



COMMUNITY TASTER COURSES

TOOLKIT



Community Taster Courses Toolkit

This toolkit is designed for community groups looking to establish or enhance opportunities for community members to engage in learning that is inclusive, positive, memorable, futures-focused and leads to a clear pathway for further learning or work.

The toolkit is set out in four sections and includes templates and resources previously used in taster courses in other communities in Tasmania as part of the Community Learning Pathways Project in 2018 which was a partnership between the University of Tasmania and TasTAFE.

This toolkit will help community groups and organisations to:

- Understand what a taster course is and how it can be useful for local communities
- Explore ways of planning a taster course to suit local needs
- Consider practical needs in designing and delivering a taster course
- Learn from the experiences of other taster course programs delivered in communities in Tasmania
- Access resources and templates to support the design and delivery of a taster course program

Acknowledgements

This toolkit was produced by project staff – Robert Alderson, Leanne Arnott, Kylie Geard and Vicki Dodson – and includes contributions from Nicole Crawford, and staff from TasTAFE, Libraries Tasmania and the Northern Suburbs Community Centre. In addition to the learnings from the project, the toolkit makes use of a range of online resources and information.

July 2019

University of Tasmania

Contents

SECTION 1: WHAT IS A TASTER COURSE?	4
SECTION 2: PLANNING A TASTER COURSE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY	5
Topic 1: Is there a need for a taster course in your community?	5
Topic 2: Who should you be working with?.....	5
Topic 3: Who do you expect to attend the taster course?.....	5
Topic 4: What should participants be able to do after a taster course?.....	6
Topic 5: Where should you deliver a taster course?.....	6
Topic 6: How to structure your taster course.....	6
Topic 7: How to market your taster course.....	8
Topic 8: Who is needed to deliver taster courses?	9
Topic 9: Recruiting Taster Course staff.....	10
Topic 10: How do adults learn?	10
Topic 11: How to develop learning activities.....	11
Topic 12: How much does it cost to run a taster course?.....	13
Topic 13: How to manage expressions of interest.....	13
Topic 14: Learning Pathway Conversations.....	13
Topic 15: How will you know if the taster course has been successful?.....	15
SECTION 3: SAMPLE TASTER COURSE	16
Scoping the need for a taster course.....	16
Taster course structure	17
Intended Learning Outcomes.....	18
Learning activities	18
SECTION 4: USEFUL RESOURCES	20
Example of session plan.....	20
Promotional ideas.....	21
Example reflection worksheets	22

Section 1: What is a taster course?

Taster courses are a short, often free, non-accredited learning opportunity in a given field delivered in a familiar community setting.

The overall topic and contents of a taster course respond to local interests and often local jobs growth areas, such as hospitality and tourism. It is important that each community designs a taster course program that meets local needs and considers the learning needs of people who are likely to participate.

The taster course model developed by the Community Learning Pathways Project was a 6-week program of 2-3 hours once a week in two local community facilities.

Adult and Community Learning is a growing area as people want to expand their knowledge for all different reasons, whether it be a hobby, learning a new skill, or getting back into work.

Learning is not just for school aged people, there are many adults in our communities who would like to carry on with their learning or return to it but in a friendly environment.

Community learning can be a positive use of a community centre and a way of attracting new and repeat users.



Section 2: Planning a taster course for your community

This section includes 15 topics relevant to planning a taster course. You may find some topics more relevant to your context than others.

Topic 1: Is there a need for a taster course in your community?

Taster courses are non-accredited learning opportunities. While many communities have access to a range of accredited courses, such as Certificates 1-4 offered by TasTAFE or other training providers, an opportunity to have a ‘taster’ of further learning or of a given employment sector isn’t available for most people.

In this sense, most communities can benefit from having access to a range of learning opportunities including free tasters that allow people to ‘dip their toe in the water’ before committing to formal learning or pursuing a career change.

Topic 2: Who should you be working with?

If you are interested in setting up your own local taster course, it’s a good idea to work with others who can provide resources, advice, venues, connections or other support. This may be local community centres, training providers, industry representatives or local education and training committees. There may also be people who have experience in delivering training courses in the community who can provide other practical advice.

Talking to potential participants is also a great way to gauge an idea of what would make the taster courses relevant and inviting.

Topic 3: Who do you expect to attend the taster course?

Anyone can benefit from a taster course. Often people who are looking to reengage with learning, such as those who left school early in life or who have been caring for family at home, along with people looking to transfer their existing skills in to a new job sector, would most likely find the opportunity to get a taster of learning or the sector useful.

Many taster course participants will come with a wide range of experiences with education (some good and some bad) and an equally wide range of aspirations that will influence their expectations and experiences in a taster course.

Who are your students?			
Backgrounds/ Prior educational experience	Challenges	Strengths	Why are they doing the course?
Negative/positive experiences with learning?	Family obligations / caring for others	Resilient	Want to change their current situation?
Family/friends might /might not value education or employment?	Mental health difficulties (e.g. anxiety, depression)	Use skills from prior experiences (in work/life)	Were told to do it?
?	Expectations of family and friends	Motivated?	?
	IT skills	?	
	Internet access		
	Transport		

Topic 4: What should participants be able to do in a taster course?

Developing intended learning outcomes, or what a participant is most likely able to do after a taster course, is a key part of the course design stage. The important element of an intended learning outcome is stating what people can do, i.e. a verb. Below is an example of learning outcomes with the verbs highlighted in bold:

1. **Find** information about courses and further study options
2. **Demonstrate** a new skill/s and knowledge relevant to work or study in the hospitality and tourism sector
3. **Identify** and **articulate** a future study or work pathway
4. **Identify** regional employment opportunities

While it is not always necessary to give the list of intended learning outcomes to course participants, it will be a useful tool to guide the learning activities and learning materials you create for your taster course.

Topic 5: Where should you deliver a taster course?

Selecting a venue that is in the community and easily accessible can help reduce barriers to participation. Factors such as location, ease of public transport and parking are also important.

Community centres and other community facilities can often be used free of charge or at a low cost.

Other important considerations include:

- Accessibility
- Comfortable and suitably sized training room
- Safety (free of hazards)
- Space for breaking into small groups if required
- Kitchen or space for refreshments
- Access to toilets

To prepare for each session, the facilitator needs to consider the arrangement of the training room furniture, making the space inviting, signage needed to guide learners, setting-up resources (whiteboards, handouts), name tags and tea/coffee.

Topic 6: How to structure your taster course

Many community taster courses run weekly for six weeks and follow a simple three-step model for each session. The components are:


1. Welcome and reflection on previous session, and introduction of new topic
2. Site visit and/or guest speaker from industry and learning activities related to topic
3. Reflection and review of the session and thinking about upcoming session

The first stage includes an informal 'transition' period that allows people to move into the session in a welcoming way. This often includes time to get a drink and casually chat before moving into the formal session delivery. The other key segments of this stage may include:

- Completing administrative tasks (such as recording attendance)
- Setting group rules (such as respect, listening to others, punctuality)
- Introduction of facilitator and overview of the taster course
- Time for each participant to introduce themselves to the group (this can first be done in pairs and then shared with the larger group)
- Brief introduction of the session's topic
- Finding out what participants already know about the topic

What is necessary to start with? What could work?

1. Students need to feel comfortable in order to contribute – how can you create a learning environment? (requires trust, connections)
2. Student-centred approach – make it relevant; interesting; meaningful
3. Stories, examples – link it to real life, link it to what they already know

 UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

The second stage of a session often includes a site visit to somewhere relevant (such as a TasTAFE campus, or local employer in the given sector) and/or a guest speaker from the local industry who can talk first-hand about the topic and how it relates to their sector.

It is important to spend time with guest speakers leading up to the session to ensure they have the skills needed to present and connect with taster course learners and include an engaging learning activity.

The final stage is important as it gives the learners a chance to reflect on the session topic and ask further questions. Here, preparing learners for the next session can encourage further conversation around the overall topic of the taster course and provide them with a chance to further build the group relationship by sharing their expectations and learnings.

This is also a good time to provide learners with reflection worksheets they can complete at home (see example templates in Section 4).

Ground Rules

1. What do you expect of the facilitator?
2. What do you expect of yourself?
3. What do you expect of other people in your class/group?



It is important to establish the culture and tone of the learning environment.

This can be aided by a list of group/ground rules that each member plays a role in creating. Having a set of group rules can help create a sense of safety and consistency and allow the facilitator to refer to the group rules if needed (e.g. if someone keeps talking over others, the facilitator can remind the group of the agreed rule to only have one person talking at a time).

Ground Rules:

Expectations of students:

- To respect each other
- To listen to each other
- No one student to dominate
- To take responsibility for your learning
- To be punctual
- To contribute/do your work, participate
- Phones to be off (or on silent), and away

Ground Rules:

Expectations of me:

- Encourage each student
- Manage the class so that all students get to contribute
- Be punctual
- Keep discussion on the topic
- Guide students
- Encourage / help students to learn independently
- Respect students
- Mobile phone off and away

Topic 7: How to market your taster course

Marketing, publicity and promotion are important for a good taster course. Some ideas for promoting your taster course include:

- Free community notice boards, radio announcements or TV
- Provide stories or information to local newspapers and community newsletters
- Establish a Facebook page or other social media platform
- Share taster course information on an existing community social media pages (such as the local neighbourhood house's or sports club's page)
- Create posters that include topics covered and how to express interest and hand out to local shops, GPs, community centres, etc.
- Promote the taster course at relevant local committee meetings
- Consider translating material into several languages

Designing posters and other promotional material does not need to be expensive. There are many free and easy to use websites that have templates, such as [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com).

Topic 8: Who is needed to deliver taster courses?

There are several key roles in delivering an inclusive taster course, such as:

- Taster course manager (who puts the program together, recruits guest speakers and oversees the delivery and evaluation, and completes any reporting)
- Group facilitator (same person each session)
- Guest speakers (sourced from local industry)
- Support staff / volunteers (to help with learning activities as needed and in creating a friendly learning environment)

The 'staffing' needed to run a taster course may include paid or volunteer people and may include existing community workers who see this as part of their existing roles.

Beyond the planning tasks, a key consideration is creating a sense of familiarity for participants. This can easily be done by having an engaging, approachable and caring facilitator who becomes the 'face' of the taster course.



Topic 9: Recruiting Taster Course staff

Taster course staff and volunteers have a range of skills and attributes that work towards designing an inclusive, engaging and meaningful learning program for their local community. Often people with existing facilitation or teaching skills are desirable. Otherwise people who can attain relevant skills can be recruited. Such skills include:


- Organisational and time management
- Empathetic and good listeners
- Good at communicating to people of diverse backgrounds and all ages
- Good at encouraging people to participate in learning activities
- Understanding of local study and work opportunities

Topic 10: How do adults learn?

It is important to consider the ways adults typically learn. Generally, adults:

- Are self-directed
- Come to training with a lifetime of existing knowledge, experience, and opinions
- Are goal-oriented
- Want training that is relevant
- Want training that is task-oriented
- Learn when they see “what’s in it for them”
- Want to be and feel respected


It can be useful to hold a training session with all guest speakers before the taster courses start that covers adult learning styles.

According to  **Adult Learning Australia**

There are 5 types of adult learners:

1. Lifelong learners
2. Reluctant learners
3. Breaking barriers learners
4. Community builders
5. Foundation learners

To which categories might your students belong?

 UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

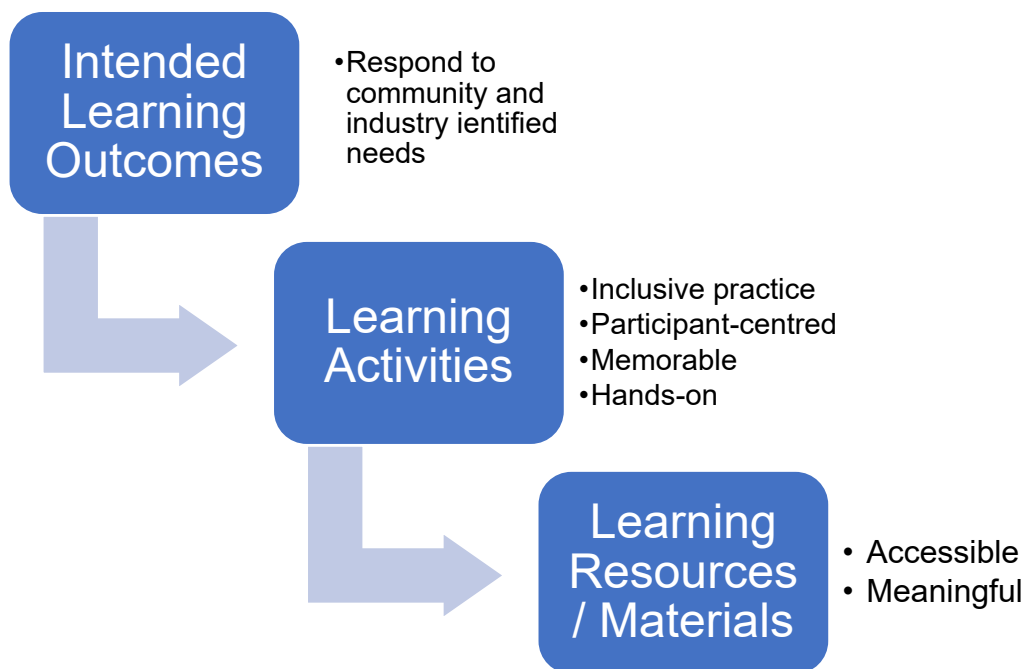
[From: <https://ala.asn.au/adult-learning/>]

Topic 11: How to develop learning activities

There are many benefits to including learning activities in taster course sessions. Learning activities provide learners with an opportunity to reinforce the session topic and content covered by the guest speaker.


They also give learners a chance to hear what others in the group think or took away from the session, and to challenge any assumptions they may have had on the given topic.

The learning activities are directly linked to the intended learning outcomes and the learning materials used.




A good learning activity supports learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Learning outcomes should not set anyone up for 'failure'. They must always create a safe space for learning.

What is Active Learning



- “Students doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (Bonwell & Elson, 1991).

Active learning requires students to be engaged – to be doing, thinking, reflecting...

 UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Some examples of learning activities that can be suitable to a taster course include:


- Small group discussions (e.g. what was the most interesting thing the guest speaker said?)
- Invite participants to complete a worksheet that asks them to reflect on their own experiences and aspirations with the given topic (e.g. today we looked at skills needed to be a carer, what relevant or transferable skills do you have and what skills do you want to develop?)
- Site visits provide opportunities to have learners do a hands-on activity, such as setting a table at a restaurant.



Learning activities do not need to be complicated. Anything that supports the learners to gain a deeper understanding of the topic or an opportunity for them to reflect on their own skills and aspirations, will be a good activity. Learning activities can also be given as 'homework'.

**so, what are some
Active Learning
strategies?**

1. Give students time to pause in order to reflect
2. Think alone; discuss in a pair; then share with the larger group
3. Brainstorming (getting ideas out of our heads and on to paper)
4. Short written exercise? (what could that look like in your groups? (Could it be a list? Free writing?))

 UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA

Topic 12: How much does it cost to run a taster course?

Taster courses can be fairly cheap to run. Often guest speakers are happy to be involved for free, and many venues are cheap or free. Some promotional material can also be at a low cost, but it all depends on local resources and using your networks to see who can do what at what cost.

There are some grants that can provide funding, such as the Skills Tasmania Training and Work Pathways Program. Many local governments also offer community grants.

Topic 13: How to manage expressions of interest

Asking people to express an interest in joining a taster course has several benefits.

You can gather contact details which allows you to keep them updated as the taster course develops or of any changes to the delivery schedule. You can also use this step to ensure you meet your target cohort (e.g. you may be focusing on people who live in a particular town or age).

In addition to contact details, an expression of interest form may ask for:

- Previous learning experience
- Reasons for wanting to join the course
- What they hope to get out of participation
- If they can commit to attending all sessions
- If they have any special requirements to participate, such as child care or public transport

Topic 14: Learning Pathway Conversations

The process of learning and career pathway planning is an important part of a taster course. The four broad stages of an individual conversation with course participants includes:



Before someone can confidently start to explore further education and employment options, it is essential that they firstly have a solid understanding of where they already are in terms of strengths, skills and interests. Many participants will have had limited exposure or experience in pathway and career planning, therefore making the exploration of self a vital first step in this journey.

Learning Pathway Conversations: A Guide

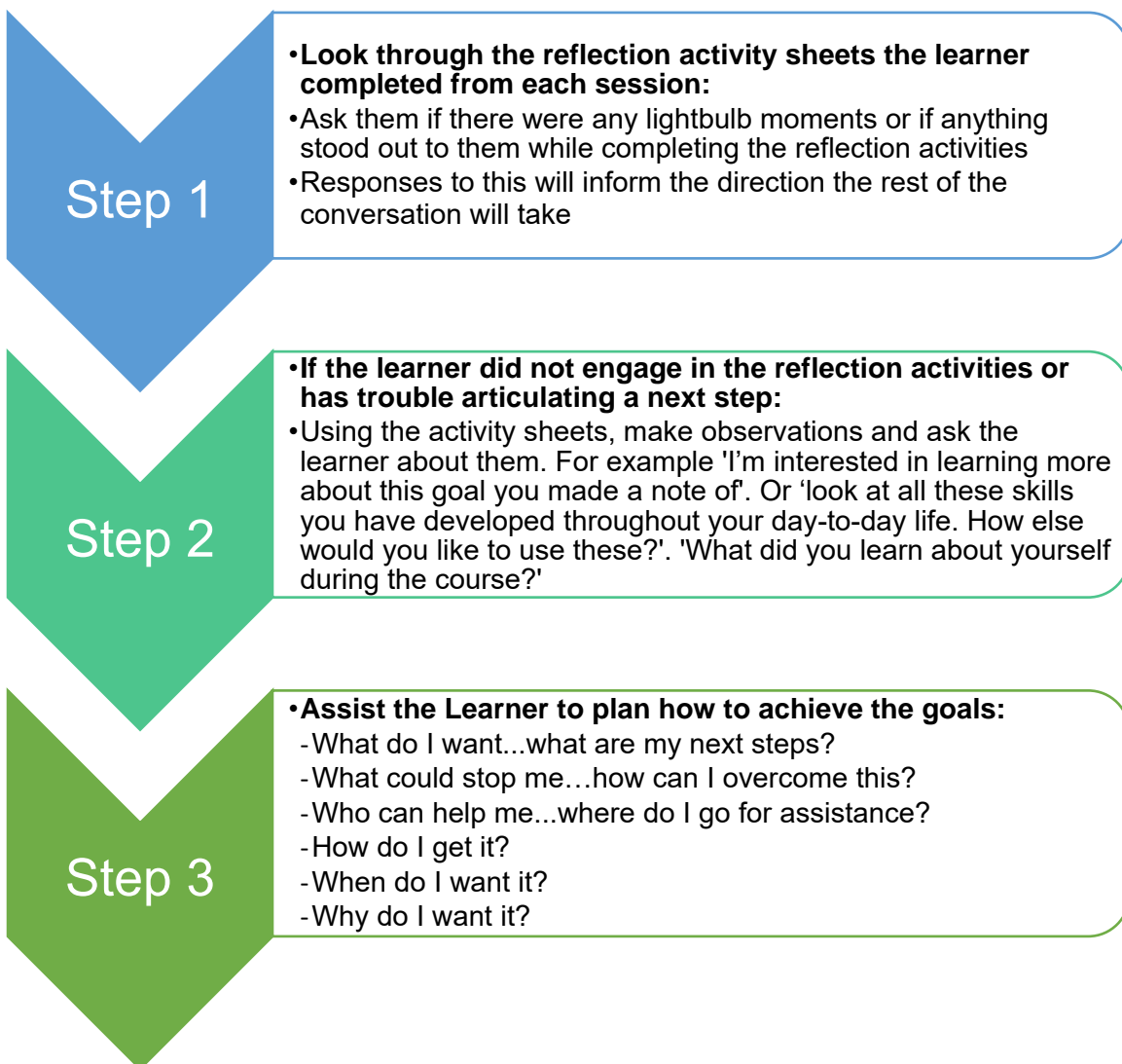
Purpose

The purpose of these conversations is to draw together each learner's career reflections and insights gathered during the course, assist them to set goals and create a plan around their next steps.

Outcome

The outcome of the conversation is that each learner will come away understanding what they need to do next to fulfil their goals.

The conversation is guided by the wants and needs of each individual Learner and could go in many different directions. Although a standardise approach is not fundamental, the following is a guide to demonstrate how the conversation could be approached.



Topic 15: How will you know if the taster course has been successful?

The process of evaluation helps the improvement of community education offerings.

Evaluating taster courses can assist in measuring the effectiveness of the taster course's aims and objectives (such as the intended learning outcomes) and assist any future funding applications. It can also be useful to find out if there are things that can be changed or improved for any future taster course.

Evaluation can include:

- pre- and post-participation surveys that ask similar questions to compare if there is a shift in learner confidence or knowledge of their transferable skills, for example
- general feedback surveys
- focus groups to gather ideas and qualitative data



Section 3: Sample taster course

The University of Tasmania worked with TasTAFE, the Devonport Library and the Northern Suburbs Community Centre in Launceston to trial a series of taster courses in the Community Learning Pathways Project throughout 2018. The taster courses were co-designed and co-delivered with the communities of East Devonport and northern suburbs of Launceston.

The taster courses developed in this project were based on the following set of community learning principles used in many communities around the world:

1. Empowerment – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their local communities
2. Participation – supporting people to take part in decision making
3. Inclusion and equity – recognising some people may need additional support to overcome barriers they face
4. Self-determination – supporting the right of people to make their own choices
5. Partnership – recognising that many agencies can contribute to community learning to ensure resources are used effectively

Below is some detail on how those taster courses were designed, promoted, delivered and evaluated. This may be useful for your community taster courses.



Scoping the need for a taster course

The scoping stage of the project included consultation with the project steering committee (made up of TasTAFE, UTAS, community and Library representatives), community leaders (such as managers of community centres), industry and potential participants.

The outcomes of this process provided a framework for the program delivery schedule which considered timing (e.g. to lead-in to peak tourism season and hence greater job prospects), length (of each session and overall program), access (public transport) and other commitments of potential participants (e.g. school pick-ups, caring responsibilities).

This process also informed the development of intended learning outcomes that underpinned the learning activities and learning materials used in the taster courses.

Analysing existing course offerings available in the two communities was also a key factor in the development of the taster courses. It was evident that there were multiple opportunities for community members to engage in accredited courses for free in their local community. Many of the other offerings were Certificate I and II in Community Services delivered by an RTO in the same local community centres we were engaging. Ensuring the taster courses offered something different and useful was key.

Taster course structure




Four taster courses were delivered to over 50 people in the two locations in the areas of tourism & hospitality and caring (aged and disability).

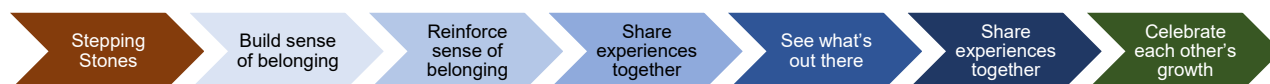
The scoping stage identified the following key features of a taster course that would best meet local needs:

- Weekly sessions of 2-3 hours each over 6 weeks
- Inclusion of excursions to local industry sites with transport provisions
- Each session topic presented by a guest speaker from industry
- Each session wrapped with reflection activities
- Experiential learning opportunities (no emphasis on theory)
- Opportunities for each participant to explore future learning plans individually
- Inclusion of visits to further learning centres (i.e. TasTAFE and UTAS)



Below is the general structure of the six-week programs:

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
	Introduction Ice breaker	Review and reflection	Review and reflection	Review and reflection	Review and reflection	Review and reflection
	Industry guest speaker	Industry guest speaker	Site visit (TasTAFE)	Site visit (industry)	Site visit (UTAS)	Individual pathway planning conversations
	Review and preparation for next session	Review and preparation for next session	Review and preparation for next session	Review and preparation for next session	Review and preparation for next session	Celebration



Intended Learning Outcomes

The course development stage of the project included identifying and articulating a set of intended learning outcomes (listed below), designing a series of learning activities that were aligned to each session topic, and the development of supplementary learning materials for extended learning.

1. Find information about courses and further study options
2. Demonstrate a new skill/s and knowledge relevant to work or study in the hospitality & tourism or caring sector
3. Identify and articulate a future study or work pathway
4. Identify regional employment opportunities

Learning activities

While there were no assessment tasks, homework or exams, the sessions included several learning activities and participants were given worksheets to guide personal reflection.

You can also access and use some online modules we created for the tourism and hospitality taster course on the project website: utas.edu.au/clpp

Course promotion

We used several methods to promote the taster courses. We found Facebook as the most engaging and allowed us to keep communicating with interested people in the lead up, during and after the course.

Word of mouth was also a key method for recruiting participants, along with placing posters in relevant and high-traffic areas in each community.

Course evaluation

To evaluate our taster course program, we invited participants to complete a pre- and post-participation survey, to attend a focus group, and to complete a phone survey 6 months after the course ended.

The surveys asked participants to rate their level of confidence as a learner, and their experiences with education so far, and their aspirations for future work or study. The focus group asked them to elaborate and speak more openly about their experiences in the course. And the phone survey was to see what participants were doing in terms of work or study and asked if the taster course influenced this.

Section 4: Useful resources

Below is a range of resources you may find useful when planning a taster course for your community.

Example of session plan

LAUNCESTON - WEEK 1 SESSION

Tue 7th August, 2018

Session Content	Timing (mins)	Teaching Strategies / Learning Experiences (How it is taught):	Resources and Organisation:
INTRODUCTION	60min	10.00am – 11.00am	
Welcome	10 min	Greet learners at the foyer, provide name badges, tea/coffee Acknowledgement to country Staff introduce themselves Outline of session activities	Names badges
Pre-survey	15 min	Students to complete pre-survey	Pre-survey forms
Ice breaker	25 mins	Students to pair up and introduce each other to the group	Questions for learners to ask each other (e.g.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • What they hope to get out of the course • Something interesting they have done
Ground rules	10 min	Learners to brainstorm ideas, write on board e.g. Respect others views No interruptions Listening to others Phones off / on silent	Whiteboard
GUEST SPEAKER	60 min	11.00am – 12.00pm	
Chris de Bono	30 mins	Meru Miso Food activity	Food samples
Chris de Bono	30 mins	Q&A Working in industry / Volunteering	
WRAP UP	20 min	12.00pm – 12.20pm	
Reflection – Exploration of skills and strengths	15 min	Learners to look over Worksheet Learners to complete Reflection	Week 1 Worksheet – “Skills needed to work in Hospitality and Tourism” Week 1 Reflection – “10 minutes to reflect on your skills”
What’s next	5 min	Discuss Open Day, handout brochures Week 2 – Starting your own tourist venture (Local Aboriginal Tourism Venture)	Open Day brochures



Aged Care & Disability

FREE

Taster Course

@DEVONPORT LIBRARY

Session 1

FRIDAY 17 MAY, 10AM-2PM

Introduction to the caring sector

Self-care as a carer

Boundaries and communication

Intro to online modules

Session 2

FRIDAY 24 MAY 10AM-2PM

Using technology when caring

What next? Work and study options

Session 3

TBC

Individual Learning Pathway discussions

For more information:

Community.Engagement@utas.edu.au

6324 3566



Community Taster
Courses Tasmania



Example reflection worksheets

10 MINUTES TO REFLECT ON YOUR SKILLS

_____ Date: _____

Three skills you already have:

How could you use one of the above skills in a different way?

One existing or new skill that you want to develop further or improve:

How can you develop this skill?

10 MINUTES TO CELEBRATE YOU

_____ Date: _____

I've always wanted to be a:

Things I
learned
today:

What is it about tourism and hospitality that interests you?

Words to describe
your interests:

Words to describe
your motivators:

What could be some jobs that you think complement your skills, interests and motivators?

10 MINUTES TO LET YOUR MIND WANDER (WHO KNOWS WHERE IT MIGHT LEAD?)

Date:

Two jobs you've never done, but
would love to try:

Three things you learned today:

One job that you'd like to learn more about:

Two occupations that you like the sound of:

1

2

Two things in your life you that may need to change to pursue these jobs:

10 MINUTES TO FIND JOY IN LEARNING

Date:

Today I learned about

--	--	--

Three courses that I might be interested in doing:

--	--	--

One reason to undertake a training course:

What was the best part of today:

--

One thought to take with you into the next week:

10 MINUTES TO RECOGNISE THE GOOD STUFF

_____ Date:

What do I need to do now to achieve my goals:

One thing you've worked hard to achieve previously:

My Plan B is:

--

Two people who can help me achieve my goals

Two things I need to do to achieve my goals:

Three things I loved about today:

--	--	--