



Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres
The heart of our community

Neighbourhood House Networks Good Practice Guide

February 2013

This document has been developed by the Victorian Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre Sector.
An individual NH Network's capacity to implement all tasks in each practice level of the document is dependent on the level of NHCP funding received.

The Neighbourhood House Networks Good Practice Guide is designed to be used in conjunction with:

The Neighbourhood Houses Good Practice Guide (NH GPG)

(An evaluation tool to assist Neighbourhood Houses to evaluate their strengths and identify opportunities for improvement; it is a step by step process that guides users through a thorough investigation of their House or Centre's governance, management and delivery practices)

and

The Neighbourhood House Quality Enhancement and Risk Management Matrix

(A framework for providing support to Neighbourhood Houses when things aren't going well; designed to clarify the roles & responsibilities of parties to the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP), and other stakeholders where a Neighbourhood Houses experiences some difficulty)

Acknowledgements:

The Neighbourhood Houses Networks Good Practice Guide was conceived and developed by the Combined NH Networks over a number of years.

Thanks go to all of the organisations and individuals who contributed their time and materials to help put this guide together.

Much of the drafting for document was undertaken by a small working group comprising representatives of RANCH, Network West, GRNHG, NIECH, UMNHN and CHAOS. Bruce Watson from Heads Together was employed to work on the document, to streamline the language and align it with other key sector documents.

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BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

An initiative of the Combined Neighbourhood House Networks, the Neighbourhood House Networks Good Practice Guide was originally intended as a guide for newer NH Networkers by defining and agreeing on what constitutes good practice in networking for the Victorian Neighbourhood House sector. It is also aimed at better explaining to government how NH Networks might more effectively operate and meet their funding agreement requirements (see page 4) if they were adequately funded. As well as being a tool for induction and advocacy, the NH Networks Good Practice Guide sets standards for good practice in NH Networking.

The initial framework for the document was first developed by NH Network representatives at an in-service in September 2010 and further drafted over the following year. At the September 2011 NH Networks in-service, NH Networkers and NH Network committee representatives undertook further work on the document and, as part of this process, reached broad consensus on what constitutes good practice in a range of NH Network activities. The final document reflects the culmination of re-drafting and consideration of the contributions received from consultation processes. It aims to be clear, practical and easy to use without being overly prescriptive.

The NH Networks Good Practice Guide is a prime example of the collaborative work between ANHLC and the NH Networks in supporting Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres. The ANHLC Board supported the initiative in keeping with the 2011-2015 the strategic plan objective, "to improve the quality of Neighbourhood House sector practice at all levels".

GOOD PRACTICE

This document is about **good practice**: a strategic management term that is less prescriptive than best practice. Good practice guidelines outline broad strategic areas and well regarded practices, thereby allowing choices to be made to best suit specific circumstances and contexts.

Best practice generally refers to methods or techniques that have consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means and are used as benchmarks. Best practice is often used to describe the process of developing and following a standard way of doing things that multiple organisations can use. A key difficulty is that there is not a general consensus on what constitutes best practices and 'best' practice assumes that it is not possible to go beyond what has been already prescribed.

NH&LCs and NH Networks implement community development in different ways to suit their respective communities and citizens. To suggest or impose prescriptive best practices that do not align with specific individual or organisation contexts would be counterproductive.

USING THE NH NETWORKS GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

This guide is designed primarily for NH Network Committees of Governance and NH Networkers, but it is also intended to inform the public, stakeholders and funding bodies about the operations of NH Networks.

It is understood that not all NH Networks will be able to implement all tasks in each practice level. An individual NH Network's capacity to conduct the work detailed in the document will depend on the level of Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP) funding, number of members, geographic distance, etc. But whatever their capacity and priorities, the guide should provide standards and inspiration for continuous improvement.

NH Networks may choose to use this guide for:

- New NH Networker induction
- NH Network Committee of Governance (CoG) induction
- New NH Coordinator/NH CoG induction
- NH Network strategic planning
- Annual NH Network evaluation
- Reporting on NH Network activities/outcomes
- Explaining the role and function of the NH Network to external parties
- Funding submissions
- Advocacy for increased investment in the NH Network
- Identifying opportunities for improvement in NH Network operations
- Marketing and promotion of the NH Network

The first part of the guide provides the context, scope and operating principles for Neighbourhood House Networks.

NH Network operations are outlined in the Key Practices, Activity Areas and Practice Levels.

The tables (pages 8-16) provide Good Practice Standards for each activity area and practice level, and describe proactively orientated good practice for specific tasks.

The Standards provide a base line for NH Networks to assess their operations, evaluate their strengths and enable consistency of performance across the NH Sector. The chances for success and sustainability of a NH Network increase with each Good Practice Standard followed.

The appendices provide additional information that is useful for understanding how Neighbourhood House Networks operate.

CONTEXT

There are approximately 390 Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria, with at least one Neighbourhood House in every state electorate. Additionally, there are 16 Neighbourhood House Networks and the Victorian state peak body The Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (ANHLC).

Neighbourhood Houses operate as autonomous, not-for-profit, community managed providers of a wide range of services; some are auspiced by other organisations (eg: local councils or community health centres). Programs provided by Houses & Centres integrate community development and adult learning and vary widely in content and context. Though neighbourhood houses go by various names, such as community houses and learning centres, they all have a strong commitment to the philosophy and practices of the Neighbourhood House sector as a whole. Not all NHs are in receipt of the State Government Neighbourhood House Coordination Program funding.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE SECTOR PRINCIPLES

The Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre sector works in a community development framework with a membership-based governance model. This builds social connections and networks that are based on trust, respect and reciprocal interaction – known as social capital¹.

There are ten NH&LC Sector Principles²:

- Community ownership
- Community participation
- Empowerment
- Access and equity
- Life-long learning
- Inclusion
- Networking
- Advocacy
- Self help
- Social action

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL³

The model of Neighbourhood House community development practice can be described in six simple and generic steps. These steps enable Houses to have a key role in local area planning to meet the needs of their local communities.

1. **Involving** the community and encouraging participation and inclusion, and valuing diversity and difference at all levels of Neighbourhood House operation.
2. **Identifying** community needs and aspirations.
3. **Determining** appropriate community programs, activities and services in response to those needs, ensuring that diversity and difference are valued.
4. **Partnering** with community organisations, businesses, government and philanthropic organisations to secure appropriate funding and support.
5. **Delivering** quality programs, activities and services.
6. **Evaluating** the effectiveness of all aspects of Neighbourhood House operations, including programs, practice and governance.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE⁴

The vital ingredient that binds together the three parts of the NH&LC sector — ANHLC, the 16 NH Networks and Neighbourhood Houses across the State — is the particular style of practice, which is underpinned by the ten Sector Principles (as above). The three parts of the sector work collectively to take the whole sector forward.

The NH&LC sector style of practice is facilitative and developmental, and fundamentally relies on strong and inclusive relationships both within the individual Houses and Centres and the wider community. The sector, including the NH Networks, operates within a social justice framework.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE NETWORKS⁵

The sixteen (16) Neighbourhood House Networks operate across the State in a variety of ways. The majority are autonomous, community-managed and incorporated bodies, with committees of governance elected from and by their member houses & centres. At the local or NH Network level the NH Networks provide local support and advocacy for Houses and Centres in that NH Network. Their work is varied and complex, and is reflective of the requirements of their member houses and centres, the communities of these houses and centres, the broader sector, and the community at large.

NH Networks play a key role in representing the views and needs of members and may act as a conduit between members and the ANHLC, local government and state governments, other organisations and the broader community. Their governance and operational professional development and support enhance the capacity of their members to operate effectively to meet funding requirements and local community needs.

NH Network membership is determined by geography, however the geographical boundaries between NH Networks are acknowledged as sometimes arbitrary and Houses may choose to participate in more than one Network. All NH Networks agree to allow involvement by Houses from outside their boundaries and, also refer all enquiries from outside their area to the appropriate NH Network.⁶

Additionally, a variety of sub groups or clusters of Neighbourhood Houses function within and across the boundaries of some NH Networks. They vary in size and degree of formality but generally exist to provide support and networking opportunities to group member Houses and Centres. In metropolitan areas particularly members identify as being part of a specific local government area.⁷

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE COORDINATION PROGRAM⁸

Neighbourhood House Networks (NH Networks) are funded to provide services and support to all Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (NH&LC) through the State Government Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP).

Funding is provided towards the employment of a NH Networker and related costs to deliver services and support to members of the NH Network. A committee drawn from the membership in each NH Network directs the activities of the Network to meet the requirements of their funding agreement with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and their obligations as an employer.

Networks are funded in accordance with these agreements to provide services to Neighbourhood Houses within their Network including governance and management support, advice on Neighbourhood Houses programs and activity development, training and training resources, capacity building and links with and between Neighbourhood Houses and other community organisations at the local and regional level.

Funding to Networks is determined by the number of NHCP funded NHs within each particular NH Network's area. Membership of any NH Network is determined by location according to the department's provisional boundaries, with exceptions being approved by the department only on a demonstrated geographical or community relationship basis and agreed to by the NH Networks involved.

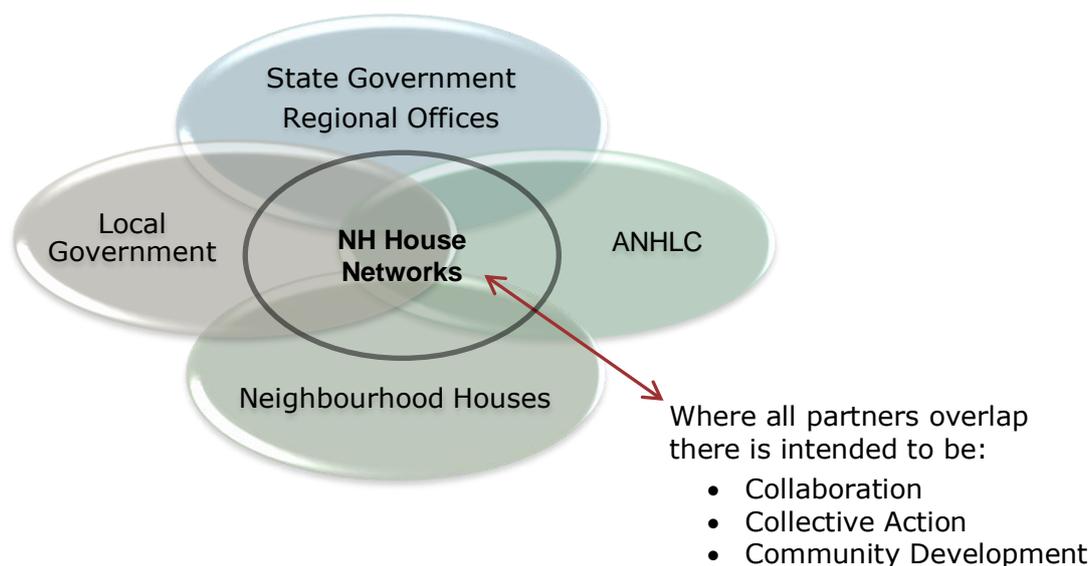
NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

There are a variety of ways of working together: on a continuum from mutual support to formal partnership.

Partnership is a good description of the relationship between NH Networks and ANHLC in the context of the Victorian NH sector. Partnership can be described as a 'well-defined, mutually beneficial, interdependent relationship between two or more organisations to achieve (agreed) results they can more effectively achieve together than alone.'⁹

A partnership is a sustainable relationship, underpinned by agreed values and principles, clearly defined mechanisms for communication, governance and accountability and clear understandings about the respective roles of partners.

The NH Sector partnership model also extends to include involvement of State and Local Government. State level participation and strategic action & planning in community development primarily involves the State Government, ANHLC and the NH Networks. Local level strategic planning primarily involves Local Government, NH Networks, Neighbourhood Houses and State Government Regional Offices (eg Department of Human Services, Department of Planning and Community Development and Adult Community & Further Education).



NH NETWORK GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

KEY PRACTICES

Central to the role of NH Networks is the provision of information, identifying and delivering professional development and networking. Good practice in each of these areas is outlined below:

PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

When providing information and referral NH Networks ensure:

- the veracity, accuracy and currency of information provided
- information provided is consistent with legislative, regulatory and contractual obligations
- referrals are appropriate, based on the principles of the NH&LC Sector Framework (see page 3)
- referrals are made to agencies or individuals with a proven track record in their area of specialisation

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In providing for professional development (PD) needs NH Networks:

- identify needs using appropriate tools
- exercise due diligence in identifying professional development resources by checking with other networks, ANHLC and external experts for accuracy, currency
- promote opportunities and resources external to the NH Network
- research and develop materials as appropriate
- source and integrate existing materials
- provide professional development as required / if appropriate
- facilitate skill sharing within the NH Network
- identify professional development funding
- identify partners to resource and deliver professional development
- take steps to ensure that all intended recipients receive the resources

NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION

Networking and communication is undertaken by NH Networks:

- in a timely way
- with purpose
- ethically and with commitment
- with sincerity and transparency
- using research and understanding of key issues
- using the most appropriate means: sector-wide emails; all-network emails; local and sector-wide newsletters
- ensuring the status of the information is clearly defined, eg emerging issue, draft policy position, discussion paper, sector-endorsed recommendation, for information only, etc.
- identifying the source of any circulated information

AREAS OF ACTIVITY AND PRACTICE LEVELS

Neighbourhood House Networks employ these key practices in four areas of activity:

1. Support to Members – One-to-One or NH Network-wide
2. Regional Work with NH&LC Stakeholders
3. State-wide work on behalf of NH Network members
4. NH Network Organisation Operations

Within each activity area, NH Networks operate in the following practice levels:

1. Governance and Management
2. Community Development Activity (Operations and Delivery)
3. Capacity Building

In conducting this work, NH Networks:

- adopt an ethical approach
- understand and promote the NH community development model (see page 3)
- comply with established NH Network policies and procedures, contractual and legislative requirements
- take a proactive approach to monitoring the wellbeing of Houses
- consider external and internal factors that may impact upon the wellbeing of Neighbourhood Houses
- provide advice using relevant, authorised, up to date sources
- provide advice within the competency range, role and responsibilities of the Network
- protect member Neighbourhood Houses' confidentiality so that information is not inappropriately shared with other Network members
- adopt recognised decision-making processes, such as the NH Networks and ANHLC Decision making Process. (Please refer to the diagram at Appendix 2, page 20.)

Note: Some NH Networks have developed charters and a formal commitment to standards and practices that ensure accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in the use of public resources. It is considered good practice to have such a document.

The following tables provide Good Practice Standards for each activity area and practice level.

ACTIVITY AREA 1: SUPPORT TO NH NETWORK MEMBERS (ONE-TO-ONE / NH NETWORK-WIDE)

ACTIVITY AREA 1 - PRACTICE LEVEL: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive individual support to Committee of Governance (CoG) members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of needs or underlying issues • identification of appropriate strategies, professional development and referrals • succinct record keeping re facts/issues, policy or process disparities, suggested solutions and identification of appropriate resources • confidentiality and an objective perspective • utilisation of existing tools and resources • engagement with appropriate partners • promotion of the strengths of Good Governance • investigation of options and alternatives • use of sector documents as an underpinning framework • focus on best interests of the whole Neighbourhood House, not individuals or its CoG • monitoring of changes in CoG membership
Proactive induction – CoG members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploration of existing/required resources within House • introduction to the Neighbourhood House sector in line with the NH Sector Framework and NHCP Guidelines • clarification of importance of understanding legal obligations • establishment of professional development needs of CoG members • CoG skills audits • whole-of-committee orientation with new committee members • provision of resources and models of good practice in community governance • discussion and explanation of what the NH Network does and how it works • discussion and explanation of the role of the NH Networker
Proactive induction – Coordinators/Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • induction of, and mentoring for new coordinators/managers in the areas of governance, management, operations and delivery • introduction to the Neighbourhood House sector in line with the NH Sector Framework and NHCP Guidelines • clarification of importance of understanding legal obligations • establishment of professional development of coordinators/managers • discussion and explanation of what the NH Network does and how it works • discussion and explanation of the role of the NH Networker

Proactive staff management support & appraisal / review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of quality resources and advice on staff recruitment, management, performance appraisal/review, and retention (within the Neighbourhood House Community Development Model) • clarification of legal obligations and accountability • participation in performance appraisal/review when invited • dispute resolution by referral to appropriate support (i.e. Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria) • NH Network representation on interview selection panels • contribution of expertise in community development and ways to employ accordingly
Proactive resource development and provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of gaps in existing policies and procedures and provision of resources accordingly • tailoring resources to meet specific needs of Houses • sourcing and integration of existing materials • quality control by checking with other NH Networks, ANHLC and external experts for accuracy, currency, consistency and relevance with Neighbourhood House sector principles (e.g. <i>Neighbourhood House Good Practice Guide</i>)
Proactive planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs analyses and planning days by facilitation and provision of resources • facilitation of workshops as appropriate • establishment of a databank of Neighbourhood House appropriate facilitators
Proactive referral systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research and establishment of appropriate and transparent referral pathways (internal or external) • identification and communication of referral policy/procedures (see <i>Neighbourhood House Quality Enhancement & Risk Management Matrix</i>)
Proactive trouble-shooting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protection of the interests of the community and the Neighbourhood House sector's reputation • regular application of the <i>Quality Enhancement & Risk Management Matrix</i> and <i>Neighbourhood House Good Practice Guide</i> • identification of key components of a situation and underlying issues, appropriate strategies and referrals • factual documentation of an issue, policy or process gap, and exploration of options, including quality referral • compliance with relevant legislation regarding privacy and confidentiality protocols • referral of NH Network members to policies & procedures, Constitution, contracts, etc. • focus on the best interest of the Neighbourhood House, as determined by its vision/mission/purpose statement

NH Network Good Practice Guidelines

Proactive links and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification and referral of NH Network members to the skills available within the NH Network itself • referral of members to other NH Networks and/or organisations/resources as appropriate • facilitation of mentoring relationships within the NH Network and externally as appropriate • maintenance of accessible list/database of quality assured resource people
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ACTIVITY AREA 1 - PRACTICE LEVEL: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY)

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive partnership development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of relevant resources and links • referral of members to other Houses (within/external to NH Network) that have similar relationships • referral of members to external sources, e.g. PILCHConnect
Proactive relationship brokerage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of and linking of parties
Proactive identification of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • linking and promoting NH Network members' talents and capabilities, history, programs and skills • monitoring and informing about funding sources and opportunities • canvassing other NH Networks and organisations
Proactive planning / needs analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs analyses by facilitation and provision of resources • referral to proven facilitators or consultants
Proactive facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • referral of members to proven facilitators or consultants • facilitated planning sessions in accordance with the NH Community Development Model

ACTIVITY AREA 1 - PRACTICE LEVEL: CAPACITY BUILDING

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive NH Sector information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of current NH Sector issues and resources • referral to NH Sector documents • use of NH Network and ANHLC websites, wiki sites, and other ICT resources • continued membership of ANHLC
Proactive understanding of key issues and documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of basic information and referral to relevant sources of expertise such as ANHLC, relevant Government Departments or LGAs, PILCH etc. • support of ANHLC information dissemination process and position, with reference to NH Networks Practice Framework & Protocol

NH Network Good Practice Guidelines

Proactive understanding of strategic alliances / partnerships / relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of strategic partners and players • facilitation of environmental scans – e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ what makes the House a strategic partner? ○ what their interests may be, potential risks and benefits • brokerage and facilitation of connections
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ACTIVITY AREA 2: REGIONAL WORK WITH NH&LC STAKEHOLDERS

ACTIVITY AREA 2 - PRACTICE LEVEL: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • referral to relevant expertise • utilisation of existing resources • monitoring relevance of existing resources • identification of gaps • provision of professional development and education to Neighbourhood Houses and CoGs
Proactive Network operations / procedures / information manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circulation of NH Network manual to all Houses and Committees of Governance (CoGs) • regular updating of NH Network manual • distribution of other relevant information to NH Network members as appropriate

ACTIVITY AREA 2 - PRACTICE LEVEL: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY)

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive adult community education procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distribution of ACFE information to Network members as appropriate • keeping abreast of current policies, projects and practice via ANHLC • attendance at regional forums as appropriate • maintenance of relationships with ACFE Regional Council / office
Proactive childcare procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distribution of information to NH Network members as appropriate • keeping abreast of current regulations, policies and practice via ANHLC • maintenance of relationships with DEECD regional teams / office
Proactive DHS relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaison with DHS in preparing NH Network grant submissions • distribution of information to NH Network members as appropriate • keeping abreast of current regulations, policies and practice via ANHLC • attendance at regional forums as appropriate • maintenance of relationships with DHS Local Connections teams / office

Proactive LGAs relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaison with LGAs at councillor and officer level • Houses to develop relationship with their LGA • NH Network-wide engagement with LGAs regarding regional planning and community development • representation of NH sector to local government • distribution of information to NH Network members as appropriate • keeping abreast of current regulations, by-laws, policies and practice via ANHLC • attendance at regional forums as appropriate • partnerships with local government to support Neighbourhood Houses • engagement in broader LGA planning framework for NH Networks
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ACTIVITY AREA 2 - PRACTICE LEVEL: CAPACITY BUILDING

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive NH Network meetings / activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of technology and other practical ways to connect people • NH Network Chairpersons' forums as appropriate • NH Network Committee of Governance members' forums as appropriate • NH Network Treasurers' / financial officers' / book keepers' forums as appropriate • NH Network Coordinators' forums as appropriate • celebrating success / achievements • embracing, maximising and promoting the skills and knowledge that exist within the NH Network
Proactive liaison with local councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NH Networker support for Houses to form / strengthen local government relationships • individual Houses to cultivate relationships with their Local Government Authority (LGA)
Proactive relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of relationships with relevant decision-makers at regional / local levels • participation in regional planning and service delivery as appropriate • relationship building within the NH Network

ACTIVITY AREA 3: STATE-WIDE REPRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF NH NETWORK MEMBERS

ACTIVITY AREA 3 - PRACTICE LEVEL: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive development and promotion of new / existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of resource gaps • contribution to "central store" of documents / repository • identification of funding opportunities to develop resources • sharing of information between NH Networks, their members and ANHLC to ensure resources are showcased, promoted and not duplicated • showcasing resources from other NH Networks at NH Network meetings • showcasing resources at the ANHLC Conference • resources developed are of a high standard and made available (where possible) for distribution on a state wide basis • resources that can be made available through the ANHLC web site are presented in a user friendly format
Proactive sustainability of Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agenda items of state-wide significance for discussion at Combined NH Networks meetings • identification of 'best financial practice' • participation in state-wide government / ANHLC working groups

ACTIVITY AREA 3 - PRACTICE LEVEL: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY)

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive promotion of good practice from across the State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showcasing new ideas / materials through email and/or presentations at Network meetings • participation in annual ANHLC and Brainfood conferences • attendance at and reporting back to the Combined NH Network meetings on ANHLC, Brainfood, ACE Vic, ALA, ACFE and other relevant conferences / professional development opportunities • representation of the sector in accordance with ANHLC guidelines / position
Proactive regular DHS meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in Neighbourhood House Common Interest Group (NHCIG) meetings • taking an active role in NHCIG working groups

ACTIVITY AREA 3 - PRACTICE LEVEL: CAPACITY BUILDING

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive participation in surveys / data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reminders and support for NH Network members to complete the annual ANHLC membership survey • NH Network / NH Network members' participation in state-wide projects and initiatives
Proactive ANHLC working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular participation as active members • participation as mailing list members
Proactive political campaigning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for political campaigns with informed understanding of the campaign • support NH Network members to have an informed understanding of the campaign • support NH Network members to campaign • organise letters and visits on behalf of the NH Network where appropriate • ensuring any campaign activities are coordinated with ANHLC to maximise effectiveness and minimise risk
Proactive regular Combined NH Networks meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular participation in Combined NH Networks meetings to share and exchange info identifying emerging/current issues • contribution to agenda items, discussion and decision making • presentation/ representation of the interests of the NH Network at Combined NH Networks meeting • collaboration for the greater good
Proactive ANHLC newsletter / website input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribution of information to the <i>ANHLC News</i> newsletter & e-bulletin • promotion of the ANHLC newsletter, website and e bulletin
Proactive NH sector professional development and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of high standard relevant resources for state-wide availability (e.g. via ANHLC website) in user-friendly format • presentation of / participation in relevant professional development activities by ANHLC • attendance at and feedback on other relevant workshops external to the sector, e.g. VCOSS, iTaNGO, PILCH Connect, Jobs Australia, VMIA • delivery of workshops by members at ANHLC and other professional conferences • delivery of workshops to colleagues at Combined NH Network in-service activities • sharing of existing / new professional development resources • appropriate support and skills development opportunities for new / existing NH Networkers

ACTIVITY AREA 4: NETWORK ORGANISATION OPERATIONS

ACTIVITY AREA 4 - PRACTICE LEVEL: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive NH Network Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of responsible and ethical stewardship for the organisation • annual review and skills audit of the NH Network Committee of Governance (CoG) • development, review and implementation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. policies relevant to the operation of the Network governance, management, operations and delivery of activities; and, ii. policies and practices that keep the NH Network relevant to the needs of its members • compliance by the Network with all relevant legislative, statutory and contractual requirements and its own Constitution • facilitation of and contribution to development of the NH Network's Strategic Plan • provision of relevant, accurate and timely information to the NH Network Committee of Governance
Proactive management of Network finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible and ethical management of NH Network finances • support of the NH Network Treasurer and/or finance worker in their role/s • development and implementation of NH Network policies and financial risk management systems that are adhered to
Proactive administration of Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintenance of appropriate files and office systems • maintenance of records in accordance with legislative requirements • maintenance of good office systems in order to protect sensitive, confidential and important documents and communications
Proactive compliance and liaison with funding bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance with guidelines and conditions of contracts as determined by NH Network funding bodies • liaison with funding body representatives to support compliance • NH Network representation at forums, discussions and consultations relevant to NH Network funding
Proactive representation / liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • official representation of the NH Network at activities identified as a priority by the NH Network • reporting back to NH Network
Proactive organisational legal compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management of compliance with requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 Victoria

NH Network Good Practice Guidelines

Proactive Human Resources management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management of the human resources of the NH Network (including paid staff, volunteers and committee) in an ethical and responsible manner • the use of transparent employment processes • compliance with employer legal obligations
Proactive recognition of achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • celebration of NH Network achievements

ACTIVITY AREA 4 - PRACTICE LEVEL: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY)

EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive NH Network planning, evaluation and continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development and facilitation of NH Network planning and evaluation processes • collection and contribution of relevant information and statistics • contribution to and participation in continuous improvement practices • use of reflective practices • contribution to and participation in NH Network evaluations or reviews • feedback from members and other stakeholders • benchmarking against sector standards
Proactive NH Network promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotion of the Network (internal and external) • preparation/distribution of Media Releases in line with current sector policy directions • use of current promotional material

ACTIVITY AREA 4 - PRACTICE LEVEL: CAPACITY BUILDING

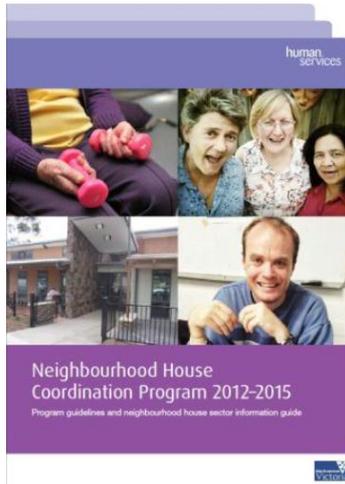
EXPECTED OUTCOME	The NH Network encourages:
Proactive NH Network sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • succession planning for NH Network Committee of Governance (CoG) and staffing • provision of professional development, and development of professional development resources • NH Network wide projects

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES:

KEY NH SECTOR RESOURCES & GUIDES

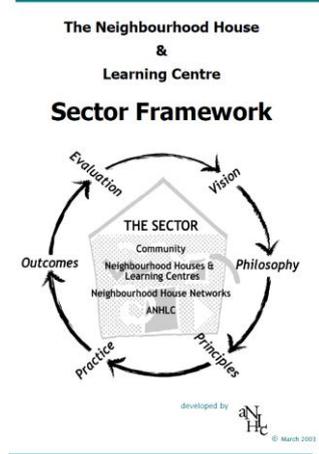
Neighbourhood House Coordination Program 2012-2015, DHS, Victoria 2012

NHCP guidelines and NH sector information guide.



Sector Framework, ANHLC, March 2003

Describes the vision, philosophy, principles, & practice of the NH&LC sector in Victoria. Developed using the sector community development practice.



NH Networks - an information resource updated regularly

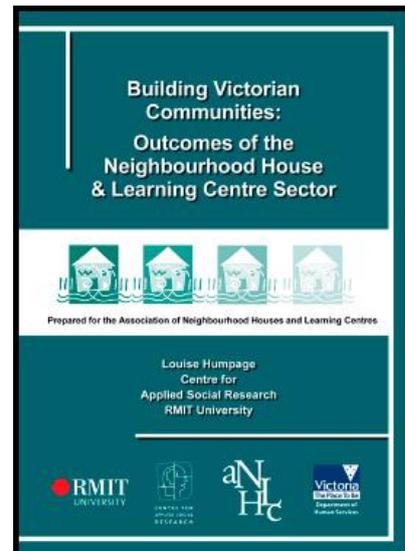
A reference booklet that briefly profiles each of the 16 Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre Networks and broadly outlines the network style of practice includes maps (available for download on the ANHLC website www.anhlc.asn.au)

Neighbourhood House Networks: an information resource



last updated July 2011

Building Victorian Communities: Outcomes of the NH&LC Sector Humpage, Louise, CASR – RMIT University, 2005



OTHER RESEARCH & RESOURCES

- *NH Good Practice Guide (previously Quality Houses), ANHLC, revised 2012*
- *Report on Combined Networks and ANHLC Meeting and Workshop, 15-16 September, 2009, ANHLC, 2009*
- *Strengthening local communities: an overview of research examining the benefits of Neighbourhood Houses, DPCD, July 2005*
- *Guide to Creating a Financial Systems & Procedures Manual, ANHLC January 2007*
- *Navigating the Maze: Understanding & Managing Accountability & Compliance, ANHLC December 2007*
- *Ways of Working & Learning Together: a guide for NHs&LCs, ANHLC June 2006*
- *Moving in Together: a co-location guide for NHs&LCs, September 2008*
- *Building Communities Together: a practical guide to creating & sustaining partnership for NHs & Local Government, October 2005*

NH NETWORK, ANHLC & DHS PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS

- *Neighbourhood House Networks Meeting Descriptions, May 2009*
One page brief describing each meeting NH Networks attend
- *Regional Neighbourhood House Networks Practice Framework and Protocol, September 2008*
A description of NH Network Practice that supports NH Networks to work in an agreed, united approach whilst maintaining responsiveness to unique local circumstances. It provides a guide for communication, accountability and decision-making between NH Networks, their members and ANHLC
- *PROTOCOL: ANHLC Board & Combined Regional NH Networks Joint Meetings, November 2008*
To guide the processes and outcomes of the joint meetings and provide a framework for working collectively.
- *Neighbourhood House Common Interest Group (NHCIG) Meetings Terms of Reference, October 2009*
To establish a common understanding and statement of intent to work collaboratively with an agreed governance and decision making structure for the joint Neighbourhood House Networks and DPCD Regional Teams biennial meetings.

APPENDICES

1. EXAMPLE NH NETWORK GOOD PRACTICE MECHANISMS

SUPPORT TO NH NETWORK MEMBERS – ONE-TO-ONE OR NH NETWORK-WIDE

- provision of resources and links
- referral to other Neighbourhood Houses that have specific expertise
- referral to external resources and organisations
- monitoring and informing about funding sources and opportunities
- identification of and linking of potential partners
- assisting with needs analyses by facilitation and provision of resources
- referral to proven facilitators or consultants
- facilitate access to professional development by sourcing facilitators or referral to external professional development
- provide guest speakers at NH Network meetings
- provision of support, resources and professional development to member Houses as appropriate
- leading by example

REGIONAL WORK WITH NH&LC STAKEHOLDERS

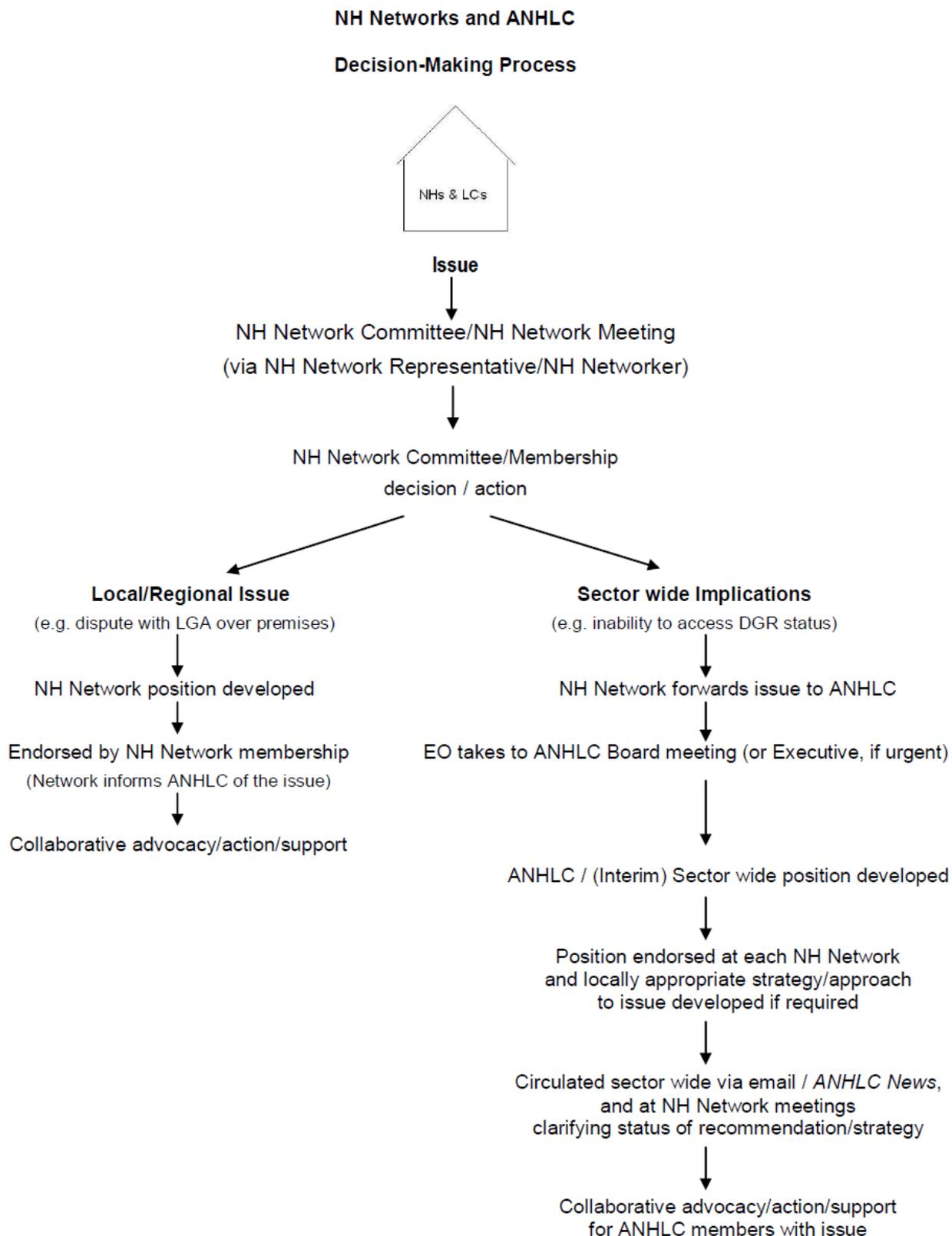
- linking and promoting NH Network members' talents and capabilities, history, programs and skills
- attendance at regional meetings with stakeholders
- representation of the NH sector (in accordance with NH Sector protocols and decision making process – see page 20)

STATE-WIDE WORK ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS

- facilitation of cross NH Networks professional development sessions - share resources across state
- sharing of skills and expertise of NH Networkers – NH Networker acts as a conduit, sounding board or mentor
- delivering workshops at ANHLC and other professional conferences
- delivering workshops to colleagues at NH Network in-services
- offering support to new and existing NH Networkers
- sharing resources

NETWORK ORGANISATION OPERATIONS

- regular NH Network meetings
- regular NH Network Committee of Governance meetings
- facilitated planning sessions
- participation in relevant professional development to keep up to date with changes, trends



3. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advisory Committee - a community-based committee or reference group independent of the auspice body responsible for overseeing the neighbourhood house program and the functions of the house.¹¹

Auspice Body - an agency that takes on legal and financial responsibilities for another organisation (such as a Neighbourhood House) in situations where it is not viable for an incorporated locally based Committee of Governance to be formed or when an existing Committee of Governance dissolves or ceases to be incorporated, or chooses to operate under the auspice of another organisation.¹²

Benchmark/benchmarking - a process of comparing one's business processes and performance metrics to industry best and/or best practices from other industries.

Capacity building - a process of building capabilities in individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and societies at the local, national and international level.

Clusters - may provide opportunities to share expertise and management, coordination and service delivery or other specific purposes. Neighbourhood Houses maintain their existing committees and coordinators but develop agreements (either formal or informal) to work together for specific purposes. These could include:

- purchasing legal and financial expertise
- joint submission/tendering for funding initiatives (where a larger auspice is more likely to be successful in the process); and
- purchasing administrative support to help meet accountability requirements.

Community – people from the same geographic location (a locality, town or suburb) and/or people with common needs (e.g. people with a disability, Indigenous Australians).

Community Development – a process in which people within an identified community, participate to increase their life opportunities, choices and skills. The process involves the active participation and fullest possible reliance on the initiative of the members of the community and is intended to increase the independence and inter-dependence of individuals and communities.

Community Strengthening – a sustained effort to increase involvement and partnership among members of a community to achieve common objectives. It involves local people, community organisations, Government, business and philanthropic organisations working together to achieve agreed social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Memorandum of Understanding [MOU] – a written statement between parties, that formalises an understanding between them. Honouring a Memorandum of Understanding is a 'moral' rather than a legal obligation.

Outcome/s – desired or intended effects on the community.

Output/s – products and services produced or delivered.

Outreach – planned strategies to increase the participation of people and groups in an organisation or service activity. It requires an awareness of the barriers to access that exist in any given location or community. Barriers may include distance, lack of transport, illiteracy, cost, agoraphobia, a sense that the organisation is not for them, and language barriers.

Performance measures – measures of quantity, quality, timeliness and cost used to assess the production and delivery of outputs.

Self-help – activities designed by a group of people to help themselves rather than seek the assistance of professionals.

4. ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adult Community Education
ACFE	Adult Community and Further Education, Victoria
AEI	Adult Education Institution
ANHCA	Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association
ANHLC	Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (Victoria)
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
CD	Community Development
CoG	Committee of Governance
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria
DHS	Department of Human Services, Victoria
DPCD	Department of Planning & Community Development, Victoria
ICT	Information Communications Technology
LGA	Local Government Area/Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NH	Neighbourhood House
NHCP	Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (Victoria)
NHCIG	Neighbourhood House Common Interest Group (meetings of representatives from DHS, NH Networks and ANHLC)
OCC	Occasional Child Care
OoSHC	Out of School Hours Care

5. ENDNOTES

¹ *The Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centre Sector Framework*, Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Melbourne, March 2003, page 3

² *The Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centre Sector Framework*, Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Melbourne, March 2003, page 4

³ *Neighbourhood House Coordination Program 2012-2015*, DHS, Victoria, page 16

⁴ *Building Victorian Communities: Outcomes of the NH&LC Sector*, Humpage, Louise, CASR – RMIT University, 2005 page 21 (paraphrased)

⁵ See *NH Networks - an information resource*, Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Melbourne, first produced 2007 – updated regularly, pages 1 & 3 for descriptions of NH Networks

⁶ *Neighbourhood House Networks Practice Framework and Protocol*, September 2008, page 3

⁷ *NH Networks - an information resource*, Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Melbourne, first produced 2007 – updated regularly, page 1

⁸ This section is taken from the *Neighbourhood House Coordination Guidelines 2012-2015*, DHS, Victoria 2012, page 6

⁹ *Ways of Working & Learning Together: a guide for NHs&LCs*, ANHLC June 2006, page 4

¹⁰ *Neighbourhood House Networks Practice Framework and Protocol*, September 2008, page 6

¹¹ *Neighbourhood House Coordination Program 2012-2015*, DHS, Victoria, page 8

¹² See *Neighbourhood House Coordination Program 2012-2015*, DHS Victoria, pages 8-9 for more information on NHs and alternative governance requirements and auspice bodies