



CASE STUDY

Understanding the impact of the Partnership Brokers National Network

"When I met with Simon and Olivia from SVA Consulting about enumerating the value of our work, it was refreshing to meet people that were able to understand the complexities of our program. It was also immediately apparent that the team would be able to handle the complex task of measuring the change that came through our work."

Craig Dadds, Executive Officer, Partnership Brokers National Network

The Partnership Brokers National Network (PBNN), funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), engaged SVA Consulting to evaluate the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program (Partnership Brokers program). This program supports partnerships between schools, businesses, community organisations and other stakeholders to improve education and transition outcomes for young people. It involves a network of 100+ Partnership Brokers which support around 1,600 partnerships and more than 5,000 partner organisations Australia-wide.

Detailed understanding needed

Since the Partnership Brokers program commenced in 2010, the PBNN became increasingly aware that its program generated a broad range of benefits for key stakeholders including schools, businesses and young people. As an example, the Health Pathways Partnership (which promotes careers in the health professions for young people living in the Bathurst region) was recognised for developing young peoples' skills, accreditation and pathway plans leading to employment in the sector.

However, the PBNN wanted a more detailed understanding of the program's impact

PARTNERSHIP BROKERS SCHOOL+BUSINESS+COMMUNITY

SERVICE AREAS

- ✓ Measurement & evaluation

IMPACT AREAS

- ✓ Education
- ✓ Employment

ABOUT SROI

SROI is used to understand, measure and evaluate the impact of a program, organisation or policy. It is a form of cost-benefit analysis that seeks to understand and measure the value of the social, economic and environmental outcomes created, and the costs of creating them.

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both in terms of the type and also the scale of change being created for stakeholders. And importantly, it wanted to build its understanding for both individual partnerships like Health Pathways and the program overall.

Five SROI analyses

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology was used to evaluate the Partnership Brokers program for 2010-2013. The evaluation included five standalone SROI analyses for Partnership Broker organisations working across NSW and Queensland. Across these five analyses, SVA Consulting surveyed and interviewed more than 300 stakeholders including representatives of local businesses, schools, community organisations, education institutions and parents. The findings from these consultations underpinned the research and evidence to complete the analyses

The project team also used the 'program logic' methodology to develop and test an hypothesis about the changes experienced by partner organisations and young people through the program.

High level of partnership activity

Through the five SROI analyses, the evaluation captured the impact created for more than 700 partner organisations and parents through around 150 partnerships. In particular, the analyses were able to confirm that the program was creating value for stakeholders participating in partnerships. This was underpinned by a high level of partnership activity, comprising a high number of partnerships and partners. Some of the other key findings identified through the analyses included:

- The value of social returns exceeded DEEWR's cash investment by between 1.1 times and 3.7 times across the different regions. The impact generated through the program had also increased over time – highlighting the fact that the program was building momentum across the community and enhancing its effectiveness.

- At the individual partnership level, partner organisations shared resources and expertise to build each other's capacity and capabilities. This generated outcomes for organisations in how they operated and how they supported young people. These outcomes, in turn, led to direct benefits for young people.
- The experience of stakeholders across the five analyses illustrated a high level of consistency in why organisations participated in partnerships and what changed for them as a result. It was therefore likely that a number of findings would hold for the program at the national level.

Importantly, the evaluation gave the PBNN a body of evidence to demonstrate the value created through the program. This was an important part of the evidence base that informed the government's decision to extend the Partnership Brokers program. In addition, using the SROI methodology to evaluate a major government program not only highlighted the value of considering the broader social and environmental impacts created for the community but demonstrated a practical way to do just that.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP BROKERS NATIONAL NETWORK

The School Business Community Partnership Brokers program (Partnership Brokers program) supports partnerships to improve education and transition outcomes for all young people. The network of brokers is the Partnership Broker National Network (PBNN). DEEWR has committed more than \$200 million in funding for the program between January 2010 to December 2014.

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