



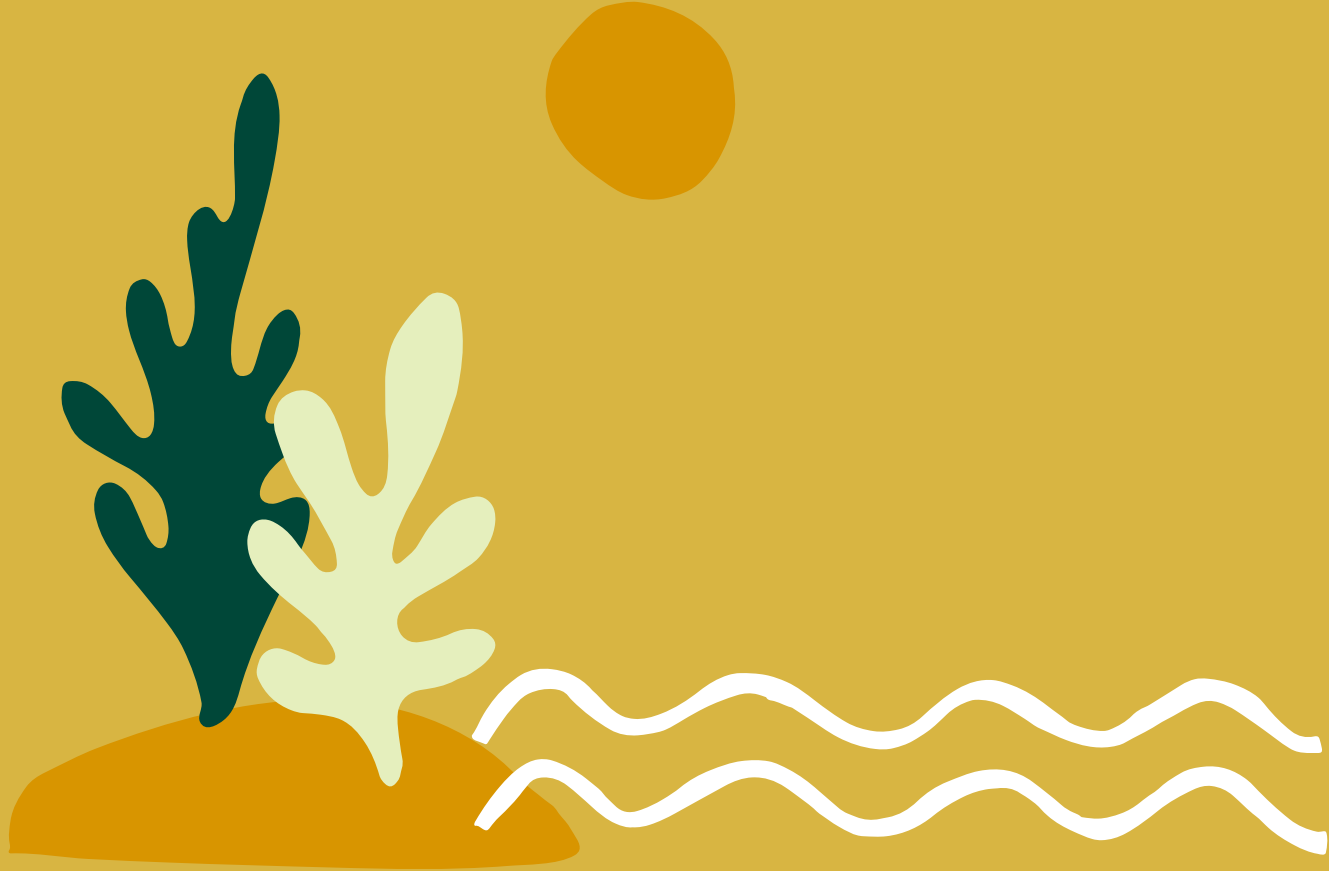
Hogg Foundation
for Mental Health



PREVENTION
INSTITUTE



Wendie Veloz



SUSTAINABILITY LEARNING ACADEMY LESSONS LEARNED

What's Working, What's Next: A Deep Dive into Sustainability with CoC Grantees

Community coalitions from across Texas came together for a hands-on experience that turned strategic reflection into real-world sustainability plans. This experience leveraged coins, collaboration, and courageous conversations to inspire partners to sustain the most successful parts of their work.

This effort was made possible through the partnership and support of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Prevention Institute, and the Communities of Care initiative.



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

As the Communities of Care (CoC) initiative approached the end of its six-year funding cycle, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health wanted to equip grantees with the tools and strategies needed for long-term sustainability. To meet this need, Prevention Institute partnered with consultant Wendie Veloz to facilitate the Sustainability Learning Academy, an in-person experience focused on sustainability planning, resource development, and cross-collaborative learning.

Teams identified sustainable priorities, clarified leadership pathways, and deepened cross grantee collaboration. The session resulted in collaboratives solidifying their approach to sustainability and feeling equipped to have difficult conversations about sustainability with their partners.

A MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

After six years of dedicated work under the Hogg Foundation's Communities of Care initiative, many grantees found themselves at a turning point. With funding winding down, the question was clear: "what now?"

That's where the Sustainability Learning Academy came in. The session gave collaborative leaders a chance to step away from day-to-day operations and focus on long-term impact.

Rather than just focusing on funding, the group was asked to think about the legacy of the CoC efforts. Especially about carrying forward the passion, the programs, and the purpose that had driven them throughout the grant period.

The session also came at the perfect time. Many collaboratives had faced delayed start-ups and pivots due to COVID-19. The Academy gave them a chance to think strategically, reflect, and plan the next steps.

Leaders and Lived Experience in the Room

Inside the room attendees represented project managers, agency partners, parent leaders, and other community stakeholders. The mix of voices created a powerful network of community advocates with deep implementation experience and lived expertise.

What made the day especially rich was the variety of perspectives. Groups weren't required to sit with their partners. Instead, the tables mixed participants from across initiatives. This cross-pollination of ideas sparked honest conversations, helped people see common challenges, and generated energy that lasted throughout the day.

The space was welcoming and inclusive, hosted at The Garden in an open space that allowed for movement and networking. Interpretation was available for Spanish-speaking participants with fresh food and ample breaks. These comforts helped keep people engaged and feeling connected.

SUSTAINABILITY LEARNING ACADEMY: STRATEGY MEETS STORYTELLING

The purpose of the Sustainability Learning Academy is to practice shared decision making with partners while gaining insights into the group's successful and unsuccessful strategies. Facilitation is grounded in three parts of Wendie's Multi-Dimensional Sustainability Framework:

- Leading with Passion
- Strategic Investment/Divestment
- Long-Term Change Strategy

A brief overview of these concepts is given to the group along with a dime, nickel, and a penny for each participant. Tables were set up to include small cups that serve as each group's investment accounts.

The opening activity, What's Working / What's Not Working, was a chance for teams to reflect

on their success. The activity sounds simple, but it is designed to bring deep insights about implementation. Table participants were asked to reflect on their most successful and difficult strategies and share their lessons learned.

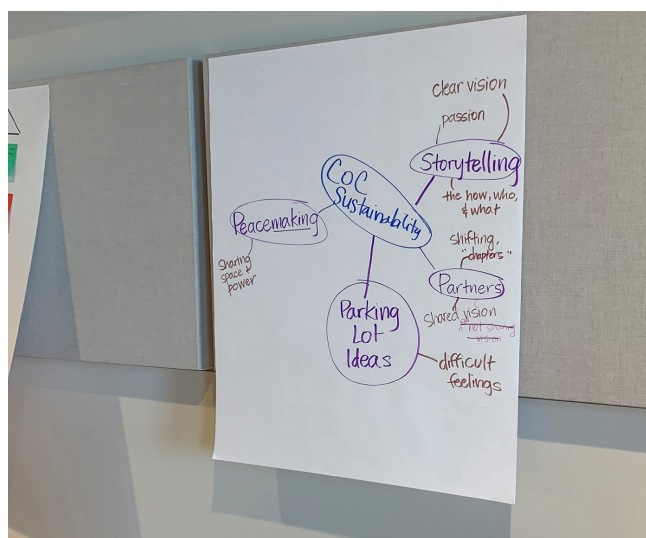
As people shared implementation stories it was clear they were proud of what they'd accomplished. In contrast, they felt conflicted about the strategies they had to consider letting go. Letting go of something that's not working isn't always easy, especially when it's something you built.

Turning Coins to Clarity

As the experience progressed, participants shifted their teams and moved into new groups. During this time every person had the opportunity to invest in their vision from the original group or a new one from a group they visited.

The new groups give participants the chance to engage in peer exchange with a host who pitched a sustainability strategy developed by the original team. Participants listened closely to the pitches. The stories that resonated the most and inspired investments were ones that showed alignment with similar values to the ones their collaborative held.

Some people had a hard time deciding whether to invest in their own idea or someone else's. To help with strategic investments, undercover investors circulated the room with bonus coins to invest based on what they heard. These larger investments mimicked additional grant funding given to teams with well structured sustainability plans.





Real Decisions, Bold Next Steps

Although the Sustainability Learning Academy is a simulation, it sparked real decisions for CoC members. Several collaboratives identified specific activities to sunset, things that weren't working or wouldn't be fundable long-term. Others began crafting new ways to tell their story, even without perfect data from the past six years.

One group took it further. Two project co-managers launched an LLC consulting firm, InReach to keep doing the work they love. They're now offering services to other communities and continuing their impact through a new structure.

The Sustainability Learning Academy experience is a high-dose of strategy mixed with collaboration building in a facilitated and structured environment. The experience gives grantees at the end of a grant period the space to be strategic and learn from peers while making important decisions.

The Power of Zooming Out

Sometimes, the hardest part of sustainability planning is just making time for it. This session gave people permission to zoom out and look at the bigger picture. More importantly, the experience provided a framework to do it together.

Sustainability isn't just about keeping something going. It's about knowing why you're doing it and how to evolve when the context shifts, especially at the end of grant funding. This Sustainability Learning Academy helped bring clarity and open dialogue to help manage and usher in change.

Dive Deeper - Resources to Learn More About Sustainability

If you're a funder looking to support long-term community impact, or a collaborative wondering what comes after a grant, take note: peer learning, inclusive facilitation, and space for storytelling matter. Thanks to the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and Prevention Institute's commitment to sharing knowledge about sustainability, you can access some of the resources developed for CoC Collaboratives for free.

Learn more about sustainability by exploring the Community Sustainability Library's resources.

- Visit the **Community Sustainability Library**
- Learn more about **Communities of Care**