



More than Money:

How to get money, resources and skills
from Australian businesses

Community Funding Centre
www.ourcommunity.com.au/funding

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Foreword

Some while ago society was faced with a problem.

Everybody was in the middle of an unparalleled technological revolution, and there were jobs to be done that called for more than the ordinary human capacities – mountains to be shifted, rivers to be dammed, oceans to be bridged.

So the rulers took the only possible course: they invented giant robots.

These robots had the linked strength of hundreds of humans and the power of thousands of horses, and they got the job done. They changed the face of the globe until nobody could remember what life had been like before they came along or conceive of what life would be like if they went away.

Every now and again one of them fell over and destroyed a lot of property, but when the lamentations died down everybody agreed that we couldn't do without them and we'd just have to tweak the software a bit more.

To make life easier, the giant robots were given personalities, just so that we'd have a way to communicate with them and tell them what to do and not to do. That worked most of the time.

Those giant robots were what we call companies – the product of a social technology that could pull together the savings of one town to pay the inhabitants of another town to build a railway across a wilderness to yet another town where they made pots.

Companies have legal personality, which means they can sue or be sued, or take out insurance, or join with their local communities to build and progress.

We've all seen enough giant robots on movies or TV to know that however carefully you sanitise the machinery, humanity always works its way back in. We humans are social beings, and we can't help building that social consciousness back into anything we create.

Companies live in the same environment as the rest of us, and like us companies rely for their survival on the fragile yet all-pervasive networks of trust and reciprocity that connect our personal preoccupations and make commerce and law and progress possible.

Companies are made up of people, among other things, who have their own lives, who go home in the evenings to their houses in the community.

Giant robots, in fact, are people too, and in this book we're offering some guidelines on working together with them person to person to strengthen the social bonds that benefit us all.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to community-business partnership sage Kylie Cirak for pouring her wisdom into this book, and to all of the companies and community groups we have worked with over the years, who have also been generous with their knowledge.

Denis Moriarty

Group Managing Director, Our Community

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I. Introduction

So, you're thinking of entering the wonderful world of community-business partnerships: a world of limitless funding, unconditional support, endless opportunities, and carte blanche to use those never-ending corporate dollars in any way you want!

Hate to disappoint you, but it really doesn't work like that.

Unfortunately wealthy philanthropic businesspeople willing to give away money with no strings attached are in short supply and even if you do happen to meet one, the relationship you'll be entering into will bear very little resemblance to a partnership.

Community-business partnerships can take many forms but authentic partnerships do always have one thing in common: they are a **collaboration** of organisations and individuals working together to solve the social, economic and environmental problems facing us every day.

Sometimes money never changes hands in a community-business partnership but the shared ideas, resources and energy are often worth far more than cash; in fact, such resources can be priceless.

A community-business partnership should be based on mutual respect and a mutual desire to work towards a common aim. Most times, such partnerships aim to provide benefit the whole community.

Partnerships require a significant investment of time and attention but if managed well there are real and meaningful benefits for everyone.

This book will help step you through the process of scoping possible partnership targets, approaching a business, working with them, evaluating the results of your partnership and – finally – winding up or reinventing your partnership.

We have included a range of case studies to help illustrate how these things work (the case studies are real – though some of the details have been changed to protect the innocent!). We hope that someday you will be able to contribute your own.

2. What is partnership?

In the same way that businesses are tempted and even pressured to brand every interaction with the community as “corporate citizenship”, community groups often feel the need to call every relationship with a business a “partnership”.

There are many ways for community organisations to interact with businesses and partnerships are just one of those.

A partnership is not for everyone. Some community groups are simply looking for a donor-recipient relationship – a community group asks for a donation in the form of money or goods, and the business obliges.

Other community groups seek sponsorship, where there is an exchange of cash in return for naming rights to an event or program, or a branding opportunity of some sort.

And then there is that rarely sighted but highly coveted beast, philanthropy. Usually this involves a business seeking out a cause it wants to support and opening up its wallet.

These are all perfectly legitimate and valid forms of community-business relationships and a really straightforward way to help finance your community group.

But a partnership is a more involved form of relationship, one that takes time, effort and energy. If managed well, there can be real and meaningful benefits for everyone including the broader community.

It's important to have a good think about what form of relationship is right for your organisation.

A partnership is not for you if:

- you're looking for a quick injection of funds for a specific event;
- you want a handover of cash in exchange for a branding opportunity;
- you do not have the time or interest in listening to ideas and input from a business partner; or
- you don't want to involve your partner in the activities of your organisation.

In essence, a partnership is not for you if you want the funding but not a relationship with the funder.

If you are looking for a mutually beneficial relationship with an organisation that wants you to grow and prosper, and that wants to grow and prosper with you, a partnership might be just the thing for you.

AT A GLANCE

Partnership Advantages

- Potential for greater innovation
- Access to new networks
- Access to new skills
- Access to funding
- New people bring new energy
- Increased profile for your organisation
- A boost to staff morale
- Ambassadors – a new group of people who support you and are willing to tell everyone how great your group is

Partnership Disadvantages

- Can slow things down – more people to consult
- Time consuming
- Resource intensive
- Potential for culture clash
- Requires capacity
- Potential for over-commitment

Partnership models

There are many different partnership models and your organisation can adopt one or many of them. A partnership can include one or several of the following:

Ideas exchange

The old adage 'two heads are better than one' is true. It can be fabulous to get an injection of some fresh ideas and new perspectives from an organisation very different from your own. It is easy to become trapped in the day-to-day activities of your organisation and hard to see beyond what has to be done. Someone who is not totally embedded in what you do can offer an interesting perspective and can often suggest the perfect solution to a problem.

Skills exchange

Your new partner will be an expert in their field, be it banking, manufacturing, mining, or retail. They will have employees with skills and abilities that are not present in your organisation. You also have employees and volunteers with distinct skills and abilities that may be lacking in your partner's workforce.

Look for opportunities to exchange these skills. Their bookkeeper may be able to show your bookkeeper a new and more efficient way to operate, while your volunteer coordinator might be able to teach their human resources manager different ways to engage employees. This is a cost-free way to improve the operations of both organisations.

Funding

Your business partner may have funding available through a grants or community engagement budget.

Sharing resources

Your group needs a venue for Tuesday night meetings; your partner has an empty meeting room that's free in the evenings. You have an extensive library of community engagement tools and resources that they might want to dip into from time to time.

What else could you share?

Access to new networks

Your partner's employees constitute a whole new untapped market of potential donors, volunteers and supporters for your organisation. Your employees and supporter base are a new market for your partner's products or services. You both have different stakeholder networks and can introduce the other to people of interest. You both have the power to open the door to new relationships for the other.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a specialised form of skilled volunteering. A mentor serves as a teacher and provides opportunities for professional development, growth and support to those with less experience. One of your employees could mentor a staff member at the business or vice versa, or a business employee could mentor one of the individuals your community group serves.

Volunteerism

Your businesses partner's employees are potential volunteers for your organisation. Volunteer opportunities could be regular or one-off for individual staff, groups of staff or even every staff member in the business for a working bee or large project.