Snapshot:
Cross-sector partnerships in SETS

This snapshot provides an overview of cross-sector partnership models and approaches that are commonly used by Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) providers to enhance economic participation outcomes for their clients. It is based on responses from members of the SETSCoP Cross-sector partnerships sub-group who represent settlement organisations in NSW, TAS, VIC and QLD. Respondents range from frontline professionals to operational managers to CEOs.

Overview

Respondents were predominately from large organisations of over 100 staff (43%), 29% were from medium-sized organisations (26-100 staff members) and the remaining 29% were from small organisations with less than 25 staff members.

Cross-sector partnerships were a key focus for respondents and their SETS program, ranging from 25-98% of their SETS related work.

Identification of Partners

Reasons to start a cross-sector partnership/collaboration include to:

- support areas of need where specialist services are required (e.g. English language support from AMEP)
- achieve maximum impact
- strengthen capabilities
- share resources
- acquire further knowledge and enhance staff development.

When deciding who to partner and/or collaborate to enhance the economic participation of their clients, respondents considered the potential partner's:

- alignment to their organisation's goals, values and strategic plan
- ability to meet identified client, program or organisational needs
- specialisation or expertise
- governance capacity, risk and resources
- flexibility and collaboration
- mutual partnerships and associations

Additionally, respondents noted that whether they have a pre-existing relationship with the potential partner, the mutual benefit of the partnership and geographical location of the partner, as other important considerations.

Initiation or cessation of a partnership

There is a lot of variance across providers for who initiates a cross-sector partnership. Some providers reported that their organisation would almost always initiate a partnership, while others noted that they tended to be approached by organisations for a partnership. Providers did identify that most partnerships were based on pre-existing relationships with a select number of organisations.

Partnerships are generally formalised through MOUs, verbal agreements, written contracts, or working groups/committees and to a lesser extent agreement by email or other methods.

Respondents shared the below reasons to end a cross-sector partnership/collaboration:

- reduced funding
- changes to staff
- changes to program or organisation's priorities
- lack of progress or unmet outcomes
- expired MOU or partnership agreement
- misaligned values
- poor communication.

Generally, SETS providers play the below roles in cross-sector partnerships and collaborations:

- 71% are the lead
- 43% are co-partners with the other partners
- 14% are sub-contractors in agreements with other partners.

Process for Cross-sector partnerships

The general process to formulate a cross-sector partnership described by respondents is as follows, with some minor variations between providers.

Some providers develop formal partnerships through identifying and approaching potential partners, formulising an agreement and the jointly deciding on goals, outcomes and deliverables. While others allow partnerships to develop organically through established relationships between the organisations at middle management.

Alternatively, some providers identify client needs or systemic gaps, following which they then identify relevant organisations to collaborate with to overcome issues. Some providers rely on pre-existing network groups to then identify probable partners. Following the identification of key partners, a proposal is provided. A plan of approach is then decided, with roles, expectations and key targets outlined in a MOU or contract. Most providers acknowledged the

value of maintaining regular contact with their partners, including regular meetings to discuss progress and next steps.

Focus of partnerships

Areas of focus of cross-sector partnerships (in order of priority, with 1 being of highest priority):

1. English language capabilities
2. Advocacy
3. Placements, volunteering and work experience
4. Recruitment processes
5. Vocational training
6. Educational training
7. Digital literacy skills
8. Other

Evaluation

Respondents shared that 86 % of cross-sector partnerships are evaluated via both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, while only 14% are evaluated through qualitative evaluations only.

Some difficulties with cross-sector partnerships identified by respondents include:

- rapid changes to client needs or programs
- changes to funding and resources available
- loss of relationships due to staff turnover
- issues with trust
- time constraints
- competing demands or KPIs
- communication issues
- incomparable motivation, investment, or commitment
- unclear roles and responsibilities.