

EVALUATE TO GROW

A GUIDE TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR
SCHOOL-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP THROUGH
EVALUATION



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Foreword

THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN WRITTEN to support schools and businesses as they work together to improve outcomes for students.

Research shows that few school-business relationships monitor their progress or evaluate the impact of their collaboration.

One of the recommendations of the Business-School Connections Roundtable, which was set up by the Australian Government to see how businesses and schools could partner to improve educational outcomes, was to develop a guide that would help partners and potential partners evaluate and improve their collaborations.

This guide is the result.

Introduction

IF YOU'RE IN A SCHOOL-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP, or thinking about starting such a relationship, then evaluation can be a useful way of showing if you're making an impact.

Evaluation is a great idea if you want to:

- » find out how well you are achieving your goals
- » find out what impact your activities or project are having on students and others
- » improve the outcomes of your collaboration
- » assess whether or not the outcomes have justified the effort
- » identify opportunities to expand the scope of your collaboration
- » report progress to stakeholders or senior management
- » attract funding, and
- » attract more or different partners.

This guide will help you to evaluate your school-business relationship and show you the benefits of evaluation; give you some handy tools to use in your evaluation; and describe a range of school-business case studies that have used evaluation effectively.

And don't worry if you're already in a school-business relationship and haven't done any evaluation yet. It's never too late to start!

Using this guide

HOW YOU USE THIS GUIDE depends on where you are in the 'life cycle' of your school-business relationship.

If you want to start a school-business relationship and build in regular evaluation from the beginning, you can use the guide in the planning stages of your project.

If you're already in a relationship but not sure how to measure the impact of what you're doing, then the guide can help identify the information you need, show you how to gather it, and what to do with it once it's been collected.

If you're already in a relationship and have been evaluating what you're doing, then you might want to focus on the sections that can refine your approach, look at some of the case studies, or follow up the references at the back of this guide.

If you're a broker or member of an organisation interested in bringing together businesses and schools to work cooperatively, you can use the guide to help others with their evaluation.

At a glance

Evaluation can:

- help you measure the impact of what you're doing
- show others the impact of what you're doing
- show what improvements can be made, and
- help you make informed decisions based on the information you've gathered.

School-business Relationships

THERE'S NO 'RIGHT' MODEL of a school-business relationship.

Some relationships are simple and informal, involving a one-off activity, event or gift. Others are more complex partnerships with formal governance arrangements, detailed documentation, and programs or projects that take place over several years. In between these extremes are all sorts of relationship variations.

What your school-business relationship looks like will depend on what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve this. In turn, how you go about your evaluation will depend on the type of relationship you have.

Once you're clear about the kind of relationship you have, or want to have, then you're in a better position to know what and how you want to evaluate.

Your relationship will change over time, and evaluation is one way to identify the best way to move forward. For example, it might show that you need to:

- » bring in a new partner
- » expand an existing project
- » develop a new project
- » redefine existing roles and responsibilities
- » bring in additional resources.

Terminology

In this guide the term 'relationships' is used to describe the full range of linkages that occur between schools and businesses.

Other terms often used to describe a school-business relationship include 'partnership', 'collaboration' or even 'alliance'.

At a glance

School-business relationships

- vary greatly in type and purpose with no single type being necessarily better than another
- can be evaluated using a variety of approaches, depending on the nature of your relationship
- can be enhanced through evaluation.

For further information, go to the Toolkits section for the Identifying Your Type of Relationships tool and some examples of informal and written agreements between schools and businesses that have been used to recognise the relationship.

School-business activities

EVEN THE MOST INFORMAL school-business relationship is built around a need or opportunity and involves an action and outcome of some kind.

These actions and outcomes are generally student-focused and can be short- or long-term.

Some examples of activities that school-business relationships have generated include:

- » a nursery providing advice and plants to help students landscape a school environment
- » students in a school designing a website for a local business
- » a school and business planning a creative arts event for the whole school community
- » a business providing students with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge of a key local industry

- » a school working with multiple local businesses to provide structured work placements each year for students
- » several businesses providing staff as volunteer mentors each year to several schools
- » schools, community groups, businesses and local council working together to develop wetlands and an environmental centre.

Terminology

Other terms often used to describe the activities that occur as a result of a school-business relationship include 'project' or 'program'.

At a glance

School-business activities

- vary greatly in purpose, nature and duration
- are generally student-focused
- will influence what and how you choose to evaluate.

What is 'evaluation'?

EVALUATION MEANS measuring impact or outcomes. In the context of a school-business relationship it means looking at what you're working on together and how you're working together.

Evaluation can be either a point-in-time activity or an ongoing process. Often it is done at the end of a project.

Evaluation forms a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. You can regularly monitor your relationship's activities, measure the outcomes of these, put into place any suggested improvements, and evaluate the impact of the new suggestions, then continue the process again.

Evaluating the 'what' and the 'how'

In any partnership there are two sets of outcomes that need to be evaluated: the degree to which overall aims or intended outcomes have been achieved; and how well the relationship itself is functioning. *'These two things are distinctly different. The first is important in ensuring that the partnership actually works toward achieving the outcome that it first set out to achieve while the second is important in ensuring that the partners are actually working together effectively and that the working relationship/partnership can stay viable and mutually beneficial to all partners.'* Partnership Broker

At a glance

Evaluation can:

- occur at any stage in your collaboration
- let you know if your objectives and expectations are being met
- let you know if there are any changes you could make to improve what you're doing.

Why do I need to evaluate?

MOST PARTICIPANTS in school-business relationships want to know if their collaborative activities are making a difference to students and if they could be doing things better.

Evaluation will be able to answer these questions and show you how the relationship is going, as well as provide the evidence to allow you to make informed decisions about the future of the relationship.

Improving the impact of your activities

Evaluation can:

- » show if, how and to what extent students are benefiting from your collaboration.
- » highlight any issues that need to be addressed
- » help you decide where to put your energy and resources in the future
- » identify any changes you might need to make
- » show if you're meeting your objectives
- » show an external body, like a local council or state government, that you're using their funding or resources wisely.

Improving the effectiveness of your relationship

Evaluation can:

- » give you an evidence base to consider the effectiveness of what you're doing
- » help you make better use of time, staff, money, equipment and facilities
- » improve existing staff skills or build new skills that can be applied to work
- » help you decide if a relationship needs to be rejuvenated or if it has run its course.

If you're mainly interested in assessing outcomes, your primary focus will be on the activities or projects to see if these are making a positive difference for students.

If you want to review the effectiveness of the relationship, this will mean looking at the process or how you and your partners are working together to develop and deliver the activities.

At a glance

- Your purpose will shape the kind of evaluation that you do and the timeframe in which you do it
- Evaluation provides an evidence base for decision making
- Evaluation can satisfy accountability requirements.

How do I evaluate?

JUST AS THERE'S NO 'RIGHT' MODEL of a school-business relationship, there's no single 'right' way to go about an evaluation. You might want to adopt a very informal approach or a more structured approach. Either is fine if it meets your needs.

It helps to think of the evaluation process as a cycle involving preparation, information gathering, information analysis, information use, further preparation and so on.

In the Evaluate to Grow Framework below, which forms the basis for this section of the guide, these phases have been called:

- » Preparing – the success of your evaluation depends largely on the thinking you do in this phase
- » Gathering information – you need to collect the information most relevant to your purpose
- » Analysing information – you need to organise your information and identify your key findings
- » Using information – this phase is about sharing the findings and making decisions about the future.

Evaluate to Grow Framework



At a glance

- How you approach your evaluation will depend on your relationship and purpose in evaluating
- While you can start anywhere in the cycle, most evaluations will begin at the preparation phase.

In the following sections we explore each of these steps a little further and provide you with some support tools to help you along the way.

Preparing

This is the time to think about your relationship and:

- » what you are setting out to achieve
- » how you are going to achieve it.

This is also the time to decide if you're wanting to evaluate the:

- » outcomes of the project ('the what')
- » school-business relationship ('the how') or
- » both of the above.



Be clear about the purpose of your evaluation

What is it that you want to find out? You'll need to identify a central or key question that you want the evaluation to answer. For example, you might want to ask how participants have benefited from being in your program, or if you have achieved what you set out to do, or if all parties in your school-business relationship are performing as well as they could be.

Your key evaluation question needs to be related to your objective(s). Keep it simple and achievable. Below are some examples.

EXAMPLE 1

Environmental sustainability project:

Objective: To increase students' knowledge of soil nutrients and the impact this has on agricultural practices

Possible evaluation question: What have students learned from this project?

EXAMPLE 2

School-business relationship:

Objective: To improve the effectiveness of the relationship so that project objectives can be achieved

Possible evaluation question: What are the current strengths and limitations of the relationship and how might the collaboration be improved?

EXAMPLE 3

Productive post-school pathways:

Objective: To improve students' transition from school to post-school work options

Possible evaluation question: How, and to what extent, is the project helping students transition successfully to work?

For further help in identifying your key evaluation question and sub-questions, and for sample questions that could guide your evaluation, go to the Toolkit section on Sample Evaluation Questions.

Go to the Toolkit section for help in identifying your stakeholders.

Be clear about your stakeholders

In any relationship there are multiple stakeholders. You will need to think about the audience for your evaluation, who your stakeholders are, the information they might expect, and when they will need this information.

Stakeholders can vary from school council members to the board of your business partner, from students to local youth workers, from allied health services to the school psychologist.

Identify the type of information you need for your evaluation

Measuring success may require the collection of information before, during and after your intervention, project or relationship. You will have to identify early on the types of information you will need and ensure that it is ready and available when you need it.

There are two broad categories of information to consider:

- » quantitative: this is information that is concerned with counting and measuring things, like attendance or grades
- » qualitative: this is information that is concerned with people's feelings, thoughts, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, and may include things like improved student attitudes to schooling identified through interviews or student diaries.

Below are some ideas for how you might capture, through questions, the different categories of information.

Sample questions for a creative arts collaboration

Questions that lend themselves to quantitative data

- » How many staff from the business and school were involved in the mentoring program?
- » Has attendance improved as a result of participation in the mentoring project with the creative arts business?
- » Has there been an increase in students choosing creative arts subjects as a result of the mentoring program?
- » How many students have gained positive outcomes from participating in the activities?

Questions that lend themselves to qualitative data

- » What were your feelings about having a mentor before you started?
- » How do you feel about the experience now that you have been mentored for a year?
- » What parts of the experience did you find most enjoyable?
- » What (if any) parts of the experience did you find challenging?
- » What advice would you give other students coming into the mentoring program next year?

Identify the sources of the information you want to gather

Your evaluation is more than likely going to require a mix of quantitative and qualitative information, so you will need to think about where you might be able to get this from.

As a first step, you should find out what information is already available to you and what extra information you might need to gather. Some sources of information might be applicable to both schools and businesses, such as destination data or staff feedback surveys.

Potential sources of information

From a school perspective, you could think about using:

- » attendance records
- » retention rates
- » post-school destination data (e.g. number of students in study, work, at TAFE, or in apprenticeships or traineeships)
- » student portfolios of work (e.g. art, writing, photo journals, self-assessment forms and tests)
- » student behaviour records (e.g. time-out, detention, suspension)
- » student, parent, teacher satisfaction survey responses
- » student achievement data

From a business perspective, you could think about using:

- » feedback from corporate volunteers
- » records of financial and in-kind support
- » level of media coverage
- » student satisfaction surveys
- » numbers of students directly and indirectly impacted by the activities or projects
- » sales figures or other evidence of marketing success
- » staff feedback surveys

Make the most of existing information

The history of the relationship could be traced through such documents as:

- » early planning documents
- » early communications – emails, records of phone conversations between partners
- » original timelines and budgets
- » business or strategic plans
- » minutes of meetings
- » evidence of community consultation
- » memos, and
- » financial records.

For help in identifying the type of information that is most appropriate to your needs, go to the next section on Gathering Information.

Other information could be gathered by simply talking with people who have been involved since the early days of the relationship.

You could find out:

- » what people remember about the beginning of the relationship
- » their initial expectations
- » early roles and responsibilities
- » expected challenges and
- » proposed ways of addressing these.

In this way you can build up a picture of how the relationship has evolved and if it is still serving its original purpose.

There are many different sources of information, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, such as case studies, observation checklists, surveys and interviews. See the next section, 'Gathering Information', for more ideas on how to collect information from a variety of sources.

Identify potential sources of help

Before gathering your information, think about the kind of help you might need and when you might need this support.

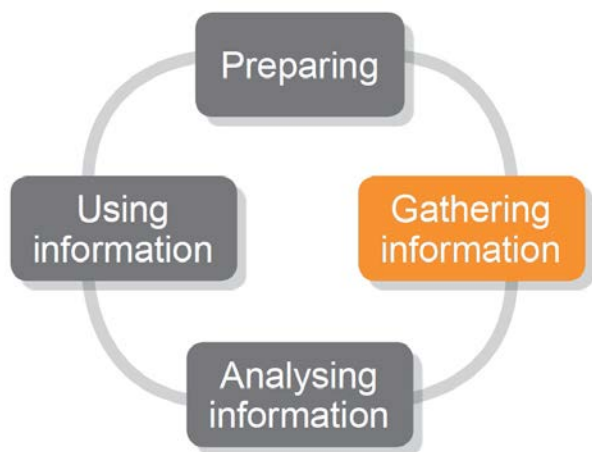
For further help in identifying who could potentially help you in your evaluation go to the Toolkit section on Identifying Your Stakeholders

Potential sources of help

- » An independent person, such as a broker or someone from another school or business, could help during the preparation and planning part of your evaluation.
- » External experts could assist with the design and analysis of surveys or in refining your interview questions.
- » Some information gathering might best be done independently by a third party.
- » Depending on the nature of the project, school students could assist with the design of survey or interview questions.

At a glance

- Be clear about your purpose in evaluating
- Identify the information you already have
- Identify the information you need, where you will get it from, and who might help you.



Gathering information

This section of the guide looks at:

- » different ways of gathering information
- » how you might use a particular source of information in an evaluation.

The summaries below are provided to help you identify the most relevant and appropriate types of information to meet your evaluation needs.

Document reviews

Documents can be a useful source of information about the beginnings of your collaboration.

Relevant materials might include early planning documents such as business or strategic plans, communications between partners, financial records, minutes of meetings, letters of agreement or memoranda of understanding and the like.

If you're already in a well-established relationship it's likely you'll have access to some of these documents and they can be included in your evaluation. If not, gather anecdotal information from individuals who have been involved from the beginning. You could find out what they remember about the reason for the school and business coming together, what they hoped to achieve and how well they think the early objectives and expectations have been fulfilled.

If you're starting out in a school-business relationship, keep your early records. They can be a useful source of information to track progress.

Checklist

A checklist is a quick and easy way of recording basic information. It's used when there are specific items or actions in a project to be recorded.

You can use a checklist to:

- » summarise actions or activities that students have engaged in
- » track students' progress over time
- » record observations – more on these below
- » show the tasks a student has completed or which aspects of a task have been done.

Checklists might be maintained by school or business staff, by students or by all parties. An example of a checklist can be found in the Toolkits section of this guide.

Observation

You can use observation checklists or make notes to record student or teacher activities and responses.

An observation checklist, for example, enables you to record the dynamics of the interaction between students and staff or among students. To measure student engagement you might use a simple yes/no or tick/cross system to record students' body language or verbal comments, the kind of questions they are asking, the amount of confidence being shown, or the extent to which they are following staff or mentor suggestions.

You might use a simple tally to record, say, the number of students engaged in activities at various points during the course of the project.

It's a good idea to gather other sources of information besides observed information for a more complete picture of student outcomes.

Interviews

An interview is basically a conversation and can be as informal or as formal as you want to make it. Interviews can be adapted to fit in with the availability of your interviewees – during business or school hours, face-to-face or by phone, onsite or offsite.

Interviews can be structured (i.e. a prepared set of questions), semi-structured (with prepared questions that you might add to, adapt or omit as the interview progresses) or unstructured (where interviewees talk with only the occasional prompt from you).

How you conduct your interviews will depend on the relationship you are evaluating. For example, participants in an informal school-business relationship might have casual conversations about how the activities or project is going. Participants in a more structured relationship might use semi-structured interviews by phone or in person.

Interviewees can be given the guiding questions beforehand as this allows them time to think about their responses.

Focus groups

A focus group is a small discussion group or group interview. Focus groups usually invite a range of people to discuss a common topic. They can be useful if you want to bring together, say, a few students, parents, teachers or business partner

members to discuss their different perspectives on a project, its impact and how they think it might be improved.

It can help to have one person facilitating the discussion while a second person takes notes. You can summarise in writing, or verbally, the findings from the discussions.

Case study

A case study is an in-depth study of a particular story or experience. It can be a powerful illustration of how an activity or project or relationship has had an impact at a personal level. Case studies capture the story behind the statistics or other information and are particularly effective when combined with other sources of information.

For example, a case study might involve an in-depth study of a particular student, highlighting the skills and knowledge gained, and the benefits of participation identified by the student. By bringing together the student's voice with other evidence, it's possible to build up a broad picture of the impact the school-business relationship is having.

This other evidence could include comments you have gathered from the business coordinator of the program, other business staff who contribute their skills, school staff who teach the curriculum and several parents of the students involved.

Diaries, journals and logs

Personal reflection recorded in a diary, journal or log can give you a rich picture of people's experiences. Entries can show how a student's thinking or understanding has changed as a result of being in a project or program. They might show what the students were expecting at the beginning and whether or not these expectations have been

filled. They can show if a student has become more confident or if they have gained particular skills or knowledge.

Teacher journals can track student development or teachers' own growth in professional understanding.

Partners may choose to keep a log of meetings and activities to track progress or document what's happened.

These reflections can be as informal or as formal as you like or need. This kind of information is most useful for evaluations that want to show change or growth over time.

Testimonials

A testimonial or reference enables people outside the school or business to show their support for your project. Testimonials offer evidence about the strengths of a project. They're typically, but not always, a response to your request.

Like case studies, testimonials provide a more complete picture of what has been achieved from the perspective of someone outside the project or relationship. A letter from the local council, addressing the reduced incidence of graffiti, for example, might be used to demonstrate the impact of a school-business collaboration in a particular area. Another example could be if a local chamber of commerce passes on positive feedback from businesses regarding the conduct and performance of students during work placement activities delivered as part of a collaborative program.

Photographs and videos

Visual records are a useful way to record evidence of engagement in an activity or show the impact of a project on participants. Videos of interviews about the difference a project has made to people can capture elements of tone and body language that might otherwise be difficult to record. Photos and videos can also set the scene for an evaluation by showing the environment in which it is taking place and the people involved.

Depending on the nature of the activities that students are participating in, photos can show progress towards an end product and the end product itself. Consent should be obtained from participants (and from parents/carers if students are involved) prior to taking these images.

Tests and other forms of classroom assessment

Schools routinely conduct tests and other assessments to show student progress. Tests from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) can show student performance levels before and

after engagement in a project or series of activities. However, it may be difficult to show there has been a change in performance as a result of your relationship activities alone. Unless there's very strong evidence, the most that you might be able to say is that your collaboration has contributed to the positive changes that have taken place.

Questionnaires or surveys

Questionnaires and surveys (print-based, online, or spoken) are quick and inexpensive ways of finding out what people think.

For example, you could survey business staff to see what they have gained from collaborating with a school and what they think students have gained as a result of this exposure to business or industry experiences. You might survey students to find out what they have learned from participating in the activities developed by participants in a school-business relationship, and if they have any suggestions for improving either outcomes or processes. You could survey teachers to find out what their students have learned, what they have learned themselves, and if they have any suggestions for improvement. You might survey parents to see what impact the program has had on their children and families.

There are numerous examples of surveys online with questions that could get you started or you can design your own survey using free online software.

Advantages and limitations of some common information collection methods

You may not be entirely sure about which sources of information you should collect for your evaluation. Some will be more suited to your purposes than others.

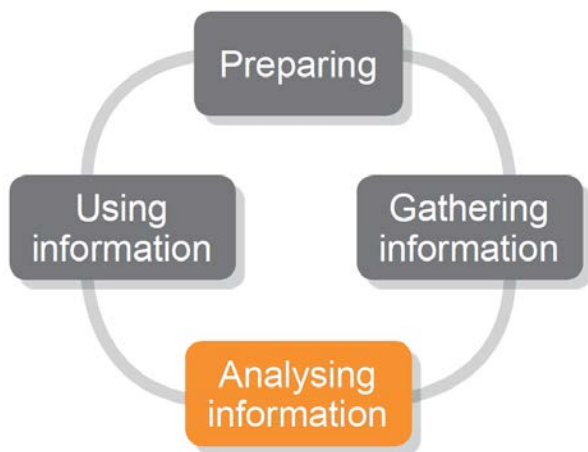
To help you decide what information would be best for your evaluation, look at the following table, which shows at a glance one key advantage and one key limitation for each information collection method.

Information collection methods	Advantages	Limitations
Document review	Can give a context to the relationship, including early expectations and objectives	Early planning documents can be hard to find
Checklist	Can be a quick and easy way of recording information	Can tell you that something happened but not why it happened or what it felt like
Observation	Allows you to see participant involvement firsthand	Shows only the external behaviour not what participants are thinking
Interviews	Allows you to capture a range of participants' perspectives	Can be time consuming when it comes to writing up the interviews
Focus Groups	Can be more comfortable for some participants than one-on-one interviews	Can be time consuming when it comes to writing up the discussions
Case studies	Can provide an in-depth and holistic picture of impact on participants	These are about particular instances and not generalisable
Diaries, journals and logs	Can show change in attitudes and impact over time	Effectiveness depends on the self-discipline of participants
Testimonials	Can offer a range of personal perspectives on impact	Quality and usefulness in terms of showing genuine impact can vary greatly
Photographs, videos	Can show elements of experience that might be difficult to capture in other ways	Can involve privacy and ethical issues, particularly with images of students
Tests and other classroom assessments	Can show tangible learning outcomes	Can be difficult to establish cause and effect
Questionnaires or surveys	Is a quick and low-cost way of finding out views	Does not allow for more in-depth perspectives

At a glance

- Gather only the information you need
- Use two or three different sources of information to gain multiple perspectives
- Gather information relevant to your project objectives, type of relationship, evaluation purpose and the time and resources you have available.

Analysing information



This phase is about analysing the information you have gathered in order to make sense of it.

This is a critical step toward identifying whether you have made a difference and achieved your desired outcomes.

You will probably need to analyse information that is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative information is essentially numbers, such as test scores, absenteeism figures, or the number of students who meet minimum benchmark standards. Qualitative information, on the other hand, captures people's views, observations, experiences and perspectives.

By analysing a variety of information you can paint a clear picture of your program and highlight any measurable improvements it has brought about, as well as capture how stakeholders feel they have benefited.

Analysing your data by looking for patterns or trends may tell you if your program has been a success and if there are things that you could change to improve your outcomes. For example, if you and your partners run a program to enhance student engagement you could track their outcome performance over time by analysing the changes in attendance or grades.

To more fully understand the impact of your program, you might also want to analyse feedback from teachers and parents on student attitudes. If you are a business working with a school to provide mentoring support to students, you might like to measure success both in terms of better student engagement and employee attitudes about their employer and work.

The table below lists some things to keep in mind as you analyse information you have collected.

Tips for analysing information

- » You can convert your information from words into numbers to make analysis easier. This might be done by categorising responses under a set of headings or themes that capture the relevant aspects of the relationship or project.
- » This approach will allow you to summarise large amounts of information, such as frequencies (counts), per cents or rankings. It also lets you look at more than one characteristic (or 'variable') at a time if you want to know how they might be related. For example, you might be interested in looking at how attendance in a program differs for girls and for boys.
- » Depending on the quantity and kind of information collected you can analyse this yourself, seek help from a colleague or partner, an external organisation, or use a statistical software package to help. (These packages can be expensive and require a working knowledge of them.)
- » In some cases you might be able to compare your results with national or state/territory results. However, if you do take this approach, remember that any comparison needs to take into account the context in which the data were collected.
- » Patterns, trends and themes can help you answer your evaluation questions, identify any unanticipated outcomes, and reveal possible gaps in your information.
- » Sometimes your analysis will involve comparing what people say or write at the beginning of an activity or project with what they say and write afterwards. (Such pre- and post- testing information collection can use quantitative or qualitative data.)
- » Your project might even lend itself to more regular collection so consider ways that data can be collected at multiple points during your program and then analysed to best identify your achievements or otherwise.
- » Your analysis should be 'fit for purpose', that is, it need only be suitable to provide the evidence that your relationship or program has or has not achieved the desired outcomes. For a one-off project this might be fairly basic pre- and post-comparisons, showing if and how things have changed. For longer-term projects, or where further funding is being sought, you might need more depth to your analysis to identify if there are sufficient measures of success to justify continuing your relationship and project.

At a glance:

- Analysing all available information will help you determine if you have achieved your outcomes
- If you're unsure about analysing lots of quantitative information there are software programs that can help, or someone in the school or business might have the skills to assist
- Regardless of your approach, make sure the findings relate back to your original question.

Using information



This phase in the Evaluate to Grow cycle is about sharing your results and making some informed decisions about your school-business relationship and its future directions.

Sharing your findings

- » Sharing may be for compliance purposes, but it can also be a valuable opportunity for others to have their say about the evaluation findings.
- » Sharing may help stakeholders engage with the project, influence the next steps of the school-business relationship or influence the partners to go back and have another look at their analysis.
- » Who you decide to share your findings with, and how you choose to do so, will depend on the expectations of each party in the relationship and on your reason for evaluating in the first place.
- » If funding is involved and you need to satisfy a group or organisation, you'll need to write up your evaluation findings with that audience in mind.
- » If you want to show the world what a great relationship you have then the findings can be made public. For example, you could put a summary on the school and business websites or in your respective newsletters or annual reports.
- » If your relationship is informal then you might present your findings verbally so all parties know how the collaboration is going.

Making informed decisions

You've conducted your evaluation, shared your findings and are now in a position to make informed decisions about whether to go on as you are, or to make changes to your project, relationship or both.

For example, an evaluation might show that your school or business should continue to work collaboratively with the same partner but on a new challenge or opportunity. Or an evaluation might show that a similar activity could be carried out but with a different school or business.

This is the point where you and your partners need to talk openly about the future of the project and the relationships itself.

Below are some examples of questions that could guide this stage in your evaluation.

Sample questions to ask at this stage in your evaluation:

- » Will you continue to do things in the same way?
- » Do you need to evolve or enrich the relationship?
- » Could your model be replicated elsewhere (which may or may not involve your current school-business participants)?
- » Has the relationship run its course? If so, what is the best way to finalise the relationship?
- » How will you convey your decision to stakeholders?

At a glance

- Use your evaluation findings to grow your relationship – who might you bring on board? How might you expand what is being offered?
- Share the findings with key stakeholders and involve them in the decision making
- If your collaboration has run its course identify how any loose ends can be managed smoothly and efficiently.

Relationship review

For further help in developing guiding questions to measure the quality and effectiveness of the relationship go to the Toolkit section on sample evaluation questions.

THE PREVIOUS SECTION looked at the Evaluate to Grow framework mainly from the perspective of how you evaluate the impact or outcomes of your collaboration (the ‘what’ of your relationship). However, thinking about your relationship itself (the ‘how’) is also important and can occur at any phase in the Evaluate to Grow cycle.

The kind of school-business relationship you have can influence how you go about your evaluation. Similarly, your evaluation findings can help shape the kind of relationship you have (or could have). For example, a school and business could begin with one kind of relationship and, based on the findings from an evaluation, evolve into another kind of relationship. In this way evaluation contributes to growth.

Alternatively, an evaluation may highlight the fact that the relationship has run its course and needs either to be wound back or re-energised.

Reviewing the way in which you and your partner(s) collaborate requires an honest appraisal. You need to think about such things as:

- » how well you are communicating together
- » the extent to which roles and responsibilities are being shared and if these need to be reviewed
- » the commitment of each partner to continuing the collaboration
- » the adequacy of human and other resources.

At a glance

Each kind of relationship is useful when considered in relation to:

- Your evaluation purpose
- Your choice of evaluation method(s)
- The implications these have for the amount of time participants in the relationship need to commit, the level of trust that needs to develop, and the level of willingness to reciprocate (access to space, staff, equipment, documents etc).

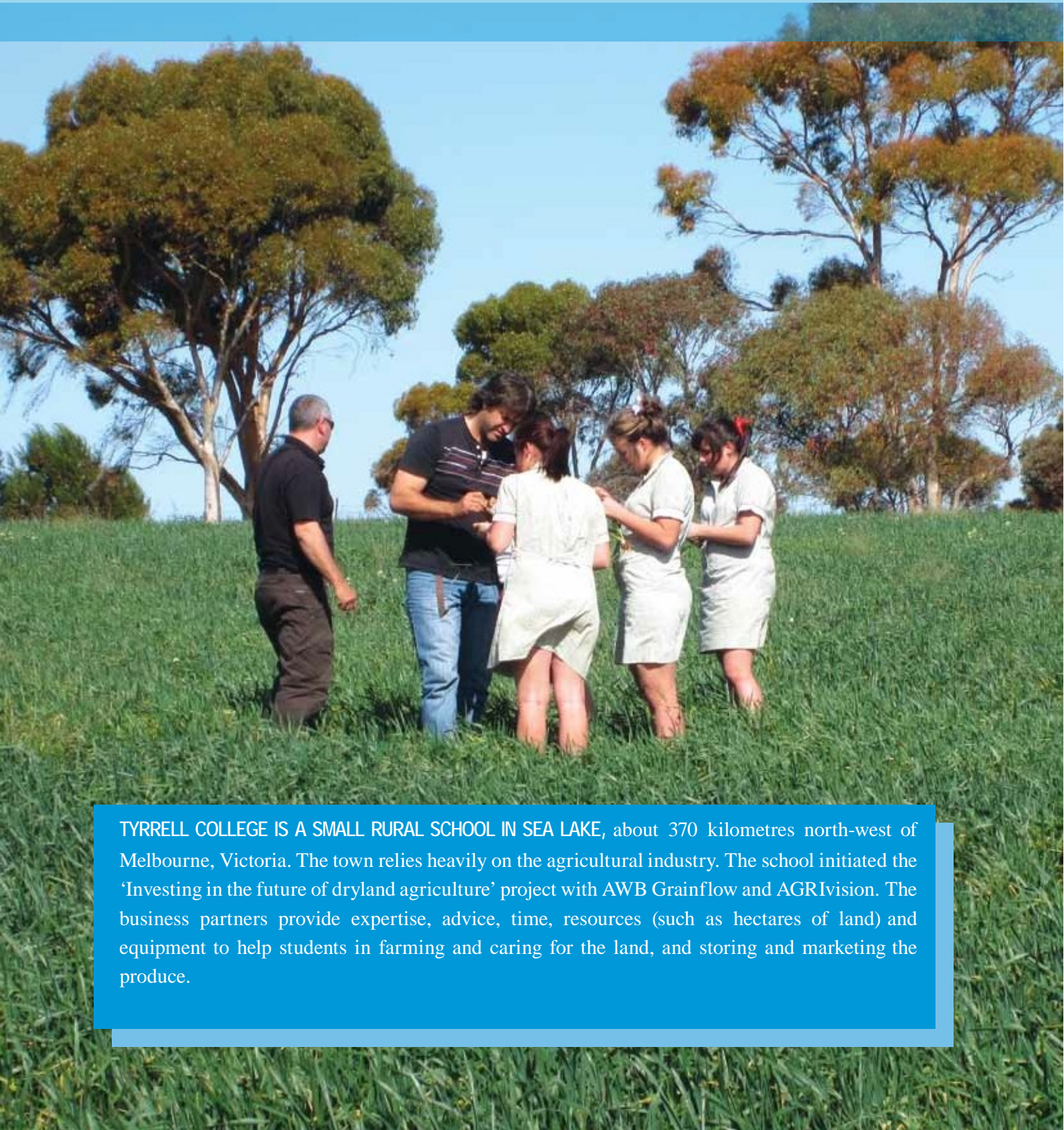
CASE STUDIES

The following people and organisations have kindly contributed to the case studies.

- » John Wright, Tyrell College's Agricultural studies and VET coordinator
- » Judi Stanton, Research and Advocacy Coordinator, Ardoch Youth Foundation
- » Audrey Fernandez, coordinator of Ardoch's LiNCS project
- » Carla Barbieri, coordinator of Ardoch's LiNCS project
- » Leanne Sheardown, Dinjerra Primary School Principal
- » Sharon Higgins, Dinjerra Primary School's coordinator of the Ardoch program
- » Wendy White, Glenala State High School teacher and Breaking Down the Barriers Project Leader
- » Robert Reed, Minter Ellison Community Investment Program Leader
- » John Willett, Ertech Indigenous Training and Development Consultant
- » Anne Oliver, Vocational Education and Training Coordinator, Clontarf Aboriginal College
- » Tony Chinnock, Principal, Clontarf Aboriginal
- » Caroline Watts, Dubbo Secondary College
- » Annette Ollerton, Community Liaison Officer, Lurnea High School
- » Joanne Short, Group Fitness coordinator, Move Fitness Centre
- » Carey Badcoe, Chief Executive Officer of, Australian Business Community Network
- » Geoff Dole, former coordinator of the LAMP Program
- » Shane Doherty, Principal, Bunbury Primary School
- » Andrew Van Dijk, Manager Communications and External Affairs, BHP Billiton Worsley Alumina
- » Sue Jacobs, Coordinator of the Offshoots program, Ravenswood Community Garden
- » Marcus McCormick, Partnership Broker, TL3 Partnership Brokers

CASE STUDY 1

Investing in the future of dryland agriculture



TYRRELL COLLEGE IS A SMALL RURAL SCHOOL IN SEA LAKE, about 370 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, Victoria. The town relies heavily on the agricultural industry. The school initiated the 'Investing in the future of dryland agriculture' project with AWB Grainflow and AGRIVision. The business partners provide expertise, advice, time, resources (such as hectares of land) and equipment to help students in farming and caring for the land, and storing and marketing the produce.

The challenge

Industries in the district were finding it hard to get experienced workers. The school's agricultural project, set up in 2000, was struggling. Timetable and logistical constraints prevented students from being able to find suitable placements and farm-based activities to meet the VET requirement of 200 structured hours of learning on a farm. The small number of students who participated were disillusioned and disengaged.

The solution

Tyrrell College decided to set up its own onsite agriculture project. The objective was to re-engage students, open employment pathways, and support the local agriculture industry.

Tyrrell College's Technology and VET Agricultural Coordinator, who grew up in the local community and has strong personal relationships with many industry people, approached people he knew in management at Agribusiness and AWB Grainflow to communicate the school's vision for the new agriculture project.

Evaluation

Initially, the partners talked to each other informally about how the program was going. When it was decided they should apply for a NAB Schools First award a more systematic approach was taken to gathering information in order to meet the awards criteria.

The partners now rely on a range of information to tell them how their project is going.

Formal measures include information gathered routinely by schools, such as absentee data and behaviour management records. Responses in annual student attitude surveys are used to monitor student engagement. Subject enrolment and demand, including the number of female students involved, are monitored each year. The active involvement of local community members, such as the farmers who lend equipment, affirm the project's important role in the community. Student participation in related events – such as open days, school assemblies, writing articles for the school newsletter and local paper – all suggest the project is engaging students successfully. Pathways and employment data, including local apprenticeships and further studies in agriculture, provide quantitative confirmation of the impact of the project.

Informal measures include comments from students involved in the project as well as those wanting to become involved; observations from

agriculture teachers as to what worked in a lesson, what didn't, and what to do differently; comments from school staff regarding student attitude and behaviour, and from the staff of the partner organisations and participating farmers. Parents also give verbal feedback.

The project is monitored through regular communication from different sources. For example, students give weekly updates in their work journals. There are regular briefings with school management and partners to discuss the current cropping project, raise issues, and clarify roles and responsibilities. Parents, employees and the community are informed about what is happening with the project via the school newsletter and items in the local newspaper. Everyday conversations in the street provide another means of discussing the progress of the crops and how the students are going.

Impact



So successful has the project been that other companies including some national ones have approached the school to be part of the agriculture project and other schools have sought advice to set up their own local projects.

Indicators of success include reduced absenteeism, increased popularity of the project and more positive responses on attitudes-to-school surveys over several years. Teachers and parents have observed students displaying increased confidence, supporting each other, and demonstrating teamwork and problem-solving skills.

There has been increased parent involvement in school activities – for example, parents helped with the cropping project and supplied farm equipment.

AWB Grainflow benefits by having unused land maintained and productive, while local farmers benefit from being able to employ local young people in the future, rather than having to rely on bringing in employees from elsewhere.

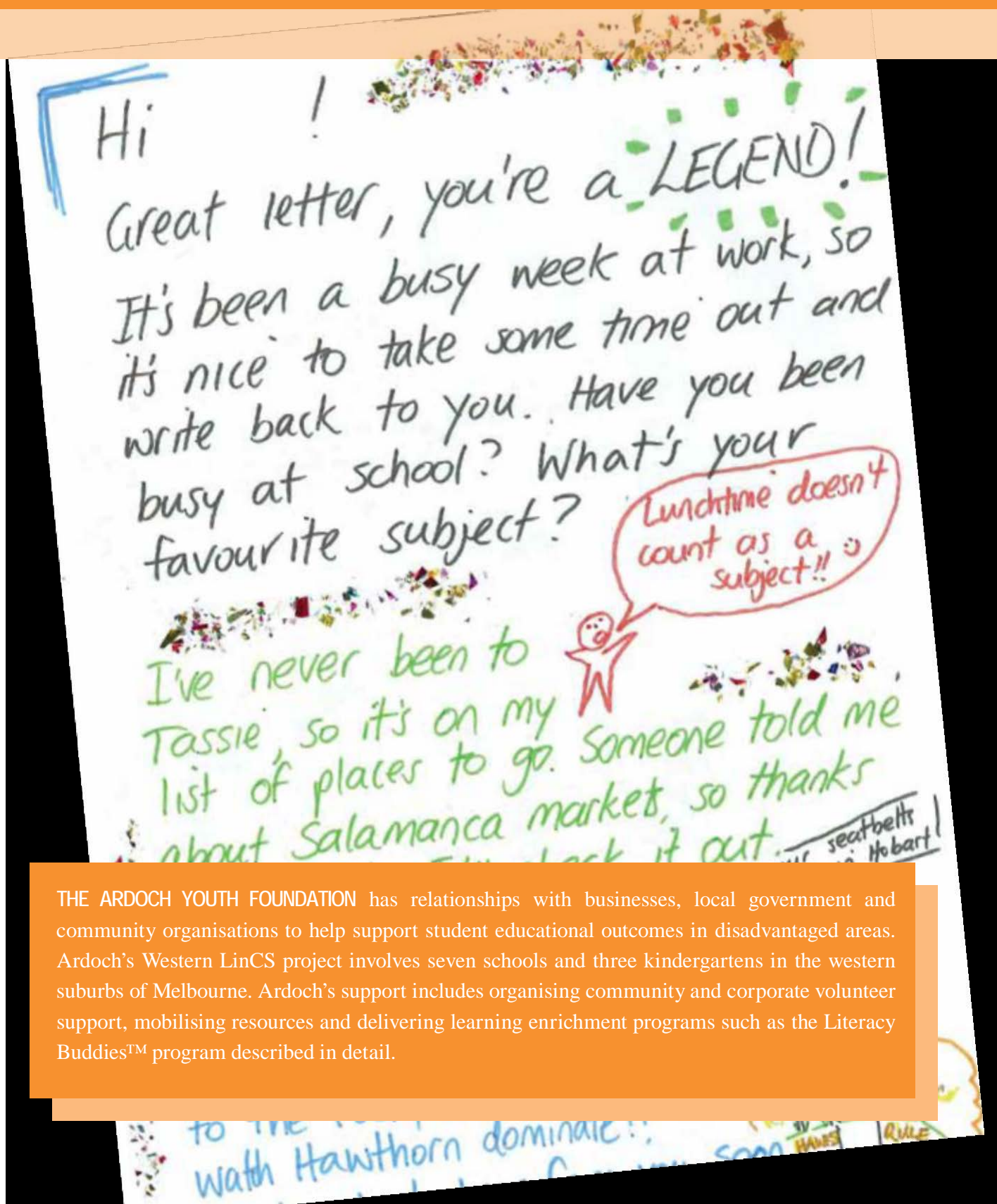
Students who are not from the land are now taking an active interest in agriculture as a legitimate career option. Business leaders who were struggling to attract work-ready employees now see that the project is developing relevant skills in local young people.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » Informal feedback in a small community like this can be appropriate as a means of evaluation. It keeps the project on track because everyone in the community knows what's working well or not and is willing to share their views.
- » As a relationship and project evolve evaluation can become more formal to meet external or other requirements.
- » There is a place for both kinds of evaluation.

CASE STUDY 2

Literacy Buddies™



THE ARDOCH YOUTH FOUNDATION has relationships with businesses, local government and community organisations to help support student educational outcomes in disadvantaged areas. Ardoch's Western LinCS project involves seven schools and three kindergartens in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Ardoch's support includes organising community and corporate volunteer support, mobilising resources and delivering learning enrichment programs such as the Literacy Buddies™ program described in detail.

The challenge

Dinjerra Primary School in Melbourne's western suburbs identified that students in Years 5 and 6 were not sufficiently motivated during writing sessions. Many struggled to write more than two or three sentences. Teachers wanted to generate interest and a real purpose for writing to support skill development.

The solution

Ardoch works closely with schools to achieve their objectives and engage businesses to help meet the particular needs identified. In this case, Ardoch's Literacy Buddies™ was seen to be an ideal program for improving writing motivation and building skills. It would have the added benefit of linking students with working adult role models. Students in Years 5 and 6 were paired with a corporate volunteer from a partnering organisation. Students exchanged letters with their 'buddies' over the course of the school year and met them in person at the school mid year and at the corporate workplace near the end of the year. All Year 5 and 6 students participated in the program, with appropriate adjustments for individual student needs. Around sixty corporate volunteers were involved. They attended a training session to prepare them and then wrote many colourful and engaging letters to their buddies over the year.

Evaluation

Ardoch invites teachers and corporate volunteers to complete a survey regarding the impact and effectiveness of the Literacy Buddies™ program at the end of each year. The impact on students' skill development and attitudes to writing are also measured through teacher responses to the survey tool.

Questions for the corporate volunteers cover their experience of the program and the impact on the volunteers themselves in terms of job satisfaction, team work and personal development.

At the end of the year, Dinjerra Primary School also asks students for their reflections in writing on the program.

However, the partners recognise that the program evaluation could be improved by gathering stronger data, including baseline data of student skill levels and attitudes to writing before the program commences and by measuring changes at the end of the program. To facilitate this stronger data collection, Ardoch is beginning to work more closely with the school in its evaluation of the Literacy Buddies™ program. The intention is for the school, Ardoch and corporate partner to identify together the desired outcomes and how the information can be collected and reported. Evaluation will also tap into data that is already being gathered as part of normal school processes.

Impact

Continual positive feedback from teachers indicates a demonstrable improvement in student writing skills evident in the letters being sent. Students who would only write one or two lines at the beginning of the year are willingly writing four page screeds to their buddies by the end of the year.

Current evaluation processes show that both the primary school students and the corporate volunteers are gaining from this relationship, with some volunteers also attending activities like school sports days. The volunteers' letters are carefully produced, often including decorations and illustrations, and are evidently the subject of much thought.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » Get some baseline information specific to the project where possible – for example, ask how the children feel about their letter writing at the beginning of the year and then ask them again at the end of the year.
- » Ask teachers how the project is going. Ask how they know it's making a difference.

CASE STUDY 3

Breaking down the barriers



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GLENALA HIGH SCHOOL in Queensland and Minter Ellison Lawyers began in 2008 with a mentoring reading program for ten Year 8 students. In this program a mentor from Minter Ellison is matched with a Year 8 student. Since then, the relationship has deepened, paving the way for the development and implementation of other programs at the school. The relationship has evolved from Minter Ellison funding specific needs – such as the purchase of hats and breakfast for students – to a sophisticated program of change. This case focuses on the Year 8 mentor reading program.

The challenge

The school wanted to address low aspiration and educational apathy. The main objective of the relationship with Minter Ellison Lawyers was to develop more positive student attitudes to schooling and improve transitions into the workforce.

The solution

One solution to the identified issues in the school was to develop a relationship with Minter Ellison Lawyers. Both the school and Minter Ellison Lawyers recognised the value in working together for a common goal. The partners decided to start small with the development of the high school mentor reading project.

Evaluation

The partners use a variety of formal and informal ways to monitor and review the various programs they provide and their partnership.

For the mentor reading program, all Year 8 students are given a Queensland Department of Education standardised pre- and post-test. Students selected for the mentor project are reading at least two levels lower than what they should be. The school identifies how many words and how many errors a student makes in 100 words and then repeats the diagnostic test at the end of the reading project.

The results of those who were part of the mentoring project and those who were not are compared. The school also compares the students' National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy results in Year 7 and Year 9.

In addition to these tests, the school also monitors how many books students borrow from the school's library before and after the reading project.

Surveys are distributed to students, parents, staff and mentors about the project overall. Parents are asked questions such as: Do you read with your children at home? What sort of materials does your child read? Have you noticed any behavioral changes in your child following their participation in the project, compared to before they began?

The main way the school gathers information on how the project is going is through anecdotal feedback in the form of conversations with students.

The school and business partners regularly monitor their relationship. The partners are in contact via weekly emails to share information and check arrangements for various project activities.

More formal meetings between the partnership leaders from each organisation are held at the start of each year to plan the year ahead and review the budget.

The partners talk about the evidence gathered throughout the previous year, identifying what is working and what needs to be refined or changed. There is also a high-level formal meeting once a year to discuss the partnership, its projects and strategic directions.

Impact

Students in the reading mentor project are showing demonstrable growth in their reading ability, more so than those who haven't participated. For some of the students, this might be the first time they've been read to or encouraged to read. The project has been going for four years, which is testament in itself of its value. Two of the students from the original reading cohort are now in Year 11 and looking at career paths that might not otherwise have been in their sights.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » As a business, you need to be clear about what you want to achieve and why the school you are thinking about might be a good fit. And you need to think about how the school may assist. So do some due diligence – quiz them a bit to see if the partnership and its purposes align with yours.
- » Draw on a range of evidence to show the benefits – for example, pre- and post- tests, student and parent surveys, teachers' views, business partner's views.

CASE STUDY 4

Training and employment in civil construction

The Ertech Construction Academy is the result of a collaboration between Clontarf Aboriginal College and Ertech Holdings in Perth. Clontarf Aboriginal College is a coeducational Catholic school with 120 Indigenous students in Years 7 to 12. Ertech Holdings is a large, national construction company operating over three states. The Ertech Construction Academy is a purpose-built training facility in outer metropolitan Perth where students from Clontarf get on-the-job training. After becoming familiar with occupational health and safety policies and procedures, they complete training modules for nationally recognised courses that are also credits for the West Australian Certificate of Education.



The challenge

Clontarf staff wanted to find ways to engage students in education and training to increase their chances of employment after leaving school. Ertech Holdings needed workers. In the past, when farms were smaller, a ready supply of plant operators from rural areas was available for employment. Now, with larger farms and fewer people in rural areas, there's no longer the same ready labour pool for the company.

The solution

The partnership provides a workplace education and training environment for Aboriginal students in Years 11 and 12 at an onsite training facility. In 2007, Ertech approached Clontarf with opportunities for training and employing young Indigenous people through a partnership. Polytechnic West was approached to be the registered training organisation. Stockland, a land development company, was approached for some land to build the Ertech Construction Academy. Westrac was approached for heavy machinery. Together, Ertech and Clontarf created a direct path that would lead students straight into employment in civil construction.

Evaluation

Both Clontarf and Ertech keep information about each individual's training and employment. The importance of data is recognised and its collection has evolved since the beginning of the project.

There are unique issues facing young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers who are used to strong support systems. At the Academy, 39 students have completed their training and 26 have been employed by Ertech.



has been a drop-off in retention, though, and the company, which has invested more than \$1 million, felt there had been little return for the money. To help retain employees, Ertech started a mentoring project to alleviate some of the isolation new Indigenous workers feel in the workplace.

Monitoring of the partnership has increased and is now more data driven. The Academy needed to justify to the company why the project should remain despite the apparent poor retention. Company data on Indigenous employee retention showed that the retention over time from the Academy was better than in other parts of the company.

Applying for a NAB Schools First award also made the partners focus more on gathering data as evidence of positive impact.

Clontarf monitors student wellbeing and disposition informally through such things as students' maturity in interacting with others, their eagerness to get onto the bus for the Academy and their engagement with the training courses.

Impact

The indicators of success are numerous. Ninety per cent of trainees graduated with Year 12 and successfully completed the program in 2010. Between 2008-2010, 29 students graduated from the Academy and 21 of these were offered employment by the company. Staff have commented on Ertech trainees' improved attitude back at school.

The Academy has expanded the range of Certificates offered and a second Academy in Broome has been set up. The partnership has led Ertech to consider sponsoring current employees who want to set up their own businesses. Polytechnic West is now considering offering additional training modules in other areas of construction. Ertech and

Clontarf have identified several students who have supervisor capabilities. One student says his goal is to 'work my way up to be supervisor.' Comments like this suggest the project is making a difference to individual students.

The project fosters reconciliation between Indigenous and non- Indigenous workers. Ertech staff attend students' sports matches, assemblies and graduation ceremonies. They also become the students' role models. Similarly, the students become positive role models to younger Clontarf students.

Girls are now offered opportunities to join the project with the Academy which in turn impacts on the worksite culture.

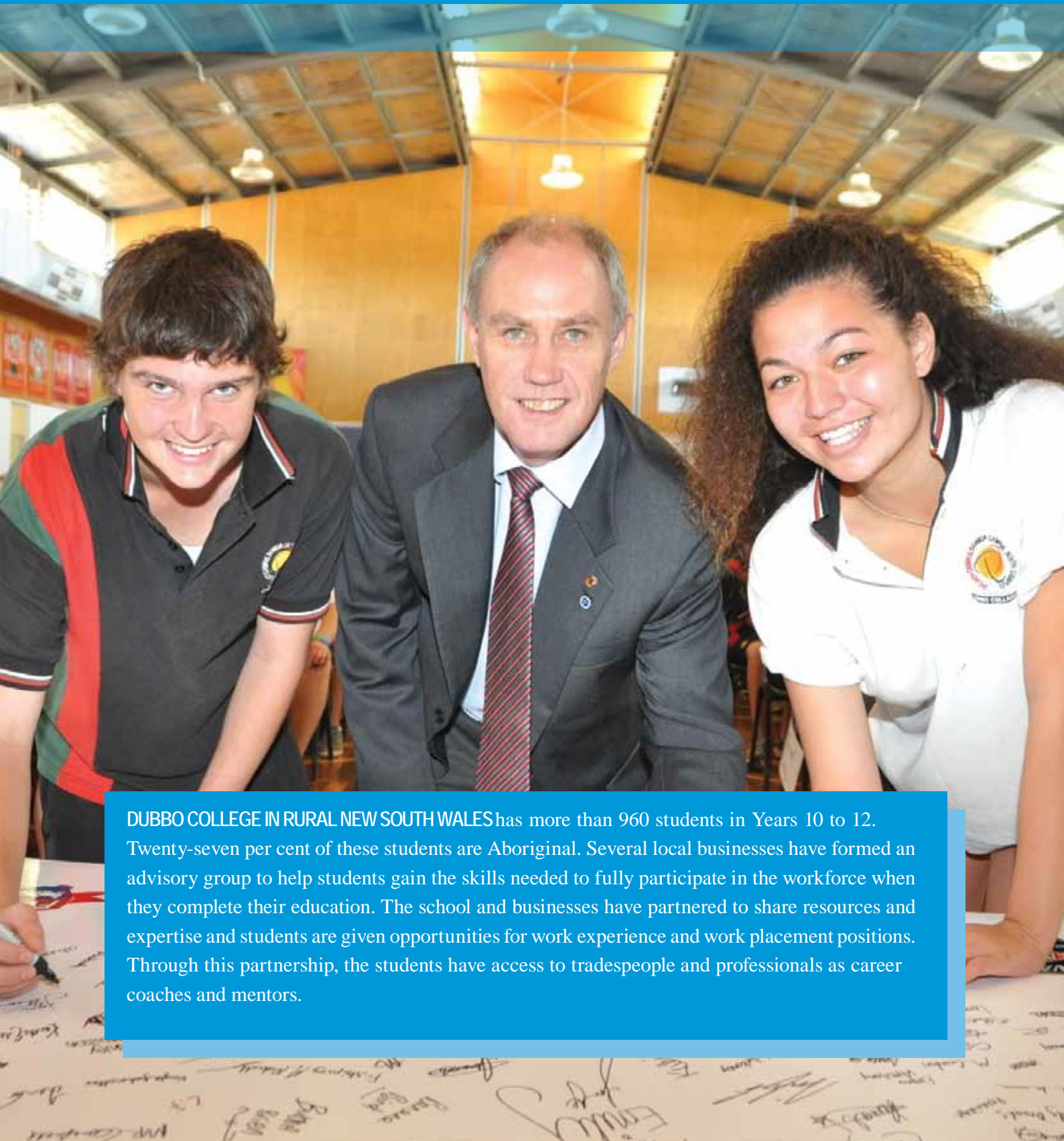
For Clontarf College, there has been a big improvement in enrolments because of the opportunities the Academy offers.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » The kind of data you collect and your reasons for collecting it can change as the project evolves.
- » Find ways to communicate with parents, using postcards, letters and photos where internet access is difficult as this communication helps students' communities see what is happening at the school and can provide data to show how the project and relationship are tracking.

CASE STUDY 5

Get Real



DUBBO COLLEGE IN RURAL NEW SOUTH WALES has more than 960 students in Years 10 to 12. Twenty-seven per cent of these students are Aboriginal. Several local businesses have formed an advisory group to help students gain the skills needed to fully participate in the workforce when they complete their education. The school and businesses have partnered to share resources and expertise and students are given opportunities for work experience and work placement positions. Through this partnership, the students have access to tradespeople and professionals as career coaches and mentors.

The challenge

Research into enrolment, attendance, participation, retention and destinations by staff at Dubbo College identified that a significant number of students were not completing Year 10. They were generally leaving as soon as they turned 15, moving from school to unemployment, or leaving without a vocational or study pathway to follow. The issue was affecting the community not only the school.

The solution

A project was needed to provide work experience opportunities, traineeships and career pathways for students. It was hoped such a program would improve retention and engagement and give students the skills that would help with the transition to work or further education. The Get Real project has been operating for more than six years. The corporate partners provide transport, referrals, mentoring, work experience and work placement opportunities. Students pledge that by the age of 17 they will be in full-time education, training or employment.

Evaluation

Data are gathered on attendance rates, suspension rates, teacher referrals, student performance in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy testing, other literacy and numeracy testing, and other key learning area assessments, case studies, post-college destinations, retention, and participation in work experience and work placement. For example, destination data show an increase in the uptake of a wide range of career pathways which involve further education and training opportunities.

The Get Real project began as an informal relationship, but stakeholders regularly meet twice a year as an advisory group. Dubbo College staff report on the number of student placements, traineeships and other vocational or study outcomes,

and plan for the next semester. The advisory group provides advice and suggestions for the next steps.

Impact

Dubbo College sees large numbers of enrolments and completions. Destination data reflect an increase in the uptake of a range of career pathways which involve further education and training. A greater percentage of students now stay at school to complete Year 12. Specific outcomes include: successful implementation of a zero tolerance policy (students don't leave college unless progressing to full-time employment or further education), lower crime rates, fewer people on welfare, generational change for some Aboriginal families with the eldest child now successful and completing college, and re-engagement of students who were early school leavers prior to the commencement of the project.

The Get Real Program has led to an increased staff awareness of the needs of Aboriginal students and those at risk of disengagement from education.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » Identify the available resources. Dubbo Secondary staff hadn't realised the local Chamber of Commerce was such a big resource and would've called on it sooner if they'd realised the sort of help it could offer.
- » Use existing information where possible, including baseline data, to show improvement

CASE STUDY 6

Looking good, feeling great



LURNEA HIGH SCHOOL IN NEW SOUTH WALES partners with Move Fitness Liverpool, a local fitness centre, to address self-esteem and body image for students through improved physical health and wellbeing programs. The school has also developed a relationship with the Butterfly Foundation, which runs body image programs for the students.

The challenge

An issue at Lurnea was the disengagement of some students due to lower levels of self-esteem. A survey of all students was distributed through the school's Student Representative Council. For both girls and boys, body image presented as a key issue in the survey.

The solution

The school used the survey feedback from students, external research and the school's National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy results to develop a structured program of support. The aim of the program was to educate students about body image issues and to develop lifelong skills that would enable them to identify and improve feelings of self worth. Desktop research by the Head Teacher Welfare at Lurnea, led to the connection with the Butterfly Foundation. The local presence of the Move Fitness centre provided the perfect opportunity to establish a connection.

Evaluation

The partners use both informal and formal means of evaluating effectiveness. For example, the school and fitness centre use weekly emails to check operational matters for the forthcoming class or activity, share ideas, and make sure each is 'okay.' At the end of a session the partners do a quick check with one another and the students about what worked well and what might need to be modified next time: 'The girls will tell you straight away, if they want something else!' The partners also have planning days to talk about how the project is going and plan for the next year.

The school has embedded the program into other areas of school life, including as a topic for discussion in interviews with prospective new students and their parents. These connections provide other potential sources for identifying whether the program is making a difference.

The school uses attendance data as an indicator of students' engagement in the program and student assessment completion data and also looks at how student participants are performing in other school curriculum assessment tasks.

Individual evaluation forms, associated with specific events within the program, such as the Mental Health Day, invite feedback from students.

Until now the school-business partnership has relied mainly on informal methods of gathering feedback on the effectiveness of the program. This has involved having conversations with students during and at the end of lessons and incidental conversations outside of class.

However, the school has plans to expand the methods of gathering data. Next year, the Looking Good, Feeling Great Program will be offered to 300 students. The partners recognise this means more formal measures will need to be put in place. The school is considering the possibility of introducing a pre- and post-program survey with students so any change can be identified. The partners are also thinking about 'how we can creatively collect attendance data, but also make this aspect of attendance something of an incentive for students. The idea of doing some form of gym pass that is stamped has been put forward.'

Impact

The structured 12-month program is having a positive impact on students. Attendance rates in the programs have improved dramatically since the Looking Good, Feeling Great Program began in 2005, while the incidence of negative behaviour has decreased dramatically.

The combination of internal and external partners makes a big difference to attendance. When the business partner runs the classes attendance is 100 per cent. More broadly, the school-business partners look at the overall attendance data for the school. These also show improvement. In term 1 of 2011, 50 per cent of students exceeded 90 per cent school attendance.

Year 11 and 12 girls who have participated in the program, have shown a 70 per cent reduction in non-completion of assessment task awards in 2011 and an increase in the quality of their submitted work.

The school principal and staff have witnessed a dramatic drop in the number of repeat offenders for school suspension, down from 74 per cent in 2010 to 33 per cent in 2011.

Positive differences for individual students are also apparent in their conversations with program staff.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » Time must be created for the school and business partners to discuss their relationship and the program they are working on together.
- » Evaluation methods can change over time. At first, the number of students participating in this program was small. This made it quite easy to talk with each student individually about what's working and what's not working. But as the program gets larger, other complementary methods of monitoring and evaluating the program will also need to be considered.

CASE STUDY 7

Australian Business and Community Network



THE AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY NETWORK (ABCN) is a partnership of 30 national business leaders and companies working with schools from disadvantaged areas on mentoring and coaching programs. Since 2005 over 15,000 volunteers from member companies have worked in more than 200 government schools in programs targeted at improving opportunities for students and schools that are most in need. ABCN programs are developed, piloted, evaluated and refined in partnership with schools and businesses. ABCN currently has over 100 partnerships between senior business leaders (including CEOs), principals and educators.

The challenge

The challenge was to develop sustainable school-business relationships. The short-lived nature of some relationships can be the result of misunderstandings and the ABCN was created to support partners and ensure continuity. Sometimes the focus of school-business relationships is on ‘fixing things up’ and on the financial aspect of a program but to promote sustainability, programs need to be fleshed out and the substance understood by both parties.

The solution

ABCN offers a series of core programs, which include pairing school and business leaders to learn from each other’s experiences and corporate employees mentoring students in programs that address key employability. Short term activities are also offered for individuals and teams from member companies. ABCN programs are developed to address the needs identified by schools and extensive desk-top research is conducted to identify key priority areas and to determine how best to run specific programs. A précis of the research and ABCN’s approach is shared with relevant stakeholders. This gives some security to schools before they enter a relationship with the business community.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical aspect of these ABCN programs. It demonstrates the impact and value of the programs, helps iron out issues and informs the ongoing refinement and improvement of future programs. Programs are structured so they can be readily evaluated and comprehensive materials and briefings are provided to all participants, prior to starting any program, as a way of managing expectations.

ABCN implements pre- and post-program surveys as part of their evaluation methodology, and 360-degree feedback when appropriate. At one point, ABCN also implemented a mid-program evaluation, but this was determined to be too onerous for schools and was consequently withdrawn.

ABCN also wants to ensure that the staff in their member companies are given high-quality learning experiences. The benefits of the programs to both schools and

businesses are therefore an important focus. A key part of the evaluation process for ABCN is the preparation of individual reports for member companies.

The structure of the report is determined at the start of the evaluation and includes quantitative information such as the number of participants in the program; the outcomes and impact of the programs on students and mentors; and qualitative information in the form of quotations about a program. It also includes photographs of the programs in action. The reports provide a global summary of the member company’s involvement in ABCN programs. It then goes on to provide an overview of feedback on each program area that the business has participated in.

Impact

Feedback from participants indicates a range of benefits, including attracting and retaining staff, contributing to the local community, developing staff skills (such as mentoring, relationship management, coaching and problem solving), and improving staff engagement. Outcomes for students include increased confidence, better communication, improved knowledge and experience of the business world, career building skills and improved literacy and numeracy. The feedback shows community benefits in the form of increased job opportunities, better appreciation of vocational and tertiary training by students, closer engagement between business and school, and increased understanding of cultural diversity.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » School and business partnerships programs need to be clear about what they are hoping to achieve. These objectives will inform the evaluation and help manage stakeholder expectations.
- » Quantitative and qualitative information is collected from all program participants and stakeholders to ensure impact is fully captured.

CASE STUDY 8

Lansing Area Manufacturing Partnership



The Lansing Area Manufacturing Partnership (LAMP) project was a collaboration between schools in the Ingham Intermediate School District in Michigan (Ohio), the General Motors Corporation (GM) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States. The project, which began in 1997, involved teaching workplace-related skills. While the LAMP program ended after 11 years due to the economic climate in Michigan its successful model has since been replicated elsewhere. Evaluation was a core feature of the partnership.

The challenge

Schools in the Ingham Intermediate School District in Michigan needed to produce graduates with employability skills and a better understanding of how education is linked to future career pathways. Manufacturing needed recruits with a realistic understanding of the workplace.

The solution

A program was needed that would better prepare students for life after school and give employers a stronger labour market from which to draw. Educators and their industry partners developed the curriculum together. The school district provided teaching staff, access to students, and curriculum expertise. Both the UAW and GM provided workplace staff who served as mentors, subject matter experts and project advisors.

Evaluation

The LAMP project benefited from several longitudinal studies. For example, a three-year longitudinal study conducted by the National Institute for Work and Learning (NIWL) used a case-study approach and collected information through site visits, interviews, focus groups, telephone surveys and a review of the documents relating to the partnership. The impact on both LAMP and non-LAMP students was assessed to provide a point of comparison.

The impact of the program was mainly identified through student assessment. Students were assessed academically and in relation to the skills they were expected to gain, such as teamwork, problem solving and communication skills. They were assessed through traditional methods including tests and written assignments, but also on team presentations, projects, portfolios and their performance in a worksite situation. Student progress was jointly evaluated by students and teachers based on standards created at the beginning of each unit.

LAMP was also monitored as part of a larger independent evaluation. Students, workplace staff and parents were regularly asked for feedback about the program. LAMP administrators and teachers looked at both quantitative and anecdotal information to identify if the project was effective. Feedback was also sought from LAMP graduates.

The information collected through regular monitoring of the program fed into the overall evaluation.

Impact

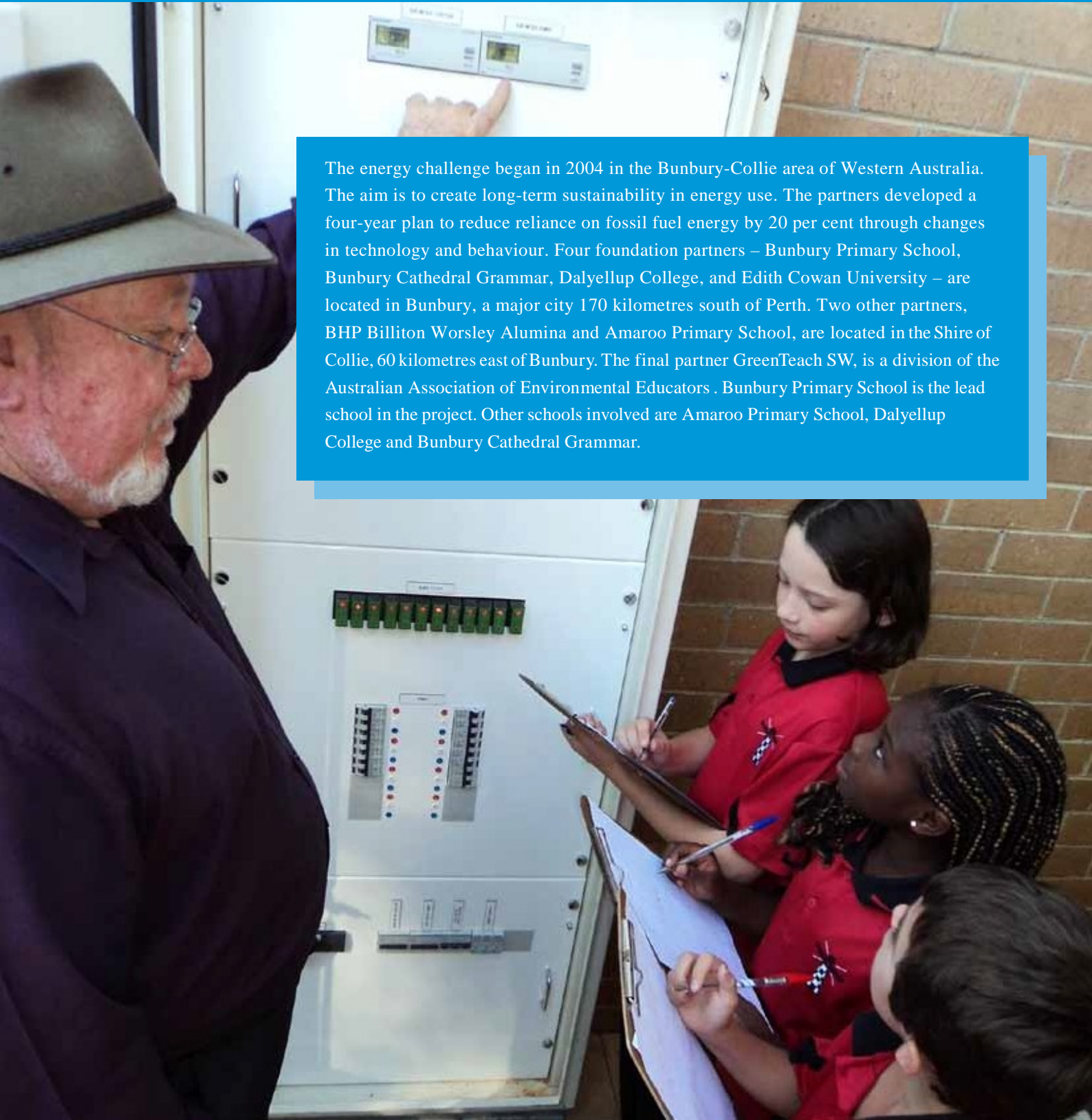
Among other findings, external evaluations found that LAMP students were better prepared for the challenges and responsibilities of work than non-LAMP students. There were also differences in terms of the career opportunities taken up by each group of students. One of the more valuable, and unanticipated, consequences of the program was that it enabled different groups to gain a better appreciation of the other person's perspective. For example, after working with plant personnel, LAMP teachers reported that they had a better understanding of some of the industry challenges. Students were also found to have learned from one another.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » Partner leadership needs to define and quantify the measures of success before the program starts. In LAMP an initial measure of success was to determine how many students pursued a career in manufacturing. This changed. After lengthy discussions the partners realised it was a success if students chose not to pursue manufacturing careers because this saved students the time and expense of embarking on a career they would not enjoy.
- » The collaborative team that is set up must have a shared vision and defined mission. In addition, the partners on the team should quantify and qualify their support and commitment, including monetary and in kind support.

CASE STUDY 9

The Energy challenge

A man wearing a brown hat and glasses is pointing at a digital meter on a white electrical panel. The panel has several other meters and switches. In the background, three young girls in red school uniforms are looking at a clipboard and writing on it. The scene is set in a room with a brick wall.

The energy challenge began in 2004 in the Bunbury-Collie area of Western Australia. The aim is to create long-term sustainability in energy use. The partners developed a four-year plan to reduce reliance on fossil fuel energy by 20 per cent through changes in technology and behaviour. Four foundation partners – Bunbury Primary School, Bunbury Cathedral Grammar, Dalyellup College, and Edith Cowan University – are located in Bunbury, a major city 170 kilometres south of Perth. Two other partners, BHP Billiton Worsley Alumina and Amaroo Primary School, are located in the Shire of Collie, 60 kilometres east of Bunbury. The final partner GreenTeach SW, is a division of the Australian Association of Environmental Educators. Bunbury Primary School is the lead school in the project. Other schools involved are Amaroo Primary School, Dalyellup College and Bunbury Cathedral Grammar.

The challenge

The idea for the Energy Challenge came from a retired science teacher from Bunbury Cathedral Grammar who had a desire to ‘put something back into the community’. The teacher believed that collaboration between schools, industry and the community could form a powerful alliance to promote community awareness and education. In particular, the focus was to engage school students in awareness of energy conservation.

The solution

One approach to changing peoples’ behaviours is to extend student learning about energy conservation back into the home. From there, conservation practices reach into the community and extend over time, creating sustainable changes in behaviour. As the biggest mining company in the area and a big energy user, BHP Billiton Worsley Alumina was approached to support a trial project involving the installation of a range of renewable energy technologies. At Bunbury Primary School, the Challenge gives teachers a clear curriculum focus. The provision of photovoltaic cell solar panels is an immediate and relevant way into the science and technology learning outcomes. Worsley provides infrastructure and project management skills, giving schools the capital boost they would never be able to afford themselves. The Worsley refinery also has energy conservation strategies in place. The company has funded research and teacher time for producing online learning materials written to the Western Australia curriculum. Edith Cowan University provides research resources and academic support for the project and GreenTeach provides project facilitation and links the project to the broader community.

Evaluation

Preparing an application for the 2011 NAB Schools First Awards gave the partners a chance to reflect on how much they had achieved since 2004.

Before data loggers were installed in the schools, several methods for information collection were used to monitor outcomes. An attitude survey was devised, but the partners agreed the information collected was difficult to interpret and use as baseline data because of a wide range of subjective variables amongst participants. One of the great challenges, according to the principal of Bunbury Primary School, has been to access reliable information and tools to measure the progress and success of the intervention.

Anecdotal feedback from parents about how things are being done differently at home, and observing changing student behaviours at school has been the most powerful and encouraging way of monitoring the Challenge.

School power bills were analysed for levels of power consumption. Even though there were contextual variations that made it difficult to calculate per capita consumption, schools did calculate their average per capita rate at the beginning of the Challenge and then, again, after the fourth year. Trends showed reduced per capita consumption.

The Energy challenge steering group has been able to use NAB Schools first prize money to install data loggers at a number of schools, including Bunbury Primary. These loggers monitor and report a range of information about mains and solar energy sources and use, and CO² emissions. This data is overlaid on a 24 hour graph and uploaded to every computer in the school, from where any teacher or student in any class at any time can see how much power the solar panels are producing and the school is using.

Regular steering group meetings are a forum for building relationships. Ideas are aired and problems discussed. The steering group meetings address staging points with clear goals and milestones that keep the Challenge on track. Because schools have their own ways of implementing the Challenge, it sometimes seems the project ‘wanders,’ but this steering group approach maintains the core focus.

It is notable that a number of new primary and high schools have sought to become involved in the Challenge.

Impact

The partners are proud of what they have achieved and recognise that it is an evolving journey. At Bunbury Primary, students now read how much power is being used by each of the classroom blocks, set targets and have competitions to achieve them. All partners have benefited in some way from the collaboration and have gained a better understanding of the expertise and skills that each brings to the relationship.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » Have a plan with very clear goals and milestones. Evaluation is easier if there are clear objectives to track progress and change.
- » Spend time on building evaluation into your planning and focus on measurable outcomes from the start.
- » Meeting regularly helps things stay on track and is a form of monitoring and motivation.

CASE STUDY 10

Off-shoots



Off-shoots is the result of a partnership between Northern Support School (a school for intellectually disabled students in Tasmania), a local community garden organisation, and other community-based partners. Off-Shoots is a community-based enterprise located within the Ravenswood Community Garden and operates as a workplace three days a week for up to 55 young people with disabilities. The students raise saplings from seed and grow stock for retail sale and land rehabilitation. All partners collaborate to research and plan the resources and facilities that are required for Off-Shoots to operate at industry standard while meeting the needs of the students with disabilities.

The challenge

There are few transition and work opportunities for young people with disabilities in Northern Tasmania and traditional work experience models do not work for this group of young people due to their high level of need, difficulty in adjusting to changes in routines and relationships, and the problem of sourcing appropriate work placements. Something was needed to bridge the gap between education, training and employment.

The solution

A local family-owned business, Inspirations Garden Centre, approached the Ravenswood Community Garden, which shares a site with the school, to grow some stock for them as a trial. They were having difficulty securing a local, reliable source of seedlings. The partnership evolved and now includes a partner from industry, NRM-North, which offers a different focus and stock requirements to the retail nursery. The project prepares students for further training or employment in the nursery industry. Students are involved in raising saplings from seed and growing stock for sale to both the Garden Centre for retail sale and NRM North for land rehabilitation.

Evaluation

There had always been an intuitive response in estimating student gains from the program. While the teachers knew how the students were progressing in the garden program it was hard to measure how they knew that students were improving. The coordinator of the program developed a matrix based on the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry core work skills. Skills such as

persistence, listening and communication had to be adapted for special needs kids.

There is a matrix for each student which has incorporated a modified version of Certificate 1. The students are monitored on this matrix. Their progress is checked off each lesson in coloured highlighter so there is a visual record and each component explains the skill set of the student. The school uses the data to show some students where they are as they can follow the coloured chart. The school also takes video recordings and data from job sheets and teacher observational checklists.

Each student's output is a measure of their success. They need to meet the orders that they receive from NRM North and the community garden.

The importance of this kind of data can't be underestimated: 'It is very powerful and valuable to be able to show someone else, especially employers, and it gets people on board when they are able to see that something is working.'

The relationship is monitored through bi-monthly partnership meetings, with an agenda and minutes.

Impact

Students have gained an understanding of work and training, while also developing both their employability and practical skills.

A surprising outcome has been investigating and finding effective ways to measure and evaluate student performance. The positive impact on students has been the key indicator of success and tangible evidence that the program is effective. The students see themselves as workers – a huge concept for them – and they are able to articulate



that. They see themselves as being meaningful contributors to work and their parents now see them as being employable.

Media attention has brought people into the school. There are many conversations, including from senior staff in Tasmania's Department of Education, wanting to see where the partnership is going. The school has been approached by universities who want to research the impact of the garden program on curriculum outcomes.

Expectations have been raised about what the school is achieving and other learning areas are being influenced.

The following table below shows how the Northern Support School and its business partners in Tasmania have developed 'indicators' or performance measures for both the impact of their project and the effectiveness of their relationship.

Evaluation lessons learned

- » It's critical to start collecting evidence and documentation from the beginning to help you gauge success.
- » Try and get a number of people around the table to get ideas and direction.

Off-Shoots Partnership agreement Key Performance measures

Partnership Outcome KPIs

KPI No.	KPI	KPI Measurements
1	<p>The Off-shoots partnership has made progress against each of the following aims:</p> <p>A. Developing and sustaining Off-shoots as a community enterprise that provides a quality work experience program for young people with disabilities and preparing them for transition beyond secondary education.</p> <p>B. Building financial viability and sustainability of the off-shoots community enterprise.</p> <p>C. Providing opportunities for young people with disabilities to participate within the community outside of school and the Off-shoots nursery.</p> <p>D. Establishing opportunities for providing employment and training for young people with disabilities.</p> <p>E. Ensuring that all partners are able to mutually contribute to and benefit from the Off-shoots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Limited Progress » Some Progress » Satisfactory Progress » Significant Progress » Achieved
2	<p>Off-shoots has been able to increase the number of participants that it can provide support to for:</p> <p>A. Preparing for Transitions</p> <p>B. Participating in Community Interaction</p> <p>C. Participating in Training</p> <p>D. Participating in Employment</p>	<p>An increase of has been achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 0 -5 participants » 5-10 participants » 10-15 participants » 15 – 20 participants » Program is operating at full capacity
3	<p>Off-shoots has led to an increase in the successful school to work transitions for young people with disabilities.</p>	<p>An increase of successful transitions has been achieved for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 0 -2 participants » 2-5 participants » 5-7 participants » 7- 10 participants » All participants leaving the program have completed a successful transition
4	<p>Off-shoots has met the product demands of its customers and partners.</p>	<p>Off-shoots has met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Less than 50% of product demand » Between 50 and 75% of product demand » Between 75 and 100% of product demand » 100% of product demand » Has exceeded product demand
5	<p>Off-shoots has generated enough funds/income to extend the life of the program.</p>	<p>Finances allow for program to be extended by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » 0-3 months » 3- 6 months » 6 months – 1 year » 1 – 2 years » 2+ years

Partnership Strength KPIs

KPI No.	KPI	KPI Measurements
1	The partnership is contributed to by all partners as originally agreed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » No partners are contributing to the partnership as originally agreed » Less than half of the partners are contributing to the partnership as originally agreed » Most of the partners are contributing to the partnership as originally agreed » All partners are contributing to the partnership as originally agreed » All partners are contributing more to the partnership than was originally agreed
2	The partners agree on shared goals for the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » There is no agreement on shared goals for the partnership » Less than half of the partners agree on shared goals for the partnership » Most of the partners agree on shared goals for the partnership » All partners agree on shared goals for the partnership
3	The partners actively share responsibility for decision making relating to the partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » There is no shared responsibility for decision making. » A limited number of partners share responsibility for decision making » Most of the partners share in the responsibility for decision making » All of the partners share in the responsibility for decision making
4	The partners communicate openly and regularly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Open and regular communication between partners does not occur » Open and regular communication occurs between a limited number of partners » Open and regular communication occurs between most partners » Open and regular communication occurs between all partners
5	The partners actively promote and contribute to strengthening the partnership.	
6	The partners actively contribute to monitoring and reviewing the partnership.	

TOOLKIT

This Toolkit contains templates, tables and checklists that you can use to help you at different stages in your evaluation.

1. Evaluate to Grow Checklist
2. Identifying your relationship type
3. Identifying your stakeholders
4. Sample evaluation questions
5. Identifying the information you need
6. Agreements (informal and formal)

1. Evaluate to Grow Checklist

Addressed	Yes (✓) No (x) or Unsure
PREPARATION » What do you need to find out? What information will help you?	
Do you have clear and shared objectives for the evaluation?	
Is there a key evaluation question (or questions) to guide your evaluation?	
Do you know your stakeholders and their expectations of the evaluation?	
Do you know what relevant information is already available?	
Have you identified the information that you need to gather?	
Do you have the skills and knowledge to gather it?	
Do you know who can help you find the information you need?	
Will each 'partner' have an opportunity to contribute to the evaluation?	
GATHERING INFORMATION » How will you gather your information?	
Is your focus on gathering relevant information rather than a lot of information?	
Do you know how the information is to be gathered (e.g. quantitative, qualitative)?	
Have you established a process for gathering information (existing and/or additional)?	
ANALYSING INFORMATION » What does the information you have gathered tell you?	
Have you identified the main themes, patterns and trends (over time)?	
Are you clear about the main outcomes from the 'project'?	
Are there any additional (ie unanticipated) outcomes from the 'project'?	
Have you identified ways in which your relationship might be improved?	
USING INFORMATION » How can you share and promote what you have learned? » Is there scope to expand or build on the 'project' or relationship?	
Have you provided relevant feedback to your key stakeholders (written or verbal)?	
Have participants in the relationship been invited to discuss the findings?	
Is the status of the project – complete, ongoing etc – understood?	
Have the stated objectives for the evaluation been achieved?	
Do you need to make changes to the 'project'?	
Have you agreed how you will proceed next with the 'project' and 'relationship'?	

2. Identifying your relationship type

Think about:

- » Which relationship type are you in?
- » What relationship type do you need to be?
- » What are (or could) be the pros and cons of this form of engagement? For whom and in what circumstances?
- » What do you think will be the biggest barrier to developing this form of relationship? How might this barrier be overcome? Who or what can you help you in overcoming this barrier?

Informal

eg. A business invites and receives a range of student designs, one of which will be selected for a new website. This is a one-off arrangement with no expectation of further engagement between the business and school.

In kind

eg. The business offers to mentor the principal around financial matters. The school lends some sporting equipment to a local business for its team-building day.

Networking

eg. The school and business exchange information for mutual benefit at a local business breakfast meeting organised by the local council every month.

Cooperating

eg. Several schools pool their resources to work with a local fitness centre to run a 'Health Promotion Week' as a way of encouraging exercise and healthy eating among students and their families.

Embedded

e.g. A school and business start off with a simple targeted program. Over the years the relationship deepens until its objectives are embedded in the business plans of both organisations.

Formal

eg. The school and business enter into an arrangement to share the school's gymnasium facilities. A formal agreement, holding each party to account, is developed and signed by the school and business leaders.

Financial

eg. Sponsorship of travel or an event is provided by a business. Scholarships are offered as part of school-to-work pathways for selected students.

Coordinating

eg. Several schools work with a local business to provide a structured work experience program for students.

Collaborating

eg. Both school and business work together to enhance the professional skills and knowledge of their staff for mutual benefit and a common purpose.

Our relationship type is or could be ...

3. Identifying your stakeholders

In any relationship there can be multiple stakeholders. Knowing your stakeholders can help you identify what information they might expect of you and when they might expect it, and vice versa.

This stakeholder inventory is intended to help you identify who might be interested in and/or affected by your evaluation. Think about who needs to participate in the evaluation and who you will need to share the findings with.

Are any of the following your stakeholders? Who else might be on your list?

Stakeholder Inventory

Potential Stakeholders	Y/N	Potential Stakeholders	Y/N
Students		Service club staff	
Parents		Board members	
Teachers		School Council members	
Principal		Allied health staff	
Chief Executive Officer		Youth worker	
Program Head		Case manager	
Human Relations Officer		Elder	
Marketing & Communications		University staff	
Head of finance		TAFE staff	
Bursar		Partnership broker	
Chaplain		Local council	
Mayor		Who else....?	
Police			
Other schools			
Journalist			
Local business staff			

4. Sample evaluation questions

Evaluating the outcomes ('the what') of your relationship

The questions below are provided simply as guidance in evaluating the outcomes of your relationship

You may have additional or different questions you want to ask depending on the nature of your collaboration and your reason for evaluating.

- » In what ways have participants benefited from being in your program? (eg re-engaged with learning; gained accreditation; improved self esteem; identified a realistic vocational pathway; gained employability skills; gained identity documents etc)
- » How do you know?
(ie what information or evidence do you have to show that students have benefited?)
- » What other benefits are you delivering (and to whom)?
- » Have there been any surprising or unanticipated outcomes?
- » How do you know if it is your partnership that is making the difference?
(ie there might be other things that are going on in a school or business at the same time as your project which might also impact on student outcomes or things you are looking to measure.)

Evaluating the effectiveness ('the how') of your relationship

The checklist below is provided as a simple way of evaluating the effectiveness of the relationship ('the how') and to identify potential areas for improvement.

You may have additional or different questions you want to ask depending on the nature of your collaboration and your reason for evaluating. You may also want to refer to the *Guiding Principles for School-Business Relationships* to help with this process (see the 'Publications and Websites' listing later on in this Guide for further information on these Principles).

Key question	Y/N	Examples of follow up (to address identified issues)
eg Are all partners sufficiently engaged in the relationship?	No	Arrange a meeting of all partners to review current levels of involvement and see if this needs to change and in what ways. For example, are more resources needed? Would formalising the relationship in an MOU make a difference? If there is a genuine lack of engagement from one partner and this is unlikely to change, should the support of another organisation be sought?
Is there a shared vision and common goals?		
Does each partner have a clearly defined role and responsibilities?		
Are the expectations of each partner fair and reasonable?		
Does each partner have a good understanding of the other partners' requirements?		
Is there regular communication between partners?		
Have all partners received fair recognition for their efforts?		
On balance, have the benefits of the partnership justified the time and effort that have gone into it?		
Is the partnership sustainable?		
Can the partnership be improved?		

It can help to break down an overarching or key evaluation question into a small number of sub questions to guide the information gathering and analysis. The table below shows how one collaboration on vocational education developed their questions further.

Name of project: Productive Post-school Pathways

Objective	Focus of the evaluation	Evaluation question	Evaluation sub question
To improve students' transition from school to post-school options	Focus on the impact of the activities or project (the 'what')	How, and to what extent, has the project helped students transition successfully to work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What knowledge and skills have been gained by students through this project? » How have these skills helped students in their transition to work? » Are there other things that could be done to support students in their transition? » What additional information is needed to make a decision about the future of the project?
To identify how well the partners are working together and if improvements could be made	Focus on the effectiveness of the relationship (the 'how')	How effective is the current relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What are we doing well? » What are the things that are not working so well? » How can we improve this relationship?
Your objective	Your focus	Your question	Your sub questions

5. Identifying the information you need

Keeping in mind the purpose of your evaluation, identify the information collection method that will best suit this purpose. Summaries of each kind of method collection can be found on pages 13-16.

Kind of information	Which information is most relevant to your purpose	Which information will be easiest for you to collect	Which information will you need some help with	What kind of help will you need (eg locating documents, identifying participants, preparing questions, collecting information, analysing information, disseminating findings)	Write down who can give you this help (eg a colleague, a partner's colleague, a partnership broker, an external evaluator)
eg Document review				Finding the original MOU and strategic plan with the partnership objectives	Jenny W in the VET office who convened the early meetings
Checklist					
Observation					
Interviews					
Focus Groups					
Case studies					
Diaries, journals and logs					
Testimonials					
Photographs, videos					
Tests and other assessments					
Questionnaires or surveys					

6. From handshake to formal agreement

Some schools and businesses start off with an informal undertaking because this is the most appropriate arrangement to achieve the objectives that have been identified.

As the relationship evolves these casual arrangements can become more formalised with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which describes the roles and responsibilities of the partners. An MOU can be reviewed as circumstances change.

An MOU is designed to communicate the purpose of collaboration and its intended deliverables and outcomes. It might or might not be a legally binding document depending on the intention of the parties and wording of the document. It might or might not include a financial exchange.

Some school-business relationships might choose to enter an even more formal agreement than an MOU, one that is legally binding. However for the purposes of most school-business relationships, an MOU is an adequate indication of the commitment of each to the collaboration.

Example of a 'handshake' agreement

A principal and a manager of a local real estate business get together on a semi regular basis to discuss how best to brand and communicate the school's strengths within the local community.

Example of an informal Memorandum of Understanding

The local university facilitates the introduction of scientists as role models and mentors to Year 10 students at a school. This voluntary commitment between the scientists and the school is for a three month period, once per week for two classes of Year 10 students. The scientists work alongside the science teacher during class and give talks about career options within science. At the conclusion of the three month period, the students undertake a site visit to where one of the scientists works. The school and business prepare an MOU that captures the spirit of the relationship and makes clear the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

A generic template for an MOU

Please note that other sections might need to be added depending on the nature of engagement.

NOTE: You must seek independent legal advice before entering into any formal agreement with other parties.

Between [insert name of party A]

And

[insert name of party B]

Date:

Purpose of the engagement: [insert name of project]

When is the 'project' going to occur?

Where is the 'project' going to occur?

What is the main nature of the 'project'? [e.g. volunteers as mentors]

Who is the target audience for the 'project'? [e.g. three Year 9 classes]

Who is responsible for what in the 'project'?

This MOU is mutually understood and agreed

Signature: [Party A]

[Party B]

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

The following people, products and websites may provide you with the information or support you need.

People

There are many people and organisations who might help you evaluate to grow. For example, you could go to the websites of the Australian Business Community Network (<http://www.abcn.com.au/>) or Schools Connect Australia (<http://www.schoolsconnect.org.au>)

Another potential source of support are the Australian Government's School Business Community Partnership Brokers located in every stage and territory. These brokers help schools and business to work together through partnership arrangements and get the most out of their relationships.

Whether they're part of a peak body, large organisation, not-for-profit group or government agency that encourages schools and businesses to work cooperatively, brokers advocate for and facilitate relationships to help improve student outcomes. Brokers can have a role to play in encouraging good practice in evaluation.

Partnership brokers are aware of the needs and expectations of schools and businesses, as well as the possibilities and opportunities each can provide. Every partnership broker operates in a particular context so talk with your partnership broker to see how they might support you to achieve your goals.

Explore whether they can help you to:

- » identify and locate relevant information for your evaluation
- » review the relationship process
- » use the findings of your evaluation to improve existing practices
- » develop new strategic directions

- » identify how what you are doing could be expanded or strengthened
- » share what you are doing with other schools and businesses.

To see a list of Partnership Brokers and some of their success stories, visit:

<http://transitions.youth.gov.au/sites/transitions/successstories/pages/partnershipbrokerssuccessstoriesrollup>

How brokers have helped

Brokers have assisted schools and businesses to informally assess how things are tracking by collecting anecdotal data and testimonials from partners. This has been useful for compiling case studies and grant applications. For one broker: 'Verbal conversations seem to give the truest form of evaluation of the partnership; however, recorded data is also highly important as it provides trackable and longitudinal evidence of how the partnership is progressing.'

Publications and websites

The following is a list of resources that you may find useful as you consider your evaluation options and your school-business relationships more generally. These are just a handful of the useful publications you can find.

Realising Potential: Businesses Helping Schools to Develop australia's Future, final report from the Business-School Connections Roundtable, DEEWR, May 2011. <http://deewr.gov.au/partnerships-between-schools-businesses-and-communities-reports-and-research>

The Business-School Connections Roundtable was established by the Australian Government in February 2010 to develop a practical strategy to ensure that all schools can benefit from a connection with business. The Roundtable's final report contained 13 recommendations, including the development of this Guide.

Guiding Principles for School-Business Relationships, DEEWR, 2012. have been developed in response to a recommendation of the Business-School Connections Roundtable. The Principles highlight features that contribute to effective and sustainable school-business relationships. They are aspirational, describing benchmarks which individual school-business relationships can aim to achieve over time. <http://deewr.gov.au/partnerships-between-schools-businesses-and-communities-reports-and-research>

The United Kingdom organisation **Business in the Community** provides a range of online publications conducted as part of its 'corporate responsibility research'. These reports might be useful in seeing how businesses undertake their own reviews, evaluations and research. <http://www.bitc.org.uk/>.

NAB Schools First is a national awards program that recognises and rewards outstanding school-community partnerships which are having a positive impact on students beyond the classroom. The website contains information and case studies which may help you when considering your relationship and evaluation. <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/>

General evaluation tools

Evaluation: Step by step guide, 2008,
http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/32986/Evaluation-Step-by-Step-Guide.pdf

While not specifically aimed at evaluating partnerships the guide provides a clear, accessible and practical guide to evaluation of programs. It also contains useful worksheets and checklists which could potentially be adapted.

Community-business partnerships: a practical guide, Maribyrnong City Council, funded by the Department of Planning and Community Development,
http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/files/Community_Business_Partnerships_a_practical_guide.pdf

This resource is clear, attractively presented, user-friendly and provides an overview of the components of effective school-community relationships, including evaluation. While the focus is not specifically on school-business relationships there is much useful advice here about how to set up an effective relationship.

Schools and businesses working together, New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2004,
https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/doingbusiness/schbusiness/sc_hbuspaper.pdf

The aim of this paper is to support principals and teachers to develop relationships with business. It provides a list of contact organisations that could potentially help in developing school-business relationships and related policies and resources. It also provides a list of questions that could be asked at each of four stages in the setting up of a partnership.

Partnership is a two-way street: What it takes for business to help drive school reform, The Institute for Competitive Workforce, 2011,
http://www.austinchamber.com/education-talent/files/Partnership-TwoWayStreet_2011.pdf

Examines United States models of business-school relationships where business is seeking to transform—not merely subsidise—public education

Partnership evaluation tools

The partnerships analysis tool, VicHealth, 2011,
<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/VicHealth-General-Publications/Partnerships-Analysis-Tool.aspx>

One of the aims of this resource for establishing and maintaining partnerships for health promotion is to help organisations ‘reflect on the partnerships they have established’ and ‘focus on ways to strengthen new and existing partnerships by engaging in discussion about issues and ways forward’.

Assessing strategic partnership: The partnership assessment tool, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (UK), 2003, Strategic Partnering Taskforce,
http://doh.state.fl.us/Planning_eval/CHAI/documents/AssessingStrategicPartnership.pdf

The partnerships assessment tool provides a quick and cost-effective way of assessing the effectiveness of partnerships. It enables a rapid appraisal or a quick ‘health check’ which identifies problem areas. If you are in the process of setting up a partnership the tool provides a checklist of what should be done and what should be avoided.

Reviews and research

The benefits of school-business relationships: Final report, ACER, 2011,

This report reviews the literature on the benefits that school-business relationships can bring to all parties and provides a small number of Australian and UK case studies. <http://deewr.gov.au/partnerships-between-schools-businesses-and-communities-reports-and-research>

Unfolding opportunities: a baseline study of school business relationships in Australia, PhillipsKPA, 2010, <http://deewr.gov.au/partnerships-between-schools-businesses-and-communities-reports-and-research>

There are several appendices, including a literature review. This provides a solid background to the nature of school-business relationships in Australia.

Schools First Final Report, ACER, 2008, <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/pages/useful-research>

This report provides the evidence base for the establishment of the NAB Schools First awards program. It examines the literature on school-community partnerships and examines examples of effective models of partnerships and awards schemes. It is useful for those who want to know more about the theoretical background to setting up school- community partnerships.

Social Return on Investment: lessons learned in Australia, Social Ventures Australia, 2012, <http://www.socialventures.com.au/sector-collaboration/investing-in-impact-sroi-partnership/>

Social return on investment (SROI) is an emerging discipline in Australia and around the world. This report describes it as “a form of stakeholder- driven evaluation blended with cost-benefit analysis tailored to social purposes. It tells the story of how change is being created and places a monetary value on that change and compares it with the costs of inputs required to achieve it”

Glossary

Below is a brief explanation of how the following terms have been used in the guide.

Accountability

Being accountable means being answerable for your actions and decisions. In the context of school-business relationships, accountability means being able to show stakeholders if a collaborative activity or project meeting its objectives, making a positive difference to students, on track in terms of timeline and budget, and is being managed responsibly by participants in the relationship (taking into account any ethical or administrative protocols that might need to be met when working with students). It is possible that schools and businesses might have different perspectives on the meaning of accountability, but as used in the guide accountability means being able to show how you are going.

Anecdotal information

Anecdotal information consists of people's stories, perspectives and experiences (usually as told by them). For example, if a teacher reports that a program has worked because 'students are happier when they come into the classroom,' this would be considered anecdotal. The information could be strengthened by drawing on supplementary information. For example, the teacher might report that students are happier at school as a result of a particular program because they're coming to class more regularly, or because they've written positively about their experiences in their journals. This provides stronger evidence of impact because it is based on information gathered in a more structured

way. There is a place for anecdotal information in evaluating projects, particularly in more informal relationships. Anecdotal information based on the professional judgment of staff can enrich more formal information, such as enrolment or attendance statistics.

Assessment

Assessment involves measurement of some kind. Assessment in school-business relations involves gathering information from a range of sources to determine if the collaborative activity or project is working well and bringing about the intended outcomes. Assessment can involve quantitative or qualitative information. For example, it could include National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test results, classroom assessments for particular learning activities (such as an oral presentation or diary), or work experience competencies achieved.

Baseline information

This is the information gathered at the very beginning of a project or program, either before it starts or just after it has started. It is generally associated with a longer-term project rather than a one-off activity, donation or event. For example, if you wanted to know whether or not student attendance had improved as a result of your collaborative efforts you could collect attendance data just before the project or program begins and compare this with attendance data after the project.

has been going for a while. This can be an important means of showing what difference a school-business collaboration has made because it enables you to track progress from this initial information. Baseline information can be as simple as recording the expectations of participants and seeing if these change as a result of project participation or it can involve collecting statistics to be re-visited at regular intervals during the project.

Broker

In this guide a broker is a third party – either an independent individual or a group or organisation – that wants to bring together schools and businesses to improve outcomes for students. The role of the broker varies and can include involvement in all or some of the phases that schools and businesses go through when initiating, building, maintaining and evaluating relationships.

Business

In this guide a business is an organisation that is engaged in commercially viable and profitable work, from small local businesses to multinational companies. In school-business relationships there can be one or multiple business participants.

Case study

A case study provides in-depth information about particular individuals or small groups or ‘cases.’ It usually draws on information supplied by those in the study supplemented by other sources. The purpose is to illustrate some aspect of a project or program. Used as one source of information in an evaluation of a school-business relationship, a case study could provide additional insights into the impact of a program on an individual student or students.

Collaboration

Collaboration refers to the relationship formed between schools and businesses when working

cooperatively towards a common goal or goals. Collaborative activities are those activities, projects or programs that participants in the relationship have come together to develop and/or deliver. Collaboration in the guide embraces the full gamut of connections between schools and business from the one-off or one-way donation of goods through to a fully developed, mutually beneficial project or program conducted over several years.

Data (plural)

If you’re gathering data as part of your evaluation then you’ll be gathering bits of information that are most relevant to your evaluation purpose. Data include statistics and factual information. They also include more subjective sources of information such as people’s opinions based on reason or observation, photos or drawings. The kind of data or information you gather will be determined partly by your objective in monitoring and evaluating, and partly by what’s feasible to gather.

Evaluation

As used in this guide, evaluation is the process of gathering information to help determine impact and effectiveness. Evaluation involves assessing the extent to which the original objectives have been met and identifying areas for improvement. It means looking at the strengths and weaknesses of a relationship, including the activities that are being done and the ways in which the partners are working together. It means identifying those aspects that might need to change and in what ways. Depending on the nature of the relationship and how formal or informal it is, evaluation could involve a systematic gathering and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information or a more informal approach that involves talking to a few key participants.

Evaluation tool

An evaluation tool is an instrument designed to help you conduct your monitoring and evaluation. It could be a checklist, template or set of survey or interview questions. It could be a reporting format for interviews or an observation record. It could be a matrix to help you keep track of your evaluation activities. Whatever it looks like, its purpose is to help you gather the information you need in an efficient way so it meets your purpose in evaluating.

Focus group

A focus group is a small discussion group brought together for the purpose of capturing views usually relating to a particular theme or area of interest. It can be either a relatively informal discussion or a formal and structured sharing of views.

Impact

Impact refers to the effect that your program or partnership has had on participants and others. Measuring impact can tell you the extent to which your program or project is making a difference to student outcomes, such as improving reading, increasing civic pride, gaining a better understanding of workplace expectations or having a more realistic understanding of study or work options. An impact evaluation measures the nature and extent of the changes that have taken place as a result of a particular program or partnership.

Indicators

Indicators help us to understand how we are going, if we are going well, and how far we still have to go. Indicators that measure the impact of a program will be different from indicators that measure the effectiveness of the partnership. For example, one indicator of an effective program might be an increase in the number of students staying on in Year 12 to complete a course. An indicator for measuring the effectiveness of a

relationship might be the extent to which each partner is acknowledged in communications (such as newsletters, websites, planning documents).

Measurement

Measurement can be related to measuring physical attributes such as heights, weights or time, or it can be related to measuring mental attributes such as attitudes, ability, skills and knowledge. Measurements of ‘something,’ such as mental attributes, need the use of some type of instrument or test designed and developed for the specific purpose it is intended.

monitor

Monitoring a project and relationship means watching these closely to make sure they are on track. It means regularly reviewing their progress and working out whether or not the intended and/or expected outcomes are being achieved. Monitoring can form another source of information that can feed into your evaluation.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes that come about as a result of a program or project. If the objective of a project is to improve student literacy outcomes then an evaluation of the partnership would look at the results of the program to see if levels of literacy have improved. Student-business relationships are aimed at improving student outcomes. These outcomes could include positive changes in behaviour, attitude, skills or knowledge.

Partnership

In the context of this guide a partnership is a relationship that has been set up between a school and business for the purpose of improving outcomes for students.

Process

Process refers to how you go about something. In the context of school-business relationships it includes the procedures and steps taken when setting up, developing, implementing, reviewing and sustaining your partnership. A process evaluation assesses how well the partners have gone about their collaboration to deliver a project. For example, how often do the partners catch up to share information about the project? Are the student-based activities consistent with the project's objectives? What information has been gathered by the partners and how has this been used? How could the relationship be improved?

Program or project

A project can refer to a series of activities in their entirety or it can be an activity in its own right within a program. In this guide, a project is generally a collective group of activities developed cooperatively by a school and business in their relationship. A program is generally a specific activity or group of activities implemented as a result of the relationship. Schools mostly talk of their 'program' rather than their project.

Qualitative

Qualitative information is not based on numbers but instead captures people's thoughts, observations, experiences and perspectives. For example, corporate volunteers might describe the benefits they gained from helping students in the classroom and students might talk about what they have enjoyed most about, and learned from, the volunteers' visits. These comments are qualitative. Information gathered via interviews, case studies and student diaries will typically be qualitative in nature. Open-ended responses in surveys could also be considered qualitative.

Quantitative

Quantitative information is numerical data. In the context of evaluating school-business relationships, quantitative information could include the results of surveys, tests and other classroom assessments. It could include data around numbers of suspensions, time-outs or detentions that students have been given before and after participating in a program. It could include post-school destination data that show the proportion of students going on to further study or work or on to apprenticeships and traineeships. It could include attendance, retention and enrolment figures.

Relationship

As used in the guide, a relationship refers to a wide range of connections and linkages between schools and business in which the purpose is to improve outcomes for students. A relationship may be as simple as a one-off sponsorship through to a complex, multi-partnered, long-established, formal arrangement between school and business. It differs from a partnership in that it is a more informal connection although participants in this loose arrangement may still think of themselves as 'partners.'

Review

Reviewing a school-business relationship means monitoring its quality and effectiveness. A review involves looking closely at various aspects of the relationship to determine what is working well, what is not working so well and what changes might be made to improve effectiveness and impact. The conclusions are based on information gathered for this purpose.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those people affected by the partnership and/or its focus. They will have an interest directly or indirectly in the activities and outcomes of the evaluation. Depending on the nature of the project they may be expecting or needing more or less formal evaluation to be done.

Survey

As used in the guide, a survey is a means of gathering information from people involved in or affected by a project or school-business relationship. It can be written, online or verbal. It seeks information by asking a series of questions. Responses can then be collated, analysed and shared with stakeholders.

TAFE

TAFE stands for training and further education. In most cases, TAFE is delivered by an Institute of TAFE or a College of TAFE, although New South Wales institutions do not refer to TAFE in their title.

VET

VET stands for vocational education and training. VET prepares students for work in jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, although VET students sometimes choose to do other tertiary study. VET includes students undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships. Given that many

partnerships between schools and businesses are established to improve vocational outcomes for students, the VET sector is an important component of school-business relationships. Evaluation of partnerships in the VET sector generally offers opportunities to use both quantitative and qualitative information.