Australian businesses provide substantial support to community organisations each year through donations, sponsorship, volunteering and in-kind support. During the 2003-2004 financial year over $3.2 billion was donated by businesses to the not-for-profit sector, 68% of this donation was in the form of money ($2.21 billion), 16% in goods ($0.52 billion), and 16% in services ($0.52 billion). With a bit of planning and determination your program could potentially access some of these donations. Although partnerships take work, there are a number of mutual benefits to consider. Firstly, you may be able to establish ongoing funding/resourcing for your homework club, leading to sustainability and ultimately, better outcomes for the young people you support. Secondly, partnerships offer opportunities for the exchange of ideas and information, developing the capacity of both partners in often unexpected ways. And thirdly, developing partnerships with local businesses enhances your community networking ability, promotes your program and creates further potential. Below are 10 tips to help you with your endeavours:

10 Tips for Forming Mutually Beneficial Business-Homework Club Partnerships

1. Ensure that your organisation/homework club is partnership ready. Full support from management is required to assist you in the possible long and challenging road ahead.

2. Develop an organisational value system for forming partnerships – consider under what circumstances you would reject a partnership offer from a business. Identify risks...
associated with forming a business partnership.

3. Get to know your local council members, ask for letters of endorsement from these members to support you when approaching potential business partners.

4. Attend networking opportunities where businesses will be present (even if it does not relate directly to your homework club or organisation) – you have an advantage if a business has already met you or has some knowledge of your organisation before you approach them.

5. People give to people, not to organisations – put time and effort into developing a relationship with your potential partner business. Face to face meetings are essential.

6. Approach your potential business partner with a program plan for your homework club, outlining your vision, mission and purpose and what sort of support you are seeking (don’t start with asking for money). Involve your business partner in the further development of the Homework Club.

7. Provide your potential partner with a list of possible benefits to them, e.g. the partner could be exposed to a key target market (young people, multicultural community etc.), there could be opportunities for staff community involvement (business/corporate responsibility activities), or the organisation’s community reputation could be improved due to website/newsletter advertising, staff training, room hire etc.

8. Develop a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with your business partner outlining roles and responsibilities of each party. There must be ‘buy in’ or commitment to the partnership at the top levels of both organisations.

9. Be sure you can deliver on anything you promise. Aim for quality not quantity and be upfront and honest. You must continue to impress your partner with your professionalism and good partnership/program outcomes.

10. Effective communication is the key – ensure that you are in regular contact and that you communicate important changes - no surprises! Ask to be part of their stakeholder communication lists/emails so you are always up to date with the happenings of your partner.

1 http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/general/general_article.jsp?articleId=103