

Becoming a 26TEN Community

Lifting adult literacy levels in Tasmania

Part 1 of 2

THE 26TEN COMMUNITIES GUIDE



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1. Introduction

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for anyone who wants to help lift literacy levels in their community, and would like to work together with others in a systematic way to do that.

ABOUT LITERACY

Literacy, in this guide, refers to the skills of reading, writing, doing basic maths, using everyday technology, and solving problems. In Tasmania, we know that around one in every two adults among us struggles with one or more literacy skills, such as:

- reading books, newspapers, magazines and brochures
- obtaining information from bus timetables, or reading charts and graphs
- adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and calculating percentages
- reading and interpreting medicine labels, information and advice
- speaking and listening to obtain information, get a service or build a relationship
- using computers and other technology
- working through day-to-day challenges and their consequences.

ABOUT 26TEN

26TEN refers to the 26 letters of the alphabet we use for reading and writing, and the ten numbers we use for counting – the tools for literacy. 26TEN is a growing movement of people committed to improving adult literacy in Tasmania.

Everyone's efforts are guided by the Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan. The overarching aim of this plan is:

For Tasmanian adults to have the literacy skills they need to participate fully in their family life, the community, learning and employment, and contribute to Tasmania's economic prosperity.

As awareness about literacy grows, more and more Tasmanians are tapping into support programs. Some are taking their first steps by learning to read a letter from a loved one or write a reply. Others are building on the skills needed to enrol in and successfully complete training courses in all sorts of areas, from community services to construction.

Maree Taylor's story

Maree Taylor decided to make a difference to her life by doing something about her reading skills. She turned to her local LINC for help after she had pulled out of a job interview because she was embarrassed. "I wanted to do it for myself and get somewhere in life, to actually prove to myself that I can do it. I want to get a good job and walk in there confident and think, I can fill out this form, no problems," she said. Since then, she has been making a difference for others by talking about that personal challenge, as part of the 26TEN awareness campaign.

For more stories about people like Maree, go to the 26TEN website
www.26ten.tas.gov.au/join-26ten

26TEN runs a members program to help build the 26TEN network and make support more widely available. Any group or organisation is welcome to join. The first step is to contact the 26TEN Strategy Team for a membership pack. They can explain the benefits of membership and help with completing a 26TEN member action plan.

26TEN Strategy Team
Freecall 1300 00 2610
email@26ten.tas.gov.au
www.26ten.tas.gov.au

ABOUT 26TEN COMMUNITIES

26TEN Communities are places where people are working together in a coordinated way to lift literacy levels. Some of the settings where they can work well are local government areas, industry groups and large organisations.

Each 26TEN Community is striving to achieve three main outcomes:

- 1. Everyone knows about adult literacy**
 - Literacy is talked about openly in the community and is seen as a valuable skill that can be learned.

- 2. Everyone is supported to improve their literacy skills**
 - People can easily tap into programs and services that will help them.

- 3. Everyone communicates information clearly**
 - All information is presented in ways that people can readily understand.

26TEN has supported a number of pilot projects to come up with ways to lift literacy levels across whole communities. Gradually, a good bank of knowledge and resources is being drawn together. In developing this guide, the experiences of two communities in particular have been invaluable. Their stories are on the following pages.

Story 1. Understanding your community and making a plan – Circular Head

The Circular Head Education and Training Consultative Committee (CHETCC) is a committee of the Circular Head Council. Members include people from Council, LINC Tasmania, business and industry, local schools, TasTAFE and the University of Tasmania. Basing their calculations on the Tasmanian data of around one in two people struggling with literacy, the committee estimated that between 3,000 and 4,000 people in the Circular Head community might benefit from support to improve their literacy skills.

In 2013, using funding provided under the 26TEN Investment Fund, a small working group set about developing a five-year plan to improve literacy skills in the area. The group worked with a consultant with the aim of learning how literacy was viewed across the community. They spoke to a range of people, including clients of literacy support services, volunteer tutors, business people, school students, parents of young children, and people who know their part of the community well but aren't necessarily service providers. They considered a number of questions, such as:

- Is literacy an issue in Circular Head?
- Does it matter? How important is it?
- Do people talk about literacy? If not, what stops them?
- How can we encourage people to improve their literacy?
- Do people know about the support programs available?
- How might we mobilise the whole community to take action?

Methods of consultation included one-to-one interviews with people, small focus groups, and a community forum that brought together service providers and community members. At the forum, the content of the proposed Community Literacy Plan was explained and participants were asked to make comments about it and offer other ideas. Overall, the community engagement process involved approximately 100 people.

The working group also researched current evidence on improving adult literacy levels, looking in particular at what helps change community attitudes and behaviours in positive ways. They also analysed demographic data to develop a more detailed picture of the age, gender, cultural, educational and workforce profile of the Circular Head community.

The *Circular Head Community Literacy Plan 2014-2019: Learn for Life* contains many creative ideas from local people about engaging and motivating people, including:

- Ways of changing community values about learning.
- How to engage more children and parents in early learning programs.
- How to fully engage more students in years 11 and 12 and literacy programs
- How to encourage more young people and adults to continue to learn and to improve their literacy after Year 12.

There is now a rich pool of information and ideas that will help the community put its literacy plan into action over the next five years. Visit the Circular Head Council website at www.circularhead.tas.gov.au for more information.

Story 2. Raising awareness about adult literacy – Burnie

In July 2013, Burnie City Council set up a 12-month 26TEN Demonstration Project that was overseen by a Steering Group of people who work in schools, vocational education, business, job skills programs, human services, LINC Tasmania, literacy support programs and local government. A small Working Group from the Council and LINC Tasmania managed day-to-day organising, while volunteers were recruited to help out with various activities.

The main focus of the project was on raising awareness about the importance of adult literacy and reducing the stigma that people with low literacy sometimes encounter. Wherever possible, the Steering Group linked adult literacy to existing projects in Burnie that aim to create jobs and help people develop work skills.

A short 'call to action' was developed to encourage people to seek support themselves and encourage family, friends and colleagues to do the same. Alongside this, further information was provided through specific events and activities, including:

- Information breakfasts and lunches for business operators ranging from automotive to retail, and for job service agencies and non-government organisations.
- A community event where an empty shop was taken over for a day. People were encouraged to pop in and meet people who run literacy support programs, and to engage in fun literacy-related activities. Local radio broadcast from the shop and ran competitions with prizes related to literacy. Volunteers stood at various points in the city centre and talked to people about literacy and 26TEN. All up, about 200 people took part.
- Plain English workshops for businesses and non-government organisations.
- The development of an app called 'How to hold the 26TEN chat', which gives tips on raising the subject of literacy with people.
- Advertisements on local radio stations that reassured listeners that adults can improve their literacy skills and that 26TEN offers an opportunity to get the tools to do this. The ads had a light, humorous style and copies of the audio clips and scripts are available from 26TEN.

Over the 12 months of the project, the number of people in Burnie who have requested support and set up a literacy learning plan with a tutor has steadily increased. The working group have offered these tips for people doing similar projects.

- Make sure you have enough people, time and funds to plan your project well.
- Be clear about literacy problems in your community and what you're trying to do.
- Think about who – individuals and groups – you need to work with to really make a difference.
- Remember that 'word of mouth' works powerfully in small communities.
- Link literacy to other learning and training initiatives and be ready for increased demand for literacy support programs.

HOW THE GUIDE IS SET OUT

The guide is in two parts:

Part 1: The 26TEN Communities Guide

Part 2: The 26TEN Communities Toolbox

In Part 1, we've set out five main steps for you to follow to become a 26TEN Community. Under each step are suggested actions to take. There are also links to further information, and references to practical tools that you might find helpful.

Part 2 is where you'll find the tools all gathered in one place. Keep in mind that they are just suggestions. Don't feel you have to use them – you may have your own that already work well for you.

HELP TO GET YOU STARTED

As well as this guide, there are plenty of people who can help you by telephone and face to face. Talk to the 26TEN Strategy Team if you have any questions. As well as having a lot of information and resources at their fingertips, they can also put you in touch with people doing similar work to you.

26TEN Strategy Team
Freecall 1300 00 2610
email@26ten.tas.gov.au
www.26ten.tas.gov.au

2. Five Steps to a 26TEN Community

There are five main steps to becoming a 26TEN Community. The first two are about setting up strong foundations and the other three are about the actual work of lifting literacy levels.

STAGE 1: SETTING UP

- Step 1 Set up a small group to lead the way
- Step 2 Create a plan of action with your community

STAGE 2: MAKING IT HAPPEN

- Step 3 Raise awareness about adult literacy
- Step 4 Support people to develop their literacy skills
- Step 5 Encourage clear communication

You'll find suggested action for each step on the following pages. As you build your 26TEN Community, remember to:

- Take your time. Rolling out this program won't happen overnight. You need to be persistent and see yourself as being in it for the long haul – at least a few years.
- Make sure that everyone in the small lead group works together in a spirit of cooperation. You are important role models within your community and will set the tone for how this work will unfold.
- Tailor this guide to your community, don't try and make your community fit the guide. It's just a guide.
- Pick and choose which of the tips in this guide are likely to work best for your community. You might also have some better ones up your sleeve.
- Keep connected with the 26TEN network and seek help from others while any problems you come across are still small.

Step 1 Set up a small group to lead the way

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

– *Margaret Mead, anthropologist*

SUGGESTED ACTION

1. Form your lead group

- Aim to have about six to eight people in your group who represent the diversity and breadth of your community. Think about gender, age, cultural background, skills, and networks. Also think about different sectors like business, education, healthcare, employment, local government, community organisations, charity groups, sporting clubs and others.
- Ideally, seek people who are able to make a commitment for at least two years.
- See yourselves as coordinators and catalysts for action within the community. Don't try and do everything by yourselves. Make it easy for others to be involved.
- Be hopeful, optimistic and enthusiastic, and foster a sense of urgency to help build momentum.
- Bring in guest speakers to inspire the group and to suggest ideas.
- Be prepared for when people in your lead group need to leave, for example, because they are moving out of town. Have a simple succession plan in place to help make the changeover to a new person happen smoothly.
- Know that you don't need to start from scratch. 26TEN can link you into existing support and resources. Freecall 1300 00 2610 or email@26ten.tas.gov.au.

Tools to help

T1 [Roles and skills of your lead group](#)

T2 [Leadership qualities](#)

T3 [Succession planning](#)

<p>2. Build good foundations for your group's work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be committed to working in partnership with each other. Agree on principles for working together and for making good decisions. • Be upfront about the likely ups and downs ahead. Build in time and opportunities to relax and get to know each other, such as over a meal. Getting together like this can help everyone enjoy the good times and keep going through the hard times. • Recognise that it takes time to build a common language among people with different backgrounds and experiences. Appreciate the shared motivation behind each group member's different efforts. • Make your meetings productive and enjoyable. See them as a way to create opportunities and solve problems together, and to learn from each other. <p>Tools to help</p> <p>T4 Working collaboratively</p> <p>T5 Productive and enjoyable meetings</p>
<p>3. Build a good understanding of literacy among group members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap into the larger 26TEN network for information and insights. Sign your lead group up as a 26TEN member organisation. Encourage other partner organisations in your community to become members too. • Know the different types of literacy support people need, such as one-on-one tutoring, group sessions and structured courses. • Learn more about literacy by reading these documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the 26TEN Annual Report and the Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan (TALAP) are available at www.26ten.tas.gov.au. – <i>Tasmanian Voices</i>, a report on what motivates people to develop literacy and other skills is available from the Publications section at tascoss.org.au. – the Australian Core Skills Framework is available from the Skills section at www.industry.gov.au. – find background literature and other research used to inform Circular Head literacy planning at www.circularhead.tas.gov.au • Get to know what literacy support is available in your area. A list of 26TEN Literacy Support Programs and Services is available on the 26TEN website. • Take part in a 26TEN Literacy Awareness workshop which covers the extent of the issue in Tasmania, the impact of low levels of literacy, and what can done to help. (See Step 3 for more information).

Step 2 Create a plan of action with your community

Use the voice, wisdom and experience of the recipients.

– *Michael McAfee, Collective Impact specialist*

SUGGESTED ACTION

1. View everyone in the community as potential partners with much to offer

- People in your community already have a wide range of strengths and skills. Consider putting together a “map” of your community’s assets to draw on as your literacy work unfolds.
- Make it easy for people to be involved, for example, as supporters, champions or members of working groups.
- When considering who to involve, ask yourselves: “Who makes things happen round here?” Look beyond the obvious community leaders and seek out people who are active within smaller groups in the community.
- Encourage genuinely collaborative community action, while also making it possible for people to be involved in ways that work for them. Some people will be more comfortable working at the local grassroots level, in closer contact with people who want to improve their literacy skills. Others will be more comfortable working at the strategy level, helping to assess the needs across the whole community, planning action, putting together budgets, sourcing funds, and keeping an eye on progress.
- Build a wide network. Set up an initial list or database of people who want to be involved and keep adding to it over time.
- Make sure that people from different parts of your community feel welcome and confident that their voices are being heard. Check in with them about this from time to time.

Tools to help

T6 [Mapping your community’s assets](#)

T7 [Working in partnership with your community](#)

<p>2. Gather basic population information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out approximately how many people there are in your particular 26TEN Community, for example, the population of your local council area, or the number of people working in your organisation or industry. • Where possible, collect more detailed data on the characteristics of people in your community, for example, age, gender, location, employment status, income level, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. • Analyse your data to work out approximately how many people are likely to be interested in improving their literacy skills. Based on state literacy data, this could around 50% of your total adult population. <p>Tools to help</p> <p>T8 Locating data on your community</p> <p>T9 Types and levels of literacy in Tasmania</p>
<p>3. Find interesting and creative ways to involve a lot of different people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out what literacy means to people in your community, and what sort of support they think is needed and would work best. • Talk face to face with as many people as possible, either through individual interviews or focus groups. This will give you a depth of information that will be extremely valuable when planning and running literacy programs. • When you're designing new programs, or adapting existing ones to suit your community, actively involve people who would like to improve their literacy skills. • Identify barriers that might be stopping people seeking help and take action to dismantle them or work around them. • Get to know those people in your community who can engage people who have literacy problems, for example, teachers who meet with parents at school, staff of neighbourhood houses and sporting coaches. • As early as possible, seek out people whose lives are directly affected by low literacy and invite them to get involved. Ask them what they might like to do, or offer them some options, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – telling their story to inspire others – coming along to a community forum – being part of a working group – suggesting ways to connect with different groups.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help build the community’s collective strength by making it as easy as possible for people with low literacy to be involved. In the process, many will build new skills and also get to enjoy the experience of being able to make a difference for their community. <p>Tools to help</p> <p>T10 Consulting your community</p>
<p>4. Develop a plan of action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow a reasonable amount of time to develop a plan suitable for your community (this could take anywhere between 3 and 9 months to do well). • Use the plan to bring together everyone’s mutual efforts. Make sure it provides clear direction, without being either too rigid or too flexible. • Stage the work in your plan so it stays manageable and doesn’t end up feeling overwhelming. • Before putting the plan into action, make sure there is agreement on it within your group. • If you have a lot of volunteers, set up small working groups for specific sections of the plan. Have a member of your lead group manage or at least be closely involved with each one. • Look at examples of plans from other communities, like this one from the Circular Head community under the publications section at www.circularhead.tas.gov.au • Consider drawing on ideas from models for social change like Collective Impact. • If your community is a big one, think about using project management tools to develop your plan, like the templates, guidelines and tips at the Tasmanian Government site www.egovernment.tas.gov.au • Alternatively, you might decide to use a strategic planning approach. <p>Tools to help</p> <p>T11 A model for social change</p> <p>T12 A strategic planning process</p>

<p>5. Identify sufficient financial resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially, gear up for at least 2–3 years and work out what funds you are likely to need. • Factor in research, marketing and promotion costs. • Be creative about raising funds through local efforts, and look for opportunities to combine fundraising with spreading the word about your 26TEN Community. • Get to know what grants are available to help you fund activities. See some examples here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tasmanian government literacy grants www.skills.tas.gov.au – Tasmanian government grant alert register www.dpac.tas.gov.au – Tasmanian community fund grants www.tascomfund.org • Look out for grants and other sources of funding from your local council. Check the Local Government of Tasmania website www.lgat.tas.gov.au for a list of all councils, or contact your own directly.
<p>6. Keep an eye on progress and celebrate achievements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work out what results you want to measure, based on evidence, what is measurable, and what is meaningful to your community. • Find out what 26TEN is measuring and look to where you can match your measures with theirs. • Set milestones with due dates in your plan and check in regularly to see how well you are going in reaching them. • Over time, use the information you are collecting to see patterns of both progress and delay. Where there are problems or barriers, find solutions and quickly put them into action. • Take the time to mark significant milestones along the way. Involve as many people as possible in celebrating your community’s achievements.

Step 3 Raise awareness about adult literacy

Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens.

Bill Clinton, former President of the USA

SUGGESTED ACTION	
1. Collect information about levels of awareness of literacy and 26TEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run an initial community survey. • Do follow-up surveys at regular intervals.
2. Prepare a marketing plan then put it into action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with the 26TEN Strategy Team about their promotional material and how you can adapt it to your own setting and activities. Freecall 1300 00 2610 or email@26ten.tas.gov.au • Drawing on your community research (from Step 2), write a plan that identifies different groups, key messages for each one, and how they are best delivered. • Engage with people where they gather, such as neighbourhood houses, workplaces, sporting clubs and hobby groups. • Hold activities and events where you are listening to people, as well as spreading the word about your 26TEN Community. • Consider some of these ideas: Invite local media to be a partner, set up a stall at local events, set up a Facebook page, set up a website. • Run 26TEN Literacy Awareness Workshops. • Celebrate individual successes, for example, of people in the community who have overcome literacy problems, volunteers who have mentored them, and organisations that are taking an active role in lifting literacy levels among their staff.

Step 4 Support people to develop their literacy skills

Literacy helps us explore our world, shape our ideas, develop our potential, crystallise as people, and ultimately express ourselves as individuals — to sing from our own song sheet.

Quentin Bryce, former Governor-General of Australia

SUGGESTED ACTION	
<p>1. Build and strengthen connections between people who provide services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing on your research into what resources are available (from Step 1), get to know organisations in your area that are providing literacy support. • Develop a local referral guide setting out what specific literacy support is available in your area. For ideas about where to start, see information about statewide services at www.26ten.tas.gov.au. • Make sure there are many places where people can be referred to for the support they need. • Offer opportunities for people from different organisations providing literacy support to meet up and learn about each other's programs. • Encourage people who provide services to work together, share resources and volunteers, and refer to each other. Support these activities with written agreements where this is helpful. • Consider using a "warm referral" approach, where the person seeking support is personally introduced to someone who can help them. This helps put them at ease and also reduces the chances of them getting lost in the system.
<p>2. Involve people from your community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local people to become involved as volunteer tutors. Make sure you set up ongoing support for them, such as regular social catch-ups and the opportunity for further skills development. • Invite local people to help out with promoting 26TEN within their local neighbourhoods and the wider community.
<p>3. Involve workplaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people who work in businesses, community organisations and government departments to find ways to make their workplaces literacy-friendly.

Step 5 Encourage clear communication

If you talk to a person in a language they understand, that goes to their head. If you talk to them in their language, that goes to their heart.

– Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa

SUGGESTED ACTION	
1. Promote an understanding of the value of plain English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out what barriers people face in being willing or able to present information in plain English, for example, limited time, limited skills or concerns about “dumbing down” material. • In your marketing material, include messages about the importance of information being presented clearly, especially for people with low literacy. • Read and become familiar with the 26TEN Guide to Plain English www.26ten.tas.gov.au
2. Promote the wide use of plain English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage staff in organisations who interact with people who may have limited literacy skills to make sure they present all information clearly. • Foster a culture where people are prepared to seek and to give feedback on information that isn't as clear as it could be. • Set up a local group of people with the skills to be able to check other people's documents for clarity. • Provide a list of people who can help groups and organisations translate their information into plain English. • Come up with key points about the importance of plain English that people in your lead group and working groups can use in quick conversations with others.
3. Help people improve their skills in plain English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer 26TEN Plain English workshops to as many people as possible. • Remember that plain English is as much about being clear when speaking as it is about writing clearly.

Finally, remember that there are a number of tools to help you as you become a 26TEN Community. You can find them on the 26TEN website. www.26ten.tas.gov.au