



**FROM EARLY  
COLLABORATION TO AN  
ENDURING ORGANIZATION:  
THE SUSTAINABILITY  
ROADMAP TOOLKIT**

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## Correspondence

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## **Introduction**

How can organizations sustain their existence over time? Most new organizations fail and disappear. The early phase of developing an organization involves engaging stakeholders, identifying problems, and generating hypothetical solutions. In the context of PCORI engagement awards, researchers and community partners collaborate to confront key problems, from the pandemic to mental health concerns to long-standing chronic diseases like diabetes. How can these preliminary collaborations develop into enduring, sustainable organizations that can meaningfully address significant problems over time? This document provides a template and illustrative example that future teams can use to guide their organization along a sustainable pathway.

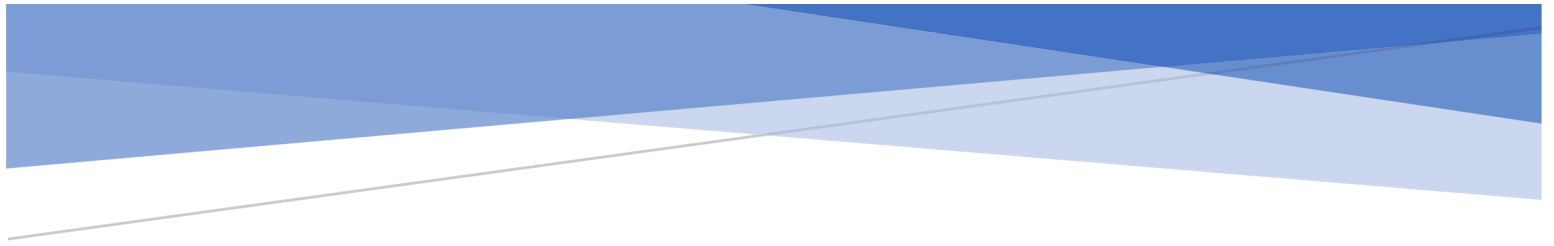
## Template for Organizational Sustainability

Defining Story	Why did the organization come to exist in the first place? The reason for the organization's continued existence will evolve over time. However, it remains important for those involved and the public to understand the original motivation, as that will guide the organization's culture and goals.
Core Values	What does the organization value? Identify and define 4-5 core values. No more. No less. These should be values identified by consensus within the current organization. They should not be historical values, which would seem outdated. They should not be aspirational values for which there remains current disagreement. When facing uncertainty and strategic decisions, members of the organization should look back to these values to guide the path forward.
Purpose	Why does the organization presently exist?
Mission	What does the organization do?
Envisioned Future	Paint a vivid picture of what the organization hopes to accomplish over the next 30 years. This should be speculative, forward-looking, and capable of getting people excited about where the organization is headed.
Core Operations	<p>Priorities – What are the main issues that the organization primarily aims to address? These could be 4-9 topic areas.</p> <p>Methods – How does the organization address these priorities?</p> <p>Partnerships – Who are the key people, groups, and organizations that partner with this organization?</p>
Audacious Goals	If the organization were to reach 95% of its potential, what are 3 goals you hope it would accomplish in the near term? Pick a specific timeline, such as 3 months, 6 months, or 3 years. The goals should be optimistic but obtainable.
Immediate Objectives	What are the near-term objectives that the organization would need to accomplish to have a chance at meeting the audacious goals described above? Use the same timeline.

## Illustrative Example – The NOLA Pandemic Food Collaborative

<b>Defining Story</b>	<p>COVID-19 hit New Orleans’ food service workers before the pandemic declaration and mask recommendations, as the city saw the highest number of deaths per capita of any major U.S. city by April 2020. Absent testing, the virus spread silently to several regions of the U.S. in the weeks prior to the pandemic declaration. Like a perfect storm, this silent spread coincided directly with New Orleans’ Carnival season, characterized by peak national and international tourism, social gatherings of thousands, large dinner parties, and restaurant outings. The timing was tragic, occurring before federal officials indicated a public health threat, before a single known U.S. death, and before those in attendance could have perceived the threat. Despite substantial undercounting early on, New Orleans’ cases peaked in the early pandemic on April 2, 2020, before the federal government recommended masking, and deaths per capita soon topped other major U.S. cities. Food service and other public-facing workers have been more likely to get COVID-19 and experience adverse outcomes, and New Orleans has been no exception. Millions of Americans, especially those within or supplying to the restaurant and prepared food sector, lost their jobs because of layoffs, ill health, fear of illness, and family obligations. Many lost their health insurance while battling COVID-19. As the pandemic continued, each time precautions were lifted, food service workers on the frontlines were among the earliest to assume increases in viral exposure risk. These pandemic stressors have taken a toll on the physical, mental, and financial health of the nation, especially food service workers, including in New Orleans.</p>
<b>Core Values</b>	<p><b>Crisis Response.</b> Our organization responds to the ongoing crises of the pandemic. The particular crises will vary over time. Moreover, as the acute impact of the pandemic diminishes, the organization may evolve to address new crises.</p>

	<p><b>Supporting the Vulnerable.</b> The organization supports people who are most vulnerable, whether due to exposure risk, health conditions, or enduring financial strain.</p> <p><b>Holistic Perspective.</b> We take a holistic perspective, addressing the physical, emotional, social, functional, and financial impact of the pandemic.</p> <p><b>Collaboration.</b> The organization thrives on collaboration, shared power, shared decision-making, community engagement, and community-centered goals.</p>
<b>Purpose</b>	To support the community in handling the pandemic and its aftermath.
<b>Mission</b>	The mission of our organization is to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the community by helping people make decisions about their health and healthcare, get support for stress and mental health, and identify and reduce long-term consequences.
<b>Envisioned Future</b>	In the early days of the pandemic, we began organizing to address the needs of the New Orleans community, ultimately forming the NOLA Pandemic Food Collaborative. Our work has helped to identify the key issues faced by those in the food service industry throughout the pandemic, a group consistently at high risk of exposure to the virus. As the pandemic has evolved and mitigation has been dropped (masks, testing) or become less effective (waning vaccines), we have reorganized to become the Pandemic Mitigation Collaborative and aim to support all members of the community who are at high exposure risk or otherwise vulnerable to the virus. Over the next 5 years, we anticipate conducting research to implement evidence-based interventions to improve vaccine utilization, use of high-quality masks in risky contexts, reduce in-home COVID-19 transmission, and reduce long-term effects, such as long COVID-19 and financial strain. Over the next 30 years, we imagine conducting research to examine the very long-term impact of key elements of the pandemic, COVID-19 reinfections, long COVID-19, and interventions to help.
<b>Core Operations</b>	<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing in-home COVID-19 transmission</li> <li>• Masking outreach and advocacy</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing outreach and advocacy</li> <li>• Air-cleaner outreach and advocacy</li> <li>• Stress and mental health support</li> <li>• Documenting long-term pandemic impact</li> <li>• Long COVID-19 support</li> </ul> <p><b>Methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising charitable funds</li> <li>• Raising research funds</li> <li>• Educational outreach</li> <li>• Project implementation</li> <li>• Presentation and publication</li> </ul> <p><b>Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Public health institutions</li> <li>• Workplaces</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Community organizations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Audacious Goals</b></p>	<p>By the end of 2023, we hope to complete the following audacious goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design and submit a research funding proposal focused on reducing COVID-19 transmission</li> <li>2. Gain charitable funding for a community-based masking program</li> <li>3. Develop a partnership and implement a small project with an additional new community-based organization</li> </ol>
<p><b>Immediate Objectives</b></p>	<p>Our corresponding near-term objectives include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify an appropriate funding mechanism, develop a working protocol, and identify the team</li> <li>2. Meet with COVID NOLA to develop a charitable mask funding proposal</li> <li>3. Maintain communication about possible leads for new collaborative opportunities</li> </ol>