

Funding & resources

Advice for schools as community hubs (SaCH)

In a nutshell

Reliable, long-term funding and sound financial management are essential to sustain an impactful SaCH. Blending, braiding, or layering funding from different sources – usually tied to reportable outcomes – is often required. Upfront agreements or contracts defining who's paying for what help avoid disputes later.

Seek long-term funding

Short-term grants may be easier to win, but strive to secure ongoing funding so you can:

- continue hub programs and activities
- retain knowledgeable, networked staff
- build strong relationships with your community and partners – refer to the '[Partnerships and collaborations](#)' advice sheet in this series
- reduce time spent re-applying for funding
- demonstrate positive impact – which takes time and helps to justify existing funding and win more. Refer to the '[Evaluation and evidence](#)' advice sheet.

'The idea that you can design a solution on a 12-month funding arrangement is unrealistic.'
Our Place – see reference on p.3

'Ongoing support for the school in terms of funding and operating community hubs is vital, so that the ongoing operation is not seen as a burden over time.'
Building Connections workshop participant

'One principle has been firmly established: all programs require new funds... The idea that comprehensive programs can be created... by moving existing funding from one program to another, has not been demonstrated.'
Joy Dryfoos, US expert in 'full-service' schools

'Funding streams shift like sand on a beach, so think in terms of change. Remember, trust between people lasts longer than money from any funding source. People are your major resource.'
Calfee, Wittwer & Meredith – see reference on p. 4



Based at The University of Melbourne, **Building Connections: Schools as Community Hubs** is an Australian Research Council Linkage project that has advanced understanding of how to design, implement and sustain SaCH. Produced by the research team, this advice sheet is part of **How to Hub Australia**, a suite of resources for policymakers, school leaders, and designers.



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Building
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Schools as Community Hubs

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Combine funding sources

Your SaCH will probably need to draw on multiple funding sources: federal, state, local, public and/or private. Different funders usually have varying objectives and reporting requirements, and meeting these will take significant effort and skilled financial administration. But combining streams of funding can support more diverse SaCH programs and broader community engagement.



Photo: Cathwest Innovation College by Alleanza Architecture

Funding type	What it is	When it's used	Key challenge/s
Blended	Multiple funding streams are combined, and overall expenditure is tracked.	When funders have the same goals.	Achieving consensus on funding goals.
Braided	Multiple funding streams are combined and expenditure from each source is tracked separately.	When funders have varying priorities and reporting requirements.	Managing more complex administration and determining collective progress towards the SaCH vision.
Layered	Separate funding streams for optional activities are added to a base layer of reliable funding for core operations.	When supplementary funding is short-term or unreliable.	Determining which activities are optional and managing disappointment if they are discontinued.

Photo: Armidale Secondary College





Case study: Philanthropy

Our Place is 'a holistic place-based approach to supporting the education, health and development of all children and families in disadvantaged communities by utilising the universal platform of a school.'

In partnership with the Victorian Government, Our Place is being implemented in ten school sites across Victoria, with the support of philanthropic partners: the Colman Foundation, Dusseldorp Forum, Paul Ramsay Foundation, Ray and Margaret Wilson Foundation, Sabemo Foundation, RM Ansett Trust, and the William Buckland Foundation. Each organisation understands that only long-term support will achieve lasting change.

Source: Our Place – see reference below.

Photo: Doveton College



Want to learn more?

- *Brokering School-Community Partnerships: Cross-sector Advocacy and Hard Work* by Lynden Lauer, Shirley Watters, Kari Morris and Sandra Griffin in *Schools as Community Hubs: Building 'more than a school' for community benefit* (2023)
- *What it means to walk alongside: Exploring the our Place partnership* by Fiona McKenzie
- Chapters 4 & 5 in *Building a Full-Service School: A Step-by-Step Guide* by Carol Calfee, Frank Wittwer, and Mimi Meredith (1998)