

How to run a successful Community Hub

First Edition

October 2016

- ⋮ A practical guide to setting up and operating a school-based
- ⋮ community hub using the Community Hubs Australia model



Meadow Primary School hub

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Thank you!

We wish to thank the many hub leaders and support coordinators who have contributed to this guide.

How to use this guide

A guide, not a manual

This guide is designed to help hub leaders and host schools achieve the best possible outcomes for their community hub.

While the content speaks directly to hub leaders, we hope it will also be a valuable source of information and inspiration for hub support coordinators, school leaders and hub partners.

This guide presents examples and tips about what has worked well in our hubs to date. However, the success of our community hubs model relies on each hub being able to offer flexible, placed-based programs tailored to the needs of their local community. So try what we suggest and if it doesn't work, come up with solutions that work for your hub, your school and your families.

Then let us know what's worked and what hasn't. Members of our national hubs network are always sharing and learning from each other.

This guide is designed to evolve and be updated over time and may not answer all your questions. It's important to connect with other hub leaders and support coordinators through our national 'community of practice' to ask questions and learn about what's happening in other hubs.

If there's anything you'd like us to add to this guide, or if you have ideas, tips and stories to share, please share them with us via info@communityhubs.org.au.

A practical resource

Throughout this guide you will find:



What hub leaders say has worked well in their hubs



Helpful tips from established hub leaders



Success stories direct from the hubs



Video stories direct from the hubs



A toolbox with links to additional information, checklists, templates and resources



Strengthening family bonds whilst teaching children key developmental skills in Hume hubs



The National Community Hubs Program model

Community Hubs Australia

Dozens of community hubs operate under the National Community Hubs Program (NCHP), which is part of Community Hubs Australia Incorporated (CHA) – an organisation dedicated to increasing social cohesion in Australia.

CHA helps culturally diverse families, whether they came here as refugees, migrants, or on temporary visas, to integrate into Australian communities.

We work with federal, state and local governments; businesses; philanthropic and not-for-profit organisations; and community organisations to deliver grassroots programs based on locally identified needs. These programs aim to reduce isolation and increase connection.

What are community hubs?

Our community hubs aim to engage culturally diverse, disadvantaged communities across Australia. They are based in schools and a small number of community centres – places where families, particularly women, feel safe and welcome.

Hubs serve as gateways that connect families with each other, with their school, and with existing services, including local organisations that can provide education, health and settlement support.

The hubs focus on reaching women from migrant and refugee backgrounds who have pre-school children. Without a welcoming community hub to go to, many of these women can spend most of their time at home, feeling isolated from the rest of the community.

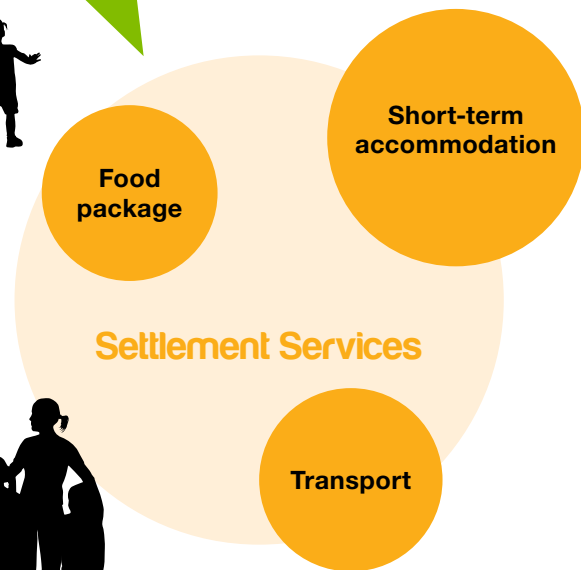
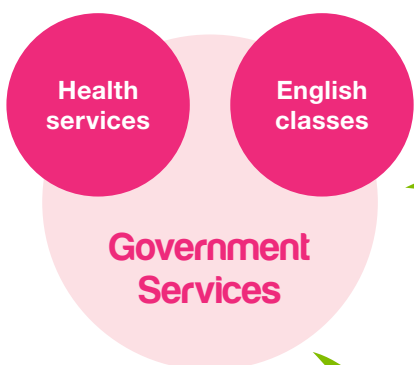
Our hubs empower people to:

- Develop skills
- Build local connections
- Learn English
- Engage in early years services and improve school readiness



Government services/Not-for-profit sector

- Maternal & Child health
- English
- Family support
- Employment/setting up small business
- Links to legal support
- Women's health and leadership
- Education
- Parenting
- Financial counselling



Settlement support

- Accommodation
- Case management assistance with interpreter
- Referrals and links to wider network of services and community development initiatives
- Essential registration for Centrelink, Medicare
- Information sessions and links to employment programs
- Transport assistance, linkages to services and health supports

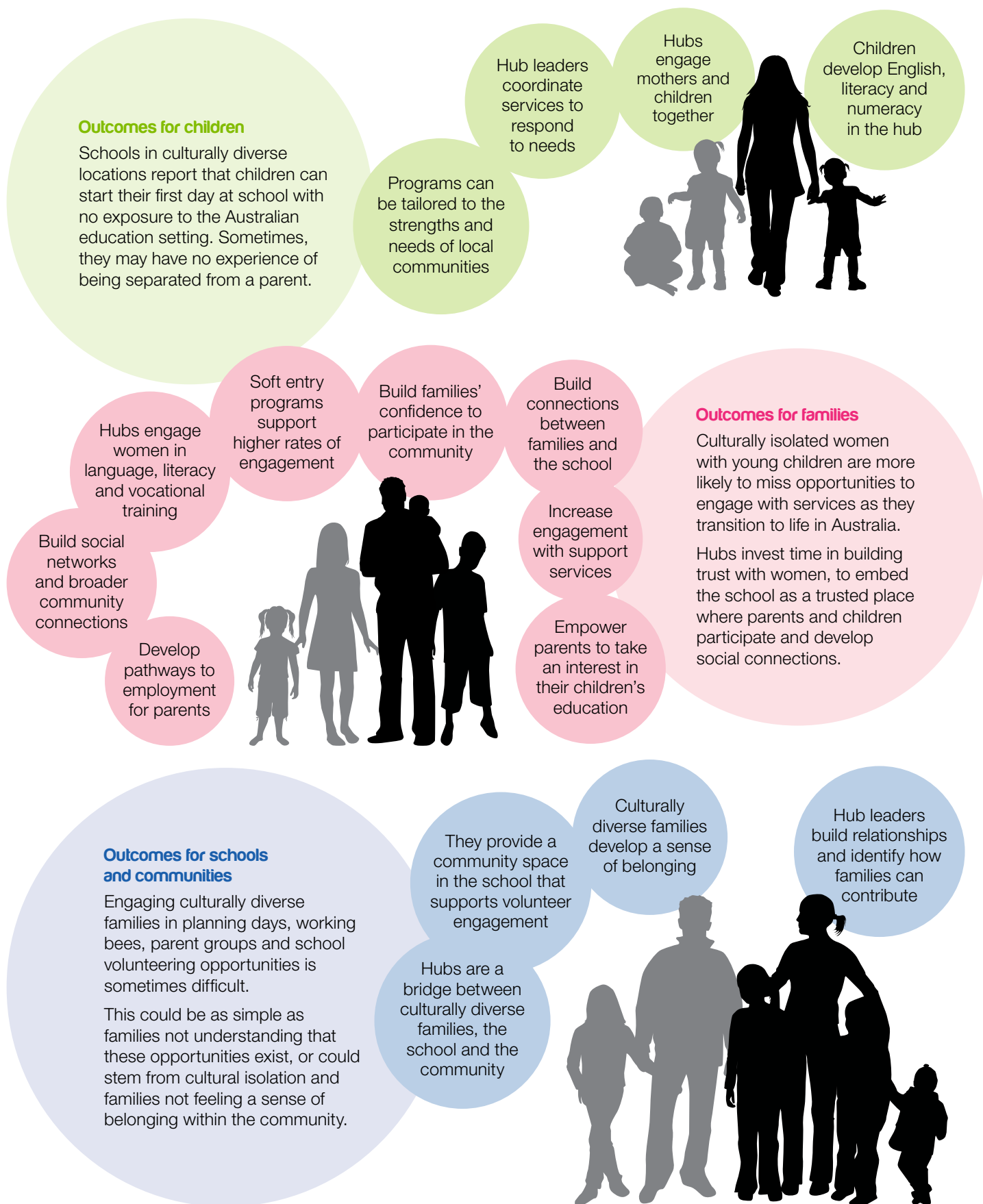


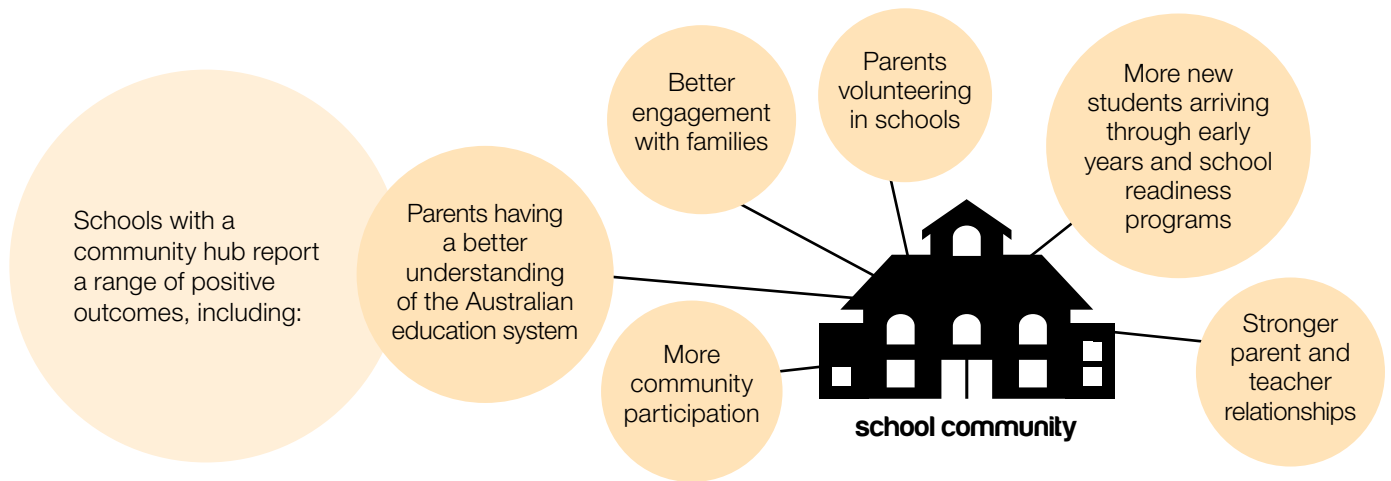
Community hubs:

- are child friendly
- provide soft entry and engagement programs that help women who are isolated access support they would otherwise miss out on (eg: sewing group which builds relationships and then gets women participating in other things)
- work in partnership with government and not for profit sector to deliver activities including:
 - Early years programs such as playgroups
 - Informal and Formal learning eg: English, computer classes and certificate courses
 - Volunteer and employment
 - Healthy lifestyle programs eg: Maternal and Child health
 - Settlement specific
 - Social connection and friendship programs
- provide referrals to additional support

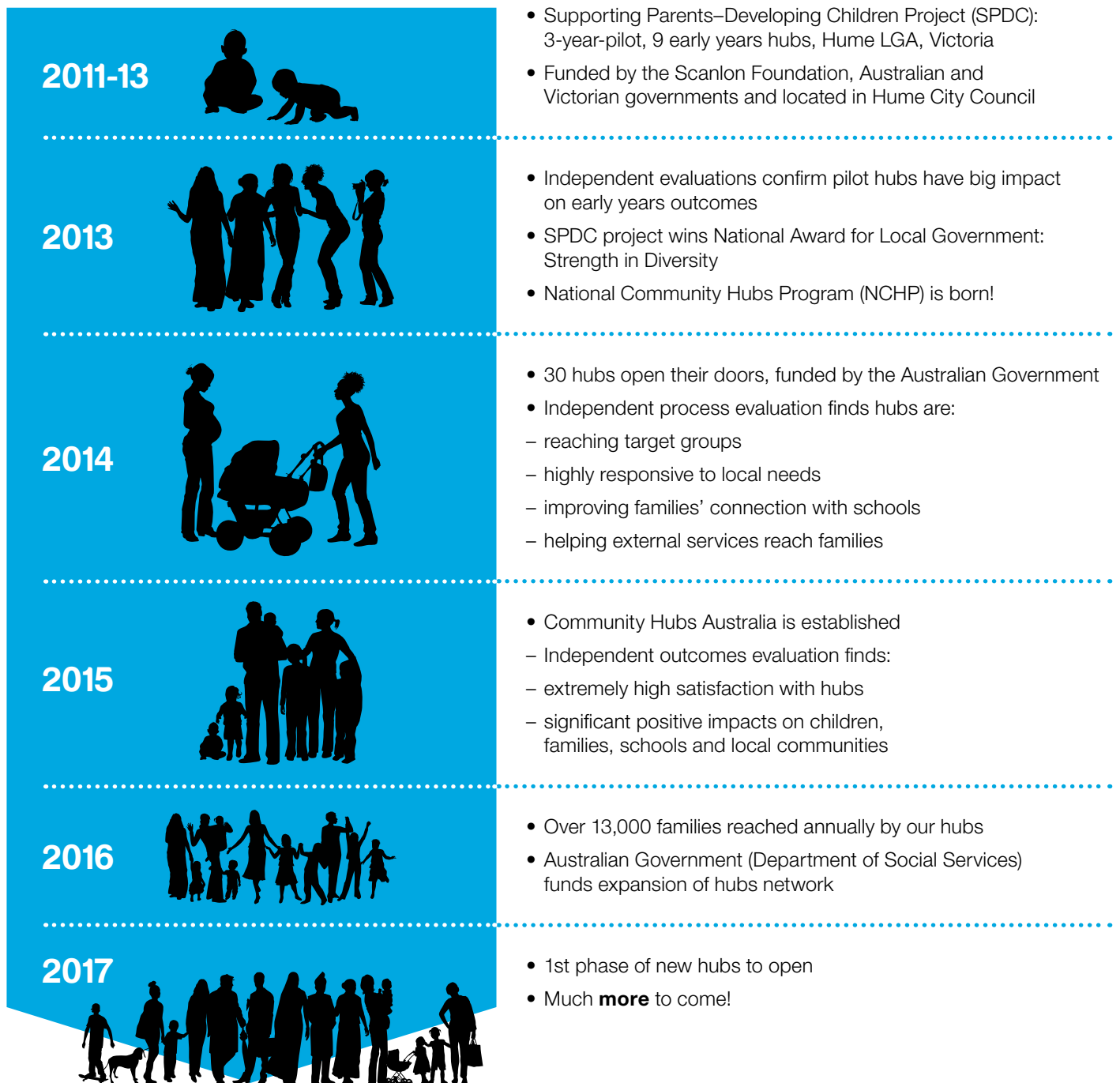
Why community hubs work so well

Our community hubs are designed around a proven, evidence-based model. They are place-based and people-focused. Our hubs respond to the needs of their local communities while always planning to achieve positive outcomes for children, families, schools and the wider community.





Evolution of the community hubs model



An independent evaluation of a selection of our community hubs found that:

100% of school principals/staff agree	→	hubs have enhanced their school's ability to collaborate with families
100% of respondents agree	→	community services are working more effectively with migrant families, and are more connected, available and accessible
99% of respondents agree	→	hubs make schools more culturally inclusive
99% of families	→	feel listened to, able to contribute to the school and more connected to the school
97% of respondents agree	→	hubs improve children's literacy and transitions into school
97% of families	→	know more about community services and where to find them
96% of families	→	feel more connected to their community

Evaluation results sourced from: Wong S, Press F, Cumming T. *Report on the pilot evaluation of the National Community Hubs Program* (2015). Charles Sturt University's Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education.

More information about the community hubs program model and outcomes-based evaluation framework is available at: www.communityhubs.org.au.

Who funds our community hubs?

Community hubs are funded by the Australian Government, through the Department of Social Services, in partnership with the Scanlon Foundation and Community Hubs Australia.

State and local government, and a growing number of private and community sector organisations provide additional financial and in-kind support.

Our aim is to make sure they are inclusive of everyone in the community and are able to continue operating for a long time.

Governance structure



The main **tools and templates** needed by host school principals:

- Hub leader induction checklist
- Terms of reference for local leadership group
- Community hubs program outcomes and objectives
- Memorandum of Understanding template for hub partnerships
- Model hub leader position description
- Community hubs philosophy statement
- Annual delivery and outcomes reports

Getting started – 12 priorities for the first 12 months

1

Get to know your host school and local hubs network

The quality of the relationships you establish with colleagues at your school*, local families, your hub support network and external partners will be the most important ingredients for your hub to be successful.

Building strong relationships takes time and needs to be a constant priority.

What works – insights from hub leaders

Building positive relationships with school colleagues

- ✓ Get to know the teachers and educational support staff at your school, including the administration team and any multicultural aides. Invite them into the hub so they understand what happens at the hub and can tell parents what you do – these people are your front-line advocates.
- ✓ Attend staff meetings and school assemblies when you can. Speak at these forums to raise awareness of the hub and its activities.
- ✓ Remind your school colleagues to refer families into the hub and encourage students to bring their families in to have a look.
- ✓ Find ways to support the principal and teachers – small gestures of support go a long way towards building positive relationships.
- ✓ Invite school staff to make use of the hub to deliver special programs to their students outside the classroom. For example, speech therapy sessions, bike safety classes, a homework club or breakfast club.
- ✓ Catch up with a different teacher for lunch when you can.

Demonstrate the value and relevance of the hub

- ✓ Share stories about successes with colleagues, school leaders, and in the school newsletter.
- ✓ School readiness is a priority for schools. Transition programs, playgroups and other early learning activities are likely to be viewed favourably by the school leadership team.
- ✓ Find opportunities to demonstrate how the hub can help to achieve some of the school's main goals and objectives.
- ✓ Get involved in whole-of-school activities whenever possible, for e.g. the annual fete, NAIDOC Week activities – offer the hub space as a venue that's available to host associated activities.

Learn from other hub leaders

- ✓ There's a great deal of knowledge and experience across our hubs network. Connect to other hub leaders across the network through your local hub leader meetings, our national buddy program and the regular, informal hub leader dial-in sessions.
- ✓ Make full use of the information and tools available on our website.
- ✓ Remember: you're not alone. Reach out and ask for help when you need it.

* Purely for ease of expression, we will refer only to host schools during the rest of this guide, rather than host schools and community centres.



Fahriye,
Coolaroo
South Primary
School Hub

"You cannot separate a community hub from the rest of the school. You really need to be able to embed the whole community hub philosophy throughout the school. The teachers, the assistant teachers, the staff in the office ... everybody needs to be part of that community hub understanding."



Salwa,
Meadow
Heights
Primary Hub

"Schools are very busy so it's not easy to organise activities. We have a Hub committee that includes our speech therapist, the vice-principal, about four parents and me. We work out what we want to do and prioritise the activities we want to do for the year. We usually have a list of 10 activities."

By involving the school in the planning, this helps me build relationships and keep the school staff involved in the hub."



Fahriye and Caroline **talk** about how they started their hubs.



Induction checklist for hub leaders – page 8

Hub leader induction checklist

Name

This checklist is to be used as a reference guide by the school principal, support coordinator and new hub leader.

The school principal will:

- Introduce the hub leader to the leadership group and explain the impact that a hub will have on children's learning outcomes and how the hub will contribute to the school's strategic plan. The principal and the hub leader will share the aims of community hubs with the leadership group.
- Show the hub leader the space designated for the hub and discuss a shared vision for how this will be decorated and the budget that is available.
- Provide an orientation to the school, introducing the hub leader to school staff and the welfare team.
- Share information about parent committees, how they work and when they meet. Provide an introduction to the committee/s.
- Invite the hub leader to staff meetings to speak what the hub is and what it will be doing.
- Discuss what existing work is being done with families, what has worked and any challenges (e.g. any transition programs).
- Allocate the hub leader a buddy from the staff/leadership team so they have someone they can check in with to familiarise themselves with the school when they start.
- Arrange a regular catch up with the hub leader to discuss priorities, how the hub is progressing and work through any challenges.

The hub support agency/hub support coordinator will:

- Provide an overview of the National Community Hubs Program model, including the national focus and the various roles of the team.
- Introduce the hub leader to the program's outcomes framework and philosophy statement.
- Supply a copy of this guide and review the position description with the hub leader, providing examples of how different hubs operate.
- Introduce hub leaders to each other at a local hub leaders' meeting and share each other's contact details. Provide a schedule of hub leader meetings for the remainder of the term/year.
- Provide an overview of the professional development that will be available and assess, together with the hub leader, what knowledge and skills may be beneficial for them to learn.
- Provide an overview of existing networks and partnerships and discuss strategies to make broader connections.
- Introduce the new hub leader to the national team and link them to our community of practice through hub leader dial-in sessions and the hubs network buddy program.
- Introduce the hub leader to other relevant team members at the support agency.

- Provide a list of key contacts and links to networks.
- Explain reporting requirements, as well as the importance of collecting and sharing stories.
- Provide an introduction to the **www.communityhubs.org.au** website and our social media.
- Arrange for the hub leader to have access to the protected sections of the website and provide an orientation to resources available on the site, including where key program templates for are stored.
- If applicable, provide some background about the hub's history and development.

The support agency or principal (depending on contract arrangements) will also:

- Show the hub leader their work space (computer and phone) and set them up with an email and access to print/scan.
- Help them complete their contract and explain payroll, leave and other staffing related matters.
- Explain the IT system and where and how to save work related files.
- Explain the funding available for the hub, the process for accessing program related funds and the reimbursement process.



Community hub this way

Rydamere Public School Hub knitting helps women connect across cultures

2 Create a welcoming space and help people find it

One of the most important things a hub can do is help families connect with each other. When people feel connected and part of a community, they feel safer and have a sense of belonging. This increases social cohesion at the local level.

It's important to create a hub space that encourages people to relax and connect. A hub can be like a 'home away from home' – where people can meet together, make friends, seek help, learn and engage in fun social activities. Once you have the space ready, it's important to make it easy for people to find. Schools can be difficult places to navigate, especially for first time visitors.

If your hub is not visible from the main entrance and there are no clear signs to help people find it, this could be a barrier to them visiting. Remember, the hub will change over time to reflect the people who use it, so the space doesn't have to be perfect from the start.



What works, in our experience, is a space that:

- ✓ welcomes everyone
- ✓ is informal and relaxed
- ✓ is child and family friendly
- ✓ feels safe
- ✓ is a somewhere people feel like they belong
- ✓ supports participation and interactions
- ✓ is personalised to the needs of local families
- ✓ has culturally sensitive and inclusive spaces
- ✓ families have a sense of ownership about because they've contributed to it in some way
- ✓ respects diversity
- ✓ has a mix of private and shared areas, and
- ✓ has spaces and furniture that can be used for different purposes, for example: a large table (or group of tables) that can be used for craft activities, adult education classes, holding meetings and workshops, or as an informal dining table.

To help people find your hub:

- ✓ CHA will arrange for a sign to be placed at the front of your school.
- ✓ Add directional signage around the school if needed. For example, some hubs use coloured arrows that guide people to their door.
- ✓ Arrange for a sign on the outside wall and/or the door of your hub.
- ✓ Ask your school to add paint a coloured line along the ground leading to your hub.



Gail,
Dallas Brooks
Community
Hub

“When thinking about how to set up the space, check in with the school about what is available and your budget. Always also think about your past contacts, business associates or friends who may be in a position to donate unwanted furniture and equipment that could be used in the hub.”

It's not just about decorating the walls; it's about what's within those four walls and how people feel when they enter the room.

Make sure people working in the school's front office know how to direct people to the hub and always have copies of the hub timetable to give to parents.

First impressions count, so design your community hub signage to give people a positive impression of what they'll find inside your hub.



Hub design inspirations



Two views inside **Westmead Public School Hub**, highlight the versatility of the space, which has flexible zoning and furniture. An art/craft session can happen while an English class is underway nearby. A bright 'Welcome' sign, multi-use tables, computer workstations, lots of storage, and shelves for displaying brochures, create a friendly and functional space.



Chair covers, tablecloths, a comfy rug for playtime and a vase of flowers add to the welcoming, homely interior of **Dandenong Primary School Hub**.





St Brendan's Catholic Primary School Hub uses floor cushions, a play mat, low tables and chairs, and a tee pee cubby to create a great play area for pre-school children. Colourful posters and drawings on the walls, and overhead decorations, complete this vibrant space.

This cheerful mural greets families in **St Paul's Primary School Hub**. It was created by an artist relative of hub leader, Michelle, with help and ideas from local children. "The hub supplied the materials," says Michelle. "It was an exciting process and wasn't an expensive exercise. I'm sure art students would enjoy the opportunity." Also note the comfy chairs for informal chats and the creative timetable display.



Caroline speaks about how to start a hub. Get inspiration from the fantastic hub space.



Fahriye highlights the importance of embedding the hub and her role in the school. She shares strategies for families to find out about the hub and the activities available.

3 Get to know your hub families

How many jobs actually encourage you to stop and chat with someone over a cup of tea or coffee? Well, this one does; in fact, we think it's a key part of every hub leader's role.

Relationships are at the heart of a successful hub. And building authentic relationships requires spending time getting to know people. Giving quality time to a parent, even when you're busy, is one of the best ways to make them feel valued and build trust. It is also important to continually engage with families, informally and formally, to find out their passions and interests, and what they want from their hub.



When asked what advice they would give new hub leaders, existing hub leaders speak about the importance of spending time building connections with families.

Here are some of their examples of what works best:

- ✓ Be at the school gate each morning to chat with parents as they drop off their children. If the weather's bad, visit a prep classroom at that time instead.
- ✓ Drop in to the school canteen to chat with the parents working there.
- ✓ Attend meetings of the parents committee and get to know each member informally.
- ✓ Use the 'We Can' visual consultation game to find out what families are interested in and discover the strengths and skills they can share at the hub.
- ✓ Put on some food and invite families to have conversations with each other using some of the community asset mapping tools on our website. Extra tip: this is a great way to get people in the mood for volunteering.
- ✓ Use appreciative enquiry questions to learn about the strengths, interests and passions of your families.
- ✓ Map out their interests, skills and needs to make sure you understand parents' priorities.
- ✓ Wherever possible, delegate program delivery to trusted service providers and volunteers. This will free up time for you to focus on building relationships and being strategic about how your hub develops.
- ✓ View every parent as someone who has something valuable to contribute to your hub.
- ✓ Remember, if people trust you and you help them see the opportunity, they will get involved.



Lack of child minding is a big barrier to engagement. If parents understand that their children are welcome to attend and that there is free child minding, then it's much easier to get families to join an activity.



Caroline

"We assume too much about families. So I have a DNA policy—Do Not Assume. Do not assume parents can understand, read or write English. Do not assume they can read their mother language. Do not assume they have families or friends to rely on. Do not assume families know about services outside the hub."



Maureen

"Be very clear from the start that the hub is a place for everybody. You've got to have a clear idea of what the codes of conduct will be. Be clear that the hub is a caring and inclusive environment where families can discuss individual differences and negotiate responsibly, but they cannot dictate to others."



Encourage new families to attend a meet and greet or coffee and chat to get to know the family.



The **'We Can'** card game is a visual tool you can use to overcome language barriers and uncover each parent's strengths and skills. Download the guidelines; capacity cards and corner cards.



Find out about how to use the **'World café' technique** and other ways to start discussions about what is important for your hub community.



Helping people make a contribution

Victorian hub leader, St Albans Heights Primary School Hub

"In our busy roles, let's never lose sight of the importance of informal engagement and persistence.

Helping parents to recognise their personal capacity and skills is extremely important and providing the opportunity for them to share is very valuable. Language, or language confidence, can be a barrier to inclusion, but in a supportive, caring environment, many barriers can be overcome.

A family who are asylum seekers on community-based detention orders recently enrolled at our school. The mother was described by her caseworker as extremely depressed and with poor English.

I continued to engage informally with this mum for a couple of months, encouraging her to attempt English and providing feedback and encouragement that her language was comprehensible.

After three months, the mum agreed to attend the parents group meeting in the hub and began attending weekly. The group supported and encouraged her in her English language use and when we were talking about our individual strengths and skills, she indicated she had been a personal trainer in her country of origin. This led to the mum facilitating a weekly parents exercise group, with demand for a second class."



Watch this inspirational clip for more ideas on what day-to-day looks like in a hub. Caroline shares some great tips on how she empowers and communicates with parent.



Caroline shares with us the type of relationships hub leaders should build and why these are important.



Rania highlights the power of a smile and connecting with mothers around their care for their children.



Westmead Public School Community Hub

A day in the life of a hub leader



**Lina, hub leader,
Chester Hill Public School Hub**

8.00am:

When I first arrive at the hub, I check my emails and do what admin I can. I'm also often preparing for the first activity, which starts at 9am.

About 8.30, I go to the staff meeting to keep on top of what's happening at school, build relationships with the other teachers and promote what's happening at the hub. I make connections with other staff and casually inform them about the hub and what's been happening.



9.00am:

I walk around and chat to parents after they drop off their kids for school. Since I started in this role, this has been the single most important thing I do. I'm often out in the playground building relationships.

Many parents are happy to see me and bring things up that I can help them with. Sometimes I'm not out for long, and some mornings I'm there for over an hour talking to families. If a parent has an issue, then I spend time with them. Like yesterday, one of the mums needed support to link to a teacher about their child.

If it's not too busy at the front of the school, I make my way to the canteen where families are making the lunch orders. I have hub posters with me and I chat to the women there.

10.00am-12.30pm:

Today, I attend our school readiness program, which a new family has joined. I spend my time getting to know both the mum and her child and their interests. Even though the mum doesn't speak much English, I am friendly and ask lots of questions. I want to clarify my understanding about the development of her child, who will be starting school next year.

Depending on the situation and what we're talking about, I sometimes ask for help from another family with the same language, but there are times when this isn't appropriate.

1.00–1.45pm:

I usually sit at my desk over lunch to do some admin and answer emails.

Some days, when I have the time, I have lunch in the staffroom with the teachers to make friends. This also helps the staff become more aware of who I am and what the hub does. I let them know they can refer families to me for support.

I also relay what parents are saying they want from the school back to the teachers. Over time, this has helped the school become more welcoming and responsive to the needs of families from different cultural backgrounds.

1.00–3.00pm:

Today, I sit in with families attending the bullying program, which is facilitated by a partner organisation. I sit among the families to encourage them to participate and speak up and so there isn't too much of a distinction in their minds about a 'professional' speaking to them.

I always provide, tea and coffee and tell people to make themselves at home.

3.00pm:

The parents stick around after the bullying program. We have a debrief and speak about what they liked and what they want in future. If they had left, I would have gone back outside to chat to families out the front of the school during pick-up time.

3.30–4.00pm:

I spend the last part of the day packing up, cleaning up and channelling my interior designer to set up for the next day. I always joke that as a hub leader, half of my time is with the community the other is being an interior designer!

In actual fact, I'm very lucky because I usually ask parents and facilitators to help with tidying up after each activity. While they do this, I start the set up for the next activity.

Ah! ... another day finished ... time to get home.

✓ Lina's top tips

Developing personal relationships with families is the most important part of my job. It's the personal relationships that get people coming back. When they come back, you know there is trust and they feel connected.

I don't run the hub programs myself. It's more practical to link to other services that already have funding, as we have connections to the families they want to support. They provide the services and this gives me the flexibility and time required to focus on building in-depth relationships and understanding the families.

It's all about the quality of what you do, not the quantity. You can run a million programs but no-one comes. When I started I thought I could cater to everyone. I realised I had to connect and offer the programs that parents wanted.

Early on in my role I took things personally when they didn't work out exactly how I wanted them to. For example, in a school of 350 families, only seven parents have come to our bullying workshops. As much as you promote things, you don't always get the numbers and there are many reasons for this. I've learned it's okay and it's not about me when things don't work.

In the beginning, my hub was empty most of the time as I was out researching what services are out there. I asked lots of questions of my existing 'go to' people and the school and they helped me identify new key contacts. One man linked me to a Bankstown inter-agency meeting and everyone was there – it was like I'd found gold!

Because I didn't know agencies well at the beginning, I also didn't make too many referrals. That came with time once I got to know the workers and agencies and felt confident that if I sent people somewhere they would have a positive experience.



4 Develop a plan for your hub

Our community hubs model is evidence-based and has a strong focus on achieving major outcomes for children, families, schools and communities. For this reason, it's important for every hub leader to set clear goals and objectives, and collect evidence that shows how these goals are being achieved.

Once you have a good understanding of the needs of your hub families and school, it's important to think strategically about how your hub can provide them with the best support. Outcomes-based plans help us think through what we want to achieve, what we need to do in order to reach our goals, and how we will measure whether or not we've been successful. Each of our hubs is guided by an annual outcomes-based plan that is tailored to their local needs. Developing a plan will give you a clear picture from the start about what needs to happen for your hub to have the greatest positive impact on your school community. This planning task is best done before setting up your timetable of programs and activities.

Your hub support coordinator will provide templates and guidance to help you develop the plan. We also suggest you use the 1-page NCHP outcomes and objectives summary (see page 40) as a reference guide when developing your priorities.

Report progress

At the end of each school term, you will be asked to submit data to your support coordinator about your hub's activities and the level of participation from families. You will also be asked to provide at least one real-life case study about how your hub has had an impact on people's lives. See Priority 10 (page 23) for more guidance around what we're looking for from hubs in terms of reporting and success stories. By 28 February and 31 August each year, your school principal also need to submit financial reports about the hub's operations to your support agencies.

Update your plan

You will be asked to review and update your outcomes-based plan every year. This is a good time to check in with your families to find out if the hub has been meeting their needs and if there are other programs or services they would like to access in the coming year.



What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Set aside some time in your diary every week to complete reporting and administration tasks. This is a key part of your role as it's important to collect real evidence of how your hub is connecting with and helping families.
- ✓ Working with families who trust you and are relying on you can add pressure to try to do as much as you can to help as many people as possible. However, it's really important to remember that it's OK to say 'No'. Your support coordinator and other hub leaders can help you with strategies for managing the expectations of parents and school staff.
- ✓ Your role is not designed to be a caseworker for individual parents or families. And you will never be able to please everyone, especially working part time. It's far more important is to focus on the quality and sustainability of the programs being offered in your hub.



Fahriye shares tips around how to plan for your hub and record successes.



Here is a powerful 6-minute presentation on understanding your priorities and always putting the most important things first.



Speak to your support coordinator who will provide you with templates and help you to complete an outcome based plan for your hub.



5

Get to know your local support services

Community hubs serve as gateways for families to access existing services. Our programs aim to fill in the gaps rather than duplicate what's already out there.

Hubs are also an important way of linking government agencies and community services with vulnerable families who may otherwise be difficult to reach. In return, service providers can help by introducing new families to the hubs.

It's therefore important to quickly get to know 'who's who' among the government and community support agencies servicing your local community.

Your support coordinator will provide a list of initial contacts and link you into key networks. Then it's up to you to attend network meetings, build relationships and dig deeper to extend your knowledge about which quality, reliable services may be able to assist you and your hub families when the need arises. (See Priority 8: Build and sustain partnerships, to find out how to use this knowledge to even further benefit.)



What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Ask your hub support coordinator to introduce you to a service that is important for your hub, or to invite them to one of your local area hub leader meetings.
- ✓ Find out which service network meetings are most valuable and if your support coordinator isn't attending this network, register to receive meeting minutes by email so you keep up to date with what's happening locally even if you can't get to every network meeting.



- **Learn about your community** – some tips and ideas about how to explore what your hub community has and what it needs
- **How family friendly is your school?** – A checklist to work through with hub families
- **How to sustain a partnership** – even when there are challenges.



If you have placement students, ask them to visit local services

and help to develop a resource folio about the services and support in your area. At the same time, they can hand out the hub timetables to the service providers. If you're unsure how to get started, ask your support coordinator for guidance.

Aim to build strong relationships with the case workers from your local settlement services agency, particularly those working in Humanitarian Settlement Support and the Settlement Grants Program. The caseworkers know their clients well and can personally introduce them to you and the hub. If you're not sure where to start, ask for guidance from your hub support coordinator and the other hub leaders in your local area network.

Speak to your support coordinator about how your hub can develop its connections with the local council, particularly the children and family services, community development and social cohesion teams. Other sections of the council to connect with include the community education, allied health, grants, and sport and recreation teams.





6 Test and tailor programs

Our community hubs are successful because we put the needs of local families and communities at the centre of everything we do.

This place-based, people-focused approach requires each hub leader to actively involve families, school representatives, and local community members in decisions about the type of activities and support that will be offered at their hub. For this reason, every hub – and every hub timetable – is different.



What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Start small and be flexible. Remember: quality is better than quantity. Ask questions and adapt what you do and how you do it so it works for your community.
- ✓ What you think people need may not be a priority; make sure you understand what people really want.
- ✓ Give an activity a go. If it doesn't work, that's okay; get feedback to find out why it didn't work. Learn from it and try something else.
- ✓ Check in with families on a regular basis to find out which activities they are getting the most value from and whether anything needs to be re-designed or discontinued.
- ✓ Ask other hub leaders about how they run specific programs and activities. They've already been through the process, so there's lots to learn from their experiences.
- ✓ Understand what gaps there are in services in your local area and plan how your hub and its partners can respond to address some of these gaps.



Caroline

“Getting parents to turn up to events, even when they've filled in a form to say they will come, remains a big challenge. It's hard because there are many reasons why a parent doesn't turn up – they might be the only carer, children might be ill or they have to care for an elderly relative. I've found that giving parents an extra incentive to attend often works well.

For example, at playgroup we do the Let's Read activity and I put a note in the newsletter that we may give free books to parents at the sessions.”



NSW hub leader

“You get asked to do a lot as a hub leader and that's not easy when you're only working part-time. I have to keep reminding myself that I'm not meant to be a caseworker for individual parents. It's important to set boundaries and work in partnership with other services so I can refer people to the most appropriate agencies for support.”



Check out the Hubs in Action section of this guide for program ideas and insights from other hub leaders about setting up and running programs.



Consider different ways of designing and displaying your hub's timetable to make it:

- attractive and engaging
- easy to read and understand, and
- easy to print and display.

Look at timetables from other hubs to get ideas.



Trust is the key

Salwa

“Build trust with families for the first year. Be creative, be patient. It takes about a year to build up trust, to make families feel comfortable. This will help you understand what is important to families and how they want to be involved.

Our two-hour parenting sessions, which we run for six weeks at a time, are really popular. Parents are happy to know they’re not alone struggling with their child. They say they’re looking at things differently – that when they change the way they talk to their child, the child’s behaviour improves, that if they play with their child for 10 minutes every day, it makes a difference.

If I’d planned to run a parenting program when I first started, it would not have worked. Parents would have said ‘Who are you, telling us how to bring our kids up!’”



Ask for honest feedback

Blaise Itabelo,
Access Community
Services Ltd

“Culturally, women can be reluctant to provide critical feedback – especially to people who are trying to help.

For example, there was a sewing program in one hub and they were sewing things they didn’t want. Instead of saying this, they stopped coming because they didn’t want to upset anyone.

It was actually the men who came and told us about the issue. The men wanted the program to continue, because they were grateful for programs like this one that were helping their wives, mothers and sisters to learn and grow in confidence.

We worked with the women so they felt confident about giving us feedback. When the program was changed to suit their needs, they were happy to stay involved.”



Woodbridge State School Community Hub timetable

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Playgroup 0-5 years 9:00–11:00 	Sewing Group 9:00–12:00 Childcare available! Free and for all abilities!	Mother’s & Babies group 9:30–11:30 am Are you pregnant? Or do you have a child under 12 months? Come along... It’s free, and everyone is welcome!	English Class 9:00–11:00 Childcare available! Everyone welcome!	Playgroup 0-5 years 9:00–11:00 (Friday playgroup is at the WSS library)
Cooking Hub 11:30–1:30 Cooking from a variety of cultures... come and join us! 	GANYJUU Playgroup 9:00am – 11:00am Homework Hub 2:45–4:00pm (Both at the Resource Centre)	WOW Women’s Group 12:30–2:30 Childcare available! Craft sessions, wellbeing workshops and general learning—everyone is welcome!	English Class For Farsi Speakers 12:30–2:00pm 	English Class For Farsi Speakers 12:30–2:00pm
Want to do something different? Come and let me know!		PEACH Healthy Lifestyle Program 3:30–5:00 To register, call Briony on 0467 078 485	Homework Club 2:50–3:30 (Followed by soccer coaching for Year 4, 5&6 students—for registered students only) Parents are encouraged to attend 	Briony Hadfield Community Hub Woodbridge State School For more information: (Located on the corner of Railway Parade & Finders Street, Woodridge) (07) 3440 2333 0467 078 485

7

Promote your hub and its activities

The saying ‘build it and they will come’ is not an approach you can rely on when trying to connect with hard-to-reach migrant and refugee families.

This is where all the local knowledge and relationships you’ve been developing can be put to good use.

What works – insights from the Logan hub team



Word of mouth

- ✓ Enlist the help of ‘parent champions’ from the school to draw other parents into hub programs.
- ✓ Get to know local leaders from the main cultural groups attending your school and ask them to help spread the word about the hub.
- ✓ Remember: the more you can encourage friendships to develop through the hub, the more successful it will be.

Promotional material

- ✓ Submit regular articles to the school newsletter. Provide updates about programs, special events, success stories, and introduce new hub faces.
- ✓ Display posters, flyers and timetables of hub activities in the main reception area and the prep classrooms.
- ✓ Use engaging photos, graphics and clear language in your promotional material.
- ✓ Be sure to highlight if an activity is free and/or if there will be food or another incentive offered to everyone who attends.
- ✓ Give timetables to all classroom teachers and families you meet at the school gate.
- ✓ Drop flyers and timetables into local houses, apartment buildings, shops, cafes and restaurants, medical centres and maternal health centres.

- ✓ Ask your support agency to distribute timetables and promotional material to service providers in the local community, with a focus on settlement agencies and caseworkers.
- ✓ Make a short video that highlights your hub’s activities, to show at school assemblies and other forums.

Be the voice of your hub

- ✓ Provide regular updates to your school principal and senior leaders about upcoming programs and events.
- ✓ Present at school staff meetings and assemblies.
- ✓ Speak at service network meetings, community events and partner meetings.

Referrals

- ✓ Keep your hub support coordinator and other hub leaders in the loop about new programs and events on your calendar.
- ✓ Develop an email address list of the people working in local support services who are happy to receive updates about hub programs and events.

Special activities and events

- ✓ Hold activities where hub parents are encouraged to bring along a friend or family member who’s never been to the hub.

- ✓ Attend festivals and events in the local community and have a community hub stall.
- ✓ Host an open day or a cultural performance.
- ✓ Invite local news media to cover special events and other newsworthy activities (only with prior permission of your school principal and hub support coordinator).
- ✓ Organising a colouring competition can be a simple and effective way to get children from the school to visit the hub, with parents in tow.
- ✓ Get students from the school to put on a show and invite parents to watch and tour the hub after the event.

Social media

- ✓ If there’s a Facebook page for the community hubs in your local government area, use it to share news and photos about your hub and promote the page among your families and school community.
- ✓ Send requests to other family-oriented or multicultural community Facebook pages to share your information. This can be effective in reaching new families and raising awareness.
- ✓ If you’re not a social media whiz, find someone in your hub community who is and enlist their help.



Lina

“A couple of weeks ago, I used a small break I had at my computer to email teachers about the bullying program that is running this afternoon. From this one email, I had seven referrals. Teachers can help, but you have to give them plenty of notice as they are very busy and don’t have much time.”



Call families a week before the start of a program or an event, and again the day before. Texting and emailing them can also help.

8

Build and sustain partnerships

Many hubs get started with the hub leader facilitating most of the activities. In time, however, successful hubs establish partnerships that result in other organisations delivering many of their programs and activities.

Many support services want to extend their connections to reach more isolated families and the hub can help them do this.

Sustaining a productive long-term partnership relies on sharing responsibilities and planning, learning and adapting together.



What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Map out the interests and needs of your families before seeking out potential partnerships. That way, you can be strategic about who you partner with and why.
- ✓ Ensure the partnership is with the organisation, not just one individual.
- ✓ To help potential partners understand what hubs do, share our reports and philosophy statement with them.
- ✓ Establish a formal, documented partnership with each organisation – discuss and create a Memorandum of Understanding for mutual benefit. Keep the MOU short and practical. An MOU template is available in the Resources section of our website.
- ✓ Speak to your support coordinator and fellow hub leaders to see if they have families looking for similar things and see if there are any partnerships worth establishing as a group.



10 tips for building a successful partnership

- 1 Get buy-in and support from the leaders of both partners (e.g. through a [formal MOU](#))
- 2 Identify your shared vision, purpose and goals
- 3 Discuss what success will look like, collectively and for each partner
- 4 Take time to develop mutual trust and a commitment to getting things done
- 5 Clearly define the main points of contact, roles and responsibilities
- 6 Agree on shared boundaries and how you will obtain decisions and approvals
- 7 Agree on the level of financial and in-kind commitment from each partner
- 8 Maintain strong lines of open communication
- 9 Share knowledge, expertise and resources
- 10 Make sure activities are well planned and executed



Driving healthy partnerships

St Anthony's Primary Community Hub has established formal partnerships with over 50 community, government and philanthropic organisations.

Hub leader, Lisa, says surprising opportunities often arise from developing partnerships with local organisations.

One example is the hub's partnership with RoadSafe South East, which approached Lisa to support the delivery of its Community Car Connection program. The program helps women who are newly arrived in Australia to become safe and lawful road users and move from a learner's permit to a full driver's licence.

RoadSafe South East funded and delivered the 6-week program, which included information sessions from the Sheriff's Office and Victoria Police. Child care was provided and all participants were eligible for six free driving lessons.

Lisa promoted the opportunity to the wider hubs network in Greater Dandenong, resulting in 25 participants attending from three community hubs.

Women who attended the program gained valuable skills and also established new friendships. They supported each other by minding each other's children during the driving lessons.



• Memorandum of Understanding template

- How to sustain a partnership even when there are challenges
- Research and reports on the community hubs website
- National Community Hubs Program: Delivery and Outcomes Report, December 2015
- National Community Hubs Program philosophy statement

9

Encourage volunteering

Volunteers are among the most valuable resources you can have in your hub. They can be skilled professionals, students from vocational or tertiary institutions or, most importantly, hub parents and grandparents.

Volunteering gives people an opportunity to share their skills and contribute back to the community, which builds self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Working in the hub and the school as a volunteer can open up valuable pathways to vocational study and employment. This is particularly important for families who have recently arrived in Australia. Having the hands-on help of volunteers gives hub leaders more time to focus on priorities other than directly running activities. Trusted volunteers can also keep the hub open while a hub leader is out getting to know families and service providers or attending meetings. Each school will have defined procedures for sourcing and engaging volunteers. Hub leaders should confirm volunteer engagement conditions directly with the school.



There is a wealth of knowledge across our community hubs network about working with volunteers. We've drawn on this experience to produce a practical resource kit to help hub leaders understand what's involved in volunteering. It's a simple, step-by-step guide with templates of volunteer position descriptions and [checklists](#).

What are the special talents, skills and passions of your hub parents? When you're setting up a program, always consider the variety of ways parents can help. This could range from asking someone to help cut up fruit or organise tea and coffee for a group, to tapping into someone's abilities, such as child minding, playing a musical instrument, dancing, leading an exercise class or demonstrating a traditional handicraft.

Getting parents to help out in the hub and/or the school can also be a constructive way of helping them to improve their English language skills.

Find ways to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of your volunteers. This could range from simply saying 'Thank you', to remembering someone's birthday and hosting a morning tea to show them how much they are valued.

Consider organising celebrations to mark [National Volunteer Week](#) and/or [International Volunteers Day](#).



Caroline talks about the importance of building the skills of families to volunteer and become involved in the hub.



Giving volunteers a Healthy Start

After learning that many children were arriving at school in the City of Hume without having eaten a proper breakfast, a local company funded a pilot of the Healthy Start program in three of our community hubs.

Healthy Start breakfast programs usually run for an hour before school starts. They provide children with a healthy breakfast while engaging families in the school, enhancing social connectedness, promoting healthy eating and creating vocational pathways.

The City of Hume program has grown to over 60 parents and children attending each week at each school. Each school has a paid Healthy Start program facilitator who is supported by parent and community volunteers.

The volunteering opportunity provides on-the-job experience for hub parents, with many then going on to help out at other school events. Some volunteers have also been motivated to enrol in English courses, or courses in hospitality or cooking, to increase their employability.

One recently arrived Syrian refugee who volunteers to make pancakes for the Healthy Start program says: *"One of the things I like best about volunteering is talking English with others. Not having English is a barrier. Here I can practise my English with all the other parents and children."*



Getting parents involved in the school

Dandenong West Primary School Hub supported three newly arrived mums to attend a Women in Leadership Course at the local neighbourhood house.

The course gave the women the confidence to volunteer at the school and all three have since joined the school committee. The women come to the committee meetings well prepared with lots of questions and ideas. They contribute different perspectives, including what their children are experiencing in school.

Hub leader, Vikki, says the three women have become the *"go-to people at the school"* and an integral part of the hub team.



- Hub Leader Volunteer [Resource Kit](#)
- The Volunteer Journey: [Case Study 1](#)
- Recruiting and training volunteers can be time consuming, so get in touch with existing volunteer programs. Your local council or [Volunteer Resource Centre](#) will be able to connect you to the most appropriate organisations

10

Record and share your results

Keeping accurate records of your hub’s activities and reporting these back to your support coordinator is an important part of every hub leader’s role. We need up-to-date information about what each hub is doing so we can continue to get funding and support and so that you can continually evaluate and improve your services.

Your support coordinator will outline the end-of-term reporting requirements and is there to help if you have any questions. The main information we’re looking for is:

- what activities were held in your hub
- how many people attended
- how many adults/children
- from which cultural/migrant/refugee backgrounds
- what partnerships were established and any activities arising from them, and one hub case study/story.

Real-life stories are incredibly powerful ways of demonstrating the benefits of community hubs.

We use quotes and personal stories in all our reports and these have helped us raise the profile of the program and secure funding.



Victorian hub leader

“When someone tells you a story about the impact your hub has had, always write it down. The people in CHA’s national support team are really approachable and they don’t mind if I send a summary of feedback in a text, voice recording or even a dot-point email. It doesn’t need to be perfect, they’re just happy to hear stories about the challenges families are facing and when things go well. I’ve scanned thank-you cards and forwarded emails I’ve received from hub mums and dads, to share the feedback I get. This way people in the national office gets to see the words direct from the person.”



What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Ask for help from your hub support coordinator if are finding it difficult to maintain the necessary records.
- ✓ Promote your hub’s successes by regularly sharing stories and photos in school newsletters and meetings; with your support coordinator and our national support team.



NSW hub leader

“I’ve spoken to my principal about what data is useful to him and now I know what to look out for and provide to the school.

After preparing my report each month, I print out the summary (available in the last tab of your data report) and give this to my principal and the parent committee.”

“I set aside weekly time to do my admin to make sure this doesn’t pile up. I’ve had to say ‘No’ to some things and focus on doing fewer things, but to doing them well.”



- Your support coordinator will show you how to complete an end-of-term report.

There are also brief **YouTube clips** available so you can familiarise yourself with the templates.

- See how Community Hubs Australia presents evidence of the outcomes our hubs are achieving in the reports available in **Resources > Research and Reports** section of our website.



Two ingredients are vital for the sustainability of your hub: relationships and resources.

We've already highlighted the importance of both these elements in earlier sections of this guide. For example, building partnerships and getting support from volunteers can bring additional financial and human resources into your hub.

You can also collaborate with other hub leaders and services in a number of ways to enrich your hub's activities.



What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Work with your hub support coordinator and local hub leaders group to submit joint applications for grant funding and sponsorship. Supporters want the greatest reach and impact for their money, so a proposal involving several hubs may be more attractive to them.
- ✓ Connect into local networks to increase your awareness of available resources and generate opportunities to collaborate with other organisations. Look for early childhood, family and parental support, settlement services, multicultural, youth and inter-agency networks.
- ✓ Think of ways to enrich your existing programs. For example, invite the local maternal and child healthcare nurse to attend the hub's playgroup sessions to speak with mums.



Playgroup at Information Cultural Exchange



Generating joint funding opportunities

In the City of Brimbank, the hub leaders and school principals work in collaboration to deliver some of their projects across all the hub sites.

With the help of the hub support coordinator, they identify grant opportunities and come up with ideas for projects that would work across the five hubs. The hub support coordinator is available to help schools with writing grant applications.

New opportunities are brought to the Hubs Principals Advisory Group meetings for discussion and endorsement. This group also decides which school will take the lead on a project and be responsible for distributing and tracking funds, overall project coordination and acquittal. The hub leader of the lead school takes on the role of project manager.

These are examples of joint points delivered through the Brimbank Community Hubs:

Sing and Grow – a music therapy program that focuses on parent-child connection, engaging targeted families with complex needs, through hands-on musical activities.

Connecting Isolated Women – focused on providing the opportunity for women and pre-school children to participate in hub activities such as playgroup, Mother Goose, and art workshops for parents and children.

Food Security Project – cooking and gardening workshops, and healthy eating/nutrition information sessions. The project aimed to connect parents to the school and each other, increase awareness of nutrition and the importance of healthy eating to their children's development and behaviour, and embed a culture of healthy eating and school and at home.



12 Surround yourself with support

There's no need to go it alone. While you are the hub leader and the most critical factor to your hub's success, there is plenty of support available to help you thrive in your role.

A hub leader's role is unique in a school environment, so it's important to make connections across the school and the community so you don't feel isolated. Our state and national support teams, and other hub leaders, are also only a phone call or email away, so please make the most of us!

What works – insights from hub leaders

- ✓ Get to know the members of your school's welfare team so you can draw on their support and offer them yours.
- ✓ Make opportunities to connect with other local community hub leaders a priority in your diary. Look for ways to provide hands-on and moral support to each other.
- ✓ Make use of our buddy program, which can connect you with experienced hub leaders who can help you increase your skills and knowledge in specific areas. Your buddy can be a great sounding board for ideas and challenges.
- ✓ Join our regular national dial-in sessions for hub leaders. This informal forum helps hub leaders connect with each other, share ideas and stories, and problem solve together.
- ✓ Find out who provides your school's Employee Assistance Scheme service and access the free counselling sessions if you need help with personal or professional issues.



Caroline

"You can't run everything yourself, that's one big lesson I've learned. You need to delegate, you need to ask people for help, you need to use volunteers as well and upskill them too, so that everyone is winning."



Contact CHA info@communityhubs.org.au to learn more about opportunities to connect with other hub leaders through the dial-in sessions and a buddy program.

Hubs in action – examples of good practice from other hubs

This section provides examples of existing hub programs that demonstrate good practice.

The National Community Hubs Program uses an outcomes-based framework to measure the impact our hubs are having on children, families, schools and their communities. The topics featured in this section are marked with the outcome they most relate to, for example, playgroups mainly contribute to outcomes for children.

Child outcomes: Running a playgroup

Playgroups are one of the best ways to attract young families into a community hub. A structured playgroup is an important part of a hub's weekly timetable.

Playgroups provide social connection, support networks and open up opportunities for valuable friendships to develop, particularly among migrant and refugee mums who might otherwise feel isolated.

Once a family feels safe visiting the hub for a playgroup, it becomes easier to link them into other hub classes, programs and events. And once trust has been established over time, the hub leader can refer families to external services if required.

Child outcomes

Migrant children enjoy and succeed in school and achieve optimal health, development and wellbeing



[Leadership in playgroups](#) – hear various perspectives on starting and importance of playgroup





Michelle

“When someone misses a playgroup I always call in or talk to their friends to check that they’re okay. I’m trying to show mums that I care for them and that they are valued.”



Maureen

“I identified mothers attending my playgroups who were potential leaders and worked with them to understand their aspirations and develop vocational plans. They have all since attained qualifications in early childhood development and five ladies are now employed part-time.”



Kate

One playgroup works its magic

“There was one child who, when she started playgroup, could not communicate or interact with other adults or children. She was incredibly timid, would not play with toys, did not like being touched, would avoid eye contact and hid from the playgroup facilitators.

After months of attending the playgroup, this child grew confidence and security in the place and people. She started to show preference for certain toys and activities and one day we heard her squeal with delight as she ran in and out of the kiddie pop-up tent.

Through persistence with attending the group and letting the child do tasks at her own rate, when she was ready, she learned that playgroup was a safe place and developed oral language, social and cognitive skills.

This child is now more school ready.”





What works – advice from hub leaders

You don't have to do everything listed here. Try some things and see what works for your hub. Establish your playgroup and then build on and enhance it over time.

Getting parents in the door

- ✓ Hold 'open playgroups' that welcome people from any cultural background. This helps break down cultural barriers and encourages people to learn about each other's cultures and family values.
- ✓ Make families feel welcome when they arrive by greeting both the parent and their child.
- ✓ Remind participants that grandparents, other members of their extended family, and friends are always welcome.
- ✓ Promote incentives to get more people through the door. For example: offering healthy snacks for children, or book giveaways.

Involve and develop parents

- ✓ Role model child-focused behaviour, such as getting down to the child's level.
- ✓ Create opportunities for parents and children to learn and play together. When a parent participates, the activity becomes more meaningful for the child.
- ✓ Ask parents for ideas about what they and their children would like to experience in a playgroup session and invite them to help. For example, parents can make the play dough, suggest (and lead) craft activities, or teach the group a favourite children's song from their culture.
- ✓ Follow up a session with a morning or afternoon tea and invite parents to bring a plate of food to share. Food is a universal language and helps break down cultural biases.

Offer a variety of learning and social activities

- ✓ Bring in bi-lingual storytellers, artists, and culturally appropriate music and dance performances.
- ✓ Invite guest speakers to talk to the entire group about services that may be of interest to your families.
- ✓ Provide learning opportunities that extend beyond the playgroup setting.
- ✓ Organise excursions to child-oriented attractions (e.g. a park, a playground, a museum, a children's farm, a zoo). Even better, run an excursion involving playgroups from a number of hubs, to expand parents' social networks even further.
- ✓ Use sessions leading up to special events to explore themes relating to the upcoming activity. For example: a farm animal theme before visiting the children's farm.

Share information and build relationships

- ✓ Find a partner organisation that will run the playgroup sessions for you and arrange for volunteers to help run the associated activities. This gives you more time during the sessions to focus on getting to know each parent.
- ✓ Place brochures and information sheets about support services in the playgroup rooms, so parents can discreetly take them home.



- Talk to your school about a permission to participate form for parents to sign when they first

join a playgroup. If your school doesn't have a form, speak to other hubs in the network about what they use.

Professional development resources

- Understanding the core concepts of early development – 3 short YouTube videos from Harvard University's Centre on the Developing Child
- Building adult capabilities to improve child outcomes: A theory of change – YouTube video by Harvard University's Centre on the Developing Child
- **A transition to school** – resources for parents
- Understanding **why involving families helps children/school outcomes**
- **Evidence into Action** – playgroups for diverse communities

National early years programs

- **Sing and grow program** – Encouraging parent/child bonding through music
- **Let's Read** – Promotes families reading to their children from birth to five years
- **HIPPY** – 2 year program encouraging parents to be their child's first teachers in their own home, thus helping kids transition to school
- Bi lingual story time in your local library
- **Transition: A positive start to school resource kit**

Useful websites

- Raising Children Network



Family outcomes: Improving English language skills

Many people coming into our hubs have low levels of English language ability, which affects their confidence and how they communicate with others on a day-to-day basis.

Migrant and refugee women, in particular, can find it difficult to attend classes if they are at home caring for pre-school children. Some have never been to school and therefore have no basic literacy in their own language, making it extremely difficult to learn a new language in a formal educational setting.

Even those people who qualify for and complete government English classes may still require additional help and more opportunities to practice.

Family outcomes

Migrant families function well, have the capacity, confidence and skills to nurture child learning and are connected, active participants in the community and workforce



Informal learning by creating family albums at Dandenong Primary School hub

English class

Responding to local needs

This is where a community hub can make all the difference. Across our network, hubs have been linking families into existing English classes, such as those run by neighbourhood houses, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), TAFE colleges. Hubs have also been introducing tailored English language programs to address specific local needs. They vary widely between hubs, as these three examples demonstrate:

Informal English language support	Volunteer led English activities	Formal learning
<p>In the City of Logan, a group of 13 Burmese women needed support to improve their English, however they didn't want to do any more formal learning.</p> <p>Most of the women had two or three children and they felt comfortable in the school-based hub environment. They told the hub leader they wanted to learn practical sewing skills.</p> <p>Once they were sewing, the hub leader, who was also a trained English teacher, started an informal language group.</p> <p>The women started to enjoy this and found that their confidence with English was improving. They were happy to come in early and extend the time they had to learn English.</p> <p>They started the day with informal English practice and then continued practicing their new language skills during sewing class.</p> <p>The classes were not funded. The hub leader facilitated the English classes and students and volunteers provided free child care.</p>	<p>At Westmead Public School Hub, English classes are organised for about 12–16 parents and grandparents of children attending the school.</p> <p>The classes are led by volunteers led and provide interactive and practical activities with lots of small group and one-on-one activities. They give participants lots of time to practice their English, seek clarification and increase their confidence to speak to and in front of other people. People get help with their pronunciation and understanding Australian accents.</p> <p>The volunteers are self-sufficient and highly organised. They run the activities with support from the hub leader, who books rooms and organises equipment.</p> <p>The classes are not funded and there is no child care provided.</p> <p>A similar model runs in Victoria, with the local AMEP provider (AMES) supplying a volunteer tutor, and the hub leader and parents sharing child minding duties.</p>	<p>A number of hubs in the City of Hume run a 20-week Mother Child English Program in partnership with a registered training provider (RTO).</p> <p>The curriculum focuses on English within an early childhood development context. The program allows mothers to come in and settle their children into child care in a nearby room, while they have formal English classes that focus on practical, everyday English about child development, pre-school learning, raising healthy children and raising children in a multicultural society. The children take part in fun child care that is pre-accredited.</p> <p>After the formal session, the children and parents come together in a playgroup, which has play activities themed to the classes, giving parents the chance to practice what they have learned.</p> <p>The model requires a partnership with an RTO and is suitable for people with various levels of English proficiency. It is funded with AMEP funds as well as funds from the Foundation Skills stream. Funding to cover child care has been sourced from the philanthropic sector.</p>



Find a registered training organisation in your local area and ask them to help you identify funding options for **informal and flexible learning**; **AMEP classes** and unlimited access to **Foundation Skills training**. You may also be able help parents to claim **Jobs, Education and Training (JET) child care support** to help them attend English classes.



Hub leaders at Victorian professional development



Drumming Group, Social Connection and English at the Banksia Road Primary School Hub



Thinking outside the room

Deborah,
Dandenong South Primary School Hub

One of the challenges of running English classes in community hubs is providing child minding for pre-school children so their parents can attend the lessons.

Deborah from Dandenong South Primary School Hub explains how they've addressed this issue at her hub:

"We've been running a highly successful English language class for mums with bubs for over a year. The women appreciate the ability to have their children looked after during the session, as most of the other English classes available don't have any ability for children to attend.

Although the intention was for us to provide a 'child free' English language class for the women, some of the children had significant difficulty separating from their mothers. A group of four or five children who were very unsettled caused other children in the group to also become distressed. As the mothers could hear them crying, they too were very uncomfortable and were not able to concentrate.

Some women ended up taking their children into the classes with them, but this created a very noisy learning environment. We decided to trial having one woman per week sit out of classes to assist with child care. This did offer some assistance to our child-care assistant, but children were still distressed.

We then decided to split the class into two groups. In one room, we now have the women whose children are happy to separate from their mothers. These women can quietly concentrate on their learning tasks. In the second room, we provide child care and we also have the women whose children will not separate from their mothers. This is a noisier room, however all of the women in the room have a child. The children are no longer crying and are happy to engage in play activities around the room. The tutor moves between the two rooms, which are next door to each other, assisting all the women.

All the children are more settled and all the women are happy!

My advice to others is to work through solutions with the group. Sometimes what you think will work won't and what you think won't work, will. It's about being flexible and working with your families to best suit their needs."



Asking questions such as these will help determine the most appropriate pathway to learning English for each individual:

- What is your reason for wanting to learn more English? (For e.g. for daily communication, to practice existing ability, for work, to be able to study, to build friendships ...)
- Have you studied before, in Australia or anywhere else?
- What is your current ability/level of English?
- Do you have a health care card/Visa to study in Australia?
- Do you have pre-school children? (If so) Do you have someone who can take care of them? Are you and your child comfortable separating from each other so you can attend classes?

Family outcomes: Creating pathways to volunteering and work

One of the most important ways a hub can be of service to its local community is by opening up pathways to volunteering, skills training and paid employment.

Examples of capacity-building programs and courses offered through our hubs include:

- work readiness
- early childhood/child care certificates
- computer classes
- education support
- parenting skills
- driver education, and
- leadership skills
- first aid training.

Capacity building means different things for different people. For some, it may be developing new skills that will help them find a job, while for others it means being a better parent or finding out how to contribute more to their local community. That's why hub leaders have the flexibility to develop programs that will best serve the specific needs of their local community.



Providing flexible study options for mums

Across a number of hubs, mothers have identified that they want to learn how to work in a school context helping children learn. At St Brendan's Catholic Primary School in Bankstown, the hub leader Steffi recruits participants from the school and wider community to enrol in a course that helps women obtain a Certificate IV in Education Support.

One of these women, Alphonsia, who migrated to Australia from Lebanon eight years ago, has a son in Year 2 at St Brendan's and wants to become a teacher's aide. 'I wanted to do early childhood education, but because I have a little one at home it was difficult to go to TAFE five days a week,' says Alphonsia. 'When I heard about the Certificate in Education Support and that we could have the classes at school every fortnight, I ran to it.'

Steffi was able to make sure the course content and structure is flexible and tailored to the women's needs. She says the school has been very open to having community members come in to use the hub as a learning space that is flexible and supportive.

Alphonsia adds that *"it's a very good chance to take and very flexible with my kids. I have plenty of time to finish assessments and at the same time, in my role as a mother, to do what I should do at home. It has also given me a lot of ideas of how to help my son with his education and homework."*

You can read more about St Brendan's program here: [Study support for school mums.](#)



The right environment makes a huge difference to getting learning outcomes at St Brendan's Catholic School Hub



Laila's journey from stay-at-home mum to working mum

Laila was born in Australia. Her parents were Lebanese migrants



She'd been a stay-at-home mum for several years



She enrolled her daughter in the school readiness program at Chester Hill PS Community Hub



Laila and her daughter attended weekly sessions for 12 months



Hub leader, Lina, built a strong relationship with Laila



Lina learned about her strengths and needs

Laila's daughter started kindergarten



Laila had no more pre-school children at home

Lina encouraged her to enrol in a 12-month school learning support officer (SLSO) course



Laila enrolled and attended classes at the hub



Lina supported Laila to join the school's Parents and Citizens Association

Laila became Vice-President, then President of the Association



She's been President for the past two years



Laila trained to be a parent representative on school staff interview panels

She has become a familiar face in the school and the hub



Laila completed her Certificate III as an SLSO, through the hub



She was always volunteering in the classrooms and the hub



The school secured more SLSO funding



Lina recommended Laila to the deputy principal as a potential SLSO



Laila is now employed 20 hours a week as an SLSO in the school!





Speak to families about their aspirations. Once you understand what they would like for themselves and their families, you can see if there are any common interests.

Then you can start thinking about the most appropriate way to support them and whether that involves linking them to existing services or providing tailored learning opportunities at the hub.



Professional development

- **Asset Based Community Development** – framework
- **Project Management** – setting up projects and budgets

Useful resources and websites:

- **Community Hubs Volunteer kit**
- Self-employment **New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)**
- Small Business **Victoria, NSW, QLD**
- **World Café** discussion tool
- **'We Can' card game** – a tool to discover the interests and skills of your community



Volunteering as a pathway to work

"My name is Nayran, I am from Syria, and I arrived in Australia in 2012 as an asylum seeker.

From that time, I started volunteering in different organisations and also studying different courses to help me better understand the other cultures so I could be more helpful for people. When I arrived at the Detention Centre, I shared my language skills and helped with interpreting.

After I graduated with a Diploma of Child care, I started bi-lingual child care training and studied to be a playgroup facilitator. As a social activist, I studied leadership and family violence with the aim of supporting in-need families and ladies.

My passion is cooking; I had my own business in my country. I have started cooking classes for adults and children in community centres.

As a mother of four, I love children and all of these help me to build good relations with parents and children."

Carolyn, the hub leader at Deer Park North Primary School Hub, says Nayran is an asset to the hub. She is the paid child care minder/entertainer during art and cooking sessions, and next term she is starting a gardening program for hub parents.



St Brendans Catholic School hub

School outcomes: Improving the capacity of schools

Research into the impacts our community hubs are having on their host schools has shown that hubs are improving the schools' respect for cultural diversity and their capacity to respond to the needs of migrant families.

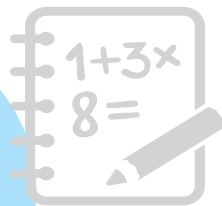
A key priority for school principals and teachers is supporting student learning and wellbeing.

Hub leaders are able to network and bring resources and organisations into the school that increase the capacity to support families, particularly those with special needs such as newly arrived migrants and refugees.

By getting to know families and understanding their strengths, hub leaders can help them to become more involved in the school community. This also provides schools with additional volunteers to help inside and outside the classroom.

School outcomes

Schools respond to the needs and aspirations of migrant children and families



The difference a good cup of coffee can make

Banksia Road Public School's hub leader, Marina, recognised that one of her priorities was to strengthen the relationships between parents and teachers. Many of the mums she'd been working with were keen to build their skills, which led to the idea of starting a coffee café.

The women completed barista training and on three days a week they make and sell cheap coffee (sometimes cake as well!) to the teachers, who look forward to these new interactions.

This program helps raise money for hub activities and also teaches the women valuable business skills. Importantly, providing this informal service is helping teachers get to know these mums while also gaining a better appreciation of what the hub does.

Marina has noticed the significant difference this program has made for these women. For example:

- they are more confident and self-reliant – a huge shift from when they started
- they feel worthwhile, valued and have something to offer back to the community
- they get out of the house and feel energised, are often laughing and bringing joy to others
- they are learning how to run a business, gaining an understanding of how to take orders, handle money and provide customer service
- they feel trusted, and
- they are no longer stay-at-home mums.

The café has evolved into a place where other parents come and grab a coffee and chat to each other. The coffee is just the incentive; it's more about how the café space is bringing families and school staff together for informal social time.

Marina says it's been wonderful watching these relationships develop over time.



Connecting schools with the community

Hub leaders from the City of Logan offer the following tips about how to connect schools with important programs and services:

Get school leadership and staff on board by helping them to understand the importance of getting families involved in the school before a child starts prep. Explain how this helps the children become school ready.

When a child starts school already well behind other children in terms of being ready to learn, it makes the teachers' job more difficult as that child requires more time and resources.

At our hubs, our transition-to-school programs are helping to identify developmental delays or problems with children early. This gives the school time to plan ahead and put in place the right staff and resources to support those children when they eventually start school.

For the children and parents, being involved in a Transition to Prep program gives them time to build confidence and familiarity with the school and introduces them to the learning experience.

Build relationships with your local councils. They can help you connect into networks and also help directly with hub programs.

We received a grant from Logan City Council that funds a music therapist to work across the hubs in our Pathways to Prep initiatives. The music therapist is a great addition to build school readiness skills such as taking turns, using your voice, asking for help, independence and resilience, lining up, packing up, and working within a group.



Connecting families with each other and the school

From: Fatima
Sent: Wednesday, 22 June 2016 9:27 AM
To: Maria, Meaghan, Siba, Loukia; Sonja; Luke; Marta
Subject: Yagoona Public School Hub Community Dinner

Dear Meaghan/Maria/Siba and Yagoona Public team,

Thank you for the opportunity to share last night's community dinner with your school community.

I have to say it was one of the best community events I have attended, despite the challenges of the very short time it took to coordinate (2 weeks??/no budget??) and not knowing how many people will show up!

I was overwhelmed by the spirit and talents of the organising committee and staff. They made the place look amazing and gave it a real welcoming feeling, filled with so much energy and generosity.

When I arrived around 4pm there were a few people in the event area. I asked one of teachers how many people they expect will attend, she said: we are not sure, we didn't get a response from the notes we sent out. I felt a bit nervous but thought there were about 20 people around and it would still be a nice event.

Around 4.30pm parents started to come in loaded with yummy food to share with other families. Extra tables had to be added to fit the amount of food that was coming in. Even the hall, which was set to accommodate around 150 people overflowed into the outside playground area where more tables were set to fit the families and their children. It was really exciting to see hundreds of parents and children mingling together, smiling, enjoying each other's food and sharing recipes with a great sense of pride.

Please accept my sincere congratulations for supporting and motivating your team to host the event and pass them on to your team for their amazing efforts in managing the event. It was an absolutely fantastic night.

Warm regards

Fatima

NSW Community Hubs Manager
Settlement Services International

Additional note from the national hubs support team: As well as being delighted to hear about the success of this event at Yagoona Public School Hub, we were also pleased that Fatima cc'd CHA's CEO, Sonja, and other members of our national team into her email, so we could also hear about this wonderful success story.



Fahriye shares the importance of embedding the hub in the school



Examine what you do well and what can improve by using this **Parent Engagement in Action resource guide**

Community outcomes: Connecting families with additional support

Each hub leader needs to establish good relationships with service providers in the local community who have the skills and capacity to support hub families when required.

Many of the parents you work with will have limited knowledge about what support is available. In many cases, a person's cultural background or family situation may reduce their willingness or ability to ask for help.

Your work through the hub helps to build a bridge between community services and families who otherwise may not access the support they need. Once you have earned the trust of family members, particularly women, you will gradually be able to develop a picture of their situation.

As you learn more about the needs and aspirations of your hub's families, you will be able to form partnerships with the most appropriate government and not-for-profit organisations in your local area.

Connecting families to additional support ranges from developing relationships with services and their case workers so you can refer people to them for more intensive support, to working with service providers to tailor their programs and have them delivered directly through the hub. Having external organisations delivering your hub programs also frees up more of your time to concentrate on building relationships with families and managing the overall operation of your hub.

Hubs connect with a wide range of government and not-for-profit agencies to deliver programs or make referrals across many specialised services, including:

- early years programs
- maternal and child health
- education and training
- volunteer pathways
- employment
- settlement services
- family support
- family violence
- financial counselling
- accommodation

Community outcomes

Community services respond early and effectively to migrant child and family needs





Early years learning at Holy Eucharist Primary School hub



What works – advice from hub leaders

- ✓ Build relationships with key staff, particularly case workers, from local service providers. It's important to know who you're referring families to, as you want to feel confident that they will have a positive experience. If you make a referral and a family has a negative experience, this may impact on the trust they have in you.
- ✓ Think about key programs, such as a playgroup, and how you can add value to them by inviting service providers to deliver information to parents during these sessions.
- ✓ Some organisations may be interested in 'out posting' one of their staff to the hub, for example, by having a worker embedded in the playgroup. That way, they get to build relationships with families who may need their services one day, while the parents learn about the support available to them – it's a win-win!
- ✓ It takes time to develop trust-based relationships, so be patient if family members are reluctant to open up to you about the kinds of support they really need.
- ✓ Let people know you are there support them whenever they feel ready.
- ✓ Once you have referred someone to a support agency, you also need to step back and let that organisation develop its own relationship with the family and undertake the necessary case work.
- ✓ Develop connections with **local settlement providers**. Some settlement services will be able to deliver programs directly through your hub.
- ✓ Think about how you can introduce school leaders and staff from your school to the local service providers you are building relationships with.
- ✓ For example, an organisation may offer a program for school-aged children that could be beneficial for your school. While this falls outside your role, it would be worth checking in with the welfare team and principal to see if it's an opportunity they wish to follow up.
- ✓ Don't rush to invite agencies to present on sensitive topics. Build trust with families and when they're ready, they will start asking for specific information.



Connecting across hubs to support women's health

Volunteer health professionals from The Water Well Project have been empowering women attending four community hubs in the City of Greater Dandenong by improving their health literacy.

The Water Well Project is a not-for-profit health promotion organisation with over 300 volunteer healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health specialists.

Sitting among the hub families, the volunteers engage in conversations about health and nutrition. They keep things informal and promote discussion among the group.

The project initially visited one of the Dandenong hubs and the relationship spread to other hubs in the region after hub leaders discussed the benefits of working in partnership with this organisation.

Dandenong South Primary School's Hub Leader, Deborah Handley, says women have become more comfortable and confident about discussing health-related topics as the hub's relationship with the health professionals has developed.

"We initially covered topics around dental health, child health and wellbeing, and healthy eating," explains Deborah. "However, as the year progressed the women's confidence grew. They started sharing their stories and concerns with the volunteers and asking directly for additional topics to be covered."

In the last few months, sessions have focussed on mental health, contraception and women's health, cervical and breast cancers and other specific women's issues. "One woman confided in me after one session that she wanted to know how to stop having babies," Deborah says. "And another mother shared that she had never really discussed her own health without being pregnant before. Topics that I would have been cautious about including in the early stages of our partnership are now being requested and embraced by our families."

"It's been great to witness the women taking ownership of their own health and recognising that the key to helping keep their family healthy, is maintaining their own health."



Alison

"Many parents speak to me about the difficulties they've experienced in finding employment after completing training in aged care, child care and nursing. I advocated on their behalf to the local Migrant Resource Centre, with the result of that organisation coming into the hub to deliver a three week program to help families find employment."



Aneza, hub leader with the All Saints of Africa Community Hub

Aneza organised for a local service provider to deliver information sessions for women who are newly arrived so they understand their rights – particularly in relation to family violence – and the support available to them in such situations.

This initiative has reached over 70 families and gives them access to a support worker who is out-posted at the hub. This means women who have nominated that they require early intervention and assistance in relation to family violence can now receive direct support from a qualified case worker who is based at the hub.



Michelle, St Paul's Catholic Primary School Hub

Michaëlle is often called on to support people when they are at breaking point and in the midst of a financial crisis. They are usually struggling to pay electricity, gas and other household bills; as well as parking and traffic fines.

Instead of dealing with this herself, Michelle refers families to Centrelink, which she has found to be very responsive. Centrelink can provide emergency relief support and follow that up with ongoing financial counselling to help families manage their household budgets.

Invite services providers into your hubs to present programs on topics such as financial literacy and positive parenting.

For example, Coolaroo South Primary School Hub partnered with a local migrant resource centre to run parenting workshops for Arabic speakers. The sessions covered topics such as parenting strategies, your relationship with your child, bonding, attachment and communication, helping children develop self-confidence, protecting child safety, discipline and managing family stress.

Outcomes and objectives

Child outcomes	Family outcomes	School outcomes	Community Outcomes
1. Migrant children enjoy and succeed in school and achieve optimal health, development and wellbeing	2. Migrant families function well, have the capacity, confidence and skills to nurture child learning and are connected, active participants in the community and workforce	3. Schools respond to the needs and aspirations of migrant children and families	4. Community services respond early and effectively to migrant child and family needs
Objectives	Objectives	Objectives	Objectives
1.1 To increase the participation of migrant children in a range of early childhood development activities including kindergarten	2.1 To increase the participation of migrant parents in English language, literacy learning, parenting and community activities	3.1 To increase the awareness of and connections of schools to early years and community services	4.1 To increase community service connection, availability and accessibility to migrant families
1.2 To increase the language and literacy skills of migrant children upon entering school	2.2 To increase the English language and literacy and vocational skills of migrant families for workforce participation	3.2 To increase school engagement and connections with migrant families to support child learning outcomes	4.2 To increase community service connections with schools and other agencies
1.3 To increase the prompt identification and response to migrant children's needs and issues	2.3 To increase migrant family knowledge of and access to available services and assistance	3.3 To increase school capacity to have collaborative partnerships with families	4.3 To increase service coordination and collaboration to meet the needs of families and their children across the community
	2.4 To increase social networks for migrant families leading to strong social cohesion and involvement in decision making processes		
	2.5 To increase migrant family engagement and skills in nurturing child learning and development		

The Community Hubs Program is especially focused on improving for migrant families and their children:

- 1. Access to Settlement Service**
- 2. Language, Literacy and Learning Skills**
- 3. Participation in Early Years Services**
- 4. Parent and Family Capacity Building**