

Sustainability

Sustainable networks operate effectively in spite of organisational setbacks, such as staff reorganisation. Embedding the components of an effective network will steer networks towards sustainability, along with the following key principles that promote network sustainability:

- **A supportive culture**

Networks that value and develop a culture of inclusive support are more effective and sustainable as they use all of the resources and expertise that exist within the network.

Having strong leadership that facilitates supportive relationships is an essential part of creating a sustainable network.

- **Resources**

An effective network encourages each stakeholder to contribute and share their skills, expertise, time or other resources in a sustainable manner.

- **Flexibility**

Members need to be flexible when organising meetings or establishing other arrangements, to help become familiar with the different operating styles of other network members.

- **Succession planning**

Effective networks do not rely on the work of one teacher or employee and are more sustainable if a variety of employees are up to date with the structure and status of the network. As staff from schools and member organisations can move on to other employment, it is important for members to avoid losing expertise and good relationships by placing too much responsibility on a single individual.

It is also important that dealings between members and materials relevant to the network are documented and are easily accessible so that other staff can quickly identify where the network is at.

- **Coordination**

If there are a number of people working on a network, it is important that there is a single point of contact for each network organisation. This helps coordinate the network's work and helps prevent conflicting information being communicated between members.

Within schools, staff members that frequently play this valuable coordination role might include the principal or assistant principal, student welfare coordinators or literacy coordinators. This is because they are the first point of contact when network organisations, families or volunteers that come into the school for activities associated with the network.

- **Shared decision making**

All members should be involved in the decision making process, allowing each member to contribute their expertise to the network. Shared decision making helps promote mutual trust and respect within the network and a sense of ownership of the network's achievements.



Sustainability and activity trajectory

Ensuring the sustainability of a network and its activities relies heavily on how well the activities add value for children and young people and stay true to the priorities that have been agreed by all members. The diagram below demonstrates the common process for new network activities and how in many instances 'quick win' activities can result in a loss of focus on the original priorities if not reviewed regularly.

The orange line demonstrates strategic priority and the blue line shows the number of activities. The important thing for networks to remain aware of is the importance of bringing the blue line back down to the strategic priority.

Quick wins are important and can encourage buy-in from partners, collaboration and strong momentum. However as the dotted blue line demonstrates focusing on quick wins for a long period of time can move a network away from the strategic priority. Ongoing reflection, evaluation and asking why and how the planned activities align with the goals and evidence should ensure that effort will meet strategic priorities.

