

NONPROFIT TOOLKIT

Prevention Continuity Playbook

**Building Financial, Human, and Mission Resilience
in a Changing Funding Landscape.**



THE MONEY



THE PEOPLE



THE LEADERSHIP



MISSION
ADAPTABILITY

FUNDING IS OUR RUNWAY.

RESILIENCE IS OUR DESTINATION.

PLAN TODAY. ADAPT TOMORROW. CONTINUE THE MISSION.

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Executive Summary

Prevention organizations are operating in a funding landscape marked by uncertainty, competition, administrative volatility, and shifting public priorities. While total funding levels may appear stable or even increasing, headline numbers do not always tell the full story. Multi-year continuations, fewer new grant starts, pass-through funding risks, and sudden administrative disruptions can create hidden vulnerabilities for organizations that rely too heavily on a limited set of funding streams.

The Prevention Continuity Playbook was created to help prevention leaders move from reactive crisis management to proactive continuity planning. It offers a practical framework for strengthening organizational resilience before disruption occurs. The central message is simple: stable funding should not be treated as permanent protection. It should be used as time capital, a finite window of relative security that allows leaders to diversify revenue, invest in people, strengthen systems, document processes, and prepare for future funding shifts.

This playbook introduces four pillars of prevention continuity: The Money, The People, The Leadership, and Mission Adaptability. Together, these pillars help leaders examine the financial, human, governance, and strategic conditions that allow prevention organizations to sustain their work through political, social, and economic change.

The playbook also expands the conversation beyond financial capital alone. Prevention continuity depends on multiple forms of capital, including time capital, people capital, relationship capital, knowledge capital, leadership capital, adaptability capital, and trust capital. Each form of capital can be built, protected, and invested. When leaders steward these forms of capital intentionally, they create organizations that are stronger, more flexible, and better prepared to carry prevention science forward.

This resource includes practical tools to help organizations map their funding mix, assess staff retention and cross-training practices, conduct scenario planning, adapt language while staying anchored in mission, and stress-test continuity over a 24-month period. These tools are designed to support meaningful conversations with executive leaders, boards, staff, and partners.

At its core, this playbook is an invitation to strengthen the business of prevention so the mission can endure. Prevention science has implications far beyond any single program or grant. It

contributes to healthier communities, stronger protective factors, reduced harm, and human flourishing. By applying these strategies, documenting what works, and sharing lessons with others, prevention leaders can help build a field that is not only responsive to change, but ready for it.

Acknowledgments and Author Note

This playbook was developed by Nicole M. Augustine, founder and CEO of RIZE Consultants, a public health consulting firm focused on strategy, prevention, leadership development, and capacity building. Nicole brings experience as a prevention professional, strategist, author, facilitator, and business owner to this work. Her approach reflects a core belief that prevention organizations must be mission-centered and operationally strong. When prevention leaders strengthen the business side of their organizations, they strengthen the field's ability to serve communities through uncertainty, disruption, and change.

The New England Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) supported the development of this resource in response to a clear need in the field. Prevention leaders are navigating complex funding conditions, shifting priorities, workforce pressures, and increasing expectations for sustainability. This playbook reflects New England PTTC's commitment to equipping the prevention workforce with practical tools, strategic frameworks, and timely guidance that help organizations remain resilient while staying anchored in prevention science and community impact.

Special acknowledgment is given to Brian Johnson of Main & Johnson for bringing a valuable external business lens to this project. His perspective helped sharpen the playbook's focus on financial sustainability, organizational risk, leadership foresight, and the importance of treating stable funding as an opportunity to build long-term capacity. His contributions helped bridge the language of prevention with the language of business strategy, strengthening the usefulness of this resource for nonprofit leaders, boards, and prevention organizations preparing for the future.

This document is offered with gratitude to the prevention leaders, staff, board members, coalitions, and community partners who continue to carry this work forward. Your leadership makes prevention possible, and your willingness to build stronger organizations helps ensure the field can continue to support healthier communities and human flourishing.

Introduction and Purpose

In an environment of constant change, the most resilient organizations are not those that avoid disruption, but those that prepare for it. The Prevention Continuity Playbook is a strategic guide designed to empower prevention leaders to navigate funding volatility and build sustainable organizations. Recent shifts in the funding landscape, including administrative changes and fluctuating award cycles, underscore an important reality: continuity planning is no longer just a best practice. It is a core leadership competency essential for the health of our communities and the integrity of our field.

This resource is for directors, CEOs, and prevention leaders on the front lines. We recognize the tightrope you walk as you balance mission-driven work with the practical demands of financial stability. An analysis of 258 SAMHSA award actions in HHS Region 1 from FY2022 to FY2025 reveals a complex picture. Total award dollars peaked at \$19.47 million in FY2023 and declined thereafter, while new-start counts narrowed in FY2025 and continuation or other award actions continued to account for most annual dollars. This composition shows that even long-term funding can give a false sense of security if it is not used to build capacity.

This resource is built to help you lead with clarity and courage through financial challenges, ensuring your organization can withstand system shocks without compromising its mission. We will explore how to frame stability as time capital: the finite window of relative security created by stable funding that gives leaders time to plan early, diversify revenue, strengthen systems, and prepare for future funding shifts before a crisis occurs.

This playbook will equip you with:

- An analysis of the modern funding environment
- The four pillars of prevention continuity: The Money (Funding Architecture), The People (Staff and Employees), The Leadership (Governance and Internal Leadership), and Mission Adaptability
- Practical tools to stress-test your organization's readiness and guide strategic discussions

Our goal is to help you move from a reactive posture to a proactive one, positioning your organization for long-term impact. By embracing continuity planning, you can work to secure your team's future and contribute to a more resilient and adaptive prevention field.

The Funding Shock Reality

The ability to navigate financial uncertainty is an essential skillset for every prevention leader who is creating sustainable impact.

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The ability to navigate financial uncertainty is an essential skillset for every prevention leader who is creating sustainable impact. In the current landscape, prevention organizations face a complex and often unpredictable funding environment. Federal and state priorities can shift with little notice. Political climates can change rapidly. Administrative actions or delays can have immediate effects on programs and people.

As prevention leaders, the stakes are high. Continuity of community services, stability for dedicated staff, and the ability to meet evolving public health needs all depend on organizational resilience in the face of uncertainty. Too often, organizations interpret steady or increasing funding levels as assurance of security, missing subtle warning signs. Yet it is precisely during periods of apparent stability that the seeds of either vulnerability or future strength are planted.

This section examines the modern funding environment and reveals how surface-level stability can mask underlying risks. It also explains why a proactive stance is essential for long-term sustainability.

Lessons from a Changing Landscape

An analysis of 258 SAMHSA award actions in HHS Region 1 from FY2022 to FY2025 offers essential lessons for prevention leaders. Total award dollars peaked at \$19.47 million in FY2023 and declined to \$16.80 million in FY2025, a 13.7% contraction from the peak. Across all four fiscal years, continuation and other award actions accounted for 71.9% to 80.4% of annual dollars. The landscape therefore remained substantial while access to new opportunities narrowed.



Across all award records, new starts fell from 20 in FY2024 to 12 in FY2025, a 40.0% decrease. Within CSAP/SP-prefix records alone, the decline was from 18 to 12, or 33.3%.

Nationally, the STOP Act opportunity contracted from an estimated \$4.566 million and 76 expected awards in FY2024 to \$750,000 and 13 expected awards in FY2025. That represents an 83.6% decline in estimated funding (84% rounded) and an 82.9% decline in expected awards (83% rounded). In Region 1, the composition change was especially revealing: total STOP award dollars rose 3.7%, while new STOP starts and new-start dollars each fell 64.3%. Continuation funding can therefore support existing awardees even as the entry point for new awards contracts.

Data note: See the companion resource Reading the Funding Landscape More Clearly for the complete dataset, equations, scope definitions, and limitations. The award-action data does not measure application volume, competition, renewal odds, success rates, or staffing effects.

The dataset does not measure application volume, competition, renewal odds, or staffing effects, so it should not be used to claim those outcomes directly. What it does show is a narrower count of new starts in FY2025 and a funding base in which continuation or other actions supplied most annual dollars. For organizations seeking to launch or scale programs, that pattern is a reason to monitor opportunity pipelines closely, plan for longer funding gaps, and avoid treating aggregate totals as evidence that new funding is broadly accessible.

Taken together, these shifts underscore a vital point: aggregate funding figures offer only a partial view of organizational security. Leaders must be vigilant in reading between the lines, tracking the total number of funded projects or dollar amounts, alongside the proportion of new versus continuation grants, renewal timelines, as well as policy signals that may affect their long-term sustainability. Organizations that fail to recognize these trends risk being blindsided by sudden funding contractions or finding themselves unprepared when the next wave of change.

For prevention leaders, the pattern is a strategic warning rather than proof of a universal outcome. When a large share of annual dollars comes from continuations, aggregate funding can remain substantial even while the number of new starts falls. Organizations may then face greater exposure when multiple awards end or when future competitions produce fewer entry points. Monitoring new-start counts, continuation timelines, and revenue concentration can help leaders identify potential gaps early and respond before they threaten program continuity.

For new or scaling organizations, the Region 1 data does not establish application success rates or prove that competition has increased. It does, however, show why access must be examined separately from total funding: fewer new starts can narrow the number of entry points even when substantial continuation dollars remain in the system. Maintaining a mix of experienced awardees and new entrants matters for innovation, adaptability, and responsiveness to varied

communities.

In addition, administrative volatility, like the abrupt 2026 grant terminations and swift reinstatements, should be viewed as more than rare events. They spotlight how federal processes, policy debates, and bureaucratic disruptions can stop the flow of funding with no advance warning. For organizations without robust reserves, diversified income streams, or dynamic scenario planning, the disruption is not just logistical but existential, threatening staff retention and program continuity.

The implication is clear: it is no longer enough to track aggregate numbers or focus on securing a renewal. Leaders must cultivate a sophisticated understanding of the funding environment, regularly analyze grant composition and timelines, and anticipate both slow-moving and rapid shifts. Only by closely monitoring current funding streams and building corresponding internal agility can prevention organizations protect themselves from the next funding shock.

The Stability Trap

Long-term funding, such as multi-year federal grants, can feel like a significant victory. It provides security, allows for program planning, and reduces the immediate pressure of fundraising. However, this stability can become a trap. When an organization becomes overly reliant on a single, long-term source, it can foster a culture of complacency. The illusion of security leads to a deferral of critical, strategic work.

For example, a coalition may celebrate securing a five-year grant and channel most resources into maintaining existing programs, choosing not to pursue philanthropic dollars or local contracts due to a sense of comfort. Over time, grant reporting becomes routine, conversations with the board stagnate around operational updates, and investments in innovation stall. Suddenly, if the grant's renewal is threatened or lost, there is little time or internal capacity to develop new partnerships or revenue streams, leaving the organization scrambling and the employees searching for positions in other organizations with more perceived stability.

Strategies to Avoid the Stability Trap

- **Build a Diversification Roadmap:** Early in a grant cycle, map out a fundraising calendar that includes milestones for pursuing at least one new revenue stream per year, such as foundation grants, state or local funds, corporate support, fee-for-service activities, or earned-income initiatives. Diversification should begin in the first year of a multi-year

award, not in the final 12 to 18 months before funding ends. When an organization waits until a major grant is close to expiration, prospective funders may see the organization as financially vulnerable rather than strategically positioned. Smaller grants, local contributions, contracts, or fee-for-service opportunities are more compelling when they are part of a broader sustainability plan, not when they appear to be the only thing standing between the organization and a funding cliff.

- **Benchmark Funding Mixes:** Compare your organization's revenue sources with peer organizations. Set attainable targets to reduce reliance on any single funding stream, aiming, for example, for no single grant to exceed 20–25% of your annual budget. For guidance on how to benchmark your funding model against peer organizations, see Bridgespan's “Finding Your Funding Strategy: Benchmarking 101.”
- **Enlist Board Champions:** Engage your board in discussions about risk. Assign governance champions to lead fundraising diversification or to host regular brainstorming sessions with staff. Fundraising should be clearly owned. In some organizations, it may be one person's primary role; in others, it may be shared across staff, board members, and leadership. What matters is that responsibility is explicit. Tools such as a RACI matrix can help clarify who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed for each funding strategy. (NonprofitReady, 2024)
- **Establish Reserve Policies:** Use periods of stable funding as opportunities to formalize and grow reserve funds. Adopt policies to allocate eligible surplus dollars each year until a set operating reserve goal, such as three months of expenses, is reached. Not all funding streams allow organizations to carry forward or “bank” surplus dollars, so leaders should review grant terms before relying on this strategy.
- **Proactive Communication:** Routinely update your entire organization, staff, board, and stakeholders about the funding mix, emerging risks, and progress toward diversification goals. Transparency creates shared responsibility and creative problem-solving.
- **Scenario Planning:** On a regular basis (at least annually), stress-test your organization's readiness for grant loss or delay by running leadership through mock “What if?” exercises to identify gaps and actionable next steps.

By embedding these strategies into standard operating procedures, prevention organizations are more likely to remain adaptive and mission-driven, even when long-term funding is abundant.

Funding as Foundation and Runway

Stable funding creates a runway. Major federal and state grants create a foundation for meaningful prevention work, staffing, partnerships, and community trust. But a foundation alone is not a complete structure. Stable funding also creates runway: time and space to prepare early, diversify revenue, strengthen systems, develop staff, document processes, and plan for the next funding shift.

To avoid the Stability Trap, leaders can treat stable funding as time capital: a finite period of relative security that should be used to build long-term resilience. Instead of focusing only on maintaining current programs, organizations can use periods of stability to create stronger systems, deepen partnerships, and reduce future vulnerability.

Here are key strategies and real-world examples prevention leaders can leverage to effectively turn funding stability into a launchpad for growth:

- **Invest in Capacity Building:** Allocate a portion of each grant toward strengthening your organization's core functions. For example, one New England prevention coalition dedicated part of its federal funding to modernize its financial systems and upgrade data management software, making budget tracking and compliance reporting more efficient, with benefits that last well beyond the grant period.
- **Prioritize Staff Development:** Use the predictability of multi-year funding to strengthen your team's skills, credentials, and long-term career pathways. This can include sponsoring prevention specialists for professional certifications, hosting cross-training workshops, offering stipends for advanced learning, and providing senior staff with training in donor relations, grant writing, income development, and funder communication.

“The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay.”

HENRY FORD, FOUNDER, FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Investing in staff is never wasted, even when funding is uncertain. In contingency planning, one possible outcome is that funding may dry up and positions may shift, shrink, or end. If that happens, organizations have a responsibility to set staff up for the best possible next step by helping them build transferable skills, credentials, relationships, and confidence. For instance, a community-based nonprofit in Vermont invested in certification training for all front-line staff during years with stable funding, resulting in greater staff retention and improved prevention

outcomes. Well-trained staff who move into new roles can carry prevention knowledge, language, and values into other organizations and sectors. In that sense, professional development supports not only the individual employee and the current organization but the sustainability of prevention as a field.

Resource: Staff and board members who are new to fundraising can build baseline skills through NonprofitReady's Free Fundraising Courses, which include training on fundraising plans, major donor fundraising, donation campaigns, fundraising events, and the basics of identifying, cultivating, and soliciting donors.

- **Pursue New Partnerships:** Leverage grant-funded security to forge collaborations with other organizations, local businesses, or universities. These partnerships can open doors to joint grant applications, shared service delivery, or innovative pilot projects. Consider hosting a regional convening or roundtable discussion on shared prevention challenges as a springboard for collective action and future funding opportunities.
- **Pilot Diversification Initiatives:** While the “lights are on” thanks to reliable annual grants, organizations can experiment with earned-income streams, social enterprises, or community fundraising events. Initiate a small-scale fee-for-service model, or launch a campaign targeting individual donors; test new ideas while your core funding allows for risk-taking without jeopardizing key programs.
- **Braid Staffing Across Funding Streams When Appropriate:** When allowable, avoid placing an entire position on one vulnerable funding stream. Instead, consider whether staff time can be distributed across multiple compatible programs or grants. This can make it easier to reduce hours or shift responsibilities if one grant is reduced, rather than eliminating an entire position. This strategy requires careful coordination with finance, HR, and grant compliance staff to ensure that time, effort, and salary allocations are documented accurately.
- **Institutionalize Knowledge and Process:** Use stable periods to document workflows, codify best practices, and standardize onboarding procedures. This protects your institutional memory and ensures smoother transitions if staff turnover occurs as funding streams change.
- **Strengthen Your Political Engagement:** Stable funding gives organizations the breathing room to engage in policy action, collect and share outcomes data, and influence local or state prevention agendas. Proactively communicating your organization's impact, supported by evidence, reinforces your position with funders, partners, and decision-makers when competition increases.

- **Celebrate and Steward Funding Wins:** When your organization secures a grant, sponsorship, or major contribution, share the win. Thank the board members, staff, partners, and funders who helped make it possible. Publicly recognize supporters when appropriate, highlight what the funding makes possible, and show the community the return on investment. For example, your local bank gave you a \$10,000 grant. Publicly thank them at every event, on your social media, in your newsletters, and at your advisory board meetings. Funders are more likely to reinvest when they feel like valued partners in visible, meaningful work.
- **Conduct Proactive Scenario Planning:** Use stable years to build and regularly update contingency plans. Facilitate annual scenario-planning sessions with your board and executive team. Map out responses for various funding-loss timelines, and assign roles and responsibilities in advance. These exercises provide clarity and help ensure no one is caught off guard when external shocks occur.

By viewing major grant periods as an investment window rather than only a safety net, prevention organizations can steadily increase their readiness, diversify income sources, and deepen their operational roots in the community. The runway mindset opens the door to growth, innovation, and long-term sustainability, helping organizations carry their mission forward even when external funding conditions change.

The Four Pillars of Prevention Continuity

True organizational resilience requires a systemic approach.

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True organizational resilience requires a systemic approach. To revolutionize the business of prevention and disrupt the status quo, we must build organizations that withstand external shocks by design. Continuity planning is a core leadership competency that nonprofits should borrow from colleagues in business fields.

This framework breaks down resilience into four essential pillars: The Money, The People, The Leadership, and Mission Adaptability. By strengthening each of these areas, we equip professionals to be active participants in creating solutions designed to improve health outcomes for the communities they serve.



The Money

Funding Architecture



Financial stability in prevention is often misunderstood. Our analysis of federal grant data in HHS Region 1 shows a dangerous composition shift. While total funding dollars grew between FY2022 and FY2025, new grant starts actually plummeted by 40% in FY2025. Rising total dollars often mask a shrinking pipeline of new opportunities.

To create systemic, sustainable change, leaders must treat long-term funding as a foundation and runway, not as permanent protection from future disruption. As introduced earlier, this time capital gives leaders the breathing room to prepare early, diversify revenue, strengthen systems, and build durable infrastructure before the next funding shift.

Strategies

- **Map Your Funding Mix:** Catalog every revenue source supporting your organization. Identify the exact ratio of federal, state, local, philanthropic, individual, corporate, and earned revenue dollars. Earned revenue refers to income generated through mission-aligned products, services, trainings, contracts, or fee-for-service activities. As you map your funding mix, note whether state or local dollars are direct allocations or pass-through federal funds, since they may carry risks similar to those of federal grants.

- **Target Vulnerabilities:** Highlight any single grant that accounts for more than 25% of your operating budget. Develop a dedicated plan to dilute that concentration.
- **Build the Runway:** Use periods of stable grant funding to invest in revenue diversification strategies. Train staff or board members in grant writing for community foundations, strengthen donor cultivation practices, and explore earned revenue models.

2

The People

Staff and Employees



Your people are the engine of your mission. Prevention specialists, community health workers, educators, social workers, program coordinators, and other frontline employees often bear the brunt of funding anxiety. Sudden shifts in grant availability can lead to rapid turnover, draining your organization of critical institutional knowledge, prevention expertise, and vital community relationships.

Strategies

- **Transparent Communication Protocols:** Establish clear, predictable communication channels regarding funding status. When staff understand the financial realities and the contingency plans in place, anxiety decreases and trust grows. Consider using a simple organizational health scorecard or dashboard that helps employees see current funding status, known risks, and the steps leadership is taking to address them.
- **Implement Cross-Training:** Train employees in multiple program areas. If a specific grant ends, cross-trained staff can transition seamlessly into other funded initiatives, preserving their employment and your capacity.
- **Prioritize Retention:** Invest in the professional development and certification of your prevention specialists and other key employees. Programs, products, partnerships, and services all come back to the people doing the work. Staff development is not just a morale strategy; it is a continuity strategy.
- **Protect Relationship Infrastructure:** Strong staff relationships are an asset, but no single employee should become the only face of a program,

partnership, or community connection. If removing one person from the picture would cause an entire body of work to collapse, the organization has a sustainability risk, even if the work is thriving in the moment. Build shared relationship maps, document key contacts, create warm handoffs, and make sure more than one person understands each major partnership, program process, and community touchpoint.



The Leadership

Governance and Internal Leadership

Effective continuity planning requires alignment between the CEO, Executive Director, senior leadership, staff leaders, and the Board of Directors. Governance foresight is what separates organizations that survive disruptions from those that collapse under them. Leadership continuity also requires developing people inside the organization so knowledge, decision-making capacity, and trust do not sit with one person or one position alone.

When appropriate, staff at multiple levels should be included in planning conversations. This builds leadership from within and helps ensure smoother transitions if an executive director, senior leader, or other key decision-maker leaves the organization.

Actionable Strategies

- **Elevate Board Financial Literacy:** Train your board members to understand the specific nuances of prevention funding, including the difference between continuation funding and new base grants. Consider using simple red, yellow, and green indicators to help board members understand what is stable, what requires monitoring, and what needs urgent attention.
- **Conduct Scenario Planning:** Guide your leadership team through routine stress tests. Ask them to build response plans for multiple scenarios, including a 30-day notice of a major grant termination and partial budget reductions of 15%, 30%, or 45%. In each scenario, identify which programs would be reduced, which positions would be affected, which services must be protected, and whether staff can be reassigned across other funded work.

- **Govern with Foresight:** Shift board conversations away from strictly retrospective reporting toward future-focused risk management. Your board must actively monitor the external funding environment, understand the organization's most significant vulnerabilities, and use their networks to support fundraising, partnerships, political engagement, and long-term sustainability.

4

Mission Adaptability

Focus, Flexibility, and Evidence



Prevention professionals operate in complex social and political environments. Sometimes, the language of our field becomes caught in political crossfire. If specific terminology suddenly jeopardizes funding, your organization must know how to pivot without abandoning the communities you serve. Adaptability is not the same as abandoning your mission. It is the ability to adjust language, methods, and program models while remaining anchored in the outcomes your community needs.

Strategies

- **Separate Mission from Method:** Your core mission is to improve community health outcomes and prevent substance misuse. The specific program, grant, or intervention you use to achieve that mission is a method. If a program loses funding, the method may change, but the mission remains intact. Organizations can strengthen this adaptability by diversifying programming in advance, so no single program becomes inseparable from the mission itself.
- **Practice Linguistic Flexibility:** Learn to translate your core values into the language of the current funding environment. You can address the non-medical drivers of health and the economic and environmental conditions that affect health outcomes using terms that align with shifting grant requirements.
- **Anchor in Evidence:** Maintain a strict adherence to evidence-based practices. When your work is deeply rooted in verified data and proven outcomes, it becomes much harder for external forces to dismantle your programs.

Mission adaptability helps prevention organizations remain steady without becoming rigid. When leaders can separate the mission from any one method, describe the work in language that resonates across contexts, and anchor decisions in evidence, they are better positioned to protect community impact through changing conditions.

The Forms of Capital That Sustain Prevention Continuity

Throughout this playbook, continuity is framed not only as a financial concern, but as a stewardship responsibility. Prevention organizations rely on multiple forms of capital to remain strong, adaptive, and mission-centered. Financial resources matter, but they are only one part of the continuity equation. Time, people, relationships, knowledge, trust, and adaptability are also forms of capital that leaders can build, protect, and invest.

Form of Capital	What It Means	How Leaders Build It
Financial	The funding, reserves, revenue streams, and fiscal systems that support the organization's work.	Diversify revenue, monitor funding concentration, build reserves, strengthen financial reporting, and explore earned revenue opportunities.
Time	The finite window of relative security created by stable funding, which gives leaders time to prepare before disruption occurs.	Begin sustainability planning early in the grant cycle, use stable periods to build infrastructure, and avoid waiting until the final months of a grant to act.
People	The skills, experience, credentials, creativity, and commitment of the people doing the work.	Invest in professional development, support certification, offer cross-training, create career pathways, and prioritize retention.
Relationship	The trust and connections held with staff, board members, funders, partners, coalitions, and community members.	Steward funder relationships, document key contacts, create shared relationship maps, celebrate partners, and avoid relying on one person as the sole connection point.
Knowledge	The institutional memory, data, processes, tools, and lessons learned that allow work to continue through transition.	Document workflows, standardize onboarding, maintain shared files, track outcomes, and preserve lessons learned from both successes and disruptions.
Leadership	The governance capacity, decision-making strength, foresight, and internal leadership bench needed to guide the organization through uncertainty.	Strengthen board financial literacy, develop staff leaders, clarify roles, use scenario planning, and create space for strategic decision-making.

Form of Capital	What It Means	How Leaders Build It
Adaptability	The organization's ability to shift language, methods, program models, and strategies while staying anchored in mission and evidence.	Practice linguistic flexibility, diversify programming, monitor policy signals, use data to tell the story, and separate mission from method.
Trust	The credibility an organization earns by communicating transparently, delivering on commitments, and showing visible impact.	Communicate proactively, share wins, report outcomes, honor commitments, and engage communities with honesty during both stability and disruption.

Common Continuity Risks to Watch For

Before moving into the planning tools, it may be helpful to name the most common risks prevention organizations should monitor. These risks often appear gradually before they become urgent, which is why continuity planning works best when leaders pay attention early.

Risk Area	What to Watch For	Why It Matters
Funding Concentration	One grant or funder represents a large percentage of the operating budget.	A delay, reduction, or non-renewal can create an immediate organizational crisis.
Pass-Through Funding	State or local dollars are ultimately tied to federal funding streams.	Funding may appear diversified on paper while still being vulnerable to the same federal decisions.
Renewal and Timing	Multiple grants renew or end within the same 6- to 12-month period.	Overlapping deadlines can create cash flow gaps and staffing uncertainty.
Staff Dependency	One person holds the key relationships, knowledge, or program processes.	If that person leaves, the organization may lose institutional memory and community trust.
Leadership Transition	Decision-making, funder relationships, or board knowledge sit with one executive or senior leader.	A leadership change can disrupt continuity if knowledge and relationships are not shared.
Program Rigidity	Programs are too closely tied to one funding source, one model, or one set of terms.	The organization may struggle to adapt if funding priorities, language, or requirements shift.
Communication	Staff, board members, partners, or community members are unclear about organizational health or next steps.	Uncertainty can lead to anxiety, rumors, disengagement, or loss of trust.
Mission Drift	The organization pursues funding that does not align with its core purpose.	Short-term financial relief can weaken long-term identity, credibility, and impact.

Practical Planning Tools

The purpose of this section is to give you planning tools that you can immediately utilize and implement as you build your prevention continuity plan.

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The purpose of this section is to give you planning tools that you can immediately utilize and implement as you build your prevention continuity plan. Resilience is built through deliberate action. The following worksheets and guides are designed to help you move from theory to practice, translating the concepts from the Four Pillars into concrete steps. Use these tools to facilitate conversations with your leadership team, board, and staff to strengthen your organization from the inside out.

Fillable versions available.

Interactive, fillable versions of all five tools in this section are available online, so your team can type answers directly into the form, save a copy for your records, or download a blank template.

Access the fillable tools at: <https://prevention-continuity-playbook.vercel.app/>

DATE PREPARED



PTTC
New England
HHS REGION 1

Analysis Questions

Reflect on your funding mix above before moving to Tool 2.

Use the space below each question to record your answers. These reflections are for your team's internal planning and are not shared outside your organization unless you choose to.

Q1 Does any single grant account for more than 25% of your total budget? If so, this is a high-risk concentration.

Q2 What is your ratio of federal to non-federal funding?

Q3 Which funding types are underutilized? Where are the opportunities for growth?

Q4 When are your largest grants up for renewal?

Retention and Cross-Training Strategies

Pillar: The People – Staff and Employees

Your staff is your most valuable asset. A funding disruption should not automatically trigger a staffing crisis. This checklist helps you proactively build a more resilient and flexible team.

A note for YOU: Building and sustaining a strong team is a significant responsibility. You are often the person thinking about who to recruit, how to develop talent, how to retain key people, and how to protect the organization through uncertainty. As you use this tool, remember that you need support, too. Identify a trusted mentor, peer, advisor, board member, or thought partner you can lean on as a sounding board for hard decisions.

Instructions: Review the following strategies with your leadership team. Check the boxes for actions you currently have in place.

Retention Strategies

- ☐ We have a clear and transparent communication plan for sharing organizational health updates with staff.
- ☐ We invest in professional development and certification opportunities for staff, even during tight budget cycles.
- ☐ Our compensation and benefits are benchmarked against similar organizations in our region.
- ☐ We conduct regular "stay interviews" to understand what keeps our top performers engaged.
- ☐ We offer non-monetary benefits like flexible work schedules or additional paid time off to boost morale.

Cross-Training Strategies

- ☐ We have mapped the core competencies required for each program.
- ☐ We have identified at least one backup person for every critical organizational function (e.g., grant reporting, payroll).
- ☐ We have a formal plan to train staff in adjacent program areas.
- ☐ Staff are encouraged to shadow colleagues in different roles.
- ☐ Job descriptions are written to include flexibility and a percentage of time dedicated to supporting other initiatives.

Cross-Training Strategies

Pillar: The People – Staff and Employees

Our Top 3 Priorities for This Year

Based on the checklists above, identify the top three new strategies your team will implement this year.

1.

2.

3.

Scenario Planning Guide

Pillar: The Leadership – Governance and Internal Leadership

Resilient leadership is proactive, not reactive. Use this guide to stress-test your organization's response to two common funding shock scenarios. Complete this with your board and senior leadership team, and store your answers somewhere your leadership team can access when needed.

SCENARIO A: THE 3-DAY SHOCK

You receive an email on a Wednesday that an administrative error has frozen payments on your largest grant, effective immediately. Cash flow will halt by Friday.

Who is on the crisis response team?

What is our communication plan for staff? For the board? For key partners?

How much operating cash reserve do we have on hand, and how many days of payroll can it cover?

Which non-essential expenses can be frozen instantly?

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SCENARIO B: THE 30-DAY WARNING

You are notified that a major multi-year grant will not be renewed. The final payment will be made in 30 days.

Financial: What is the exact budget shortfall? What combination of reserves, bridge funding, or line of credit can cover the gap?

People: Which staff positions are directly impacted? Can they be reassigned to other funded projects through cross-training? What severance, PTO, transition, reference, or job search supports should be reviewed with HR in advance?

Programs: Which services are tied to this grant? Can we scale them back or transition them to a different funding source without disrupting community access? How will we communicate changes to the people we serve?

Governance: How will the board leverage its networks for fundraising, strategic partnerships, or warm employment connections for affected staff? If reductions become unavoidable, what gentle off-boarding practices can offer as much notice, flexibility, and support as possible?

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24-Month Continuity Stress Test

All Four Pillars: The Money, The People, The Leadership, Mission Adaptability

This tool provides a comprehensive, forward-looking view of your organization's resilience. It integrates all four pillars into a long-range planning exercise. The table below is a filled-in example to illustrate how to use this tool; your own blank worksheet begins on the next page.

Example

Timeframe	Pillar: The Money (Funding)	Pillar: The People (Staff)	Pillar: The Leadership (Board/Exec)	Mission Adaptability
Next 6 Months	Key grant renewal deadline approaching. Success rate is ~75%.	Plan to hire one new prevention specialist if grant renews.	Board needs training on financial scenario analysis.	Current program language is aligned with funder priorities.
6-12 Months	If grant is lost, a 20% budget gap opens. Need to tap reserves.	Risk of losing 2 staff if grant is lost. Can one be retrained?	Begin succession planning for a retiring senior leader.	Monitor for any shifts in state-level prevention language.
12-18 Months	Launch a new local fundraising initiative to diversify revenue.	Implement new cross-training program.	Board to lead introductions to 3 potential corporate sponsors.	Explore adapting a program to serve a new population.
18-24 Months	Target: Reduce reliance on largest grant from 40% to 30% of budget.	Evaluate impact of professional development investments.	Review and update the organization's strategic plan.	Assess if our core mission statement still reflects community needs.

24-Month Continuity Stress Test

Project your organization's status across each timeframe below.

Next 6 Months

PILLAR: THE MONEY (FUNDING)

PILLAR: THE PEOPLE (STAFF)

PILLAR: THE LEADERSHIP (BOARD/EXEC)

PILLAR: MISSION ADAPTABILITY

6-12 Months

PILLAR: THE MONEY (FUNDING)

PILLAR: THE PEOPLE (STAFF)

PILLAR: THE LEADERSHIP (BOARD/EXEC)

PILLAR: MISSION ADAPTABILITY

24-Month Continuity Stress Test

Project your organization's status across each timeframe below.

12-18 Months

PILLAR: THE MONEY (FUNDING)

PILLAR: THE PEOPLE (STAFF)

PILLAR: THE LEADERSHIP (BOARD/EXEC)

PILLAR: MISSION ADAPTABILITY

18-24 Months

PILLAR: THE MONEY (FUNDING)

PILLAR: THE PEOPLE (STAFF)

PILLAR: THE LEADERSHIP (BOARD/EXEC)

PILLAR: MISSION ADAPTABILITY

Reflections and Next Steps

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The future of prevention will not be secured by funding alone. It will be secured by leaders who understand that mission-driven work also requires strong business infrastructure, thoughtful governance, resilient staffing models, adaptable language, and the courage to plan before crisis arrives.

If you have reached this point in the playbook, you have already taken an important step. You are choosing to look directly at the realities of funding volatility without surrendering to fear. You are choosing to see stability not as a place to rest, but as time capital that can be invested wisely. You are choosing to build an organization that can protect its people, honor its mission, and continue serving communities through political, social, and economic change.

This work matters far beyond any single grant, program, or funding cycle. The strategies of prevention are rooted in a larger promise: that communities can be strengthened, harm can be reduced, protective factors can be built, and people can flourish. Prevention science does not only contribute to the reduction of substance use disorders. At its foundation, prevention science supports human flourishing. It helps create the conditions where individuals, families, organizations, and communities have a greater chance to thrive.

That is why continuity planning is not administrative busywork. It is stewardship. It is leadership. It is field-building.

As a next step, read this playbook again with your organization in mind. Identify one section that speaks directly to your current reality. Choose one tool to complete with your leadership team, board, or staff. Document what you learn. Track what changes. Capture your successes, even the small ones, because the field needs practical examples of what resilient prevention organizations can look like in real time.

Then teach someone else.

Share what worked with a peer organization. Bring the conversation to a coalition meeting. Use the tools with your board. Mentor another leader who is navigating similar uncertainty. Each organization that becomes more resilient strengthens the field as a whole.

You are not only responding to the current funding landscape. You are helping shape the next era of prevention. When prevention organizations become stronger businesses, the work becomes harder to disrupt. The mission becomes more durable. The science becomes more

transferable. The impact becomes more sustainable.

“The invitation is simple: apply what you have learned, document what works, and share it forward. Our communities will be stronger because you did.”

Additional Resources

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