



# Local Government and School Partnerships

## School fact sheet

### Background

By developing a relationship with local councils, schools can become key hubs for the wider community, enabling more efficient delivery of community services and the use or development of public infrastructure. Having these extra resources within the school environment can help teachers deliver more informed or engaging curriculum to children and young people.

Schools often partner with local councils to deliver integrated community services. For example, councils operate out of school hours care, health and family support services through existing school facilities. These programs assist schools to provide a holistic range of services aimed at promoting the development and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. Increasingly schools and local government are entering into partnerships for the establishment of integrated early education and care facilities on or adjacent to school sites.

### The benefits of partnerships

Partnerships between schools and councils can generate educational and economic benefits to schools. Such benefits include:

- improved access to state-of-the-art facilities for a range of purposes, such as sports and arts, at a single location through joint development projects. This allows students to have greater access to new and creative work environments that can improve their engagement with and achievement at school..
- teachers can obtain access to expertise and diverse information sources so that they can deliver more relevant and engaging curriculum.
- a more positive perception of local schools and a greater sense of community can be achieved through the shared ownership, operation and maintenance of facilities.
- access to funding for new projects through the pooling of school and local council resources and expertise, thereby benefiting from economies of scale. Through partnerships, councils and schools can also gain access to funding bodies that may not usually be available to them.
- financial savings by sharing the operating and maintenance costs of large facilities between schools and councils.
- school security is improved and vandalism reduced as a result of the increased use of school premises outside of school hours.

## Practical steps to establishing partnerships with local government

### Create

As a first step the principal should establish a relationship with their council's Human Services Director, or the Director/Manager of Family and Children's Services. Council representatives should also be invited to present to School Councils about important strategies, issues or project for children and young people in their local area that council is working on.

Schools should take the following steps to establish effective partnerships with councils:

Identify an issue to be addressed within the school that council could assist with. Schools should also contact their regional office to discuss whether the issue is being addressed by other schools or partnerships in the region.

Review policies that affect school-local government partnerships. For example, all shared facility partnerships between schools and councils need to be formalised in a legal agreement. As these partnerships range from simple to complex, the DEECD provides 3 standard legal agreements to cover all partnerships, depending on the type, frequency and size of the partnership (see Part 2 of the [Schools as Community Facilities: Policy Framework and Guidelines](#)).



Other relevant policies include:

- [Schools as Community Facilities: Policy Framework and Guidelines \(2005\)](#) – is an easy-to-use reference with extensive tools and guidance to assist local councils in the establishment of partnerships with schools.
- [Shared Facilities Partnership: A guide to good governance](#) – recommended governance processes and structures for the three key phases of any shared-facility partnership (planning, development and management), with a particular focus on issues that relate to the operational management of the facility.
- [2009 Partnership Agreement](#) between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).
- [The School Policy Advisory Guide](#) contains guidance for schools about entering into partnerships with business.

Discuss the partnership proposal with neighbouring schools, existing local networks or Regional Office in the first instance to identify other schools in the region that are working on similar initiatives. This provides an opportunity to investigate similar initiatives in the region, other schools that may also want to get involved and to brainstorm opportunities and concerns.

Once you contact the council to discuss partnership possibilities, try to contact the Human Services, the Family and Children's Services or Community Development Director of the council you want to partner with.

## Implement

Following initial conversations, plan a strategy to achieve your goals/vision, which includes:

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

## Grow

It is important for both partners to understand and recognise the important differences in organisational structure, operations, responsibilities and the wide range of stakeholders each partner may have.

Even well planned partnerships can encounter barriers that may impede the ability to achieve the partnership's objectives. Tackling problems early and embedding ongoing communication, trust and respect can help resolve any issue as it emerges. 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.

## Further information

- [Shared Facilities Partnership: A guide to good governance](#)  
(<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/infrastructure/facilitypartner.htm>)
- [Schools as Community Facilities: Policy Framework and Guidelines](#)  
(<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/propman/facility/SACF-PolicyFramework-Guidelines.pdf>)
- 2009 [Partnership Agreement](#) between DEECD and the Municipal Association of Victoria  
(<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/govrel/Policy/mavpartnershipagreement.pdf>)
- [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/spag/default.htm>