

School fact sheet

Background

Community organisations play an important role in delivering services and programs to the community that frequently focus on improving the opportunities and resources available to children, young people and their families. Partnerships between schools and community organisations provide an opportunity for services and resources to be more accessible and delivered more efficiently.

By partnering with community organisations, schools have the ability to plan and develop infrastructure and programs that assist young people across the community. This also helps foster greater integration between schools and communities creating better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Benefits

Effective partnerships between schools and community organisations bring benefits to schools and students whilst helping build stronger communities. Examples of benefits include:

- Supporting school staff by making them aware of community services and activities that can provide students, and their families, with specialist support aimed at keeping students connected to school.
- Engaging community services to bring a holistic, coordinated and targeted approach to redressing disadvantage within schools and the community.
- Contribute to the learning outcomes for Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning for secondary students.
- An opportunity to link curriculum options with Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) requirements
- Assist in the delivery of programs that support key transition periods for children and young people entering or leaving school, such as those provided by the Youth Connections service across Victoria.
- Enable schools to utilise the skills and expertise of community organisations, such as using them to manage partnerships that deal with a multitude of stakeholders.

Practical steps

Create

When establishing a partnership with a community organisation, schools need to take into consideration these vital steps.

Identify an issue or goal to be addressed by your school and a community organisation. If your school is approached by a community organisation consider if the partnership proposal aligns with your school's annual implementation plan. Visit the '*Identify goals*' webpage in the [Create](#) section of the Education Partnership Resource website for more information.

Review the partnership proposal with your school council (as authoriser of all partnership activity), students and families to ensure that the partnership is consistent with the school's culture. Be clear about the partnership and what benefits it will derive for the school.

Discuss the partnership proposal with a community organisation that you know is an expert in working on your identified issue. Also it is good practice to contact neighbouring schools, your local networks, School Focused Youth Service (SFYS)



coordinator or even the Victorian Council of Social Service for information about organisations or projects already addressing the issue and for support of a proposed partnership.

Schools can discuss the partnership proposal with specialist internal school staff including:

- Primary Welfare Officers
- Student Wellbeing Coordinators
- Chaplains
- Student Support Services Officers (psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers and visiting teachers)
- Secondary School Nurses
- Multicultural Education Aides and
- Koorie Education Support Officers.

Implement

Once agreed on to enter a partnership, plan a strategy to achieve your goals, which includes:

- agreement on clear and realistic objectives
- agreement about how resources will be provided
- inviting organisations and people to contribute to the partnership
- equitably assigned responsibilities between the partners
- a dispute resolution mechanism, just in case things go wrong
- an evaluation process.

Grow

To get an idea of common problems that effect partnerships you should refer to the troubleshooting section of this guide.

Visit the '[Addressing problems](#)' section of the Education Partnership Resource website and the 'Partnership *Troubleshooting*' fact sheet which details some common barriers and tips to overcome them. Some specific issues that effect partnerships between schools and community organisations are described below:

The community sector has a different way of working and our skills and training don't match

Like schools, community organisations are varied. Some community organisations are large, whilst others may have only small staff numbers, some of which might not work full-time.

These factors affect the way in which a community organisation is resourced and operates. Schools should recognise community organisations can work under constraints that affect the functioning of your partnership, such as having a high demand of services.

Effective partnerships respect the diversity of styles and skills amongst members of the partnership and acknowledge that this can bring benefits to a partnership. Schools should respect the different expertise that community organisations can bring to a partnership, such as experience working in partnership with a diverse group of stakeholders or expertise in addressing local issues. Effective partnerships work collaboratively to harness expertise and knowledge in order to achieve an agreed goals.

More information

- [Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vcal/index.html) (http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vcal/index.html)
- [Vocational Education and Training](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/registration/vet/) (http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/registration/vet/)
- [School Focused Youth Service](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/sfyouthservices/default.htm) (http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/sfyouthservices/default.htm)
- [Victorian Council of Social Service](http://www.vcross.org.au) (http://www.vcross.org.au)