

Forming, developing and sustaining social partnerships

Stephen Billett

Griffith University

Allie Clemans

Terri Seddon

Monash University



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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author/project team
and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government,
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Level 11, 33 King William Street, Adelaide SA 5000
PO Box 8288 Station Arcade, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia
ph +61 8 8230 8400, fax +61 8 8212 3436
email ncver@ncver.edu.au
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>

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Key messages

Social partnerships are local networks connecting some combinations of local community groups, education and training providers, industry, and governments for the purpose of working on local issues and community-building activities. They are becoming an increasingly widespread organisational form and are considered to work well in expressing and responding to local needs and building decision-making capacity at the local level.

- ✧ Through studies of ten social partnerships involving vocational education and training (VET) in Queensland and Victoria, this research demonstrates that social partnerships are established and maintained because participants engage in ‘partnership work’—the interactive and collaborative process of working together to identify, negotiate and define goals, and to develop processes for realising and reviewing those goals.
- ✧ A key finding is that this is complex work, demanding significant skills in cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. Although this issue was identified in earlier research, this study has enabled these complex activities to be further examined and defined.
- ✧ Partnership work is underpinned by a set of principles that vary for different types of work at different stages of the partnership. The principles include developing or maintaining: the partnership; shared goals; relations with partners; capacity for partnership work; governance and leadership; and trust and trustworthiness.
- ✧ Given that vocational education provision is often supported by social partnerships, as reflected in many of the partnerships canvassed in this study, the nature of partnership work is of interest and relevance to vocational education and training, and particularly in relation to achieving objective 3 of the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010, which is concerned with strengthening communities and regions economically and socially through learning and employment.

Executive summary

Aims of project

This project investigated the principles and practices underpinning the effective operation of social partnerships. The aim was to identify those principles and practices most beneficial in social partnerships supporting vocational education and training (VET).

The project builds on prior research into social partnerships by examining the processes involved in social partnerships.

The specific aims of this project were to investigate the:

- ✧ key principles and practices that underpin the formation, development and maintenance of the social practices effective in assisting localised decision-making and capacity-building
- ✧ effective enactment of these principles and practices as shaped in different ways across these social practices
- ✧ ways in which these principles and practices are associated with establishing and developing social partnerships robust enough to manage changing circumstances, tasks and goals.

This project is phase 1 of a two-phase project. Phase 2 will investigate the application of these principles and practices to vocational education and training in specific regions.

Methodology

Phase 1: Retrospective study of existing social partnerships

The project involved reviewing ten social partnerships in Queensland and Victoria during 2005–06, specifically those which had shown some history of operation and success. This review process aimed to understand their formation, development and progress; determine internal and external factors influencing their formation and development; and identify principles and practices that have sustained these social partnerships and their partnership work over time.

Data were collected from these ten partnerships through interviews with up to three key informants in each, and focused on specific events in the development of the partnership in order to identify factors that either contributed to the development of, or served to undermine the partnership and partnership work. An analysis of the data gathered through the interviews identified guiding principles in developing and sustaining partnership work. The findings were returned to each social partnership for comment, elaboration and verification. The informants in the social partnerships overwhelmingly endorsed the principles and practices identified in this first phase.

Social partnerships

Social partnerships are localised networks that connect some combination of local community groups, education and training providers, industry and government to work on local issues and community-building activities (Seddon & Billett 2004; Billett & Seddon 2004).

In Australia and throughout the world, governments, civic organisations and global agencies, including those associated with vocational education and training, are increasingly recognising the value of social partnerships as a means of identifying and responding to local and regional concerns, and for building social capital.¹ Social partnerships have the potential to engage communities with government and non-government organisations in solving local problems, to involve communities in making decisions, and to negotiate cooperatively the outcomes desired by these communities. They are seen as a way to assist collaborative decision-making and to build local capacity in ways that support economic, social and civic goals, and development attuned to local needs and circumstances. By its very nature, a partnership requires partners to collaborate in achieving common goals. However, the process of working together is complex and challenging. It requires partners and participants to understand that effective social partnerships work in specific ways.

Findings

The findings reported here cover the identification of different types of social partnerships; the central role of partnership work in the development and continuity of social partnerships; the principles and practices associated with partnerships and their development; and the types of partnership work.

Types of social partnerships

The partnerships reviewed were of three different kinds:

- ✧ *enacted partnerships*, which were initiated by external agencies, but whose goals are of relevance to, or are shared by, the community
- ✧ *community partnerships*, which originated in the community to address local concerns, but worked with external agencies to secure adequate resources and support for dealing with identified problems and issues
- ✧ *negotiated partnerships*, which were formed between partners with reciprocal goals to secure a service or support, and required negotiation between various interests and agendas.

However, despite there being different kinds of social partnerships and instances of diverse goals, purposes and histories, the key common enabling activity across these partnerships was the quality of the partnership work undertaken in the partnership.

Partnership work

The data show that social partnerships develop and are sustained because participants engage in *partnership work*. Effective partnership work embraces and harnesses the contributions of local partners and external agencies, their interactions and the changes they make in the collective work of realising shared goals. The processes of working together allow:

- ✧ communities to identify and represent their needs, and to secure quality partners and partnership arrangements that will enable them to achieve their objectives
- ✧ government and non-government agencies to understand and respond to local needs, to utilise local resources and to enhance capacity for local governance.

Partnership work embraces a wide range of processes that enable partners to work together. These processes include:

- ✧ maintaining shared purposes and goals
- ✧ developing mature and reciprocal relationships among partners

¹ Social capital is defined as the accumulated benefit accruing to individuals and communities as a result of their engagement in community and civic activities and the consequent networks established.

- ✧ identifying and accessing resources to assist in realising goals
- ✧ supporting individuals who engage effectively in the community to secure partnership goals, and to avoid the negative consequences of burnout and a high staff turnover
- ✧ focusing on the partnership goals, rather than on operational issues, in order to foster close and trusted relationships among partners
- ✧ participating in and maintaining commitment to the partnership process by recognising achievements and seeking opportunities to demonstrate achievement
- ✧ welcoming, facilitating and sustaining commitment and trust within the partnership
- ✧ identifying a range of measures for evaluating achievement.

From analyses of the interview data, a number of principles and practices of partnership work were identified as contributing to the initial development of social partnerships and their continuity over time.

Principles of partnership work

Five principles were identified as guiding the initial stages of effective partnership work.

- ✧ *Building shared purposes and goals* involves identifying the partners' interests and concerns, and developing a framework for collectively realising goals.
- ✧ *Building relations with partners* involves building trust and commitment, encouraging participation, and developing inclusive and respectful processes.
- ✧ *Building capacities for partnership work* involves engaging partners in the collective work of the partnership, through developing the infrastructure and resources needed to achieve goals.
- ✧ *Building partnership governance and leadership* involves formulating and adopting consistent, transparent and workable guidelines and procedures for the partnership work and practice of leadership.
- ✧ *Building trust and trustworthiness* involves establishing processes that engage and inform partners, and which encourage cooperation and collaboration.

Principles required to sustain social partnerships

Similar principles are required to sustain effective partnership work over time and through changing circumstances.

- ✧ *Maintaining shared purposes and goals* involves the partners actively reflecting upon, reviewing and revising goals, identifying achievements, and renewing commitment.
- ✧ *Maintaining relations with partners* involves endorsing and consolidating existing relationships, recognising partners' contributions, and facilitating new and strategic relationships.
- ✧ *Maintaining capacity for partnership work* involves securing and maintaining partners who engage effectively with both community and external sponsors, and managing the infrastructure required to support staff and partners.
- ✧ *Maintaining governance and leadership* involves developing and supporting close relations and communication between partners, and effective leadership.
- ✧ *Maintaining trust and trustworthiness* involves focusing on partners' needs and expectations, and ensuring that differing needs are recognised and addressed.

These principles are evident in a wide range of practices across a variety of successful social partnerships. Where these principles were absent, the partnerships resulted in unsatisfactory practices and outcomes. They can be identified in the initial stages of partnership formation and building, as well as in the work that maintains the partnerships. It was these principles that were broadly ratified by the social partnerships in the feedback process.

Dimensions of partnership work

Partnership work can be understood as having five aspects. These aspects or dimensions emerged as participants described their partnership work and are:

- ✧ cultural-scoping work (establishing a culture within the partnership which develops from the values each partner brings)
- ✧ connection-building work (acknowledging connections among partners)
- ✧ capacity-building work (building the capacities of partners to engage in the complexities inherent to social partnerships)
- ✧ collective work (establishing processes for collaborative action within the social partnerships)
- ✧ trust-building work (establishing an ethic of trust within the social partnership).

Together, these five dimensions and the principles and practices that support them were identified as comprising effective partnership work. Partnership work will adopt particular variations and emphases within social partnerships over time, but will still be consistent with the identified principles.

Phase 2

This framework for understanding partnerships work as it applies to vocational education and training will be appraised in the second phase of this project. It is expected to involve further work with particular localised communities and/or skills ecosystems that will have their social partnerships appraised in terms of the framework.

Background to study

Social partnerships

Globally, government and non-governmental agencies are now viewing social partnerships as a means of improving service delivery and for building enhanced capability at the local level (Alexadiou & Ozga 2000; Green, Wolf & Leney 1999; OECD 1994a, 1994b; United Nations Development Program 1997). In the context of the vocational education and training (VET) sector, this view has arisen out of a range of concerns and needs that include:

- ✧ a growing consensus that centralised agencies struggle to understand and accommodate the diverse needs of communities, such as providing effective and tailored educational provisions for young people (for example, O'Donoghue 2001)
- ✧ a growing government interest in building capacity at the local level to assist in the effective targeting and delivery of services, such as VET courses and provision (for example, Kosky 2001)
- ✧ an emerging concern to find ways of securing economic goals through local partnerships and decision-making, such as aligning VET provision with local enterprise needs (for example, ANTA 2003)
- ✧ a growing governmental interest in engaging and mobilising individuals and communities more directly in civic activity and community-building projects (Field 2000).

Thus, there are both economic and social motives in the interest taken by government and non-government agencies in the effective implementation of social partnerships at a local level.

These new social partnerships, it is claimed, overcome bureaucratic rigidities, address unfortunate consequences of market reform and provide solutions to social exclusion and the risks (that is, individual, community and national) associated with poor educational participation and outcomes (Levitas 1998; Putnam 2000). These partnerships are self-governing agencies that associate and work through horizontal rather than hierarchical relationships. Decision-making in these social partnerships requires careful management because the shift away from corporate organisation (for example, large government, organised capital and labour) to smaller-scale localised interest groups creates different political systems in which there is considerable cultural diversity and many different decision-making centres (Rhodes 1996). This was evident in the earlier work on the role of social partnerships in vocational education (Seddon & Billett 2004). These partnerships adopt decision-making processes best described as 'governance' rather than 'government' (Jessop 1998). It is proposed that partnerships bring individuals together so that they learn that there are benefits in cooperation with others, especially when directed towards common goals. Participants in partnerships become more confident, capable and engaged, and potentially create communities with high 'social capital' (Putnam 1993), in situations where there are strong social networks and trust that facilitates working together for mutual benefit (Woolcock 1998).

Hence, we are interested to understand how social partnerships work, how they are developed, and how they can be sustained through changing priorities and times.

The Copenhagen Centre (1999) defines partnerships as:

People and organisations from some combination of public, business and civil constituencies who engage in voluntary, mutually beneficial, innovative relationships to address common societal aims through combining their resources and competencies.

(Copenhagen Centre website)

Here, we define social partnerships as localised networks that connect some combination of local community groups, education and training providers, industry and government, to work on local issues and community-building activities (Seddon & Billett 2004). However, the formation and ongoing development of these social partnerships can be complex, sometimes problematic, and require particular kinds of support and guidance.

Some social partnerships evolve as a product of local concerns, such as those focusing on localised skill shortages or concerns about unemployment (Billett & Hayes 2000; Rees 1997). More typically, new partnerships are those which government and non-government agencies deliberately establish for specific policy purposes. Yet, these 'enacted' partnerships are different from those that emerge spontaneously from a locally identified need (Seddon & Billett 2004). This is partly because enacted social partnerships are often more global in their ambitions, more inclusive in their membership, wider in their localities and are subject to governmental administrative and accountability measures. Moreover, as they are enacted and supported from outside the community, their formation is often necessarily predicated upon and auspiced through existing networks or affiliations which require negotiation with these bodies and changes in existing relationships (Billett & Seddon 2004).

It follows that the processes for the effective formation, development and maintenance of these partnerships are both potentially complex and diverse across different kinds of partnerships. In the Victorian local learning and employment networks the prospects for the development of consensual decision-making were found to be premised upon the scope of the partnerships, the diversity of interests represented, on securing representation and the participants' experience in consensus-based decision-making processes, and what constituted consensus-building activities within the partnerships (Seddon et al. 2002). Moreover, enacted partnerships such as these rely heavily upon volunteer effort. While essential, voluntary effort adds further complexities to the establishment, development and maintenance of social partnerships. Volunteers, whether individuals giving their time freely or as employees paid elsewhere, seem less inclined to accept central edicts, are selective in their engagement, look for outcomes from their efforts, and are prone to exhaustion, thereby threatening the continuity of social partnerships.

Partnerships have the capacity to:

- ✧ make significant contributions to localised decision-making in VET
- ✧ support local initiatives associated with skill development
- ✧ participate in and guide the development of local capacity-building through and for vocational education.

However, these partnerships are themselves in need of support and guidance in their development and continuity. Agencies sponsoring these partnerships need to act in ways that best support the prospect of effective partnership development and assist them to promote local workforce capability development. From the perspectives of both the social partnerships and their sponsors, their development needs to be informed by principles and practices to guide and support their development, thereby avoiding repeating needless mistakes.

Aims, phases and procedures

Project aims and goals

This project aims to identify the principles and practices underpinning the effective formation, development and transformations in the work of social partnerships. This investigation was undertaken to identify principles and practices that enable social partnerships to support vocational education and training and local capability-building.

The project builds on and extends earlier research by two of the researchers into social partnerships (Seddon & Billett 2004) which examined the roles that social partnerships were playing in vocational education and training. This project looks at the outcomes and experiences from social partnerships and which have been sustained over time. In this way we can learn from their collective experiences.

The specific aims of this project are to identify the:

- ✧ key principles and practices that underpin the formation, development and maintenance of social practices that are effective in assisting localised decision-making and capacity-building
- ✧ effective enactment of these principles and practices as shaped in different ways across ten instances of social practices
- ✧ ways in which these principles and practices are associated with establishing and developing social partnerships robust enough to manage changing circumstances, tasks and goals.

This project takes up the question of how partners with different values, agendas, practices and cultures come together and negotiate and reconcile these differences to achieve constructive working relationships through social partnerships. In doing so it focuses specifically on the processes or social practices that constitute the principles, norms and behaviours within social partnerships and the kinds of work which enable partnerships to be effective in establishing their operations, and in progressing and successfully meeting the partnership's goals. We call these processes of working together 'partnership work'. By understanding how social practices come together in effective partnership work, it becomes possible to identify ways in which the provision of vocational education could be supported. This more focused goal is the subject of the second phase of this project to be conducted in 2005 and 2006.

Phases of project

Phase 1: Retrospective study of existing social partnerships

The project has reviewed the social partnerships investigated in 2001–02 and a number of new partnerships in order to determine their progress, and ascertain internal and external factors that have influenced their development, and identify those principles and practices which have sustained the social partnerships and their partnership work.

Data were collected from ten social partnerships by interviewing up to three key informants in each. These interviews focused on specific events in the development of the partnership to identify factors that sustained or undermined the partnership and partnership work. These partnerships are listed in appendix 1.

Procedures for phase 1

The procedures for this project comprise three key stages of phase 1.

- ✧ identifying, selecting and securing participating social partnerships
- ✧ gathering and analysing social partnership interview data
- ✧ verifying identified principles and practices within social partnerships.

Identifying, selecting and securing participating social partnerships

Ten social partnerships were identified, selected and approached, and subsequently agreed to participate in the first phase of the project. The partnerships are located across two states: Victoria and Queensland. These partnerships included a number of those which had participated in earlier projects undertaken by the principal researchers and also a number new to the researchers. The earlier social projects include the ACE (adult and community education) Community Partnership, St James College, Banyule–Nillumbik Local Learning and Employment Network, and Frankston Local Learning and Employment Network.

The ten cases represented different kinds of social partnerships with diverse foci and locations. Some are examples of ‘enacted partnerships’—partnerships initiated and sponsored by agencies external to the communities in which they are located (for example, the local learning and employment networks). Others are ‘community’ partnerships—those initiated by the community (for example, Deception Bay Project, Wide Bay Coalition), and some best characterised by being initiated through interaction between internal and external interests (for example, Mt Isa Regional Skill Capability Project). These are termed ‘negotiated partnerships’. Although all the partnerships are concerned with addressing local needs and capacity-building, there is diversity in their specific purposes. These include:

- ✧ assisting the provision of and support for community services (for example, Wide Bay Coalition, Deception Bay Project, ACE Community Partnership), and community services and health skills and workforce development (for example, Queensland Community Service and Health Industry Training Council)
- ✧ addressing young people’s employment and education needs (local learning and employment networks)
- ✧ addressing industry and regional skill development needs (for example, Mt Isa Project)
- ✧ assisting in school-to-work transitions (St James College).

However, the common goal for those partnerships is the transformation in individuals and communities through individual and community capacity-building activities or learning. These partnerships are located in inner metropolitan areas, provincial centres, outer suburbs of metropolitan cities, and remote centres.

Gathering and analysing social partnership interview data

Interviews were conducted with up to three key informants within each social partnerships to identify:

- ✧ the social partnerships’ development and transformations since they were last investigated
- ✧ the factors and practices assisting or inhibiting their development through this period
- ✧ the factors instrumental in sustaining the social partnerships through periods of significant change.

Findings from earlier studies about key sustainability factors were used to formulate interview questions. For instance, earlier research identified key issues relevant to sponsoring agencies. These were:

- ✧ the organisation of the administrative and contractual arrangements

- ✧ the scope of geographical and cultural diversity limiting sustainable social partnership
- ✧ the impact of particular auspicing (that is, hosting) arrangements
- ✧ the provision of an adequate resource base
- ✧ the formulation of realistic timelines
- ✧ the reciprocal flow of advice and reporting.

The nature of work required to overcome these constraints within particular social partnerships has been explored and elaborated further in this study.

In the interviews informants were asked to reflect upon particular events in the development and transformations of the social partnerships to provide rich and valid data about the factors which had played key roles in either sustaining or threatening their continuity. Interviewees were asked to identify factors that threatened or promoted the development of social partnerships as a means to inform what practices were most likely to secure effective partnership outcomes.

Questions designed to identify principles and practices integral to each social partnership were asked about their:

- ✧ initial formation
- ✧ early development
- ✧ capacity to be sustained over time.

An interview schedule was developed, trialled and then forwarded to the informants prior to the interviews being conducted. The interviews were usually audiotaped, and synopses of the interviews were tabulated for ease of analysis. The tabulated data provided the opportunity to organise and interpret participants' responses to interview questions.

Analysis of data

The data analyses comprised an interrogation for principles and practices that were salient either in one of the phases of development of the social partnership, or across all phases of its development and continuity. In addition, instances or examples that illustrated principles or practices were identified through this process.

The key outcome of these analyses was the identification of a tentative set of practices and principles whose use led to effective partnership work. These principles have implications for both the social partnerships and their sponsoring agencies.

In practice, it was difficult to differentiate between the practices/principles relevant to either the initial formation or early development stage. Consequently, these two stages were collapsed into one category. Following the analyses, the tentative framework consequently developed was returned to social partnerships for verification.

Verification of identified principles and practices with social partnerships

The feedback from the social partnerships themselves suggests the tentatively identified set of principles and practices reflects not only generally applicable outcomes, but also those which individual social partnerships can identify as representing their experiences and practices. The instrument developed for the verification phase also serves as a device to illuminate and evaluate the practices and policies being enacted in social partnerships in the next phase and for other purposes (see appendix 2).

Findings

The findings reported here are the results of analyses of the interview data and its verification by informants from the social partnerships. Firstly, findings about the types of social partnerships are presented. This is followed by discussion about the characteristics and scope of social partnerships and partnership work. The discussion draws on examples from the social partnerships. A discussion of the nature of partnership work follows, supported by illustrative examples, including principles and practices associated with the initial stages of their development and their continuity.

Types of social partnerships

Each of the ten partnerships participating in the study was categorised as one of three different kinds of social partnerships.

Enacted partnerships are initiated by external agencies, but whose goals are relevant to, or are shared by the community. These include: Banyule–Nillumbik Local Learning and Employment Network, Maribyrnong–Moonee Valley Local Learning and Employment Network, and Mornington–Frankston Local Learning and Employment Network.

These three social partnerships focus on creating pathways to training and employment for young people disengaged from education and training. These enacted local learning networks were established in Victoria in 2001 and continue to operate through a group of community stakeholders who come together to plan and initiate pathways and programs for youth.

Community partnerships originated in the community to address local concerns, but worked with external agencies to secure adequate resources and support for dealing with identified problems and issues. These include: Upper Yarra Secondary College/Upper Yarra Community House (referred to throughout as ACE Community Partnership), North-Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network, Mt Isa Regional Capability Project (referred to throughout as Mount Isa Project), Deception Bay Support Service (referred to throughout as Deception Bay Project) and Wide Bay Coalition, Disability Sector Training Fund (referred to throughout as Wide Bay Coalition).

These community social partnerships have been in operation for around one to three years. Their work is directed towards improving the employment and educational prospects for disadvantaged social groups. The Upper Yarra Community Centre and Upper Yarra Secondary School partners are aiming to improve school retention by providing young people with a vocational Year 12 program conducted through the community centre. The North-Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network, the Maribyrnong Local Learning and Employment Network and the Mt Isa Project connect young people to employment and work placements, while the Wide Bay Coalition decides on training priorities for the disability sector, including those for parents and carers.

Negotiated partnerships were formed between partners with a reciprocal goal to secure a service or support. These required common negotiation of interests and agendas. These partnerships include: St James College (referred to throughout as St James) and the Queensland Community Services and Health Industry Training Council.

These social partnerships have been in operation for around 11 to 15 years, relatively longer than the social partnerships described above. The Queensland Community Services and Health Industry

Training Council social partnership is a tripartite organisation providing advice on VET to the Queensland Government. It brokers training through regional networks and was established in 1990. St James College draws on a social partnership model to provide structured workplace learning for Years 11 and 12 students.

Each type of partnership has distinct origins and purposes, as summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of types of partnerships

	Origins	Purposes	Processes
Enacted partnership	From outside the partnership which is to be the target of the engagement, yet with goals or resources that the community is interested in engaging with	To secure outcomes aligned to external funding body	Responding to requirements and accountabilities of external partner/sponsor through engaging the community in activities associated with those goals
Community partnership	Concerns, problems, issues identified within the community	To secure resources to address issues, problems and concerns, often from agencies outside the community	Consolidating and making a case and then working with external agencies to secure adequate responses
Negotiated partnership	Need to secure a provision of service or support that necessitates working with partners	To develop effective working relations outside the organisation which comprises the social partnership	Working with and finding reciprocal goals with partners

These distinctions suggest that there are different factors initiating the formation, purposes and focus for their work.

These conceptions of social partnerships serve to demonstrate something of the scope of how social partnerships are initiated and enacted. However, a set of concerns or goals that have to be met collectively, and through partnerships with others is common to each. One way of considering the formation of social partnerships is to examine the origins of these partnerships and their goals as the key premise for organising and acting collectively. This includes engaging with others who are seen as holding the resources to address these issues, and whose requirements need to be aligned with the emerging goals of the social partnership. Another common basis was the need to build trust in relationships with others to ensure effective partnership engagement and participation. Because of the differences in origins, this process of building trust, for example, takes on quite different forms across the three kinds of partnerships outlined above. The character of the social partnership influences the way this process of building relationships of trust is realised, as table 2 indicates.

Table 2: Building trust in types of partnership

	With whom and for what purpose	Instances
Enacted partnership	Within and among representatives of the community to achieve prescribed goals for which the partnership has been formed	Among local schools, TAFE, employers,
Community partnership	With sponsoring agencies to secure resources or support	Government agencies
Negotiated partnership	With partners to secure service or support	Employers, agencies

Note: TAFE = technical and further education.

So, despite the differences between the origins of partnerships, they all demonstrate a common need to negotiate and realise a set of concerns or goals that have to be met collectively, through partnerships with others who hold various resources, and by building the capacity for the

partnership to achieve its goals. We have called this process of building relationships of trust and capacity *partnership work*.

However, while these three conceptions of social partnership provide a means to understand different motivations, goals and processes, the data also suggest that, rather than being fixed qualities, these characteristics and qualities reflect particular moments in the life of social partnerships. That is, in considering the overall development of social partnerships, they represent sets of contributions to and processes of partnership work at particular moments in time and stages of development, rather than being categories of partnerships or distinct perspectives on social partnership work. While useful in categorising the starting point for social partnerships, these three conceptions of how they operate may not be sufficient to understand the evolving and sustaining processes of partnership development and maintenance.

For some partnerships, the expressed need within the community led to the formation of some kind of collective activity which subsequently sought to engage with government or sponsoring agencies or enterprises to achieve the goals related to that need (that is, as in negotiated partnerships). The Deception Bay Project arose out of concern about a lack of opportunities and social infrastructure to enable young people to participate in education and training. This prompted them to engage with government to address both broader and strategic issues of inadequate social infrastructure. The theme: *How do we build a better city?* became the focus of the community concern. This gave the community the motivation for seeking solutions outside its usual boundaries, since resourcing the development of this infrastructure was beyond its capacity. This partnership quickly moved from its category at formation (that is, community partnership) to, during its operation, a different category (that is, negotiated partnership).

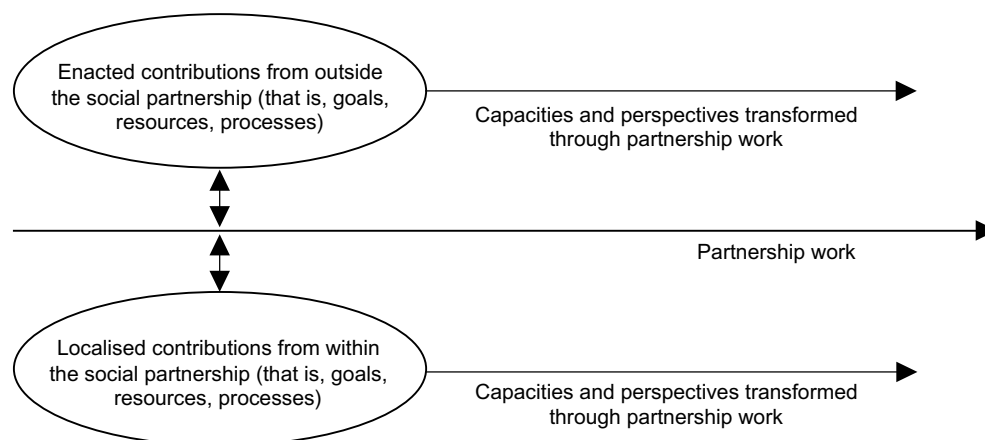
Similarly, the North-Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network was preceded by community concern to secure a local learning and employment network for the Wodonga region. Through a process of negotiation, it can be seen as moving from a community partnership towards an enacted partnership. In the case of Frankston Local Learning and Employment Network, which had been established to deal with issues of youth transition, some groups saw its agenda being broadened over time to accommodate issues of older and marginalised job seekers. In this way, the community reshapes the enacted partnership. Conversely, the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation had to vary its policy of large school networks in order to maintain the St James partnership, thereby shifting it from its enacted category to one that reflected a negotiated partnership. Therefore, partnership relations and processes move and transform iteratively, as the original conceptions of community and enacted partnerships evolve.

At different times and in different sequences and iterations, and with contributions from within and outside the social partnership, the ten partnerships discussed here affected and influenced the shape, form and goals of the partnership. The initial contributions, bases for formation and processes are not fixed qualities of a social partnership; they contribute to the partnership in different ways and at different moments in its life cycle. These contributions are depicted in figure 1. This figure suggests that the central focus and concern for social partnerships is on partnership work, that is, the activities within social partnership that see trust and capacities developed and decisions made to meet the transforming goals to which the partnership is directed.

This partnership work is premised on help from outside what initially constitutes the community, region, situation etc. in which the social partnership will be enacted. This 'help' takes the form of goals, processes and resources that are central to partnership work being able to proceed. There are also localised contributions that come together and are negotiated as part of the partnership work; this is ongoing. Through the process during which these contributors negotiate and engage, it is anticipated that transformations may occur in both kinds of contributions. If they are effective, the relations between the social partnership and external agencies and institutions will both change. The sponsoring agency or institution might be transformed by becoming a partner. The localised concerns that originally generated the social partnership (for example, concerns about levels of

youth unemployment) should also be transformed through these interactions. Capacities should be developed and perspectives changed by all participating partnerships.

Figure 1: Enacted and local contributions to social partnership work



Characteristics of social partnerships and partnership work

The four factors shaping the formation and continuity of social partnerships and mediating the nature of partnership work are:

- ✧ localised need and engagement
- ✧ diversity of local interests and values
- ✧ origins and process of partnership development
- ✧ initiating and leading activities.

Localised need and engagement

Social partnerships are most likely to emerge from a set of expressed local needs. Even where a need is identified and proposed by agencies outside the community and which becomes the focus for action (as in the local learning and employment network and Enterprise Career Education Foundation partnerships), it is unlikely that establishment of these partnerships will be successful unless concerns are shared within the community. There was evidence of communities rejecting or attempting to subvert offers of governmental support when the goals were inconsistent with the communities' needs and priorities (Billett & Seddon 2004). Yet, addressing both the short-term and strategic responses to local needs often requires accessing and engaging with resources and interests (for example, government or institutions) outside the locality, community or institution. So, although the need arose locally, it was often recognised that contacting and forming working partnerships with government agencies was essential in addressing the community's needs and concerns. Social partnerships such as the Wide Bay Alliance, a precursor to the Wide Bay Coalition, and the Deception Bay Project, therefore, arose from a localised need and a core commitment to redress local disadvantage. However, the first goal of this social partnership was to work collaboratively across institutions to provide services for disabled people. The second goal of the partnership was to work in coalition with government to address the identified localised concerns. For the Wide Bay Coalition, this involved the partnership working at different levels simultaneously and across sectors, including with local government agencies to address this need. They moved towards partnership work on the basis of locally identified needs, yet through the conjunction of existing institutional arrangements and with innovative community engagement models which at that time were just beginning to inform government processes. That is, the government responded

to community concern by providing funds for community projects which themselves became vehicles for the community interest to become engaged more collectively in a focused way.

The Mount Isa Project was premised on a common concern about the consequences of the region's current skill shortage in the mining industry. It was realised that the skills shortages were being exacerbated by competitive practices among the mines. By poaching from the limited skill base available, the mines were separately but collectively contributing to the escalating cost of skilled labour and creating untenable levels of worker turnover. Indeed, individual action was creating a more competitive labour market, driving up the cost of wages across the mining sector. Individually these enterprises would not be able to address problems of skills shortages and the shortage of skilled labour was affecting the viability of the Mt Isa community. Therefore, they needed to act together and with other partners (that is, local and state government) to address a structural problem. Consequently, the mines, allied industries and those in the region concerned about the skills shortage had to act collectively and with government, both at the local and state levels to produce a regional and collective response.

The partnership between the Upper Yarra Youth Centre and the Upper Yarra Secondary College resulted from a need for an alternative program recognised by the college as a key institutional partner, which would then support the centre. There were reciprocal goals associated with this institutional partnership. The college would improve its retention rates and students would exit with appropriate certification. There was also a possibility that both partners would gain additional revenue through the partnership.

St James College in Queensland recognised that, to provide appropriate workplace experiences for its students, it would need to engage in partnerships with local enterprises and also develop a skill base and system within the school to attract and retain local employers as partners. The Queensland Community Services and Health Industry Training Council clearly understood that partnership work was essential to core organisational goals across its regional and state-based national projects. The Banyule–Nillumbik Local Learning and Employment Network built partnerships from existing relationships across two quite different but cooperative local government areas in order to address young people's needs, but also to fulfil the requirements of the network's operational goals and plans.

Sponsoring agencies—those enacting the social partnership externally—become part of partnership work. It was demonstrated repeatedly that these agencies have to become partners; their needs have to be considered, discussed and possibly accommodated within partnership arrangements. Yet as with other partners, a goal for partnership work is, in part, to transform the views and practices of the sponsoring agencies to enable them to address the needs of the social partnership. For instance, the networks attempted to convince their government sponsor of the need for time to achieve goals and to be more flexible in terms of its processes for appraising progress. This included emphasising the need for a two-way process in communication, and understanding the important pivotal role played by volunteers, and furthermore, that these volunteers were not subject to government priorities (Seddon et al. 2002; Seddon & Billett 2004). Hence, a wholly top-down approach would jeopardise the very goals government was seeking to achieve. In this way, partnership work is defined by needs that engage with and transforms partners' perspectives and practices, as directed towards particular identified goals.

Diversity of local interests and values

Although there may be a single unifying issue that had been identified as needing to be addressed by the community, the response by different partners may be quite diverse and even conflicting. In Mount Isa, the increased use by mines of the practice of flying-in and flying-out the skilled workers who lived in coastal communities is in direct opposition to the local government's concerns about stabilising and maintaining the community (in terms of people living and working in Mount Isa). These differences are more than variations or different conceptions of the problem; they represent

quite different positions. These differences surface in the process of building the trust so essential for partnership work.

Although partnerships have goals common to its partners (for example, supporting disaffected youth, regional renewal, improving disability services, educational opportunities for homeless young people), it would be naive to believe that there will be consensus in the partnerships about how these issues might be addressed. Quite different perspectives on approaches and goals were sometimes evident from the interviews, reflecting different concerns, interests and values of partners. For instance, there were tensions in purposes and beliefs between the Upper Yarra Community Centre and the secondary college about what constituted the enactment of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning curriculum and student conduct (for example, working from home rather than in the centre). Similarly, a number of representatives from a local learning and employment network reported that, early on and even later, members of the management committee were often 'looking for support and being a watchdog for their school'. So the negotiation of the interests of the partners shaped the initial form of the social partnerships and the basis for its auspicing, focus and scope. However, it was these very incomplete negotiations that formed some of the initial pathways and programs of the local learning and employment networks that were later transformed more by localised factors than those enacted by government. For others, there was a clear and identified concern that, above all, partnership work was essential, inevitable and needed to be successful. This defined the scope of partnership work.

As noted, the North-Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network was formed after the Wodonga region failed to secure a network in the first round of funding for these networks. The community worked to secure the network for the region in the second round. The community, therefore, had already begun to marshal its resources to address the needs of school-to-work pathways and the needs of the young unemployed in their community. The community interests comprising the first partnership were most welcoming of the success in the second round of network funding. Moreover, the development of the proposals to establish a local learning and employment network in this region brought together representatives of sets of local interests. This, in turn, permitted some initial scoping and awareness-raising of diverse localised interests and concerns. In particular, the schools acted collectively to marginalise the role of Wodonga TAFE, which was suspected of positioning itself to dominate a partnership of this kind. Also, geographical concerns arose (and persist) about the partnership becoming too centred in Wodonga to the exclusion of the outlying communities. So, even where there was strong and lasting local support, the formation of the network did not arise from a uniform, benign and wholly shared vision. The present conditions arose from institutional influence, geographical boundaries and a history of relations and practices in the region. Indeed, many of these networks were formed out of existing networks or built upon existing associations. In this way they were neither 'de novo'—totally new and unburdened by contested local relations—nor without a desire by the community to engage with the kinds of local partnerships that the government was keen to enact. Indeed, it was often their histories and allegiance to past programs, including those in which the paid partnership workers had been involved, that led to resistance to the regulatory framework under which the government stated the local learning and employment networks would operate. Furthermore, these histories provide associations focused on particular permutations of need (for example, homelessness, environmental, educational, pathways etc.). In all of these, there are important local factors that shape the formation and continuity of social partnerships through partnership work.

Origins and process of partnership development

The origins of partnership formation are likely to shape the scope and form of activities and focus of social partnerships, and thus it is useful to understand the bases of their initial formation. For instance, the organisations which auspice social partnerships (for example, local government, education providers) were shown to shape how the partnerships work and their goals focused (Billett & Seddon 2004). Hence, it was useful to describe partnerships in terms of their origins and auspicing—as being either community or enacted partnerships. There are also some clear

distinctions in the early phases arising from partnerships which originate either within the community or are enacted by external agencies. As argued above, these differences suggest that the concepts of 'enacted' and 'community' partnerships need to be made clear by understanding the sequence and relationship to each other. Beyond identifying the starting points for social partnerships as arising either outside or within the local community, ultimately it is what happens after that initial development phase that will be most likely to shape the capacity of the partnership to grow and be sustained over time. The evidence here suggests that the subsequent phases of development are what makes a consideration of partnership work so important.

For example, partnerships which have their origins genuinely in community action (rather than in local institutions) often seem to be uncertain of how to proceed, and require some guidance in articulating their concerns into effective collective expressions and processes. This is perhaps not surprising. This seems to have been the case in the Deception Bay Project, where the set of concerns was clearly articulated by the community after they had consulted facilitators to organise, direct and refine their local concerns. The community had to learn how government power worked and how to locate and gain access to that power in order to present its case. However, uncertainty about how to proceed seemed less evident in 'community partnerships' premised on institutional relations (that is, Wide Bay Coalition). Here, partnership development was premised on how institutions could come to work together. Conversely, a different kind of uncertainty and basis for participation occurs in some of the 'enacted partnerships', such as the local learning and employment networks. For instance, as identified earlier, and reflected in the feedback from the networks in this study, many of the 'partners' arrive uncommitted and more concerned with their own organisation's goals and programs. Informants from both the Banyule and Nillumbik, and Maribyrnong networks refer to participating institutions such as schools and technical and further education (TAFE) colleges sometimes quite transparently engaging in these partnerships with a prior and primary interest related to their institutions' goals. Consequently, the initial, and in some cases, ongoing concern within social partnerships is that participants may be less, rather than more committed to the social partnership's goals and processes. As one informant stated about the formation of the local learning and employment network:

The initial board of management may have misunderstood the role. There was conflict, exercise of self-interest and the exercise of interests.

This kind of concern prompted an informant within the North-Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network to view as a key benchmark of commitment a partner's willingness to 'give something up'. That is, to give up something which could be seen as being in their institutions' interest for the sake of the partnership.

In a different way, the demands of the enacting body can have a profound impact on the existence of the social partnership, even when the importance of partnership work and the status and resources provided by the enacting agency are fully acknowledged. St James College, like other school-to-work partnerships (Seddon & Billett 2004), found that the bureaucratic language involved in the reporting requirements by the now disbanded Enterprise and Career Education Foundation and its predecessor, the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation, constituted a real threat to the continuity of the partnership and its goals. Even the industry partners, allegedly so valued by the sponsors and so valuable to the partnership, found it difficult to reconcile their participation with the reporting requirements of the sponsoring agency. Ultimately, it was the accommodation of the enacting partner, the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation, permitting a variation to its national policy of only supporting networks of schools that allowed the St James partnership to progress.

Initiating and leading activities

As foreshadowed, different kinds of initiating action occurred across the social partnerships. For those reflecting localised requirements, there was often the need to begin by marshalling localised concerns. For other kinds of localised or community-based collaborations, social partnerships began

by finding the means by which institutions could work together. For enacted partnerships such as local learning and employment networks and Enterprise and Career Education Foundation school-to-work partnerships, governance procedures were initially established to meet the sponsors' needs for accountability and program compliance. However, irrespective of the kinds of action initiated to meet either local or external needs, the data suggest that leadership at the local level is important for the initial development of the social partnership.

In instances where partnerships have emerged from local concerns or issues, notable individuals are often referred to in terms of their contributions in initiating, guiding or sustaining the formation of the partnership. That is, what is needed is more than a set of locally articulated concerns; there also has to be an agent at the local level who can motivate, organise and direct the effort of the social partnership, and at times give confidence. This leadership is so evident that informants not only make reference to this leadership but they often state it as 'a given' of partnership work. This agency can take the form of an individual who exercises a role with particular effectiveness (for example, Wide Bay Coalition, Mount Isa Project, Deception Bay Project, Frankston Local Learning and Employment Network), who adds something to the partnership in terms of capabilities (for example, Deception Bay Project, Wide Bay Coalition), or who is simply able and available to do the work. An important quality, however, was being able to make the voices of others heard. An informant from the Deception Bay Project stated:

I noticed by reading the historical documents ... the Reference Group had the same people making comments year after year. So it really was an individual's view and not community point of view. The facilitator of the consultations did a brilliant job to engage those who are shy into the picture.

Other kinds of contributions were identified by individual partners. One innovative project provided many points of entry into the partnership through forums, case management, stakeholder reference groups and independent evaluation, capturing voices not necessarily heard or respected previously. The knowledge of and capacity of individuals to work around or through bureaucratic processes were valued in a number of the social partnerships (Mount Isa Project, Deception Bay Project, Wide Bay Coalition, Maribyrnong Local Learning and Employment Network). As one interviewee noted: 'One was a nun and her manipulation of many a catholic bureaucrat was a delight to watch'.

Summary

Ultimately, the three kinds of partnerships introduced earlier may not be helpful in categorising social partnerships in their early or subsequent development. But their quite different bases need to be considered in the context of their initial formation, depending on the direction or initiation of the partnership project. That is, the existing circumstances across these partnerships are so different as to require consideration of their origins. These issues are central to what constitutes partnership work and how it is developed in these partnerships. It may well be that, of the three phases of development (that is, initial formation, early development and continuity over time), the principles and practices associated with their initial formation may be the most diverse given the diverse antecedent conditions and goals. Yet, in a different way, these three stages may more or less reflect the kinds of partnerships identified above. While *negotiated* partnerships can be seen as the ongoing process of negotiating different interests in a partnership, the *community* partnership can be seen as the sets of needs, concerns and processes that exist, occur and shape the localised response and which transform over time through partnership work. That is, rather than a kind of social partnership, they represent a set of issues on which partnership work is based and enacted. For instance, all of the social partnerships involved in this study were able to identify localised issues as the source of their formation. This source and the impetus behind it to form a social partnership may have come from the local community (for example, Deception Bay Project, Wide Bay Coalition, Mount Isa Project, Banyule Local Learning and Employment Network), or from an external agency as with the local learning and employment networks. But even here, there was a set

of local interests and concerns that clearly marked the formation of the local learning and employment networks, and sometimes even the contestation within them.

Consistent with this, the *enacted* social partnership can be seen as either a set of processes, concerns and needs reflecting agencies external to the local community and which may be a starting point for social partnership formation, or as a response to a social partnership arising from a community-identified and generated need, one which actively seeks to engage with external agencies (and the accountabilities implied) in order to further its goals. There is also the view that agencies outside the social partnership, such as those which enact them (that is, government departments) constitute a partner who is there to be negotiated with and the transformation of whose views is a desirable outcome. For instance, an informant for the Deception Bay Project noted that the successful outcomes for the social partnership were to, firstly, engage with strategic government departments to address issues of social disadvantage and displacement, and, secondly, to change the behaviour of those departments. The example was used of securing flexibility within departmental processes to give particular client groups special treatment (that is, change the criteria for breach notices, thereby drastically reducing their number). The point here is that it is this kind of engagement, taken for granted (at least in part) with government enacted partnerships, which distinguishes the initial goals for partnerships whose genesis lies within the community, from those enacted by government. These are the salient tasks for partnership work.

Partnership work

The data show that social partnerships are established and maintained because participants engage in partnership work.

Partnership work is the interactive and collaborative process of working together to identify, negotiate and articulate goals, and to develop processes for realising and reviewing those goals.

Effective *partnership work* embraces and harnesses the contributions of local partners and external agencies, their interactions and transformations in the collective work of realising shared goals. The processes of working together allow:

- ✧ communities to identify and represent their needs, and to secure quality partners and partnership arrangements that will enable them to achieve their objectives
- ✧ government and non-government agencies to understand and respond to local needs, to utilise local resources and to enhance capacity for local governance.

Partnership work includes a wide range of processes that enable partners to work together. These processes include:

- ✧ maintaining shared purposes and goals
- ✧ developing mature and reciprocal relationships among partners
- ✧ identifying and accessing resources that can make a difference in realising goals
- ✧ supporting individuals who engage effectively in the community to secure partnership goals, thereby avoiding the negative consequences of burnout and a high staff turnover
- ✧ focusing on partnership goals, rather than operational measures, to foster close and trusted relationships among partners
- ✧ participating in, and maintaining commitment to, the partnership process by recognising achievements and seeking opportunities to demonstrate achievement
- ✧ welcoming, facilitating and sustaining commitment and trust within the partnership
- ✧ identifying a range of measures for evaluating achievement.

An example: A Victorian local learning and employment network

At one of the Victorian local learning and employment networks, the executive officer talked about the way she built relationships of trust. She described herself and her role:

... as a really key resource. It's like being a madam. You've got to get the lighting right, get candles on the table, and good food and good wine, and people comfortably into the room together, good music, so I set the ambience and to get the ambience happening takes a bloody lot of work—so that when they [working party and committee of management members] get there everything's right.

The executive officer felt that building relationships is about the 'aesthetics' of situations. Creating a pleasant environment makes people more comfortable and productive. They have to be appreciated and valued and this is a key to success in any relationship-building. She saw this work as the core of her role. People had to be comfortable with one another. They had to understand why they were important to the local learning and employment network and that the network valued and appreciated their work. At the same time, she had to help them realise that they had a mutual relationship with the network, and that they had to appreciate each other's work and contribution to that relationship. Even though the executive officer admitted that her 'natural type is a more controlling sort of person', she felt that it was necessary for her to make others who worked for the network feel that they were the ones in control. The network was playing a 'service' role to the community. She could not physically make things happen on her own but depended on others in the partnership.

People have got to feel as though they can trust you. You've got to also continue to make them think they're important, and they're making it happen, because they have to, in the end product. I can only make things go so far. If they don't own it in the end product it ain't going to go on for very long.

Partnership work is a critical and ongoing process in social partnerships. It contributes to the consolidation of relationships of trust but is never completed. Participants must continue to work at relationship-building if trust is to be maintained between the partners.

An example: Deception Bay Project

The Deception Bay Project arose out of a concern about lack of opportunities and social infrastructure to help young people. Community frustration over the prospects for their young people led a number of individuals and groups to come together. They engaged with government, focusing on the theme 'How do we build a better city?'. The partnership was successful, building relationships with government to access resources from outside the community. Money started to flow. Many in the community hadn't experienced money like this before. 'Living on social benefits doesn't give you much experience in handling large sums of money', stated one informant. Initially, some groups took the money and used it to progress their own particular agendas. Others in the partnership were left out. This exclusion created tensions. But as the money continued to flow and the scale of funding became apparent, the partners learned to be more generous. Those groups who had initially been exclusive in using funds became more inclusive: 'Go for it, we will support you and your project'. It was easy to be generous when there was enough money to support all the projects. Then you could look after your own group's interests and those of others.

More recently this flow of funding has dried up. So while many initiatives had been supported, without funds they could not all be continued. Which would go on? Uncertainty and tensions have returned to the partnership. Generosity is easily unlearned. These dilemmas have been compounded because the strong leadership that marked the earlier partnership period has also gone. Two subsequent leaders have come and gone in quick succession. When the relationships start to fracture, it is hard to hold them together.

Seeing social partnerships from a process perspective demonstrates that they are an outcome of partnership work.

Focusing on successful partnership work is a useful approach for understanding the complexity and diversity of social partnerships and how they might be developed and sustained over time. It shows how social partnerships operate, how they respond to changing circumstances, and how they might best be supported to realise their purposes in sustainable ways.

An example: Wide Bay Coalition

The Wide Bay Coalition partnership was formed in conjunction with The Alliance, a group concerned about the disability services available to individuals who had been in institutions and who were now placed into community care. It was claimed people were dying because there was a lack of appropriate support and skills in caring for them in the community.

Initially, the local TAFE institute was approached to offer Certificate III Disability Work for existing workers in the community. But this didn't work. The teachers didn't understand the area, and teaching materials were not sufficiently relevant. The next step was to try to provide training themselves. They formed groups to cover different areas of expertise, but imparting knowledge was hard. They had expertise in caring, not in teaching about caring. And the load that fell on the individuals and their agencies was just too high.

Smart thinking and strategic alliance-building was tried next. The group formed a close relationship with the chief executive officer of the relevant industry training council. This relationship gave them access to policy, good advice, resources (through the Disability Sector Training Fund) and information. It allowed them to expose myths about disability training and to argue a case with TAFE that teachers needed field experience and relevant teaching resources. Two directors over a period of years took up the challenge. A young woman was employed to work closely with the disability service providers in the area and the group was part of the selection panel. Her role was to build up appropriate training materials based on local practices of disability care, visit community-based carers and parent carers, and undertake work-based assessments.

The strategy is working well. But the toll is beginning to tell on the community-based carers and service providers. The close engagement with TAFE has built up good relationships and ensured that the training is relevant to local need, but it takes the carers away from their core work in cash-strapped organisations. They feel they are giving a lot, perhaps too much. Burnout is becoming an issue. Comments about who has the power are heard. The partnership is working, but at some cost to those partners who can least afford it.

These extracts and the issues they raise illustrate the importance of partnership work as being ongoing in building and maintaining trust and renewing capacities to engage in partnership work.

Principles of partnership work

Through analyses of the data it was possible to conceptualise the nature of partnership work, revealing that this work has five main aspects or dimensions. These are: cultural-scoping work; connection-building work; capacity-building work; collective work; and trust-building. From these five dimensions, five concomitant principles were identified as guiding the initial stages and later stages of effective partnership work.

Building shared purposes and goals

This stage initially involves identifying the partners' interests and concerns, and developing a framework for collectively realising goals.

Sustaining the partnership involves the partners actively reflecting upon, reviewing and revising goals, identifying achievements, and renewing commitment.

Building relations with partners

This stage initially involves building trust and commitment, encouraging participation, and developing inclusive and respectful processes.

Sustaining the partnership involves endorsing and consolidating existing relationships, recognising partners' contributions, and facilitating new and strategic relationships.

Building capacities for partnership work

This stage initially involves engaging partners in the collective work of the partnership, by developing the infrastructure and resources needed to achieve goals.

Sustaining the partnership involves securing and maintaining partners who engage effectively with both community and external sponsors, and managing the infrastructure required to support staff and partners.

Building partnership governance and leadership

This stage initially involves formulating and adopting consistent, transparent and workable guidelines and procedures for the partnership work and enactment of leadership.

Sustaining the partnership involves developing and supporting close relations and communication between partners, and effective leadership.

Building trust and trustworthiness

This stage initially involves establishing processes that engage and inform partners, and which encourage cooperation and collaboration.

Sustaining the partnership involves focusing on partners' needs and expectations, and ensuring that differing needs are recognised and addressed.

Aligned with each principle is a set of practices which have facilitated the social partnerships involved in this study, building a culture for robust partnership and sustaining their partnership work over time and through changing circumstances. Each principle is expanded upon in greater detail below and its manifestation at the initial and more developed stages of partnership work is outlined.

Table 3: Dimension of partnership work—cultural scoping work

Principle of partnership work			
Build shared purposes and goals		Maintain shared purposes and goals	
<i>Early focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Later focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Identify, articulate and conceptualise partnership	Articulate concerns Identify collective action and celebrate outcomes Act inclusively among difference Develop a framework for success	Reflect, review and revise purposes	Renew interests through ongoing reflection and revision of goals Remind each other of successes Build a history of relationships Secure funding Maintain relevance of purpose
<p>...The benchmark of a commitment of a partner is their willingness to give something up ... Competing groups should be brought together to work out the benefits to each group and all. (Local learning and employment network)</p> <p>This partnership has been an arrangement that allows both parties to gain something. As such, we have each learnt different things. It is an opportunistic partnership for a good end. Together we have learnt how to 'use' the system to make things work better. (ACE Community Partnership)</p> <p>The [partnership] engendered and deepened relationships. It continued to work and commit to incremental changes so it is relationship-based. The heart commitment—you want to make a difference—is central to the capacity to move through. The strength of the partnership is its belief in 'place' and everything happens at that place level. (Deception Bay Project)</p> <p>Giving participants a say from the beginning helps get over the problem that the partnership formation is about interests outside the community. (Local learning and employment network)</p>			

This dimension of partnership work is about establishing a culture within a partnership that grows out of the values, traditions and interests each partner brings.

In the initial stages, the principle of building shared purposes and goals is achieved through forging the identity of the social partnership. Such partnership work involves the articulation, definition and transformation of partners' views in the process of forging the identity and purpose of the social partnership. It calls on a philosophical and process commitment among partners to collective action. The different perspectives and interests of the partners influence working towards this commonality of purpose. These are often made explicit through dialogue about their needs and the

desired outcomes of the partnership work. For instance, schools and TAFE colleges might have quite different perspectives on the purposes and best means of providing vocational preparation.

In the later stages, the principle of maintaining shared purposes and goals is achieved through reflecting and revising the identity of the partnership. Such partnership work involves instilling a reflective attitude which involves monitoring, revising and restating the partnership's purposes and goals. The partnership embraces a culture of recognition so that a sense of history is built and shared successes are celebrated. Work also involves securing funding through which to realise goals and purposes.

Table 4: Dimension of partnership work—connection-building work

Principle of partnership work			
Build relationships with partners <i>Early focus</i>		Maintain relationships with partners <i>Later focus</i>	
	<i>Practices</i>		<i>Practices</i>
Nurture relationships Create spaces for all voices to be heard	Make an explicit commitment by partnership leaders Participate in shared action Build and manage relationships	Recognise and consolidate existing relationships and contributions Assess impact on the partners Nurture new relationships	Restate sense of overall project Build capacities of novice partners Maintain strategic focus in meetings
Personal networks are most useful. Attempts at formal networks sanctioned by government funding do not work. (Local learning and employment network)			
The ABC program was a huge success ... with plenty of profile ... but only one person was employed in this area. It was great in the immediate but long term ... another matter. The number crunchers do not see this. (Local learning and employment network)			
[Partnerships are made up of] ... committed and informed people with a goal ... who keep in there where funds are not available. They try things out together, talk to each other, help each other and take a risk. (Local learning and employment network)			
There was a commitment and it was contained enough for the players to demonstrate an outcome quickly to keep busy people engaged. (Mt Isa project)			
It takes a village ... is the key—know one another and understand, be genuine ... (St James)			
Be patient and chat so that all parties are heard—government heard and people heard as well. [Our] group meetings were powerful events—safe places. Government people seeing the change that can occur if they listen with their heart. The community learned—it shifted in understanding. The heart was fundamental ... the spirit of it all took the people with it ... (Deception Bay Project)			

This dimension of partnership work is about making an explicit acknowledgement of, and giving time to, the work involved in making connections amongst partners—not just as a by-product of partnership work, but as integral to its nature and success.

In the initial stages, the principle of building relations with partners is achieved through partnership work that involves working inclusively with partners while being explicit about differences. Work is aimed at building processes to facilitate partnering, allowing for input and the option to make and unmake 'rules' to fit. Partners participate in shared action as a means of building trust while being realistic about early and easy achievements. However, engagement over time is likely to be required among partners before the impact of this relationship-building becomes apparent.

In the later stages, the principle of maintaining relations with partners through partnership work involves reflecting on and restating the sense of the overall project. A strategic focus among partners is maintained. Efforts are made to engage strategically with partners' capacities (for example, sharing the load, involving others, rotating the load, building up novice partners), all the time acknowledging and rewarding partners' contributions. Partners also pay attention to recruiting and building capacities of newer partners.

Table 5: Dimension of partnership work—capacity-building work

Principle of partnership work			
Build capacities for partnership work		Maintain capacities for partnership work	
<i>Early focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Later focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Develop infrastructure and resources	Share information, successes and strategy Identify resources Coordinate activities across partners Journey together over diverse histories and cultures	Maintain infrastructure and resources	Secure partners who can engage effectively with community/sponsors Maintain physical infrastructure, manage staff and partner turnover Develop induction processes
<p>Our chair was discursive and low-key, often drew out different opinions and people were not used to this tabling of their thoughts. [Have a] ... core who shares understanding, not going over same ground at each meeting. (Local learning and employment network)</p> <p>Take on board the politics of the organisations involved. You need to massage the egos of those who can help ... Go in boots and all as one, if there is no progress in four meetings, you will lose the busy ones who are the ones you need. (North-Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network)</p> <p>Make sure there is conversation which welcomes and gives value to the employers and participants. (Wide Bay Coalition)</p> <p>Recognise the value and input, keep the space fluid, create opportunity through dialogue, you can't use the 'in and out' approach but pathways ... (Deception Bay Project)</p>			

This dimension of partnership work is about building the capacities of partners to engage in and feel comfortable with the complexity inherent in social partnerships and with its multiple and dynamic relationships between a number of stakeholders.

In the initial stages, the principle of building capacity for partnership work involves sharing information, successes and strategies to influence others. Partners' capacities to achieve partnership goals are assessed, and where necessary, individuals who can assist with capacity-building among partners are engaged. Partners work to develop the infrastructure for partnership work and coordinate activities across partners. Together, they journey over diverse histories and cultures.

In the later stages, the principle of building capacity for partnership work involves securing partners to engage effectively with the community and sponsoring agencies. The social/physical infrastructure secured through the initial stages is maintained. Partners work at fulfilling commitments to each other. A process of induction and engagement of partners and institutions is developed. Attention has to be paid to managing staff and partners by guarding against burnout and disaffection.

This dimension of partnership work is about establishing a culture of, and processes for, collaboration and collective action within a social partnership. It includes consideration of partnership governance and leadership.

In the initial stages, the principle of collective work is realised through partnership work that involves the consistent application of procedural rules through committees and boards. These processes ensure that tasks are well structured and that they attempt to counteract the pursuit of individual agendas. The governance work calls upon frequent rehearsal and restating of the social partnership's purposes. They aim to achieve a balance between being inclusive and being a workable size. They create a locally based (informed) reference point or reference group. The procedural rules adapted for use avoid the need to conform to prescriptive measures about membership. Members practise openness, trust, tolerance of ambiguity and alternative approaches. Importantly, strong and supportive leadership guides the social partnership.

In the later stages, the principle of collective work is realised through partnership work that involves maintaining a pattern of regular meetings and open communication. Care is taken to make the meetings interactive and focused on partnership goals. Time is taken to develop trusting relationships among committees, boards of management and partnership workers. Strong and open

leadership pays attention to partners' needs and focuses on long-term goals. The partners' work is focused on partnership work and goals, not the administration of the partnership.

Table 6: Dimension of partnership work—collective work

Principle of partnership work			
Build partnership governance and leadership		Maintain partnership governance and leadership	
<i>Early focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Later focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Manage partnership purposes, procedures	Consistent application of process	Develop strong and strategic leadership	Develop good working relations between committees, board and partners
Build trust, openness, tolerance	Balance inclusivity and workability Understand how purposes coincide, complement or clash	Promote close relationships among partners	Display sensitivity to partners' needs and long-term goals of partnership
<p>You need different personalities involved in the group BUT make sure the negative ones are not invited to the next meeting! It is important that the skill base of the group is complementary. ... You need to come together as a core ... but be accepting of parallel players and their needs. The core talked carefully before each meeting and discussed how they would approach issues. They would massage egos if necessary. (Mt Isa Project)</p> <p>... massage those who were not as forthcoming ... (Wide Bay Coalition)</p> <p>We had a very strong reference group, vocal residents and talented local employees ... The facilitator was excellent and always ensured well-structured meetings processes. ... The facilitator did a brilliant job and brought those who are shy into the picture. (Deception Bay Project)</p> <p>Sharing feedback about everything [was] often a spiritual experience—becoming the best that they could be for the good of all. Recognise. (Deception Bay Project)</p> <p>Unmaking or remaking centrally devised rules that are impractical or unworkable provided a means of engaging partners ... (Community and Health Industry Training Council)</p>			

Table 7: Dimension of partnership work—trust-building work

Principle of partnership work			
Build trust and trustworthiness		Maintain trust and trustworthiness	
<i>Early focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Later focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Develop processes and activities that engage, inform and are informed by partners' contribution	Develop a history of partnership work Pursue cooperative and collaborative activities	Expect, welcome and act upon partner input	Highlight the success of partnership work Assist with meeting partners' needs and expectations
<p>Pre-existing partnerships had built up trust. (Local learning and employment network)</p> <p>... share in doing, make mistakes and have successes. (St James)</p> <p>Show mutual respect—the community and government need to be open and honest with each other, especially about the power relationship. It needs both parties to shift power a bit. Take special care with people. Take time to build trust. Balance objectionable ideas with discussion—get the ideas out even if unpalatable ... (Deception Bay Project)</p>			

This dimension of partnership work is about establishing an ethic of trust within the social partnership. It remains a key factor in partners navigating the complex and sometimes rocky conditions that ensue at different stages in the life cycle of a social partnership.

At the initial stages, the principle of trust-building work is realised through partnership work involving experiences which allow trust to evolve among partners. It calls for the development of processes that work with the tensions that militate against trust-building (for example, a competitive environment). These processes must necessarily engage partners at the same time as they inform them. At all times, the partnership's goals drives partnership activity.

At the later stages, the principle of trust-building work is realised through partnership work involving consistent welcoming of partners' input and demonstration of its being acted upon. This

demonstrates that the social partnership works to meet partners' needs and expectations where possible and appropriate. Again, the ritual of celebrating the effectiveness of partnership work cannot be overlooked as a platform for trust-building.

Value and usefulness of the principles and practices

The principles and practices identified through the analyses of the data were returned to the ten social partnerships in the form of a survey for them to comment upon and rate. The feedback received was highly supportive of the utility of the identified principles and practices for actions for both social partnership and their sponsors. Responses were received from half of the ten social partnerships.

Respondents made suggestions for changes to words used in the tentative principles and practices. At the same time respondents were able to rate each of the principles and practices in terms of its usefulness to their particular social partnership. Those responding to the survey overwhelmingly indicated that the principles and practices identified through the analysis of the interview data reflected what they believed should occur in the development and maintenance of social partnerships.

This feedback rated the principles and practices as being either 'very useful' or 'indispensable'. Of the nine sets of principles, respondents rated five of them as 'indispensable' and the other four as 'very useful'. Comments from the participants supported the utility of findings as rated by the respondents. For instance, one informant stated, 'I think that these look really spot on'. Another similarly suggested that: 'Thought this was a great summary of key principles and practices in relation to social partnerships. Distinctions between establishing and maintaining was [sic] also very good and highly important', with another claiming: 'They appear to fit well with our overall experience'. Other important contributions provided refinements and suggested additions and rewording. These comments were helpful, and were incorporated into the principles themselves and others will be subject of further discussion in phase 2 of the project. Nevertheless, the feedback provides some confidence that the principles and practices identified in this first phase broadly reflect, and are seen to be useful for enabling individuals to evaluate social partnerships and partnership work.

Subsequently, the evaluation tool (see appendix 2) has been used as the focus of a workshop in a conference for social partnerships (Industry Training Council State Gathering of Integrated Skills Development Network, 2–4 March 2005) and the feedback was again very positive. Several social partnerships have stated they intend to use the evaluation tool in planning days for their partnerships.

Social partnerships and partnership work

The findings of this first phase of the research project have been used to identify and elaborate further the character of social partnerships and the work necessary for establishing and maintaining them. A key finding is that this is complex work, demanding significant skills in cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. This point was foreshadowed in earlier research (for example, Seddon & Billett 2004; Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Formation 2002; Kilpatrick et al. 2001). This study, however, has allowed the nature of this complex work to be identified, elaborated and articulated and its dimensions defined.

Drawing on interview data from ten sites, it has been possible to conceptualise the nature of partnership work. This reveals five main dimensions of partnership work:

- ✧ cultural-scoping work
- ✧ connection-building work
- ✧ capacity-building work

- ✧ collective work
- ✧ trust-building work.

These dimensions are underpinned by a set of principles which are implemented differently at the earlier and later stages of partnership formation. The principles are realised through a wide range of social partnership practices and are shaped by:

- ✧ the character and purposes of the social partnership
- ✧ the readiness of the partners
- ✧ the kinds of organisations that auspice the social partnership
- ✧ its history and culture
- ✧ the scope of changes it confronts
- ✧ frequency with which its goals are changed or re-negotiated.

This list of conditions shows that social partnerships are highly contextualised. This means that successful partnership work is likely to depend upon careful reading of the context and the development of strategies for action sensitive to local conditions, cultures and challenges, and also the readiness of the partners and partnerships to achieve their goals.

We know that VET providers are explicitly utilised in social partnerships. Successful partnership work certainly impacts on VET, as it does on all forms of education and training programs that emerge as a result of social partnership work. The precise impact of, and implications for VET will be elaborated on further in phase 2 of this study.

While context is undoubtedly important in partnership work, it seems that the principles of partnership work are also important. It is these principles that serve as moral anchor points for individuals faced with complex moral choices in contexts characterised by significant cross-cultural communication and interpersonal negotiations. That is, their enactment of partnership work is a manifestation of these choices. In this respect, the principles act as a kind of applied ethics, providing some universal guidance about what is necessary to make partnerships work.

This framework for understanding the contribution that partnership work makes to vocational education will be appraised in the second phase of this project. However, it seems that the findings here already provide some useful bases for defining performance indicators which can be used to guide and account for partnership work. That is, they provide principles and practices of partnership work and its key dimensions which existing social partnerships and those being developed can adopt. Moreover, the findings offer a set of suggestions, goals, practices and bases for evaluation that sponsoring partners, such as government and non-government agencies, might like to deploy in establishing and subsequently ensuring the continuity of these partnerships.

If used in this way, the framework also has the potential to be a tool which draws attention to the full range of work involved and the resources needed in establishing and maintaining partnerships, including the substantial 'soft skill' dimension involved. Currently, this lack of attention to the personal, intimate and significant work involved in social partnerships, such as trust-building and cultural-scoping, has been a cause for concern amongst partnership participants, since funding agencies generally do not acknowledge, resource or recognise this labour.

Social partnerships and partnership work in prospect

Issues for further consideration

The following issues suggest areas for research into partnerships and partnership work, and will be integrated, wherever possible, into the second phase of this research.

Partnership work

This study has focused explicitly on social partnerships. However, our sense is that the character of partnership work is more generalised than might be first thought. While partnership work is the obvious activity within social partnerships, the qualitative character of that work is also evident in many other work and community settings.

The character of partnership work is distinctive because it entails the confluence and negotiation of different agents, their interests, ways of working and definitions of success. This kind of activity is increasingly evident within contemporary society, where globalisation means that, more than ever before, people who are different from one another work and attempt to realise goals collaboratively. For example, the globalisation of investment, the emphasis on innovation, and increased movement of people (through short-term job deployment, migration, and refugees) all increase the extent to which people must work with others unlike themselves and whose interests differ from their own. While working across difference is not new, it is experienced more pervasively and with greater risk than in the past.

Networks of partnerships

When seen in this ‘big picture’ context, it is evident that partnership work can be understood as an expression of the growing significance of networks in the contemporary economy and society (for example, networks of production, supply chains, knowledge networks which consolidate various levels of social capital and transact in relation to other forms of capital—economic, political, cultural, symbolic etc.). The organisation of networks brings different agents together and requires the negotiation of their interests, goals and values (as noted in relation to partnership work).

Our current work on partnerships has tended to focus on single partnership initiatives, tracking back from the initiative to better understand the agents involved and the challenges inherent in consolidating shared understandings between them. Contextualising these partnerships opens up the possibility of methodological refinement that would locate the partnership as a specific moment or node within a wider network. Buchanan’s (2001) research on ‘skill ecosystems’ provides one way of understanding the way a specific partnership might be located within a wider skills ecosystem with a distinct skills formation agenda (for example, focused on managing youth and youth pathways). Garlick’s (forthcoming) use of census data to develop detailed socioeconomic profiles for different regions of Australia also offers more grounded insights into the particular contextualisation of social partnerships. Understanding partnerships and partnership work within distinctive localised needs/skills ecosystems provides a way of more tightly contextualising and conceptualising the motivations, goals, work practices, resources and definitions of success.

Social partnerships and vocational education

A key rationale for this overall project is the development of an understanding of how social partnerships might support vocational education, in its broadest manifestations. In some ways, the findings here provide implicit bases for relations between vocational education and the communities they seek to serve. That is, they exemplify issues associated with engagement, consultation, building trust and capital and meeting localised needs. The study also identifies that, as communities become empowered, they may overtly express their frustration in ways that may threaten or destabilise vocational education providers. These providers may themselves be subject to institutional arrangements that do not permit them to respond readily to the needs of local communities. For instance, Billett, Ehrich and Hernon-Tinning (2004) found that meeting the vocational education needs of small business was rendered difficult by the demands upon vocational colleges to secure economies of scale in their provisions, rather than tailoring programs to the needs of businesses with few workers who were often widely distributed. Yet, earlier work (Billett & Hayes 2000) identified how local communities look to organisations like the social partnerships investigated in this study in order to have their interests represented, particularly looking to organisations not weighed down by organisational constraints (for example, education institutions). Here also, the practices and principles outlined above might be deployed in the development of curriculum arrangements to meet local needs, and to fashion curriculum responsive to localised goals, needs and capacities.

Partnerships for partnerships' sake

There is a risk, however, in establishing a social partnership that becomes an institution whose continuity becomes the central focus for action and strategy, rather than the interests it was designed to support. This is particularly likely when employment of individuals is premised on the continuity of the institution representing the partnerships. Some informants complained that too much of the deliberations within social partnerships focused too strongly on the day-to-day activities of the partnership at the cost of the purposes for which the social partnership had been established. There is no simple way of addressing this issue, although some suggest that the partnership having a finite lifespan might overcome these concerns. However, this may bring with it other problems, such as an insecure working environment, with workers casting about for more secure options.

These issues of partnership work, networks of partnerships and their existence for their own sake will be explored in greater detail and over time in the second phase of this project.

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Appendix 1:

List of partnerships

Partnership/researcher	Contact
Community and Health Services Industry Training Advisory Body: Social partnerships in capacity building in health and community work	Wallis Westbrook, Executive Director Queensland Community Services and Health Industry Training Council
Wide Bay Training Alliance: Social partnership in regional area	Pat Turner Wide Bay Coalition, Maryborough, Queensland
Mt Isa/Regional capability project: Regional partnership for developing skills capability	Les Young, Project officer Queensland Mining Industry Training Advisory Body
Deception Bay Support Service: Social partnership for assisting local disadvantage and disadvantaged	Trish Ferrier, Coordinator Deception Bay Community Youth Programs Incorporated Association
St James College: Partnership aiming to assist school- to-work transitions	Vernon Kent St James College, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
Banyule–Nillumbik Local Learning Employment Network	Ms Kate Rhodes, Executive Officer Banyule Nillumbik Local Learning Employment Network 162 Main Road Lower Plenty VIC 3093
North-Eastern Local Learning Employment Network	Michelle Kelly, Executive Officer Northeast Local Learning Employment Network
ACE Partnership: Partnership to support adult and community-capacity building	Sally Brennan, CEO Upper Yarra Community House Learning Centre 2463 Warburton Hwy Yarra Junction VIC 3797
Frankston Local Learning Employment Network	Ms Pat O’Connell, Executive Officer Suite 10A, Level 1, 84 Mt Eliza Way Mt Eliza VIC 3930
Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley Local Learning Employment Network	Ms Sue Fowler, Executive Officer Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley Local Learning Employment Network 16–38 Bellair Street Flemington VIC 3031

Appendix 2: Instrument for verification of identified practices and principles

Forming, Developing and Sustaining Social Partnerships project

Name: Social partnership:

Dear participant -- thank you for your earlier contributions to the Social Partnership project. From the data we have identified sets of principles and practices for developing and maintaining social partnership work. In Section One these are principles are presented. We invite you to read through these sections and make any changes that you believe enhances the accurate reflection of your partnership. These changes might be deletions, elaborations or changes. Please just write any changes onto the sheet.

Section One: Principles and practices of partnership work

Five principles were identified as guiding the initial stages of effective partnership work:

- 1. Building shared purposes and goals.* Involves identifying the partners' interests and concerns, and developing a framework for collectively realising goals.
- 2. Building relations with partners.* Involves building trust and commitment, encouraging participation, and developing processes that are inclusive and respectful.
- 3. Building capacities for partnership work.* Involves engaging partners in the collective work of the partnership, through developing the infrastructure and resources needed to achieve goals.
- 4. Building partnership governance and leadership.* Involves formulating and adopting consistent, transparent and workable guidelines and procedures for the partnership work and enactment of leadership.
- 5. Building trust and trustworthiness.* Involves establishing processes that engage and inform partners, and that encourage cooperation and collaboration.

Similar principles are required to sustain effective partnership work over time and through changing circumstances:

- 1. Maintaining shared purposes and goals.* Involves the partners actively reflecting upon, reviewing and revising goals, identifying achievements, and renewing commitment.
- 2. Maintaining relations with partners.* Involves endorsing and consolidating existing relationships, recognising partners' contributions, and facilitating new and strategic relationships.
- 3. Maintaining capacity for partnership work.* Involves securing and maintaining partners who engage effectively with both community and external sponsors, and managing the infrastructure required to support staff and partners.
- 4. Maintaining governance and leadership.* Involves developing and supporting close relations and communication between partners, and effective leadership.
- 5. Maintaining trust and trustworthiness.* Involves focusing on partners' needs and expectations, and ensuring that differing needs are recognised and addressed.

These principles are associated with a wide range of practices across the different social partnerships, which are presented in overview in the following tables.

Build shared purposes and goals		Maintain shared purposes and goals	
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Identify, articulate and conceptualise partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate concerns Identify collective action and celebrate outcomes Act inclusively among difference Develop a framework for success 	Reflect, review and revise purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renew interests through ongoing reflection and revision of goals Remind each other of successes Build a history of relationships Secure funding and maintain relevance of purpose

Build relationships with partners		Maintain relationships with partners	
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Nurture relationships Create spaces for all voices to be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make an explicit commitment by partnership leaders Participate in shared action Build and manage relationships 	Recognise and consolidate existing relationships and contributions. Assess impact on the partners. Nurture new relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restate sense of overall project Build capacities of novice partners Maintain strategic focus in meetings

Build capacities for partnership work		Maintain capacities for partnership work	
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Develop infrastructure and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information, successes and strategy Identify resources Co-ordinate activities across partners Journey together over diverse histories and cultures 	Maintain infrastructure and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure partners who can engage effectively with community/ sponsors Maintain physical infrastructure, manage staff and partner turnover Develop induction process Maintain contact with community

Build partnership governance and leadership		Maintain partnership governance and leadership	
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Managing partnership purposes, procedures, Build trust, openness, tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent application of process Balance inclusivity and workability Understand how purposes coincide, complement or clash 	Develop strong and strategic leadership Promote close relationships among partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop good working relations between committees, board and partners Display sensitivity to partners' needs and long term goals of partnership

Build trust and trustworthiness		Maintain trust and trustworthiness	
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Practices</i>
Develop processes and activities that engage, inform and informed by partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a history of partnership work Pursue co-operative and collaborative activities 	Expect, welcome and act upon partner input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the success of partnership work Assist with meeting partners' needs and expectations

Any overall comments for the researchers about these principles and practices

Section Two - Practices required by the social partnership and sponsoring agency

In this section could you please indicate the degree by which these practices of both the social partnership and sponsoring agency are to be important. Could you please indicate (i.e. tick, circle) the indicator that most closely reflects you view of the importance of this principle.

Please note NA – not applicable; 1 not at all helpful; 2 not very helpful; 3 helpful; 4 very helpful; and 5 indispensable

1. Building shared purposes and goals for and scope of partnership activities (intents)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- identify the scope of and depth of shared purpose within the locale or partnership, and consolidate and articulate that purpose; NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5
- reinforce the value and values of collective action by exemplification; NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5
- acknowledge the diversity of , yet be inclusive of, partnership needs and contributions; NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5and
- identify and champion both short term and long term goals and bases for achieving them. NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- encourage, but not overly specify, an inclusive approach to articulating localised concerns; NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5
- reinforce the values and valuing of collective action and advice; NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5
- champion the contributions of partners and partnership work in meeting partners' needs and shared goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- permit social partnerships some scope in nominating goals for its success and the timelines for meeting those goals. NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5

Building relations within the partnership and with partners (process measures)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- build trust through being responsive to partners' concerns and being open about differences in these needs and goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- engage partners in deciding the kinds and scope of the partnership arrangements and the conduct of partnership work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- be consultative in forming partnership goals and processes, including its governance NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- encourage trust through enacting administrative arrangements that are accountable yet whose processes and outcomes can be negotiable and tailorable to partnerships' goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- encourage social partnerships to determine their means of governance, processes and determining their outcomes NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- be tolerant of ambiguities in processes and outcomes NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

Building the capacities for and values of partnership work (process)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- build the localised base of skills and dispositions required for partnership work through collective, shared and supportive action NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- accumulate infrastructure and procedural capacity for partnership work and fulfilling partners' needs NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- support the building of localised capacity for collective (partnership) work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- engage with social partnerships in building partnership infrastructure NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- recognise that capacity building will differ in scope, nature and duration across social partnerships NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- exercise patience in the achievement of demonstrable outcomes NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

Building partnership governance and leadership (process)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- enact its partnership work through the fair and consistent application of agreed principles that are closely aligned to its purposes, yet can be transformed as required through changes in purposes or agendas NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- exercise governance that both balance inclusiveness with practical processes NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- demonstrate openness and trust in communication and practice NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- identify and organise leadership most appropriate to the social partnerships' stage of development and/or urgent goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- evaluate partnerships' progress on process outcomes (e.g. measures of inclusiveness, trust building and consultations) as much as program goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- support the development of governance appropriate for the partnership's goals, practices and stage of development NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- align support with processes and goals identified by the partnership NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

Continuity of partnership work through changing times and circumstances

Maintaining shared purposes and goals of partnership activities (intents)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- maintain and renew partnership goals and processes through constructive reflection, and by focusing on core business NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- actively champion partnership successes NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- rehearse the complexity and importance of sustaining commitment to the partnership's work and goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- accommodate changing views, processes and goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- acknowledge, support and accommodate the task of maintaining shared interests and partnership performance over time NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5;
- acknowledge the successes of and contributions of the social partnership NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5; and
- be tolerant of social partnerships' changing processes and goals NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

Maintaining relations within the partnership and with partners (process measures)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- rehearse and remind partners of the overall project NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- fulfil some of partners' expectations and habitually acknowledge their contributions NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- build productive relationships with sponsoring agency as a partner in a shared project NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- exemplify how partnership work has achieved its goals; NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5
- manage the burden placed upon partners and avoid burnout of volunteers NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- manage the recruitment and induction of new partners NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- acknowledge the partnership's contribution and that of its partners NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- be open to productive and reciprocal engagement with the social partnership NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- demonstrate how partners' (and in particular volunteers) contributions have been acknowledged and enacted NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- draw upon social partnerships experiences in establishing new social partnerships and developing further existing partnerships NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

Maintaining the capacity in and values of partnership work (process)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- attract and retain partners and resources capable of continuing partnership work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- maintain the infrastructure required to fulfil effective partnership work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- manage the turnover of staff and partners to secure continuity of the partnership's work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- direct support to each social partnership strategically in ways to assist its continuity NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- assist in processes of support for the induction of new partners NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- identify and provide strategic infrastructure support to the partnership NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

Partnership governance and leadership for continuity over time (process)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- maintain trust and openness as key principles for partnership governance NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- manage the diverse contributions to avoid both over and under representations NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- locate and select effective leadership NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- maintain the effective provision of meetings and communications across the partnership NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- respect and acknowledge the preferred mode of partnership governance NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- acknowledge the importance of open and trust in partnership work through accepting advice and demonstrating its contributions NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- advise about alternative governance strategies for long levity NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- encourage and support meetings and communication processes NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

Maintaining trust and trustworthiness (process measures)

The **social partnership** should aim to:

- demonstrate trust and openness through partnership work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- welcome and encourage partnership input NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- actively and openly appraise the level of meeting partners' expectations and needs NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- emphasise the achievements and effectiveness of the partnerships' work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

The **sponsoring agency** should aim to:

- demonstrate continuing and growing autonomy as the partnership matures NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- demonstrate an openness to criticism and reform of its processes and goals as result of partnership feedback NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5;
- acknowledge and identify the partnerships' contributions NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5; and
- continue to champion the effectiveness of partnership work NA – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 - 5.

Any overall comments for the researchers

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Thank you for your contribution



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**National Centre for Vocational
Education Research Ltd**

Level 11, 33 King William Street
Adelaide SA 5000

PO Box 8288 Station Arcade
South Australia 5000

Phone +61 8 8230 8400
Fax +61 8 8212 3436
Email ncver@ncver.edu.au

www.ncver.edu.au