

# Guideline

## Partnership governance

### Summary

The Partnership governance guideline outlines effective governance practices for Partnerships.

Table 1 - Document details

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## 1. Title

Partnership governance guideline

## 2. Purpose

This document describes the governance role that Partnerships have within the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). The purpose of this document is to clearly articulate the principles of effective governance within DECD Partnerships and outline the key elements and processes that determine, influence and shape decision making.

The Partnership governance guideline contributes to the DECD Governance framework which describes the principles and elements which will drive improvement focused on high quality educational service provision and accountability as well as meeting our legislative and corporate obligations.

## 3. Scope

This guideline applies to all DECD preschool directors and principals together with members of the Local Education Team.

## 4. Guideline detail

### 4.1 Purpose of Partnerships

DECD Partnerships were created to enable a networked approach to learning focused on developing collective responsibility for improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people. Partnerships provide increased opportunities for educators to reflect on effective practice, share available resources, generate innovative solutions and increase leadership capacity through a collaborative and networked approach to improvement.

DECD Partnerships are an important structure contributing to effective governance within the organisation. Partnerships comprise geographically defined preschools and schools whose leaders, together with the Local Education Team, provide strategic leadership within the partnership to realise the organisation's vision and priorities.

### 4.2 Structure and membership of Partnerships

Partnerships comprise geographically defined preschools and schools represented at Partnership meetings by leaders from those sites.

Leadership is provided to Partnerships by a Local Education Team (LET) comprising the education director, early childhood leader, principal consultant and administrative assistant.

### 4.3 Role of Partnerships

The role of the Partnership is to improve children and young people's learning and wellbeing outcomes through a networked approach to learning.

## 4.4 Governance definition and principles

The DECD Governance framework adopts The Australian National Audit Office Public Sector Governance Better Practice Guide (June 2014) definition and principles of governance. Please refer to the [DECD Governance Framework 2016-2018](#) for references.

## 4.5 Effective governance within Partnerships

Effective governance within a Partnership involves:

- Providing strategic networked leadership to schools and preschools, and other Partnership service providers, with a focus on continuous improvement.
- Designing structures and processes that enable the Partnership to effectively identify, implement, monitor and evaluate improvement for all children and young people.
- Optimising learning outcomes through systematic improvement planning that is coherent with DECD's strategic priorities.
- Engaging and collaborating with key stakeholders to strategically plan for more effective and responsive services for children and young people.
- Assuming collective accountability for the learning growth and achievement of all children and young people within the Partnership.

## 4.6 Partnership management structures enabling effective governance

The following management structures are examples of how Partnerships may organise themselves to support and enable effective decision making.

### 4.6.1 Partnership executive leader groups

Some Partnerships have democratically elected representatives from each level of schooling represented in a Partnership executive group. These executive groups have responsibility for leading the strategic direction of the Partnership in collaboration with the Education Director. The chair of the Partnership is nominated from the executive group. Additionally, some Partnerships identify an executive officer who provides administration support to the executive leader groups and chair.

### 4.6.2 Partnership finance school

A school is identified to manage the financial resources of the Partnership. Financial reports are provided to Partnership leaders who use this information to inform and resource strategic planning. Decisions about utilising finances occur according to the protocols agreed to by Partnership members.

### 4.6.3 Partnership working groups

Partnership working groups may report to executive groups or, in the absence of an executive leader group, to the Partnership directly. Frequently these working groups will have operational responsibility for enacting a priority identified within the Partnership improvement plan. Some working groups are organised according to levels of schooling.

### 4.6.4 Professional learning communities

A structure used by some Partnerships to engage a broader scope of staff in the implementation of priorities is Professional Learning Communities. PLCs provide pedagogical leadership regarding a particular improvement priority and support the implementation of strategies within individual schools and preschools.

#### 4.6.5 Student Support Services Partnership Portfolio reference groups

Student Support Services have established specific, local forums to connect with Partnerships and sites. These forums enable strategic and operational decision making concerning the provision of services to sites and partnerships supporting them to meet the needs of students with a disability and additional needs.

#### 4.6.6 Mechanisms for engaging children, young people and families

Partnerships will seek to engage children, young people and their families in the planning and decision making processes to ensure a democratic and collaborative approach to improvement that utilises the strengths, wisdom and resources of stakeholders. Partnerships configure these structures differently according to the local context but may comprise a regular, ongoing structure or a subject specific consultation.

### 4.7 Partnership processes enabling effective governance

The following processes support Partnerships to engage in effective decision making.

#### 4.7.1 Partnership improvement planning

Partnership planning processes contribute to effective governance by:

- collectively identifying and aligning improvement priorities with the broader organisation's priorities
- developing implementation plans to ensure that objectives are achieved
- allocating resources strategically to achieve improvement goals.

#### 4.7.2 Self-review

*“Self-review is a process of reflection on practice, made systematic and transparent, with the aim of improving student, professional and organisational learning”* (McBeath, J. 2005). The development of planned, cyclical approach to self-review provides Partnerships with relevant and reliable information on a continuous basis that can be used to inform progress towards improvement priorities within the Partnership plan.

Effective internal accountability processes include:

- Rigorous continuous self-review against improvement goals, Partnership data and Performance Review directions.
- Improving and refining pedagogical practices that facilitate and enable deeper and more meaningful learning for every child and student.
- Accountability for the strategic deployment of Partnership resources.

#### 4.7.3 Networked performance development

Networked performance development may contribute to effective governance by strengthening the collective understanding between leaders about improvement within sites while building internal accountability between participants. This process can support the deprivatisation of leadership practices and build leadership capability within a Partnership.

#### 4.7.4 Clear protocols and referral processes

Clear protocols and referral processes between service providers within and across agencies contributes to open and transparent decision making and builds effective collaboration between providers. Partnerships strategically plan and negotiate the provision of services with a range of providers in order to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of children and young people within the Partnership.

#### 4.7.5 Performance reviews

Performance reviews support Partnerships to achieve their vision for higher standards of learning achievement for children and young people by embedding a culture of growth, achievement and accountability. The purpose of the performance review is to engage with site leaders in a facilitated evidence-based discussion about:

- progress sites and Partnerships are making towards improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people
- successful approaches that can be shared across the system
- areas for collaborative action and sustained improvement.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

Table 3 - Roles and responsibilities

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Preschool Director and Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.</li> <li>• Provide educational leadership and management of the preschool or school.</li> <li>• Participate and contribute to the Partnership's priorities.</li> <li>• Adhere to the legislative frameworks and governance principles.</li> </ul>
Education Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide strategic and innovative educational leadership to realise DECD's strategic plan and the Partnerships' priorities.</li> <li>• Adhere to the legislative frameworks and governance principles.</li> </ul>
Local Education Team (Education Director, Early Childhood Leader, Principal Consultant, Administrative Assistant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide leadership to the Partnership.</li> <li>• Align local and organisational priorities to build coherence.</li> <li>• Adhere to the legislative frameworks and governance principles.</li> </ul>

Role	Authority/responsibility for
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that Partnership objectives are achieved, risks are managed effectively and resources are deployed responsibly.</li> <li>• Establish effective internal accountability processes.</li> </ul>
Channel Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide strategic and operational advice to Partnerships to design and establish innovative service provision responses according to Partnership needs.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with Partnerships to support the achievement of improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people within a Partnership.</li> </ul>

## 6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

Monitoring of the implementation of the Partnership governance guidelines will be carried out by the School and Preschool Improvement Division.

The Partnership governance guidelines will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with the DECD Governance framework.

The review will be led by the School and Preschool Improvement Division, in consultation with the Senior Executive Group.

## 7. Supporting documents

- [DECD Governance Framework](#)

## 8. References

- Australian National Audit Office Public Sector Governance – Better Practice Guide 2014
- MacBeath, J (2005). *School self-evaluation and the role of the critical friend*. Cambridge Journal of Education 35 (2) 239 – 252.