



## Start a Community Kitchen at your Early Years Centre!

A Community Kitchen is a group of people who meet on a regular basis to plan, cook and share healthy, affordable meals. They can be run in any community venue or early years centre that has a kitchen, and be held for anyone including children, families, staff or the wider community.

Because every early years centre is different, there is no 'one way' or 'right way' to run a Community Kitchen. However, there are three key features that are essential:

- 1 They are held on a regular basis (usually weekly or fortnightly)
- 2 All participants are involved in planning, preparing and cooking food
- 3 All food prepared is shared among participants and/or members of their household (meals are not given away or sold)

These key features ensure the participants learn essential food skills and take pride and ownership over the prepared food (rather than it just being given to them).

Community Kitchens in early year's settings:

- provide regular opportunities for children and families to get together
- support children to start developing knowledge and a love of healthy food through touch, smell and taste
- enable families to develop or improve food knowledge and skills. Community Kitchens can support literacy and numeracy, meal planning, budgeting, food preparation and cooking skills
- enable families and children to develop communication, interpersonal, teamwork and leadership skills
- builds confidence and self-esteem
- improves access to healthy food
- improves motivation to cook at home, and reduce reliance on takeaway and fast food
- are owned and driven by the community, for the community



## Use the Community Kitchen model to enhance existing programs and initiatives

If your centre does not have the time and resourcing available to run a stand-alone Community Kitchen, that is ok! Your centre may have programs already in place (cooking group, gardening group, breakfast program etc.) that can be modified to include some of the Community Kitchen features, and reap some of the benefits.

The Community Kitchen key features that can be adopted by existing or initiatives are:

1. Held on a regular basis (usually weekly or fortnightly)
2. All participants are actively involved in planning, preparing and cooking of the food

### Examples:



An early years centre is running a breakfast program once a month for children and families. Staff are responsible for preparing and serving breakfast. Could this breakfast program be tweaked so that children and families are involved in the planning, preparation and serving of breakfast?



An early years centre has an edible garden program which is used a few times a term. Explore if there are ways children, families and staff can learn how to prepare and cook food from the garden.



An early years centre is interested in starting a Community Kitchen for their community, but they have limited time and resourcing. Could the centre develop a partnership with another local organisation to run the Community Kitchen for them using the centres kitchen facilities?



An early years centre runs activities for families. The centre does not have a kitchen, but there is a multi-purpose room with tables. Could families come together on a regular basis to plan, prepare and share foods that do not require full cooking facilities?



An early years centre is interested running a Community Kitchen for staff, but do not have the time or resourcing to make it a regular occurrence. Could staff come together once a term to prepare, cook and share a meal together as a team building activity?

**For more info, and FREE templates and resources visit:**

[www.communitykitchens.org.au](http://www.communitykitchens.org.au)