

Library Board of Victoria
and Victorian Public Library Network

FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION
JUNE 2004

This document marks the beginning of a new phase in the relationship between Victoria's 43 public library services and the Library Board of Victoria, through the State Library of Victoria.

It recognises that these bodies have many things in common, particularly a shared commitment to delivering excellent information services to the whole Victorian community, and that more can be achieved to advance our common aims by working together than separately. Over seven months, from November 2003 to May 2004, representatives of Victoria's public libraries, the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Library Board of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria, met to create this document, which aims to facilitate the smooth development of the relationship. Their spirit of great goodwill, commitment and vigour will ensure that the Framework for Collaborative Action is transformed from mere words on the page into a stronger relationship between public libraries, the Library Board of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria, delivering better services to all Victorians.

The Framework for Collaborative Action has been endorsed by both the Victorian public library network and the Library Board of Victoria.

June 2004

1. Introduction

The Framework for Collaborative Action defines the way in which the Library Board of Victoria, through the State Library of Victoria, will partner with the public library network to deliver enhanced library services to Victoria's communities over the next five years.

The Framework is intended to grow and mature the Collaboration and enhance its effectiveness by:

- developing a shared vision for enhancing access to public library services
- providing clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of the Collaboration's constituents
- specifying the values, principles and protocols that should guide collaborative action and support cohesiveness, consistency and confidence in decision making
- identifying the enabling strategies crucial to achievement of the Collaboration's goals and the processes for their development and implementation

The Framework is a living document that marks the start of development of collaborative action. It will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is fit for its purpose and to fine-tune any areas identified as not meeting the Collaboration's requirements.

The Framework does not provide a detailed road map for achieving the objectives of the Collaboration. However, it sets in train a range of activities that will ensure this road map is developed along with any tools or guidelines that may be required.

2. Purpose and scope

2.1 Vision

At the heart of the proposed Collaboration is a strong commitment to improve access to information services available to Victorians, through collaboration between the State Library of Victoria and the Victorian public library network.

2.2 Goals and priorities

In determining its goals and priorities the Collaboration takes into account the priorities of the State Government, the Library Board of Victoria and Victorian public libraries.

The Collaboration between the State Library and the public library network will benefit Victorian communities across the state. It will work towards achieving:

- enhanced library collections
- improved access options
- 'seamless' service/access for users
- better skilled staff
- increased community and government understanding of and engagement with libraries
- greater efficiency and effectiveness of library services through collaboration and sharing

2.3 Key areas for collaboration

The key areas for collaborative action are focused around:

- resources within the control of the Collaboration
- decisions within the control of the Collaboration
- emerging and ad hoc issues
- areas of influence

In the first phase of the Collaboration we will focus on:

- the funds allocated to the Statewide Public Library Development Projects
- the resources of the Public Libraries Unit
- further developing Victoria's Virtual Library (www.libraries.vic.gov.au)

The Collaboration should ensure that the statewide ICT agenda for public libraries focuses on improving service delivery. The Collaboration should also be responsible for managing the interconnection across these activities.

2.4 Challenges and opportunities

The State Library and public libraries will pursue partnership opportunities to be involved in initiatives, projects or programs for the benefit of the public.

The external environment in which the Collaboration operates provides many challenges and opportunities. Key among these are:

- the drive towards 'joined-up' government services
- the increasing local emphasis in delivery of services
- on-going sustainability of services
- the interests of other stakeholders such as Department for Victorian Communities, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries, and the Municipal Association of Victoria

3. Roles, responsibilities and contributions

This section establishes what the various constituents bring to the Collaboration and what each will be expected to contribute to achieving the shared goals.

3.1 The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries

The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, the body responsible for directly linking the Board with the network, was established in July 2003. The Advisory Committee consists of the following members:

- two members of the Board (one of whom is the Chairperson of the Committee)
- the Chief Executive Officer of the State Library of Victoria
- two representatives of Viclink (including the President)
- two representatives of the Country Public Libraries Group (including the President)
- one representative from the Municipal Association of Victoria

The Advisory Committee works on a representative model. That is, the members represent the various constituent groups who form the collaboration, and are responsible for providing communication and consultation channels between the Advisory Committee and their constituents.

Terms of Reference have been established for this group defining its objectives, functions and powers, structure, terms and conditions.

3.2 The Library Board of Victoria

The Library Board of Victoria has responsibilities in relation to public libraries as defined in the *Libraries Act 1988*:

- to oversee cooperation in programs with libraries and information organisations to promote access to library and information resources
- to exercise leadership and promote high standards in the provision of library and information services
- to provide advice and information to the Minister on any matter concerning libraries and information organizations

3.3 Viclink/CPLG

Viclink (Victorian Public Library and Information Cooperative) is the peak body for Victorian public libraries, comprising representatives of every public library service in the state. Viclink is incorporated under the Corporations Act and its duties and obligations are set out in its constitution. Membership is institutional.

CPLG (Country Public Libraries Group) is an incorporated body that represents the 19 rural and regional library services in Victoria. It is a forum for the issues that are particular to country libraries (e.g. shrinking populations and rate bases, low population densities and distance). Viclink and CPLG work in partnership to assist, encourage, protect and promote the interests of those who use Victorian public library services and the staff of public libraries.

Viclink partners the Library Board of Victoria in meeting its responsibilities by:

- cooperating in promoting access to library and information resources
- informing it on issues as appropriate
- providing advice to ensure there is network-wide support for issues within its sphere of influence and that there is agreement on standards for provision of library and information services

Viclink and CPLG bring extensive knowledge, expertise and skills to the collaborative process. Further, they are the representative bodies through which the outcomes of the Collaborative Action will be implemented, contributing the experience of the libraries that deliver services at a local level to Victoria's communities.

3.4 Municipal Association of Victoria

The MAV by Act of Parliament 1907 is the legislated peak body representing the 79 Victorian councils, which are the owners, operators and majority funders of the public library services in Victoria. Two key roles of the MAV include being the lead negotiator between local government and other spheres of government, and acting as the advocate for councils on policy, funding and program priorities. The MAV is the communication and information hub for and about Victorian local government, and facilitates councils' capacity development. Broad policy and funding arrangements are negotiated by the MAV on behalf of Victorian local government with the State and Commonwealth in consultation with councils.

3.5 Public Libraries Unit

The Public Libraries Unit is a work unit of the State Library of Victoria. Its overall role is to enhance the effectiveness of public libraries for Victorian communities through cooperative activities. The Unit is actively involved in:

- communication across the public library sector and its stakeholders
- coordinating industry knowledge, research and innovation
- developing and delivering projects that meet statewide public library sector needs
- facilitating strategy development

4. Values and governing principles

A common set of values and principles will guide the activities and behaviour of the constituents of the Collaboration.

4.1 Values

The Collaboration values:

- communities that are informed, engaged and empowered
- libraries, for the role that they play in providing information, opportunities for lifelong learning, a sense of 'connection', and enjoyment to their communities
- partnership, because more can be done for the community through sharing of resources than can be done by library services acting alone
- bold and innovative approaches to challenges, problems and issues
- trust, as the cornerstone of effective partnerships
- honest, open and ongoing communication, which is fundamental to building trust
- respect for the knowledge, expertise and points of view of all parties

4.2 Communication and consultation procedures and protocols

These procedures and protocols provide a grounding reference for decision making, running meetings, sharing information, etc. They:

- ensure that decision making is transparent and follows clear processes
- provide a reference point for public library decision making on statewide issues
- ensure there is a mechanism for members of the Collaboration to discuss priorities and to bring ideas and to raise positions/problems with the ACPL

4.2.1 Advisory Committee on Public Libraries

The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries set out arrangements for communication and running of meetings. These arrangements make explicit that Agenda items are welcomed from any member of the Committee.

4.2.2 Communication with constituents

As the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries is a representative body, it is the responsibility of the members to provide communication and consultation channels between the Advisory Committee and the constituent groups that they represent.

4.2.3 Other State Library/public library committees

As the body that links the Library Board of Victoria with the public library network, the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries is responsible for establishing the structures (including committees), processes and procedures to facilitate communication, consultation and decision making and will make this one of its first priorities.

5. Management and operation

5.1 Governance and coordination

The Advisory Committee and the constituents its members represent are the 'owners' of the Framework.

The Advisory Committee members are the custodians of the Framework, and will be responsible for promotion of the Framework and its outcomes to the Board.

The State Library's Public Libraries Unit is responsible for 'giving the Framework legs' on a day-to-day basis.

5.2 Conflict avoidance/dispute resolution

The Framework is in itself a mechanism for minimising potential areas of conflict. In the event of any conflict or disputation arising among parties in the Collaboration, it will be resolved:

- in accordance with the Framework's values of trust; honest, open and ongoing communication; and respect for the knowledge, expertise and points of view of all parties
- by focusing on the issues and on the best outcomes for the Collaboration rather than on individual interests
- by seeking a consensus solution

Specific steps for dealing with disputation are:

- The issue or difficulty should be made explicit at a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries
- The matter may be referred to the President of the Library Board of Victoria through the Advisory Committee's Chair
- The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries may decide to avail itself of an external facilitator

Every effort will be made to avoid withdrawal of any party to the Collaboration or member from the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, and to avoid the Collaboration becoming dysfunctional.

5.3 Evaluating success of the Collaboration

The Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, on behalf of the Board, will review the performance of the Collaboration annually in line with the budget process and as part of its review of itself. The following indicators will be used to assess the success of the Collaboration in meeting its goals:

- extent to which the Collaboration is able to point to evidence of its activities reflecting the Collaboration's values and leading to better library services
- extent to which key players within the Collaboration are talking together and their 'feeling of intimacy'
- the Library Board is informed about, engaged in and actively working on issues related to public libraries
- acceptance and integration of the Framework into future planning and operations

These indicators will be refined by the Collaboration over time.

Any party to the Collaboration may choose to develop its own indicators for evaluating whether its continuing membership of the Collaboration meets its objectives.

6. Enabling strategies

The success of the Collaboration will depend on its ability to implement actions that demonstrate tangible progress in achievement of its vision and goals and translation of its values and principles into changed behaviour. Implementation of the Framework will be supported by development of the following plans and strategies:

6.1 Action Plans

The first phase of the Collaboration will focus on funds allocated to the Statewide Public Library Development Projects by the Library Board of Victoria at its July 2004 meeting.

Following its work on the Statewide Public Library Development Projects the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries may turn its attention over time to other areas of possible collaboration.

6.2 Resource allocation

The following guidelines are designed to ensure that funding of the Statewide Public Library Development Projects will support efficient management of shared resources and facilitate better alignment with strategic planning.

The focus for the Statewide Public Library Development Projects is as follows:

Projects must have the potential to:

- deliver statewide benefit to the Victorian community
- increase the capability of the public library network to deliver services
- increase interaction/partnering/collaboration between public libraries, and between the State Library of Victoria and the public library network
- avoid duplicating the work of other organisations or project funding
- offer bold and innovative approaches to challenges, problems and issues

Projects must have linkages to one or more of the goals of the Framework for Collaborative Action:

- enhanced collections
- improved access options
- 'seamless' service to users
- better skilled staff
- increased community and government understanding of and engagement with libraries
- greater efficiency and effectiveness in library services through collaboration and sharing

Projects must:

- require committed involvement by public library staff
- achieve their outcomes within the time frame of the funding

In any year, the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries may choose to give priority to Projects that advance one goal area of the Collaboration ahead of others.

At the end of the first round of funding the Statewide Public Library Development Projects will be comprehensively reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries. In developing Projects for the first round of funding there should be no assumption of continued funding for any Project beyond the life of that funding round, or that the model for the first round of funding will continue.

Throughout the first funding period the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries will be responsible for ongoing monitoring of the Statewide Public Library Development Projects and for dealing with any issues that may arise. The Advisory Committee will also be responsible for reporting to the Library Board of Victoria on the Projects as its Board representatives deem appropriate.

6.2.1 Process for determining Statewide Public Library Development Projects

The process to achieve approval of the first round of a three-year cycle of Projects by the Library Board of Victoria will be:

→	Advisory Committee on Public Libraries agrees to overall model and criteria for Statewide Public Library Development Projects
→	Library Board of Victoria presented with recommendations from ACPL on the model and criteria for Statewide Public Library Development Projects
→	Advisory Committee on Public Libraries defines the process for gathering Statewide Public Library Development Project ideas
→	Ideas gathered for the Statewide Public Library Development Projects by Viclink and the Country Public Libraries Group
→	Advisory Committee on Public Libraries reviews ideas for development into full Project proposals
→	Public Libraries Unit manages development of full Project proposals
→	Advisory Committee on Public Libraries signs-off on Project proposals
→	Statewide Public Library Development Project proposals for the triennium recommended to the Library Board of Victoria for approval

6.3 Communication and consultation strategy

Consultation on development and review of the Framework and communication about the Framework across the public library network will occur as outlined below.

6.3.1 Consultation

The Viclink, Country Public Libraries Group, Municipal Association of Victoria and Library Board of Victoria representatives on the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries will be responsible for communicating and consulting with their constituents about the Framework and for providing synthesised feedback to the Committee.

The State Library of Victoria will assist the Committee's representatives to consult with their constituents by providing a facilitator as and if required.

6.3.2 Dissemination

A printed version of the Framework will be provided to all constituents.

The Framework will be available on the relevant websites of all constituents, including the State Library of Victoria website and the Victoria's Virtual Library website.

6.3.3 Commenting on the Framework

Comments on the Framework are welcomed and may be received via a representative on the Advisory Committee on Public Libraries, or sent to drosenfeldt@slv.vic.gov.au at the State Library of Victoria.

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