

Facility management

Advice for schools as community hubs (SaCH)

In a nutshell

Involve the school administrative staff and/or facilities manager **early** in the process of designing your SaCH, including negotiations about facility sharing, to ensure your plans support cost-effective and sustainable management.

Becoming a SaCH increases the complexity of school site management, so sharing facilities with community organisations should mean **sharing the management burden too**.

Partnering with facility management groups, or outsourcing such services, can improve community access, while reducing the administrative burden on school personnel.

Costs and benefits of sharing facilities

Schools may avoid sharing their facilities with the community because of the costs of insurance, maintenance, cleaning, staffing, security, and utilities. The smaller the school, the greater the facility management burden that may fall on individual staff members.

However, sharing school facilities with community service providers or other local groups or organisations can:

- deliver **higher-quality facilities** for the school and community by pooling resources
- **reduce costs** of facility management and operation for the school and partners through shared economies of scale
- generate **additional revenue** to enhance school programs
- increase facility **security** through community presence
- improve **environmental sustainability** through more efficient infrastructure use
- foster **stronger relationships** between the school and community
- enhance the school's **reputation** in the community; and
- support the **education and wellbeing** of school students and families.

'Operational issues – from the milk usage to the cleaning – can be managed once a shared vision for the site is agreed. Everything is "figure-out-able".
Building Connections workshop participant



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.

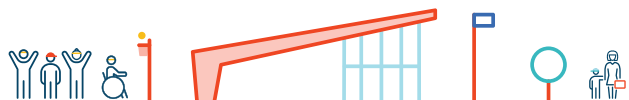


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Designed for sharing

Thoughtful design can help schools share their facilities efficiently and safely.

For example, cleaning and storage facilities can be designed with out-of-hours access in mind. A school could be divided into sectors (e.g., cooking and eating areas, rooms for classes and meetings, sports courts, and performing arts facilities) that are each secured separately, so community users can access just the area they need.

Refer to the '[Facility design](#)' and '[Safety and security](#)' advice sheets in this series.



Photo: Hazel Glen College, VIC, by Minx Architecture

Hired, shared or jointly used?

To maximise community benefit from publicly-funded infrastructure, state governments generally encourage the use of school facilities by the community for appropriate purposes. Community use of school facilities is always subject to requirements that protect school students, staff, property, and other users.

Various terms are used to describe different sharing arrangements – refer to the table below.

SaCH facility sharing models	
SHORT-TERM HIRE	Community members, groups or organisations can arrange access to school facilities outside school hours for special events, which may incur a hiring fee.
SHARED USE	Businesses or organisations can negotiate a long-term lease agreement for regular (e.g., weekly) exclusive use of school facilities, when not required by the school. This usually incurs rent to cover facility cleaning, management, and maintenance costs.
JOINT USE	The school and one or more partners from the community, private or government sectors share the use and management costs of an existing facility.
JOINT DEVELOPMENT	The school and one or more partners from the community, private or government sectors co-fund new or upgraded facilities, which they jointly use.





Case study: Sharing

Marist College Community Centre was created by the Marist Brothers Bendigo in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo. It has facilities for football, cricket, netball, tennis, and basketball, with a kitchen, kiosk, and bar. It's home to the Maiden Gully YCW Eagles Football Netball Club and the Maiden Gully Cricket Club. The sports facilities are available for hire outside of school hours, and this income helps pay for management and upkeep.

Source: [City of Greater Bendigo](#)

Photo: Y2 Architecture

Case study: Outsourcing

In 2017-18, Victoria's Department of Education and Training delivered 12 new schools across some of the state's fastest growing metropolitan and regional communities.

The private sector financed, designed, and constructed the schools, and will maintain them for 25 years. The private company Spotless was contracted to manage the school facilities.

Source: [Victorian Department of Treasury & Finance](#)

Photo: Mernda Central P-12 College by Clarke Hopkins Clarke Architects



Want to learn more?

- [Shared use of school infrastructure](#) – NSW Department of Education
- [Community Use of Schools – Community Joint Use Agreements](#) – Victorian Department of Education and Training

Read the following chapters in [Schools as Community Hubs: Building 'more than a school' for community benefit](#) (2023):

- [Developing a School and Community Learning Hub: A Case Study from Regional Australia](#) by David Tordoff and Julia Atkin
- [Planning Doveton College: Holistic Vision, Innovative Design and Paving the Way for Others](#) by Laurence Robinson