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Overview

Background
The purpose of the Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership ‘Partnerships – Working Together’ Forum is to identify and develop skills and knowledge between agencies across the southern mallee and give agencies the capacity to address improved health and wellbeing outcomes. Presentations were based around the theme ‘Partnerships—Working Together’, highlighting frameworks, best practice, community development and health promotion.

The Forum provided an opportunity to showcase the great local work occurring across the catchment by and between Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership Member Agencies. The Forum was an initiative of the Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership Integrated Partnerships Committee and aimed to provide agencies the opportunity to hear about work that is being completed, or has been completed, by other agencies in partnership within the southern mallee.

Presentations at the ‘Partnerships - Working Together’ Forum were based around work completed or commenced in partnership on; mental wellbeing, promoting healthy lifestyles, local government networks, service coordination, integrated chronic disease management and working in partnerships.

The Forum was developed as an opportunity to be inspired by the great work agencies in the Southern Mallee catchment are achieving through partnership. The Forum hoped to provide the opportunity to learn new approaches; develop relationships; expand and strengthen networks.

Aim
The aim of the ‘Partnerships – Working Together’ Forum was to provide a medium allowing Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership member agencies to come together and share their partnership skills and knowledge with one another, as well as provide the opportunity for current partnerships to be strengthened and new partnerships to be forged.

Forum Structure and Participation
The forum was held on Wednesday 23rd of November 2011 at the All Seasons Swan Hill Resort and was attended by 55 people (including SMPCP staff and presenters).

The forum structure involved nine presentations from local organisations within the SMPCP catchment who are working in partnership. Although the presentations explored different projects, the presentations were all focused on highlighting how their partnerships came together, how the partnerships worked, and where the partnership work was headed in the future.
Presenters involved with the forum included:

Official Welcome—Tricia Currie, Chair Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership

Welcome to the Country—Ken Knight, Swan Hill Aboriginal Health Service

Facilitator—Bronwyn Hogan, Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership

Good Sports, Good Mental Health – Build Your Game
Presenters – Greg Currie, Northern District Community Health Service & Rhonda Allan, Mallee Sports Assembly
The presentation highlighted the background of the Good Sports, Good Mental Health program, partnership engagement and collaboration, implementation strategies, challenges and outcomes.

Constructing Better Mental Health – Tools of the Trade
Presenters – Dianne Dean, Northern District Community Health Service & Jann Barkman, Swan Hill District Health
The presentation focused on the work of the Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership Mental Health & Wellbeing Committee in the development and usage of the Mental Health & Related Services Eligibility and Entry Criteria Charts for Swan Hill Rural City, Buloke and Gannawarra Shires.

Carer Respite – Mental Health “Rebuilding you Strength”
Presenters - Robyn Hosking, Peta-Lyn Nosatti, Mallee Family Care & Marlene Lamprell, St. Lukes
Mallee Family Care and St. Lukes presentation focused on the partnership forged between the two agencies and how both partners work together to achieve better mental health for carers of people with mental health.

Cooking Up a Storm – Developing the Recipe
Presenters – Colleen Scriven (formally Gannawarra Shire Council) & Alexia Stephens, Northern District Community Health Service & Larni Byrnes, Swan Hill District Health
The presentation demonstrated how expertise and skills were drawn upon from agencies to provide assistance to communities in establishing the community kitchens, as well as how important it is to review your recipe to make sure your ingredients are complimenting each other and the value of partners every step of the way.

Cook In
Presenters – Naomi Caulfield & Emily Clark, East Wimmera Health Service
The Cook In project was developed and funded in 2010 to run for 3 years and has involved the setting up of community kitchens, the development of related activities around physical food access and security and physical activity within Donald, Charlton, Birchip, Wycheproof and St Arnaud, and other smaller communities. A link between Cook In and the SMPCP Cooking Up a Storm project has been developed and maintained.

Swan Hill and Districts Health, Aged and Disability Network – Getting it Together
Presenters – Vicki Nietvelt, Bendigo Health & Marg Free, Swan Hill Rural City Council
Swan Hill Districts Health, Aged and Disability Network – Getting it Together highlighted the partnerships formed whilst developing the SMPCP Swan Hill and District Health Aged and Disability Network.
Presenters continued:

**Long Paddock Protocol - the importance of a good lunch and collaboration**
**Presenters** – Mandy Hutchinson, Gannawarra Shire Council, Kate Roberts, Kerang District Health, Kerry Harrower, Northern District Community Health & Anne Graham, Cohuna District Hospital.
The presentation highlighted how a simple document brought together Gannawarra agencies so they are able to work collaboratively towards better health for their community.

**Launch of the SMPCP Local Resources for Diabetes Services for Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill Shires**
**Presenters** - Angela Roney, Northern District Community Health Service & Dr. Michael Moynihan, Swan Hill Medical Group.
Dr. Michael Moynihan on behalf of Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership Chronic Disease Management Committee officially launched the Local Resource for Diabetes Services. The presentation highlighted the purpose of the resources for diabetes care, referral options and the importance of utilising all services to ensure client centred care.

**Closing the Gap – Improving Local Connections**
**Presenter** - Kerry Parry, Murray Plains Division of General Practice
The presentation focused on how barriers like access, low GP referral to allied health and unmet best practise standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients are being improved through partner agencies.

**Aboriginal Health Promotion & Chronic Care – The Swan Hill Initiative**
**Presenter** – Paul Smith, Swan Hill District Health
This presentation highlighted the partnership between Swan Hill District Health Service and the Swan Hill Aboriginal Service, in the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care plan for Swan Hill.

**Let’s do Coffee!**
**Presenters** – Bruce Myers, Swan Hill Rural City Council & Michael Adamson, Mallee Family Care
Let’s Do Coffee! discussed the benefits and challenges involved whilst working in collaboration and partnership with other agencies. The presenters highlighted the good and the bad as well as solutions for any challenges found when working in partnerships.
**Evaluation Method**
Evaluation forms were provided with a forum booklet to participants who were then encouraged to complete the form prior to departing.

**Evaluation Response**
A total of 31 completed feedback forms were received by SMPCP from the 55 participants of the forum (60% of the overall participants excluding four SMPCP staff).

**Evaluation Results**

**Your job/role**
A range of different jobs/roles were represented. The job/roles most represented at the forum were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job/Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Worker</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Officer</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Health Nurse</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your Sector**
The “Health” and “Community Services” sectors were most represented at the forum, followed closely by ‘Government—Local’.
1. How did you find out about the forum?

The majority of the forum participants found out about the forum through attendance at a SMPCP Committee or Network Meeting (50%) or through their organisation/colleagues (42.9%). Several respondents also specified that they found out about the forum through the SMPCP Newsletter (25%) and/or email of forum flyer (21.4%).

2. Forum organisation

Overall the response to the forum organisation was positive. 6 respondents also provided feedback about the forum organisation. The comments generally related to the following:
- Chairs were very uncomfortable (3)
- Presenters should not be placed near the door (2)
Question 3. Forum Structure and Content

The response regarding the forum structure and content was generally positive. 6 respondents commented on the conference structure and content. The comments generally included the following:
- Presentations/forum was too long (2)
- Well structured/good layout (2)

Question 4. Forum Presenters

The feedback on the forum presenters indicated that respondents thought the presentations were generally interesting and clearly communicated. 9 respondents provided comments. The comments provided included such comments as:
- Presenters often went over time and off topic (6)
- Not concise enough (2)
Question 5. Forum Facilitator

Feedback on the forum facilitator were positive. 8 respondents commented on the forum facilitator, with comments including:

- Timing needed to be kept tighter (5)
- Nice/Good work (2)

Question 6. ‘Where to from here’ session

Responses regarding the ‘Where to from here’ session were generally neutral, with 3 respondents leaving comments. The comments generally indicated next time to:

- Look at managers/professional heads for further discussion
- Also look at how to connect clients to service
- Increase interaction with forum participants
Question 7. Use of whiteboard—capturing key points

Generally responses to this question were neutral, with responses leaning towards the most positive end of the spectrum. 5 respondents commented, with comments generally indicating the following:

- Great idea to capture points (2)
- Needed to be more engaging (2)

Question 8. Outcomes

Overall, the results show that participants felt generally positive about their experience at the Forum.
Question 9. Would you see benefit in participating in regular cross sector forums?

The response to this question was overwhelmingly positive with 90% of respondents indicating that they would like to participate in cross sector forums in the future.

If yes, How often?

The yearly forum was the preferred option by 65.4% of respondents who answered this question.
Question 10. Overall impressions of the SMPCP Annual Forum—Partnerships Working Together

20 participants responded to the overall impressions questions leaving very detailed and constructive advice. General overviews of the comments include:
- Fantastic/Good first forum (8)
- Presentations needed better timing and to be more concise (3)
- Informative/Interesting (3)
- Great opportunity for networking (2)
- Cooking Up a Storm presentation was the best (2)
- Needed more indigenous input (2)

Summary & Conclusion
Results Summary
The SMPCP ‘Partnerships—Working Together’ Forum was held on 23 November 2011 at the All Seasons Swan Hill Resort with 55 participants in attendance (including presenters and SMPCP staff). 60% of the participants (excluding SMPCP staff) completed and submitted a feedback form at the end of the forum. The information collected through the feedback forms has been collated and can be summarised as follows;

- The forum was attended by 55 participants, with a high representation from the Health and Community Services sectors. The highest proportion of participants came from the Health sector with 60.7% working within the Health field and 39.3% in Community Services.

- The SMPCP Committee and Network Meetings were the most common medium that informed participants about the forum (50%) with word of mouth through organisations and colleagues being the next most popular (42.9%).

- Response to the organisation of the conference was generally positive with the majority of the participants agreeing that the forum venue was acceptable, although some participants did find the chairs “uncomfortable”. Generally the food was considered ample and enjoyable, with some members commenting that one food/coffee station was not enough and that food needed to be labelled clearly.

- The forum structure and content were found to be positive, with most respondents agreeing that the forum met their expectations. The length of the conference was only seen as satisfactory, with some participants commented that some presentations went for too long and better timing was needed.

- Responses to the forum presenters were positive overall, with respondents agreeing that presentations at the forum were interesting and informative. Respondents left many comments to this question, with the majority indicating that the presenters often went over time and were not on topic, as well as that they needed to be more concise.

- The forum facilitator was received well, with most of the respondents agreeing that the facilitator was effective and engaging. The majority of the comments left about the facilitator indicated that timing of presenters needed to be better controlled.

- The response to the ‘Where to from here’ session was decidedly neutral, with respondents comments indicating that more participation was needed to make this a success.

- The use of the whiteboard to capture key points was also found to be generally neutral, with comments left by participants highlighting participation and inability to read the whiteboard as contributors.
Participants’ responses indicate that the Forum will result in some positive outcomes:

- 56% of participants indicated a neutral feeling on whether they would change their work/community practice as a result of the forum
- 44.4% indicated a neutral response with having a new idea to explore, with 40% responding positively to this question
- Participants responded equally at 37.5% for neutral and agree in regards to making a connection with someone they would like to work with in the future
- While 46% agreed that they had a better understanding of their role when working in partnership after attending the forum

- 90% of participants responded positively towards SMPCP holding another Partnership themed forum in the future, with 65.4% agreeing that it should be held on a yearly basis.

- Feedback from the forum regarding overall impressions of the forum were generally positive, with timing of presentations being the most identified factor needing improvement. Other key themes identified by the respondents included that the forum offered a “great overview of local organisations”, “overall good effort”, “more indigenous input would be good” and requests for presenters details to discuss presentations further after the forum.

**Conclusion**

The evaluation indicates that the objectives of the forum were generally met.

Feedback from participants indicates that there will be ongoing support for regular cross sector forums run by Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership. Further consideration should be given to the running of the forum on factors such as timing.

Comments from participants indicated that the forum could provide more indigenous input, stimulate more participant interaction and ensure presentations are concise, on topic and well timed.
Partnerships—Working Together Whiteboard Summary

**Summary**
The Partnerships—Working Together Whiteboard was split into two sections, Working Together and Opportunities. Participants at the forum were encouraged to provide their ideas which were then discussed within the forum.

The **Working Together section** of the whiteboard was used to compile a list of ideas directed at highlighting what makes a good partner and/or partnership. Some of the ideas highlighted included;

- Looking at gaps objectively
- Ask for support and information
- Be a driver—get there—instigate
- Invitation, Relationship, Trust, Respect, Celebrate

The **Opportunities section** of the whiteboard was used to identify what projects or ideas we would like to turn into actions for the future. An example from this section was the Good Sports, Good Mental Health—Build Your Game project which participants in the room collectively thought needed to continue. A particular way that was noted on the whiteboard and discussed was the reviewing of the Local Service Directory, making sure that all mental health related services were listed and easily accessible.

**Actions**

- Review the Build Your Game—Local Service Directory
- Increase agency knowledge of how to effectively engage with community
- Encourage partnership initiatives

A full list of whiteboard notes is set out at Appendix 10.

**Next Steps**

1. Consider your current and past partnerships and critically evaluate how effectively you believe they worked and why; the positive and the negative.
2. Utilise partnership tools, ideas and suggestions to integrate into your current and future partnership work to make positive improvements. Particular items of interest include;
   - How to work effectively in Partnerships (page 16)
   - Growing Successful Partnerships (page 17)
   - Partnerships Working Together—Whiteboard Work (Appendix 1)
   - Forum presentations (slideshow available on the SMPCP Website)
   - Suggested readings
3. Participate in the **SMPCP Integrated Partnerships Committee** meetings, to find out more contact Bronwyn Hogan, SMPCP Executive Officer, on 03 5033 0722 or email bronwyn.hogan@smpcp.com.au.

**Suggested Readings**

- **Building a Partnership**—A4 poster
- **VicHealth Partnerships Fact Sheet**
- Victorian Council of Social Services Partnership Guide
  - Guide 1: Preparing to Partner
  - Guide 2: Commencing the Partnership
  - Guide 3: Sustaining the Partnership
How to Work Effectively in Partnerships

Below are a list of key points made by participants of the SMPCP ‘Partnership’s—Working Together’ Forum on how to work effectively in partnerships. The points made have been throughout the day have been allotted into the beginning, middle and future of partnerships timeline.

Starting Partnerships
- Bring people/agencies together for a cause
- Take the first step—make an offer for partnership
- Use your connections and build links to include key stakeholders
- Who are the leaders? Try to work with/involve them
- First meeting—right people at the right time
- Required partnerships mean cooperation—even between rivals
- Be patient, partnerships can take time to develop
- Understand and be open to what members want from the partnership
- Consider capacity, time, roles and responsibilities
- Develop clear and concise goals and expectations—don’t be unrealistic
- Develop values, approaches and frameworks from the very beginning
- Consult with key partners, community and stakeholders
- Keep it simple and be genuine
- Plan for long term sustainability

Working Together
- Consider and assign realistic roles to members e.g. lead agency, community level, overarching body, etc.
- Look at team gaps objectively and work together to fill them
- Share knowledge, skills, training, problems, support and information
- Ask for support and information if required
- Meet regularly and use time productively
- Work with, talk to and listen to what others want and need
- Understand and acknowledge weaknesses and strengths
- Neutral and non-judgemental
- Partnerships can be difficult—be flexible, support and have humour
- Celebrate every win—no matter how minor
- Encourage others to bring the best out in their role
- Be informed in partnership work—stay up to date
- Be open, respectful and strengthen relationships
- Be clear and concise with all documentation
- Always be positive and look towards the future

Looking Towards the Future
- Review/Evaluate
  * What worked well?
  * What needs improvement?
  * What didn’t work?
  * New stakeholders involved?
  * New insight, challenge or direction?
  * Long term sustainability
  * Update processes, new activities or other actions
  * Mark milestones and celebrate wins
- Look for avenues to continue work
  * Invite others
  * Look for other opportunities/initiatives to become involved in
  * Encourage others/leaders to spread message
  * Continue to build relationships and take ownership of work

See Appendix 1 for further participant suggestions.
Growing Successful Partnerships

Plant the seed
- Make an offer for partnership
- Be patient—ideas need time to grow
- Right partner at the right time
- Develop clear & concise goals and expectations
- Plan for long term sustainability

Facilitate Growth
- Consider & assign members realistic roles
- Look at team gaps objectively and work together to fill them. Do with not to.
- Meet regularly & use time productively
- Be open, flexible, respectful & supportive
- Work with, talk to and listen to other members’ need’s
- Encourage others to bring out the best
- Be clear & concise with documentation
- Nurture & enhance growth within the partnership
- Always be positive & work towards the future

Foundations for the Future
- Review & Evaluate
  * What worked well? How can it be improved?
  * What didn’t work? What can we do instead?
- Encourage new stakeholders involved
- Initiate a new challenge or direction
- Update processes, activities or other actions
- Mark partnership milestones and celebrate successes
- Look for other avenues to continue working together
- Continue to build & strengthen relationships

Review & Evaluate
* What worked well? How can it be improved?
* What didn’t work? What can we do instead?
- Encourage new stakeholders involved
- Initiate a new challenge or direction
- Update processes, activities or other actions
- Mark partnership milestones and celebrate successes
- Look for other avenues to continue working together
- Continue to build & strengthen relationships

- Continue to build & strengthen relationships
Appendix 1
Partnerships Working Together—Whiteboard Work

Working Together
- Have a common goal/vision
- Cooperation—even between rivals
- Team looking at gaps objectively
- Share—knowledge, skills, training, problems
- Open communication
- Meeting regularly—formally and informally
- Ask for support and information
- Be persistent in engaging
- Invitation, relationship, trust, respect, celebrate
- Keep eyes and ears open to what is out there
- Be patient
- Build links and continue to
- Make an offer
- Be a driver—get out there —instigate
- Values, approaches and frameworks
- Develop relationship
- Have a sense of humour
- Take pride in your work

Opportunities
- Sustaining Good Sports, Good Mental Health Program
- Local service directory
- Review of MHFA presenters
- Understand our communities—Do with not to
  o Consult
  o Build Trust
  o Who are the leaders—work with them
  o Client centred practice
For more information you can visit our website

www.smpcp.com.au

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