

In Partnership – Promoting Health through Local Government Strategic Partnerships in SWAHS

Building regional and other partnerships for
health

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Promoting Health through Local Government Strategic Partnerships

SWAHS

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Aim

Improved health & well being of local communities through sustainable partnerships between local Councils & SWAHS by:

- Strengthened business relationships
- Development of formal partnership agreements and communication structures &
- Defined actions (agreed projects)

Nature and Extent of the Problem

- Most determinants of health sit outside health system & LG is in the position to influence & affect some health determinants
- Lack of structural/sustainable opportunities for joint planning & resource sharing
- Operational level relationships were dependent on goodwill & individuals
- Directions were not always strategically aligned with respective organisations
- Approaches to LG from Health from a range of units

Strategic importance

- NSW State plan - identifies the importance of working collaboratively & in partnership across government & non-government organisations
- NSW State Health Plan - indicates the importance of working beyond the health system to collaboratively plan better linkages & service coordination
- LG is a major intervention setting for addressing priority prevention issues - Healthy environments influencing Tobacco Control, Healthy Weight, Injurious falls among older people, locational disadvantage
- Formal partnerships with all Councils within the AHS boundaries & WSROC presents an integrated regional approach for joint planning & actions with mutual obligations for sustainable & healthier communities

Planning & Implementing solutions

- Partnership needs assessment conducted using a purposeful sample of Mayors, General Managers & Senior Planners from all Councils within SWAHS boundaries
- Data results identified directions for improvement including:
 - Agreed aims/objectives for community health improvement
 - Joint workforce development re respective structures, principles, drivers & planning processes

Planning & Implementing - cont

- Formal processes for communication, interventions & entry points
- Agreed projects for improving health & wellbeing, reducing duplication & utilising shared resources
- Formal partnership agreements with clearly defined purpose, directions, roles & responsibilities, governance, actions, resources & evaluation methods

Outcomes & Evaluation

- Formal MOU - Parramatta Council & Penrith, Blacktown & Baulkham Hills in progress. Includes governance structure, implementation of agreed accountable projects, evaluation/review mechanisms & joint workforce development. Project examples:
 - Structure for feeding into Councils major plans (10 major plans successfully influenced for positive health impacts)
 - Successful in obtaining NSW Health LG seeding grants for agreed projects
 - HIA Granville Regeneration Strategy
 - Integration of healthy urban design guidelines & HIA assessment tools into Councils policy & planning frameworks
 - Expansion of Council Tobacco Control Policies

Sustaining Change

- AHS Level:
 - Area Strategic Plan & Population Health Plan
 - Executive reporting structure
 - Support role included in position job description
- LG Level:
 - MOUs with governance structure & accountability mechanisms creates a sustainable framework

Lessons Learned

- Strategic partnerships take time to develop and maintain
 - Negotiate for appropriate representation at the table
 - Understand partners business, organisational drivers, priorities
 - Acknowledge political process & its strengths
 - Formal structures/agreements with accountabilities do create commitment, action & sustainability
- The formal process of the needs assessment & MOU development builds trust & creates a framework for the partnership

Future Scope

- LG is an important, rapidly developing setting for addressing urban development/regeneration & community/social planning that address NSW Health's major prevention priorities
- The model described has the potential to be a blueprint for other AHSs
- SWAHS will develop MOU guidelines in 2008 providing a generic resource that could be used by other AHSs/agencies