COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

WCTF Sustainability Planning Toolkit

Start Here: A guide to planning for what comes after your grant

Welcome

Your Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) grant helped your partnership build something valuable: a training program, new relationships with employers, and a workforce strategy that responds to real needs in your region. This toolkit will help you decide which parts of that work should continue after the grant ends, and how.

WCTF grants are designed to launch and test new approaches, not to fund them permanently. Partnerships that plan early are much better positioned to keep their most important work going. Partnerships that wait until the final months of a grant often find themselves looking only for replacement funding, with little time to make other changes that could keep the strategy alive.

By the end of this process, your partnership will have a **Sustainability Roadmap**: a written plan that names what will continue, who will lead it, how it will be supported, what will end, and what you will do in the next 6 to 12 months.

What We Mean by Sustainability

Sustainability does not have to mean keeping your program exactly as it is today. For many partnerships, the most realistic path involves change. Sustainability might look like:

- embedding training within a community college, training provider, or employer
- shifting leadership or coordination to a different partner
- securing employer investment, whether financial or in-kind
- running the program at a smaller or different scale
- combining several funding sources instead of relying on one

The goal is to sustain the workforce strategy, meaning the pathway, the partnerships, and the employer relationships you built, even if the grant-funded structure around it changes.

The Six Pillars of Sustainability

Every tool in this toolkit is organized around six pillars. Together, they describe what it takes for a workforce strategy to last.

Pillar	The central question
1. Workforce Demand and Program Value	Does the workforce need still exist, and can you show your strategy is meeting it?
2. Partnership Strength and Commitment	Do partners share ownership, with clear roles and a way to make decisions after the grant?
3. Employer Engagement and Investment	Do employers rely on this pipeline, and are they willing to invest in it?
4. Program Model Adaptability	Can the model change in scale, structure, or delivery without losing what makes it work?
5. Resource and Funding Strategy	What mix of funding, partner contributions, and cost-sharing can support the work?
6. Data, Measurement, and Storytelling	Can you track what matters and show your impact with both numbers and stories?

What's in the Toolkit

Part I: Core Planning Process

These five tools are designed to be used in order. Each one builds on the one before it, and the last produces your Sustainability Roadmap.

#	Tool	What it helps you do	What you'll walk away with
1	**Sustainability Framework** *Read: 15–20 min*	Build a shared understanding of sustainability and the six pillars across your partnership.	A common language for the planning conversations ahead
2	**Readiness Reflection** *60–90 min*	Score your partnership on each pillar individually, then compare scores and discuss where partners see things differently.	Pillar scores, and a clear view of your strengths and gaps
3	**Partnership Mapping** *45–60 min*	Map who is involved, how engaged they are, who is missing, and where the work depends too heavily on one organization.	Your top 2–3 areas to strengthen and one action for the next 60–90 days
4	**Planning Guide** *2–3 hrs, often over 2 sessions*	Work through seven planning areas using a Reflect, Discuss, Decide approach, ending each area with a decision.	A written decision for each planning area
5	**Sustainability Roadmap** *45–60 min*	Bring your decisions from the Planning Guide together into a single plan with owners and timelines.	Your completed Sustainability Roadmap

Part II: Supporting Resources

These optional tools go deeper on specific topics. Use them alongside the core process whenever they're helpful. The current resources focus on Pillar 6: Data, Measurement, and Storytelling.

Resource	Use it when you need to...
Metrics Selection Worksheet	Choose a small set of indicators that reflect your priorities. This is especially useful for Section 7 of the Planning Guide and the Measuring Success section of the Roadmap.
Dashboard Planner	Decide where each metric's data will come from, who will maintain it, and how often it will be reported.
Story Builder	Pair your outcome data with participant, employer, and partner stories to make the case to funders and stakeholders.
Partnership Ecosystem Map	See your whole partnership at a glance and spot gaps, single points of failure, and grant-dependent roles.
A Completed Sustainability Roadmap	See the level of detail a strong roadmap includes

Additional resources on funding strategy, employer engagement, and communications will be added over time. Check the TA Portal for the latest version of the toolkit.

Getting Started

Choose your path

Full planning process. If your partnership is starting sustainability planning for the first time, work through Tools 1 through 5 in order. Most partnerships complete the full process over three or four working sessions spread across several weeks.

Targeted use. If you have already done some planning, or you need help with one specific issue, go directly to the tool that fits:

If your partnership is asking…	Start with
"How ready are we, really?"	Readiness Reflection
"Who is missing from the table, and who are we too dependent on?"	Partnership Mapping and the Partnership Ecosystem Map
"Who should lead this after the grant?"	Planning Guide, Section 2
"What should we let go of?"	Planning Guide, Section 6
"What should we be measuring?"	Metrics Selection Worksheet
"How do we make the case to a funder or employer?"	Story Builder

When to start

The best time to begin is in the first half of your grant period, while there is still time to test changes, build employer commitments, and pursue new funding. The toolkit is still useful later in a grant, but your options narrow as the end date approaches. Ideally you are revisiting your Readiness Reflection and Roadmap every six months or so. They are meant to be updated as your work evolves.

Who to involve

Sustainability plans work when the people who will carry them out help shape them. Aim to include:

- the lead grantee and the staff who coordinate the work day to day
- key partners such as training providers, the workforce board, community-based organizations, and higher education partners
- **employers.** If they can't attend every session, invite them at least for the Planning Guide sections on priority pathways (Section 1), employer engagement (Section 3), and funding (Section 5).

Before your first session

Readiness scores and planning decisions are only as good as the information behind them. Before you begin, gather and share with all partners:

- regional labor market data, including your Regional Workforce Blueprint
- program outcome and participant data

- records of employer engagement and any employer feedback
- partnership agreements, MOUs, or letters of commitment
- your current budget and a list of funding sources

> **Pro-Tip**
>
> **Focus on decisions.** Each tool ends with something to decide. Record what you decide, not just what you discussed.
>
> **Treat disagreement as useful.** When partners see things differently, it usually points to the conversations you most need to have.
>
> **Be realistic.** Plan around the capacity your partners actually have, not the capacity you wish they had.

Support Is Available

You don't have to do this alone. CommCorp supports WCTF partnerships through:

- **Technical assistance.** WCTF staff can facilitate sessions or help your partnership work through any tool.
- **Communities of Practice.** Work through toolkit exercises alongside peer partnerships facing similar questions.
- **The TA Portal.** Access the latest version of every tool at any time.

Questions or feedback on the toolkit? Contact **Mary-Ann Roberts at mroberts@commcorp.org**. We're continuing to improve this resource and want to hear what works for you and what doesn't.