

RESOURCE MATERIALS

on

“Developing and Sustaining Strategic Partnerships”

- For** Partnerships (and their brokers) who are dedicated to improve learning and transitions by young people; characterised by
- Cross-sector collaboration (using the three sectors of the economy)
 - Working within active democracy
 - Education (single or cluster) and external partners working together
 - A **regional** focus
 - Communities with young people who choose a range of pathways (beyond the traditional route; school direct to University/full-time TAFE)
 - Meeting needs within low SES communities

Dave Turner 2010

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THE MEANING OF CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

“with a strategic emphasis”

- Engage all three sectors of the economy; the market, the state and civil society in order to work for the common goal; active democracy taking its course.
- Civil society includes NGOs, trade unions, faith based organisations **and** more informal groupings and movements e.g. parent groups, service clubs, youth forums. Civil society is about voluntary (chosen) action being taken by groupings with shared values, interest and purposes for the **common good**.
- Cross-sector partnerships are required to tackle an issue or meet a challenge that demands/or is most effectively dealt with, by collaboration between the three sectors e.g. at a macro level, sustainable development, and more specifically to our purpose, for facilitating successful transitions by most young people from adolescence to adulthood (including school to work).
- Cross-sector partnerships may often involve, but go well beyond the concepts of transactions/procurement, the shifting of risk and donating resource. They are about the sharing of goals, resources, risks and benefits. In their purest state, they form a union that determines and cultivates a whole of community vision and effort.
- Cross-sector partnerships that are strategic often want to prioritise and allocate resource within their region for lasting impact i.e. who are our initial target groups and in what order should we take action.
- Cross-sector partnerships can be operational/tactical and/or **strategic** (little “s” or Big “S”). In concerned communities/regions, where significant numbers of young people face real challenges to successful learning and transition, strategic responses across the three sectors are likely to emerge.
- Strategic means a longer term plan for success or competitive advantage, whereas tactical refers to moves and methods that contribute to that strategy **now**. Strategic is about lasting impact, creating systemic change and bringing about significant innovation.

CHALLENGES FACING CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

“In their thinking and strategising”

- The varying cultures of the three sectors of the economy poses challenges to truly effective partnering. Appreciating each others values, structures, relationships, protocols, reward systems, timelines, risk management procedures, financial approval systems and **traditions** takes time and effort – finding a common language can be a challenge.
- The cultural diversity of the key stakeholders (across the three sectors) in the field of (youth) learning and transitions reflects this situation.
- Overcoming dilemmas/a nasty taste that has been left by previous attempts (history) can divert effort from achieving the common goal – effort may need to be made to renew faith in the potential impact of cross-sector partnerships.
- Being willing to commit time and energy to clearly defining the common goal/purpose is necessary and can appear daunting! It is so vital for partners to truly determine (logic) and feel (believe) that their practical outcome of common good can only be achieved by cross-sector collaboration. Not all outcomes need partnerships. Save this form of collaboration for meeting those challenges that demand it!! e.g. successful transitions for the vast majority of young people who are not taking the traditional and direct pathway of school – University – job are one such outcome.
- Gaining a shared appreciation of how serious the challenge is in their region – does it require Big “S” systemic change (that goes beyond achieving current outputs of separate silos) and/or making some minor improvements (on the edges) through little “s” collaboration. Can our region make our contribution to the goals of the National Partnership **and** achieve our own goals for/by young people with or without a systemic and whole of community effort? This is a key and defining question for cross-sector strategic partnerships.

Handout 2 cont.

- Finding clarity in the meaning of systemic change. It can mean realising a their regional contribution to the state or national strategy. It can mean making modifications and changes to that strategy that helps bring about their regional contribution. It can mean advocating for significant change to the national/state strategy if the region feels that the “centre” is mistaken and may/will not enable partnerships to achieve the goals and targets of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (NP).
- Being clear about what the partnership means by change. Change means to make or become different. A strategic partnership that seeks to bring about positive change (i.e. helping to meet NP goals and targets) intends to add value. The resulting change and added value can mean to expand and enhance current provision, it can mean to consolidate some encouraging new or marginal effort, it can mean to remove barriers and it can mean to create a new service and/or alternative way forward.

Change-making can be reinforcing of systems and their direction and/or it can be challenging to those systems. Whichever, the strategic intent of the partnership must remain accountable to the goals (and efforts to meet) the targets of the National Partnership i.e. to the agreement of the elected representative democracy at the national and state level.

TRAVELLING ALONG THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY

“Generally speaking, local and operational collaboration between two or more partners that meets a practical need for young people is a pre-requisite for the successful development of **regional** strategic partnerships. At the regional level, there is a threshold of influence and an economy of scale which enables a full range of stakeholders to determine how they want to shape the future and leave a legacy (lasting impact)”.

Why is this so?

- The operational partnership enables busy partners to learn about each other (varying cultures etc), builds a degree of both trust and transparency whilst the immediate practical need is met for each partner.
- This experience of working together helps them to discover what are the possibilities, what are the obstacles and more gradually what are the structural/systems limitations that are placed upon their collaboration and the agendas and contributions of each partner.
- They learn more about the needs of young people in their community, the strengths and gaps in provision (delivery, funding regimes, leadership etc) and some of the issues that need to be resolved **and** who else needs to be involved.
- Their specific and practical collaboration gives them a sense of confidence to engage (even build the capacity) of other stakeholders and they can all begin to think, plan and advocate strategically.
- They begin to appreciate their own power to influence change from a regional base. They will also learn more about their own limitations and also the reasons for, and the complex responses of central systems to their strategic and/or advocacy.

“Such a good reason to value both little “s” and Big “S” partnerships”

Please do not exclude the possibility of a **local** strategic partnership emerging “out of the blue”; especially in a community that is clearly defined, isolated, or conversely, a rather distinct and high density population in a large city and faces very significant challenges in economic/social development and the well being of their young people.

THREE STAGES; TRAVELLING ALONG THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY

STAGES	THE STARTER	THE MATURE PERFORMER	NEW HORIZONS
Little “s” or Big “S”	Operational (Little “s”)	Operational – Strategic Little “s” – Big “S”	Strategic Big “S”
Key Activities	Practical action to meet an immediate need for each partner e.g. donating resource, procurement, coming together for funding bid (criteria already set). Silo or sector thinking dominates rationale for participation; collaboration often dominated by one lead partner.	Reflecting upon and consolidating practical action, beginning to share risks, resources, information through greater transparency. Beginning to explore both mutual benefit and higher goals – includes, and yet goes beyond each partners agenda and beyond purely a procurement culture. Practical activity nearly integrated into the core business of the partners. Looking at future i.e. renewal or “let lie”.	Renewal of partnership Thinking the Big Picture, needs revealed, concerns shared and a growing awareness of the synergy and potential power of the partnership. Shared learning reveals the relevance of expertise in each sector, the need for equity of influence to achieving a shared and higher long term goal that seeks change. Involvement can change the partners themselves.
Membership	Limited number of partners working together in the short – intermediate term. May only represent 1 – 2 sectors of the economy.	Partners reflecting and becoming aware of other stakeholders and increased priority placed upon crafting a partnership culture and innovation across sectors.	Welcome other stakeholders as they are a working for a “whole of community, truly cross-sector(s) and regional effort – moving towards a union. Partnerships contribute to policy, not only practice.
Essential	Systems Support	Searching for Reform	Seeking Significant Systemic/Structural Change

Thanks to OECD Education Industry Matrix; DTI/DfES (UK) Partnerships with People Diagnostic Tool and GTA Partnerships with Schools Diagnostic Tool (2006) and Partra Simon/Dixon Partnership Solutions (2010)

THE ROLE OF THE BROKER – ALONG THE PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY

“Helping little “s” transform into Big “S” Partnership – with a focus on Stages 2 - 3 of the partnership journey”

- The broker can play a key role in creating, developing and sustaining a strategic partnership; which is generally a cross-sector and regional effort to seek or bring about longer term, significant and lasting change. Such change will directly lead to improved learning and transition outcomes for young people from that region and realise the goals and targets of the NP.
- In general terms (but not always), a regional and strategic partnership will build upon and around one or more local operational partnerships. The broker will respond as “mature performers” seek to enter “new horizons” by using their social capital, shared learning and their growing awareness of needs, opportunities and challenges to make a lasting difference.
- Making a difference is generally about influencing and/or bringing about some form of systemic/structural change in the region (and sometimes beyond) for successful learning and transition i.e. change required to meet the outcomes and targets stipulated by the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions. These can mean reinforcing, and/or regionally tailoring and customising the current state/national strategy and/or seeking to modify that strategy in order to achieve regional contribution – generally working with the grain!! For more detail, see the last two paragraphs of Handout 2.
- Engagement in an strategic partnership can lead partners to evolve their own culture, to change there interactions with other partners, and to learn and change their own practice.
- The next three handouts explain in more detail the role of the broker in
 1. Creating a Strategic Partnership
 2. Developing a Strategic Partnership
 3. Sustaining a Strategic Partnership.

THE ROLE OF THE BROKER IN CREATING A STRATEGIC PARTNERHSIP

“generally occurring at Stages 2 – 3 of current partnering”

- Monitor established operational partnerships and watch for signs of the partners wanting to combine and/or transform their intent and efforts into a more strategic endeavour (brokers do not impose!!)
- Facilitate and support the operational partnerships and emerging strategic endeavour to extract all learnings from their experiences – what opportunities, strengths, obstacles, gaps and need for change did they learn about together?
- Support the partnerships to carefully explore the need for change and/or a strategic response (not all challenges require partnerships, let alone a strategy or significant change). Help them to focus their energy and passion on what is truly needed.
- Access the partnerships to summaries of relevant policy and position papers (saving partners time and ensuring equity of access to intelligence/insights is vital)
- With the partners, keep auditing the partnership culture within the region and respond to meeting a gap or need – see handout 11 “Crafting a Partnership Culture”.
- Offer these partnerships exemplars of relevant activities and models from afar; those that are cross-sector, regional and change-making (both regional innovation to support the existing systems strategy, advocacy and/or pilot action and/or to challenge those systems).
- Support the partners to scope and define their shared purpose, to acknowledge their various agendas and values and how all may/may not be fully integrated into the shared goal.
- Respond to the partnerships requests for information/access to other relevant stakeholders (across the three sectors) and when appropriate, help build the capacity of the less organised/confident and resourced.
- With the partners, signpost possible sources of funding and resource plus valuable contact points in relevant systems.
- Service (and save time spent by partners on logistical matters) to launch and to celebrate their endeavour e.g. Partnership Summit.

THE ROLE OF THE BROKER IN DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

“generally occurring at the end of Stage 2 but usually within Stage 3”

- Serve the partnership by providing assistance in their efforts to formalise both their agreement and the contributions of various partners.
- Support their efforts to both prepare any funding proposals and develop an action plan and milestones for their partnership.
- Assist in the establishment of procedures and protocols i.e. internal support.
- Explore with the partners, the need for (and if required rapid response) technical or process expertise.
- Monitor the progress of the partnership, the relationships and the various activities, ensuring who “is at the table”, is needed and/or the state of effective communication flows back to key decision makers/resource holders.
- Offer, wait and respond, (do not impose or push) to requests for partner capacity building.
- Keep on “crafting the partnership culture”.
- Work with the partners to monitor communication flows with the systems that the partnership wishes to influence i.e. support and bolster and/or to seek change. It is very important that the region is fully aware of the evolving thinking/activity of the systems and then they can be clear about differences, similarities (between the region and the centre) and also moving feasts/changes (vice-versa).

THE ROLE OF A BROKER IN SUSTAINING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

“Stage 3”

- Monitor the continuity of engagement and the well being of the partners – especially the drivers. Help the partnership to recognise the “toll” of driving change e.g. burnout, silo/organisational pressure to reduce commitment or even withdraw.
- Assist the partnership to fully explore how it can nurture/protect individual drivers of change and advocacy, against excess-workload, imposed stress; for example, the security of having an independent partnership spokesperson, the need for an independent fulcrum/servant.
- Ensure that the partnership conducts shared and structured reviews at which it not only monitors progress, but forward plans **and** captures and stores the learning. This will reinforce accountability and good governance, and it will lead to either confirmation or negotiated modification of direction, strategy and tactics.
- Celebrate small wins and “along the way” progress.
- Raise the issue of media/presentation coaching for the partnership spokespeople **and** for persons who will speak from their own organisation/sector perspective, yet remain aligned and accountable to the mission of the strategic partnership.
- Watch for the inevitable signs of a strategic partnership needing to stop, reflect and decide whether to

Renew again – rekindle/relaunch

or

Consolidate – maintain momentum

or

Closure – preside over the wake.

- Reinforce the message that innovation increasingly emerges from the “coming together” of people from separated territories i.e. different sectors and organisations. Value the potential of cross-sector collaboration to innovate; creativity that would not have occurred if all remained separate silos/sectors.

THE ROLE OF A PARTNERSHIP BROKER – NURTURING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP THAT HAS COME “OUT OF THE BLUE”

The Situation

- In certain circumstances, a cross-sector (whole of community) partnership or coalition of stakeholders with a strategic intent, will “kind of” emerge from nowhere. For example, a crisis comes to a head in a region, a special opportunity makes itself available and/or a new and strong stakeholder comes to the region (or has a fresh leader) with both energy, and a strong commitment to the learning and transition of young people.
- The broker is not in a position or empowered to tell this emerging partnership or coalition (and its leader(s)) to “get a track record” first by tackling operational and practical activity, before they are ready to seek significant change. The broker is responsive and a servant leader, however the following series of helpful hints may be helpful.
- **Seven Helpful Hints**
 1. Offer information about current partnership activity within the region, lessons learnt by previous or current collaborative efforts within the region.
 2. Access the new leaders and partners to relevant policy and strategic papers that are directly relevant to their goal – enabling them to appreciate the current context (including the goals and targets of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions).
 3. Provide the energetic leaders of the endeavour contact people from whom they can learn, regional allies that they may wish to “recruit”, and systems people with whom they will need to interact and/or with whom they will wish to influence.
 4. Offer the strategic partnership **independent facilitation** for the review of progress – watching out for the signs of the partners having limited experience of working together e.g. a lack of equity in the agenda (dominant leader), the need for the partners to more thoroughly get to know each others values/intentions (retreats, processes of relationship building) and the potential of a new and dynamic leader to inspire and/or antagonise other stakeholders with their energy, passion and drive.
 5. Above all, use the reviews to reflect upon progress in both task and process – assisting the members to measure their satisfaction and clarity about the shared goal, transparency and levels of equity/respect.
 6. Keep feeding the partnership the experiences and learning of similar endeavours in other regions.
 7. Obviously – offer the same kind of support as one would to a little “s” partnership that wants to transform itself into a Big “S” initiative.

CRAFTING A PARTNERSHIP CULTURE

“Facilitating the partners and offering process support”

12 Exemplars of Process Support Activity

1. Information about the full range of partnership models.
2. Provide data that indicates the level of need for partnerships.
3. Secretarial support to a regional “Partnership Summit”.
4. Programs and processes of structured review/shared planning by partnerships.
5. Cross-sector and multi-agency “pd” (refer to “The Character of Cross-Sector CPD”).
6. Access partners to valuable practice (local – global link).
7. Share documented practice with other regions.
8. Social auditing process – peer and self appraisal by partners and partnership brokers; verified by a social audit panel that may include funders and local governments.
9. Critical friends observing existing partnerships and commenting upon potential for more strategic activity (little “s” – Big “S”).
10. Regional prioritisation of resource allocation and the use of local capacity e.g. work placement use, and the need to inspire young people who are not “work-ready”.
11. Self-assessment tools for partners to reflect/renew their responsiveness to external partners.
12. Encouraging continuity of stakeholders personnel e.g. orientation of staff new to a region to the “world of Partnerships”.

THE BROKER: FACILITATOR OF A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

“What does Facilitation really mean?”

- Facilitation is to enable a group, team or alliance to think, plan and lead action to change their reality i.e. to improve their performance and the lives of their members and those they serve. The facilitator is dedicated to building the solidarity and power of the partnership to determine content, strategy and direction.
- Paulo Freire first incorporated the notion of facilitation into a vision of education and learning; where a group could be supported to think critically about their place in society, understand structures of support and oppression and then take action. The facilitator walked behind or alongside the group and encouraged the group to reflect upon progress to extract and capture the learning and to forward plan.
- In essence, the facilitator is a support person who responds to, and empowers the group, rather than a leader, mentor or coach who guides, trains and tutors, and shows the way. For more details about the distinctive yet related concepts of Facilitator, Coach and Mentor please refer to handout
- The Facilitator
 - encourages the partnership to consider the broader dimensions
 - asks questions, prompts, and poses problems rather than giving direction or answers
 - summarises reflections/reviews and discussions (Rapporteur) and offers feedback for the partnerships further consideration
 - manages the review process, without imposing his/her own views.
- Above all else, the Facilitator believes in the partnership and its capacity to take the lead, voice their ideas and achieve its goals. The Facilitator is an enthusiastic supporter, always searching out opportunities for the partners to review and celebrate success and learning.
- The Facilitator of a strategic partnership offers process support to the partnership (including access to conflict resolution) and responds to any partner who seeks support for their efforts to contribute to meeting the shared goal of that partnership. In terms of capacity building, the Facilitator replies to the request of the partner and becomes (or organises) a just-in-time coach of process skills, tactical design and a propensity to truly collaborate e.g. crafting a partnership culture, helping the partners to unite in their shared effort etc.

THE ADVANTAGES OF AN INDEPENDENT BROKER SERVING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

- Independent means to be free from the influence or control of others (including the partners of the strategic effort that the broker supports). The independent broker should not have to be dependent upon any one partner for resource, function and validity. In such a situation, it is easier for an independent broker to consistently remain loyal to the shared goal of the partnership, rather than to be diverted to the agenda of a particular (especially powerful) partner i.e. reinforcing accountability for the common good through active democracy.
- Such a broker can “afford” to declare their commitment to monitoring mutual respect, equity and transparency amongst all the partners. They should be seen by the partners and those that the partnership is seeking to influence as partner **neutral**. The independent broker can be a fulcrum to the partnership; a fulcrum around which the dynamic contributions and aspirations of the partners can revolve.
- It is not always possible for a partnership to have at its regional or community disposal a truly independent broker. The broker may need to be part of an organisation that is also a partner. In such a case, lines of supervision, forums of support and accountability as well as measures of performance must be developed to be as independent as possible from the mainstream culture of that “parent” organisation.
- Regions that are particularly challenged by economic disadvantage, high youth unemployment rates and/or significant “closing the gap” targets are very likely to require long-term strategic partnerships that seek to improve learning and transition. The challenge of meeting the goals and targets of the NP is more pronounced. Present providers are frequently dealing with crisis after crisis and there is often a plethora of home grown and external agencies competing for influence and resource. These partnerships are most likely to require an independent broker, someone who can incorporate the sometimes competing agendas of the three sectors of the economy into one goal and harness resources for that purpose.

A FEW HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE BROKER OF A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

“Many of the following may be obvious, yet must not be overlooked or undervalued”

- **Do not assume** that the intent of a strategic partnership is, or will become advocacy for systemic change e.g. in education, business, community groups. On many, if not most occasions, the partnership will want to support the directions being made by the system. They will focus their collective wisdom on determining how their region (through active democracy) can most effectively translate the State policy/strategy (of representative democracy) into practice and make their regional contribution to achieving relevant targets.
- **Conversely, do not assume** that a cross-sector strategic partnership will not seek to influence, refine, or even significantly change the directions or structures of the existing systems of education, training, employment, welfare etc. Even the engagement of small business, parental engagement in school life and the role of young people as a source of career and transition support, maybe debated and recommendations made to regional partners and their parent bodies or peak organisations.
- Tutor/Scholar yourself and other brokers in models and approaches to regional advocacy and regional development, and lifelong learning. Offer information/insights from afar to your region and its partnerships. Learn more about process support, crafting a culture and facilitation from not only other regions (Australia) but from indigenous, rural poor, urban and high welfare dependent communities from overseas.
- Be consistent about **connecting** people, ideas and resources – become “famous” for being an enthusiastic believer in what your local region could do when people partner.
- Always keep your promises, deliver on what you say you will do and **save partners time** by helping out on logistical and individual tasks; so the partners can commit time to thinking and action that must be done together.
- Make yourself available as a friendly ear and confidante to partners, as long as they understand your paramount loyalty is to the shared **goal/mission** of the partnership.

- Be aware of the common roadblocks to effective cross-sector and strategic partnering – monitor progress and other process support to “unblock”
 - a lack of clarity about the complex interaction of active and representative democracy
 - stereotyping partners and sectors of the economy
 - the passion and/or closed mind and/or ego/personality of certain partners meaning that they find it extremely difficult to leave their own perspective
 - lack of clarity about the shared goal of the partnership
 - putting in place and maintaining good government
 - allowance for regional history i.e. past feuds, failures in collaboration, strengths, informal and formal connections with systemic power brokers etc
 - busy partners may want to do rather than talk/listen; a facilitator can make sense of this as long as the partners reflect upon progress and learn as they move forward

MAKING THE DISTINCTION: STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

“Yet recognising the interrelationship – two-way momentum”

OPERATIONAL (little “s”)	STRATEGIC (Big “S”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical initiatives that make an immediate contribution (sometimes with a dash of strategic intent, but value added now) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endeavours that are about creating a long-term value added and advantage and lasting impact e.g. demonstration, modified structures and resource allocation, advocacy to funders etc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally with a specific goal/outcome for the benefit of young people and that meets a particular need of each partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally with an overall goal for change and seeking a “union” in vision and strategy for young people’s learning and transition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributions to the partnership often clear and specific; partners have a particular role and area of expertise, often contracted contributions (procurement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributions more dynamic and evolve over time as the union strengthens and engages in change-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often two or more partners – multi-agency but not always cross-sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally cross-sector (3 sectors of the economy) – a whole of community effort – formal and informal groupings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually local and sometimes regional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually regional (economy of scale) and promoting a regional contribution, aspiration and/or desire for change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System support and/or minor reform/refinement of existing structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System support and a desire for systemic change. Innovation at the regional level through harnessing cross-sector insights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often not even concerned about culture; focus is on an immediate more practical activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural change within the region is sought through cross-sector partnerships and shared learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis placed upon doing together – mutual benefit to the partners and the meeting of their own agendas. Judgements and differences often put on the back-burner in order to get the job done – coordination is paramount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis placed upon thinking as well as doing together i.e. process – finding the common ground and shared goal, acknowledging differences, values and a range of agendas that are to be subordinated to the shared goal. Strong desire to resolve conflicting needs – mediation is as important as coordination.
<p>Broker – Respond – Contribute – Exit (short term support)</p>	<p>Broker – Process Support (more ongoing)</p>

WHY ARE STRATEGIC CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS SO VITAL TO ACHIEVING THE 2015 TARGETS OF THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON YOUTH ATTAINMENT AND TRANSITIONS

- To raise the percentage of Young Australians who achieve year 12 or a vocational equivalent from current rates means that services will need to engage, retain and boost the attainment of many young people who have **not** experienced satisfaction and/or success within current services and their provision. It is highly likely that change needs to occur; more of the same will not be enough to both connect and boost the attainment of such young people.
- When one refers to change and more specifically systemic change, one is not only talking about schools, but also the way in which employers, youth services, training organisations, parent networks relate to the agenda of youth attainment and transition – especially for those young people who are defined as being “at risk” and who will be the target for support – essential to achieve the NP targets.
- To raise the attainment for those young people who are often poor, and/or damaged and/or discriminated against, and/or from welfare dependent cultures demands that aspirations (hopes, dreams and ambitions) are raised as well as, or even before connecting those marginalised young people to services. **This is about cultural change;** systems, structures, relationships and reward systems of major youth services will be altered by business, the state, and civil society (both NGOs and more informal community groups – including families etc) working together.
- Cultural change can be driven by international, national and state forces, yet regional and local endeavours are essential if the impact is to be constructive and enables one to engage and develop the learning of particular “at risk” groups. Strategic and practical action needs to be designed and implemented close to the ground. This requires the input of both active and representative democracy. The region is not so far removed, and yet offers an economy of scale (even threshold) where it is feasible for the various key players of the three sectors of the economy to not only “share a stake” in the issue, but also exploit the logistics e.g. local and a common understanding of the community and a regional presence of most partners and drivers to bring about longer term advantage.
- Effective regional cross-sector partnerships will follow the tradition, and become part of the proven track record within public policy for regional development strategies (for economic and social development).

- Similarly, to guarantee every 16 – 24 year old a place in education, training or employment will require regional collaboration with both operational and strategic intent. However, there will be even greater need for a plethora of agencies/services to work together (across this broad age group that is beyond the compulsory years) in order to both improve current performance i.e. eliminate gaps and wasteful duplications of services **and** to shape the future combination of services and opportunities that is required if services are to connect with, engage, retain and boost attainment of a cohort of young adults; many of whom have not experienced success in their past learning or transition.
- Public policy for education/learning within Australia has already highlighted the essential contribution of partnerships for “closing the gap” and meeting the associated targets. The 2008 Declaration of Education Goals makes specific mention of schools working in partnership with local indigenous communities on all aspects of the schooling process. The need to innovate and change provision and culture is so evident with respect to “closing the gap” contributions. That requires **strategic** partnerships as well as operational collaborations.
- Successful efforts to bring about systemic/cultural change at regional and state/national level requires the full engagement of key personnel from within key and mainstream systems e.g. schools, colleges, large business. Yet, it also requires that their contribution is placed in context with the strategic intent of drivers **outside** their systems. By working together, the two sets of drives can:
 1. innovate by putting together intelligence at regional level; encouraging key personnel from mainstream systems to put on “a regional hat” and work with those external to their employer (yet respect their need to be accountable to their organisation or employer)
 2. interpret, prioritise and then allocate resource to regional efforts that are culturally responsive/in harmony with local populations (and especially particular target groups)
 3. protect each other from any unhelpful/limiting control of their own system and its hierarchy – there is security in numbers; cross-sector collaboration generates a community/regional voice of active democracy that can be stronger and potentially more public than the stated views of any particular driver who is employed by, and accountable to the power structures of one key partner e.g. schools, large business, national youth service organisations.
- Effective cross-sector strategic partnerships are regional efforts in which the strategic thinking of key drivers from all sectors of the economy combine, generate a synergy and either create change at the regional level and/or advocate for change at a state/national level. Their paramount accountability is not to the head offices, strategies and requirements of the partner organisations but to achieving their own combined regional contribution to meeting the goals (and associated targets) of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (as established by the elected members of the representative democracy).