

# *Partnerships...*

→ The Way To Go



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is a WA Department of  
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produced by Learning Centre  
Link, which is the State  
Association for Community,  
Neighbourhood and Learning  
Centres in Western Australia



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- develop cooperative relationships to offer courses and learning activities that fit with the objectives of both (or all) partners' objectives
- develop appropriate networks and share resources to provide the most appropriate service for participants
- inform and support community members wanting to enter learning pathways or employment
- promote community development strategies
- open up new opportunities for people to participate in life long learning and in their communities.

In short, this guide will help you establish and maintain partnerships in the provision of ACE.

Finally, this guide is just that... a guide! We understand that this is not the only way to work in cross-sectorial partnerships, but it can be a beginning!

## Life long learning

Life long learning contributes to make society more tolerant, culturally richer and more highly skilled. It gives individuals the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to live to their full potential.

Learning is something we do throughout our lives. It is not something that stops when we leave school and go out into the world. No matter how young or old – it is never too late to learn. We are learning all the time and life long learning recognises that our own life experience counts.

Life long learning is an important way for people to cope with change. In a rapidly changing world there is a growing demand for people with new skills. There is pressure on all people to upgrade their existing skills and knowledge.

People learn differently and have different learning needs at various stages in their lives, and are therefore involved in different types of learning throughout their lifetimes. Sometimes it can be formal, like taking on a short course at college or a training program at work. And sometimes learning can be informal – like acquiring skills through taking part in a community project.

*Life long learning is a basic human right and a universal human value: learning and education are ends in themselves, to be aimed at by both individuals and societies and to be promoted and made available throughout the entire lifetime of each individual.*

*Fredrico Mayor, Director General of Unesco*

## Promoting a learning society

A learning society is mutually beneficial. Life long learning for all is a democratic right and the general well-being of society needs an educated, informed population to respond to our rapidly changing world. ACE partnerships can promote the development of a learning society.

ACE partnerships can highlight the advantages of learning by:

- being responsive to what people want to study, starting where the learner is at
- being flexible and offering a wide range of learning options
- promoting a flow on effect back to the community by supporting and encouraging a variety of different learning opportunities
- promoting the idea of life long learning among disadvantaged groups who have not had the same access to learning opportunities.

## Why partnerships?

By focusing on learning about expanding educational pathways for learners, ACE providers and other training and/or community organisations can better assist the communities with which they work. They need to be proactive in looking for ways to work more closely together, to forge new alliances and collaborative ventures. These new alliances can also be good for:

- participants
- disadvantaged groups

- both organisations
- the wider community.

Partnerships have shown they can widen the market for ACE programs to non-traditional users of ACE. Partnerships can promote the values of all the organisations. They can use limited funding and resources in effective ways. Individually, providers of ACE are good at what they do. In a complementary relationship they can achieve even more!

## Developing partnerships

Partnerships can evolve in different ways. This depends on how the respective partnering organisations are set up and the way the people involved see their roles. A lot depends on the relative size, prominence and previous relationships. How individuals get on with each other is also critical.

Partnerships can lead to long-term strategies that address the diverse and changing needs of communities. Collaborative ventures work best when the partners focus on their respective strengths and work together to explore a range of other opportunities that benefit both.

Different types of relationships can be useful:

- co-operative/joint arrangements where both parties work jointly on the project, sharing the work in a mutually agreed manner
- coordinating arrangements where one partner coordinates the project and links up with a number of bodies to offer the program
- linking arrangements where one partner takes on the entire task of delivering the program and draws on the other partner(s) to make it work well.

Partnerships can be as diverse as you like. Collaborative working ventures may include, for example:

- Local Government
- Migrant Resource Centres or ethno-specific bodies
- Community Health Services
- Family Support Services
- TAFE
- Age-specific Services

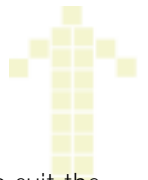
- Telecentres
- Community, Neighbourhood and Learning Centres
- Other not for profit community organisations.

Partnerships could also involve projects with employers, local industry groups and regional development bodies.

Projects can vary widely as the following examples demonstrate:

- a community arts group, a retirement village, a school and local government in partnership to provide an inter-generational community arts project
- a TAFE college in partnership with a community centre or Telecentre to provide TAFE bridging courses in the community
- a migrant resource centre in partnership with a group of community centres to develop strategies to increase the participation of people from CaLD backgrounds in ACE programs
- an environmental group in partnership with a school, local government and private nursery to provide an adult community education perma-culture project
- a Telecentre and Learning Centre in partnership to provide a literacy and numeracy mentoring program for a rural community
- a youth service, TAFE, Telecentre, Neighbourhood House and Aboriginal community group in partnership to provide a flexible program to mentor and support a group of young aboriginal women to access existing services and to build user-friendly pathways between them
- a health service in partnership with a Telecentre to provide community education around specific health and wellness issues
- a Learning Centre in partnership with a Registered Training Organisation to provide an empowering and esteem building program with a focus on preparing women for re-entry into the work-force.

A list of useful contacts is provided in this guide to encourage you to 'think outside the box' and cement some creative alliances.



## Different organisational cultures

Providers of ACE and other training and/or community organisations in Western Australia may operate in different sectors, so it is not surprising that they have different cultures.

Organisational cultural differences can present themselves in many ways. You might notice that people from other sectors tend to dress differently (more formally or informally), or that they appear to place different emphasis on 'paperwork'. They may seem disorganised and informal compared to your organisation, or vice versa. They may talk about their organisation and the community in different ways, and use different jargon.

ACE providers develop organisational cultures to suit the needs and objectives of their overall operations. Their physical environments reflect their organisations' objectives.

Different types of organisations may be subject to different accountability processes and different service priorities. These differences impact on the culture within the organisation. Cultural differences can sometimes act as barriers to working together: if all we see is the difference. Appreciate the differences as simply 'being different' (not better or worse), then look beyond the cultural difference for common ground.





## Finding common ground

Focusing on differences without finding common ground can detract from the real benefits a partnership can bring. While there are many differences amongst ACE providers, there are also many commonalities!

ACE providers and other training and/or community organisations operate in an increasingly challenging environment. The context for most of these organisations includes:

- increasing pressure to raise new revenue eg user pays policies
- pressure to increase quality outcomes
- increasing pressure to operate like a small business
- reductions or lack of growth in many areas of government expenditure
- greater expectations for administrative accountability eg data collection, standards and accreditation
- greater 'competition' from for-profit bodies who have identified new markets
- continued targeting and rationing of public resources
- pressure to 'work smarter' and respond to rapid change.

## Benefits of partnerships

There are many reasons ACE providers and other training and/or community organisations can benefit from partnerships, for example you can:

- increase your capacity to link into, and provide for, your community
- become more aware of the diversity within the community
- promote the benefits of both partners' provision within the community
- gain access to extra services that you might not otherwise be able to offer
- increase your experience of community development
- gain a broader understanding of educational pathways

- become advocates for education and employment pathways for your clients
- build links with, and knowledge of, social and community services to address needs other than those directly related to learning. For example personal needs such as housing, parenting, transport and areas connected with personal growth such as grief counselling, addictions and emotional health
- increase your capacity to link with people who traditionally do not participate in ACE eg people who are unemployed, from culturally and linguistically diverse or indigenous backgrounds, living with a disability, low income earners or with low confidence.

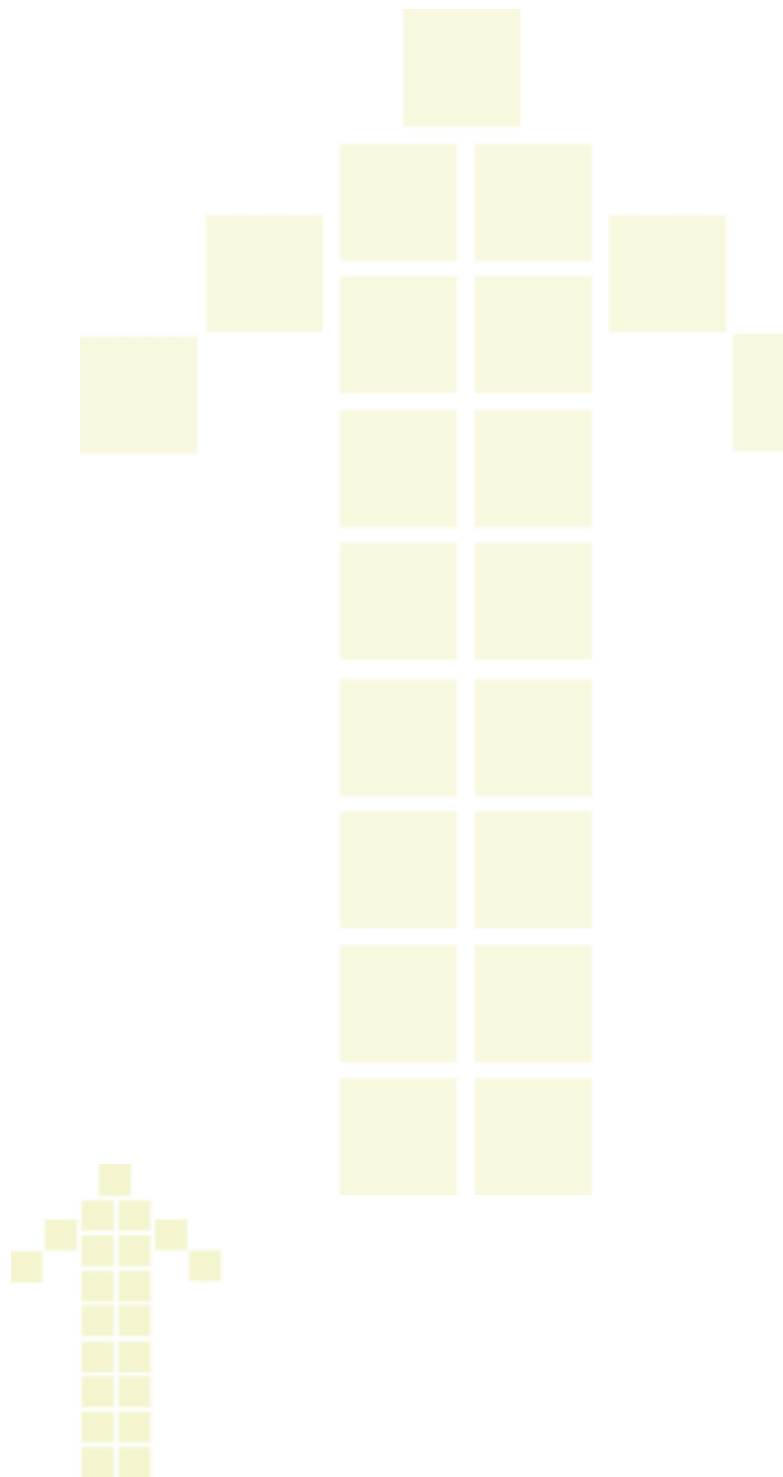
*This project has significantly raised awareness of Learning Centres and their programs with personnel who usually work within Registered Training Organisations delivering accredited training programs. These individuals will pass this information on throughout their own networks...one of the successful aspects of building partnerships is knowledge and experience of each others' ways of working.*

*Learning Centre Link ACE Partnerships Report, December 1998*

## Before you start

Before entering into a partnership with another organisation there are certain points you might want to establish, for example:

- Where are they?
- What do they do?
- What do they value?
- What do they offer the community?
- Are there different types of this organisation?
- Who owns and manages them?
- Where do they get their funds?
- How do they spend their funds?
- What are the policies that guide their practice?
- Where do they operate?
- Who are their users?





## Partnership Process Model

- IDENTIFY COMMUNITY NEED
- LIAISE WITH RELEVANT COMMUNITY MEMBERS/ORGANISATIONS TO CONFIRM IDENTIFIED NEEDS
- ASSESS LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED NEEDS
- IDENTIFY POSSIBLE PROJECT PARTNERS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ESTABLISH A PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE
- DEVELOP PROJECT IDEA IN COLLABORATION WITH PROJECT PARTNERS
  - Establish communication process and key contact people
  - Define target group and develop project aims, outcomes, methodology and budget
  - Consider access and equity issues for the project
  - Negotiate project roles and responsibilities
  - Identify any possible environmental, cultural and legal issues, or the need for specialist expertise
  - Identify resources required and possible sources of funding where appropriate
  - Acquire resources eg write submission, liaise with other resource owners
  - Keep all parties informed, including project partners' management boards
- ON CONFIRMATION OF FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROJECT:
  - Establish a project management team
  - Write and sign Letter of Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding between parties
  - Establish a Conflict Resolution procedure
  - Consider potential Conflicts of Interest
  - Recruit and select project workers
  - Re-assess community needs and project resources
  - Establish financial procedure and review budget
- MARKET PROJECT
- REGULARLY COMMUNICATE BETWEEN PROJECT PARTNERS AND ASSESS METHODOLOGY, OUTCOMES ETC ON AN ONGOING BASIS
- EVALUATE PROJECT AND PARTNERSHIP, WRITE REPORTS AND ACQUIT FUNDS
- RECOGNISE WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BY THE PROJECT AND CELEBRATE



## Development of the Partnership Process Model

The Partnership Process Model presented here was initially developed during the *Filling in the Gaps* Project 2000-01.

The project, which was funded by the WA Department of Training, aimed to develop and trial a collaborative process model to guide organisations to work effectively in partnership and maximise the use of the available resources to meet community needs.

The project involved three rural Learning and Community Centres and other services within their given localities working in partnership to meet identified adult education needs in their respective communities. The model was initially developed during the first pilot project and then applied and reviewed throughout the second and third projects. Subsequently, for the purpose of this project it has been further developed through consultation with key stakeholders in the adult community education sector in WA.

The Partnership Process Model is provided here firstly as a step-by-step framework and then in more detail. Examples have been included to illustrate some aspects of the application of the model. It is intended that the model highlight the most important steps in developing working partnerships. You may find that not all are relevant to your situation or that some of the steps need to occur in a different order from what is presented or, as the project evolves that you need to revisit some of the steps. Please bear in mind that this model is only a framework to guide you.

## Partnership Process Model

### IDENTIFY COMMUNITY NEED

The seed of an idea for a new ACE project could come from someone noticing a lack of skills, a new resource, a gap in provision, a potential target group, an emerging issue or a source of funding. It is usually either something

missing that is creating a need, or something available that could prove useful to the right situation. The trick is to make sure that there really is an identified need and that it is not simply a great idea or resource looking for a home.

Sometimes this gap may be identified by more than one organisation right at the start, which makes collaboration an obvious choice, but generally it is one group or even an individual who first notices the need and sets about exploring how to address it. It is important to check out:

- Does the need really exist?
- Whose need is it? Is it the service provider's need, a whole community need, specific group's need?
- What is the cause of the need and is there more than one way to address it?
- Is anyone else already working on addressing it?

Once a need or gap has been identified it can be explored in a number of ways. Initially use of informal networks and discussion will begin to show if others agree with the perceived need and/or what their thinking may be around it. This could be followed up with a more formal community needs assessment such as through a questionnaire, survey, meetings or focus groups.

It may be there are other needs in the community that come to light which are subsequently addressed as a result of this consultation process.

### LIAISE WITH RELEVANT COMMUNITY MEMBERS/ORGANISATIONS TO CONFIRM IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Consulting with other agencies, representatives of the target group and/or key stakeholders will enable you to:

- confirm the identified educational need and gather more information
- check out the relevance of the proposed project
- ascertain the level of interest in being involved in the project as participants or project partners

- establish connections with groups or organizations which either work or have links with prospective participants.

Take notice of information gathered through this community consultation and be flexible in the development of the project idea or, conversely, recognise when it lacks community support and be willing to put it aside.

True consultation is often a lot easier to talk about than to carry out. It may take time to share the project idea with others and to really hear their response. Allow sufficient time for those being consulted to reflect on the idea properly and in turn to check out with their networks. For genuine dialogue to take place, the project instigators need to put aside their own perspectives temporarily in order to hear the feedback and to lay the basis for effective collaboration.

## example

There is great potential for Community Learning Centres and RTOs, such as TAFE colleges, to work together to provide a pathway for people who want to undertake an accredited course within their community environment.

Such partnerships can be highly successful as long as there is mutual understanding and appreciation of their different cultures, and a willingness to look for solutions. For example, the centre co-ordinator has to be willing to fulfil TAFE accountability requirements, such as those for AVETMISS data collection; the TAFE co-ordinator has to acknowledge that the number of participants will probably be fewer than for a similar course on campus. (There are strategies that the TAFE coordinator can put in place to accommodate the lower enrolment within the funding model – for example, to enrol one extra student in the whole course on campus in order to deliver one part of the course to a small group in the Learning Centre.)

One example of a successful collaboration between a Learning Centre and a TAFE college (the Foothills Learning Centre and Midland College of TAFE) to

deliver an accredited course grew out of a TAFE/Learning Centre Link partnership project involving Life Experience Counts in 1998. Ironically, the project nearly didn't get off the ground.

"Learning Centres' customer focus is on the individual and their needs. Therefore a low initial enrolment, as experienced at Foothills, did not result in cancellation of the program (at the expense of those three people). Instead, the Project Manager encouraged the Facilitator to continue, encouraging the group to bring a friend and the Learning Centre Co-ordinator re-advertised locally. Enrolments rose to ten. One person responded to a poster in a local shop, one 18 year old young man brought his uncle and the others came via word of mouth. Toodyay's enrolments also rose from six to eight via word of mouth. A risk was taken at these Centres in continuing with the program, but experience has proved the effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing filling the courses. In a more formal setting these programs may well have been cancelled."

*Learning Centre Link ACE Partnership Report, Dec 1998.*

Following on from the success of the pilot partnership project, the Foothills Learning Centre and Midland College of TAFE extended their partnership and began delivery of the accredited course, Certificate 1 in New Opportunities for Women (NOW), which provides a pathway for women into vocational training of the paid workforce. Through the partnership, one module of the course is delivered each semester by a TAFE facilitator to a rolling group of learners. This group of learners was nominated for the 2001 Adult Learners Week WA State Awards.

## ❖ ASSESS LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Having established a strong need for this great idea it is important to clarify whether anyone is prepared to help achieve or implement it. Other groups or community members may have readily agreed to the existence of a need for the provision of this particular ACE project but have there been any offers of involvement and commitment to addressing the need?



Keep a record of any offers of resources, help with marketing, or sharing the load in some way. Note skills, knowledge or previous experiences others may have that could be useful.

Be prepared to consider alternative approaches to achieve the desired outcome keeping in mind, which may be more appropriate to the target group, to the resources available or to the community at that time. Check out whether the community or other organisation are currently interested in addressing this particular need. It simply may not be the right time or a high enough priority.

### IDENTIFY POSSIBLE PROJECT PARTNERS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ESTABLISH A PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

When identifying prospective partners consider which agencies/groups could provide project resources to complement your organisation and assist you in meeting the adult education needs of the community.

Organisations venturing into collaborative projects should be aware of the aims/objectives/ philosophy of their prospective partners. Success of a partnership does not depend on all parties having a similar philosophical perspective but rather that all have an understanding and appreciation of their cohorts and a willingness to work co-operatively to achieve the aims of the collaborative project. Sometimes a partnership provides access to adult learning that would otherwise not be available or possible.

### example

"Key aboriginal women within the community were asked for their comments. Their responses were positive. They spoke about the need to increase young women's self esteem and give them options to make informed choices. They also felt that the project when developed needed to be flexible and the participants able to offer direction for the project."

*Filling in the Gaps Project – Kununurra,  
Final Project Report May 2001.*

A frank discussion of agency needs and expectations might ensure that there are no hidden agendas or assumptions. An exploration of potential benefits for prospective players would also assist in the choosing of partners. (See page 7 for some important questions to consider when selecting project partners). A history of working together with an organisation and the reputation of key personnel are other major factors to keep in mind. Within an organisation it may take some time to find the "right" person for the project – don't rush in. An individual can add credibility to a project and attract potential partners and/or participants while someone with a poor reputation can have the reverse effect.

The establishment of a Project Steering Committee with representation from project partner organisations and other key people is a useful next step. Members could also include:

- representatives of the target group
- ACE providers and other organisations working with the target group
- agencies representing the interests of equity groups eg people from CALD backgrounds, age specific groups, and people with disabilities
- community members interested in the project.

Establishing a Steering Committee is a way of ensuring that all players have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the project idea, whilst fostering the evolution of a shared vision, joint ownership and commitment to see the project progress from idea to actuality. Think carefully about the role you want the Steering Committee to play, as this will determine to a large extent the skills and/or knowledge required by its members.

Some points to consider when setting up the Steering Committee:

- for continuity have at least two people per organisation involved in the project, ensuring that an informed person is available for meetings thereby being prepared in the case of staff changes or absences
- establish guidelines/terms of reference for the Steering Committee

- effective meeting practices will provide focus and structure for group interaction
- involve everyone in decision-making rather than having a hierarchical approach and be aware of the potential for power plays or inequities of input
- ensure that the contribution of all is acknowledged and valued.

## ➤ DEVELOP PROJECT IDEA IN COLLABORATION WITH PROJECT PARTNERS

A collaborative approach is more effective if development and planning of the idea can largely be done jointly. It will also mean that the original idea is explored more thoroughly by making use of the variety of perspectives involved. Not only allow for 'difference' but where possible encourage it. Particularly in the early stages it can be energising to let the creativity and lateral thinking of others enhance the planning process.

### ■ Establish communication process and key contact people

Given the importance of communication in collaborative ventures it is good to be very clear as to:

- who needs to talk to whom and how often
- who will be the key contact(s) to deal with external queries
- which mode of contact best suits those involved eg some prefer phone contact while others rely on emails
- how the flow of communication will be maintained to ensure effective decision-making and up to date information.

## example

"We have found that we have had to establish a communication process with key contact people to ensure 'ownership' for the target group (indigenous population) after identifying the need and before we could establish who the relevant community members or organisations should/could/or would be involved."

*Janine Hinton,  
Armadale-Kelmscott Job Link*

As with most aspects of a partnership, these arrangements will need to be flexible and could alter as the project gets underway. Sometimes one person from an organisation may be closely involved in the initial 'big picture' planning, but another may then take over as the key player during the implementation stage.

Watch out for blockages in the communication process. If information seems to consistently get stuck or lost at some point in the network, address your concerns with that player. If the problem continues then consider changing the communication pattern to prevent or lessen the impact of that player's inconsistencies. For example if using email, always copy to other key people.

### ■ Define target group and develop project aims, outcomes, methodology and budget

The framework for the project usually evolves gradually, although this obviously depends to some extent on the length of time available. Some projects can evolve over a year or more, while others are constrained by funding, staffing or programming factors.

Be sure who constitutes the target group, as this will have a significant impact on how the project is to be implemented. Outcomes need to be agreed on by all the stakeholders and may be qualitative and/or quantitative. Set clear and realistic time-lines for the project with sufficient space for evaluation, reporting and finishing details. Project time-lines should also be set with reference to when possible sources of funding eg grants, will become available. If the project involves the provision of a course that could articulate into further study areas, also consider when it would be best to run the project to optimise this articulation.

In considering aspects of methodology, ensure that decisions reflect the needs and concerns of the target group. For example, in choosing a venue for adult community education activities, formal education institutions are sometimes not as suitable as more relaxed informal settings and may remind participants of unsuccessful schooling days. If formal studies are the eventual goal then build in self-esteem strengthening pathways along the way.

Plan your budget thoroughly. The budget in the sample agreement on page 23 gives some ideas of items to

include. Don't overlook project co-ordination and administrative costs, extra insurance that may be required and fees that may be involved in contracting specialist expertise.

#### ■ Consider access and equity issues for the project

Throughout the provision of any adult community education think about whether the target group is inclusive enough and whether the learning will be readily available to participants who may otherwise find it difficult to access. Sometimes unnoticed barriers can prevent people from successfully completing or perhaps even starting a new learning experience. Some such barriers may be:

- lack of childcare
- inadequate literacy or numeracy skills and a lack of assistance or flexibility available for support
- lack of transport or venue not on public transport routes
- poor facilities for disabled participants
- costs involved for the participants
- unrealistic numbers required for a course to occur.

### *example*

"Budgeting for transport enabled members of the Aboriginal community 30kms out of town to participate in the Filling in the Gaps "Culinary Communication" project in Paraburdoo."

*Filling in the Gaps Project – Paraburdoo,  
Final Project Report May 2001.*

Consider whether it would be advantageous to consult with or invite onto the Steering Committee, people with specialist expertise in any specific access and equity areas, if you have not already done so. See the Useful Contact list at the back of this booklet for some well-informed contacts or starting points for finding services or individuals who may be able to provide the required skills or information.



## ■ Negotiate project roles and responsibilities

Clear, positive and consistent communication between the groups involved in the collaboration will go a long way towards its success. In the development of the idea into a working framework there needs to be open discussion about who will do what and who will have specific responsibilities for which aspects of the project. Not only will this improve the flow of the project but will hopefully ensure a balanced and fair input into the process, allowing a stronger sense of joint ownership.

Some specific roles would include being the primary contact for funding bodies, marketing purposes and the target group.

In considering who will handle the project funds there are a number of questions to consider:

- who has the administrative support to effectively manage the monies?
- who has the best processes to pay bills or buy material?
- who has the best infrastructure to pay workers?
- who will be able to make small purchases at short notice eg for coffee?

Handling the finances is an important responsibility in a partnership. If budgets are well planned, and adhered to there should be little cause for concern. Difficulties can arise however if extra costs are incurred or items are significantly over/under budgeted.

Acknowledge the value of "in-kind" contributions of agencies by including them in the budget.

## ■ Identify any possible environmental, cultural or legal issues or the need for specialist expertise

Occasionally a project requires skills that are beyond the experience of the key stakeholders. This gap may not become clear until further down the track, but sometimes it can be planned for from the early stages. If the project is to involve a target group from diverse cultures then it makes sense to enlist the assistance of individuals with skills in working with those cultures. If there are complex legal or financial issues involved in getting the project off the ground then it is worth

connecting with someone with the appropriate skills to handle those aspects.

See the Useful Contacts list in this booklet for some valuable connections or starting points for finding services or individuals who may be able to provide the required skills or information.

## ■ Identify resources required and possible sources of funding where appropriate

Resources required may include equipment, venues, personnel, office space, transport or specific skills. It is useful to list what resources are available from each stakeholder, note any gaps and think laterally about ways to address those spaces.

Likewise it is good to look broadly for likely sources of funding. However, avoid the trap of moulding the project idea too much to fit into possible funding guidelines. There can be a tightrope element to balancing between being flexible enough to achieve funding but still maintaining the integrity of the project.

## ■ Acquire resources eg write submission, liaise with other resource owners

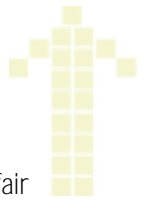
Be clear as to the provision of resources by the collaborative partners. Build in flexibility where possible to meet unexpected contingencies. There may need to be some agreement about the sharing of resources where that is an issue. Make sure administrative details are considered, such as insurance cover for equipment. Note any occupational health and safety issues that may result from the arrangements.

In seeking funding, where possible have representatives from key stakeholders involved in the submission, to give it greater support and keep all parties committed to the process.

## ■ Keep all parties informed, including project partners' management boards

Build in regular, effective feedback loops in the process to ensure:

- all parties have current information on the progress of the project
- ongoing energy and commitment for the idea



- rumours and grumbles are minimised
- ownership remains with all parties and doesn't drift to a few key individuals.

Regular contact between key stakeholders is important. The use of technology can assist in maintaining contact through email groups, teleconferencing or even videoconferencing. However, these options should not replace some good old-fashioned face-to-face contact where possible. Obviously there would have to be a greater reliance on contact via technology for rural partnerships.

Phone-trees are a useful device for keeping numerous people well connected without the cost and responsibility falling to one player. One person phones one or more people on the 'tree', who then in turn phone one or more allotted people. Thus the message fans out through the 'branches' of the tree.

Project partners need to keep their own management bodies and colleagues informed to ensure ongoing support and commitment for the project. If that feedback loop is neglected it can result in loss of

understanding or interest and can lead to unfair criticism or even blockage of the project if the feeling of alienation becomes too great.

Some projects take a considerable period of time from inception to actuality and thus there could be a need to actively maintain energy and enthusiasm for the project.

Ways this could be done include:

- noting new evidence demonstrating the need for the project
- raising the project as an agenda item on a regular basis with the organisation's management committee
- informally discussing the project with community members and other organisations.

#### ◆ ON CONFIRMATION OF FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROJECT:

##### ■ Establish a project management team

Establishing a project management team can facilitate collaborative management of the project and an equitable distribution of power, especially where there is a significant difference in size between different project



stakeholders. Like the steering committee, the management team should be small enough to be a workable group but large enough to share the workload and adequately represent the interests of all parties.

In the interest of timely, informed and participatory decision-making it is suggested that project management team members have a proxy representative from their organisations who can knowledgeably participate in project decision making or contribute in project meetings should their organisation's representative not be available either on a short or longer term basis.

One of the first tasks for the project management team would be to negotiate such issues as decision making procedures, methods of communication, meetings, project time-lines, financial matters, reporting, what tasks need doing, who will do what, etc. It is likely that some of these issues will have been at least rudimentarily discussed by the steering committee.

#### ■ Write and sign Letter of Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding between parties

A written agreement between partners clarifies roles and responsibilities, and provides a reference point should there any be disagreements during the project. This agreement needs to be signed by all parties. It also assists in reaffirming commitment to the joint venture and accountability for actions and outcomes.

There is value in keeping an agreement between partners simple but clear as to respective roles and responsibilities. Some of the issues that an agreement could include, as appropriate to the specific project and partnership, are:

- background to the project – aims, target group, outcomes (if appropriate, a copy of project funding proposal could be attached)
- specific areas of project responsibility





- legal considerations such as intellectual property, copyright, duty of care
- how any materials/resources produced will be used during and beyond the project
- project time-lines
- project reporting – who, when and how
- project budget.

If funding has been secured from outside sources then there may be some points in the agreement with the funding body that you will need to consider. For example, project time-lines, project reports or who is responsible for the management of funds.

There are three sample agreements on pages 23-27 that you could use as a starting point for developing a partnership agreement.

#### ■ Establish a Conflict Resolution procedure

Disagreement, conflict and struggle are an ongoing part of life. You should expect some difference and possible conflict. Efforts to work co-operatively and run a project successfully may be hindered by a lack of clear communication. You may find it isn't possible to get on with your main contact with the other organisation.

With any project this person could have:

- too big a workload
- the formal responsibility, but little real interest in making the project happen
- difficulty in doing what is needed to carry through with the project
- a view that the project is not in the best interests of their organisation.

Sometimes there may be a previous history of conflict or misunderstanding between the organisations. This could involve existing or past staff and management at each organisation.

Sometimes people start from fixed perceptions – they see each other in set ways that may not reflect reality. This can affect the way people set about working together. These different perceptions can sometimes be

a source of conflict and misunderstanding. In some cases they can lead to the breakdown of relationships between organisations and an unwillingness to work together.

All these factors may impact on the way a project evolves, without the people involved being fully aware of them.

It's a good idea for partners to agree on a mediation process at the onset of the partnership. This can be used if conflict affects the partnership to the point where negotiation is no longer possible.

#### ■ Consider any potential Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of Interest for individuals and/or organisation involved in the project may arise. It is important that such conflicts be declared and dealt with as appropriate, this may include withdrawal from the project or a decision not to proceed with a particular source of funding.

#### ■ Recruit and select project workers

If the project requires the recruitment of staff either paid or unpaid it is important to establish a clearly defined process that is fair and equitable and in line with Equal Employment Opportunity legislation. A good starting point is to write a job description detailing the tasks and responsibilities of the job and then selection criteria detailing the experience, skills and knowledge required by persons to do it.

Some issues that need consideration when selecting staff include:

- which, if any, Industrial Awards the worker would be covered by
- whether workers would be taken on as employees or consultants
- GST related matters
- establishing a grievance procedure
- if and how the positions would be advertised
- who is responsible for selection of workers
- how people will apply for positions



- allowing sufficient time to find the right person for a position, this is particularly pertinent in rural areas that experience transient populations.

See the Useful Contact list at the back of this booklet for some knowledgeable contacts for industrial relations issues.

It is good practice to use written contracts for workers both paid and volunteer as this can clearly define expectations of the worker; conditions of employment; and the responsibilities of the employer, thereby reducing the opportunity for misunderstanding.

Recruitment and selection of staff is a potential area for Conflicts of Interest for parties involved in a collaborative project. Once recognised a Conflict of Interest should be declared and action taken as appropriate for the success of the project and the integrity of all involved.

#### ■ Re-assess community needs and project resources

Some time may elapse between when the project planning commences and when the project actually comes about, so it may be worthwhile re-assessing whether the need in the community still exists. For instance another organisation may have also seen the existing educational gap and implemented another strategy to address it, or you may have been planning to offer a follow-on program for a previous group of participants but find that having had to wait for a considerable period, they are no longer interested. Under these circumstances it would be prudent to reconsider the project. On the other hand the community need may still exist and it would thus be advisable to review existing project resources, making sure that you include any new players or interested parties.

Another pertinent factor to consider is whether your priorities or those of your partner have changed in the interim and accordingly whether the project is still the best use of your time or resources, not forgetting the community for whom you provide a service.

#### ■ Establish financial procedures and review budget

The partner responsible for financial arrangements for the project should set up appropriate bookkeeping

systems which would include processes for:

- recording of all payments by either cheque or cash
- petty cash float
- issuing of invoices and relevant receipt of funds
- maintaining proper wages records
- maintaining GST records
- reconciling actual expenditure and receipts against budget.

A review of the budget may be needed to ensure that figures reflect current costings and is realistic.

#### ◆ MARKET PROJECT

Share the idea with others from early in the project. Marketing of the project is ongoing in order to:

- float the idea in search of other interested or like-minded parties
- confirm the need for the idea
- arouse the interest of the potential target group
- encourage and maintain community energy and interest for the idea
- alert your networks and/or referral agencies to the project
- report on progress and achievements.

### *example*

"I put a small article about the idea of a community permaculture garden in the local community newspaper (Toodyay Herald) to see if anyone else might be interested. I thought someone from the general community might reply but instead the local high school spotted it and that's what brought them into the project. They provided the land for the garden and students have been involved in growing the vegies."

*Dave King,  
Toodyay Community Resource Centre.*

For effective marketing make use of community networks such as local newspapers and local radio. 'Word-of-mouth'

is generally one of the most effective marketing tools, particularly in getting the message to potential participants. 'Bring-a-friend' is another useful strategy for boosting the interest in order to ensure sufficient numbers are reached to make a group viable.

In any marketing it is important to allow sufficient time for the strategies to be effective and it is useful if the message is heard in more than one context. For example, if someone reads about a new project in a flyer in the mail and then reads an email at work, or hears about it at their management committee meeting, then it will start to sound like an idea worth checking out.

### ➤ REGULARLY COMMUNICATE BETWEEN PROJECT PARTNERS AND ASSESS METHODOLOGY, OUTCOMES ETC ON AN ONGOING BASIS

One of the key factors for successful collaborative projects lies in effective communication between all parties. The early establishment of regular contact between players (face-to-face, or using available technology such as email, fax, tele/video conferencing whatever is appropriate) keeps everyone informed and contributes to keeping the power within a group evenly balanced.

Collaborative partnerships are built on relationships and in turn effective relationships require open communication and a certain level of trust. Create opportunities to connect with members of the project team both informally and formally. Utilising effective group processes will enable project partners to engage in honest dialogue, thereby gaining a better understanding of their partners and an appreciation of each other's strengths and the reciprocal benefits of a mutual agenda and shared vision.

Individual personalities have a bearing on any communication issues and great care should be taken in ensuring everyone is as fully informed as possible.

Although much of the communication between partners may be informal, there will be occasions where more official structured meetings will be required and these should be minuted for future reference, clearly noting required action with deadlines and who is responsible.

Regular reviews built into the project time-lines will facilitate feedback from all players, the continued evaluation of project methodology and the achievement of outcomes.



Workers, participants, co-ordinators and managers ideally will be involved in giving feedback. In this process it is important to acknowledge all viewpoints and feedback, both positive and negative, and to explore how all players can work together to improve any areas that are lacking.

Emerging needs of the target group and/or partners may require project partners to be flexible and adaptable in the way that they work.

### *example*

"The project co-ordinator worked closely with the project mentors and there was ongoing assessment of the project methodology and outcomes. All parties remained open and flexible as to how they could work together most effectively to meet the needs of the participants. For example there was agreement to change the venue after the first four weeks of the project; re-structuring of the planned program firstly to accommodate the higher than expected numbers of participants and later the different levels of ability and interest within the group."

*Filling in the Gaps Project – Koorda, Interim Project Report  
October 2000.*



## ❖ EVALUATE PROJECT AND PARTNERSHIP, WRITE REPORTS AND ACQUIT FUNDS

Often there is little energy left for the important tasks of evaluation and reporting, which makes it all the more important to include details of this stage in the early planning for the project. It is much easier to finalise if all the required information has been collected along the way and clear records have been kept of the project activities, process and finances. Responsibilities for these details should have been clarified between project partners during the early negotiations. Regular reminders and requests for records are quite appropriate and in the best interests of all involved.

Evaluation identifies the successes and gaps in the project, as well as providing useful groundwork for future versions or developments from the project. It may be a combination of formal and informal feedback, written or verbal, qualitative and quantitative, hard evidence and casual observations.

It is useful to have feedback from a number of perspectives:

- the target group
- the facilitators/mentors/leaders/presenters/tutors
- the project partners
- the management bodies involved
- the community, where feasible and appropriate.

Evaluations are not only worth gathering but also worth heeding. Positive feedback is always reassuring, but it is important to note ways that the project could have been improved or done differently and, where appropriate, to build those notions into any future project.

It is really useful for the collaborative partners to meet and evaluate the project overall, looking at their input and outcomes and whether the process achieved what they set out to do. This will hopefully also engender a sense of closure, or alternately act as a review and catalyst for future partnerships.

## ◆◆◆ RECOGNISE WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BY THE PROJECT AND CELEBRATE

An important part of project evaluation is the acknowledgement of all players and the expression of appreciation for their commitment and contribution to the success of the project.

This could take the form of a function to celebrate the achievements of the project participants, the successful working relationship of the project partners and to thank all those involved, including the funding body. Such an event could also be the focus of some media attention to promote the success of the joint venture.

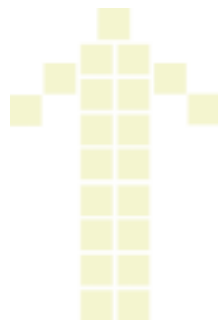
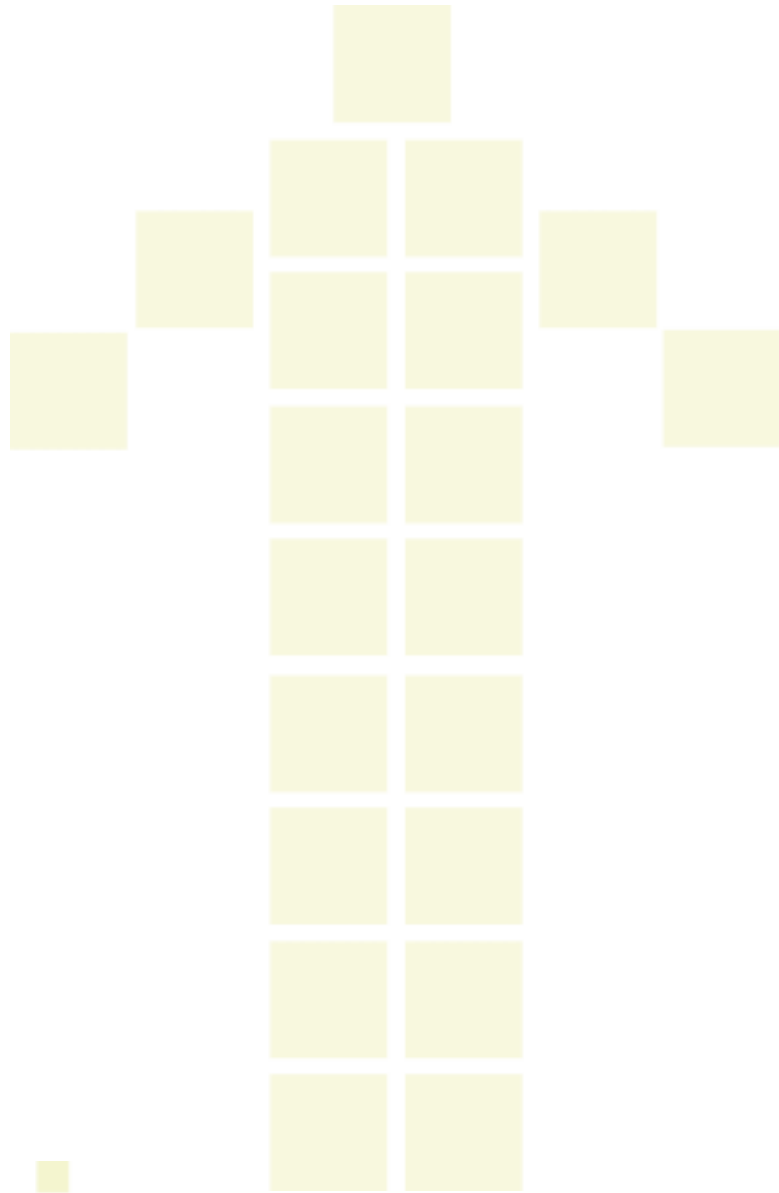
A celebratory event can also provide closure to an undertaking that has required considerable input of energy, enthusiasm and commitment from all players.

Sometimes endings are beginnings – your collaborative project may be the stepping-stone to new ventures.

### *example*

"The success of the partnership project [Filling in the Gaps in Kununurra] has led to further collaborative ventures. One was an extension of the original project to work further with the existing project participants and the second, a project that came about due to the new connections made with other local service providers and the focus on utilising available resources collaboratively rather than competitively to meet community needs."

*Filling in the Gaps Project – Kununurra,  
Final Project Report May 2001.*



## ➤ *conclusion* and resources



### **Conclusion**

Hopefully this booklet has provided you with some useful strategies on how to go about working in partnership to enable an adult learning project to happen.

While partnerships provide new opportunities there needs to be mutual understanding and respect between partners. There may be costs as well as benefits but the results deserve to be celebrated.

The Partnership Process Model is a framework to hang your ideas on and to guide the collaborative process. It is not meant to be prescriptive and each partnership situation will be unique. Partnerships work best when they develop at a local level.

Finally, remember the foundations of good partnership practice:

- good, open communication, keeping everyone informed
- mutual agreement on roles and responsibilities, preferably in writing
- make no assumptions.

**A respectful and responsive partnership can indeed be...  
The Way To Go.**



## sample agreement one

Remember that this is only a guide.

This is an agreement for

The purpose of this partnership is

The stakeholders are

	Partner A	Partner B
Name		
Organisation		
Postal Address		
Contact Number		
Email Address		

We will work with this target group to

We know there is a need because

We will use these strategies

We will achieve these outcomes

We will know if our project is successful by

The following have been negotiated and we have allocated responsibility for the tasks

Area of responsibility	Who will be responsible
Overall coordination	
Finances	
Promoting the course	
Recruiting and liaising with participants	
Facilitating	
Organising venue	
Catering	
Dealing with enquiries about the course	
Taking enrolments	
Keeping attendance and statistics	

continued over

continued

Evaluating the course	
Reporting AVETMISS Statistics	
Following up participants	
Evaluating the project	
Reporting outcomes to the funding body	
Other (Specify)	

We will use this organisation as mediators if we can not resolve conflict

We have planned an interim meeting on

We have planned a follow up meeting on

We have discussed the project budget and we will allocate funds in the following manner

Management and Administration	\$	
Venue Costs	\$	
Refreshments	\$	
Promotion and advertising	\$	
Course materials and group resources		
	<b>Subtotal</b>	\$
Access costs (as needed)		
childcare	\$	
transport and travel	\$	
interpreters	\$	
personal attendants	\$	
ATSI/NESB assistant	\$	
Other (specify)	<b>Subtotal</b>	\$
Training	\$	
Facilitator	\$	
Other (specify)	<b>Subtotal</b>	\$
	<b>TOTAL</b>	\$

If there are any funds left we will

We have negotiated this agreement and are committed to fulfilling our responsibilities to the project and to each other

Partner A	Partner B
Signed	



## *sample agreement* two

This sample agreement is based on one developed for a partnership project between a Learning Centre, a Telecentre and Learning Centre Link which aimed to maximise the effective use of available resources to provide literacy, numeracy and technology skilling for adults in a rural community. Participants were mentored throughout the project and a program was developed to meet their individual needs. (Fictitious names for the Learning Centre and Telecentre have been used here).

### **Letter of Agreement Between Link, Wattle Learning Centre & Wattle Telecentre**

#### **RE: Rural Partnership Project**

It is agreed that Learning Centre Link, Wattle Learning Centre and Wattle Telecentre (hereafter Link, WLC and WT respectively) will work collaboratively to meet the outcomes for this project as stated in the attached funding submission.

The approved funding for the project will be paid to Link by the Department of Goodwill.

#### **Link undertakes to:**

- manage the funds and distribute as required for the project and in accordance with the attached budget
- provide support to the project coordinator as required
- monitor the progress and outcomes for the project via monthly written or verbal reports, meetings and/or phone contact
- coordinate meetings between the Department's designated officer, Link, the project coordinator, and any other key stakeholders as appropriate
- assist WLC and WT with the production of a document outlining the partnership process
- ensure the Department is acknowledged in all publicity and advertising associated with the project
- provide a report to the Department on completion of the project, based on records and information supplied by the key stakeholders and the project coordinator
- acquit the project funds in accordance with the funding agreement with the Department.

#### **The Wattle Learning Centre co-ordinator, as the appointed project co-ordinator, will be responsible for:**

- advertising the project and recruiting interested community members
- recruiting mentors for the project
- negotiating the project process with mentors, WLC and WT
- reporting regularly to Link via written reports, phone calls and/or meetings as to the progress of the project and the achievement of the outcomes
- gathering and collating information from key stakeholders for example WT staff, mentors and local services re ACE resources in the area
- providing Link with appropriate financial documentation of the project
- liaising with WT personnel re possibilities for ongoing collaboration
- writing, with assistance from Link a document outlining the collaborative process between WLC and WT
- assisting participants to identify where they will get support to enhance and develop their new skills beyond the project time-lines

- ensuring adequate insurance policies are maintained for both WLC and WT.

**Mentors will be responsible for:**

- working on a one to one basis with participating community members to identify the knowledge, skills and support required by them
- locating and presenting resources as needed and mentoring community members as required
- recording ACE resources available to the locality
- assisting participants to self-evaluate and identify their future learning directions.

**The Wattle Telecentre coordinator will be responsible for:**

- providing computer/technology orientation to participating community members as required
- providing information about courses and resources available through WT
- recording ACE resources available
- liaising with WLC personnel re possibilities for ongoing collaboration
- working with the project coordinator in the writing of a document outlining the collaborative process between WLC and WT.

Link shall hold copyright of all materials and resources produced for the project. On completion of the project all materials and resources developed for the project shall be freely available for use by all parties to this agreement with the proviso they are not used to make a profit.

It is envisaged that the project will commence in the first week of July and will be completed by 29 September, with the project report being provided to the Department by 6 October 2001.

**Signed**

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Wattle Learning Centre

/ / 2001

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Wattle Telecentre

/ / 2001

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Learning Centre Link

/ / 2001





## *sample agreement three*

Many Telecentres have established partnerships with TAFE Colleges to assist in the delivery of educational programs, both ACE and accredited courses.

These Telecentres establish a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the College, which clearly outlines the responsibilities of each party in the delivery of courses. The MOU is regularly revisited through meetings between the Telecentre Co-ordinators and the relevant people from the college to discuss the operation of the MOU and to clarify operational issues.

Telecentres involved in these arrangements receive remuneration for enrolling students in accordance with terms negotiated with the College. Quite often the course is run at the Telecentre, or it can be arranged to run in another venue in town depending on the nature of the course (especially considering that some run belly dancing courses!)

The MOU is developed in consultation between the Telecentre Support Team, the College and the Telecentres involved.

Following is a framework of an MOU that would typically summarise the major responsibilities of the Telecentre and College, and a list of other areas that the agreement would include, as appropriate.

### **College responsibilities:**

- to offer courses for training which can be delivered via self paced and remote delivery
- to include the Telecentre in any promotional material about their courses locally
- to accept enrolments for courses
- to advise the Telecentre of courses that are over subscribed
- to provide resources to the Telecentre to assist in the delivery of their courses where appropriate and agreed by the College Director
- to ensure the correct charging information is provided to the Telecentre for all course enrolments
- the College cannot bind the Telecentre to any business other than for the purpose of enrolments.

### **Telecentre responsibilities:**

- for the purposes of this agreement the Telecentre shall not be associated with the College for any other reason other than to facilitate enrolments
- to maintain all relevant insurances and business licenses
- to use all the correct forms and procedures to enrol students
- to keep the College indemnified from any claims arising from the use of the Telecentre's facilities by any member of the public, whether enrolled in a College course or not.

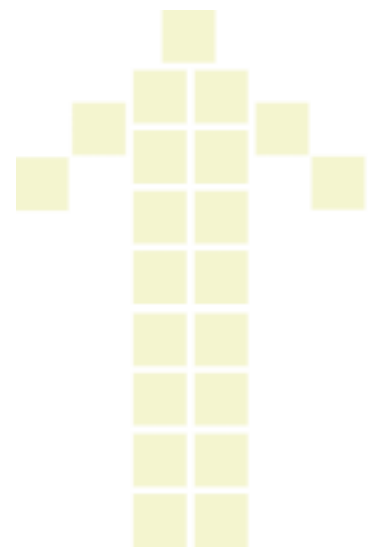
### **Other key components that should be considered for inclusion in the MOU are:**

- outlining the purpose of the agreement
- outlining the scope of the agreement, including time period
- fees and remuneration/recuperation of funds
- dealing with student complaints
- resolving disputes
- signatures by both parties.

## *acronyms*

Listed below are some acronyms that you may come across in your exploration of partnership opportunities.

ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
ALA	Adult Learning Australia
ALW	Adult Learner's Week
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
CALD/CaLD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CAN WA	Community Arts Network WA
CBT	Competency Based Training
CLAN WA	Community Link and Network WA
COTA	Council on the Ageing
CREDO	Community Regional Economic Development Operatives
CSH & E ITC	Community Services, Health & Education Industry Training Council
CSTC	Community Skills Training Centre
DETYA	Dept of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Federal)
ECC	Ethnic Communities Council
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FCS	Family and Children's Services (State)
GST	Goods and Services Tax
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education and Research
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
OMI	Office of Multicultural Interests
QETO	Quality Endorsed Training Organisation
RCC	Recognition of Current Competencies (Skills Recognition)
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning (Skills Recognition)
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAC	Training Accreditation Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TSU	Telecentre Support Unit
U3A	University of the Third Age
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WACOSS	WA Council of Social Service
WAMA	WA Municipal Association



## *useful contacts*

### **Aboriginal Services Branch**

Dept of Training  
Level 2, 151 Royal St  
East Perth WA 6004  
Ph 9235 6196  
<http://www.training.wa.gov.au>

### **Access Improvement Branch**

Disability Services Commission  
146 - 160 Colin St  
West Perth WA 6005  
Ph 9426 9200  
<http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au>

### **Adult Learning Australia**

C/- Learning Centre Link  
335 Pier St  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9228 9000  
<http://www.ala.asn.au>

### **Community Arts Network**

King Street Arts Centre  
Ground floor, 357 - 365 Murray St  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9226 2422 / 1800 681 021  
<http://www.canwa.com.au>

### **Community Services Health & Education Industry Training Council**

1st floor, 1152 Hay St  
West Perth WA 6005  
Ph 9481 4211  
<http://www.csheitc.org.au>

### **Conservation Council of WA**

2 Delhi St  
West Perth WA 6005  
Ph 9420 7266  
<http://www.iinet.net.au/~conswa/gtimes>

### **Council on the Ageing (COTA)**

2nd floor Wesley Centre  
93 William St  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9321 2133  
<http://www.cotawa.asn.au>

### **Dept of Productivity & Labour Relations**

3rd floor, 2 Havelock St  
West Perth WA 6005  
Ph 9222 7700  
<http://www.doplar.wa.gov.au>

### **Dept of Sport & Recreation**

PO Box 66  
Wembley WA 6014  
Ph 9387 9700  
<http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au>

### **Dept of Training**

Level 2, 151 Royal St  
East Perth WA 6004  
Ph 9235 6222  
<http://www.training.wa.gov.au>

### **Ethnic Communities Council of WA**

20 View St  
North Perth WA 6006  
Ph 9227 5322  
<http://www.multicultural.online.wa.gov.au>

### **Equal Opportunity Commission**

141 St Georges Tce  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9216 3900  
<http://www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au>

### **Learning Centre Link**

335 Pier St  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9228 9000  
<http://www.learningcentrelink.asn.au>

### **Office of Multicultural Interests**

Level 2, 81 St Georges Tce  
Perth WA  
Ph 9426 8690  
<http://www.ocmi.wa.gov.au>

### **One World Centre**

99 Hay St  
Subiaco WA 6008  
Ph 9388 2508  
<http://www.oneworldcentre.org.au>

### **Read Write Now!**

PO Box 1336  
Midland WA 6936  
Ph 9274 9366  
<http://www.pixeltech.com.au/rwn/>

### **Reconciliation WA**

10 Pier St  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9325 3377

### **Regional Development Commissions**

Dept Local Government & Regional  
Development  
168 - 70 St Georges Tce  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9327 5614  
<http://www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au>

### **Rural Remote & Regional Women's Network (RRR Network)**

Dept of Local Government & Regional  
Development  
168 - 70 St Georges Tce  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9327 5165  
<http://www.rrr.online.wa.gov.au>

### **Swan River Trust**

Hyatt Centre  
87 Adelaide Tce  
East Perth WA 6004  
Ph 9220 5300  
<http://www.wrc.wa.gov.au/srt/>

### **Telecentre Support Unit**

Dept of Local Government & Regional  
Development  
168 - 70 St Georges Tce  
Perth WA 6000  
Ph 9327 5422  
<http://www.telecentres.wa.gov.au>

### **WA Aboriginal Artists Advisory Committee**

Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation  
295 Manning Rd  
Waterford WA 6152  
Ph 9451 4977

# *Partnerships...*

→ the way to go



## **Department of Training**

Level 2  
151 Royal Street  
East Perth WA 6004

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Fax 08 9235 6224  
TTY 08 9226 3370  
Freecall 1800 999 167

[www.training.wa.gov.au](http://www.training.wa.gov.au)

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