



Working Together – Local Area Networks

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Homework club coordinators can benefit greatly from belonging to a local area network. Local area networks are groups of homework club coordinators from a local geographical area who meet on a regular basis to achieve a variety of aims. They provide opportunities to speak to others in a similar role, gain support, exchange ideas, discuss local issues and form partnerships.

This resource will focus on the following three areas:

- The benefits of local area networks.
- Important considerations for setting up a network.
- How to set-up a local area network.

The benefits of local area networks:

There are a number of benefits that may be gained from belonging to a homework club local area network. Some of these include:

- An opportunity for sharing ideas, strategies, resources, expertise and solving common difficulties.
- The capacity to refer or exchange volunteer tutors.
- Increased links between schools and community services, enabling knowledge sharing to improve services for students and their family members.
- Developing an understanding of other homework clubs in the area, allowing for students to be appropriately referred from one club to another.

The Centre for Multicultural Youth is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia.

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- Development of partnerships to improve capacity and to make funding applications.
- Building relationships with local government to assist with finances, promotion, use of council facilities and more.
- Opportunities for joint publicity through posters, flyers or a website.
- Coordinated planning of homework club development in the area.
- Coordination of joint events for students, parents or volunteers.
- Developing and improving collaborations with local organisations, such as the community library, tertiary institutions and local businesses.
- Attendance at local youth, educational, multicultural or other meetings by a network representative.

Considerations for setting up a local area network

Potential for development and sustainability of the network is an important consideration before commencing work. Some factors to think about are:

- Is there an existing network of homework clubs in the area?
- How many homework clubs already exist in the local government area? Are there enough to make such a group viable? Would it be better for the network to cover two council areas?
- Who are the homework club stakeholders in the local area? The success of the network will depend on support from these people. How many homework club coordinators and their managers are committed to an active involvement in a local area network?

How to set up a local area network

Setting up a network will require some time and commitment; however, the long term rewards can be more than worth it. The following steps are a suggestion only and may vary according to the area and need.

1. Hold an initial planning meeting with interested homework clubs to plan the format, venue, timing and publicity for a launch meeting of the network. An important consideration will be to find a time that suits those involved as many coordinators work part-time or coordinate the homework club as part of another role.
2. Publicise the launch meeting and clearly share the potential benefits of the network. Ask attendees to consider what they would like from the network prior to the meeting.
3. At the launch, have an agenda that allows time for each of the following:
 - » An opportunity for all parties to introduce themselves and their homework club.
 - » Discussion and decisions around coordination of the network; roles of members including chairing and minute taking; regularity, venues and times of meetings.
 - » A brainstorm on the short and long term goals of the network. Choose a couple of these goals as an initial focus and re-assess at each meeting.
4. After establishment of the network, consider a review or evaluation to check that people's needs are being met.
5. Establish communication strategies so that members remain up to date with changes in homework club staff and development of any new homework clubs.
6. Consider applying for funding for a network coordinator.