FORMALISING PARTNERSHIPS KIT

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- The South Sydney Consortium

- CONC (NSW Northern Rivers)

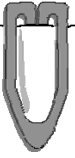- Participants of the Hawkesbury/Nepean and Northern Rivers Kit Pilot Forums

Disclaimer

This resource kit provides general information and guidance with regard to exploring the formalisation of partnerships. TCC, NCOSS and DoCS accept no responsibility for any loss, damage or injury from such information, recommendations or examples contained in the kit, and recommend that legal advice is obtained relevant to your organisation's circumstances.

Copyright

	Insert your resources here
	Tools and checklists

Contents

DoCS	Department of Community Services NSW
NGOs	Non government organisations
MOUs	Memorandums of Understanding
NCOSS	Council of Social Service NSW
DGR	Deductible Gift Recipient Status
OFT	Office of Fair Trading
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
DADHC	Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

(Including pro formas and templates)

NCOSS	Management Support Unit www.ncoss.org.au/msu
DoCS	www.community.nsw.gov.au
DADHC	www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au
Management Support Online (for fee)	www.managementsupportonline.com.au
Local Community Services Association	www.lcsa.org.au
ATO	www.ato.gov.au
Law and Justice Foundation	www.lawfoundation.net.au/information/writing/howto
ACWA	www.acwa.asn.au
NSW Federation of Housing Associations (Considering Group Structures)	www.communityhousing.org.au/S4-publications
NSW Office of Fair Trading	www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Introduction to kit

This kit has been developed by The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) through funding received from the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). This kit is aimed at small to medium non government organisations (NGOs) who may be interested in formalising a partnership with a view to seeking new funding opportunities or revising the way in which recurrent funding is applied to service delivery.

What is considered to be a small NGO?

Interestingly DoCS Funding Policy indicates that in 2005, 44.7% (1654) of its funded agencies received less than $50,000 and 31% (1146) received less than $100,000 per annum. The Funding Policy refers to the Productivity Commission indicating that organisations who received up to $100,000 per annum were considered to be micro-organisations rather than small organisations who are considered to be in receipt of up to $1m.

It is important to note that this kit is not suggesting that small NGOs in their own right do not have an important place in the human services sector and the communities that they are based in. Small NGOs can often be the most responsive and localised services that communities can access and NCOSS and DoCS acknowledge the valuable role that such organisations play in local communities as well as the broader Australian human service sector.

What does NCOSS say about formalising partnerships?

NCOSS supports a high quality, diverse and effective community services sector that makes a positive difference in the lives of people and their communities. NCOSS believes that a great strength of the community services sector is our willingness to co-operate, collaborate and work together to deliver good outcomes for people and their communities. Partnerships are one way to harness our shared interests in providing effective, high quality services that meet the diverse needs of the people we work with to achieve social justice.

NCOSS is supportive of voluntary partnerships between NGOs, and believes that these are a beneficial way of delivering holistic services to clients and potentially

assisting NGO's to reduce cost through shared resources. It is essential that partnerships are 'informed decisions' and that NGOs have access to the resources and support to form their own view of the benefits and costs of any proposed partnership. It is also essential to maintain a range of accessible services; locally based and run services as well as large charitable service providers; different models of service that meet different needs; and ensuring that no one type of service or service provider dominates the system.

There are a huge range of agreements and partnership types that organisations and services are already involved in, either very informally or with Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's), contracts or other formalised agreements. Many of these agreements and partnerships are not even documented and it is perfectly ok to continue such informal arrangements. It should be noted however that more and more 'proof' of agreements and partnerships is now being sought by both state and federal funding bodies, as evidence of your organisation or service ability to work with and within the human services sector to provide integrated services, good referral pathways etc.

Intent of Kit

It is not the purpose of this kit to provide direction or information and resources on formalising all of your partnerships; this would be wholly impractical and unnecessary. This kit assumes that some thought or decision has been made regarding formalising partnerships by your organisation and is designed to hopefully assist small to medium NGOs who may be interested in further exploring **FORMAL/DOCUMENTED** partnership opportunities for the following reasons:

- new funding opportunities in the future
- exploring opportunities to formalise partnerships around their regular activities that are funded on a recurrent basis
- formalising existing ongoing partnerships, that may be about working together to deliver, as an example, continuums of service (which are not necessarily about seeking new funding)

This kit has been developed as a web based resource that can be downloaded by any organisation that is interested in exploring the formalisation of partnerships. This kit is designed to either be worked through individually, or be presented by a facilitator (could be a manager or coordinator of a service) to a group of organisations that may want to explore working together in partnerships in the future. The kit is also designed so that it can be easily updated with new information about funding programs and guideline changes to keep it current and relevant. It is also designed so that you can add in your own resources and information about your particular situation if you wish.

> NCOSS invites you to submit any additional tips ideas or resources that you think would be useful to add to the kit.

Using the kit

NCOSS recommends that you **read the kit in its entirety** before you begin working through it. The reason we recommend this is that some of you will need to start from the very beginning, as this may be the first time you and your organisation may be considering exploring formalised partnerships. Others of you may be somewhere along the partnership track and may be even ready to start negotiating with potential partners or getting legal advice, so it will be useful to work out where you should begin in the kit. Reading it all the way through first may also help those of you who are somewhere along the track to possibly pick up things you may have missed.

Your Management Committee or Board

It is vital that you engage your Management Committee or Board at the very beginning of discussing this kit, so that the discussions, advice and research can be shared at all levels.

However, for many Boards and Management Committees formalising partnerships can be daunting, especially in terms of increasing responsibilities and liabilities, and the level of skills and knowledge of Board/Committee members that is

required. It is therefore important that Board and Management Committee members should be assisted with their skills and knowledge development and given access to training (for example Certificate IV in governance. Other useful resources to assist Boards can also be found in the Management Support Unit section of the NCOSS website

Why are there stages?

The kit is designed to give you a range of information and ideas about formalising partnerships and has a framework that allows you to work on each section and take the time and preparation you need before moving onto the next section. In the early stages of your research and preparation we advise you take plenty of time and gather as much information and advice as possible.

The kit is punctuated by checklists and questions after the sections to allow you to reflect on the text and also begin to apply the ideas that are discussed to your own organisations' situation. After each exercise you can begin to add your own ideas, resources, research documents and advice etc, so that by the time you complete the kit, you will already be well on the way to having built up your partnership portfolio.

Will this kit give me all the information I need?

This kit provides you with information and advice to get you a fair way through thinking, research, preparation and entering into formalised partnerships. However it is very important to note that there will be a range of factors about your organisation, and the ones that you may be partnering with, that are organisationally specific and this kit does not purport to cover these factors, such as your rules or constitution, your board or management committee structure, mission etc.

You should also note that this kit does not offer legal advice on any matters, however provides ideas on some of the potential legal matters that you will need to consider, such as taxation and insurance. You and your potential partner/s will need to seek specific legal advice about your own situation to ensure you are aware of all the legal ramifications that you and your partners need to be.

How is this different from what we do all the time with our sector colleagues?

As already discussed, one of the human service sector strengths has always been the ability for services and organisations to work together to ensure good quality services are delivered to the community. This is done through many forms, from individual collegial relationships, to inter-agencies, forums, conferences and integrated service planning.

This kit may assist those agencies that would merely like to formalise existing cooperative working relationships, however in general this kit is discussing more formalised partnerships, where organisations and services may enter into contractual arrangements with each other, to primarily seek and administer funding and services. This may include sharing or employing new staff, creating new incorporated entities, or engaging a range of smaller services to deliver services.

DoCS and other Government agencies are now actively encouraging greater formal collaboration and partnerships in their funding processes. This is partly to ensure that smaller NGOs, who may not normally be able to tender for large contracts over large geographical areas, have the opportunity to do so, through entering into partnerships and therefore offering localised responses on a greater and more cost effective level. This kit is about creating opportunities, improving service delivery and responding to the changing governmental policy and program initiatives. This is a real opportunity for small NGO s to build on their strengths and overcome some of the areas where they may struggle as individual entities.

Benefits of partnerships

Why are we discussing collaboration, partnerships and consortia?

Although we are well aware that many organisations and services are in competition with each other for government and private funds, there can be important real benefits for organisations, clients and the community through collaborating and partnering.

Key NSW funding agencies, such as DoCS, have developed key strategic directions that purchase and deliver services on a continuum basis across whole areas or regions. Their funding arrangements aim to support effective service delivery and improved client outcomes. DoCS funding processes provide an opportunity for agencies to consider partnerships or consortia arrangements that may strengthen service continuums in local areas. Such arrangements can also streamline administrative responsibilities and provide better supports for clients. Other NSW Government agencies also support the development of such arrangements for similar reasons, such as DADHC through its tendering process.

Useful links to DoCs and DADHC

www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCS/SECTION/S4.html
www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/dadhc/Doing+business+with+us/fundinginformation.htm

Sub-contracting policy for the Home Care Service is :

www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/AB356DB8-E528-481A-9C12-3C94EF756D53/3437/subcontracting_policy_and_procedures.pdf

Definitions:

The Cambridge Learners Dictionary on-line offers the following definitions for some of the terms we commonly use:

ALLIANCE:	An agreement…..to work together to achieve something
CONSORTIUM:	An organisation of several businesses joining together as a group for shared purposes. Plural = consortia.
PARTNERSHIP:	Working together – two people [or organisations] working together to achieve something

The terms consortia, partnerships or alliances are often used interchangeably in the context of funding integrated service delivery arrangements. While the terms have different legal and contractual implications for organisations, the overall intent is to differentiate multi-organisational arrangements from single agency ones. For the purpose of this kit, the term consortium will be used to define a multi-agency contractual arrangement with regard to funding, whereas partnership will be used to define a grouping of organisations for funding or other reasons. It is important to note that these terms do not refer to the merging or amalgamation of organisations and this kit does not provide information on such arrangements.

What DoCS has to say on the matter:

"There are a number of contractual arrangements that the Department can support in relation to the funding of integrated services. The Department will consider any arrangement posed by an agency or group of agencies so long as it is clear that the financial and service delivery requirements detailed in the service agreement can be met."

The key consortia/partnership arrangements that you are probably most likely to consider would be:

1. **INCORPORATED ALLIANCE/CONSORTIUM.** Members of the alliance formally incorporate to form a new legal entity for the purpose of facilitating cooperative working arrangements and can tender for or provide services, as well as providing the legal mechanisms for working together. The new organisation would become the '[Principal] Agency' (The new term for Lead Agency) for the purposes of tendering and would be responsible for governance, management and fiduciary care of new services or programs.

2. **A NON/UN–INCORPORATED ALLIANCE.** The consortium is formed by an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (see contract models section on page?) between the partners. However for the purposes of tendering for funding, one member partner still has to be nominated as the [Principal] Agency to undertake all dealings with the funding body. There would be one service agreement signed by all of the partners.

3. **SUB-CONTRACTING.** One agency has a funding agreement with the Department to deliver particular outcomes and then subcontracts aspects of the service delivery to another provider. The agency that signed the funding agreement then effectively becomes the 'Lead Agency'

4. **SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH AGREEMENT (LIKE AN MOU).** Usually this will be organisations grouping together to form an alliance, with each organisation providing a particular part or parts of the service delivery. In this instance each organisation will have a funding agreement and will manage their own budget. It is usual that this grouping will formalise the arrangements with each other through an MOU which specifies service coordination arrangements. This kind of partnership may still decide to nominate a lead agency, for program coordination and funding body liaison.

(DoCS CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH CONSORTIA/PARTNERSHIPS - APRIL 2007)

☐ *Have you checked your funding bodies' guidelines on partnerships?*

Why might your organisation want to formalise or create new formalised partnerships

There are a range of reasons why your organisation might want to enter into more formal partnerships with other services and organisations, many of which you may already be doing or have done at some time or another. Use the checklist below to see why might want to do this:

- ☐ *Developing agreed procedures for how you might relate with each other in conducting separate services or activities, for example referral protocols*

- ☐ *Forming partnerships or consortia to undertake a one off activity, project or other joint venture for example a joint tender*

- ☐ *Forming partnerships for a longer term activity or series of projects, for example a joint venture to set up an ongoing service set up by two organisations*

- ☐ *To agree to share resources or expertise, for example, co location of office premises, or*

- ☐ *To agree for one organisation to provide temporary auspice (legal governance) to another organisation*

What do you think some of the benefits might be?

Creating or modifying your service for:

- ☐ *A new shared service*

- ☐ *Enhanced or united client service activities*

- ☐ *Combined specialist and generalist service delivery*

- ☐ *Combined parts of the service delivery continuum eg. Prevention, early intervention and support services*

- ☐ *New approaches to working with clients, eg add outreach to existing centre-based work*

Maximising resources such as:

- ☐ *Co-location of service outlets*

- ☐ *Shared infrastructure such as share vehicles or information technology*

- ☐ *Co-location of service outlets*

- ☐ *Shared business processes such as payroll, bookkeeping*

- ☐ *Shared functions such as service reception and administration support*

- ☐ *Shared data, information, ideas or strategy through a research or evaluation collaboration*

- ☐ *Shared training and professional development opportunities*

Policy, systems and community development opportunities such as:

☐ *Collaborative policy development and advocacy through a peak body*

☐ *Integrated cross-agency referral systems and seamless client pathways*

☐ *Legal auspice arrangement between a large and small agency or newly funded program*

☐ *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreement between agencies to reduce duplication through clear identification of roles and responsibilities to deliver a more integrated and holistic client focused service*

☐ *Work together to plan and coordinate community participation*

What do you think some of the strategic benefits of partnerships with other organisations might be for your organisation?

☐ *Greater efficiency and less duplicated effort, this can apply with a consortia approach to competitive funding as it could deliver integrated service models, achieve broader geographic coverage or reduce costs*

☐ *Access to additional resources or lower costs through sharing resources such as office space, administration or other aspects of an organisations operation*

☐ *Improved service coordination across agencies, with better pathways or referral systems for service users*

☐ *A holistic approach to meeting client needs, with better and more efficient access to the range of services required, improved quality and consistency of service and greater responsiveness to needs*

☐ *Organisational knowledge and improved service system capability:*

- *Greater innovation and flexibility to respond to changing, emerging or more complex client needs and changing operations and operational environments*
- *Access to up to date information, new ideas and strategic thinking*
- *Improved capacity to demonstrate best practice*

☐ *Political and lobbying strength*

- [ ] *Increased capacity to successfully submit tenders or expressions of interest and to deliver projects,*

- [ ] *Additional expertise, support or legal protection for small, new, or struggling organisations.*

What experience has your organisation, or people in your organisation had in entering into external agreements with other organisations? (This exercise should be for staff and management committee)

e.g. Formal might be a referral agreement with another organisation, informal might be staff meeting regularly to provide collegial support

What benefits could there be for clients and communities in a more formalised partnership between you and other organisations/services?

- [ ] *better client outcomes*

- [ ] *continuum of care*

- [ ] *reducing costs*

- [ ] *holistic approach*

- [ ] *strengthens recruitment and training*

- [ ] *builds resilience in the agency*

- [ ] *reinforces community management*

- [ ] *critical mass – lock out competition*

Add your own here:

What barriers do you think there could be for you in forming formalised partnerships with other organisations?

☐ *time*

☐ *cultural misfit*

☐ *personality clash*

☐ *inflexibility of boards*

☐ *geographical boundaries*
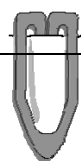
☐ *poor reputation*

☐ *standards and ethics*

Add your own here:

Think of ways in which your organisation may overcome some of the barriers you have identified.

Resources (eg co-location) or System (eg integrated referrals) issues that may benefit from your organisation formalising partnerships

ADD COPIES OF EXISTING MOUs, AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS ETC.

Initial Preparation –
Doing the internal analysis!

Before you even embark on talking to potential partners there are many issues that an organisation should consider (many of you may already have covered all this, but read on in case you have missed anything).

Importantly, ensuring these formalised partnerships is a success requires a systematic approach with clear goals and careful planning and a timeframe that allows for thorough research, data and advice gathering and negotiation. This is not a process that should be rushed and if you are creating a formal partnership to seek new funding you should consider when recurrent funding or new program funding is timetabled by your funding bodies to ensure that you give yourself plenty of preparation time.

Reflecting and Assessing

To assess the potential for formal partnerships, an organisation must review and reflect on its management and operations as well as conduct a thorough assessment of the benefits and risks of the proposed formal partnership venture.

Before formally discussing any of this with potential partners, an organisation must have a clear picture of its capacity and a documented and endorsed statement of its priorities and aims. This will most likely be the range of documents that an organisation has that include mission and vision, business/work plans, strategic plans, budgets and existing funding agreements.

ADD YOUR KEY

DOCUMENTS

Importantly your Strategic Plan should include a reference to the organisation exploring and seeking formal partnerships if not it is advised that you stop here and ensure your strategic document reflects the work you are about to embark on.

You will need to undertake an analysis of the organisations key assets, such as databases, technology, systems, people and funding and of its operating environment, internal processes and external relationships. This enables the organisation to see where it might overlap with other services, identify any gaps in it capacity to meet client needs, and how improved links and partnerships might assist.

ADD A LIST OF ASSETS ETC. AND ANY RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AROUND RELATIONSHIPS ETC.

Have you undertaken an asset analysis including:

☐ *Databases*

☐ *Technology*

☐ *Systems*

☐ *Staff*

☐ *Volunteers*

☐ *Management Committee/Board*

☐ *Funding environment*

☐ *Internal processes*

☐ *Existing external relationships*

Internal Stakeholder Discussions

Internal discussions and negotiations at this early stage are vital and an 'in principle' agreement between internal stakeholders needs to be reached.

Examples of internal stakeholders are Staff, Board/management committee, volunteers, clients, student placements, union reps etc.

It is important that all of the internal stakeholders, including the board or management committee, are given the opportunity to consider their support for the partnership venture, the potential partners, and the benefits that will be delivered through such an arrangement.

Internal stakeholders will have a range of views about the balance of the costs and benefits of partnerships in general and of your particular venture. While not all internal stakeholders will be decision makers in the initial research and planning process, understanding and accommodating, where possible, the range of views and issues will be important to ensure successful negotiations with potential partners and the ongoing sustainability of the venture.

Remember that it is ok for everyone not to agree and it will be important to note differences of opinion and issues of fear (client services might get worse), confidentiality, intellectual property rights etc may all come up. You might also want to consider accessing a third party mediator if the disagreement is serious enough. There are many workplace mediation companies around. A good start is The Resolution Centre, www.resolutioncentre.com.au

Even if you may not agree on all aspects of the 'in-principle' agreement that you hopefully reach, your internal stakeholders will provide valuable informed and diverse input to your internal assessment and analysis of the partnerships' alignment with the organisations vision, values, culture, management and staff roles, client needs and desired client/community benefits.

1. What issues mentioned in the initial preparation section resonate with you and your organisation?

2. What has your experience of discussing some of these things been like in the past?

3. Write a list of who you think your internal stakeholders are.

☐ Management committee

☐ Staff

☐ Clients

☐ Board/Management Committee

Add your others here:

4. How would you go about engaging with your internal stakeholders on this issue? Think about the communication/consultation and inclusion strategies you have used in the past?

5. Identify a barrier you might face from an internal stakeholder. How would you try to overcome this?

6. Name some previous agreements that you have made inside your organisation through consulting with internal stakeholders. EG Code of conduct for board and staff.

7. From your answers pick 2 agreements and discuss what made them successful or unsuccessful?

COPIES OF INTERNAL AGREEMENT DOCUMENTS ETC. EG CODE OF CONDUCT FOR BOARD AND STAFF IS A GOOD EXAMPLE.

SECTION 4
Getting Started

The first and most obvious question is why might you want to enter into partnerships with other organisations? Is it because you can see likely benefits for your organisation, clients or community, is it because you believe you would have more chance to gain new or enhanced funding, or is simply because you have a new organisational direction and partnering seems a logical step forward?

It is really important at this very early stage to really think through these questions and also ask the more difficult questions that arise around risk management, such as the potential impacts on the organisation like staffing, changes in service delivery, time it takes to develop partnerships, legal issues etc.

To help with this initial internal organisational assessment and analysis we have put together a check list/questionnaire that you can take your organisation through. This effectively begins the development of not only your partnership portfolio, but also your RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY. That is why you will notice that there is no specific section on RISK MANAGEMENT, as each section this kit asks you a range of questions that will inform the likely risks you and other organisations may have in entering into these partnership arrangements. Your own organisations Risk Management Policy should also inform this process.

1. *Do the Board/Management Committee and relevant staff agree that it is worth the organisation investigating the potential for partnerships?*

2. *How does the project or venture fit with the purpose mission and strategic plan of the organisation*

3. *What are the likely benefits and impacts for the*

a) *Organisation?*

b) *Staff?*

c) *Clients?*

d) *Communities?*

e) *Partners?*

4. *Is there likely to be an alignment of ideas/views/purpose between your organisation and others?*

5. *What risk assessments can you reasonably undertake at this early stage? It will be useful to consider risk assessments around:*

- *Financial issues (costs and resources, income, budget management),*

- *Legal issues (insurance, taxation, liability, exposure),*

- *Management and admin (direction setting, who and how, reporting,*

- *HR impacts,(admin workload, systems)*

- *Services to clients may worsen*

- *Existing relationships (stakeholders, possible partners, funding bodies), Assessment of possible partners (performance, relationships, quality)*

6. *Can all the organisations support and manage a partnership process? what are the likely costs of exploring this partnership (don't just think in terms of cash, think about the time that it would take for a staff person or several staff to be working on this)*

a) *Staff hours*

b) *Financial resources*

c) *Administration resources*

d) *Other resources*

7. *Who will lead this initial research and investigation?*

8. *If you are thinking of exploring additional funding through a partnership, in what way do your thoughts and ideas fit with the target group or geographical focus of the funding?*

9. *What is the likelihood of success, you need to really think about the importance of input from your stakeholders (will they support you, give advice etc?), what additional expertise you might need (particularly if you are exploring partnerships to seek new funding) and discussing with others who may have attempted similar partnerships or consortia.*

10. *Do you have an evidence base for changing your current activities if you are looking at partnering to make changes to recurrent funding, or do you have a new evidence base for seeking new funding for additional or enhanced services? Outline the evidence you have found.*

11. *Does research show that other models are suitable, if so what is the evidence?*

12. *If you are thinking of partnering for new or enhanced monies, have you researched what the requirements are of your funding bodies?*

☐ *Who are the appropriate funding bodies*

☐ *Program guidelines*

☐ *Target populations/locations*

☐ *Partnership arrangements*

Add your own list here

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13.Have you asked whether a funding body might be willing to assist you in finding or negotiating partnerships with other organisations?

DoCS website has plenty of information on their funding and program guidelines as well as information on partnership requirements www.community.nsw.gov.au

ADD ANY RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTS GATHERED FROM THE INTERNAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

Working out what sort of agreement you might want

From the types of agreements listed on page 17-18 which one resonates right now as being likely to be of interest to your organisation? It may be useful to do a SWOT analysis of a couple to see which one may fit best.

Agreement 1	
Strengths	*Opportunities*
Weaknesses	*Threats*

Agreement 2	
Strengths	*Opportunities*
Weaknesses	*Threats*

SECTION 5

What is a Principal (formerly Lead) Agency?

For the purposes of funding contractual arrangements, a Principal agency is the legal entity responsible for facilitating and managing the provision of the specified services in a nominated area. The Principal agency must be able to demonstrate it has the ability and authority to undertake this dual role of contract management and service provision. It is important to note that DoCS or other Government agencies would not have a direct contractual relationship with organisations that are partnered with the Principal Agency, as this would be a separate contractual arrangement between the consortium members (this is discussed later in the kit).

It is also important to note that funding bodies often have very specific requirements for Principal agencies, and in the case of DoCS they need to be a not for profit incorporated non-government community services organisation. Local government authorities or state government departments are also eligible to be Principal agencies provided these activities are not part of their core business.

Agencies that tender for funds as single entity (like a large existing provider) would still be termed 'Principal Agency'.

It will be very important for you to get detailed legal advice at this point as there are a range of factors that may limit or complicate the role of Principal Agency, such as Deductible Gift Recipient Status (DGR), Taxation Issues, Office of Fair Trading (OFT) requirements etc. You should also make sure you are clear about liability issues and what happens if the Principal Agency wants to leave the partnership.

1. What elements will you need to consider in identifying a possible Principal agency?

2. Do you think your organisation could be a Principal agency? Do a SWOT analysis to see where you think your strengths and weaknesses might be.

Strengths	Opportunities
Weaknesses	Threats

SECTION 6

Seeking and assessing potential partners

By now you probably have a reasonable idea of the kinds of partners and what sort of partnership you may want to enter into. For some of you, you will already have informally spoken with a range of potential partners who you have already been working with. This section will be useful regardless of whether or not you have already pre-selected your partners or want to now look for partners as this gives you the opportunity to assess them critically to ensure that they meet your requirements of a partner in the venture.

So how do you assess potential partners to come in with you on the venture you are planning? Firstly you should work out what you will need from partners and what they may need from you, and how the organisation's cultures, visions etc. may fit.

Some key questions you need to work through at this stage are:

What resources and expertise will you need from partners to ensure the success of the partnership and the venture?

- ☐ *Financial*
- ☐ *Human*
- ☐ *Business expertise*

Add your own here:

1. *What sort of commitment will you want from partners? How will you go about getting this?*

2. *What are their goals and philosophies? do they align with yours?*

3. *What evidence do you have that the partner/s are credible and viable organisations?*

- ☐ *Budget*
- ☐ *Annual report*
- ☐ *Survey*
- ☐ *Accounts*

4. *What services or service elements will you want each partner to deliver?*

5. *How many partners do you need and why?*

6. *What will a prospective partner want from you?*

Have you checked the following?

☐ *Their image and standing in the community?*

☐ *The effect that their image and standing will have on your organisation?*

☐ *Your existing working relationships (if you have them)*

☐ *Do organisational cultures 'fit'?*

☐ *Do governance and management styles fit*

☐ *Do strategic and business directions fit?*

☐ *What sort of partner do you want them to be? (set up, long term etc)*

DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES FROM PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS
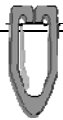
Establishing Partnerships

With the internal work undertaken and the analysis and selection of potential partners completed you are now ready to begin establishing the partnership. If you have been discussing your venture with a group of potential partners then you won't need to now approach them, however if you haven't then you will need to invite each of your partners to take part in the project you are planning.

If this is the case you should develop a clear outline of the project, what the objectives and outcomes are along with timeframes etc. This could simply take the form of a detailed letter that you send to each of your prospective partners. Make sure that you give potential partners enough time to consider your initial invitation before calling them together for your first meeting (remember how much time you have taken to get to this stage yourself).

At your first meeting together to start formalising the partnership it will be really useful to set down all the ground rules, objectives and responsibilities as best you can. (You probably won't be able to get through all of this in a first meeting, but you can begin to build a framework for the partnership and delegate tasks etc so that the workload can be shared in this establishment phase).

You might even want to send this list (with your own specific additions) to your potential partners so that they can start thinking about and preparing for your first meeting. You might even want to bring an independent facilitator (either consultant or independent colleague) to help you all work through this first meeting.

Below is a checklist to help you work through this important stage.

1. *What is the focus of your partnership, what are the key objectives, the mission, what client outcomes are you hoping to achieve?*

2. *What are the agreed values and behaviours of partners that you all agree to abide by?*

3. *What sort of partnership arrangement are you going to enter into? (see Section 2, pages 17-18)*

4. *Has in principle agreement been reached by staff/management committees etc? If so, what is it?*

5. *What roles will each of the partners have?*

6. *What legal advice will you seek on forming your partnership and who will do this?*

7. *Do you need to set up an 'establishment' steering group for this first stage? If so, how?*

8. *What timeframe and indicators will you establish for establishing the partnership?*

9. *What barriers may affect the partnership? Develop some strategies to overcome these*

10. *What management and governance policies and procedures will you need to discuss and develop for your partnership?*

Have you considered the following?

- ☐ Conflict resolution
- ☐ Conflict of interest issues
- ☐ Exit strategy if a partner wants to leave
- ☐ Terms of funding contract and program guidelines
- ☐ Risk management
- ☐ Confidentiality
- ☐ Insurances
- ☐ Clear decision making processes
- ☐ Role delineation for Principal Agency etc
- ☐ Key performance indicators and measures
- ☐ Shared service/integrated service protocols
- ☐ Staffing and other HR issues
- ☐ Administrative requirement
- ☐ Financial arrangement
- ☐ Legal Issues
- ☐ Skills development
- ☐ Succession planning if key staff leave
- ☐ Ongoing planning
- ☐ Regular evaluations

A **TIP** here is that as part of your partner assessments that you did you will hopefully already have done some research on some of these issues, so don't reinvent the wheel, revisit your analysis and discussions, see what existing policies and procedures that you and your partners have that could easily be re-interpreted for your new partnership and bring this together at your first meeting.

Legal issues to consider

There are many legal issues that you will need to consider as you plan, negotiate and embark on your formalised partnerships. NCOSS recommends that you gain legal advice at the earliest outset and continue to receive advice as you develop and ultimately 'sign off' on your new partnership. It is recommended that you seek pro bono advice where possible and a first step would be to chat to you local Community Legal Centre about how you might approach this.

A list of NSW Community Legal Centres is available at www.nswclc.org.au/clcs

- *Insurance*

- *Taxation*

- *Contractual*

- *Exit strategies*

- *Intellectual property*

- *Individual organisational liability*

- *Liability of "group" or consortium*

- *Staff entitlements*

- *Privacy Issues*

- *Incorporation/Company Limited by Guarantee*

Contracts

How do you choose what type of 'formal' agreement you use?

The three main options will either be a:

- Letter of intent
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or;
- A contract (or partnership agreement)

So what is the difference between an MOU and a contract?

An MOU is intended to formalise the terms of a relationship, arrangement or understanding between the parties but is not intended to be legally binding on them. However, sometimes, a document described as a MOU may in fact be legally binding. To avoid any dispute about whether a MOU is legally binding, every MOU should contain a specific statement to the effect that it is not intended to create legally binding obligations. Without such a statement, there is a risk that an MOU may be construed as legally binding on the parties to it.

If an arrangement is intended to be legally binding, the parties must execute a contract (rather than a document described as a MOU).

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A contract is a legally binding promise or agreement. If a contract is breached by a party the other parties to the contract are entitled to enforce the contract, or seek remedies under it.\

Choosing between an MOU and a Contract

Consider whether you want to enter into a binding agreement at or do not wish to be contractually bound then you should use an MOU. If you do decide you want formalise things then a formal contract is the way to go (for this you will most definitely need legal advice). NCOSS also strongly suggests that you still seek some legal advice on an MOU.

So what is typically in an MOU?

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Typical examples of the type of situations in which an organisation may enter into a MOU that is not intended to be legally binding are:

- To record an understanding between two or more agencies to identify programs and target groups for the delivery of programs to joint clients
- To promote cooperation and further develop a positive relationship between two agencies and to encourage interaction between respective staff, including inter-agency meetings, publications and client service collaboration.

Information included in an MOU

As a general rule MOUs would include:

- Details of the parties to the document (Named individuals who can make decisions or speak on behalf of the agency in relation the MOU and provision of the services specified therein)
- Background
- Objectives, purposes and anticipated benefits
- Agreed actions/services
- Operational and implementation arrangements
- Start and finish date

In addition, where two or more agencies are sharing an income and or participating in joint research you may consider including the following:

- Payment arrangements
- Intellectual property arrangements
- Financial and/or resourcing arrangements
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Termination
- Risk management (such as exclusions or limitation of liability, insurance requirements and indemnities)

Each MOU should include a statement of understanding i.e. an express statement to the effect that the MOU is not intended to create legally binding obligations on the parties. Generally speaking, an MOU would not include information about expiry or termination dates, though it should specify a date of review.

Guidelines for signing any document

Before entering into an MOU, the following needs to be considered:

☐ *Purpose of the document*

☐ *Does the document link to service/business and operational plans where appropriate?*

☐ *What are the benefits of the document to the agencies/clients?*

☐ *Does the document have the Management Committee/Board/Directors support?*

☐ *Does the document comply with all of the legislation that may be required?*

☐ *What are the commitments/liabilities/resources?*

☐ *What are the main risks associated with the document and can they be insured?*

☐ *Is legal opinion required?*

☐ *Who has the delegated authority to sign the document?*

☐ *What level is the signatory of the other party signing the document?*

☐ *What would be the consequences of not signing the document?*

☐ *How will the new inter-agency/ies relationship established under the document enhance my agency's reputation*

☐ *How will the relationship be enhanced in the community?*

☐ *What other potential partners will be precluded by virtue of this association? (i.e. is this the best partnership our agency can have in the nominated area)*

☐ *How does the relationship enhance and sustain other agency relationships with this partner?*

Assessing risk

What commitments will this MOU require of our agency and over what time period?

Is there anything in the implementation of the MOU that would compromise client privacy or breach legislative requirements?

What checks have been carried out on the other party or parties to the document?

What would the consequences of not signing the document be for our agency

Is there adequate insurance cover?

Have all agencies linked to this MOU undertaken a risk assessment? (Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risk.)

Are there any legal issues that require clarification?

Are there any financial implications that require consideration?

Are there any intellectual property implications?

Are there any space implications?

Are there any human resources implications?

Record management

A copy of the MOU signed by the EO/equivalent and/or Chairperson/equivalent will be kept by each of agencies involved in the participation and the signing off of the MOU

In the course of an agency developing a number of MOUs with multiple agencies you may want to create a reference for each MOU comprising:

- Reference number
- Names of the party/ies involved
- MOU contact name, position and details
- Description of the objectives of the agreement and actions to be undertaken by our agency
- Period of the document, including review and extension options
- Date of commencement
- Specified outcome/s (optional)
- Letters of termination or extension

SECTION 10
Conclusion

We hope that by the time you are reading this conclusion you will have a pretty fair idea of the issues that you may need to take into account for formalising partnerships. As we mentioned in the introduction, there will be some things that we weren't able to cover in this kit, but NCOSS hopes that you have been able to read and gather enough information to help you make some informed decisions around formalised partnerships.

Please don't forget that if you have any ideas, tips or resources that you think would add value to the kit, then NCOSS would welcome you sending them to us as we hope this kit will grow and continue to be a useful resource for the sector.

In the final section of the kit you will find some case studies that show how some organisations have handled formalising partnerships. NCOSS extends a big thank you to everyone who was willing to contribute their own experiences and again we would welcome your case studies once you have completed the process if you are willing to share them.

Case Studies

The following are a mixture of partnership types. They range from small to large organisational partnerships, some are merely to formalise working relationships, others are for the purposes of seeking funding. They are provided here, merely as examples of how some partnership arrangements have been made and do not necessarily reflect formalised partnerships that have been set up to seek and administer funding.

A new model for delivering services reduces pressure on homeless people in Brisbane but highlights the challenge of moving from crisis responses to longterm solutions.

Summary

HART 4000 is a consortium of Brisbane-based welfare and community development agencies that collaborate to provide multiple access points for homeless people seeking help. A coordination team provides case coordination and homeless people can receive help from a variety of agencies without having to travel from service to service repeating their story and request. The consortium's goal is to focus on sustainable outcomes and tenancies; a challenge when faced with the extent of day-to-day need presented by the 891 people who used HART 4000 in its first 11 months of operation.

Partners

The founding HART 4000 consortium consists of:
• New Farm Neighbourhood Centre (including TAASQ Inner North)
• Brisbane Youth Service (BYS)
• West End Community House (including TAASQ Inner South)
• Wesley Mission Brisbane
• Inner Northern Community Housing, and
• Better Housing Projects Association.

Background

The model proposed by the consortium and funded by the Queensland Government is defined by:
• multiple access points for homeless people via consortium members
• new levels of coordination:
    • a centrally located coordination team ensuring assertive approaches to
    • case coordination and gathering a variety of visiting services including
    • legal, health, hygiene, storage and housing provider services
    • a coordination team that maintains links with a broad network of
    • housing providers in the interest of homeless people and their diverse needs
    • compatibility across the consortium in relation to assessment, crisis
    • intervention and case planning, and
    • the optimal use of existing resources and synergy between consortium members.

The service delivery model features:
• a case management model focused on sustainable outcomes and tenancies
• consortium member agencies with a track record of working with people facing homelessness
• housing providers that contribute bed nights and transitional housing to HART

4000
- strong partnerships with existing service providers to enhance client outcomes
- strong advocacy in relation to homelessness issues and a contribution to the development of other initiatives across the state, and
- close work with the Micah hub in Brisbane's inner south to coordinate the allocation of brokerage dollars and complementary service delivery.

In the consortium's first 11 months of operation there were 1727 contacts with 891 homeless people. On average, each client was seen two or three times while 160 clients were provided with ongoing support with more than 10 contacts.

One third of incoming referrals came from the consortium members and a quarter of referrals for service were made to consortium members, predominantly for tenancy advice, group work and community meals. Half of the referrals made to other services resulted in a positive outcome, such as housing provided or other service accessed. The 260 referrals to non-consortium agencies revealed their inability to provide a service (e.g. full case loads or no resources available).

Brokerage funds are available to meet financial needs that contribute to homelessness. The average brokerage provided is $85 per person, with many clients receiving smaller amounts and some receiving larger amounts, especially regarding rent arrears.

Drivers for collaboration
About three to four years ago various levels of government and the welfare service sector began to recognise that to improve the plight of homeless people, new funding responses were required. It was also acknowledged that housing was not the only issue or solution and that enhanced communication and a coordinated service response with support and housing co-located were preferable solutions.

Throughout this period, the Brisbane City Council championed the homelessness agenda from a social justice and inclusion perspective. Council commissioned research into the homelessness and housing situation in Brisbane. Its *Finding Beds Report* (YEAR) provided recommendations about access to crisis beds, support services and the need for enhanced communication across the nongovernment and government sectors. This research provided an incentive within the sector to consider support options for homeless people and prompted a hope that change was possible.

The collaboration story
Discussions about the development of the HART 4000 model were facilitated within several community forums, including the Inner City Place Project's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Working Party, the Peaks and Partners

forum (a Brisbane City Council initiative) and other community housing and Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) networks. New Farm Neighbourhood Centre (NFNC), Brisbane Youth Service (BYS) and West End Community House (WECH) provided led the discussions. When the Queensland Government announced the tender for a homeless information and referral hub, a creative, strong working link already existed between these services.

Organisations were linked by a shared history of responding to the needs of homeless people, for example, dealing with the effects of boarding house closures and helping with the New Farm Park trial of basic public facilities for homeless people. It was apparent that consortium members were like-minded about gaps in service provision, and had a similar vision for innovative responses.

These agencies' relationship led to the idea of a high-quality, integrated and coordinated service model with multiple entry points for homeless people of all ages, initially for inner Brisbane and, eventually, on a statewide basis.

Other multi-agency homelessness initiatives were considered, particularly Rough Sleepers in central London and Common Ground in New York City. Both initiatives were successful because of their multi-agency status and their use of integrated service delivery, including the development and provision of housing (temporary and permanent), employment and training programs, health care services and volunteer programs.

Consortium members noted that service responses north and south of the Brisbane River were being polarised, so an inner-city service model with multiple access points for all homeless people was preferred. It was envisaged the consortium would add value to the HART 4000 Coordination Team's work with:
• early intervention and housing advocacy through the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services (TAAS) based at both NFNC and WECH
• a focus on young people, as well as a medical clinic, expertise in locating accommodation, a young parent support group, an activities program and outreach through BYS
• social supports through WECH, NFNC and BYS
• housing options through Better Housing Projects and Inner Northern Community Housing, bringing additional bed nights from the community housing sector for homeless persons, with the support of partnership agreements and individual support plans with the HART 4000 Coordinating Team
• the resources of a large church-based organisation through Wesley Mission Brisbane with an existing inner-city homelessness mission and emergency relief service. Wesley Mission also offered CBD office space with the opportunity to access volunteers for related initiatives
• a community development focus and a central location in the inner south of the service region through WECH

• a willing and capable manager of the service through NFNC. NFNC was seen as the 'right fit' because of its long commitment to helping homeless people, its established open-house and outreach activity, as well as a management committee with a strong grasp of the issues of homeless service provision.

The HART 4000 Consortium's goal was to provide holistic support, enhance existing relationships, provide extra resources to homeless people and build social capital. Each consortium representative was responsible for briefing their management committees and maintaining their agency's commitment to the project. The commitment of each agency's management was seen as critical to the success or failure of the bid.

Tools and strategies for collaboration
HART 4000's collaborative approach is distinguished by:
• a clear governance model. The consortium is governed by project management group with clearly defined terms of reference. The project management group is a sub-committee of the NFNC management committee which is ultimately accountable for the service. The group meets monthly — or more often if required— and each consortium agency is represented, as is the HART 4000 coordinator. The group's development plan includes a 'critical friend', an Indigenous mentor, a client representative and a funding body representative. The first critical friend is in place. The appointment of an Indigenous mentor is being negotiated through the HART 4000 indigenous key support worker. A client representative will be appointed from among clients serviced in the first year of operation. A standing invitation has been issued to the Queensland Department of Communities community support officer as a funding body representative, with agreement that attendance is on an as-needed basis.
• a clear service delivery model. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) which was agreed to in the first few months of operation and signed by all consortium partners, and
• a mission statement: 'achieving positive and sustainable changes for homeless people' well-established relationships and a shared understanding of homelessness between consortium partners, and partnership agreements with key agencies such as housing providers.

Outcomes
HART 4000 has forged new ways of collaborating between key inner-Brisbane community services. Clients have benefited from the coordinated approach to needs assessment and a simplified approach to referrals for resources. This has reduced the need for homeless people to travel from agency to agency, repeating their story each time. It has also enhanced HART 4000's flexibility in approaches to practice.

Both the consortium's housing providers, Inner North Community Housing and Better Housing Projects Association, say they have a greater understanding of

the overall service needs of a challenging group of their clients, and both have developed programs outside of the HART 4000 consortium that provide a continuum of support for these clients, whom they also refer to the consortium partners with confidence. In this sense, the consortium concept also worked in reverse: the individual agencies grew their core business and enhanced their service delivery as a result of collaboration.

Success factors
The consortium is a success because:
• it is a unified force committed to providing a quality service and making a difference in partnership with homeless people in Brisbane
• of its robust planning processes, underpinned by a strong evidence base for the model being provided
• it is based on a multi-agency understanding of a multi-dimensional issue
• potential conflicts between consortium partners are being identified early and honestly
• policies and procedures were developed early in the process and well before the service began operation
• physical locations of consortium partners — inner south, inner north and CBD —ensure the consortium benefits from each agency's local knowledge and connections
• members share strong social justice values that uphold the dignity and respect due to homeless people
• it develops culturally appropriate responses for Indigenous community members, enhanced through the involvement of a specialist indigenous key support worker
• consortium members provide expert advice
• it provides comprehensive information to homeless people, the community sector and key parties
• Wesley House's location is co-located with the *Big Issue*, providing access to work opportunities and an existing volunteer base. The consortium also involves the Albert Street Homelessness Ministry and the emergency relief service, and
• WECH and NFNC's community development activities enable the coordination team to meet with homeless people in a non-threatening way in the place they live via early morning outreach, training, group work or community meals.

The State Government funded two homeless service hubs —Brisbane Homelessness Service Centre (Micah Projects) and the Homelessness Assessment and Referral Team (HART 4000)— in Brisbane's inner city, with shared boundaries and constituencies. The HART 4000 staff team is in regular contact with Micah hub staff, to ensure appropriate responses for homeless people who are accessing both services. The hubs also collaborate on special projects and responses. Staff of both hubs meet to share findings and plan joint intervention strategies. An MOU has proved an effective tool for collaboration,

while keeping this essential working relationship positive and open involves ongoing commitment.

Maintaining positive working relationships with all key services, such as accommodation, legal and health services is critical to sustain the referral options the hubs can provide. The imperative to work positively with all service providers underpins HART 4000 consortium members' work with government, community and church agencies.

Challenges

Use of brokerage funds

HART 4000's approach to brokerage funds use is aimed at sustaining existing and new tenancies and support arrangements, rather than supplementing an emergency relief welfare response. Seeing many people for one-off assistance was never HART 4000's aim but demand has outreached the capacity for response. HART 4000 provides a coalface crisis response to homeless people; however staff have worked hard to create and maintain relationships within a case management framework.

Links with other services

HART 4000 sees itself as part of a government policy and program response to the effects of homelessness. The two Brisbane hubs were the first services established as part of the rollout of the Queensland Government's Responding to Homelessness Strategy. They have formed the foundation for the establishment of other responses such as hubs outside of Brisbane, Roma House in Brisbane, Homeless Persons Information Queensland, the Homeless Health Outreach Team and the Court Diversion program. The links with these new responses, as well as existing services, will be a significant factor in the hubs' success in achieving positive and sustainable changes for homeless people.

Government policies and programs

Broader government policies and programs also effect HART 4000's options to address homelessness with clients. Some may involve new challenges. Examples include the implementation of new 'move on' powers in all Queensland public spaces; public access to addictive substances and gaming; government spending priorities for public housing and other affordable housing stock and for community-based services for substance abusers and people with a disability and mental health issues; and the implementation of the One Social Housing System creating easier access to services but also a possibility that some clients are excluded from services altogether.

Competitive tendering processes

Competitive tendering processes in an environment where community agencies are being encouraged by the Queensland Department of Communities to form service delivery partnerships can present a challenge. There are also no additional resources for the development and coordination of these partnerships,

ultimately creating unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved within overstretched community organisational infrastructure.

Adding value to Supported Accommodation Assistance Program services
One challenge for homeless information and referral hubs is to offer a service that adds value to the work of the existing Supported Accommodation Assistance Program. This is important in an environment where the sector has had increasing volume and complexity of demand from families and vulnerable individuals, but no real increase in funding for many years. It is important that people at risk of homelessness and the sector as a whole consider they are benefiting from the new commitment of funds towards responding to homelessness.

The future
The Wesley Mission building is due for demolition in 2007. HART 4000's new location will be an important aspect of its ability to provide accessible services. In future, HART 4000 will concentrate on ongoing relationships with people at risk of homelessness to sustain tenancies and remain connected to their community. This will enable people to address underlying issues that have contributed to either episodic or chronic homelessness.

For more information
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Background – about the Consortium

Small non-government community service providers who operate in the Redfern - Waterloo areas are in the process of forming a Consortium to work together and to represent small NGOs in the Redfern Waterloo area. In forming this consortium, we will value the diversity of the member small NGOs, while at the same time creating a mechanism for working together.

By doing this, we propose that the Consortium will:

- Provide small NGOs with a voice to speak to stakeholders as a single voice. It will also be a single point for other organisations to come together and negotiate

- Represent small NGOs on planning bodies and in local planning processes

- Be a mechanism to develop and deliver new programs or expand existing programs in a joint, cooperative way

- Encourage local small NGOs to continue to deliver programs and services in a coordinated and planned way together, to avoid duplication

- Create opportunities for small NGOs to work jointly with the large NGOs and locally based government services

- Enable small NGOs to work together to make the best use of resources available and provide advice and input on future resource and premises models

- Be an information clearinghouse for information and for resource sharing

- Raise our profiles in the community

- Help small NGOs understand community needs, including pooling data and sharing statistics and research that identifies community needs

We believe that the Redfern - Waterloo NGO Consortium provides the mechanism for local control and tailor made solutions to reach agreed outcomes.

Forming a Consortium in South Sydney

Small community managed NGO's based in Redfern Waterloo have formed a consortium to work cooperatively towards achieving outcomes that will benefit their communities and address issues that have been identified in recent social planning processes. The Consortium may also act as a voice for small NGOs in the Redfern Waterloo area.

What is The South Sydney Consortium?

An unincorporated affiliated group of small non-government community service providers who operate in the Redfern -Waterloo areas and are community managed has been formed and is known as the South Sydney Consortium. They are developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that sets out how the Consortium will operate.

Vision

Our vision is for the Consortium to:

1. facilitate and support the members of the Consortium to work cooperatively in ways that are responsive to and meet the needs of the communities in the Redfern Waterloo area; and
2. provide a mechanism whereby member organisations may speak as one voice.

Aims of the Consortium

To enable small NGOs to formalise and further develop the cooperative service delivery they are currently involved in.

To value the diversity of the member NGOs, while at the same time creating mechanisms for working together.

To provide a structure that can be used to address current issues, with small NGOs supporting each other and speaking as one voice on issues

To enable small NGOs to respond to future expressions of interest for funding, not only having greater capacity to attract resources than agencies operating alone but also providing opportunities for proposals to include creative and innovative models of service provision based on cooperative working arrangements

To provide opportunities for NGOs to work together to contribute towards meeting the outcomes identified in the Redfern Waterloo Authority's human services planning, but in ways that are driven from the grassroots and are responsive to community needs and interests.

Values that are important in the Consortium

- Responsiveness to needs in the community
- Commitment to social justice
- Commitment to supporting and resourcing the most vulnerable people in our communities in ways that respect individual differences and individual dignity
- Open and honest cooperation and communication
- Valuing the diversity of the member organisations while at the same time working together
- Respecting the independence and affirming the identity of member organisations

Membership of the Consortium

Eligibility for membership

Organisations that fall into the following definition will be eligible to be members of the Consortium:

> *Small non-government community service providers who operate in the Redfern Waterloo areas and are community managed.*

Foundation members of the Consortium

The following agencies have agreed to join the Consortium at its inception:

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (Associate Member)

Redfern Legal Centre

South Sydney Community Aid Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre

The Factory

South Sydney Youth Services

The Fact Tree Youth Services

The Settlement

Redfern & Inner Sydney Home Support

Food Distribution Network

Voice for SONG : What is it, what impact has it had and how has this been achieved?

What is Voice for SONG?

Voice for SONG began in 2000. It is a long-term strategy that promotes the value of small community organizations, at the same time as promoting cooperation and collaboration between small and large non-government organisations, government and business and the general community. The Voice for SONG strategy was also intended to be a catalyst for discussion and for others to take action to address issues for small community organisations.

The Voice for SONG strategy came out of the passion and commitment of a group of representatives from small community organisations within Western Sydney. These representatives became a strong network committed to progressing the Voice for SONG strategy with the aim of influencing an environment to support small community organisations to flourish. Behind the passion and commitment was also a frustration at the existing conditions for small community organisations related to lack of or limited core funding, short-term project funding, poor sector conditions and many other issues.

Impact of Voice for SONG

Voice for SONG now has recognition within the sector at State and even National levels despite not receiving any specific funding for its activities. The strategy has been successful in raising the profile of small community organisations through promoting discussion through the network, conducting forums, conference presentations and published papers. The network has also influenced research and strategies supporting small community organisations such as LCSA's publication "Why the survival of small organisatations is crtical", the SNOW Report and H.R. training for community organisations provided by Westpac.

How has this been achieved?

The strategy has progressed through shared values and understanding and the development of good working relationships, particularly long-term relationships linking the local with the big picture levels. Leadership and key drivers have been critical to the success of the Voice for SONG strategy which would not have progressed without a number of committed individuals. There has also been some structure, in terms of mission and objectives.

The Voice for SONG strategy has a strong philosophical or values base related to the value of "small" and cooperation, taking a strengths-based, non-blaming

approach to tackling issues for small community organisations. Key partners have included Bridges, Mountains Community Resource Network, Springwood Neighbourhood Centre, Western Sydney Community Forum, Family Worker Training and Development Program and Tri-Communty Exchange. For more information visit www.voiceforsong.com

Link to Bridges

Bridges (previously Blacktown Alcohol and other Drugs Family Services), a small community organization, led the establishment of Voice for SONG. There is much similarity between the development of Voice for SONG and the development of Bridges and its collaborative, strengths-based, systemic approach to addressing alcohol and other drug issues. Despite, its own struggles with sustainability from year to year, Bridges goes from strength to strength. A history of the development of Bridges and Voice for SONG (including media articles since the 1990s) can be found on the Bridges website.(www.bridges.org.au),