Partnering with External Organisations

Procedure
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1. Scope (audience and applicability)

These procedures are designed to support effective partnerships between educational settings including, schools, senior secondary schools, early childhood settings including ECIS, Child and Family Centres and LINC and external organisations.

2. Purpose

These procedures provide a process for principals/managers/leaders of educational settings to work through before committing to a partnership with an external organisation.

3. Definitions

**Educational settings**

Include schools, senior secondary schools, early childhood settings including ECIS, Child and Family Centres and LINC.

**External organisations**

Include non-government organisations (NGOs), not for profit organisations, sporting clubs and other third party providers.

**Partnering Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

These terms are used interchangeably. A partnership is a mutually beneficial relationship that extends beyond what educational settings, the department and other organisations can achieve in isolation and is a relationship where all partners work together to achieve common goals and outcomes for learners.

The department has a [standard MoU template](#) that must be used.

4. Procedure Details

External organisations have considerable capacity to add value to programs and support the learning outcomes of learners. The products and services offered by these organisations are usually well defined and often long term.
Accessing organisations

From time to time, the department enters into whole-of-agency partnerships with external organisations. Before negotiating with external organisations, principals/managers/leaders must have in-principle approval from their General Manager/Manager and determine:

- whether there is already an existing partnership at a whole-of-agency level
- whether a partnering agreement or MoU is the appropriate tool to use as opposed to a specific contract, lease, licence or casual hire agreement
- the needs of the educational setting and the specific learner cohort.

Approaches by organisations to educational settings

Organisations will, on occasions, approach educational settings to offer their services and in such situations it can be difficult to say ‘no’. External organisations have performance expectations in the same way that commercial companies do and have quotas and targets that they are required to meet. It can be an attractive proposition for an educational setting to be approached by a third party and be offered a service at no cost.

Principals/managers/leaders must carefully consider and negotiate the delivery of support programs and services by such agencies in support of the identified learning and development needs of learners.

Approaches by educational settings to organisations

There is a huge range of organisations that can offer a wide variety of services to educational settings. Some of these organisations and their services are well known while others are not. To support principals/managers/leaders access appropriate services, organisations are invited to publicise their services on the department’s Partnering Bulletin Board located on the department’s website (hyperlink).

NB: this does not constitute a departmental endorsement of products, programs or services.

Starting the negotiations

Prior to negotiating with external organisations, principals/managers/leaders must read the Partnering with External Organisations Policy (hyperlinked) and the Tasmanian Government Approach to Collaboration which outlines the benefits and costs of collaboration and identifies six critical factors for working together successfully:

- Leadership
- Trust
- Shared Aims
- Membership
- Accountability
- Information sharing
Other departmental procedures that may impact on the decision to undertake a partnering agreement include: **Sponsorship and Commercial Arrangements for Schools**

Principals/managers/leaders must consider:

- the needs and priorities of the educational setting
- how the proposal links to *Learners First*
- how the proposal links to individual strategic plans including School Improvement Plans.

The following planning questions must be considered prior to any commitment to a partnership:

- What is the specific problem we are trying to address?
- Does the educational setting currently have the capacity to address this issue?
- What is the capacity of the program or service being offered to address this issue?
- Is it the best solution?
- What other external organisations are currently working in the educational setting and what impact might this have?
- Is the program or service looking to replace or replicate the work of school staff?
- Is the program being offered directly linked to the strategic directions of the educational setting and *Learners First*?
- What are the costs (finance, time, effort, focus, lost opportunity etc.) associated with the program or service?
- What is the timeframe of the program or service?
- Is it appropriate to the needs of the educational setting and most importantly its learners?

**Operational issues that must be considered:**

A range of operational matters are likely to arise in circumstances where a third party is involved in the educational setting. The following list represents some of the issues that must be considered.

- Has due diligence been undertaken in respect of the organisation?
- Is there a whole-of-agency partnership with the external organisation that may impact on the capacity of the organisation or the educational setting to fulfil its obligations?
- Do the personnel involved have Good Character Checks?
- Do they have liability cover? Do they need it?
- What is the process for inducting people into the educational setting?
- What Health and Safety issues must be brought to their attention?
- In what capacity will the organisation work with the educational setting’s community?
- What communication strategy will be employed?
- What consents will be sought?
- Are there any timetabling issues?
- Does this program impact on any subject areas?
This list is not complete and will change according to the nature of the program or service under consideration. It is the responsibility of the principal/manager/leader to ensure that all relevant issues are identified and addressed.

Consultation

The final decision about whether or not to engage with an external organisation rests with the principal/manager/leader in discussion with their General Manager/Manager; however, effective consultation is crucial. Principals/managers/leaders must consult with all key stakeholders before making a final decision is made. Consultation must include:

- Principal Network Leader/General Manager/Manager
- School Association or other advisory body
- Staff
- Parents
- The broader community
- Local business or service providers as required

Purchasing Services

On occasions schools may be asked to purchase or supplement a service or program from an external organisation. In such circumstances the procedures above are especially important.

Any commitment to fund a program in the long term must only be made after a detailed analysis of the financial circumstances of the educational setting including a ‘cash flow’ projection for the life of the program has been undertaken.

Committing to a Partnership

Documentation

Principals/managers/leaders must document any agreements with external organisations. A template for a standard Memorandum of Understanding and instructions are available.

NOTE: Prior to signing, the completed MoU must be sent through the General Manager/Manager to legal.services@education.tas.gov.au for checking.

Managing the Project

Principals/managers/leaders are responsible for what happens in their educational setting and must ensure any program or service delivered by a third party is effectively managed.

A project manager or responsible person must be allocated.

Specific outcomes and deliverables must be clearly stated.
A cycle and process for monitoring the implementation of the program or service and reviewing its effectiveness must be developed and actioned from the beginning of the partnership.

The monitoring and review cycle must identify a clear timetable for deliverables and identify a predetermined series of review points to ensure the program is effectively implemented.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Meaning of "must", "is to" and "may"

(a) the word "must" is to be construed as being mandatory; and
(b) the words "is to" and "are to" are to be construed as being directory; and
(c) the word "may" is to be construed as being discretionary or enabling, as the context requires.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deputy Secretary (Early Years and Schools)</th>
<th>Must ensure these procedures are adhered to across all educational settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Managers/ Managers</td>
<td>Must ensure all principals, managers and leaders of educational settings are familiar with these procedures. Must approve in principle the proposed partnership. Must ensure the completed MoU is sent to <a href="mailto:legal.services@education.tas.gov.au">legal.services@education.tas.gov.au</a> for checking prior to signing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals/managers/leaders</td>
<td>Must adhere to these procedures and must:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gain in-principle approval from their General Manager/Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Undertake due diligence in respect of the external organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Be aware of other whole-of-agency partnerships that exist that may impact on the decision to partner with an external organisation</td>
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<td>• Be aware of other external organisations that may already be working in the educational setting and what impact this may have.</td>
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<td>• Ensure that a partnership agreement or MoU is the correct tool and that another form of agreement such as a contract, lease, licence or casual hire</td>
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agreement is not more appropriate.
- Consult with relevant stakeholders
- Complete the departmental MoU
- Forward the MoU to the relevant General Manager/Line Manager for final approval.
- Determine a project manager
- Have regular meetings with the project manager to ensure effective management of the project.

| School Staff | Must ensure that all queries regarding partnerships with external organisations are directed to the principal/manager/leader who is the only authorised person to undertake a partnership with an external organisation. |

6. Risk Management

A risk management plan must be completed.

7. Associated Documents and Materials

8. The following documents are available from www.education.tas.gov.au (Search for the Doc ID)

- Partnering with External Organisations Policy (Doc ID: TASED-4-4947)
- Department MoU Template (Doc ID: TASED-4-4950)
- Good Character Checks
- Sponsorship and Commercial Arrangements for Educational Settings Procedures (Doc ID: TASED-4-3183) [Staff access only]
- Tasmanian Government Approach to Collaboration