

Partnerships

Developed by VicHealth this fact sheet is the first in an occasional series of documents where VicHealth will explain its interpretation of key health promotion concepts.

■ Partnership Continuum

- Networking
- Coordinating
- Cooperating
- Collaborating

■ What's expected?

■ Benefits of working in Partnership

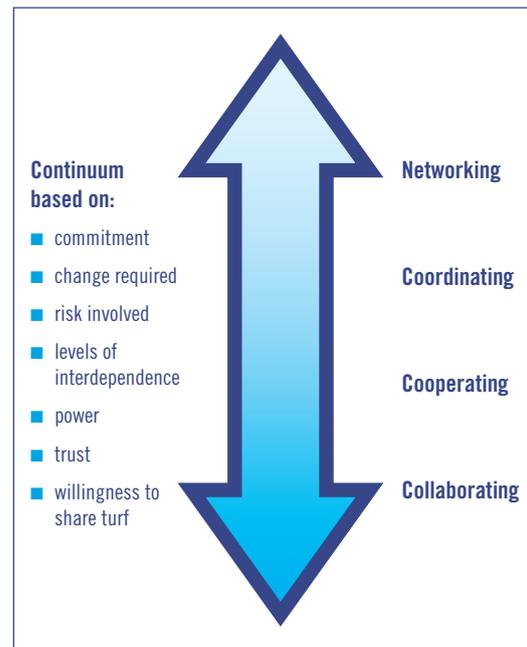
■ Resources

Are all Partnerships the same?

Partnership is a broad term used to describe working with other organisations.

Most partnerships move up and down a continuum¹ which shows progression based on degree of commitment, change required, risk involved, levels of interdependence, power, trust and a willingness to share turf.

The following diagram and terms explore the concept of partnerships more.



Networking – involves exchange of information for mutual benefit. It requires little time, trust or sharing of turf between partners and is a useful strategy for organisations in the initial stages of working relationships.

For example, community health workers in a region coming together to share information about the services they provide and to discuss issues of importance to their region.

Coordinating – involves exchange of information for mutual benefit and altering activities for a common purpose. It requires more time and trust but does not include sharing the turf.

For example, a Life Activities Club, Neighbourhood House and Retirement Village all meet to share information on activities they provide. As a result of their regular discussions they realise that two key groups, run by the Neighbourhood House and the Life Activities Club, are operating at the same time and many residents in the retirement village are interested in attending both. As a result, the Life Activity Club changes the time one activity is offered, while the Retirement Village provides information to its residents about the changed times and alters its community bus schedule so people can attend both groups if they like. The Neighbourhood House and Life Activities Club agree to run times of future programs past each other to ensure clashes don't occur.

Cooperating – involves exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources for mutual benefit and a common purpose. It requires significant amounts of time, high levels of trust and significant sharing of turf. It may require complex organisational processes and agreements in order to achieve the expanded benefits of mutual action.

For example, the Retirement Village approaches the local Neighbourhood House and asks them whether they would be able to run two specific activities at the Retirement Village for residents who are less mobile and not able to get to regular classes. A Memorandum of Understanding is drawn up between the two organisations to outline who provides which resources relating to the classes. Two classes (singing and gentle exercises) are trialled. The Neighbourhood House provides the instructor and the materials. The Retirement Village provides the venue and additional staff to assist the instructor. Participants pay the same price as those attending regular classes.

Collaborating – involves all of the above plus a willingness to increase the capacity of another organisation for mutual benefit and a common purpose. It requires the highest levels of trust, considerable amounts of time and extensive sharing of turf. It involves sharing risks and rewards but can produce the greatest benefits.

Victorian Health
Promotion Foundation

PO Box 154
Carlton South 3053, Australia

T +61 3 9667 1333

F +61 3 9667 1375

E vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au

W www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

¹ Himmelman, A. 2001, 'On Coalitions and the Transformation of Power Relations: Collaborative Betterment and Collaborative Empowerment', American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol 29, No 2, pp.277-284



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FACT SHEET

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For example, the singing and exercise classes at the Retirement Village have been running successfully. Both the Neighbourhood House and the Retirement Village identify that residents are now interested in additional classes. To enable the Neighbourhood House to respond to this request, they work with the staff at the Retirement Village to teach them how to run the exercise classes themselves. The Neighbourhood House has some funds to contribute to the skilling up of the Retirement Village staff and the cost of some of the equipment. In return the Retirement Village also agrees to open the classes up to other older adults in the area who also find travel to the Neighbourhood House difficult. This activity also frees up the Neighbourhood House staff and resources allowing them to trial a writing group at the Retirement Village.

Are all partnerships expected to progress all the way along the continuum?

No. Most partnerships are at the networking / coordinating end of the continuum and there is nothing wrong with this.

Only a smaller number of agencies will have partnerships that develop further along the continuum to cooperating or collaborating.

Some partnerships may not be working and may be causing more harm than good. It is recommended that these partnerships be reviewed and possibly ceased.

What are the benefits of working in Partnership?

Projects funded by VicHealth have found² that the benefits of working in partnership with other organisations include:

- Increased resources for the project including access to rooms/facilities, buses, extra staff, cash, in-kind support, equipment.
- Increased and easier access to groups they wanted to work with. A partner organisation often 'vouched' for the credibility of an organisation that was new or unfamiliar to participants.
- Working with partner organisations who knew the prospective participants well meant that activities that were of interest to and appropriate for prospective participants were easier to identify.
- Partner organisations were often able to directly promote programs to prospective participants as they had easy access to them.
- As many partner organisations knew prospective participants, they were often able to play a key role in encouraging and supporting participants to join in new programs and activities.
- Organisations found once they were working together they began to share information on other services and activities and this led to increased opportunities for participants as well as for organisations.
- Some organisations found that working with a new organisation or an organisation from another sector or industry tapped them into a whole new set of networks and infrastructure.

Are there any resources I can look at about partnerships?

VicHealth has recently published three documents that have an emphasis on partnerships. These resources are all available from the VicHealth website (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/partnerships) and cover different aspects of partnerships.

The Partnerships Analysis Tool

The Partnerships Analysis tool contains three simple activities that organisations working in partnership can undertake together to assess, monitor and maximise the ongoing effectiveness of their partnerships.

Building Collaborative Relationships: An Examination of the VicHealth Recreation Grants Program

Based on findings from projects involved in the 2000 Recreation scheme, this short report identifies and describes seven key factors that were considered to be most important in successful partnerships.

Evaluation of Active Recreation projects 2001

Building on the work undertaken in 2000 (above) this easy-to-read report looks at the seven factors identified in the previous research and explores both the benefits of partnerships (to the funded active recreation projects), stages of partnership development, activities and events that impact on partnerships, how partnerships were developed. It also provides some useful tips for organisations to consider when developing your partnership.

Partnerships information at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/partnerships

² Tower, J., Gaskin, C., Morris, T., & Spittle, M. 2003, Evaluation of the 2001 Active Recreation Scheme: Community Report, Victoria University, Melbourne.