



Building Collaborative Partnerships

Tips and Tools

**BUILDING
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS
TIPS AND TOOLS**

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Family and Community Consortium

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INTRODUCTION

Staying Local, Thinking Regional

Collaborative partnerships have the potential to deliver positive benefits for organisations, clients and communities.

Two heads really are better than one when it comes to strengthening communities in a holistic way. By thinking, planning, and working together it is possible for organisations to accomplish far more than they could achieve alone.

However, entering into partnership is not a decision to be made lightly, nor is it a process to be undertaken without adequate planning and appropriate resources.

This document has been designed to provide assistance to organisations in preparing, planning, implementing, reviewing and exiting collaborative partnerships. It includes information, hints, checklists, templates and other resources to streamline these processes, and ensure that partners avoid some of the major pitfalls that can undermine the success of collaborative partnerships.

These resources were developed by the Pine Rivers, Redcliffe and Caboolture Family and Community Consortium, in consultation with other nonprofit organisations in the Pine Rivers, Redcliffe and Caboolture local government areas, using funding from the Queensland Government Department of Communities and Disability Services.



DEFINITIONS

Information Sharing

Exchanging data, reports, facts and similar resources with people or organisations with whom you may, or may not, interact in other ways.

Networking

Connecting with people with similar interests to exchange information, explore opportunities and share best practice.

Networking does not usually involve working together. It requires little time or commitment on the part of organisations.

Cooperation

Working in parallel ways on a task, sharing ideas, activities and resources, with a commitment to collective outcomes.

Cooperation requires a significant time commitment and a high degree of trust between the organisations. There is little visible change in organisational structure.

Collaboration

A formal relationship where the partners agree to work together on a specific project for an agreed purpose. Collaboration has mutual benefits for the partners. It requires agreement about expectations, and a willingness to share ideas, activities and resources, as well as to blur the boundaries between previously discrete areas, such as responsibilities, activities, locations and client groups. The ways in which the partner organisations will work together are documented formally.

Collaboration requires a high commitment of time, and a high level of trust between the organisations. Collaboration includes structural changes, such as financial and personnel allocation.

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Mutual Support and Sharing

- The whole is greater than the parts
- Awareness of common ground
- Exchange of information and expertise
- Staff growth and development
- Partners learn from each other
- Develops professional capacity
- Shares the load
- Promotes lateral thinking
- Develops trust, opportunities for future partnerships
- Assists quality assurance
- Promotes transparency

Meet Client and Community Needs Better

- Strengthens network of support for clients
- Facilitates better referral processes
- Organisations can identify gaps and address needs in the region
- Services can develop flexible responses to need
- Less chance of fragmented service
- More holistic approach
- Easier access to projects for clients
- Clients get better service because organisations know each other's strengths

Maximise Resources

- Better use of resources
- Maximum advantage from limited resources
- Share skills and expertise
- Share training
- Manage client data better
- Minimum duplication



A Collective Voice

- Gives a bigger louder voice to the region
- Promotes capacity building
- Strengthens capacity of the community
- Identifies common issues and allows input
- Government looks for collaboration
- Funding bodies look very favourably on partnerships
- Supports funding applications

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

Have a Clear Purpose and Expectations

- Desire to achieve the same outcomes
- Work towards a definite goal or outcome
- Identify what is mutual, overlaps and gaps
- Clarify the expectations of each organisation
- Recognise that working together assists rather than hinders
- Don't collaborate for the sake of it
- Do a SWOT analysis first

Ensure all Partners are Committed to the Working Relationship

- Organisations must want to work together
- If the relationship is not established the partnership won't go anywhere
- All stakeholders need to be involved
- Be clear about the nature of the relationship
- Know what each service has to offer, personally and professionally
- Understand each service involved in the partnership
- Need equity, transparency, respect and courtesy

Develop Clear Roles, Responsibilities and Guidelines

- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Formal agreements and good documentation
- Good communication and decision making processes
- Structure that ensures partnership relates to 'positions' not 'personalities'
- Processes for all members to participate in the management of the partnership/project
- Review and feedback processes
- Strong financial and statistical accountability

Ensure Shared Values and Goals

- Values and working approaches need to match
- Must have the same attitudes towards clients
- Have shared values, goals and outcomes
- Need compatible philosophies
- Ensure a clear understanding of the frame of reference

Appoint a Designated Driver

- Need a 'project driver' who is not tied up in service delivery
- Appoint a manager with the motivation and energy to 'keep it rolling'
- Delegate responsibility for oversight of consistency and quality issues
- Allow plenty of time to develop all the processes

THE PARTNERSHIP

Considerations that organisations will need to address in any partnership include:

- Do we want to work together?
- How will we work together?
- Working together on a day-to-day basis
- How well did we work together?
- Finalising working together on the project

On the following pages are a number of tables which will assist organisations at each stage of the process. These are guides only; they are not prescriptive. The level of formality and documentation required will depend on the type of partnership that is established.

If the partnership is planned, undertaken and exited well, it has the potential to enable the partnering organisations to 'reach for the stars' individually and collectively.



Preparing for Partnership

Do we want to work together?

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Is there a need for the partnership?		
Is there an agreed goal for the partnership?		
Is there a shared understanding of this goal?		
Are all potential partners committed to this goal?		
Are the potential partners willing to share their resources, skills and influence to achieve this goal?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Do the potential partners share a common vision and values?		
Do the potential partners have a common working framework?		
Has each potential partner assessed the benefits to their organisation?		
Has each potential partner assessed the risks to their organisation?		
Do the perceived benefits of the partnership outweigh the perceived costs for each organisation?		

Planning the Partnership

How will we work together?

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Have partners agreed on the structure of the partnership e.g. an informal arrangement, auspice, a consortium, a new organisation created to manage the partnership, a lead agency?		
Do all partners share a common understanding of the purpose of the partnership?		
Do all partners have the necessary skills and resources e.g. project and financial management, personnel, space, computers etc?		
Have any gaps in skills or resources been identified, and strategies been developed to address these gaps?		
Does each partner have the approval of its Management Committee/ Board for the partnership?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Have communication processes with each Management Committee/ Board been established?		
Has each partner considered where/how the new partnership will fit in their organisational structure?		
Do the senior staff in each partnering organisation support the partnership?		
Have the roles and responsibilities of each partner been clearly defined?		
Is there a common expectation of the commitment required of each partner: time, personnel, reporting requirements?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Is a Steering Group needed? If so, have Terms of Reference been developed?		
Has sufficient lead time been allowed to develop documentation and prepare for the project?		
Will there be a Lead Agency for the project? If so, which partner will it be?		
Do all partners share a common understanding of the role, responsibilities and authority of the Lead Agency?		
How will the Lead Agency be reimbursed for the time and costs associated with its responsibilities?		

Implementing the Partnership

Working together

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Has a Memorandum of Understanding been developed?		
Have Terms of Reference for the Steering Group been developed and agreed?		
Has each partner nominated a representative to the Steering Group with the authority to make decisions on behalf of their organisation?		
Have Contracts between the Lead Agency and partners been developed and signed?		
Has a Position Description been developed for the 'Project Driver' (Partnership Manager)?		
Has a Partnership Manager with appropriate skills and time been appointed?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Do all partners share a common understanding of the role, responsibilities and authority of the Partnership Manager?		
Have all necessary policies been developed and agreed e.g. operating principles, risk management, safety and security, confidentiality, media?		
Have communication protocols between partners, between partners and lead agency, and between partners and Partnership Manager been developed and agreed?		
Have the decision making processes been developed and agreed e.g. will it be by majority, by consensus, or other model?		
Have the strategies for conflict resolution been developed and agreed?		
Has an Operational Plan for the project been developed and agreed?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Have processes and timelines for reporting on performance and outcomes been developed and agreed e.g. how often, who is responsible in each organisation, who collates the information?		
Has a process and timeline been agreed for regular reviews of the project, partners and of the partnership?		
Have risk management strategies been developed and agreed?		
Do all partners share a common understanding of any standards with which the partnership is required to comply?		
Have all partners developed strategies for promoting the partnership and its goals within their own organisation?		
Have any new issues arisen that need to be addressed?		

Reviewing the Partnership

How well did we work together?

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Did the partnership achieve its agreed goals?		
Did the partners identify any gaps in partnership documentation?		
Did the Steering Group function as intended?		
Did the Partnership Manager position function as intended?		
Did the collaboration add value for the community?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Did the collaboration add value for clients?		
Did the collaboration add value for the partnering organisations?		
Did the communication protocols work?		
Did the decision making processes work?		
Did the strategies for conflict resolution work?		

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Did the processes and timelines for reporting on performance and outcomes work?		
Did the risk management strategies work?		
Were group achievements publicly acknowledged and celebrated?		
Were individual achievements publicly acknowledged and celebrated?		

This table is intended to identify major issues or areas of concern in the **partnership**. It is only one element in the overall review of the joint project.

Customised tools will need to be developed to assess the success of the project and its performance against agreed targets.

Exiting the Partnership

The end of working together on this project

Points to Consider	Y/N	Further Action
Are there any outstanding tasks or issues that need to be addressed or resolved?		
Have all clients and other stakeholders been supported through the exit process?		
Have final reports been presented to Management Committees/ Boards in relationship to the project and the partnership?		
Have final project and financial reports been presented to funding bodies?		
Have decisions been made about the dispersal of any joint assets?		
Have 'best practice' learnings from the partnership been documented and distributed to partners and other stakeholders?		

ONLINE RESOURCES

Queensland Government Community Door <http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo/networks>
Includes Case Studies, links to websites offering Tools, Advice and Information

Five Vital Lessons for Successful Partnerships <http://fivevital.educe.co.uk>
Includes Five Vital Lessons, Toolkit, Case Studies

Community Business Partnerships www.partnerships.gov.au
The Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership Site
Includes stories of successful partnerships

Community Collaboration and Consensus <http://www.communitycollaboration.net>
Includes Case Studies, Resources, Information

Griffith University Community Toolbox <http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/urp>
Community Toolbox of Tools, Case Studies, Bibliography and Theory

Project Evaluation Toolkit <http://www.utas.edu.au/pet>
Extensive resources for Project Evaluation



TEMPLATE

Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

between

Organisation 1

and

Organisation 2

and

Organisation 3

RELATING TO

This Memorandum is an expression of the Partners' commitment to work together e.g. in an open and transparent manner, to provide the best possible service, to maximise outcomes for clients, and to minimise stress, misunderstandings and miscommunication for workers and Partner organisations.

Each Partner agrees the MOU is not legally binding except as set out under the headings 'Obligations' 'Changes to MOU' and 'Termination' and should not be used or applied in any way which might bring any obligation on any other Partner.

THE MEMBERS

Brief summary of each organisation, its programs and services

Nominated Representatives:

PURPOSE

The MOU exists primarily to formalise arrangements for

ROLES

The Partners named in this MOU, will (brief summary of what each Partner organisation will provide, deliver or undertake)

..... will undertake the role of Lead Agency on behalf of the Partnership, with authority to negotiate, act and bind each member of the Partnership.

PRINCIPLES

This MOU demonstrates a shared commitment to uphold the principles of e.g. access, equity, participation, etc.

In all its operations the Partnership will embody the principles of e.g. social justice, respect, self determination, partnership, transparency, professionalism, integrity, etc.

OBLIGATIONS

1. Partners agree to comply with the provisions of the Application for Funding submitted by the Partnership, and of the Funding Agreement with
2. The Lead Agency will provide all Partners with a copy of the Application for Funding within seven days of its submission.
3. The Lead Agency will provide all Partners with a copy of the Funding Agreement within seven days of its receipt from the Funding Body.
4. The Lead Agency will manage all financial information, and assume responsibility for management of funds provided under the Funding Agreement.
5. Partners will provide all financial data to the Lead Agency, including invoices and receipts, by the agreed dates.
6. The Partners will provide comprehensive and accurate information to the Lead Agency in the agreed format by the agreed dates.
7. The Lead Agency will collate information from Partners and provide it to the funding body in the agreed format by the agreed dates.
8. The Lead Agency, in consultation with other Partners, will monitor performance against agreed outcomes in the Funding Agreement.
9. All Partners will attend regular meetings of the Partnership Steering Group, and will adopt and participate in an action research evaluation of service delivery and of the service delivery model. Insights gained and learnings achieved from the ongoing evaluative cycle can be incorporated into the services in a process of constant improvement.

10. Each Partner will provide evidence of current, adequate and comprehensive insurance coverage.
11. Where a Partner performs a task or activity on behalf of any other as contemplated by this MOU, that Partner must do so with at least the same level of care and skill as it applies to the same task or activity for itself.
12. Each Partner acknowledges that this MOU does not bind the other Partners to any debts, liabilities, obligations and/or actions of any Partner, and will ensure no Partner is responsible for any liability arising from any other's activities.
13. Except in the case of wilful default or negligence no Partner will have any liability to any other for failure to perform its obligations under this MOU, and the only remedy for such failure is termination of this MOU.
14. Any Partner may request any other Partner's Nominated Representative for permission to use the name of the other Partner in annual reports, advertising or promotions. Such permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

DECISION MAKING

Decision making will, whenever possible, be

RESOLVING CONFLICT

In the event of conflict

CHANGES TO MOU

If any Partner proposes any variation to any arrangements pertaining to the Partnership, the Lead Agency must advise the Funding Body in writing. It is acknowledged that the Funding Body may decide not to allow any changes to these arrangements, or may impose conditions upon the Partnership and/or Partners.

TERMINATION

The MOU will have an initial life of years from the last date of signing and may be renewed for further periods on agreement of the Partners, subject to ongoing funding or

The MOU will be reviewed three months before expiry with a view to determining if the life of the agreement should be extended.

Should any Partner seek to terminate this MOU, the provisions of the clause 'Changes to MOU' must be followed.

On termination of this MOU each Partner must promptly return or deliver up all assets (fixed or current) in its possession which belong to any other Partner/s, subject to any right of set-off against any charges or other outstanding obligations of the other Partner/s.

SIGNATURES

TEMPLATE

Contract Lead Agency and Partners

This Agreement is made on the _____ day of _____ 20

BETWEEN

Lead Agency Name

AND

Partner Organisation Name

PROJECT

Brief summary

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Brief summary

Refer to content of funding application, if appropriate.

PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Responsibilities of each of the Partner organisations are detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding, and in the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Steering Group, developed collaboratively by all Partners.

TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

Brief summary

Refer to content of funding application, if appropriate.

LOCATIONS

Brief summary

Refer to content of funding application, if appropriate.

TARGETS

Brief summary

Refer to content of funding application, if appropriate.

BUDGET

Details of payments

Refer to content of funding application, if appropriate.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Brief summary

Refer to content of funding application, if appropriate.

CONTACT DETAILS

The contact details of Lead Agency for the purposes of this Agreement shall be:

.....

The contact details of Partner Organisation for the purposes of this Agreement shall be:

.....

SIGNATURES

TEMPLATE

Steering Group Terms of Reference

NAME OF PARTNERSHIP

STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. VISION

The Partners believe that:

-
-

2. OPERATING PRINCIPLES

-
-

3. MEMBERSHIP – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The group will consist:

-
-

Member responsibilities:

-
-

4. FUNCTION/ PURPOSE

The main functions of the group will be to:

-
-

5. DECISION MAKING

Decisions will be made in accordance with the following:

-
-

6. RESOLVING CONFLICT

-
-

7. AGENDA

The regular meeting agenda will include:

-
-

8. REVIEW

The Steering Group will undertake an annual review of:

- the performance of the Partnership
- the performance of Partner organisations
- the role and performance of the Steering Group

9. MEETING TIMES

The group will meet