We used a framework of seven sustainability influences and three ways of defining sustainability to evaluate outputs of projects funded by the USGS Community for Data Integration.

We found that the 187 delivered outputs from 2010-2016 are widely accessible, but not necessarily sustained or maintained. Even if projects were not delivered or sustained, knowledge and lessons learned built community capacity in the topic, which is a type of sustainability.

Individual-level sustainability: benefits to the user continue after project funding ends.

Organization-level sustainability: institutionalization within an organization

Community-level sustainability: capacity building of a community

Sustainability Lessons for Individuals applying for short-term funding

- During project design, plan for sustainability influences shown here
- Look for collaborators that will diversify the types of organizations supporting the project
- Create contingency plans for critical personnel departures
- When possible, use persistent identifiers for your projects
- Commit resources and time to communicate the value of your outputs after they are finished

Sustainability Lessons for Organizations providing short-term funding

- Decide on and commit resources for the amount of responsibility to be taken on for communicating value of project outputs
- Explicitly point to sustainability influences in proposal guidance and make them significant criteria for evaluation
- Create easy access to products from past funding
- Highlight lessons learned as well as concrete products
- Provide guidance on organizational policies that affect how products are released and sustained.

Selected reasons why outputs were not sustained

- Dependencies on software versions that are no longer supported;
- Training modules becoming out of date when new policies is implemented;
- Turnover of staff after initial project period;
- New funding priorities;
- Proof-of-concept applications that were never operationalized

Number and type of CDI Project outputs, 2010-2016.

Percentage of projects from all projects, projects that reached individual-level sustainability, and projects that reached organizational-level sustainability, with particular sustainability influences.

Number of collaborating groups and level of sustainability. There is no positive correlation, but more insight may be gained by taking into account details of the collaboration.