



CHCPRP001

Develop and
maintain networks
and collaborative
partnerships



CHCPRP001

Develop and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

CHCPRP001 Develop and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships, Release 1

© 2023 Aspire Training & Consulting
PO Box 5107, Bentleigh East, VIC 3165 Australia
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

First published February 2023

Cover design Anne-Marie Reeves Design

Printer Doculink Australia Pty Ltd, 1d/28 Rogers Street, Port Melbourne VIC 3207

e-ISBN 978-1-76123-109-4 (PDF version)

ISBN 978-1-76123-108-7

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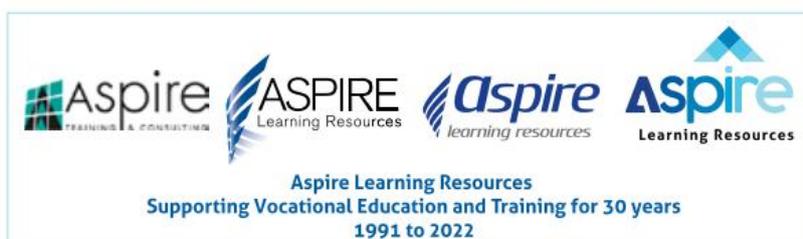
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Aspire acknowledges the homelands of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pays our respect to Country



Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCPRP001 Develop and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships*, Release 1.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature	
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.	
Examples	These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.	
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.	
Callouts	Callouts reiterate key learning points to help students revise for their assessments.	
Weblinks	Weblinks provide learners with additional content to contextualise their learning and develop their understanding.	
Videos	Videos provide a visual reference of key concepts to aid comprehension and guide learner exploration. Each video is accessed by a QR code in the Learner Guide (or a button in the eBook version) for ease of access.	 
Glossary/margin definitions	Key terms are defined where they first appear to help consolidate understanding. A glossary of terms is provided at the end of the Learner Guide to assist learner revision of key concepts.	
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.	
Learning Checkpoints	There are Learning Checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.	
Case studies	Case studies are interspaced throughout the learning content to provide a workplace setting that contextualises key concepts.	

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

These skills are listed below:

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology Interpreting key information in relevant documents Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents Communicating through written letters, email and online Recording progress; reporting incidents
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifying instructions Providing information Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance Interpreting measurements
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities Managing your work and seeing how well you are going Making goals for yourself at work Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying problems Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes. Reviewing the outcome
Initiative and Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something Making suggestions to improve work
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport



Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning your workload and commitments • Implementing tasks • Completing work on time • Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and applying decision-making processes • Reviewing your behaviour and the impact of your decisions
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely • Accessing, organising and presenting information • Using equipment correctly and safely

Note: Not every unit of competency will contain all foundation skills.

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Identify networking and collaboration needs and opportunities	1A Evaluate the ways performance may be improved through collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Identify, prioritise and address organisation and individual needs and gaps in service	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2 Develop collaboration strategies	2A Gather and review information about relevant services, organisations and key people	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Proactively initiate relationships with other professionals and organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Share information and resources to overcome duplication in service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Maintain currency and accessibility of information	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Define and document collaboration, and negotiate with relevant people	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Work collaboratively	3A Identify opportunities that meet client, personal and organisational goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Plan and implement integrated projects and service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Liaise with staff from relevant organisations on a formal and informal basis	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 4 Represent the organisation	4A Promote a positive image of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4B Communicate the organisation's issues, policies and practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	4C Implement confidentiality measures that protect the client, organisation and network	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 5 Maintain and enhance networks and collaborative partnerships	5A Maintain and improve networks and collaborative partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	5B Monitor benefits to worker, organisation and client group	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	5C Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of collaborations and recommend actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident





Topic 1: Identify networking and collaboration needs and opportunities

- 1A Evaluate the ways performance may be improved through collaboration
- 1B Identify, prioritise and address organisation and individual needs and gaps in service



1A

Evaluate the ways performance may be improved through collaboration

For community services to continue to strive for high quality and effectively meet the needs of people accessing services and/or support, working together as a collaborative team can help to achieve a common goal.

Community services rely heavily on network participation and collaborative relationships with other services and agencies to ensure community needs are effectively addressed and that organisations are working actively to improve service quality.

As a representative of the organisation, collaborative practice will rely on your ability to deliver your organisation's services and form professional and strong working relationships with other services and their representatives. To benefit from this process, you need to be able to identify and evaluate how well you and your service performs and how to improve performance.

What are networks?

Networks are individuals, groups and agencies who have agreed to share information, ideas and resources to meet common goals.

Networking describes the process of making contacts with others to foster mutually beneficial and supportive relationships.

Participants will come from the same sector or area of expertise, but you may include other **stakeholders** when the need arises.

Stakeholders are individuals who have interests or concerns relating to the business you work for, and their input will directly influence business activities. For example, a stakeholder may be a health expert who provides direct care given to a person.

Different sectors within community services have networks. For example, aged care, disability, mental health, youth, and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) services have established networks that link all the agencies and services within each sector. Some networks are based on a cross-section of organisations within a particular community, while others focus on a particular issue, such as housing.

Networking involves creating, maintaining and strengthening professional relationships that support effective service delivery. The networks you can contribute to will vary depending on your job role, but could include people with support needs, their families/carers, community groups, colleagues, experts and other health providers, professional groups, and other services.

Networking

Setting up connections to share information and ideas with other people.

Stakeholders

Individuals who have an interest in an issue or who may be affected by decisions an organisation makes.



Having a strong ability to network benefits you, your organisation and the people for whom you provide services. Using relevant networks, communities and individuals allows you to recognise when another collaborator may meet a person's service delivery gap. Regularly contributing to professional networks and creating positive professional relationships is essential to optimise service delivery to people in your care.

Networks are a means to:

- connect
- learn
- share
- access.
- communicate
- interact
- expand

Video: Partnership collaboration

For an example of how a community pharmacy can work in partnership with other organisations, visit: aspirelr.link/yt-partnership-collaboration

Pay attention to how seeking partnerships and collaboration can lead to some great opportunities for the organisation and the people it gives services and/or support to.



Principles of networking and collaboration

Collaboration is working with others and exchanging information, resources and knowledge to benefit the participants' purposes, and to ensure that best service delivery is based on mutual respect, good communication and a shared understanding of common goals.

The fundamental principle of effective networking and collaboration is identifying the potential networks that can be utilised to support the work you are employed to do.

Here are some of the basic principles that underpin networking and collaboration as tools in providing support services.

Principles of networking and collaboration

- Creating an environment where expectations and work arrangements are clear
- Identifying and welcoming the need for partnership
- Ensuring a real sense of purpose
- Ensuring agreed processes are in place to make decisions and manage the context and development of the collaboration
- Ensuring commitment, ownership and accountability
- Developing and maintaining trusting relationships with stakeholders
- Creating strong partnership arrangements
- Monitoring, measuring and learning

Network structures

As a support worker, you will collaborate with government and large-scale organisational networks to access services, funding, resources and information.

How a network is structured will depend on the purpose of its existence. In the following table are definitions of the types of networks you may engage with.

<p>Co-location</p>	<p>Co-location networks take the form of service hubs and multi-tenanted centres. A number of services will operate at the same location and will often interrelate with each other.</p> <p>Advantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides ease of access for people who are receiving support and medical treatment from more than one service • It makes sharing of resources and information easy as they are all in the one location • Expenses can be shared among the services • Enhances the referral process due to the closeness of the services
<p>Cooperative</p>	<p>Cooperatives are networks that are owned and controlled by the network members and are based on values such as self-help, self-responsibility, equity and solidarity.</p> <p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships are strengthened • Organisations can maintain autonomy • Joint funding can be used
<p>Partnership</p>	<p>Two or more organisations make a formal agreement that details the role each organisation will play without merging or forming a new organisation.</p> <p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations can keep their autonomy • Funding can be applied for and used jointly • Relationships are strengthened
<p>Collaborative</p>	<p>In a collaborative, individuals work together to achieve a goal that benefits the services involved.</p> <p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal agreement required • Gives opportunities to learn from one another • Increases level of creativity • Increases ability to formulate solutions to problems and issues shared by participants and their services

The first step in collaborating and networking with these groups is familiarising yourself with the organisations that have services available in your location. Some organisations function nationally, while others operate at the state/territory or local level. Also, international organisations can be helpful for research and information.



Here is a summary of key community providers.

<p>Community services</p>	<p>Each state or territory government and the federal government have departments that are responsible for community services. These departments are responsible for funding community-based services to provide the care and support that Australians need.</p> <p>Sites to visit for further information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal: Department of Health • State – Vic: Department of Health
<p>Aged care services</p>	<p>These organisations provide a range of services to older Australians, including Aged Care Assessment Teams/Services (ACAT/ACAS), in-home support, respite care, residential care and other services.</p> <p>The following sites will provide you with more information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged Care Online
<p>Health services</p>	<p>The health services sector is extensive and includes community health, general and specialist medical practitioners, district and community nursing, allied health (such as physiotherapy, dietetics, speech therapy, podiatry, occupational therapy and counselling), palliative care, acute health (hospitals, psychiatric services), rehabilitation, mental health, and maternal and child health.</p> <p>You can find out more by visiting the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vic: Eastern Health Service • NSW: Northern NSW Local Health District • WA: WA Primary Health Alliance • SA: Summit Health • NT: Health Providers Alliance NT • Qld: Metro North Health • Tas.: Primary Health
<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services are designed to meet the needs of First Nations people. These services may be community-controlled (services run by Indigenous organisations) or services provided by other organisations. Sites for further information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vic: Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Org Inc. • NSW: NSW Government Aboriginal Health • WA: Aboriginal Health Council of WA • SA: Nunkuwarrin Yunti of SA • NT: Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT • Qld: ATSI CHS Brisbane • Tas: Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Health Service



Disability services	<p>These provide direct support services as well as advocacy, information and lobbying services for people with disabilities and their carers.</p> <p>You can get information about such services from the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NDIS• NDIS Safeguards Commission• ADA Australia• Disability Employment Australia
Income and employment	<p>The federal government provides income support through a number of different allowances, pensions and payments. Employment services include résumé and application preparation, job search skills and interview skills. Employment services also advocate for unemployed people and create links to employment through targeted employment programs. Find out more via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services Australia, Jobseekers• Centrelink payments and services
Accommodation services	<p>Accommodation services include aged care and disability residential services as well as more general housing and homelessness services. Some accommodation services target specific groups such as older people, youth, students, people on low incomes, people with disabilities, refugees and women experiencing family violence. The following sites provide information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vic: Supported accommodation• NSW: Emergency housing and homelessness• WA: Shelter WA• SA: Community Housing Council SA• NT: Special and Emergency Accommodation Darwin• Qld: Uniting Care Homelessness Shelters and Hubs: Services and Support• Tas: Shelter Tas
Transcultural services	<p>Transcultural services are services that respond to the specific needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Services comprise the full range of community services, including interpretation, cultural awareness training and consultancy, accommodation, aged care, mental health, employment support, advocacy and counselling. Visit the following sites for information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Translation Services• Australian Multicultural Community Services• Australian Immigration Law Services• Jobactive Migrant and Multicultural Services



<p>Advocacy services</p>	<p>National, state, regional and local specialist advocacy services provide confidential and independent information and advice to vulnerable people and those with disabilities about their rights and entitlements. They also lobby governments to protect these rights.</p> <p>Examples of these organisations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Aged Care • Australian Federation of Disability Organisations • ANTAR/Close the Gap • Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
<p>Religious organisations</p>	<p>Religious organisations provide a range of community services at local, state and national levels. In many states, religious organisations are the biggest providers of services to low income and vulnerable people.</p> <p>Examples of these organisations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniting Care Australia • Anglicare Australia • United Muslims of Australia

Individual networks

The types of networks you and your service will engage in will depend on the purpose and the goals that need to be achieved. They may involve colleagues, clients, family members, carers, health professionals or other experts. Even when collaborating or networking with larger organisations, you are likely to interact with specific individuals. Here are some of the many work activities that involve networking and collaborating with individuals.

Individual networks
The connections that the person has in their personal life.

<p>Collaborative work activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting a person with support needs for the first time (e.g. forming a collaborative partnership) • Creating an individual support plan (e.g. collaborating with the person and other stakeholders) • Making a referral (e.g. networking and collaborating with the other service's representative) • Participating in a supervisory meeting (e.g. collaborating with your supervisor in providing improved services) • Being involved in group projects (e.g. collaborating and networking with colleagues) • Job sharing (e.g. joint care of specific people or tasks involve collaborating with the person and the colleague) • Participating in inductions or hand-overs (e.g. collaborating with a colleague when you start or leave a job)



Video: Collaborative support networks

Watch the following video to see how people with disabilities collaborate with their personal support networks to help them exercise control and choice about their lives: aspirelr.link/vimeo-support-networks



Virtual networks

In today’s working environments, we have the opportunity and technology to network and collaborate worldwide with virtual and online communities, groups and remote individuals.

Virtual networks offer an excellent way to participate in industry networks without imposing too much on workloads and work schedules. Your ability to interact with industry experts, colleagues and community members is further enabled by digital technologies, which allow you to participate in national and global networks and connect with industry experts and service professionals that you would not otherwise have the opportunity to interact with.

Here are some of the ways that you can improve services by accessing virtual networks and collaborations.

Social media and blogs	Your workplace is likely to use social media to connect to people and to advertise its services. This is a great way to let community members know what you’re achieving. In addition, you can start a blog and share your knowledge, or use other blogs as research tools and to make new connections.
Industry forums	Industry groups, associations and businesses may host forums where you can connect with colleagues. Posting to forums is a great way to make new contacts.
Online seminars and meetings	There are several great ways to participate and hold online seminars and meetings. Become familiar with the online technology available.
Video calls	Skype and other forms of video calling make contacting people remotely much more accessible, giving a personal connection to networking with others.

For more information on online networking for health professionals, visit: aspirelr.link/healthie-networking



Formal and informal networks

Networking and collaboration can occur formally and informally.

For example, you use informal networking every day when you attend work meetings with colleagues, connect with people with support needs and speak to your supervisor. These informal networks run on good communication, goodwill (i.e. helping others and asking for help), respecting and valuing everyone's contributions, and clear role boundaries.

Formal networks include industry groups, agencies and associations, accreditation bodies, organisational partnerships and taskforces. Much like informal networks, formal networks require good communication, role boundaries and respect for other people's expertise and knowledge. Formal collaborations can be a great way to access information and services that extend beyond your expertise, which can be very fulfilling.

Here are some of the kinds of formal collaborations that you may be involved in during your career.

Types of formal collaborations

- Formal partnership – two organisations agree to work together on a specific task or project
- Affiliation – your organisation joins or connects to a larger group
- Parent organisation supervising smaller groups – a national organisation supervises local groups
- Merger – two organisations combine to form one organisation
- Taskforce – groups or organisations agree to work together on specific tasks or activities

Formal networks

A **formal network** is often made up of representatives from various organisations who work in related areas. In most cases, formal networks have membership requirements and obligations, clearly defined processes and regular meetings or activities.

They are set up to achieve specific objectives, such as providing a forum to discuss issues and share information between organisations working in the same sector, or setting up a working party to address a matter of concern (e.g. youth disability needs).

Below are examples of formal networks, with an explanation and examples of members of each.

Formal network

Two or more organisations that share funding streams for specific groups of people.



Local	<p>Your organisation should have links with a range of other agencies and service providers in the local area. People may be assisted by more than one organisation or require referrals to other services. For example, a person with AOD concerns may also need mental health, accommodation and health services.</p> <p>Members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• government services such as Centrelink• housing departments and other accommodation services• employment services• health services and local councils• education providers• welfare and charitable organisations• local AOD, disability, homelessness, youth services and aged care agencies.
Groups	<p>Interest and support groups are usually consumer based. They include self-help groups aimed at providing support to their members.</p> <p>Members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• carers' groups• mental health groups such as ARAFMI, Grow, NEAMI National, Mental Health Foundation of Australia and PANDA• groups aimed at supporting people with AOD concerns, such as Alcoholics Anonymous• special interest groups such as mothers' groups, Riding for the Disabled and Black Dog Institute wellbeing groups.
Associations	<p>These associations represent the interests of a particular region, specialist service or sector. For example, there are peak organisations for every sector. The aim of these organisations is to ensure that community services in each sector have a unified voice. They can raise awareness of relevant issues and lobby for funding at a national or state/territory level.</p> <p>Members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aged and Community Services Australia• Cairns Youth Services Network• Carers Australia• Ethnic Communities Council• Mental Health Council of Australia• National Disability Services



Professional	<p>These associations include groups representing different professions or organisations such as community and welfare workers, social workers and psychologists. They each represent the group’s interests and promote professional and ethical practice and standards.</p> <p>Members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and Other Drugs • Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association • Australian Association of Social Workers • Australian Community Counselling Association • Australian Community Workers Association • Youth Workers Association
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Informal networks

Informal networks include the links and relationships you make as part of your work or training that are not dependent on formal agreements that set out the terms of the working relationship.

Informal networks are based on sharing information and providing mutual support. Consider the following points relating to the nature and value of informal networks:

Informal network
The connections that the person has in their work that are unofficial or not organised.

Types of informal networks
<p>Informal networks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other workers, particularly those in the community services industry • trainers, teachers and academics • contacts in policy and funding bodies • client support networks – carers, family, friends.
Developing network relationships
<p>Informal networks develop as you make friends with colleagues or find individuals in government departments or other organisations who are helpful and a good source of information. These networks act as unofficial channels of information relevant to your work.</p>
How informal networks help
<p>Your informal networks play an important role in helping you carry out your work effectively. Sometimes, the fastest way to obtain information is to phone a contact. Other times, you may simply need support from a colleague who is a good listener and understands the work you do.</p>
Participating in informal networks
<p>Some workers find it helpful to set up a small group of colleagues and meet for lunch once a month to discuss work-related matters. Other opportunities to participate in informal networks include using the internet to read blogs and participate in online forums relevant to your work.</p>



Improvements made through collaborative partnerships

Networks are an invaluable resource to seek alternative ways to improve service quality.

As a support worker, you should seek out collaborative opportunities to improve service quality; this is because all community services have a commitment to continuous improvement as it is an expectation promoted by the industry.

In many cases, collaboration is needed to ensure that individualised, thorough, flexible and effective services are provided to people with support needs. Working in partnership with other organisations also offers a cost-effective means to promote the organisation you represent, giving it a positive presence in the community. At all times, meeting the individual needs of service users is the primary goal. Here are examples of improvements that can be made through collaboration.

Information	<p>Collaborators are information sources. Sources of information can be the person, their family/carer, friends, community members, colleagues and experts.</p> <p>Adequate service provision is based on complete, accurate and relevant information from a wide variety of sources. Relevant information can include the person’s needs and goals, expert research and data.</p>
Feedback	<p>By treating the person and others as valued partners, you express a commitment to understanding and respecting the person’s needs, goals and aspirations. Seek feedback and suggestions from all collaborators and work on fostering strong relationships. Collaboration creates rapport based on empathy and respect for others.</p>
Access	<p>Collaboration allows us to support a person’s access and equity by ensuring they are able to access opportunities, even if they are beyond our job role or the organisation’s parameters, as this will enable service users to achieve their goals and have their unique needs addressed appropriately. Other services and providers are essential collaborators in providing complete supports.</p>
Finance	<p>Other services, agencies and government departments can be valued collaborators in terms of helping people access financial services and benefits. Often, colleagues and your professional networks have valuable information and expertise about gaining extra funding and financial services.</p>
Community	<p>Collaboration fosters a sense of community by working together, seeking the best possible service delivery for all. Strong working partnerships are vital for effective service provision and good morale. Offer your experience and expertise to your colleagues and others as a collaborator in reaching their goals – you have much to offer.</p>



Reasons for evaluating performance

Evaluating performance is an essential process for organisations, and it ensures that services are continuously striving to deliver high-quality services and that services offered meet industry standards.

Support workers are the face of the service. Therefore, their ability to work successfully with people accessing services and use current standards of practice will directly impact the reputation of support services in our local communities. Also, evidence-based research within the industry will often change preferred ways to work with clients, so service workers' skills and knowledge must reflect the current methods needed to work effectively with clients that will produce positive outcomes. For this reason, networking and collaboration can improve performance and help in evaluating how each support person's service delivery functions. To evaluate performance, you can use the following strategies.

Performance evaluation strategies

- Client feedback forms
- Discussion with supervisors and senior colleagues
- Self-reflection
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Performance appraisals
- Service reviews
- Feedback provided by external stakeholders
- Review policies and procedures and crosscheck with current standards of practice

Service needs will change as each person's needs, goals and preferences change, resulting in adaptations and adjustments to service delivery. Regulatory changes, workplace and operational changes, and changing job roles also affect performance. Therefore, regular self-assessment of your work performance is crucial to keep improving and expanding your skills.

Here are some common questions that you can use to evaluate each person's service delivery performance for collaboration needs.

Performance evaluation questions

- Have the person's needs, goals or preferences changed?
- Have any regulations, legislation or best practice standards changed?
- Can the person's goals be met more efficiently?
- Do I need more information to meet the person's needs?
- Will collaborating with others create greater opportunities for improvements to services?
- How can I create greater access and equity for the person?
- How can I use what I've learnt to improve my organisation's service delivery?
- How can I provide more flexible services?



Example

Collaborative partnerships enhance organisation and individual performance

A local disability service is hosting a networking breakfast. The main purpose of the event is to make time for local services to make business connections, as this will provide greater access to essential services for service users. Community service organisations in the local government area have been invited to attend.

On the morning of the breakfast, service representatives are given time throughout the event to introduce themselves to other service representatives, exchange business cards and establish new professional relationships with industry contacts.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Match each term to its definition.

Formal network
Virtual network
Organisational network
Informal network
Individual network

Services within a sector working together to achieve a common goal
Connections a person has in their personal life that are supportive and resourceful
Collaborations using digital technology
Made up of professionals with membership requirements and regulations
Working relationships that do not have written agreements setting conditions



Question 2

Briefly outline the fundamental principle of networking and collaboration.

Question 3

Give three examples of questions you can ask yourself to assist in the evaluation process.

Question 4

Which of the following are examples of network structures? Tick all that apply.

- Cooperative
- Virtual
- Co-location
- Collaborative
- Partnership

1B

Identify, prioritise and address organisation and individual needs and gaps in service

Working in collaboration with other services will assist in identifying any unmet needs of clients and highlight other areas where services can improve.

Providing support services is a balance of meeting the person's individual needs and meeting your organisation's needs. To find this balance, clearly identify both these sets of needs and prioritise them appropriately. For example, the person's individual needs are your main focus, but your service needs your time, expertise and skills to be shared with others.

The person with support needs is your primary collaborator in identifying their needs. Your job description and other organisational documents can help identify your services' needs. Networking and collaboration can be helpful ways to balance the needs of people and your service by pooling resources, information and skills.

Identify and prioritise networking needs

To select appropriate networks, first analyse your networking needs and research which available options best meet your needs and the needs of the people for whom you are providing support services.

Here are some elements to consider when making decisions about prioritising networking needs.

Organisational objectives

Identify your organisation's objectives and the needs of people or target groups. For example, you may work in disability services with people who also have substance misuse issues. You may seek a network that can help you learn more about working with people who have substance misuse or AOD issues. This information can inform your organisation's service provision.

Individual objectives

The individual's objectives form your primary focus. First, collaborate with the person to identify their goals, and then research available networks that can help the person in meeting their specific goals. Having a clear idea of the person's objectives and setting measurable benchmarks and time frames can help you monitor whether the chosen network is helping the person meet their objectives.



Potential networks

Most organisations keep files or databases on services and networks relevant to their work. Use the internet, community resource directories or talk to colleagues to find networks. Your aim is to improve service delivery for people you work with. Identify where your service needs to improve and join a network where you can benefit from the skills and experience of network members.

Identify and prioritise needs

Once you have identified areas of professional development that will improve your performance and selected appropriate networks, prioritise these opportunities by date and relevance. Choose opportunities that are relevant, useful, timely and within the service's resource capacity.

Example

Identify and prioritise organisation and individual needs

Jacob is Matt's support worker. Matt is starting a transition to work (TTW) program on Monday and is ringing Jacob for the third time today. Matt experiences anxiety in new and unfamiliar situations. Jacob has networked with an alternative transport service to assist Matt to travel to and from his TTW program. Matt would like Jacob to transport him every day, but Jacob's organisation needs him to work with other people at these times. Jacob also knows that Matt's stated goal is to increase his independence and takes all possible care to ensure his safety. For this reason, Jacob has arranged for a meet and greet with Matt and the bus driver. This will help Matt feel at ease, knowing a familiar face on the first day he uses the service.

Identify gaps in networks and collaborative practice

To identify gaps, you need to use your service's regular reviewing procedures, conduct reviews of the person's individualised plan, and reflect on each person's services and related collaborations through discussions with the person and their significant others.

To provide the best possible individualised services to each person, ask yourself if and how you could make changes within your networks and collaborative practices to make more significant improvements. For example, has a collaboration served its purpose and is no longer needed? Identifying gaps where people's needs are not being met or where they could be improved is the first step in making required changes.



Here are some of the questions that you can ask yourself to identify these gaps.

Self-reflection questions

- Are the person’s needs currently being met?
- Is the person’s individualised plan sufficiently flexible to allow for changing needs, goals and preferences?
- Am I up to date with all the relevant networks and collaborations that could benefit the person?
- Have I invited feedback and suggestions and implemented them where appropriate?
- Can I improve my communication skills or engage in other professional development activities?
- Have I learnt anything from this network or collaboration that could benefit other people in my organisation?
- How can I contribute more to my networks and collaborations?

Identify and address performance gaps

Performance gap

The difference between what is expected of a service worker in their ability to perform their role and how they actually perform their job.

Performance gaps are one of the most overlooked concepts of business. If they are not identified, you could be putting the future of the organisation at risk.

Performance gaps can occur at any level of the organisation.

For example, a support worker may not clearly understand person-centred support and be struggling to build positive working relationships with people accessing services and/or support. By identifying this performance gap, plans can be made to upskill the worker, resulting in improved service delivery.

To help identify gaps in service provision, regular monitoring and reviewing of all work practices must be done as this will assist in making improvements to existing services, including how you use networks and engage in collaborative practices. You can also review complaints and compliments lodged by clients and other stakeholders, and hold team meetings and discuss service performance gaps observed by workers.

Required actions to address gaps

Once you have identified a gap in the delivery of a person’s services, you will need to identify options that can address that gap.

Networking and collaborations are often used at this stage of service delivery, as you seek input, ideas and information from others. Your networks are there to help you provide excellent services – so make the most of them. Ask questions, invite feedback and research alternative options and approaches that benefit the person with support needs. For example, suppose you have identified that collaboration has helped a person reach a specific outcome. In that case, you may need to research



other collaborative options that can help the person reach their next goal.

As always, the person with support needs is the expert in their own lives, and they are the most important collaborator. Therefore, wherever possible, offer several possible options to fill service gaps that they can choose from, as this will demonstrate respect and uphold the person's right to self-determination.

Example

Identify gaps and required action

Mikhaela is meeting with Jerry for their monthly meeting to discuss his progress and supports. Jerry has been attending a day program run by another service, and Mikhaela is checking in with him about the program. Mikhaela observes that Jerry looks tired and down. Mikhaela shares her observations with Jerry and, through discussion, Jerry tells Mikhaela that the day program does not have any other participants in his age group. From this information, Mikhaela can raise the issue with the program manager and find a more age-appropriate program for Jerry to participate in.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Briefly explain what is meant by 'performance gap'.



Question 2

List three ways to identify a performance gap.

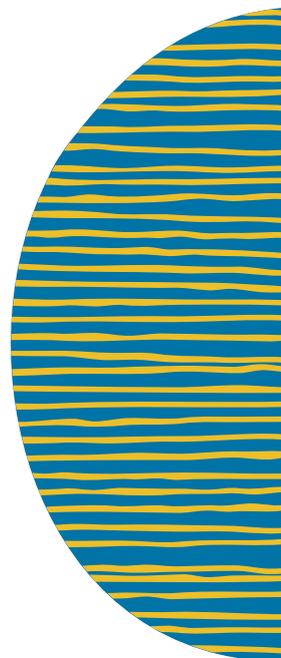
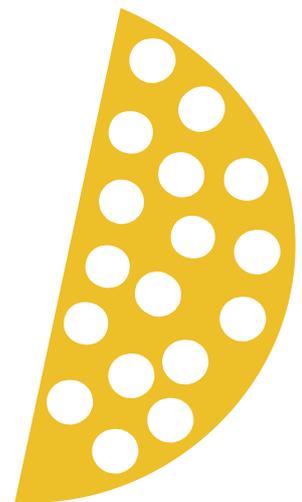
Question 3

Discuss two ways you can identify and prioritise organisational and individual needs when it comes to networking and collaboration.



Summary

- Working collaboratively and networking ensures that skills, knowledge and resources are shared efficiently, and that people's individual needs are met. This benefits people with support needs, workers and organisations.
- Providing effective services involves identifying people's needs and those of your organisation. With this knowledge, you can set priorities and identify networks and collaborative opportunities that meet everyone's needs.
- Networks and collaborative practices are subject to change and adjustment. Regularly reviewing and assessing how these activities are improving each person's services will help identify any gaps in services and offer the person options to fill these gaps.
- Networks and collaborations are great sources of information and inspiration.





Learning Checkpoint 1

Identify networking and collaboration needs and opportunities

Part A

1. Explain why it is important for organisations to review and evaluate support workers' performance.

2. Which of the following statements relating to the key principles of networking and collaboration are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. All collaborators should clearly understand their role, their responsibilities and the goal of the activity.	Yes / No
b. Networking and collaboration encourages and acts upon feedback, suggestions and reviews; information is then shared (where appropriate) and decisions are made together.	Yes / No
c. An organisation's specific goal is the reason for collaborating with other services.	Yes / No
d. Working together to reach a common goal involves teamwork, good communication and problem-solving.	Yes / No
e. Individual ideas, opinions and needs are respected and valued.	Yes / No



3. Identify three performance evaluation strategies a service worker can use.

4. Suggest how networking helps an organisation improve service quality.

5. Briefly outline the difference between a formal network and an informal network.

6. Suggest four questions a support worker can use to help determine if there are gaps in the services and support that are provided to a person.



7. Provide two examples of an organisational network and collaboration that you might use in community services.

8. Give two examples of formal networks and collaborations that you might use.

9. Give three examples of informal networks and collaborations that a worker would use to enhance skill and knowledge level.

10. Which of the following improvements can be made through networking and collaboration? Tick all that apply.

- Information
- Needs
- Access
- Resources
- Finance



11. Match each network structure to its description.

Co-location	Two or more organisations make a formal agreement which details the role each organisation will play without having to merge or form a new organisation
Co-operative	Individuals working together to achieve a goal that benefits the services involved
Partnership	Networks that are owned and controlled by the members of the network
Collaboration	A number of services will operate at the same location and will often interrelate with each other

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Victoria is a case worker with experience working with people with disability. She recently started a new role where she will be working with parents, preparing them for returning to the workforce. Denise is new to the service. She has three children under the age of eight and has recently completed a drug rehabilitation program. Denise and her family have relocated to the area to start a new life. She is using the service so she has access to the support necessary to stay well and improve the quality of life for her and her family.

- Victoria has identified that Denise will need to establish a new support system within the community as this will help her stay on the right path. Identify two networks Denise could participate in to help her establish a personal support network.



2. Identify three methods Victoria can use to assist Denise in establishing a personal support network.

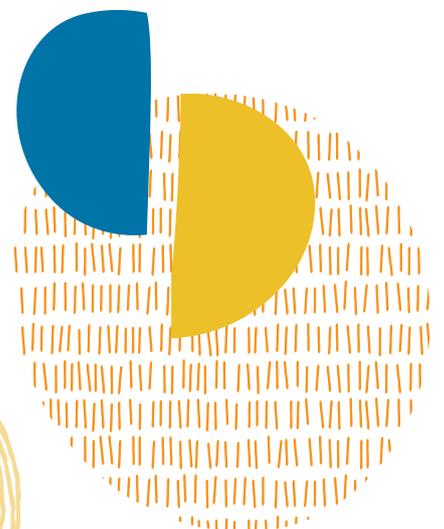
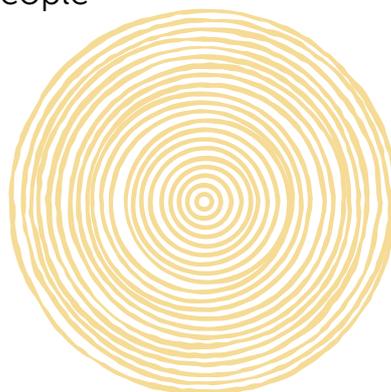
3. Victoria has determined that she has knowledge gaps when it comes to working with families, as her employment history has been focused on working in the disability sector. Suggest two strategies Victoria can use to improve her skills and knowledge in this new sector.

4. Victoria is settling into her role and is beginning to establish herself within a network. She has decided to branch out and connect with professionals from the industry at a state and national level. Identify the type of network Victoria would need to be involved in and provide an example.



Topic 2: Develop collaboration strategies

- 2A Gather and review information about relevant services, organisations and key people
- 2B Proactively initiate relationships with other professionals and organisations
- 2C Share information and resources to overcome duplication in service delivery
- 2D Maintain currency and accessibility of information
- 2E Define and document collaboration, and negotiate with relevant people



2A

Gather and review information about relevant services, organisations and key people

To ensure you create and participate in networks suitable for your purposes, you must conduct research and learn about the services relevant to your needs.

The first step in any collaborative relationship is gathering information. You need to know as much as possible about potential services, organisations and individuals you can collaborate with. Knowing what services are available, how they can help and how you can contribute is vital to ensure best practice service delivery. There are many established networks in the community services industry that can be used to improve support services.

Providing services to people is a collaborative effort. People receiving support may need a wide range of services to meet their individual needs.

To effectively help people, gather all the relevant information about the services available in your local area, both through your organisation and other organisations. This information will allow you to determine what will be most useful in addressing your needs and the needs of current and future clients.

Information about services and organisations may be available in a variety of forms, such as websites, apps, pamphlets, booklets, flyers, posters, price lists, business cards, information packs, referral forms, audiovisual formats (photographs, audiotapes, video footage), media articles and advertising, service directories and annual reports.

It is a good idea to keep all this information in a resource folder, categorised for specific purposes. These files can be presented to clients as the need arises, allowing you both to review the information which will support decision-making for the people you help.

Workplace policies and procedures will have detailed information about the services available through your workplace. When you understand the parameters of what is available, you can begin to investigate other services and how to access them.

Here are some of the categories of services that you may need to familiarise yourself with to provide support services.

Service categories	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical• Accommodation• Mental health• Drug and alcohol• Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy• Legal and mediation• Disability• Child and family• Cultural and language



Providing information

When providing information, ensure that it is accessible and understood by the person or people requiring the information.

Information may need to be available in other languages and formats such as large print, braille or audio. The language and format offered should reflect all groups and be culturally sensitive to these groups. For example, material for First Nations people should not contain images of people who are no longer alive.

Relevant and up-to-date service directories are invaluable in any kind of community services work. Keep a list of services in a directory or database for your region, state or territory. This information might be stored alphabetically, grouped according to the services provided, and be printed or digital.

Check that any information you have includes:

- name and contact details of the service agency
- details of services offered
- eligibility criteria for services offered
- referral process for services offered
- service locations
- business hours
- costs of services offered
- any information regarding waitlists.

Information about agencies, services and contacts may be collected in many ways. For example, you may collect information formally via professional groups or informally via other connections such as family, friends or the internet. When attending formal forums, talk to other people and expand your network of contacts. If you are there with a colleague, network separately and pool information after the meeting.

The following table lists some standard formal and informal information collection methods.

Formal methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place a topic on the agenda at staff meetings to share knowledge. • Join a professional networking group and host meetings. • Join an advocacy or interest alliance such as the Disability Advocacy Network Australia. • Create a list of relevant services; phone around to introduce yourself. • Investigate funding options that are offered to partnerships. • Approach possible partners with a project in mind. • Attend briefings, conferences and seminars, and work-based functions.
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Informal methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect pamphlets.• Search the internet for organisations' networking opportunities.• Discuss with colleagues what services they have used in the past.• Ask colleagues and friends to introduce you to their contacts.• Develop a broad range of interests in your personal life.• Introduce yourself to new acquaintances and tell them about your work.• Ask your people what other services they have used and why.
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Identifying key stakeholders

The number of people you will need to communicate with regularly can be extensive, depending on your role, the person's needs and the organisation you work for.

Your workplace will have many established partnerships with a range of service providers and organisations, as well as established relationships with key contact people and set referral protocols. While it is important to use these existing networks when their services are required to meet a person's needs, it is just as important to identify other service organisations that deliver different or alternative services because they may provide a unique service that meets one client's specific needs or goals.

To do this, research other service organisations and keep up to date with the services and activities offered. Do this regularly, as organisations often change and adapt.

Here are some ways to gather information about service organisations.

Ways to gather information about service organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check for established partnerships.• Ask your colleagues and supervisors.• Ask people for whom you provide services about their past providers.• Research online.• Check industry groups, contacts and networks.• Read relevant articles, blogs and forums and contact the authors.• Ask your contacts about their networks.

For more information, visit: aspirelr.link/ctb-stakeholder-involvement

Different networks are available that are designed to meet the needs of specific stakeholders. For example, professional networks support you, your colleagues and people receiving support, while other networks may be focused on sharing information among particular industry sectors. There will be other networks established for the purpose of advocacy and education.



Identify the key stakeholders that require information and investigate networks and resources that are available or relevant to them. This information will help you provide relevant information and support to stakeholders.

Here are some key stakeholders that you may work with and examples of the kinds of networks that may be relevant for each group.

People with support needs	There are many networks available to people with support needs, including support groups for specific conditions and disabilities, advocacy groups and community services.
Families and carers	Families and carers have specific needs and often require specialist supports, including advocacy groups, support networks and respite access.
Support workers	Workers need peer support networks to connect with in order to share information, expertise and evolving practices. Professional networks are vital to ongoing professional development.
Community members	Educational services, outreach organisations and funding bodies are relevant for community members. These services support them to create opportunities for interaction and support for the people in your care.

Stakeholder contact list

Contact details for key stakeholders should be appropriately collected and stored to ensure easy retrieval when needed.

Details of specific stakeholders may be kept in a hard-copy file, such as an address book or diary, or stored electronically on a phone, tablet or computer, using your device's contacts features, apps, Word or Excel files. Include information such as the organisation's name, contact's name, services provided, location and when contact was last made. A broad range of contacts means that you have access to a wide range of information and advice.

Here is a range of stakeholders that you may like to consider.

Recommended contacts

- Work colleagues may provide extra contacts and information regarding services provided.
- Families, friends and carers of the person receiving support can provide valuable information and feedback on services received and recommended services.
- Suppliers can provide information about the service or product and the suitability of products or services for particular target groups. They may also help with training on the use of products.
- Funding bodies, program contacts or liaison officers will provide information relating to funding availability, submission requirements, government policy and funding directions.



Recommended contacts

- Disability services and professionals can provide information relating to referral processes and criteria, a person's need and eligibility for services. They can also provide up-to-date expert medical advice and best practice tools and techniques.
- Teachers, training bodies and organisations can provide you with best practice knowledge, tools and techniques, information and advice on suitable professional development programs.
- Professional support and networking groups can provide information on current issues relevant to the group you work with, best practice tools and techniques, referral processes and criteria, and relevant services in your local area or region.

Review information about relevant services, organisations and stakeholders

Once you have information about the relevant services, organisations and key people that you are likely to need, this information should be regularly reviewed.

This is to ensure that contact information, job roles and places of employment have not changed. However, changes in employment do occur quite often, and it is not uncommon for you to not be notified. Therefore, by conducting regular checks you can ensure the details you have are up to date.

To review information about services, organisations and key people, you may:

- source service information on a website
- email organisational contacts regularly
- subscribe to organisational newsletters and blogs
- collaborate with work colleagues
- utilise service networks and contacts.

Example

Gather and review information about services and organisations

Simon is a freelance consultant and trainer. For one project, Simon brought together 16 different disability and aged care groups to run 70 workshops for employees who provide support services to this sector. Simon understands that networking is about working together, sharing information and supporting one another. Simon will usually network informally and attends most events he is invited to. This helps him to keep up to date with new information and services and keeps him informed on how to provide quality services. Simon uses the information to review the way services are currently being delivered and to expand his support networks.



Practice Task 3

Question 1

Identify three methods you can use to gather information about services and organisations relevant to your purposes.

Question 2

List two ways you can review information about services, organisations and key people.

Question 3

Give three examples of stakeholders that may be involved in a collaborative network.

2B

Proactively initiate relationships with other professionals and organisations

Initiating relationships with professionals and organisations is how you build productive collaborative networks.

Once you have created a database of current, detailed information about potential collaborators and networks, you can begin approaching them and learning how to initiate and foster productive relationships. This requires an understanding of the organisation's structure and how it relates to other organisations within the industry. For example, community services work involves public and private organisations, which work together to provide best practice supports and care.

While your workplace will have established partnerships and relationships with other inter- and intra-sectoral professionals and organisations, being proactive in forming new relationships supports best practice standards. In addition, it allows for evolving, flexible service provision and innovations in care.

Factors strong organisational interrelationships are based on:

- clearly defined roles
- excellent communication
- transparency (clearly defined and accountable processes)
- sharing information, resources and expertise
- accountability and a commitment to continuous improvement
- mutual respect and a common purpose
- thorough documentation
- a commitment to the value of collaboration and teamwork.

For more information on building business–community partnerships, visit:

aspirelr.link/our-community-help-sheet

Relationships between organisations

Working in the community services industry involves collaboration at all levels.

Whether your organisation is a public or private organisation, you will work with other services to provide the best possible care to those who use them. All organisations work together on numerous levels by sharing information, sharing resources, creating joint projects or policies, referring services or people, and



undertaking regional, sector or community development activities. The following table contains information on the key differences between public and private organisations.

Public organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owned and operated by government • Not formed to generate profit • Funded with public money • Implements public policies • Accountability lies within government • Can utilise the services of volunteers • Provides essential services to the community
Private organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owned by individuals or companies • Includes not-for-profit organisations • Funded using donations, government grants and/or income earned through services provided • Not-for-profits are entitled to special tax exemptions • Utilises services of volunteers

For more information on the difference between the public and private sector, visit: aspirelr.link/public-private-sector-differences

The community services industry allows extensive opportunities for collaboration and networking. Your workplace will have a specific function: serving a particular community or group, or providing a particular service. The way that your workplace fits into the wider industry depends on the activities it undertakes, how it is funded and its reach in the community. For example, community service organisations, particularly those that have been established for many years, exist on the national, state/territory and local levels. Some organisations are publicly funded, and others are private businesses that must generate their own income. Not-for-profits or charities may function purely on private donations and/or government funding. Other organisations are founded to serve a particular demographic or community, while some specialise in one type of service provision.

Be familiar with how your organisation is funded, its vision, its values and mission statements, and existing relationships with other organisations. This information can usually be found on websites and within the organisation's annual report.

The wide range of organisations, structures and activities in the industry open up opportunities for groups, organisations and individuals to work together on a range of activities. Here are some examples of the benefits of interrelationships. You can contribute to these interrelationships by collaborating with existing partners, researching other relevant organisations and reaching out and initiating new collaborations and partnerships.



Creating policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many individuals, groups and organisations create best practice standards and policies by maintaining professional networks and undertaking professional activities. These include joint partnerships, conferences and specific task forces.• While information and ideas can be sourced from the industry as a whole, a specific task force or partnership may be formed or funded to undertake certain activities, such as policy recommendations and sector development activities.
Meeting needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many organisations work together to meet the needs of specific communities. For example, in a local area a range of organisations that provide a particular service may collaborate to ensure thorough service provision in their community.• Meeting needs may involve smaller organisations collaborating on a broader regional development plan or sharing funding for community service activities.
Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All support workers advocate for people in their work. Advocacy can extend into widespread action by joining advocacy groups to educate and call for change on a specific issue or uphold a group's rights.• Advocacy groups can be specifically funded, volunteer-run or a combination of the two.

Interrelationships between individuals and organisations

There are two main types of relationships that an organisation and its representatives can form.

The first type is interrelationships. In these relationships, the departments are within an organisation. Each department has its specific purpose but will work with other departments to share information and help as needed. For example, an alcohol and drug rehabilitation service will have departments within it. There will be outpatient services, inpatient services and counselling services. Each department will need to have a relationship with the others to support the needs of the people using the service. They may need to refer, schedule appointments or provide support in the development of safety and care plans. At an individual level, colleagues will often exchange ideas, and seek information and expert knowledge from each other on a case-by-case level.

Intra-sectoral relationships between individuals and organisations

To provide better, more complete services, you may need to work with professionals and organisations outside your specific field of the community services industry.



These are called intra-sectoral relationships ('intra-' means 'between' or 'among'; e.g. different groups sharing information between each other). Effective, efficient service provision based on each person's individual needs is your starting point. In some cases, their needs go beyond what you, your workplace or even the industry can provide.

Here are some tips for establishing intra-sectoral relationships.

Existing networks

Ask colleagues, supervisors and members of your professional network for their contacts, suggestions and recommendations. Often, a colleague can facilitate a new relationship by introducing you to another individual or organisation. Also, personal recommendations often provide promising indications that an individual or organisation is good to work with and can give a point of connection. If a colleague suggests that you contact someone they know, mention them in your initial contact.

Research

Research online or in the local community to find potential collaborators. Look for official accreditations and vision and mission statements. Organisations and individuals with shared values and goals tend to work well together, and these can provide a point of connection for initiating contact.

Personal connections

Wherever possible, try to make a personal connection. Remember that you are representing your organisation and communicate in a friendly, respectful manner. Whenever you meet someone or create a new contact, make sure they know how to contact you and keep their contact information easily accessible and up to date. Maintaining personal contacts is essential, so be sure to keep in touch with people and inform them of any changes to your services, contact details and so on.

Advertise and offer

Be clear about what you have to offer. Most collaborations are formed to be mutually beneficial so that both parties give and take. Advertise your services and offer your knowledge and expertise to a wide range of potential collaborators and community members. While you may need to initiate some relationships when you first identify a need, maintaining a wide network of valued collaborators that you have assisted in the past can ensure efficient service delivery when new needs are identified.

For more information on how to build positive workplace relationships, visit:

aspirelr.link/building-positive-workplace-relationships

Good professional relationships are based on many elements, including mutual respect, good communication, accountability and transparency. These work practices should be in place from your first contact with a potential collaborator within the industry. For example, if you work in an organisation that provides health services for people with disability and a person has an accommodation crisis, you may need to initiate a relationship with someone in a charity, governmental department or accommodation service to help the person find a home.



Establishing positive professional relationships

- Research beforehand and contact the most relevant person.
- If you have a specific enquiry, make sure that you have all the details needed before making contact.
- Be flexible and concise. People are busy and appreciate alternative forms of contact and clear communication.
- Use official letterhead or your work email address to identify yourself and remember that you are acting as a spokesperson for your workplace.
- Make it clear how the other person can help you.
- A friendly smile and greeting will help to establish rapport. Showing genuine gratitude for people's help ensures that a good connection has been formed.
- Offer your services or expertise in return and where appropriate.

Example

Proactively initiate relationships with professionals and organisations

Jenny is starting a new job with a local organisation that provides mental health services in her community. Using information from her job description and induction package, she introduces herself to her workplace's established partners and makes new connections. To do this, she visits local services and sends a letter of introduction via email to services outside her employment location. Jenny also subscribes to electronic newsletters by visiting each service's websites so she can keep informed of the services and supports offered by them. To build her own personal, professional network, Jenny joins the LinkedIn professional social media platform and begins to send invitations to connect with other professionals who have similar interests.

By Jenny using initiative, she begins to receive invitations to attend local network meetings and is informed about upcoming events that will help her to keep her skills and knowledge current, promote the service she works for and expand her professional network.



Practice Task 4

Question 1

Suggest two ways to initiate relationships with inter-sectoral organisations and other stakeholders.

Question 2

Which of the following statements relate to using a proactive approach to initiate professional relationships? Tick all that apply.

- Be informed
- Be reciprocal
- Be mindful of your timeframes
- Make specific requests
- Represent your organisation

Question 3

Identify two ways you can contribute to interrelationships between organisations.



Question 4

Briefly outline the difference between a public and private organisation.

2C

Share information and resources to overcome duplication in service delivery

To avoid service duplication, organisations will communicate and work together to ensure each organisation is unique in the services and support provided.

One of the great benefits of collaboration and networking involves sharing information and resources. While some information needs to be kept private and confidential, good communication skills and resource sharing can increase efficiency and ensure that available information and resources reach the people who need them most.

Duplicated services are a waste of resources and limit what can be provided. Efficiently sharing information and resources to avoid duplication means that wider and deeper services can be available to people who need support.

Duplication of service delivery

Effective collaboration can enhance the service delivered to people with support needs. It also ensures that **duplication** in service delivery is reduced, minimised or eliminated.

If services are duplicated, it can negatively impact an organisation's ability to grow. It can confuse service users as they may struggle to understand the service they are accessing. In that case, essential community needs may be overlooked, which may mean that client needs fail to be met.

Duplication can be minimised by finding out what other organisations offer and what equipment and resources may be available. Promoting shared service delivery may involve developing sector-wide service arrangements, regional service arrangements or engaging in joint activities with other organisations.

By engaging in shared service delivery, the service or organisations involved can benefit by having access to:

- a wider range of resources
- a wider range of specialist services
- improved access to skills and knowledge
- greater utilisation of resources and assets.

Duplication
When two or more services offer the same support.



Share information

Any collaborative partnership relies on information that is communicated and shared efficiently.

Members of a team or joint project need to pool their knowledge to ensure that no time is wasted sourcing information that has already been located.

However, in sharing information, there are some considerations that must be taken into account, as shown below.

Relevance	Only share information that is relevant to the task, activity or purpose. Having clear goals, outcomes and processes ensures that only relevant information is shared, which ensures efficiency.
Security	What level of security is required for the information? This must be established and agreed on between all partners. For example, private client information must be kept secure at all times, including meetings and when transferring to other parties.
Maintenance	Any information that is shared must be maintained. All information should be up to date, clearly identified and easily accessible to the appropriate people. If different individuals are working on the same document or information, each version must be clearly marked and identified by a version control system.
Privacy and confidentiality	People’s privacy and confidentiality must be upheld at all times. Personal information should only be shared with permission and when absolutely necessary. Before sharing information, you may need to gain permission, edit or provide partial information as relevant, or de-identify information as needed.

Community groups and organisations may have limited income. They will be looking to larger community service organisations to assist them with the resources they need. Sharing resources is a way to link and network with others, and results in greater efficiency for everyone. It brings benefits to your organisation, as well as to the community groups and their members. There are a number of different types of resources that can be shared. Examples and benefits these resources bring to community groups are outlined below.

Aids	<p>The aids a person utilises are rarely in use full time and may sit unused for much of the time. Sharing resources provides people with faster and cheaper access to the aid they require.</p> <p>Some organisations establish a library of aids that can be hired. This is suitable for people with temporary or changing needs who only need the aid for a short time. For example, a person with a progressive disability may need a manual wheelchair for a short time and then an electronic wheelchair.</p>
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Equipment	<p>Expensive equipment is seldom in use full time. Increasing the number of organisations that have access to a piece of equipment reduces the costly need of each company to acquire the same equipment.</p> <p>Many organisations have equipment such as minibuses, high-low beds and various lifting devices that are not in use full time. Small equipment includes display boards, audiovisual equipment and catering items.</p>
Facilities	<p>Most organisations have venues, training rooms, meeting rooms, respite accommodation or recreational facilities that are not in use full time.</p> <p>Some organisations may only use training rooms and meeting rooms on certain days of the week, so they are available at other times, including weekends and evenings. Other organisations may have respite accommodation that is not used at full capacity.</p>
Training	<p>Organisations run training programs for their staff, such as work health and safety, first aid or managing volunteers. There is often capacity for extra participants so that people can receive the latest industry-based training, and costs can be shared or reduced.</p> <p>Most organisations require specific training before employees start work. Community group members can be invited to share in this training.</p>
Sharing knowledge	<p>Sharing knowledge and supporting other groups and individuals is part of the work role of a community services worker. Generalist or specialist staff can provide secondary consultations, advice, information, debriefing or mentoring to community groups and their members to ensure appropriate support for a person and members of groups. Remember, the information you share must be up to date and accurate, as this will avoid unnecessary time wasting for all involved.</p>

It is important to consider the resources a network can provide, such as people, materials and services. Different networks will have different levels of resources. If you belong to a small organisation with very limited information resources, access to another organisation's resources may be valuable. For example, some networks have a large number of staff working in a variety of capacities, such as social workers, mental health professionals, doctors and other health professionals. Refer to the table below for ways you can access resources and also contribute resources.

Resources you can access

Resources may be made available to you in different ways; for example, through:

- professional expertise that exists within a network
- libraries that provide research and document delivery services
- extra services that will allow you to meet the needs of those you support
- mentoring and training opportunities.



Resources you can contribute

Be practical. Some networks require organisations to take turns hosting network meetings and providing administrative support. Small organisations can join with others to host meetings. Networks should operate on principles of equality, which means recognising that smaller organisations cannot always make the same contributions as larger ones due to time, funds and resources. Resources you can contribute include:

- knowledge
- facilities
- equipment
- skilled volunteers.

Issues to consider when resources are shared

There are many advantages to sharing resources, but logistical and cost issues should be considered. It is important to consider these issues and establish appropriate procedures before sharing resources. Here are some of the factors you need to consider.

Service fees

A fee/cost structure should be established to ensure the organisation runs within budget. Use received fees to maintain or replace the resource used. Put fee-for-service arrangements in writing to avoid misunderstandings (e.g. establish a price list for the services offered and then invoice on use). Consult with your supervisor or the organisation’s business administrator to determine fees.

Borrowers’ registers

When sharing aids and equipment, a booking system is usually required. Some organisations may establish a borrowers’ register (similar to a library system) where equipment and aids are signed in and out. If any costs are involved, they should be agreed in writing and invoiced through the organisation’s finance system.

Intellectual property

Where resources are intellectual or knowledge based (e.g. a brochure or a training guide), copyright and ownership must be observed. It is also necessary to ensure that organisational policy and procedures such as privacy and confidentiality are followed.

Terms of reference

If the sharing of resources involves a joint project, subcontracting or research, terms of reference should be established to define the project’s roles, responsibilities, relationships and scope. If subcontracting, a formal agreement should be determined and signed by all parties.



Example

Share information and resources with other organisations

Tamara works for a community organisation. The organisation is located in an inner-city area where there are relatively high proportions of people from different cultural groups. Tamara belongs to a network that is made up of organisations providing community and welfare services in the local area. Member organisations include housing, youth, families, AOD, mental health and culture-specific services.

Tamara can make a valuable contribution to the network by providing information about the needs and interests of different cultural groups. She talks about different cultural needs and, when appropriate, helps workers from other organisations and support areas within the network. She also frequently liaises with the various community service organisations in the network to provide services.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Identify three considerations to take into account before sharing information with a collaborator.

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Question 2

Explain one reason why it is important to avoid duplication of services.

Question 3

List two benefits that an organisation can gain from sharing services rather than duplicating services.

Question 4

Provide three examples of resources that can be accessed through network participation.

2D

Maintain currency and accessibility of information

Information shared in networks must be current as this will assist all organisations in providing quality care without error.

As with all workplace activities, networking and collaboration rely on up-to-date, relevant and accessible information. Several techniques can be used to maintain the currency and accessibility of information so that networking and collaborative activities are productive and beneficial for all.

Maintain currency of information

Maintaining the currency of the information that you use and provide is vital when working collaboratively.

Providing services as a team depends on current information. For example, individual service plans and other documentation must be kept current at all times to ensure correct and efficient service provision. Incorrect or out-of-date information can result in delays, duplication of services or can cause harm to the person receiving support.

Receiving information or being offered resources that are out of date or unsuitable can be counterproductive. The information provided must be current, correct and recently prepared. It must also be appropriate and applicable to the situation for which it is required. Check that content is current, accurate, represents the current thinking and views of the industry, and will meet the needs of those receiving the information.

Keeping current information regarding regulations and legislation is critical and ensures the provision of best practice services. When providing information to networks or collaborative partners, work as a team with respect for others. Always provide information that has been checked, verified and is current.

The following page lists some strategies to ensure the advice, materials and information is current.



Maintaining currency and relevancy

- Ensure you have the most recent copies of your organisation’s marketing and promotional material by subscribing to services, as new information can be emailed to you as it comes.
- Keep the most recent copy of your regional community services directory and other service information on file.
- Periodically review files, folders and your address book to keep them current.
- Actively participate in formal and informal networks.
- Keep informed about current issues and information via industry journals, websites and organisational newsletters or bulletins.
- Give feedback if you identify information in policies and procedures that needs to be updated.
- Participate in professional development activities such as conferences, workshops and training.
- Update information immediately according to your workplace’s procedures.
- Schedule time to keep your records current and complete.

Accessibility of information

Information needs to be accessible to be used efficiently to collaborate and improve services.

You need to ensure that the information you provide is only accessible to the appropriate people. People’s privacy and confidentiality must be upheld at all times, so must the organisation’s professional standards regarding information-sharing.

There are many ways to ensure that the information used and provided for collaboration is appropriately maintained and accessible. These strategies may be built into the workplace’s information management procedures.

Here are some ways to facilitate the accessibility of the information used and provided to collaborative partners.

Support access needs

- Information you provide should be accessible to all people, including those with access needs, language and cultural differences, and different levels of ability.
- It may involve using translators and providing information in different formats to cater to levels of ability and other access needs.

Correct storage

- Your workplace will have a procedure for storing different types of information, which you should follow in all instances.
- It may involve following file-naming conventions, using multiple storage locations and keeping multiple copies. All physical documentation should be stored safely and securely, and all electronic information needs to be easily identifiable to others who may need it.



Tailor to the audience

- Consider the needs of your audience and tailor the way you present the information to them. For example, avoid jargon and make sure all information is concise, clear and logically ordered. This practice ensures that others can readily access the information and use it efficiently.
- Always use correct spelling and grammar, and consider how others will interpret the information. In some cases, a task requires detailed, exhaustive information, while a summary will do in others.

Use technology

- Many information-sharing technologies can facilitate easy access between networks and collaborative partners. For example, cloud storage and file-sharing software applications make it easier for collaborators to access common information securely.

For more information on tailoring communication to meet cultural needs, visit:

aspirelr.link/saq-cultural-needs

This information is particularly relevant to the health services industry but can be applied to the community services sector.

An effective partnership or collaboration relies on accessible information to ensure efficiency. Having accessible information shows respect for other people's time and supports effective collaborative processes.

Here are some common examples of when accessible information is essential and why.

People's changing needs

Keeping current, accurate and appropriately accessible information is important to support people's changing needs. For example, when meeting with someone to whom you provide support, any changing needs, preferences or goals need to be recorded appropriately. This is so that others who work with the person have access to the information in order to avoid mistakes and duplicated services.

Teamwork

Working in a team often involves several people working on different elements of a single task. All team members need to understand their role and have access to the information that they need to undertake their part of the task. If one team member holds onto all the information, other team members cannot complete their tasks.

Documenting and monitoring

In many cases, processes and work activities need to be documented so that they can be appropriately monitored and reviewed. Ensuring that the appropriate people are monitoring and reviewing the information means that gaps can be identified and that all processes can be continuously improved.

Store information

Storage systems need to allow for different formats of information and be clearly understood so that information is accessed easily. Organisations have policies and procedures in place to create an understanding of how information is to be stored. In some organisations, it may be your responsibility to maintain sufficient supplies of information to meet demand.

Here are some specific details for storing information in the workplace.

Storage systems	Storage information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical storage systems include paper-based filing cabinets, electronic management systems, a website and/or intranet and locked storage rooms or cupboards. • Information may be confidential or in the public domain. Whatever system is in place, information must be readily available to those who need it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always follow organisational policy and procedures regarding duty of care, privacy and confidentiality. For example, confidential information such as health or medical records should be kept in lockable filing cabinets. • Organisations may use an electronic security system, allowing confidential files to be accessed using a password. Workers may be required to sign a register to access the information.

Example

Maintain currency and accessibility of information

Nandina works at an advocacy service. She coordinates a program that focuses on the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. She receives a lot of requests from organisations for information about services and the law regarding disability issues. Copies of service brochures have been made available in different languages as Nandina is bilingual and uses translators when required.

Nandina produces a resource document that outlines commonly asked questions about the law, discrimination and guardians' role. To ensure this resource is up to date and accurate, she liaises with the local community legal service.

Nandina also works with people with disability and their carers, so she is aware of issues that are important to them. She makes sure she keeps abreast of the relevant legislation. Any materials and resources that are developed are reviewed and edited by the service's consumer reference group.



Practice Task 6

Question 1

Describe two strategies you could use to ensure that information distributed is current.

Question 2

Provide three ways that you can ensure advice, materials and information are accessible to intended audiences.

2 E

Define and document collaboration, and negotiate with relevant people

Negotiating terms of collaborative relationships ensures that the interests of all parties are protected.

Good collaborative partnerships are based on a thorough understanding of the values, limitations and dynamics of how these relationships function. Clear role boundaries, negotiated outcomes and good documentation all contribute to effective and efficient networks that are committed to excellent service provision.

Define the type and level of collaboration

There are several different types and levels of collaboration appropriate for other tasks, individuals and organisations.

Defining the type and level of collaboration is essential as this ensures that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities and sets the parameters of the relationship. In some cases, this may involve signing contracts or other legal documentation.

Levels of collaboration

- Networking (sharing contacts and some information)
- Cooperation (supporting colleagues and sharing resources)
- Partnership (negotiated joint action)
- Collaboration (working closely to fulfil a specific need or task)
- Strategic alliances
- Collective impact initiatives

Identify objectives and level of collaboration

Before entering into collaboration, define your objectives and the level of collaboration you require and can offer.

These parameters will help you recognise the partnership's limitations and help clarify the dynamics of how it operates. For example, if you are negotiating a formal partnership with a larger organisation, the limitations of what you can offer need to be clearly understood, and although the partnership may be based on the value of equality, the dynamics of how and which resources are to be shared needs to be clearly defined.



Questions to ask before contributing to a network or collaboration

- Do I have clearly defined objectives?
- Have I identified all of the key collaborators and stakeholders?
- Have I defined the type and level of collaboration that I need?
- Have I defined the type and level of collaboration that I can reasonably offer?
- Do my collaborators and I have shared values and understanding of how collaboration works?
- Have I considered the limitations of this collaboration?
- Have I identified and negotiated how the collaboration will occur (i.e. the dynamics)?

Develop strategies for networking and collaboration

It is important to reflect on why you are engaging in this networking and/or collaboration. Having a clear idea about the purpose of the activity helps you to define the desired outcome.

With a clear purpose and outcome, you can evaluate different strategies and decide on the best fit for your needs.

For example, if you are networking to find services to share resources, a networking strategy that involves forming nationwide contacts may not be the best fit. Here are some networking and collaboration strategies that you can consider to meet your needs.

Networking and collaboration strategies

- Work with individual colleagues within your organisation.
- Work with individual colleagues external to your organisation.
- Network online with professional groups.
- Partner with another organisation.
- Mentor or be mentored by another individual.
- Form a task force or collaboration to meet a specific need.
- Collaborate with individuals or groups outside your industry.

Negotiate collaboration strategies with relevant people

Effective collaborations value participation, clear communication, feedback and suggestions from all stakeholders.



When negotiating a new collaboration, identify all the relevant stakeholders involved and ask for their input. All the people directly involved in the partnership need to be consulted in negotiating the collaborative strategies being considered. All collaborators need to contribute to ensure that the most beneficial method is chosen. This inclusion also demonstrates a commitment to full and equal participation that shows respect and encourages everyone to be involved.

Once you have developed some preferred collaboration strategies, start negotiating with other relevant people. Successful collaboration is mutually beneficial, so being clear about your needs and proposed strategies helps others evaluate whether the collaboration will work for them.

In this context, relevant people include potential collaborators, any colleagues who may want to be involved, your supervisor and the people for whom you provide services. In many cases, people with support needs will be involved in the collaboration, but if they are not involved directly, consider whether informing them about your progress and including them in the construction of a collaborative strategy supports their rights and self-esteem.

There are many different formats that you can use to negotiate with people, depending on the specific situation and the needs of the people involved. Here are some formats for negotiation you should consider.

Face-to-face meetings	Make sure that everyone’s access needs are met and that the meetings are documented.
Feedback and submissions	If working with an established network or large group, feedback can result in a wide range of responses.
Review	Document a proposal and send it to all participants for their review, suggestions and feedback.
Brainstorming	Free-form discussions that allow for ideas to be generated can lead to more formal negotiations and positions.

Video: Negotiating win–win outcomes

To understand how to negotiate to achieve a win–win outcome, visit: aspirelr.link/yt-negotiate-win-win

Pay particular attention to the five steps of ‘principled negotiation’.



Negotiation skills

Working in collaboration with others involves negotiation at all stages.

Learning how to negotiate is an important professional skill. Negotiating strategies with a collaborative partner sets a solid base for working effectively together.

Some of the key features of negotiation include the following.

Keys to good negotiation

- Listen (use active listening techniques)
- Know what you need, want and can offer
- Confirm what others need, want and can offer
- Show respect and value everyone's contributions
- Communicate clearly
- Compromise (create a win-win situation)
- Acknowledge challenges and other people's needs
- Be open to new ideas, approaches and suggestions

For more information on different negotiation styles, visit:

aspirelr.link/5-negotiation-styles

Document collaboration

All collaborative decisions need to be appropriately documented, including the type and level of collaboration undertaken.

This documentation allows you to review the collaboration and improve your next collaborative partnerships. In some cases, documentation is required for legal purposes such as confidentiality and resource sharing. Also, negotiated positions, outcomes and proposed collaborative strategies need to be clearly documented and communicated to all the participants for their review. This ensures that everyone has been heard and that you will be working from a common starting point.

For example, if you are negotiating a partnership with another organisation, document each part of the negotiations so that everyone involved understands their role and progress can be monitored. This might include someone taking minutes during team meetings and then sending the minutes to each participant for their records. Any decisions taken can then be recorded and referred back to in case of disagreement or confusion later. Remember, collaboration is to work effectively with others, so clear communication and documentation will facilitate this process.



Example

Define, document and negotiate collaboration

Nadine and Marco are meeting to discuss collaborating on a joint project. They work for disability support organisations in neighbouring areas and investigate whether they could pool resources, information or activities. They have agreed to meet at Nadine’s workplace to show Marco around and introduce him to some of the other staff. While Nadine takes notes, together they work out the terms of their professional relationship, and decide to meet up fortnightly to explore collaborative options. Both agree to commit to consulting with their respective teams and creating some proposed outcomes for their collaboration.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

List three levels of collaboration.



Question 2

List at least three questions you could ask that may help you identify the values, limitations and dynamics of a network or collaboration.

Question 3

Explain why collaborative strategies should be documented and communicated to participants for their review.



Summary

- Gathering, maintaining and reviewing information about potential and current networks and collaborators is vital to ensure efficient service delivery.
- Keep an up-to-date contact list for all possible collaborators and networks that could benefit key stakeholders involved in your work activities.
- You can always initiate new relationships with collaborators and networks to extend services and to innovate.
- Polite, professional relationships rely on good communication and mutually beneficial interactions.
- Information and resources should be shared with collaborators, team members and organisations, where possible, to avoid service duplication. However, sharing must consider important factors, such as privacy, confidentiality and accessibility.
- Information needs to be updated and maintained for currency. This ensures efficient collaboration and effective service provision.
- Information must also be easily accessible to appropriate people.
- Before entering into collaboration, define your needs and preferred strategies, and communicate them to relevant people. Listen to their needs and preferences, and negotiate an approach that creates a win-win outcome for all.
- All aspects of the collaboration need to be documented appropriately.



Learning Checkpoint 2

Develop collaboration strategies

Part A

1. Identify three techniques a service worker can use to:

- gather relevant service information

- review service information.

2. Explain how initiating relationships with inter-sectoral professionals and organisations is different from initiating relationships with intra-sectoral professionals and organisations.



3. Explain how duplication in service delivery can be avoided when collaborating with other organisations.

4. Provide four strategies used to maintain the currency of information.

5. List three considerations that need to be defined and documented when negotiating collaborative arrangements.



6. Provide one reason why it is beneficial to create an interrelationship with another organisation.

7. Define the term 'stakeholder' and provide three examples.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Muhammad works for a local charity providing food to those in need. Due to high demands for the charity's services, he must expand his network so that the organisation can access more donations to meet these demands.

1. Identify the type of service Muhammad works for and explain your reasoning.



- 2.** Muhammad identifies a local network that includes representatives from social housing, mental health, drug and alcohol, and family services. This network meets every third Tuesday at a local community centre. List two considerations he must make when sharing information about his service.

Muhammad is attending his fourth network meeting, and a new member of the network has arrived. Max is a supermarket representative from outside the local jurisdiction. He recently established his business in a new housing estate. He is very keen to participate in the network as it will draw attention to his business and give it a positive presence in the community and surrounding areas.

- 3.** It is obvious to Muhammad that Max can provide food donations and he sees Max as an important network connection. Provide two examples of what Muhammad can offer in return.

- 4.** Max loves the idea of connecting with Muhammad, and they decide to meet again and talk further about a potential formal partnership. Identify two negotiation strategies they should use to support a successful partnership between service and organisation.



Topic 3: Work collaboratively

- 3A Identify opportunities that meet client, personal and organisational goals
- 3B Plan and implement integrated projects and service delivery
- 3C Liaise with staff from relevant organisations on a formal and informal basis



3A Identify opportunities that meet client, personal and organisational goals

To achieve your networking goals, you must define your goals and then seek opportunities that will support goal achievement.

While some networking and collaborative activities serve the purpose of general support, connection and access, other collaborations may serve particular purposes and meet specific goals. To use networking and collaborative activities in a targeted way, begin by defining specific goals to be met through collaboration. In defining your goals, the goals of the people you support, and your organisation's goals, you will be able to identify opportunities where collaborations may assist in meeting or exceeding these goals.

Relevant networking and collaborative opportunities will arise from engaging with established networks in the community services industry. As a support worker, you have the opportunity to share your skills and expertise with others and learn from other people's experiences by working collaboratively. However, to use these networks to meet specific goals, you need to understand the vision and purpose of these industry networks and recognise how you can participate in them.

Client, personal and organisational goals

Helping people with support needs to meet their goals is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a support worker.

You and your organisation will also have goals that need to be met. In many cases networking and collaboration will be used to meet all of these goals, but to succeed, you must first define your goals carefully. Always check that client goals have not changed before utilising the benefits of a network to assist the person. This will ensure your participation is relevant for your purposes and for the goals the person is trying to achieve. It will also help ensure that the stakeholders you seek advice from have the relevant expertise and knowledge to assist. In relation to your organisation's goals and your personal goals, it is important to ensure these align with the network, so it may be worth participating in more than one network as this will broaden your reach of resources.

Here are some of the important points to consider when identifying these various types of goals.



Client goals

As a primary collaborator, you may need to help people receiving support identify and define their own goals that support self-esteem, self-empowerment, and their rights to self-determination. Check to ensure you understand their goals and whether these have changed.

Goals may include:

- access to specific activities or services
- learning to budget
- gaining increased independence
- staying sober
- community participation
- finding employment.
- getting a qualification

Organisational goals

Helping to meet your organisation's goals is part of your daily work activities. How you are required to achieve those goals will be detailed in:

- the organisation's mission, vision and values statements
- policies and procedures
- job descriptions
- budgets
- performance indicators.

Personal goals

As a community service worker, you are expected to participate in professional development and training, which is ongoing throughout your career. You may be required to update certain skillsets, such as providing first aid or learning new ways to work with people accessing services and meeting their individual needs. Your professional development and job satisfaction are important goals that need to be considered.

Examples include:

- obtaining a new qualification
- computer operating systems training
- cultural awareness
- leadership skills
- work, health and safety practices, e.g. manual handling
- on-the-job skills training
- self-reflection.

Identify networking and collaborative opportunities that meet goals

With a clearly defined set of personal, organisational and your clients' goals, you can begin to assess and consider the range of different networking and collaborative opportunities available.

Being strategic about how various networks and collaborations will help you meet specific goals allows you to identify which opportunities to create and follow. Good research is vital to help discover a range of networking and collaborative options.

While some collaborations and networks need to be built from the ground up, using established networks can be highly efficient to provide best practice services, resources and information. For example, if you need the services of a specific allied health professional, contacting the national network of accredited practitioners is an efficient way of using that network. In addition, you could contribute to the network by adding a recommendation to its website.



Examples of established networks that may help you meet various goals

- People with Disability Australia
- Disability Services Australia
- National Disability Services
- Primary health networks

Video: Health networks

Watch the following video to see an example of a health network that works with consumers and providers: [aspirelr.link/yt-health-network](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aspirelr.link/yt-health-network)

Pay particular attention to how the network reaches and supports different stakeholders.



Identify vision and purpose of networking and collaboration

With a clear set of goals and detailed knowledge of the range of established networks and collaborative opportunities relevant to your work, you can begin to refine which options to choose.

Understanding the vision - the goals a network is trying to achieve, and the purpose of a network - the reason a network was established, will help you to identify the networks that are most useful to you because they align with your reasons and goals for participating.

For example, you might have a clear goal to improve the health outcomes of a particular person. You have identified several established networks that could provide opportunities to support this goal. In your assessment, you might define the vision and purpose of the proposed collaboration with the person and choose a network that provides access to a support group and medical services, as this helps the person improve their physical health outcomes and their mental health social contact.

Here are some other factors to consider when identifying the vision and purpose of collaboration or networking opportunities.

Practicality	Is this opportunity likely to support goals, outcomes and preferences in practical ways? Can they be measured and documented?
Clarity	Do you have a clear idea of your vision and purpose for the collaboration? Does this match the specific goal?
Alignment	Does the proposed network or collaborator have a vision/mission statement? Does this match your vision and purpose?
Innovation	Sometimes, collaborating with a group or individual with a different vision or purpose can create innovative approaches.



Example

Identify opportunities that meet goals

Fiona is a support worker appointed by her organisation to assess various options to increase its participation in the local community. Her organisation wants to be more visible in the local community to reach more people and investigate possible local fundraising opportunities.

Fiona has contacted the local council for information about council-run activities such as events, markets and charity activities. She has researched the local newspapers and is contacting a journalist regarding writing a story on the organisation and its activities. She has also reached out to her colleagues, professional network and friends and family for ideas about being more involved in the local community.

Much to her surprise, Fiona receives an email from a local business that has heard that she is looking for collaborations in the local community. The business proposes a fundraising pop-up shop selling its products, with part of the profits going to Fiona's organisation.

Fiona is hesitant about the idea at first as she is concerned that the business may want just to make money using her organisation's good name. However, in researching the local business and networking with the owner, she realises this would be a great opportunity to increase her organisation's local exposure. It turns out that the owner has a niece who is being provided services by Fiona's organisation, and the owner wants to show his support for its work.

Even better, some of her colleagues and people she provides services to are interested in staffing the pop-up shop, which would offer social opportunities for them and increase their community participation.



Practice Task 8

Question 1

List three factors you must consider when identifying relevant networking opportunities that meet client, personal and organisational goals.

Question 2

Suggest one thing that needs to be checked before considering the goals of a person receiving support.

Question 3

Explain the difference between vision and purpose. Provide examples in your answer.



Question 4

List three opportunities for participation in an existing network.

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3 B

Plan and implement integrated projects and service delivery

Careful planning will ensure that participants working on integrated projects have a clear understanding of the tasks to be carried out to achieve a common goal.

To collaborate means to network and pool information and expertise. It can also involve working closely with collaborators on specific projects. This involves an integrated approach to project design and management and shared responsibilities for reaching a particular outcome.

These collaborations can be incredibly productive as long as the correct foundations are laid. Clear goals, intended outcomes and defined roles (based on the structure of the networks being used) are vital to ensure services can be delivered in an integrated way that serves all collaborators.

Plan integrated projects that rely on networking and collaboration

Working together with another organisation, team or collaborator on a project to achieve a common goal is known as an integrated project.

Integrated projects are a great way to broaden the scope of service, meet a specific need or develop a new activity, procedure or service. For example, organisations often work together to provide services to people with complex needs such as multiple disabilities. However, to work effectively with networks and collaborators on an integrated project, you need to implement strong project management skills.

Initially, identify the goal that you are trying to achieve and develop a relationship with a network or collaborator who can help you reach that goal. In many cases, small organisations will provide joint services or deliver one-off activities (such as promotional activities or training).

Here are the basic stages of project management that you will follow when working with collaborators on an integrated project.

1. Identify	Identify the goal of the project. This can be done independently, and then you can seek collaborators, or established collaborators can identify a goal together.
2. Define	The scope of the project needs to be clearly defined. Goals and proposed outcomes need to be set, and appropriate information needs to be gathered (funding, time frames and so on). Collaborators should work together to define and plan the project in the most efficient manner.



3. Combine	At this stage, action strategies need to be confirmed, and all collaborators' roles need to be clearly delineated and defined. Resources need to be allocated, and ways to avoid service duplication need to be considered.
4. Coordinate	Once action strategies have been decided on by consensus, the specifics of the project need to be coordinated and documented. Everyone needs to be clear about their role and responsibility, and feedback needs to be given and implemented.
5. Review	All projects need to be monitored and reviewed to identify challenges and successes and to make adjustments as needed. All collaborators and stakeholders need to provide feedback and suggestions, which must be thoroughly assessed and evaluated.

Video: Project planning

Watch the following video to learn about project planning:
aspirelr.link/yt-project-planning

Think about projects you have been involved in and compare the steps you took with the processes outlined in the video.



Plan structure of integrated projects

All project stages require clear communication and planning between collaborators.

Initially, the scope and structure of the project will need to be established, which is often determined by the structure of the network being used. For example, if it is a joint project sponsored by a large, national organisation but carried out by a smaller, local service, its structure will reflect this relationship.

Plan the structure of integrated projects carefully and in close collaboration with all the parties involved. Good planning promotes efficient service delivery. When working on integrated projects, planning is vital to ensure that the project's collaborators work together on the project's goals. A project manager coordinates the project and provides a focal point for collaborators to communicate their needs, concerns and suggestions.

Here are the structural components of integrated projects to consider:

Identify needs	Meet with stakeholders to identify their needs and prioritise
Project objectives	Set objectives or goals that are to be achieved from implementing the project
Assign tasks	Break the overall project into tasks and assign to project participants
Deadlines	Set due dates for tasks to be completed



Define roles and responsibilities	Identify the individuals who will perform each task with clearly defined roles
Resources	Determine resources required for the project and where they will be sourced. This includes any costs that need to be paid, venues and promotional material.
Develop a communication plan	In your communication plan, consider how often the group will meet to discuss progress, how participants will be updated on progress, and methods used to communicate. Project participants should agree on the chosen methods.
Review	Has a monitoring, assessment and reviewing procedure been built into the project? Who is doing the review, and when? How is feedback sought and assessed?
Debrief	When the project is completed, all collaborators are debriefed about their experiences, and are these communicated to all parties? What have the collaborators learnt from the project, and how can this affect service delivery in the future?

Implement integrated projects that rely on networking and collaboration

Planning an integrated project takes time, good communication and a commitment to working together to meet the project’s defined goals.

Just like planning, the implementation stage of an integrated project requires excellent communication between all parties.

When you implement an action, it needs to be observed, monitored and reviewed, and any required changes have to be communicated to the entire project group. Often, a project manager oversees the implementation. For example, if two services are working together to expand their reach and provide integrated disability and mental health services, a project manager may be appointed from each service. These two individuals will then oversee their respective organisation’s contributions to the project and ensure that the project’s stages are integrated effectively. This may involve the managers meeting weekly to review the implementation and to communicate their needs, concerns and suggestions for further action.



Example

Plan and implement integrated projects and service delivery

Here is an example of how an integrated project action plan might be outlined and documented.

Participants	Goals	Actions	Timeline for implementation	Person responsible	Reviewed Y/N suggestions?
XYZ Service (Project manager, David)	To share translation services for workplace activities	Investigate language skills of staff at both services	One week from commencement, via staff emails	David and Penny to communicate findings at weekly joint meetings	Y. Completed ahead of time
ABC Service (Project manager, Penny)		Identify community needs regarding translations at both services	Two weeks from commencement, via council demographics, service reports and feedback from stakeholders	David and Penny to separately collate and communicate findings at a weekly joint meeting	Y. Completed behind schedule. More time is needed for this stage to allow for more feedback from stakeholders
		Identify gaps in required language services	Three weeks from commencement, via meeting to discuss and collate information from the previous two steps	David and Penny to communicate findings at a weekly joint meeting	To be completed
		Research funding and external resources	Four weeks from commencement, via independent research according to the task	David to research funding available Penny to research external resources and providers Findings to be communicated at the weekly joint meeting	To be completed



Participants	Goals	Actions	Timeline for implementation	Person responsible	Reviewed Y/N suggestions?
		Coordinate translation services	Five weeks from commencement, via twice-weekly planning meetings, culminating in a combined staff meeting before implementation	David and Penny working jointly to co-chair the joint staff meeting	To be completed

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Explain the term ‘integrated project’.

Question 2

When collaborating with another organisation, at which step of project management would you confirm the action strategies?

**Question 3**

Number each step from 1 to 7 in the order you would follow to manage an integrated project.

	Define roles and responsibilities
	Review
	Identify needs and project objectives
	Develop a communication plan
	Debrief
	Determine resources required
	Assign tasks and deadlines

3C

Liaise with staff from relevant organisations on a formal and informal basis

Collaboration relies on your ability to use formal and informal techniques to form strong and productive working relationships.

Working in collaboration with others is not without its challenges. It includes the ability to liaise, cooperate and interact with staff from other organisations and groups in a way that will ensure you and your organisation benefit from participation. You are likely to encounter a wide range of personalities and levels of expertise in your networks and collaborations. Understanding how to interact professionally helps to form strong working relationships where innovative partnerships can flourish. Liaising with staff and colleagues is another form of professional communication, relying on good communication skills, mutual respect and courtesy.

Liaise with key stakeholders from other organisations

Effective communication is essential in establishing and maintaining links within your organisation and with other services.

This ensures services are responsive, well-coordinated and do not duplicate each other.

Key connections and communication relationships include those between you and:

- other workers in your organisation
- organisations that provide the same type of services
- organisations from other service sectors.

Creating good working relationships with staff from other organisations takes time and commitment. Many of these interactions will occur formally, such as attending meetings, conferences and workshops; first contacts by phone, email or face-to-face; and introductions via other staff, colleagues or professionals. Specific examples include industry conferences, making referrals and working with health experts, translators and mediators. Aside from formal interactions with staff, there will be opportunities to participate with other professionals on a more casual basis. This may include meeting someone in passing, participating in a workshop or attending a professional social event. Informal interactions that create good impressions can lead to formal collaborations.



Whatever method of communication you choose to use, treat all others as valued and respected professionals. Remember that your ultimate goal is to work together to provide the best possible services and care that will only be achieved through collaborating with others.

Here are elements to successfully liaising with staff from inside your organisation or other organisations.

Mutual respect	Respect the people you are working with, and look for ways to give as well as receive. Be open to other people's time frames, preferred methods of contact and needs. Offer your assistance, where appropriate, and return favours.
Preparedness	Gather all the information you need to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. If you do not have information ready or require approval or consent before moving forward, give the person a time frame for getting back to them.
Communication	Demonstrate active listening, professional communication and openness.
Presentation	Professional presentation is important when representing yourself and the organisation. This applies to personal presentation, documentation, emails, social media and other forms of visual presentation.

Questioning techniques

Asking the right question is essential for effective communication and gaining the required information from other professionals.

Your questions should always be asked in an open manner that invites the other person to respond. The other person should not feel like they are being cross-examined, judged or patronised.

Some common questioning techniques and when to use them are summarised here.

Closed-ended questions
Closed questions require a very short or single-word answer, such as yes or no.
Open-ended questions
Open questions are phrased to receive a much longer answer than a closed question. They allow people to express their thoughts and opinions.
Probing questions
Probing questions are an extension of open questions. You want to know more details and information about the topic you are discussing. Probing questions clarify the details of what you have heard.



Leading questions

Leading questions are designed to influence the other person to your way of thinking. A leading question will include the direction the question asker wants to go in. They are structured as a question rather than a statement so that the listener still has freedom in their response.

Hypothetical questions

Hypothetical questions are asked to probe a specific situation further. They are usually used to consider future and possible scenarios.

Active listening

Active listening means that you are interested in hearing what the other person is saying and are responding appropriately.

It also helps to build trust and connect with those you are sharing information with, and can quickly open opportunities for collaboration

There are six techniques you must use when being an active listener which are described below. You may find that different situations benefit from a particular listening approach.

Attentive	Being attentive is placing your complete focus on the speaker. You give time to respond, and do not cut off the speaker. When possible, you also ignore any interruptions.
Minimal encouragers	Minimal encouragers are signals to show that you are paying attention to the speaker. You may use words like 'uh-huh', 'okay', 'hmm', or nod. By using minimal encouragers you are not intruding – the speaker is talking with minimal interruption and your utterances will encourage them to share more information.
Reflect	Reflective listening restates (paraphrases) what the speaker has said and is helpful for the confirmation of a message. Examples: "So, you think that is a good service" and "You seem pretty impressed".
Clarify	Clarifying involves using open-ended questions to show you understand what the person is saying or to check that you have understood correctly. Here are a few sentence openers that can help you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Tell me more about..." • "If I am clear, you are telling me that..." • "Can you further explain..."
Summarise	Summarising is restating what has been said in your own words. This technique will confirm to the speaker you have taken in what they have said by repeating back to them the key points of the discussion.
Withhold judgment	To be an active listener means you are open minded. Do not judge the speaker even if you do not agree with their ideas or points of view.



Other communication protocols

There are several other protocols that you should adhere to when communicating with collaborators.

The following are some common protocols that are found in all support worker roles, as discussed here.

Seek permission

Request permission before using personal information. If you wish to use or share someone's personal information, you must first seek their permission. When requesting permission, explain how and why you want to use their details. If you intend to quote what someone has said or written, you must gain their permission.

Meet your duty of care

Observe duty of care. While communicating information, you must observe the duty of care you have to people. This means protecting them from potential risk of harm. Before you communicate information, consider if it has duty of care implications. For example, discussing that a person lives alone may breach their safety.

Maintain confidentiality

Any personal information about people is highly sensitive and must be kept confidential. This includes information that is communicated internally. For example, it is never acceptable to talk about a person's personal details where other people may overhear. Ensure personal files are locked away securely.

Respect privacy

Respect other people's privacy and personal space. This includes not interrupting people while they are with others and not invading other people's personal space. When working with people in a sensitive situation, take steps to ensure no interruptions occur; for example, switch off mobile phones or, if appropriate, lock the door.

Respect people's time

Accept that people are not always available. You and your colleagues cannot always be available to your network. There may be times when you are unavailable because you are with people or have other work commitments. Accept that people cannot always be available and arrange a more suitable time for communication.

Follow up

Do what you say you will do in a timely and efficient manner. If you cannot carry through with actions you have committed to, notify the people concerned and make alternative arrangements.



Here are some basic do's and don'ts for informal interactions.

Do's	Don'ts
Be an active listener	Never gossip
Respect people's time	Do not hold people up
Request help when needed	Never make demands
Take the time for small talk and greetings	Do not ignore the real topic
Support people's access needs	Do not monopolise the interaction
Be friendly and approachable	Never assume that people have access
Be professional	Do not make promises you cannot keep

Example

Liaise with staff from relevant organisations

James is attending a conference with other community service professionals. During the day he attends lectures, workshops and seminars with a wide range of industry experts, colleagues and professionals. James wears his name badge, takes time to interact with other people and passes out his business card while making positive connections with others. He takes other people's details down and follows up in a few days with an email to reintroduce himself.

In the evenings, many of the conference attendees eat dinner together and James attends. This is a great opportunity to get to know some other people in the industry more informally. He is friendly and open but remembers that he is representing his organisation, so he does not gossip or drink alcohol.

By asking people about themselves and their work and being genuinely interested in their responses, James comes away from the conference with a broader network and many new contacts that he is looking forward to working with more closely.



Practice Task 10

Question 1

Identify the four key elements to a formal liaison with another organisation.

Question 2

Explain how you would use 'active listening' when liaising with staff on an informal basis.

Question 3

List four questioning styles that a service worker can use to support effective communication with staff from other organisations.



Summary

- Making the most of a network or collaborative opportunity involves having clear goals.
- Professional goals, personal goals and organisational goals are all important considerations when selecting collaborations.
- Clearly identifying your vision and purpose for the collaboration helps to identify the best options.
- Many collaborative projects involve integrated service delivery.
- Following project management techniques ensures that collaborators can plan, implement and document their integrated projects.
- Clear role boundaries based on the structure of the network or collaboration are vital to undertaking these projects effectively.
- Liaising with staff effectively involves forming and maintaining strong professional relationships.
- Effective liaison requires you to be positive, accessible and genuine in your interactions, in formal and informal settings.
- Use good communication skills and follow your workplace's communication protocols when liaising with staff internal and external to your organisation.



Learning Checkpoint 3

Work collaboratively

Part A

1. Describe the first step in identifying collaborative opportunities that meet client, personal and organisational goals.

2. Give one example of a client goal, an organisational goal and a personal goal.

3. Identify three factors in the scope component of project planning that should be considered.



4. Which of the following are steps in planning and managing an integrated project?
Tick all that apply.

- Document legal requirements of participants, including duty of care.
- Review and monitor the project, identifying any issues and successes, making adjustments where necessary.
- Identify the goal of the project.
- Define roles and responsibilities and allocate resources to avoid duplication of services.
- Define the scope of the project clearly.

5. Identify five active listening techniques a service worker should use when informally discussing the project with another staff member.

6. Provide three examples of ways that you can formally liaise with other staff.

7. Explain the importance of identifying the vision and purpose of established networks within your industry.



Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Thomas is a disability team coordinator for a local organisation that has been in operation for many years. With the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), he has contacted other NDIS providers because he wants to establish a new network. After conversing with each service he has made arrangements for the first network meeting and has sent out electronic invitations.

1. It is the day of the meeting and all NDIS attendees have arrived. Thomas wants to make a good impression and build trust and rapport with each participant. Explain how Thomas can do this by giving examples in your answer.

2. Geraldine has just received an email from Thomas about his network idea, and has been invited to attend a network meeting for a discussion. List the four key factors she would have considered relating to vision and purpose before deciding that she was going to act on his idea. Suggest a question she can ask herself for each factor.



3. After a lengthy discussion, the group has decided to organise a disability expo at the local shopping centre. This will give all the NDIS providers an opportunity to showcase their services as well as promote their network. The task will take a bit of planning, and everyone must be involved. Briefly outline what Thomas can do to ensure the project is implemented.

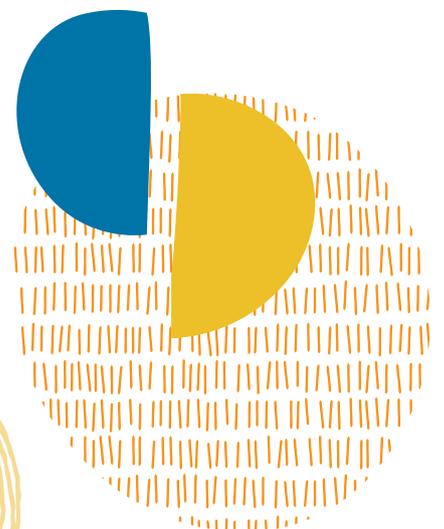
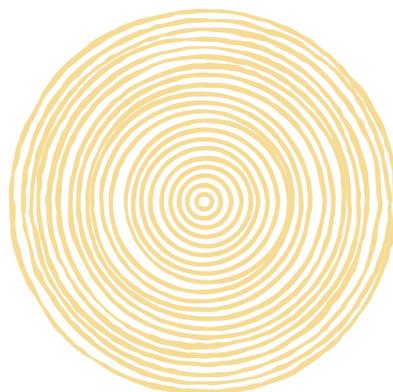
4. Thomas has been designated project manager for the disability service expo. Identify the nine key elements he will need to use to plan the project to ensure it runs smoothly and all participants contribute.

5. List the opportunities for participation that Thomas provided to network collaborators.



Topic 4: Represent the organisation

- 4A Promote a positive image of the organisation
- 4B Communicate the organisation's issues, policies and practices
- 4C Implement confidentiality measures that protect the client, organisation and network



4A

Promote a positive image of the organisation

As a representative of your organisation, you must strive to present a positive and professional image as this will help to build strong and prosperous networks.

All your networking and collaborative activities are opportunities for you to promote your organisation by presenting a positive image of the organisation, including its activities and its values such as high-quality service and care. This shows others that you take the work you do seriously by promoting best practices and that you value the work other organisations do within the sector.

When preparing for networking events or participating in networks, you will consciously be on your best behaviour, be neatly presented and be more alert to your communication and body language. All of this will be done intentionally to present yourself and your organisation in a positive light.

Of course, you also represent your organisation indirectly during your daily work tasks and routine communications with colleagues, people accessing services and/or support and other service providers, so stakeholders you talk to, care for and interact with will all receive an image of what your organisation stands for based on the actions you have taken and what you have communicated.

Here are some of the main reasons why promoting a positive image is an important part of your professional activities.

Advantages of promoting a positive image

- Demonstrates professionalism
- Builds morale in the team
- Helps advertise the organisation to people with support needs
- Promotes strong relationships with existing networks and collaborators
- Promotes the organisation to potential networks and collaborators
- Helps extend the reach of the organisation so that more people can be supported
- Creates a sense of community and achievement

For more information about promoting a positive image, visit this link:

aspirelr.link/strengthen-company-reputation

Responsibilities

When you participate in a network or as a collaborator, you have a number of responsibilities to the network and collaboration and the service you work for. Remember that you are a representative. Everything you say and do will impact



reputations in one way or another. Other people gain an impression of you and your organisation through your words and actions. Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

Your responsibilities	As a representative of your organisation, your responsibilities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintaining ethical and professional standards communicating in a clear and appropriate manner maintaining confidentiality adopting a collaborative rather than an adversarial approach adhering to network guidelines (e.g. treating all participants equally and informing network members if you are unable to attend a meeting).
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Demonstrate positivity

Part of managing a situation involves applying positive communication skills. This enhances your ability to develop and maintain relations with other workers and demonstrates your value as a potential collaborator focused on solving problems and achievement.

Small language changes can make a big difference when expressing positivity. Here are some examples of positive and negative ways of communicating.

A range of communication skills are required to establish and maintain links with other services and professionals.

Positive messages	Negative messages
"Good afternoon, I'm Amanda. I am a case manager for Best Care. It is lovely to meet you."	"Hi, I'm Amanda from Best Care."
"Let's make an appointment, so we have the time to answer each other's questions. What time works best for you?"	"I'm too busy."
"Let me find someone who can help you." Or: "I know someone who can help you. Here is their work number."	"I can't help you. Maybe you should ask someone else."
"That is an issue we should work together to address."	"That's a problem. Not sure how we overcome this."

Video: Business etiquette

Watch the following video on the basics of business etiquette:
aspirelr.link/business-etiquette

Think about the ways in which you can apply this to your communication with colleagues and network collaborators.





Part of managing any situation involves applying positive communication skills. This enhances your ability to establish and maintain links with other workers, networks and collaborators. Using effective communication skills is one of the methods you will use to promote a positive image of the organisation, and a very important one. Here are some other techniques to consider.

Be well-informed	Be informed about your organisation, its goals, services and projects. What is its place within the industry?
Think before speaking and acting	At all times, make sure that you are speaking and acting in a professional manner.
Self-reflect	Regularly take the time to reflect on your actions and words to consider how you represent the organisation.
Focus on solutions	Focusing on solutions rather than problems demonstrates capability and a commitment to problem-solving.
Be warm and friendly	Common courtesy, respect and friendliness create instant rapport and advertise your organisation as a great collaborator.
Reciprocate	Return favours and be open to other people's needs. Being helpful and interested in others demonstrates your value as a collaborator.
Communicate success	Communicate progress and successes to stakeholders and networks. Let people know what the organisation is achieving. Share good news stories about positive client outcomes and how the organisation interacts with the community at large.
Physical appearance	Always ensure when you attend networking events and meetings that your presentation is neat and tidy. Make sure you are wearing a name badge as this will help people remember you and save them the embarrassment of forgetting your name.

For more information about being professional at work, visit this link: aspirelr.link/skillcast-professional-at-work



Example

Promote a positive image of the organisation

Alexandra is attending a workshop to extend her skills. After the first class, many of the other attendees (who all work in the community services industry) get together for coffee.

Jill, one of the attendees, starts complaining about the organisation that she works for.

Alexandra has sympathy for Jill's experience but is concerned that she is not acting very professionally.

When asked about her workplace, Alexandra gave positive feedback. She was aware that it was important for her to present a positive image as this could benefit the organisation in numerous ways.

Practice Task 11

Question 1

Identify three techniques that can be used to promote a positive image of your organisation.



Question 2

Provide three examples of the responsibilities an individual has as a representative of an organisation.

Question 3

List two indirect opportunities an individual has to promote their organisation in a positive light.

4B

Communicate the organisation's issues, policies and practices

Legal requirements and professional ethics set clear boundaries for how information can be used.

Communicating organisational information to others needs to be done within clearly defined boundaries. All collaborative practices and networks must operate within legal and ethical requirements regarding the sharing and use of information, including copyright and intellectual property.

It is important to be clear and concise, and to appropriately communicate information about your organisation in networking and collaborative activities. As an organisational representative, you need to thoroughly understand and communicate your organisation's role, services, policies and practices to people.

Appropriate format for communication

When networking and collaborating, consider what would be the correct format for each communication. For example, sending a mass email to your network is not an appropriate format to communicate sensitive information about people to whom you provide services, as this breaches their rights to confidentiality. Similarly, communicating negative feedback from a person to your manager should not be done via text message, memo or social media. This information requires context and should be communicated verbally or in writing (e.g. email) in line with organisational policies and procedures.

All communication must be tailored to suit the recipient.

Here are some of the questions that you need to ask yourself to determine the appropriate format for communication.

Questions for determining the appropriate format for a communication

- Does it contain any private, confidential or copyrighted information? If so, do I have consent to share it?
- Who is the recipient, and do I need to share this information with them?
- What is the purpose of sharing this information? Is it serving a particular need?
- Is the format suitable (i.e. is it formal/informal, written/verbal)?
- Is the communication style suitable (i.e. is it full of jargon or technical language)?
- Does the format support the recipient's needs (i.e. do they have access, language or cultural needs)?

For more information on different types of workplace communication, visit:
aspirelr.link/4-types-workplace-communication

Legal and ethical considerations

Networking and collaborative practices must be performed within appropriate legal and ethical boundaries, as with all your work activities.

Not all information is relevant for sharing, and you must be thoroughly informed about the legal and ethical considerations involved in sharing information. Apart from upholding privacy and confidentiality, these considerations include sharing information, materials and resources that are copyrighted or are the intellectual property of your organisation or another party.

Ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behaviour.

The Australian Community Workers Association, in consultation with industry experts, has developed eight guidelines that form part of the framework for ethical practice within the industry. These guidelines are relevant for workers involved in providing support, intake, case work, crisis intervention, community development, team management and advocacy. It is expected as an organisation representative that you work within the eight guidelines.

As part of a network, all organisations must promote these guidelines. This way, the industry sees a consistency of high-quality workers and organisations building better communities and improving the lives of others. The work practice guidelines are provided for you in the following table.

Guideline	Description
Ethical practice	To work with service users and groups in a way that is respectful and promotes dignity. This includes identifying and addressing breaches in privacy and other relevant legislation. It is also expected that service workers will work to promote social justice and equity, and act in a way that is responsible and of benefit to the communities.
Provision of service and support	To provide services, support and advocacy that meet the needs of the individuals and communities they help. To ensure human rights are protected, knowledge is current and that feedback is received from service users. Practitioners must never abuse their authority or treat others in a way that is discriminatory or puts them at a disadvantage.
Confidentiality	To ensure that personal and private information is protected through secure recordkeeping processes, and must inform service users of their rights regarding their privacy. Service workers must understand the legislation surrounding confidentiality and provide copies of documentation when requested by the service user.



Guideline	Description
Diversity	To challenge and respond to all types of discriminatory behaviour, be willing to seek information to gain understanding where bias beliefs are experienced. To engage in knowledge building with collaborations and cultural groups and adapt communication to enhance understanding.
Regulatory framework	To comply with all legislation, statutory provisions and policies and procedures. Service workers must work within the scope of their role, and ensure fundamental human rights are never impinged.
The workplace	To understand the context of the workplace and seek ways of ensuring skills, knowledge and qualifications are up to date and relevant for the type of work done. Service workers must act responsibly, report bullying or discriminatory behaviour, and respect professional boundaries.
Professional development	To address knowledge gaps and seek advice from an appropriate professional. Service workers must be willing to share information and knowledge with colleagues and be willing to keep up to date in the latest knowledge and research to demonstrate accountability and personal responsibility.
Professional standing	To have the ability to represent the interests of service users and service providers. Workers must act with integrity and not act in any way that will affect the reputation of self, other workers and the organisation.

For more information on relevant industry ethics and standards, visit:

aspirelr.link/acwa-ethics-standards

Intellectual property and copyright

Intellectual property (IP) refers to the legal protection of creativity, innovation and product development.

Copyright, a type of IP, refers to the legal protection of new material that individuals and organisations create.

Copyright owners have rights automatically under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth). This legal protection is designed to prevent other people from profiting from the creators' hard work, creativity and innovation by copying or communicating their material without their permission.

In some cases, you need to register your IP for protection, such as granting a patent or trademark. In addition, businesses rely on owning and protecting their IP to help them fund further research and innovation.



The service you work in may own copyright in any textual materials created, sound and visual recordings, training materials or promotional photographs. IP considerations affect what information, resources and materials can be shared with collaborators or networks. Any material that is copyrighted must have permission from the owner before sharing. Any trademarked property may require a licence to share with others.

Your service may own IP, including a trademark of a brand, a patent over equipment or a design. Any material that is new and created by the service may be covered by IP legislation, including copyright laws. This means that it cannot be shared with others for use without permission. Before using any material within a network, consider whether it might be subject to copyright or other IP laws. This means that you cannot claim the products produced by an organisation as your own. Once permission has been granted that you may use the information, you must declare who the information belongs to when sharing.

Here are some common terms regarding IP and copyright.

Copyright-free	Copyright does not cover information, ideas, concepts, styles and techniques.
Patent	A patent is a right that is granted for any device, substance, method or process. It is legally enforceable and gives the owner of the exclusive patent rights to commercially exploit the invention.
Permission	You can use copyrighted material if permission is granted. This is done by contacting the copyright owner, who specifies how, when and where it can be used.
Infringement	Using copyrighted material without permission is unlawful. To do so is an infringement of the rights of the person or organisation that owns the copyright.

Video: Copyright

Watch the following video for information on copyright in Australia:
aspirelr.link/yt-australia-copyright



Communicate issues, policies and practices in appropriate formats

Aside from privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property considerations, sharing information, resources and materials with your network or collaborators may be subject to other legal and ethical considerations.

For example, your workplace will have a policy prohibiting sharing detailed financial information and personal information about staff and people receiving services.

Workplace policies and procedures will contain detailed information about:

- which information, materials and resources are owned by the organisation and considered proprietary
- which information, materials and resources may be shared and by whom
- who is the authorised person to contact for permissions
- what documentation is required for permissions
- the consequences of inappropriately sharing information, materials or resources.

Researching how IP and other legal and ethical considerations operate will help identify what can be shared and the appropriate format to do so. Consider the format that is best suited to convey the correct information and the intended audience's needs.

For example, if you are working on an integrated project with another organisation, you need to have clear boundaries about what information is appropriate to be shared for the task. This may involve sharing workplace documentation (such as a training manual), and you may need to provide a section of the manual to your collaborator or provide it with clear assertion of ownership and a statement about permitted use.

Example

Communicate the organisation's issues, policies and practices

Zariah is working with Andrea on a possible collaboration between their respective organisations. The organisations are separate, but they are investigating the possibility of establishing a network to avoid duplicating services to people in their shared location. Zariah and Andrea are meeting at Zariah's office to discuss the details. They are both very excited about having this working relationship as they can find out from each other information about specialist services and client demographics, and can now refer people receiving services and/or support directly to each other for specific purposes.



Practice Task 12

Question 1

List three ethical and legal considerations when communicating your organisation's issues, policies or practices.

Question 2

Define the word 'copyright'.

Question 3

Define the term 'intellectual property'.

4C

Implement confidentiality measures that protect the client, organisation and network

Measures must be in place to ensure care is taken to protect information pertaining to people accessing services and/or support, the organisation and networks.

Effective collaboration is based on openness, shared information and trust. These values must be balanced with confidentiality measures that protect people with support needs, your organisation and the network within which you are collaborating.

There are significant legal and ethical considerations involved in collaborative practice, including privacy, confidentiality and disclosure.

Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure considerations

The Privacy Act 1988 states that for information to be personal, it must be recorded.

The legislation dictates to services, agencies and other businesses that all people have the right to protect their private information. This legislation states that all people can control how others, including organisations, manage their personal information. Your organisation will hold private information that should not be shared with collaborative partners, such as financial information.

A breach of a person's privacy is a very serious offence and can occur when information is given to unauthorised people or not stored securely. Your organisation will have policies and procedures directing you when gathering, storing, maintaining and sharing information. In the event a breach occurs, you are at risk of disciplinary action and criminal charges.

The following table explains key considerations when handling personal information.



Consent	The person accessing services must give their permission to have their information collected. Before giving consent, they must be fully informed and understand the conditions they agree to; this is most often done during the client intake process. Consent also includes photographic images, such as uploading an image to the organisation’s social media page. This form should be collected before any event where the person receiving services will be photographed.
Disclosure	A disclosure form is given to the person accessing services to sign. This provides the service with permission to share their personal information with a third party. For example, this happens with referrals to new services. However, there are certain circumstances where permission to disclose data does not have to be given, such as when a mandatory report has to be lodged, during a police investigation or when the courts request information for legal proceedings.
Information gathering	Services are permitted to gather information with consent. The information you are accessing must be relevant only for your purposes and can be written or verbal.
Storage of information	All private information must be stored securely. Lockable filing cabinets in a room that is secure is the recommended method to store client files. For electronic information, the organisation will have a secured computer server. All devices must be password protected, and any documents downloaded must be saved in the appropriate locations and deleted from the downloads file daily.

Video: Privacy in Australia

Watch the following video to learn more about the Privacy Act in Australia: aspirelr.link/yt-privacy-act-aus

Think about the actions you need to take to when handling personal and sensitive information in your work role.



Maintain confidentiality

When working with other service workers, you must be mindful of the information you share.

Conversations are best carried out in private, and any paperwork must be stored securely. When using team virtual meeting applications on smartphones to communicate with each other and write daily reports for the team to read, it is essential that phones are kept safe and password protected.



Confidentiality ensures personal and sensitive information relating to people, staff and organisations is kept private and only accessed by people who are authorised, such as the workers providing direct services. Confidentiality measures that can be implemented include having clearly defined role boundaries within a network or collaboration, ensuring that all information is kept secure at all times, and confirming how the recipient stores information.

The following table outlines the different types of information that must be kept confidential.

Written information	<p>Written information that must be kept confidential includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any written information that may identify a person, such as their name, contact details, case notes, medical information and individual support or treatment plans • meeting minutes • letters, emails and faxes relating to people or organisational and network business • applications for funding, packages or programs.
Verbal information	<p>Verbal information that must be kept confidential includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telephone calls relating to personal information • meetings • consultations • case conferences • informal discussions about people.
Personal information	<p>In a networking environment, workers must ensure that they protect confidentiality. This means not discussing organisational plans and activities, individual staff members or any business-related information unless authorised to do so. Workers who discuss confidential information will quickly lose the trust and respect of their colleagues and supervisors.</p>
Organisational information	<p>You may find in networking situations that there is a tendency for individual workers from different organisations to compare notes about their working conditions and management personnel. Take care that you do not discredit your organisation or other employees by making negative comments.</p>

For more information on maintaining confidentiality in your organisation, visit:
aspirelr.link/maintain-confidentiality-workplace



Example

Implement confidentiality measures

Simon works for a neighbourhood community service and is planning to join an interagency network that focuses on young people at risk, made up of community organisations from the youth, mental health, homeless, and alcohol and other drug sectors. As this is a particularly sensitive area of work, the network has measures in place to protect confidentiality within the network. All network members must:

- sign a confidentiality agreement requiring them to acknowledge that privacy and confidentiality laws and policies apply to the network
- agree not to discuss network business or activities with workers or organisations who are not members of the network.

Practice Task 13

Question 1

Give two examples of when personal information may be disclosed.

Question 2

Match each term about privacy and confidentiality to its definition.

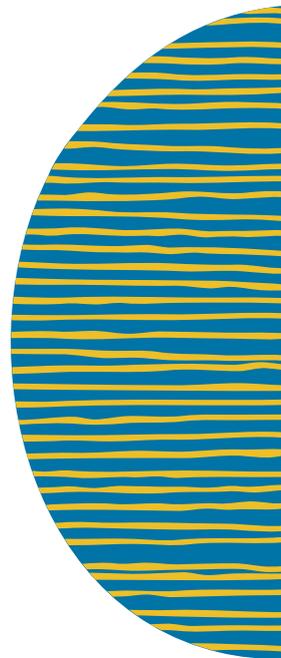
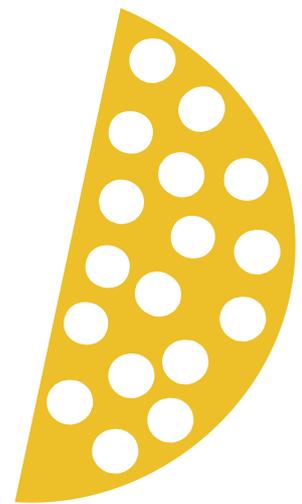
Consent
Disclosure
Breach
Privacy

Sharing of information without permission
The act of giving authority to share personal information
Sharing information to a third party
The fundamental human right for a person's personal information to be protected



Summary

- You represent your organisation at all times, so consider your words and actions, and how others may interpret them.
- Acting professionally involves communicating your organisation's achievements, services and role in the industry.
- There are legal and ethical limits to what can be shared with your networks and collaborators.
- Intellectual property rights including copyright may apply to material created within the workplace or to material that has been licensed for use internally.
- Before sharing anything with your collaborators, consider the legal and ethical implications of doing so and refer to your workplace's policies and procedures and your supervisor.
- Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure considerations apply to all collaborations and networking activities.
- Only share information for which you have consent, which is vital for the collaboration and upholds people's rights.
- Your organisation also has a right to privacy over much of its internal information.





Learning Checkpoint 4

Represent the organisation

Part A

1. For you to successfully promote a positive image of your organisation, what message would others need to receive?

2. Provide two examples of appropriate ways to communicate your organisation's issues, policies and practices to networks and collaborators.

3. Briefly describe how can you avoid breaching copyright when using the information provided by another service.



4. Provide one reason why it is important to obtain consent to share other people's personal information.

5. Define the term 'ethical' and give one example of ethical behaviour.

6. List three examples of information you would need consent to share.



Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Graham is a care coordinator. Recently, Mari was promoted to team leader. Graham is mentoring Mari into her new role. Part of this task is to introduce her to the networks the organisation is a member of and ensure that she participates in a manner that positively promotes the service.

1. Before Mari's attendance at a major industry networking event, Graham prepares to give her a few coaching points on how she can promote a positive image of the organisation. Suggest three actions Graham can recommend to Mari to ensure she understands how to present a positive image of the organisation.

2. Mari is attending her first network meeting. An organisation representative has given her some very helpful information about their services which she thinks would be of use in a workplace meeting. Identify two considerations when using another organisation's information, giving a brief description in your response.

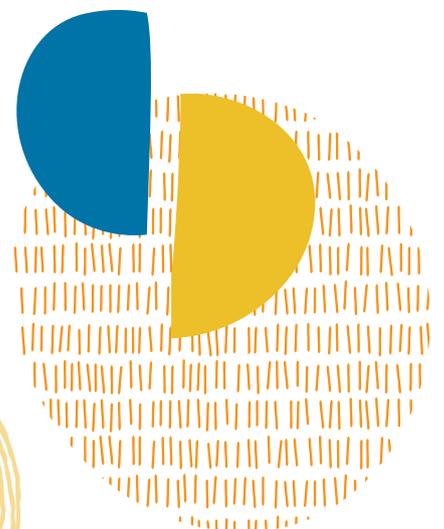


- 3.** Mari must ensure that when she is attending meetings that any documentation she has on hand is kept safe and protected from individuals who are not authorised to have access. Provide three examples of how she can keep these materials safe with her.



Topic 5: Maintain and enhance networks and collaborative partnerships

- 5A Maintain and improve networks and collaborative partnerships
- 5B Monitor benefits to worker, organisation and client group
- 5C Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of collaborations and recommend actions



5A Maintain and improve networks and collaborative partnerships

A successful networker will have the skills to build strong positive relationships with professional connections.

Effective collaborative partnerships take time to establish and require nurturing. It is important to strengthen these relationships as they are a fundamental resource that you need if you are to provide the best possible services and care to the people you assist. Making an effort to keep in regular contact with your connections, and committing to helping others create strong bonds, will ensure that you and your organisation will have greater chances of successfully reaching business goals and creating opportunities for service delivery.

Advantages to networking

Networking allows service providers to coordinate services with each other.

Networking also facilitates easy access to resources and information as your service connections provide these.

Ultimately, networking can be seen as a two-way street. Through collaboration with your network, you can ask for assistance. Those within your network can then come together to help the person in need, therefore providing an opportunity for positive outcomes. At the same time, you can make a positive contribution to your network by assisting others, whether it is with access to services, resources and information or sharing your expert knowledge.

Here is a list of benefits that you will experience with positive network participation.

Advantages of networking

- Improved coordination of service delivery
- Broader reach for organisations when promoting their services and programs
- Shared skills, resources and knowledge
- Access to up-to-date information
- Ability to develop multi-agency collaboration, which can be of benefit to access funding
- Development of relationships that will assist in addressing service gaps within the community
- Political and lobbying strength
- Increased ability to be successful in tender applications

For more information on the power of networking, visit: aspirelr.link/power-of-networking



Benefits to the organisation

Networking and collaboration will benefit your service in numerous ways.

This includes an internal partnership between workers, supervisors and management, and partnerships within external networks such as with other service providers, agencies, health professionals and community groups.

Here are some of the benefits that your organisation may gain from networking and collaboration.

Knowledge	Networking and collaboration within your service ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently, and that skills, knowledge and expertise can be shared. Networking also ensures that your service is up to date with current information, best-practice standards and innovations in the industry.
Access	Networking with external agencies, services and individuals ensures that people's needs can be met if they fall outside the service's capacity.
Work and cost benefits	A network provides a larger group of people to draw on for help, support and advice. Sharing resources, venues and equipment reduces spending and increases the utilisation of resources. It can result in the need to purchase fewer capital items for each organisation in the network, as organisations may lend resources such as minibuses, hoists or specialist staff.
Benchmarking	Coordinators may use their network to benchmark aspects of service delivery. Benchmarking allows an honest comparison of service standards. For example, you might benchmark the case load a coordinator can manage and then compare it with other services so improvements or changes may be made.
Best practice	Networking allows coordinators to share examples of best practices and share successful ideas. For example, one organisation trained delivery people at Meals on Wheels to monitor people's welfare by observing any change in their condition. Because this process worked successfully, other organisations are using the process.
Industry standards	Networking allows coordinators to have an industry perspective when implementing industry standards into their work practice. Organisations may share policy and work instructions to meet industry standards.
Sharing information	Networking provides coordinators with the opportunity for debriefing outside their organisation. This allows coordinators to get together with other workers to discuss issues they have with people or practices and seek assistance to resolve them.



<p>Community profile</p>	<p>Partnerships created through networking may create a profile for the industry in the community and increase people’s awareness of your organisation’s services. Partnerships also increase market share without undercutting each other for contracts and tenders. For example, a group of service providers in a region may organise an expo to promote their services and raise their profiles.</p> <p>Marketing together as a network, rather than separately or in competition with each other, is more cost-effective. For example, organisations may advertise services on offer to make them more attractive to prospective clients.</p>
<p>Fundraising and lobbying</p>	<p>Rather than competing for funds, fundraising jointly and working together allows more funds to be raised, which may be shared across the entire network.</p> <p>Lobbying governments is more effective when undertaken by groups of service providers, like those in a network. For example, a group of service providers may highlight the issue of younger people with disabilities living in aged care homes.</p>

Benefits to the client

Providing high-quality services to people with support needs is the primary goal.

Networking and collaboration activities must be undertaken to increase your ability to provide best-practice care. Each person who accesses services and/or support is the expert in their own life. People with support needs are your most important collaborators because you work together to meet their goals and ensure services are customised to meet individuals’ needs. There are many advantages to networking and collaboration for individuals. Networking and collaboration allow you to benefit from other people’s knowledge, expertise and experience, and give you opportunities to share your own. Support from other colleagues is essential to maintain motivation, increase your skills and knowledge, and innovate. Aside from this, it is often a highlight of the job to work and interact with other service providers.

People with support needs benefit from your networking and collaboration. Here are some of the benefits of networking for people with support needs.

<p>Individualised care</p>	<p>As a person’s condition changes, they may need to move from home care to residential care or access other services, experts or resources. Networking provides options for these changing needs, including needs outside your skill and knowledge level or beyond the scope of what the service offers. Also, participating in networks allows you to gain support from colleagues, agencies, services and individuals to support each person’s individual needs.</p>
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<p>Improved access</p>	<p>Many people with support needs require complex support, which may fall outside your job role or organisational capacity. Working with a network provides more flexibility in services. If services can be shared, it is easier for people to access a full range of services. For example, a person going on holiday may need personal care while they are away. A network may provide them with options to achieve this and ensure that extra support, expert advice and assistance can be gained to uphold their rights to equality and non-discrimination.</p>
<p>Community building</p>	<p>Networking creates good communication, reciprocal skill sharing and mutual respect. These aspects build strong working relationships and support a sense of community. People with support needs benefit when they are valued, supported and respected by community members.</p>
<p>Teamwork</p>	<p>Networking supports a teamwork approach to service delivery that draws on a broader range of skills, knowledge and expertise than a single person may have. Working together as a team benefits people with support needs in that they can gain the best possible services and care and be valued as experts in their own lives.</p>
<p>Information</p>	<p>Organisations in a network can provide more information to people about the range of options available in the community. For example, people receiving home care may not know about respite opportunities, or people may be assessed as eligible for services but not know where to purchase them.</p>

For more information on the positive impact of maintaining a good support network, visit: aspirelr.link/mensline-support-network

Benefits to the worker

Networking and collaboration are rewarding aspects of being a support worker.

Collaborating with people to help them reach their goals creates a great sense of achievement and fulfilment. Your ability to network with other professionals also contributes to the collaborative effort of providing best-practice, individualised care. In addition, networks offer a support structure to access and contribute to the ongoing development of the industry and its support workers.

Here are some of the benefits that you will discover through networking and collaboration.



What you will gain from networking and collaboration

- Satisfaction in meeting people's individual needs efficiently
- The ability to learn, grow and share your skills
- Strong relationships with colleagues, people and professional networks
- The opportunity to innovate, solve problems and create solutions

For more information on the benefits of networking for workers, visit:

aspirelr.link/6-reasons-to-support-colleagues

Maintain networks to provide identifiable benefits

Take the time to regularly evaluate the benefits that you, your organisation and people with support needs gain from your networks and collaborations.

Next, ask yourself specific questions and trace where benefits are arising and whose needs are being met.

This reflection and evaluation allows you to identify which networks are beneficial and which are less so. This information will enable you to make appropriate decisions about the networks that you participate in. In some cases, you may want to strengthen your participation in a network. In others, you may wish to limit or change your participation.

It is worth noting that some networks do not meet regularly, so by keeping in contact with network participants you are keeping that network active.

Maintaining networking relationships is an important professional activity, as efficient, functional networks optimise the services you give to people in your care. Schedule a regular time to use these strategies and to consider new ways to support your networks and increase your participation.



Strategies for maintaining networks

- Participate in their social media activities, e.g. liking posts, making positive comments
- Keep in regular contact via email, sharing information as appropriate
- Plan small get-togethers, e.g. lunches, brainstorming sessions
- Show gratitude, e.g. reply to emails thanking them for the shared information or invitation
- Share your skills and knowledge
- Always update contact lists
- If you change jobs, inform your network
- Give them space – do not flood your network with information

Establish and maintain links with services

Establishing and maintaining direct, courteous and up-to-date connections with other services in your network creates efficient pathways for service delivery.

Here are some of the ways that you can establish and maintain links with other services.

<p>Referrals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you provide services to people, one of the main contacts you will have with another service is via referrals. You may be responsible for managing all referrals on behalf of a person. • Keep an up-to-date file of services you refer people to and their referral details, and follow up on each referral made. • Take the time to meet the intake workers at larger agencies such as general practices, community health services, housing and homelessness services, family support services, mental health services, addiction services and family violence services.
<p>Telephone contact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal contact via the telephone (or face-to-face) enhances relationships and avoids any misunderstandings. • Use the phone to introduce yourself to new services on your contact list. Keep telephone calls brief and to the point. • Do not phone workers on their mobile telephones unless you have been invited or instructed to do so. • Keep an up-to-date telephone contact list.
<p>Worker networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker networks are an excellent forum to familiarise yourself with other workers and the services they represent. • These networks may be internal (staff meetings, project working groups, special interest groups, committee groups) or external to your organisation (state, regional or local service sector networks; referral network meetings; project working groups; state, regional or local committees).



Informal contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts can also be informal, such as friends, family, acquaintances and members of the community or workers who have specific information of interest to you. For example, you may have a cousin whose father has used a particular stroke support service or a friend who works for a service. You can contact them to find out how supportive they have found that service.
Case conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A case conference is an organised meeting that focuses on a particular person or family group to ensure that people requiring a complexity of service provision receive well-managed and coordinated care. Conferences may be scheduled regularly or as required; for example, when needs change. • Case conferences are usually held when there are a number of different services providing support. It may be your role to coordinate the participants or take and distribute the meeting minutes.
Interagency meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interagency meeting involves a number of different agencies meeting to discuss topics of mutual interest, such as a community service issue. • Interagency meetings are usually held at a regional or local level and may be held regularly – monthly, bi-monthly (every two months) or quarterly (every three months) – or be a one-off meeting for a specific purpose. Chairing the discussion and minute-taking is usually shared among the member agencies. • Terms of reference are generally developed that describe the aims and objectives of the meeting, when and where the meeting will be held and how it will be organised.
Consultative committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional or local consultative committees are developed to determine residents’ needs, interests, and preferences and/ or services in a specific geographical area. Examples include committees established for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of significant new programs, services or infrastructure - urban and neighbourhood renewal - redevelopment or building of public housing stock - major government policy redevelopment or creation. • Committees may include representatives from organisations, government, businesses and the community.
Joint projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many organisations work together to deliver one-off events, time-limited groups or ongoing services and programs. Working together can bring many benefits such as shared resources, shared skills and knowledge, access to a broader range of personnel including specialists, and coordination of service provision to avoid repetition. • Examples of joint projects may include Carers Week, Seniors Week, Mental Health Week activities, reconciliation and National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week activities, combined training, conference organisation and shared community facilities.



Maintain active participation in relevant networks

It takes time to develop relationships and networks with other services.

There are a number of actions to help you maintain active participation in networks. First, you need to understand what makes an effective networker. The following information compares how active and inactive networkers operate.

Active networkers	Inactive networkers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep in touch regularly • Build productive relationships over time • Return favours whenever possible • Receive help graciously • Respect people's time • Realise that each contact has something to offer • Offer help when it is requested by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact people only when they need something • Focus on their own products, services or needs on first contact • Fail to reciprocate when others need help • Are discourteous or unappreciative of others' help • Expect too much help – only aim for power brokers

For more tips on how to network better, visit: aspirelr.link/kangan-networking-tips

Maintain contact

Regular contact means you remain updated with information and that other participants know you are still actively involved in the network.

If you do not make an effort to keep in regular contact, people may assume you no longer want or need to be kept informed. You may also lose contacts if they move on to other roles or organisations without your knowledge.

If you become known as a resource for others, people are more likely to approach you for ideas and contacts. This shows you are committed to two-way networking, demonstrates trust, and increases your chances of being offered help and opportunities in the future. Plan when to contact people, including at regular network or regional meetings. Send information to others about new programs or changes to funding requirements that they may find useful.



Ensuring currency of contact information

Having out-of-date information may significantly reduce the benefits of being part of a network and may affect the efficiency of your organisation.

Time and effort can be wasted using information that is dated or no longer relevant. The following describes a range of reasons why you should keep information current.

Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in key positions may leave or their areas of responsibility may change. Also, contact details may vary due to relocation, or key contacts may be absent or on extended leave. • Existing and well-established relationships may need to be re-established with someone else when the previous person is promoted, relocated or goes on leave.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services may change due to increased or decreased demand or funding, and there may be changes to national standards, addresses, delivery methods and service delivery partnerships. New services may be introduced, and new person groups may emerge. Infrequently used services may cease, and services may be improved due to feedback. • Services may be put to public tender at each new funding cycle. Therefore, you need to know who has been successful in each funding round and who now provides the services. For example, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and several local councils do this annually or biannually.
Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies may relocate, be taken over or combine, and new agencies may emerge. New regulatory authorities may be created and new strategic directions may occur. Agencies may also form new partnerships. • As part of its strategic planning cycle, a national organisation may, for example, decide that it is not cost-effective to continue to provide services in regional areas. You should be aware of what new organisations emerge to fill the market gap created.

Example

Maintain networks and other work relationships

Carla has scheduled an hour to connect with her networks. She begins by logging into several industry forums to read other people's posts and contribute to discussions.



Carla checks her email and follows up on a couple of enquiries sent by colleagues within her organisation and others from different services. She goes over her contact list and realises that she has not heard from Margot for some time. Carla and Margot worked together on a joint project last year. Carla decides to call Margot to touch base with her. During the conversation, they arrange for a time to meet to discuss further opportunities for collaboration.

Improve and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships

All professional relationships are based on respect, courtesy and good communication.

Ensure that you express your gratitude to your collaborators and restate your interest in continuing and improving the partnership. Relationships with collaborators and networks are not static – you can always work to improve how you contribute to these relationships and utilise them to provide improved services. This section discusses strategies that you can use to improve and maintain these valuable partnerships.

Networking and collaborative practices require a commitment by you to seek ways for continuous improvement. Nothing is ever perfect, and seeking ways to improve your networks will help deliver high-quality services, provide quality support to clients, and help you improve as an industry professional. Identifying the benefits that arise from these networks and collaborations is an important step in improving these relationships. In addition, information gathering is vital to understanding how to strengthen and enhance your collaborative partnerships.

Aside from your analysis, there are digital tools available that can help you analyse your networks and collaborations, track participation and optimise resource sharing and modes of collaboration.

Improve networks and collaborative partnerships

Improvement strategies can be applied as a way to maintain your current networks and collaborative partnerships.

Taking the time to connect with your collaborative partners and asking them how the process has been working is helpful to demonstrate your commitment to teamwork and continuous improvement. Here are a number of improvements that would benefit the networks you participate in.



Network improvements

- Schedule network meetings in advance
- Implement a project
- Incorporate the use of technology to encourage participation outside scheduled meetings
- Actively promote the network through your contacts and other networks
- Create a culture that revolves around sharing and cooperation
- Have an agreed method to manage conflict
- Set clear expectations

Many different strategies can be employed to improve and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships. Here are some improvement strategies that you could use, depending on your needs and particular situation.

Seek feedback	Improving a network is a collaborative process. Ask for feedback from stakeholders and collaborators. Work together to identify successes and where improvements can be made.
Study the data	Use data and documentation from current and past collaborations to identify trends, patterns and gaps. Look for what has worked in the past and implement it.
Reward teamwork	Celebrate success and reward teamwork. Acknowledging and rewarding success is important for motivation and team cohesion.
Expand the network	Are there other collaborators or groups who could contribute to the network? New input supports innovation and creativity.
Research competitors	What are other networks, organisations or teams doing? Could you benefit from a different approach? Always look for new ideas, tools and expertise.

Example

Improve and maintain networks and collaborative partnerships

Debbie is the project manager of her service’s integrated service delivery activities. This position involves interacting with a wide range of stakeholders and collaborators, and she wants to maintain and improve these relationships.



Many of her collaborators are from smaller organisations, and Debbie knows some do not know each other. To build a more robust network, she decides to hold a meet-and-greet network meeting so that her collaborators can get together and meet in person. She allocates some funding and investigates appropriate locations where all the collaborators could meet and share a meal.

Debbie also wants to know detailed information about each of the collaborators and their experience integrating services with her organisation. With each email invitation to the meet-and-greet, Debbie also includes a short questionnaire asking each collaborator to identify:

- what benefits they have identified from the collaboration
- any gaps or concerns they have regarding the collaboration
- any other needs that they think could be met by the collaboration
- any suggestions for extending and improving the collaboration.

She closes the email with a personalised thank you to each collaborator, expressing her gratitude for their hard work and commitment to providing support services to community members. Debbie is looking forward to the lunch meeting, not only as a thank-you gesture to her collaborators but as a way to form a more integrated network that could lead to even better collaborations and improved service delivery.

Practice Task 14

Question 1

List two benefits of networking for individuals with support needs.



Question 2

List two benefits of networking for support workers.

Question 3

Which of the following are benefits of maintaining networks for an organisation?
Select all that apply.

- Allows the organisation to coordinate services
- Allows the organisation to poach other service's staff
- Avoids duplication
- Employees take time off work to attend events
- Streamlines services for the person

Question 4

Explain why it is important to seek ways to improve the networks and collaborations that service workers participate in.



Question 5

Suggest three ways a service worker can maintain networks and collaborative partnerships.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their answer to the question.

5 B

Monitor benefits to worker, organisation and client group

To ensure your network continues to be beneficial, you must monitor activities, identify changes and consider how these will benefit your service.

As with any workplace activity, it is important to monitor how your networking and collaborations operate to benefit you, your organisation and the people you provide services to. These benefits are not always obvious, so careful consideration needs to be taken to identify which collaborations and networks provide benefits, and any changes you may need to make. Understanding the values, limitations and dynamics of networks and collaborative partnerships helps you identify how they assist all stakeholders in providing the best possible services and care.

Monitor the benefits for network participation

Workers and organisations must monitor network outcomes to ensure people you work with, colleagues and the organisation benefit from their participation.

Participating in networks requires time and effort. To help you determine whether a network provides benefits for you, your organisation and the people you work with, you may need to consider the characteristics of effective and ineffective networks.

An effective network

- Has a clear purpose, guidelines and goals that reflect the needs of members
- Has meetings that are interesting, informative and relevant to needs
- Provides convenient locations and times for meetings
- Promotes constructive processes for resolving any conflicts between members
- Encourages effective communication and decision-making among members
- Fosters trust and collective identity by facilitating the sharing of tasks and responsibilities
- Is mindful of not wasting members' time
- Encourages input from all members and does not allow a few individuals or organisations to dominate proceedings
- Has regular, well-attended meetings



An ineffective network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has no clear purpose • Does not have a strong vision • Has a lack of trust • Has a lack of cohesion among network members • Is unable to achieve goals • Has irregular meetings and activities • Often leaves conflict within the group unresolved • Has poor attendance at meetings and activities • Has a lack of willingness among members to participate in group projects
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Organisations and workers may monitor the value of network participation in several ways, as outlined below.

Monitoring methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine reports and notes written by workers who are network members • Encourage regular discussions between workers who participate in networks and their supervisors • Hold meetings to review and identify the benefits (or lack of benefits) of ongoing participation in particular networks • Obtain feedback on workers' experiences of networks
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the network managed in a practical way, and is it meeting its stated aims? • How well does the network meet the networking needs of the organisations, workers and groups? • What specific benefits have the organisations and workers obtained from belonging to the network? • What constraints limit their participation in the network?

Values of networks and partnerships

The values of networks and partnerships should be clearly understood and stated at the beginning of any collaborative project.

These values are likely to form some of the goals of the collaboration or network.

Some of these values could include:

- working together to provide specialised services
- working together to provide flexible services
- professional support, education and training
- respecting and valuing all people's contributions to working collaboratively.



All parties should contribute to defining and redefining the values of a specific network and partnership to help monitor the benefits of participation. If values are being upheld through networking and collaboration, then the benefits to individuals, organisations and people accessing services and/or support should be high.

Networking constraints

Several factors may limit the benefits that organisations and workers gain from participating in networks.

These include constraints that affect your ability to make effective use of a network. As a result, you may need to consider changing how you participate in networks or what type of networks to join. For example, you may change from physical participation to electronic participation or find a more suitable network for the time and resources you have available.

Examples of the constraints you may experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the time to attend scheduled meetings due to work demands • Difficulty in participating at the same level as workers from larger organisations due to tighter budgets and staff shortages • Networking needs not clearly established • Poorly managed networks often failing to achieve their objectives and causing frustration for their members • Travelling long distances or through heavy traffic to attend network meetings which may cause participants to feel less inclined to go or to participate with enthusiasm • Organisation’s management not understanding or supporting networking activity

Limitations of networks and partnerships

Limitations are factors that can act as a barrier to goal achievement.

These limitations should be identified and addressed to see if they can be overcome or managed more efficiently. Regular reviewing procedures should help identify these limitations, but it is important to regularly self-assess to identify any gaps.

Any limitations identified in the service should be documented and monitored by the team along with any attempts to address the limitation. This will form valuable data to monitor and assess the benefits of participating in the network or partnership.

Common limitations encountered in networks and partnerships include the following.

Common limitations to networks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient resources • Insufficient participation • Communication issues • Lack of cohesion and clear goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect size for the task (too large or small) • Unclear results • Resistance to change • Cultural incompatibility



Network and partnership dynamics

The dynamics of networks and partnerships are also good indicators of whether participation is providing clear benefits.

If the network contains many members, but only a few actively participate, this may indicate several problems. To work well, a network or collaborative partnership needs to be a safe space where all members feel supported, valued and respected and can feel free to brainstorm ideas and innovate.

The desired dynamics of a network or partnership

- Equal access
- Full participation
- Ease of communication
- Cohesive structure with clear role boundaries
- Appropriate sharing of information and resources
- All members feel valued and respected

Example

Monitor benefits to worker, organisation and client group

Bree has decided to review the effectiveness of the networks she is engaged with to ensure that they continue to benefit her organisation. To help prepare for this part of the process, Bree formulates a set of questions to assist in her analysis of the network's effectiveness. These questions are:

- What is the purpose of the network, and does it generally achieve its aims?
- As a worker, what benefits do you obtain from belonging to the network?
- What benefits do you think the network offers the organisation?
- Do you think participating in the network helps improve service delivery to client groups?
- What constraints limit or affect your participation in the network?
- Does the network provide relevant professional development opportunities?
- Are meetings and network activities relevant to the organisation's aims and needs?
- Do you believe that ongoing participation in the network provides benefits to the organisation, workers and client groups?



Practice Task 15

Question 1

List three attributes of an effective network.

Question 2

Provide one example of:

- a value a network promotes

- a positive attribute of a dynamic collaborative partnership

- a networking limitation.

5C

Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of collaborations and recommend actions

To evaluate the networks a service engages with, analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the collaboration as this will help formulate recommendations for improvements.

Collaborations, networks and their results must be evaluated regularly to ensure that you are optimising what you are gaining from them and what you can contribute. Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of collaboration allows you to identify any challenges and make recommendations for actions to improve your services.

Evaluate strengths and weaknesses

Networks and collaborations should be assessed and evaluated for their strengths and weaknesses to identify how to make improvements.

This information can then be used to understand and improve future network engagement and collaborations. Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of partnerships enables recommendations for action, such as maintaining current activities, adapting them or seeking further collaboration.

Periodically during your participation in a network or collaboration and at completion (for time-based collaborations), carefully evaluate what benefits were gained from involvement, how stated goals were met and what you have learnt from the experience. Equally, evaluate the weaknesses and challenges of the relationship and identify unmet goals.

Once these have been determined, required actions are then put in place to overcome identified issues and challenges, and support strengths and opportunities. A SWOT analysis is the most common technique used in this process. It is worth noting that sometimes strengths and opportunities or threats and weaknesses will overlap, so do not worry too much if the factors you identify fit across two categories.

A SWOT analysis is a tool used to identify the core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organisation or network.



Strengths	Strengths are what the organisation and the representative excel at, and are what separates them from other organisations who are members of the network. For example, a representative’s knowledge of a particular health condition and the specific services and programs offered by the organisation.
Weaknesses	Weaknesses are what can prevent an organisation and representative from performing at an optimum level. For example; inability to address service gaps without working with other organisations or funding limitations.
Opportunities	Opportunities are external factors that work in favour of the organisation. For example; opportunities for business growth due to professional connections in an existing network, and opportunities for the representative to increase their expertise because they have access to other professionals they can ask for advice without any financial costs.
Threats	Threats include factors that can harm the reputation of the organisation and the representative. For example, if a member of the network has a negative reputation due to their inability to work effectively with others, this view could tarnish the reputation of other participants.

For more information on SWOT analysis, visit: aspirelr.link/mindtools-swot-analysis

Video: SWOT analysis

Watch the following video on SWOT analysis by MindTools:
aspirelr.link/yt-mindtools-swot

Pay attention to the key questions you need to consider to complete each section of the SWOT.



Example

Evaluate strengths and weaknesses

Sharjeela is a team leader at a regional disability service. She is performing an analysis of a disability network she engages with to determine if it is still beneficial to be part of this network. Sharjeela has done a SWOT analysis. The results show her that participating in this network is worthwhile, as you can see from the results below.



<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry knowledge of staff • Current industry connections • The success rate in acquiring funding • Integrated project skillsets • Services on offer are broad 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services on offer are limited to two locations • Workload may make scheduling for network participation challenging • Modest budget
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business growth • Fundraising opportunities • Opportunities to participate in future projects • To incorporate technological communication in team meetings 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial constraints • Changing regulatory processes • Working with organisations that have issues around reputation • Negative media exposure

Make recommendations for action

As a result of your evaluation, you will have a clear, defined list of benefits of participating in the network or collaboration, as well as several identified strengths and weaknesses.

This information is valuable, not only to yourself but to your organisation and the other collaborators. Some joint partnerships and collaborations build in an evaluation and recommendation stage to make adaptations and changes as needed. Once a project has been completed, a report is generated and distributed to all relevant parties, such as stakeholders, other collaborators and management. This report should contain clear, detailed and specific recommendations for action.

Common recommendations for action include the following.

<p>Resource recommendations</p>	<p>Common recommendations are about the need for more resources, and fundraising or lobbying for these; and improved access to and sharing of existing resources. Make specific recommendations regarding services used, timelines, collaboration use, and suggestions for alternative or improved sourcing and purchasing.</p>
<p>Communication recommendations</p>	<p>Ways to improve communication between collaborators is a common action to recommend. This information is vital to facilitate improved, more efficient collaborations and services in the future.</p>



Goal-based recommendations	Did the collaboration or networking lead to the specified goals being met? Why or why not? Successful practices and strategies can be transferred to other collaborations, and unsuccessful practices are just as helpful in recommending future actions.
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Example

Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of collaborations to recommend actions

Carlos is writing a report for his supervisor about his experiences working with another organisation to provide integrated services to Neil, a person with support needs. Carlos has been keeping detailed notes about the collaboration, which he refers to when producing his report.

The proposed goals for Neil included increasing his social access and transition to employment. Carlos reviews Neil's service plan and the collaboration documentation. He finds that Neil has substantially increased his social activity and is nearing the completion of a transition-to-work program, which the collaborating organisation administers.

Carlos carries out a SWOT analysis to assist in his evaluation of the collaboration. He then prepares a report for his supervisor using identified information about Neil and the collaborative practices to fulfil his support needs. Carlos is happy to recommend working with the collaborative organisation again but has extra recommendations to meet Neil's changing needs and to extend the collaboration to help other people.

Carlos requests feedback on the process of collaboration with his partner in the collaborating organisation and checks in with Neil to confirm that his needs are being met. He prepares a list of detailed, specific recommendations including more scheduled contact with people and collaborators, formalising the collaboration into a joint partnership and investigating shared promotional opportunities for the two organisations.



Practice Task 16

Question 1

Suggest three areas that need to be evaluated to assist in making improvements to your organisation.

Question 2

Explain the most efficient and effective method a service worker can use to evaluate the effectiveness of a network and to make recommendations for improvements.



Summary

- Good networking relationships need to be maintained. Identifying the benefits that you, your organisation and people with support needs gain from participating in each network helps determine how to participate further.
- Keeping in regular contact, following up and using current information will help you to maintain strong connections with your networks.
- Networking and collaborations need to have the same commitment to continuous improvement as all other work activities.
- Taking time to connect, ask for feedback and review data will help improve and maintain current networks and partnerships.
- Ongoing monitoring and assessment is needed to identify benefits to participating in a network or collaboration.
- Clear, cohesive ideas about the values, limitations and dynamics of the network need to be understood and communicated.
- All networking and collaborations should be evaluated for strengths and weaknesses. This should lead to a number of recommendations for action that can be used to improve collaborative practices in the future.



Learning Checkpoint 5

Maintain and enhance networks and collaborative partnerships

Part A

1. Provide two limitations of networking and collaborating.

2. Explain why it is important to maintain networks.

3. Provide three strategies that can be used to help improve and maintain networks.



4. Give two examples of values that networks promote.

5. Suggest four benefits of monitoring network participation.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Raj works as the CEO of a small aged care service that provides support to older people living in the community. He has decided to form a virtual network with other service providers he interacts with, as this method will add to the availability of resources and increase participation among its members. The other services in the network include disability service providers, alcohol and other drugs support service providers, and a range of other community support services.



- 1.** Provide an example of a benefit this network offers for Raj, his organisation and the people he helps.

- 2.** Phillip, who is a disability support worker, is a member of this virtual network. Give three examples of strategies he can use to ensure he maintains a positive dynamic with other network collaborators.

- 3.** Jeremy is a member of the virtual network. He has found he does not participate as much because he is not very good with technology. During his network evaluation, he identifies this as a weakness. Suggest two ways he can turn this into a strength.



Glossary

Duplication

When two or more services offer the same support.

Formal network

Two or more organisations that share funding streams for specific groups of people.

Individual networks

The connections that the person has in their personal life.

Informal network

The connections that the person has in their work that are unofficial or not organised.

Networking

Setting up connections to share information and ideas with other people.

Performance gap

The difference between what is expected of a service worker in their ability to perform their role and how they actually perform their job.

Stakeholders

Individuals who have an interest in an issue or who may be affected by decisions an organisation makes.

