

Working Together - Partnerships

Why form partnerships?

Partnerships are a pillar of support in establishing successful and sustainable Out-of-School-Hours Learning Support Programs (OSHLSPs). They can provide an array of benefits for your program and for the wider community, including:

- Increased resources
- Leveraging a range of capacities
- New opportunities through shared information & experience
- Fostering learning for better quality outcomes
- Connections to new groups & networks

Who should you partner with?

There are many potential partnerships that can benefit an OSHLSP, but it is important to carefully consider a range of factors before entering into one. The model and structure of your OSHLSP, as well as its strengths and weaknesses will all play a part in what type of partnership to seek. Ideally you should look for partnerships that will strengthen your program and provide resources and expertise in areas that may be lacking. This will allow for a more targeted approach, as it will be clear which organisations are a better match to the specific needs of your program. It is important to remember that partnerships are a two way street; always consider what you can offer in return.






For example, if your OSHLSP partners with an organisation that supports with provision or recruitment of volunteers, you may be able to provide training and upskilling of their volunteers.

Alternatively, if you partner with a food organisation to receive free fruit and snacks for OSHLSP participants, you may want provide this organisation with information about the number and type of people the food is reaching, or even a letter of support, which may enhance their applications for future funding opportunities.

For many organisations, promotion of their services is a great way to give back. This could involve writing a story for your website or social media pages about the impact of their support to your program.

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Some key questions to consider to help you decide which organisation you should partner with:

-  Do they have similar interests and values?
-  Are they willing to share resources and knowledge?
-  Will they be communicative, flexible and open to new ideas?
-  Do you both have a shared vision about the partnership?
-  Do you see this partnership being positive and rewarding?

A list of potential partnerships for OSHLSPs:

Partner	Benefits
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Referrals and increased enrolments - More targeted teaching/learning - School connection with community
Local neighbourhood houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community connection - Discounted venue hire - Accessible location
Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central location - Access to resources
Local council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of program - Helpful when applying for funding - Often have community grants, so the more your program is known to them, the better
Community centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community connection - Discounted venue hire - Accessible location
Migrant information centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community connection - Referrals
Volunteer resource centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can provide volunteers for your program - Promotion of program
Local community groups and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource sharing - Volunteer recruitment
Food organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Free snacks for program
Local area networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of program - Referrals - Information sharing
Business partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding - Volunteers
Education centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Venue hire - Accessible location - Resources

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For example: if your program has grown and is lacking tutors to support the growing number of students, you may want to consider partnering with a community agency that provides volunteers.

Alternatively, if your program is well supported with volunteers but is struggling to recruit students, consider partnering with local schools and having students referred to your program. See the table below for the benefits of a school partnership.

	School	Community Organisation	Partnership: school and community organisation
Reaching Students	Able to directly target students with the most need	Able to attract 'difficult to reach' and disengaged students.	Greater resources (human and physical) availability than if operating alone.
Resources and links to services	Well-resourced classrooms, learning materials and teaching staff	Well linked to other relevant community services.	Opportunity to 'capture' the benefits of both (or more) settings and organisations.
Student learning and wellbeing outcomes	Established learning environment	Use of own resource/ staff base including volunteer recruitment and retention.	Convergence of learning and community wellbeing outcomes
School, family and community engagement	Greater opportunity for liaison with school on student progress	Parental engagement skills and links with communities	Greater scope to address gaps in learning support for students in a more sustainable way

Approaching potential partners

Once your program has been evaluated and the type of partnership to pursue has been chosen, it is time to do your research. Get to know potential partners; local network groups are a great way to meet other community groups and one of these organisations may be a great partnership fit. Generally speaking, an organisation will be more receptive to a proposed partnership if they know of your program and/or organisation.

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The next step is to begin having conversations with potential organisations. These can start as more general conversations about each organisation, including their values and goals, and then develop into discussions about capacity and interest in a potential partnership. Have clear and shareable information on hand, including program aims, scope and structure; this enables you to pitch the partnership easily and professionally.

When a suitable partnership has been found and it is supported by both organisations, it is time to discuss roles and responsibilities within the partnership. Develop a clear understanding of how the partnership will look and operate, particularly in regards to the division of duties and areas of responsibility. This is where a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) can be developed, which is an agreement between two organisations and outlines the mutually accepted expectations and lines of action. Some partnerships may not wish to have such a formal process in place, but this will depend on the type of partnership and organisations involved.

It is then time to begin your partnership, ensuring to monitor and communicate regularly with each organisation. It is important to set a date to evaluate the partnership and discuss renewal of any agreement/MoU- this is often set annually, but this may be shorter depending on the type of partnership.

Successful partnerships

A successful partnership will generally:

-  Have aligned values and vision
-  Effective collaboration, share a common understanding and work towards shared goals
-  Have honesty, integrity and respect
-  Have no hidden agendas
-  Have great communication where both/all sides feel heard and valued
-  Trust and commitment
-  Be flexible and understanding
-  Have complimentary capabilities