

Framing Sustainability

Objectives

By the end of today's session, participants will be able to:

- Describe sustainability in four dimensions (People, Processes, Partnerships, Purpose).
- Identify which dimensions are strongest/weakest in their own organisations.
- Map what sustainability looks like in their specific contexts.
- Identify one practical area your organisation can strengthen next

Introduction: why we're doing this

- Civil society organisations (CSOs) operate in a complex environment
- Funding is fragile — sustainability goes beyond money
- Strength, viability and resilience depend on more than donations

What sustainability really means

- Sustainable CSOs are about:
 - Strong people & leadership
 - Reliable processes & systems
 - Meaningful partnerships & community trust
 - Clear purpose and identity
- These are the four lenses we will use to frame sustainability

The Four Lenses of Sustainability

The Four Lenses

- People
- Processes
- Partnerships
- Purpose

People

- Leadership
- Skills & capacity
- Team stability
- Wellbeing & motivation
- Continuity

LENS 1 People

Capacity, continuity, wellbeing, leadership pipeline



Not true at all (1-2)

Somewhat true/inconsi...

Very true/consistently d...

Roles and responsibilitie...

☐☐☐

Staff have the skills they...

☐☐☐

We have low dependenc...

☐☐☐

Staff wellbeing and moti...

☐☐☐

We have a basic succes...

☐☐☐

For each statement,
rate your CSO from 1
to 5.

1 = Not true at all
3 = Somewhat true /
inconsistent
5 = Very true /
consistently
demonstrated

Processes

- Systems & documentation
- MEL & reporting
- Financial controls
- Workflows & SOPs
- Continuity of operations



LENS 2: Processes

Systems, documentation, workflows, MEL, financial controls

Not true at all (1-2)

Somewhat true/inconsi...

Very true/consistently d...

Core programme activiti...

☐☐☐

Team members know w...

☐☐☐

MEL data is collected co...

☐☐☐

Financial processes (ap...

☐☐☐

Work continues smoothl...

☐☐☐

For each statement,
rate your CSO from 1
to 5.

1 = Not true at all

**3 = Somewhat true /
inconsistent**

**5 = Very true /
consistently
demonstrated**

Partnerships

- Community relationships
- Networks & collaborations
- Donor relations
- Credibility & trust
- Capacity-enhancing alliances

LENS 3: Partnerships

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Networks, collaboration, trust, community engagement

Not true at all (1-2)

Somewhat true/inconsi...

Very true/consistently d...

We have active partners...

☐☐☐

Our community trusts u...

☐☐☐

We collaborate regularly...

☐☐☐

We are able to maintain ...

☐☐☐

We have at least one pa...

☐☐☐

For each statement,
rate your CSO from **1**
to **5**.

1 = Not true at all
3 = Somewhat true /
inconsistent

5 = Very true /
consistently
demonstrated

Purpose

- Mission clarity
- Identity & focus
- Strategic direction
- Avoiding mission drift
- Value proposition

LENS 4: Purpose

Mission clarity, focus, strategic direction, value proposition

	Not true at all (1-2)	Somewhat true/inconsi...	Very true/consistently d...
Our mission is clear and...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff can explain the org...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our programmes strongl...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We can adapt to new op...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a strong value ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For each statement, rate your CSO from 1 to 5.

1 = Not true at all
3 = Somewhat true / inconsistent
5 = Very true / consistently demonstrated

INTERPRETATION GUIDE

21–25	Strong foundation: maintain and refine.
16–20	Moderate — several areas need strengthening.
11–15	Weak — sustainability risks present.
5–10	Very weak — urgent attention needed.

Sustainability Profile Summary

Lens	Score (out of 25)	Strength Level
People	_____	_____
Processes	_____	_____
Partnerships	_____	_____
Purpose	_____	_____