Partnering for Success

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Introduction

The NAB Schools First Awards are the result of a partnership between two not-for-profits, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA), and a large banking corporation, the National Australia Bank (NAB). The Awards project is a national criteria-based awards program which has been rewarding outstanding school–community partnerships since 2009. These Awards reflect a significant investment in education and by 2013, the fifth year of the Awards, will have awarded over $18 million to support more than 500 school–community partnerships around Australia.

This report presents a snapshot of the impact the Awards program is having on award winning schools from 2009–11 and examines the expected impact the Awards program will have on schools that applied for an award in 2012.

Part one of this report will present findings from a survey of Seed Funding and Impact Award winning schools between 2009–11. This will include three detailed case studies of winning partnerships that highlight the impact of winning an award on students, schools and communities.

Part two of this report includes an analysis of the results of a survey sent to 2012 Seed Funding and Impact Award applicants.
Part one: NAB Schools First Award winning schools

Between 2009 and 2011, over 25 per cent of the total number of schools in Australia submitted an application for a NAB Schools First Award. The first three years of the Awards saw 299 schools awarded with a total of $15.05M in prize money. These winning schools were asked to complete an online survey and 220 schools (74 per cent of winning schools) responded. Of the respondents, 142 were Impact Award winners and 78 were Seed Funding Award winners (Figure 1). Descriptive statistics are included in Appendix A.

Purpose
The purpose of this research is to identify:

• the main impacts of the NAB Schools First Awards on award winning schools; and
• which groups are benefiting most and in what ways.

Respondents
Of the 220 winning schools that responded to the survey:

• 142 respondents reported they were a local Impact Award winner (65 per cent)
• 78 were a Seed Funding Award winner (35 per cent)
• 18 were a State Impact Award winner
• 3 were a National Impact Award winner
• 5 were both a Seed Funding Award winner and an Impact Award winner (for the purposes of this report only a school’s Impact Award winning partnership has been referenced).
Key findings

Responses to the survey show that there have been many benefits for schools, students and communities from winning an Award. By providing an alternative source of finance the Awards have:

- enriched the educational programs in these schools;
- had a significant impact on the quality of these programs; and
- helped increase the sustainability of the winning school–community partnerships.

Winning schools have been able to use their award money to continue and strengthen their partnerships. Ninety-seven per cent of respondents reported that winning an award had allowed them to meet their partnership objectives to a major or moderate extent (Figure 2). For most schools these objectives were to improve educational outcomes and increase students’ connection to the community.

The award money has provided solutions to many issues faced by schools, such as being able to purchase a bus and provide independent transport for students. This has given schools the capacity to enrol more students, attract more partners or expand their programs.

While increased academic performance was rated highly, more than 80 per cent of Impact and Seed Funding Award winners reported that winning an award in a national awards program and the recognition that came with the win had boosted students’ self-esteem and confidence.

Schools reported that winning an award led to a higher profile in the community, increased pride in their school and opportunities to develop more partnerships. They were also able to expand their partnerships and programs creatively because the award money came with ‘no strings attached’. The award money has been used by these winning schools in four main ways:

- to purchase specialist equipment and resources, including a bus, trailer and electronic equipment;
- for building infrastructure (outdoor structures and learning spaces);
- to employ extra staff to support teachers and students, particularly in relation to coordination and curriculum delivery; and
- to provide increased professional training for teachers.

Over half of the winning schools responding to the survey reported that their partnerships have become more sustainable as they have been able to employ extra staff to ease the workload of teachers engaged in the partnership.

The non-monetary support provided by the Awards was also an important factor in the strengthening of these partnerships and schools valued the recognition and publicity that came with being part of a national program. Close to 80 per cent of all respondents reported that the most helpful aspect of the Awards in regards to their partnerships was the positive media coverage received as a result of winning an award. Schools reported that winning as award has contributed to building and sustaining partnerships through:

- increased community engagement (90 per cent);
- increased partner involvement (85 per cent); and
- the opportunity to have their partnership’s success published nationally (75 per cent).

The information collected as part of this study highlights the kinds of benefits that winning an award can bring to schools. The NAB Schools First team could potentially use these benefits to inform the community and promote the program to encourage schools to apply.

“We hope the NAB Schools First initiative continues because it encourages schools to dream.”

Partnering for Success, ACER (April 2013).
Impact of winning an award

Between 2009 and 2011, winning schools received $50,000 for an Impact Award or $25,000 for a Seed Funding Award. State and/or territory and national winners were awarded an additional amount. The award amounts were substantial and schools reported that the injection of money into their programs had a significant impact on being able to meet the objectives of their partnerships.

The NAB Schools First Awards have helped schools meet their partnership objectives.

Schools were asked to cite their main objective and explain how winning an award helped meet this objective. Irrespective of award type, the majority of schools (79 per cent) reported that the most common partnership objective was to improve learning outcomes, followed by increasing students’ social capital or social connectedness (Figure 3). Schools gave examples of programs that had been developed through the partnership which included educational programs that were not part of the curriculum; improving the quality of teaching; developing resources; improving subject knowledge; and providing access to outside assistance such as experts, mentors, volunteers, pre-service teachers, university students and tutors.

Improving student learning outcomes included the school’s desire to instil enthusiasm into students for science, mathematics, architecture and engineering. Learning outcomes were achieved with more hands-on involvement with professionals and volunteers in the local community. This could be attributed to the extra money available to develop programs through the partnership or increased partner involvement.

For Impact Award winning schools the second most commonly cited objective was ‘building social capital’ or connecting students with their communities. Many schools had partnerships which aimed to develop students’ social connectedness in their communities. Some of the partnership activities involved exercises in problem solving; developing a mentor program; being involved in community service and volunteering in the community; developing closer relationships with community groups and working on cultural, environmental and sustainability programs.

Schools wanted to promote a range of learning opportunities; encourage social interaction and mutual understanding between generations; share life experiences; and influence the development of school curriculum. Schools partnered with local aged care facilities, hospitals, RSL branches or volunteer organisations and worked with the elderly, the homeless and other groups in their communities. These schools were often able to provide social interaction and have a positive impact on the quality of life for all participants.

Many schools wanted to ‘broaden post-school options and job skills’ through partnerships and this included: developing industry-ready skills and a work ethic; providing authentic learning and training opportunities; assisting students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for their successful transition to work; preparing students for post-school; increasing students’ employability skills; raising aspirations for tertiary studies and, particularly in regional areas, providing clear pathways from school to work in local industries. Schools partnered with businesses including the Murray Valley Citrus Board, Nestle and BHP and with community organisations such as Rotary Clubs, local councils, universities and TAFE Colleges to improve vocational outcomes.

Some respondents cited ‘increasing student engagement’ as their main objective: early intervention; mentoring; activities related to music, culture and academic subjects; and hands on experiences. Other respondents referred to their objective as being ‘to enhance the health and wellbeing of students’. These...
partnerships were formed to address the health issues that impact on the learning of students, provide access to health professionals and facilities not readily available to schools and promote healthier lifestyles.

Winning an award has given students and schools pride in their achievements.

Schools were asked to report on the non-monetary benefits of winning an award. While the money was important for schools, the non-monetary benefits for schools, students and partners were highly regarded, such as increased academic performance (Figure 4). The most important non-monetary benefit schools reported was the positive perception their school enjoyed in the community after their win was announced.

Sixty-five per cent of respondents reported that winning an award has helped the wider community develop a better understanding of young people (Figure 5). The businesses and community groups that have partnered with schools have been able to form relationships with students, share knowledge and experiences and have developed a new respect for the youth in their area. For teachers the non-monetary benefits were just as fulfilling for them and the students as the money:

‘Before being involved in the partnership, the manager of the local business we partnered with had no idea of the problems faced by young people in the area. He only asked if there was more he could do.’

‘Winning the award was recognition of the talents of students within our school and this has impacted positively on school culture and expectations.’

The award money enabled schools to do things that would not have been possible otherwise.

Schools were asked what the award money had allowed them to do and many schools responded that winning the award enabled them to ‘expand their program’ (Figure 6). For example, schools were able to extend the school hours for students; enrol more students; give more students access to programs; attract new partners and build better ties with partners and the community. Many schools were able to expand their activities to involve the whole school while some extended the number of days the program operated.

Schools have benefited from being able to spend the money as they chose. Seventy-one per cent of schools used the award money to purchase specialist resources and equipment; subsidise excursions and activities; engage experts; provide authentic experiences; provide up to date technology and build infrastructure. Some schools reported that the award money had allowed them to provide breakfasts for more students; extend programs outside of school hours; provide money for trips that previously were out of reach for some students; extend the training of students and develop more comprehensive programs.

Purchasing additional classroom resources

Having won the award, schools reported that their partnerships have become more sustainable with more money to spend on the programs being initiated through partnerships. Schools responded that having these additional classroom materials would not have been possible without the NAB Schools First Awards.

Many schools spent their money on equipment essential to the programs being run in each of the partnerships – reading materials, gardening supplies, laboratory equipment, kitchen and catering supplies, musical instruments, uniforms, mountain bikes, trekking and camping equipment.

Irrespective of Award type, ‘electronic/technology’ based equipment was the most popular type of equipment purchased (Figure 7). Partnerships involving the use of Information Technology used the extra money to buy more iPads, notebooks or essential software and some schools spent their money on
cameras and video equipment. Partnerships developing programs for the physical fitness of the students used the money to buy sports and fitness equipment.

Of the schools reporting spending the money on equipment, seven purchased a bus and five purchased another type of vehicle. Impact Award winners, having access to more money, were able to upgrade or build new spaces for the benefit of the partnership. Seed Funding recipients were limited to spending their money on less expensive items.

With the extra money schools were able to engage more students in the partnership program at any one time; develop the program more extensively; embed the concept of partnerships into the ethos of the school; attract more partners; involve more students and invite other schools to participate.

Twenty-four per cent of schools reported that their award money was spent on books or classroom support materials (Figure 8). Among Impact Award winning schools the most frequently cited types of books and classroom support materials purchased included ‘subject specialist materials’, ‘electronic/technology’ based material and ‘training manuals’. ‘General reading books’ were most commonly cited by Seed Funding Award respondents.

In addition, 21.6 per cent of respondents reported having spent some of their award money on building infrastructure (Figure 9). The most frequently cited infrastructure items included ‘outdoor structure’ and general school refurbishments. The outdoor structures included outdoor kitchens, barbecue areas, outdoor learning spaces, sheds and gardens. Two schools built structures for their hens and nine schools refurbished existing areas or built structures within the school to run their programs.

Winning an award has provided schools with extra staff and professional development for teachers.

Employing extra staff

The award money has allowed many schools to expand their partnerships by employing an extra person to coordinate programs, relieve teachers from their teaching duties or provide assistance to students and teachers. Nearly half of the respondents reported having spent some of their award money on employing someone as a coordinator or as classroom support (Figure 10).

Among recipients of an Impact Award the highest proportion of staff were employed in roles involving coordination and curriculum delivery. In many partnerships, the person who is responsible for coordinating the partnership has other roles in the school and some of the pressure of time and resources is relieved by employing someone to take over the role of coordinator.

Among Seed Funding Award recipients, more people were employed in roles involving ‘support’ – classroom support, teacher support and Information Technology support – followed by coordination and service delivery. Some staff were employed on a fee for service basis – visiting experts, trainers or instructors – and money was spent to employ staff to release teachers from their normal teaching duties.

Providing professional training for teachers

Many schools have used the award money to provide training for teachers to improve their skills and knowledge in specialised areas. Teachers have been able to access further training, professional development and mentoring by experts in specific areas and this has a flow-on effect towards improving the learning outcomes of students.
Schools were asked a series of questions related to the use of their award money external to their school. Overall, 41 per cent of respondents reported having spent some of their money on providing professional training. Among respondents who were the recipient of an Impact Award ‘increasing expertise (general)’ was the most frequently cited type of professional training provided followed by training in ‘specific subject knowledge’ (Figure 11).

Respondents were asked about the difference, if any, the professional training provided to their staff had made to student outcomes (Figure 12). Most commonly cited by respondents as contributing to student outcomes was ‘increased student engagement’ and ‘improved teacher skills/ knowledge’. In contrast, recipients of Seed Funding Awards most frequently cited ‘improved learning’ and ‘improved teacher skills/ knowledge’. Given Seed Funding Awards are awarded to schools that are in the early stages of developing an initiative, it is positive to note that schools are investing time in improving teacher training to improve student outcomes.

The Awards have provided winning schools with opportunities to showcase their partnerships. Schools were asked to comment on the benefits of nine aspects of the Awards program which included support from the partners – ACER, FYA and NAB – and support through events, forums, newsletters, the website and media coverage associated with the program. Responses were separated into 2009, 2010 and 2011 as some aspects of the program were not in place every year. Responses from year to year varied as the program has evolved (Figure 13). About 80 per cent of respondents from each year reported the media coverage that came with winning an award as being the most helpful aspect of the Awards.

Winning an award has contributed to building and sustaining partnerships. Many respondents reported that the award money provided the capacity to strengthen their partnerships, with some reporting their partnerships may not have continued without the support of NAB Schools First. While the award money was important in enabling schools to purchase resources, the non-monetary benefits contributed to the continuation of the partnership. Some schools reported that their win had encouraged the wider community to recognise their success and they were able to attract more funding and more partners (Figure 14).

Eighty-five per cent of Impact Award and 90 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported their school had experienced increased partner involvement and 90 per cent of Impact and 89 per cent of Seed Funding reported greater community engagement. Winning an Impact Award provided schools with the opportunity to have their partnership initiative disseminated via published articles and media coverage. Schools have found that through NAB Schools First they have become well known, not only in their own community, but across Australia.

Between 60 per cent and 70 per cent of respondents over the three years, indicated that winning the award had contributed to the sustainability of their partnerships (Figure 15). It is encouraging to note that many of the 2009 respondents are continuing their partnerships and that winning a NAB Schools First Award has contributed to this.

‘Our partnership would not have continued without [the] award money. We were struggling to maintain the energy needed to provide a suitable alternative for challenging students. Winning the award allowed us to be more creative with our time and finances.’
Case studies

Three winning school–community partnerships were selected to demonstrate the impact winning a NAB Schools First Award has had on the students, schools and communities involved.

- Claremont College partnered with the Housing Industry of Australia (HIA) to improve students’ vocational outcomes.
- Canberra College partnered with the ACT Department of Health and other community groups to improve outcomes for pregnant and parenting students at risk of disengaging from education.
- Centenary Heights State High School/Toowoomba Flexi School partnered with Toowoomba Older Men’s Network (TOMNET) to improve outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged students.

The purpose of these case studies is to provide a detailed examination of the impact that participation in the Awards program has had on schools and their communities.

**Canberra College**

**CCCareS**, Canberra College’s partnership program, works with a group of pregnant or parenting students at risk of dropping out of school. Winning the award provided an opportunity for the students to have their stories heard and the publicity that came with winning increased student pride and self-esteem and ensured that the students felt valued. The award opened many doors for the College and CCCareS was able to enrol more students, provide access to more services, monitor the health and improve the education of these vulnerable young people in a safe environment because of the expanded program.

**Centenary Heights State High School/Toowoomba Flexi School**

The Flexi School is an alternative school for students who are socially and economically disadvantaged and who do not fit into mainstream schooling. Winning the award gave this marginalised group a stronger connection to their community through greater access to people and resources in the community. The students also gained pride in themselves and the school that was not there before. For the members of TOMNET, winning the award has enabled them access to programs for mentors and their membership has grown significantly. For the school, the money has taken away the worry about how to raise funds and enabled them to continue to focus on their core business: creating a suitable learning environment for the students.

**Claremont College**

Claremont College faced the challenge of engaging students in the local construction industry and improving retention at Years 11 and 12. NAB Schools First provided the solution – a bus! Winning the award has enabled the College to continue its youthBuild program with HIA. With the extra money the College has been able to increase the number of students engaged in the program by being able to transport them to and from the school. The recognition gained by the partnership as a result of the award has encouraged the involvement of more industry partners.

**Findings**

Winning an award has enabled these three schools to strengthen their partnerships to meet the needs of vulnerable young people at risk of disengaging from formal learning. The award has brought national recognition for the students, staff, partners and communities connected with each of these schools. Winning an award has meant being able to expand the reach of the community programs, engage more mentors, and encourage feelings of pride in being part of a project that has been recognised nationally for excellence in partnering.
CCCares at Canberra College (ACT)

2009 National Impact Award winner

Canberra College worked with government and non-government groups for many years, but did not realise the value of these partnerships until they applied for a NAB Schools First award. Filling in the application form made them think about their partnerships and realise how much they relied on their partners to assist them in the day to day business of providing a vulnerable group of students with an education.

‘You need the community to make things happen. The kids we work with are not easy [to teach] and there is so much they need, the school can’t do it all, you have to do it with them. It is the strength of our partnerships that makes the whole thing work.’ Jan Marshall, Coordinator CCCares

Canberra College is a Year 11 and 12 coeducational government college with two campuses. The second campus supports about 100 students each year, primarily pregnant and parenting students. The diverse health and welfare needs of these students were not being met and they were more likely to leave school early, struggle to find employment and face lives of poverty and hardship. To minimise the risk of these negative outcomes, the College identified the need to support these young pregnant women and young parents to stay connected to school. The College could only do this through the partnerships they formed, as the success of their program relies upon the whole community working together. Since 2004, approximately 900 students have completed their education because of the CCCares partnership.

The partnership

The College recognised the need to bring together education and health professionals on campus and to work in close cooperation with health professionals in order to provide a supportive, holistic program for its students. In 2004, a steering committee was established involving the College, ACT Department of Education and Training and community health and welfare partners to devise the kind of program that the College believed was needed. The major partner was the Child, Youth and Women’s Health Program (ACT Department of Health), although other significant local authorities and organisations were also involved, including women’s refuges, hospitals, service clubs, the Salvation Army and various crisis services.

Staff from the Child, Youth and Women’s Health Program committed to providing weekly onsite clinics, which were later increased to twice weekly. This enabled nursing staff to provide advice and care to young pregnant women and parents, and their children, who may otherwise have had little contact with relevant health services. They also provided

‘Before the partnership it was hard to access the kids, difficult to manage them as they don’t hang out in areas where the services are – it was a real bonus to be able to take the service to them.’ Kathy May, Health Directorate – Women, Youth and Children Community Health
referrals to off campus health professionals, maintained individual health records of students and their children, and advised teaching staff on a range of health and welfare issues. The College provided space, resources and logistic support for the on campus clinic and prepared personalised learning programs for students which took into account the circumstances and history of each student, as well as the curriculum requirements of the regional educational authority. Teaching staff also consulted the community health partners on health and nutritional issues that often needed to be taken into account in the preparation of individual learning plans.

The impact of winning an award
The money that came with winning the award has enabled the College and the health service to maintain their unique partnership and continue to offer services to students who would otherwise not have sought the help they required. The funding has also provided the health service with a dedicated space at the College and allowed them to run two fully staffed clinics per week at CCCares. The health staff have an opportunity to see the babies and monitor their health as a result of the program operating at the College, and have now been able to include an immunisation service for their clients. Many of the young parents go to CCCares because they feel safe, they can get appropriate referrals, have their health monitored and gain easy access to other agencies. The health service is now in a position to be able to provide effective services to these vulnerable people who would not have been able to complete their education without CCCares.

The College had always been proud of the program, but were even more positive about the valuable work they were doing after winning the award. External recognition of their client group, who are traditionally marginalised and regarded with negativity, as being worthy of the partnership effort gave everyone involved a tremendous boost. The students felt valued and experienced a strong sense of pride in their achievements as a result of the national exposure they received after winning the award. Students were given the opportunity to engage in TV interviews and to generate positive publicity for the College and the partnership with the health services.

The award money has allowed the College to expand the services offered in the program and has attracted the interest of other groups around town. There is now a shared client approach to the partnership. Community support has been extended and there are more people who donate services, time and resources to the College. The local NAB bank manager and other NAB employees regularly come to the school to support the students and they come as community members not just because of their positions in the bank. The national recognition that came with winning the award elevated external awareness of the program and politicians around Australia started to take notice; it became a point of pride in the community to have such a wonderful opportunity available for these young people.
Centenary Heights State High School/Toowoomba Flexi School (QLD)

2010 National Impact Award winner

The Flexi School provides alternative education for students who have become disengaged with mainstream schooling. The alternative stream operates off-site and has an annual intake of 65-70 students. Since winning a NAB Schools First award there has been a long waiting list to get into the Flexi School. A critical element and one of the guiding principles of the Flexi School’s success has been its relationship with the community and its community partnerships. The partnership with the Toowoomba Older Men’s Network (TOMNET), Rotary East Toowoomba and the University of Southern Queensland was created to provide educational opportunities for students facing significant social and emotional disadvantage.

The partnership

The main objective of the partnership was to promote connectedness among two marginalised groups in the community – disengaged youth and retired older men. The partners planned to provide increased employment pathways and post-school options for young people and to establish peer support networks and services to older men to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

The partnership has been successful for a number of reasons, with Jo Brennan, Head of Department at Flexi, and Glen Postle, CEO of TOMNET, agreeing that the main reason is the collaborative nature of the partnership. Regular meetings, knowledge building and expertise sharing have been very important to the effectiveness of the partnership and taking note of feedback from parents, students and partners helps them to stay on target so that everyone benefits.

‘Research has found that solutions to community issues involving youth, require involvement from all parts of society – public, volunteer and private sectors.’ Jo Brennan, Head of Dept, Flexi School

The partners developed a mentoring program to support students who are at risk of dropping out of formal education in Years 10, 11 and 12. There are about 50 TOMNET members who volunteer their time to assist the school’s four teaching staff and the students, by sharing their expertise to re-engage students with learning. The partnership has provided the older men with the opportunity to engage in individual peer support, enhance their social networks and gain a sense of belonging in the community.

The TOMNET members work with the students on a weekly basis, providing mentoring and support for students, improving their numeracy and literacy and undertaking specific projects. They also support the program financially through donations to purchase equipment, improve the facilities and provide food for students. The ‘Mentoring a Mate’ program focuses on academic support and building relationships, while ‘Vegetable Plot to Plate’ and ‘Nurture with Nutrition’ focus on construction and gardening skills, combined with healthy eating tips. The activities undertaken differ from year to year, based on the needs and interests of the students, resources available and the skills, knowledge and abilities of the volunteer mentors.
The impact of winning an award

Winning the National Award and the recognition that goes with it, has created a strong sense of pride, not only in the people involved, but in Toowoomba’s wider community. The students felt that they were part of something special and they were proud of their school. The school’s profile was enhanced, more people became involved in the program and the community has contributed more resources. The partnership has generated a stronger connection with other community groups and the students have benefited from access to more people who have the resources and the capacity to improve the program.

The Flexi School used part of the award money to buy a bus which is shared between the school and TOMNET. Transporting students to and from venues around the town to attend courses or activities had previously been a problem, but having their own bus has meant they can plan activities off-site. The bus has given the TOMNET members more mobility and independence.

The award money has allowed the Flexi School to make the curriculum more interactive and engaging by building in real life learning and they now have the funds to access short courses. The money also meant the Flexi School was able to employ a social worker to work with the students and the older men and help them develop coping strategies to deal with issues such as depression. TOMNET have gained publicity for their hard work and the community is much more aware of what they are doing.

The Flexi School often had difficulty engaging parents, since the school caters for marginalised students, often those who are homeless, without family support or social networks. After the partnership won the National Award, a group of people from the community banded together to create ‘Friends of Flexi’ with the aim of being involved with the school in some way. The group is made up of around 20 volunteers who meet regularly and operate as an advisory group with the ability to see things from a different perspective from the teachers at the school.

The Flexi School operates in a building donated by the council and previously experienced some financial concern over how to keep the school running. The award funding has reduced the financial pressure on the school and allowed them to re-focus attention on programs for students and the partnership’s core business. TOMNET is now working with NAB to access more sustainable funding from other sources to build a Mentoring Hub which will eventually be a model for other communities.

Since winning the National Award, there has been an increase in the level of interest in the Flexi School and other schools are visiting to see an example of best practice in the field of alternative education. Friends of Flexi are putting together a practical guide for publication so other communities can benefit from the success of the partnership and develop their own models. The award money provided the Flexi School with the opportunity to be innovative and to experiment.

“These sorts of programs lie at the heart of community development. Community capacity building is the ability of individuals, organisations and communities to manage their own affairs and to work collectively to foster and sustain positive change.” Darryl Bates, Coordinator, Regional Community Development
Claremont College (TAS)

2009 State Impact Award winner

Claremont College is a senior secondary government school for students in Years 11 and 12 situated in Hobart’s northern suburbs. The student body of 855 day and distance students are drawn from predominantly working class families who often travel long distances to get to school. The school wanted to encourage more students from associate high schools to enrol in Claremont College after they finished Year 10. The College partnered with the local construction industry to develop a program that would increase the number of students enrolling in the College to start year 11.

The partnership

In Term 1 2007, the College became involved in the youthBUILD project. This program was conceived partly in response to the State’s low retention rates from Years 10 to 12, but also in response to a critical skills shortage in the Tasmanian construction industry. The skills shortage reflected young people’s reluctance to enter the construction industry.

The youthBUILD program operates every day of the school year and students are bussed to the school from up to 30kms away. Local feeder schools pay a fee to Claremont College as there is no government funding for this program. The College also relies on industry funds to maintain the program. Four teachers and sixteen Year 10 students participate for one day each week, so that in any one week 80 students pass through the program.

‘Many kids are high risk; they are not easy [to teach] and not academic, these are kids who would otherwise be overlooked by employers. This program provides them with a practical option. It is very hands on and highly regarded by industry.’ Stuart Clues, Housing Industry Association

The program is run at an off-campus facility where the students undertake a comprehensive induction program covering topics such as occupational health and safety, hand and power tool operations, program rights and responsibilities and construction industry awareness. Students develop their employability skills and hone their practical skills by engaging in real world projects, such as constructing items that form part of the commercial inventory of some Housing Industry Association members and completing community projects for outside organisations. YouthBUILD enables students to have the opportunity to experience work in the construction industry and develop closer links with their local senior secondary colleges.

‘The reason the whole thing was set up was to help kids decide what they wanted to do. We are now reaching a broader range of kids who are able to make informed decisions about their futures.’ Jim Ransom, Claremont College
The impact of winning an award

The partnership between Claremont College and HIA, and the youthBUILD project that they developed, would not have been able to continue without the Award prize money. Winning a State Impact Award ensured the partnership could remain viable and develop into a sustainable project.

Schools from further afield became interested in the program, but the cost of transporting them to the College was prohibitive. The award money enabled Claremont College to purchase a bus to transport students in outlying areas to the program facility. The bus has also allowed students greater access to the community to engage in various projects. Through the youthBUILD program students from feeder high schools have been given an insight into what is available at Claremont College and about 60 per cent of the local Year 10s are now enrolling in Year 11 and entering a trade.

The students have been provided with a fantastic opportunity to increase their post-school options and work with quality trades people and products. The community benefits from youthBUILD through students sharing their skills and completing work in the community. Some of the community projects undertaken by the students include building a large rack for the sailing club, shelving for the local footy club, and cupboards for some other community groups.

The award funding has had a flow-on effect at the College and there are now more possibilities to expand and develop the project. The College has formed strong links with the training and building industry construction board and this has provided the partnership with an ongoing source of funding for staffing. One of the reasons why youthBUILD has received so much industry support is because the stakeholders can see the immediate benefits for students.

Staff and students at the College exhibited a great deal of pride in the youthBUILD project. After being awarded a State Award in a national awards program, the College has gained significant attention for its successful partnership, which has greatly enhanced College pride.

‘[We have] so many certificates to say that this is a national program, and this gives the students the idea that the program is important, not just because the school says so but a lot of other people say so too.’ Jim Ransom, Claremont College

The students enjoy participating in a program that is known across Australia and teachers are pleased to have their project recognised on a national level and strongly endorsed by an external source.

‘The biggest complaint about students from most employers is their low literacy and poor work ethic. After they participate in this program the industry looks at them and is amazed. Together, we have helped 50 kids go from unemployable to being employed.’ Stuart Clues, Housing Industry Association
Part two: NAB Schools First 2012 Applicants’ Survey

Part two contains an analysis of the findings from an online survey sent to all schools applying for a NAB Schools First Award in 2012. The purpose of this research was to identify the impact that the Awards are having on schools and their partnerships. The survey consisted of six questions (Appendix B). Applicants were asked to indicate the level of influence the Awards program had on particular aspects of their school–community partnership.

Applicants’ responses were dependent on the category of award for which they were applying – Seed Funding or an Impact Award. Respondents from both categories indicated that the process of applying for an award had encouraged them to think more strategically about their partnership (Appendix C).

- 84 per cent of Impact respondents and 91 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the process of applying for an award had influenced them to ‘think more creatively about partnering’.
- 79 per cent of Impact respondents and 77 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the Awards had helped them to monitor and review their partnerships.
- 68 per cent of Impact respondents and 74 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the process of applying for an award had influenced the way they collect and record student data.

Respondents

Altogether 725 applications were received in 2012: 240 Impact and 485 Seed Funding Awards. Surveys were sent to 689 project partnerships (excluding incomplete, duplicate or withdrawn applications from schools). Of the 379 survey responses received, 126 were for Impact partnerships and 253 were for Seed Funding partnerships. The respondents were broken down into sectors with 293 being from government, 42 Catholic and 41 Independent.

- 57 were P-12 schools
- 137 were primary schools
- 148 were secondary schools
- 22 were special schools
- 15 classified themselves as ‘other’. This included schools with specific year groups, such as P-10, Years 11-12, or Years 4-12.

Numbers of students

The 126 Impact survey respondents show that just under 57,000 students have participated in their school–community partnership programs. For the schools seeking Seed Funding around 46,100 students are expected to be participating in the partnership projects for which funding was sought. This number has not been reported consistently, so cannot be used as an accurate reflection of the number of students affected by the Awards. Variables included: differing time spans of partnerships; schools not knowing numbers if teachers have moved on; confusion over number of students participating, enrolled in the program or involved in some other way; and inaccurate or vague reporting.
Analysis

The Awards are having a significant impact on the way schools are approaching their current partnerships and partnering in general. The most commonly reported influence for Impact and Seed Funding survey respondents was ‘thinking more creatively about partnering’ (84 per cent and 91 per cent respectively). As a direct result of exposure to the Awards a high proportion of these schools have been encouraged to think differently about partnering. This suggests there are elements of the program – such as financial incentive, website, forums and workshops, high profile promotion, feedback letters – that are contributing to schools being more strategic and innovative in their thinking about who to partner with and how.

The area where the Awards appear to be having least influence is in ‘using research to identify student need’ (59 per cent of Impact survey respondents and 69 per cent of Seed Funding respondents). However, this represents a noticeable growth when compared with the inaugural year of the Awards when few applicants were using research to help them identify student need.

An important finding from the survey is the high proportion of Seed Funding applicants (83 per cent) that have been influenced by the Awards to think about the sustainability of their partnerships. This suggests these schools are already thinking about how to build robust partnerships from the beginning, something that was not evident in many of the 2009 Seed Funding applications.

Of the 379 respondents, 126 provided supplementary comments. These responses reveal a range of ways in which the Awards have influenced school–community partnerships. The Impact survey responses confirm that the Awards are having a positive impact on schools (regardless of their success in applying for an award).

Most significant influences

The Awards are influencing schools in key ways. Perhaps the most striking influence is in encouraging schools to think more creatively and strategically about their partnerships and partnering. The applicant comments reveal that there are two areas in particular that have had a significant influence on schools: ‘encouraging greater reflection’ and ‘more creative thinking about partnering’.

Encouraging reflection

Involvement in the Awards has encouraged schools to think more about their partnerships and projects. A key impetus for this reflection appears to be the application process itself. Below are some of the comments made by respondents.

‘The [Awards] submission was an excellent exercise in letting us review ideas, goals and programs of the partnership ... the chance of [winning an award] to achieve our goals has really motivated people to think about what could be achieved with the partnership.’ Impact survey respondent

‘Just completing the application has really crystallised the value of partnerships between the community and our school for me.’ Seed Funding survey respondent

‘NAB Schools First made us re-think and refocus on our partnership and moved us from being a bit casual about it and taking it a little for granted’. Impact survey respondent

‘As we have not yet been successful in [winning an award], the major impact of the awards program was to help us recognise the success of our program. We knew the program was having an impact, however in pulling together the application we collected stronger evidence to support this.’ Base and global survey respondents

‘Our partnership was well-established before we became aware of the Awards. [They do], however, make us reflect on more concrete findings and our ongoing approach to the partnership.’ Impact survey respondent

Analysis

The Awards are having a significant impact on the way schools are approaching their current partnerships and partnering in general. The most commonly reported influence for Impact and Seed Funding survey respondents was ‘thinking more creatively about partnering’ (84 per cent and 91 per cent respectively). As a direct result of exposure to the Awards a high proportion of these schools have been encouraged to think differently about partnering. This suggests there are elements of the program – such as financial incentive, website, forums and workshops, high profile promotion, feedback letters – that are contributing to schools being more strategic and innovative in their thinking about who to partner with and how.
‘Th[e] process has made us realise how much we already do as a partnership. It has led to greater communication between the partners involved which in turn has led to greater opportunities for students and the wider school community.’ Seed Funding survey respondent

‘Most importantly, it has focused my thinking on what I am doing and why. It has shaped my thinking and made me critically review and develop some vague ideas into definite goals. I found that the harder I looked at my program and reasons to be considered for an award, the more opportunities kept presenting themselves as to how I could improve on what I was doing.’ Seed Funding survey respondent

**Encouraging creative thinking**

Respondents reported greater confidence in pursuing innovative ideas and programs.

‘After attending a NAB Schools First forum, the biggest impact is how we think creatively about partnering. Since attending, we now approach industry to add depth and value to our original community partnership. Writing the [application] has indirectly given us a marketing document to approach industry with. Attending the forum alerted us to the partnership brokers which we did not know existed. Accessing the knowledge bank has provided inspiration and allowed us to think laterally with our community partner.’ Impact survey respondent

‘[The NAB Schools First] project has helped us to think more creatively about how our project could evolve into even better outcomes for people with disabilities.’ Impact survey respondent

‘The NAB Schools First program has enabled the partnership to develop opportunities that are sustainable and creative.’ Impact survey respondent

‘What the [Awards] application allowed us to do was to identify a need within our school, brainstorm solutions and approach community groups who were willing to be involved. So already community links are ... established and being utilised.’ Seed Funding survey respondent

‘By preparing an application we tend to review the outcome of our past projects much more and we plan future projects better than we might if we did not do this.’ Impact survey respondent

**Other influences**

The application process has given schools the opportunity to review their partnerships and improve data collection. Taking schools through the application to address each of the criteria would be a useful exercise for schools to be able to strengthen their partnerships.

The following responses sum this up:

‘I can state categorically that the NAB Schools First Awards program enabled us to dream, to envisage and research partnership possibilities.’

‘The application process has had a big impact. The student need was already there, but the NAB Schools First Awards will enable us to continue to use research to identify and respond to changing student needs when our project commences and reshapes our school.’

‘Don’t underestimate the importance and power of [the Awards] in galvanising positive educational change through school–community partnerships. Your funding opportunity shines as a wonderful catalyst for affirmative action.’

‘Writing the [application] has indirectly given us a marketing document to approach industry with. Attending the [NAB Schools First] forum alerted us to the partnership brokers which we did not know existed. Accessing the knowledge bank has provided inspiration and allowed us to think laterally with our community partner.’
**Impact**
Schools were asked to report on how the NAB Schools First Awards influenced or affected their partnerships during each stage from planning to evaluating to sustaining.

**Using research to identify student need**
Fifty-nine per cent of Impact respondents and 69 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the Awards had encouraged them to use research to help identify their student need to a moderate or major extent.

**Planning and setting up the partnership**
Fifty-eight per cent of Impact respondents and 80 per cent of Seed Funding respondents indicated the Awards had influenced how they went about planning and setting up their partnership projects to a moderate or major extent. Given that Impact applicants have already established partnerships, it is not surprising there are more Seed Funding applicants reporting an influence on initial planning.

**Collecting data on student outcomes**
Sixty-eight per cent of Impact respondents and 74 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the Awards have influenced the way they collect and record student data to a moderate or major extent.

**Managing the partnership**
Sixty-seven per cent of Impact and 80 per cent of Seed Funding respondents indicated they have been influenced in the way they manage their partnerships to a moderate or major extent.

**Sustaining the partnership**
Seventy-four per cent of Impact and 83 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the Awards have influenced the way they plan to sustain their partnerships. This is a higher proportion of respondents than for either managing or setting up partnerships.

**Reviewing the partnership**
Seventy-nine per cent of Impact and 77 per cent of Seed Funding respondents reported that the Awards had helped them in reviewing their partnerships.

**Thinking more creatively about partnering**
Eighty-four per cent of Impact respondents and 91 per cent of Seed Funding respondents indicated that the Awards had helped them think more creatively about their partnering.
Conclusion

ACER’s findings show that the NAB Schools First Awards continue to have a significant impact on school–community partnerships throughout Australia. Schools who have won an award have recorded tangible benefits to students, the school and the wider community as a direct result of receiving the award money. The schools who applied for an award in 2012 have indicated that the process of applying has provided them with the means to think about the strengths of their partnerships and ways of developing them further.
Appendix A

**Descriptive Statistics**

A secure online survey was administered to award winning schools from 2009–11, comprising 37 questions including a combination of likert-scale items and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed for respondents to provide greater detail and insight into their own respective partnership(s) and to elaborate on responses.

Fewer 2009 winning schools responded – 43 out of 68 Impact Award recipients (70 per cent) and 9 out of 20 Seed Funding recipients (45 per cent). These schools received their awards in the first year of NAB Schools First. From 2010, 52 out of 67 Impact Award recipients (77 per cent) responded and 25 out of 40 Seed Funding Award recipients (62 per cent) responded. There was a much higher response rate from the 2011 recipients, 48 out of 60 Impact Award recipients (80 per cent) responded and 43 out of 50 Seed Funding Award recipients (86 per cent) responded. It was not unexpected that more 2011 winning schools responded to the survey than 2009 or 2010, as 2011 winning schools are more likely to have a stronger recollection of the establishment of their partnership than respondents having to recall events from three years ago.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 1** Number of survey respondents by Award type and year won award

Figure 2 shows the extent to which respondents reported winning a NAB Schools First Award helped meet their partnership objectives.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Figure 2** Extent to which winning an award helped meet partnership objectives by Award type
Respondents were asked to identify one main objective of their school community partnership. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the five broad themes that respondents main objective fell under.

![Figure 3 Main objectives of school–community partnerships by Award type](image)

Respondents were asked about the extent to which winning an award has benefited their students in the areas of numeracy, literacy, overall academic performance and self-esteem.

![Figure 4 Extent of non-monetary benefits to students after school won an award by Award type](image)
Many respondents, both Impact and Seed Funding, reported winning an award had benefited the wider community ‘to a major extent’.

Figure 5  Extent to which winning an award has benefited the wider community by Award type

Schools were asked what they have been able to do with the award money.

Figure 6  Things schools would not have been able to do if not for receiving award money
Respondents were asked what they spent their award money on. Figure 7 provides the main categories that purchased items fell within.

**Figure 7** Type of equipment award money has been spent on by Award type

Among Impact Award winning schools the most frequently cited types of books and classroom support materials purchased included ‘subject specialist materials’ and ‘electronic/technology’ based material. ‘General reading books’ were most commonly cited by Seed Funding Award respondents.

**Figure 8** Type of books or classroom support materials award money has been spent on by Award type
Figure 9 shows that recipients of an Impact Award were more likely to have spent some of their award money on infrastructure. The most frequently cited infrastructure items included outdoor structures and school refurbishments.

Among recipients of an Impact Award the highest proportion of staff were employed in roles involving coordination and curriculum delivery. Among Seed Funding Award recipients staff were employed in ‘support’ roles, including classroom support, teacher support and ICT support, followed by coordination and service delivery.
Schools were asked a series of questions related to the use of their award money external to their school. Overall, 84 (41 per cent) respondents reported having spent some of their award money on providing professional training.

![Figure 11: Type of professional training provided to staff by Award type](image)

It is not always clear the extent to which staff benefits are aligned to the NAB Schools First initiative. ‘Increasing expertise (general)’, ‘specific subject knowledge’ and ‘general professional development’ are broad themes that do not lend themselves to a particular focus. It was expected that a higher proportion of respondents would have provided a response that fell within the category of ‘program delivery training’. This would have enhanced the reliability of staff training being aligned to the outcomes of the school’s NAB Schools First initiative.

![Figure 12: Difference staff professional training has made to student outcomes by Award type](image)
Of respondents who won an award in 2009, the most helpful aspects in building or sustaining their partnership was ‘positive media coverage’, followed by ‘attendance at a NAB Schools First event to celebrate their award’. Only 22 per cent of 2009 respondents felt that the support of NAB volunteers was helpful, but this aspect of the program was in its early stages in 2009, and 2010 respondents reported the most benefit when this program was well underway.

Figure 13  Extent to which winning an award had been most helpful in building or sustaining the partnership

Respondents were provided with seven examples of possible follow-on benefits their school may have experienced as a result of winning an award. Overall, schools reported having experienced positive flow-on benefits.

Figure 14  Flow-on benefits school has experienced as a result of winning an award by Award type
Overall, nearly 60 per cent of respondents believed winning an award increased the sustainability of their partnership ‘to a major extent’; this result is not surprising. The highest proportion of respondents irrespective of Award type reporting ‘to a major extent’ was in 2011 (Impact: 70 per cent; Seed Funding: 63 per cent). In contrast respondents who won in 2009 reporting ‘to a major extent’ was much lower (Impact: 53 per cent; Seed Funding: 38 per cent). This result may be explained by the fact that to ascertain the sustainability of a program requires time and cannot be accurately gauged over 12 months. Respondents who won a NAB Schools First Award in 2009 have had three years to observe sustainability and are better positioned to accurately assess sustainability of their initiative.

Figure 15  Extent to which schools believed winning an award increased the sustainability of their partnership

NOTE: percentage numbers need to be interpreted with a degree of caution due to small counts.
Appendix B

Survey sent to Impact Award applicants 2012

1. What is the full name of your school?

2. In total, about how many students have participated in your partnership project since it began?

3. About how many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students have participated in your partnership project since it began?

4. About how many students from a Language Other Than English (LOTE) background have participated in your partnership project since it began?

5. To what extent has the NAB Schools First program influenced how you go about your partnership in relation to each of the following: (please click on the appropriate box)
   a. Using research to identify student need
   
   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   b. Planning and setting up your partnership

   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   c. Collecting data on student outcomes

   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   d. Managing the partnership

   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   e. Sustaining your partnership

   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   f. Reviewing your partnership

   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   g. Thinking more creatively about partnering

   Not at all  
   To a minor extent  
   To a moderate extent  
   To a major extent

   h. Other [Please explain]
Survey sent to Seed Funding Award applicants 2012

1. What is the full name of your school?

2. In total, about how many students do you expect to participate in your partnership project in the first 12 months?

3. About how many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students will participate in your project in the first 12 months?

4. About how many students from a Language Other Than English (LOTE) background will participate in your project in the first 12 months?

5. To what extent has the NAB Schools First program influenced how you go about your partnership in relation to each of the following: (please click on the appropriate box)

   a. Using research to identify student need
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   b. Planning and setting up your partnership
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   c. Collecting data on student outcomes
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   d. Managing the partnership
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   e. Sustaining your partnership
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   f. Reviewing your partnership
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   g. Thinking more creatively about partnering
      Not at all   To a minor extent   To a moderate extent   To a major extent

   h. Other [Please explain]
Appendix C

Figure 1 shows the percentage of 2012 Impact survey respondents who reported that the Awards had an influence on the way they went about partnering, while Figure 2 shows the percentage of 2012 Seed Funding survey respondents who reported an influence.

![Figure 1: Extent to which the NAB Schools First Awards have influenced 2012 Impact Award survey respondents](image1)

![Figure 2: Extent to which the NAB Schools First Awards have influenced 2012 Seed Funding Award survey respondents](image2)