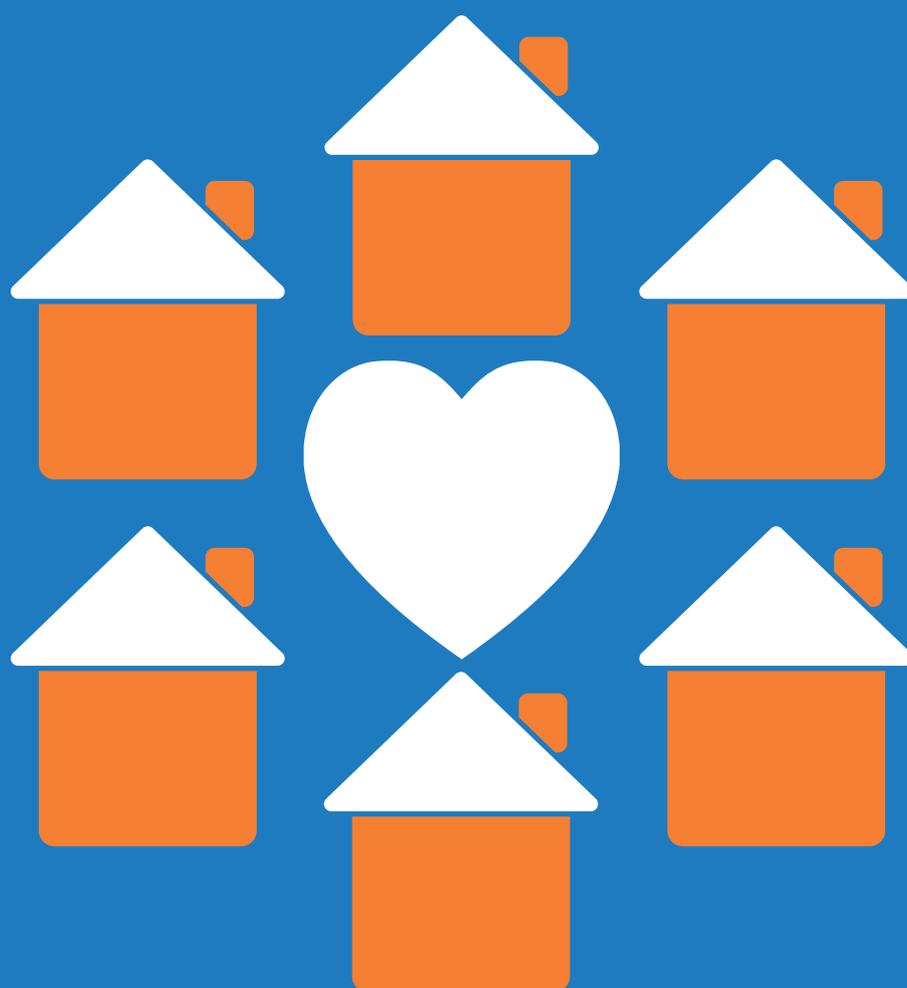


NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES TASMANIA

A Brand Story Handbook for Neighbourhood Houses



About This Handbook

This guide helps you tell your story with clarity and confidence. Whether you're new to brand storytelling or looking to sharpen your skills, you'll find practical tools, examples, and templates inside. Over 12 months, we collaborated through workshops, interviews, and feedback sessions to create a brand story that reflects our entire network while allowing each House to maintain its unique identity. Like a neighborhood of distinct houses, we're independent yet stronger together as a community. This handbook supports your existing marketing and communications processes.

What's inside:

- Simple explanations of brand storytelling
- Ideas on when to use stories
- Quick reference materials
- Ready-to-use templates

Remember:

♥ ***Brand storytelling takes practice. Focus on consistency and authenticity rather than perfection. Every conversation is an opportunity to share your story. Imagine what we can do together when we practice storytelling. We can create real ripples of change!***



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What is a Brand Story?

A brand story is simply who we are, what we do, and why it matters - told in a way that connects with people. It's not marketing speak. It's the real story of how Neighbourhood Houses change lives and strengthen communities.

Benefits for you:

- Makes conversations easier
- Explains what we do
- Builds confidence when talking about our work

For your community:

- A better understanding of how we work with the community
- Shows the impact of our work
- Builds trust and connection

For the network:

- Creates a consistent message across Tasmania
- Strengthens our collective voice

**“We are the Heart of our Community
- Where Local Connections Create Lasting Change.”**

We create opportunities for everyone. Neighbourhood Houses nurture local potential, providing a welcoming and safe space to connect. Through shared resources, skills development, and encouragement to pursue passions, we build stronger, more connected communities.

With pride and purpose, we help lay the foundation for better futures, cultivating grassroots growth and sustainable impacts. Our communities recognise and celebrate their strengths. They identify areas for change and actively pursue solutions.

We share a trust in our communities. We know they understand what works, and encourage them to lead our decisions to drive meaningful change. We believe solutions are most powerful when resourced and created by and for our communities

Our core message works because it's:

- Simple - easy to remember and repeat
- True - reflects what we actually do
- Flexible - works for any audience
- Positive - focuses on opportunities, not problems

PART ONE

A brand story is who we are, what we do, and why it matters - told in a way that connects with people's hearts and minds. It's not just words on a page; it's the foundation for how we communicate with everyone we meet.

Brand storytelling represents our purpose, vision and values. We use our brand story in various situations and it can be adapted for use when communicating about the Network or your individual House. It's more than a message — it's a way to connect with people on a personal and emotional level. Using a structured approach means keeping our message simple, relevant and relatable.

Our brand story will be memorable for our teams, volunteers, stakeholders and wider community. Together our brand story can create a positive ripple effect. The source of our Brand Story is a combination of our Purpose, Vision and Values.

Purpose

We create opportunities for everyone. Neighbourhood Houses nurture local potential, providing a welcoming and safe space to connect. Through shared resources, skills development, and encouragement to pursue passions, we build stronger, more connected communities.

Vision

A connected, equitable and resilient Tasmania, where everyone can participate in shaping vibrant, self-sustaining communities.

What We Stand For: Our Values

- **Collaboration:** We value the strengths and networks in our local communities and work together to create a stronger, more connected Tasmania.
- **Self-Determination:** We believe in the potential of every person and community to identify and achieve their goals.
- **Inclusion:** We welcome everyone, creating spaces of belonging, support, and opportunity.
- **Respect:** We honour each other's unique contribution and experience.
- **Adaptability:** We respond to the changing needs of communities by being flexible and forward-thinking.
- **Equity:** We actively work to remove barriers and create fair opportunities for everyone to thrive, regardless of their background or circumstances.

PART ONE

Who We Are

Neighbourhood Houses are independent, community-led hubs that bring together local knowledge, skills and activities, creating welcoming, accessible spaces for connection, learning and collaboration. Each House is supported by Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT) - the peak body that champions and equips each House to remain responsive, strong and resilient.

Neighbourhood Houses form a network of community hubs across Tasmania, powered by passionate individuals with deep community development expertise and genuine lived experiences. At its most simple – and powerful – community development is the art of bringing people together, united by a common concern or opportunity and choosing to work together to deliver change.

We share our skills, resources and energy with our local communities. Our commitment to positive, place-based community development creates an environment of collaboration, support, and respect. Every House is unique—shaped directly by and for the community it serves.

What We Do

Neighbourhood Houses form a member-based network of community hubs across Tasmania, powered by passionate individuals with deep community development expertise and genuine lived experiences. We share our skills, resources, and energy with our local communities.

Our commitment to positive, place-based community development creates an environment of collaboration, support, and respect. Every House is unique—shaped directly by and for the community it serves. We are here for our communities—and for each other. With empathy, integrity, and connection, we grow stronger together and contribute to a more equitable Tasmania.

Our Values - in Action

Communicating our values can be achieved in simple ways. Think about using stories to explain each value rather than using a blanket statement. Share a story that is simple, relevant and relatable. The following examples can be used in conversation, in writing or when presenting.

Instead of just listing values, try showing them through stories. Here are three examples using Inclusion, Collaboration and Respect using a simple storytelling framework - introducing our 'character', understanding their interest and creating an outcome with impact.

Inclusion Example:

"When Sara first came to our coffee group, she was just starting to learn English. Now she helps other newcomers feel welcome. That's inclusion in action."

PART ONE

Collaboration Example:

"Our community garden started when three different groups decided to share the space. Now they're sharing recipes and childcare too."

Respect Example:

"When our volunteer noticed Tom was having some challenges with his reading, our volunteer didn't make a big deal of it. She just started reading forms aloud for 'everyone' during sessions."

Core Themes

Themes correspond with our brand story. When we are thinking about content for social media, our newsletters or our website, we can use these themes as wayfinders, always ensuring that our stories steer the course for maximum impact.

Connection: Building relationships and networks

Local Leadership: Empowering community members

Community Development: Growing stronger together

Foundation for Better Futures: Creating opportunities for growth

Before sharing any story, try this values check exercise:

- *Does this show respect for the person?*
- *Does this show the value of connection?*
- *Does this show community benefit?*
- *Would I be comfortable if this was my story?*



Part One reflects our network brand story, developed over 12 months, through workshops, interviews, and feedback sessions. In Part Two we look at how to develop your own brand story....

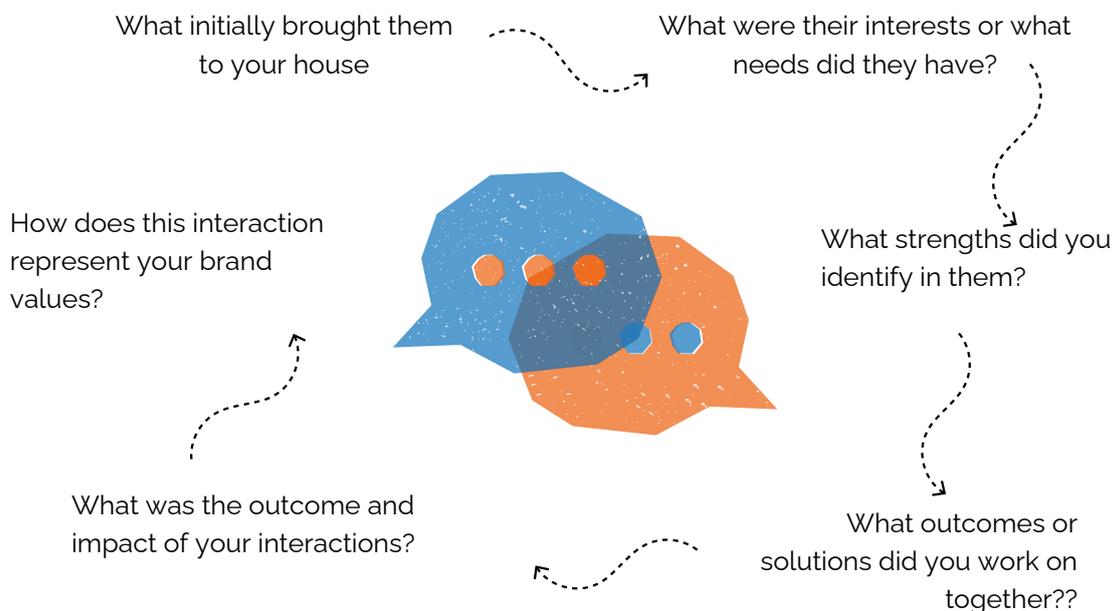
Create your own Brand Story

Think of a brand story as an organisation's personality. In a world where many might offer similar things, a unique story helps you stand out. People love stories because they can relate to them. A good brand story connects with people emotionally - it feels more authentic and trustworthy.

Brand Story Exercise

We could list off a whole lot of important facts to anyone who'd listen. But how many would they remember? If we use storytelling to create a stronger impact - the relatability and emotional connection is what will resonate and stick with the listener. Try this exercise to see if you can get your point across using a story instead of a set of facts.

1. Think of a specific community member who stands out in your memory and answer the following questions.



2. Now put the answers together in a paragraph.

You should have a beginning where you introduce your 'character', a middle situation where they connect with you, and an end where the outcome of your interaction takes place. The story is complete when you reflect on the impact of your encounter.

Storytelling to Different Audiences

We have different ways of telling our story depending on who we are talking to. For example, you have the way in which you talk to your staff or volunteers will be different to how you engage with the government, however the point will still be the same. Different topics or themes will resonate with different audiences, but the core remains the same. The core is your brand story.

Here are a few examples to help with this thinking:

Community Members

Key Message: "This is your space - come as you are, find your people, discover your potential."

Focus on:

- Stories of connection and belonging
- Personal growth and achievement
- How individuals have found their place

Example: "Maria started in our English class shy but enthusiastic to learn and make friends. Now she runs a sewing circle that brings together people from eight different countries. She didn't just learn English - she found her community."

Service Providers

Key Message: "Partner with us - together we can achieve more for our community."

Focus on:

- Successful collaborations
- Community networks you can access
- Wrap-around support examples

Example: "When the local health service needed to reach older residents, we connected them with our Eating with Friends group. Now they run monthly health checks in a space where people already feel comfortable."

PART TWO

Government and Funders

Key Message: "We deliver great value through local solutions created by communities."

Focus on:

- Data and measurable outcomes
- Cost-effective approaches
- Community capacity building

Example: "Our \$5,000 community garden project now feeds 30 families, taught skills to 50 people, and created connections between four different community groups. That's a 1000% return on investment."

Volunteers

Key Message: "Your contribution matters - be part of creating positive change."

Focus on:

- Volunteer impact stories
- Community transformation
- Personal fulfilment through giving back

Example: "When John started volunteering with our computer classes, he just wanted to help. Now he's watching people get jobs, reconnect with family overseas, and gain confidence. He says it's the best part of his week."

The Brand Story Bank

To Spot Good Stories listen out for these Trigger Phrases:

- "Thank you"
- "I never thought I could..."
- "I met someone who..."
- "This changed my life"
- "I feel like I belong"

Look out for these moments:

- Strong connections between community members
- An activity that achieves good results
- Someone overcomes a challenge
- New connections are made
- Skills are learned or shared

The 5-Minute Story Collection Method

When you notice something good happening but you are limited with time, grab a piece of paper or your mobile device and answer these short questions:

- Who was involved? (First name only)
- What happened? (2-3 sentences)
- How did your house contribute? (1-2 sentences)
- What was the result? (1-2 sentences)
- Which value does this show? (Inclusion, Collaboration, Respect, etc.)

Example:

- Who: Jenny
- What happened: Jenny came to computer class nervous about using technology but knew she needed digital skills for job hunting
- How we contributed: Our volunteer Mark paired her with another participant and they worked together each week at our community hub
- Result: Jenny increased her knowledge so much that she now helps other nervous beginners and got a part-time job at the library thanks to her online application
- Value: Inclusion

PART TWO

Collecting Longer Stories

If every House contributed one story per year to the statewide Story Bank, just imagine the impact!

Every House is invited to add a story to the Story Bank each year. These stories can be used to promote and report on our collective impact. Stories can benefit;

- Funding applications
- Case studies or interview opportunities for media releases
- Network and Peak Body communications
- Partnerships
- Celebrating our impact



On the next page you will see an example of what a story template can look like, followed by one sample completed story.

Remind Me Again - Why Do Stories Matter?

Because they help us;

- Show the real impact of our work
- Build trust with the public and funders
- Advocate for support and resources
- Celebrate community strength

What Makes A Great Story?

A good story includes:

- A clear subject (person, group, activity or moment)
- A challenge or need
- Your House's role
- A result or outcome
- Connection to our values

Who Are We Writing Them For?

For example;

- Community awareness
- Funding application
- Volunteer call out

PART TWO

Story Bank Template

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE NAME: _____

COORDINATOR NAME: _____

DATE SUBMITTED: _____

STORY FOCUS: (What is the main message of this story?)

TARGET AUDIENCE: (Who is this story for? Tick all that apply)

Community members Funders Government Media Other houses Volunteers

PARTICIPANT DETAILS:

First name only: _____

Age group: Child Young person Adult Senior

Background: (brief, relevant context)

THE STORY: (Tell us what happened - be specific and use real details)

PART TWO

INITIAL SITUATION: (What brought this person to your house?)

WHAT WE DID: (What specific support/programs/connections did you provide?)

OUTCOME: (What changed for this person and/or the community?)

COMMUNITY IMPACT: (*How did this story ripple out to benefit others?*)

LESSONS LEARNED: (*What did this teach you about your work?*)

PART TWO

VALUES DEMONSTRATED: (Tick all that apply)

- Inclusion Collaboration Respect Adaptability
- Self-Determination Equity

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES: (Numbers, if available)

- Number of people directly impacted: _____
- Number of people indirectly impacted: _____
- Duration of support provided: _____
- Follow-up period: _____

PERMISSION TO SHARE:

- Participant has given written permission to share this story Story has been fact-checked with participant Participant approves the way they are described Participant approves for internal use only

QUOTE FROM PARTICIPANT: (In their own words)

COORDINATOR REFLECTION: (Why is this story important?)

PHOTO/VIDEO UPLOAD? please advise if you have access to supporting visual imagery



You can send your story to Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania where it can be stored in a central repository.

PART TWO

Story Bank Example

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE NAME: "Suburb" Neighbourhood House

COORDINATOR NAME: Mandy Johnson

DATE SUBMITTED: December 15, 2024

STORY FOCUS: How our work creates lasting community connections that extend beyond individual participation

TARGET AUDIENCE: Community members Funders Media

PARTICIPANT DETAILS:

- First name only: Maria
- Age group: Adult
- Background: Single mother, recently arrived from overseas.

A COMPLETED STORY FOR THE STORY BANK:

INITIAL SITUATION:

Maria came to our English conversation group in January, brought by a neighbour. She was looking for ways to become more proficient with her English so she could manage her everyday tasks like shopping and school communication. Her 6-year-old son was at a new school and looking forward to making new friends.

WHAT WE DID:

Maria enrolled in our English conversation group and connected her son with our after-school program. Our volunteer coordinator noticed Maria was skilled at sewing and suggested she join our craft group. When we learned about her accounting background, we connected her with our small business mentoring program.

OUTCOME:

By June, Maria was confident enough to support others moving to Tasmania. She started a small alteration business from home and now runs a monthly sewing circle at the house. Her son has friends and Maria has become a bridge between different cultural communities in our area.

COMMUNITY IMPACT:

Maria's sewing circle now attracts 15 regular participants from 8 different cultural backgrounds. The group has created quilts for the local hospital and taught skills to 12 young people. Three other participants have started their own small businesses after seeing Maria's success.

PART TWO

LESSONS LEARNED:

People don't just need services - they need opportunities to contribute. When we see someone's skills and create space for them to share, it transforms both the individual and the community.

VALUES DEMONSTRATED:

Inclusion Collaboration Respect Self-Determination

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES:

- Number of people directly impacted: 1 (Maria)
- Number of people indirectly impacted: 35+ (sewing circle, business customers, other new arrivals)
- Duration of support provided: 11 months
- Follow-up period: Ongoing

PERMISSION TO SHARE:

Participant has given written permission to share this story Story has been fact-checked with participant Participant approves the way they are described Participant approves for internal use only

QUOTE FROM PARTICIPANT:

"I came here speaking basic English. Now I help other people who are learning a new language to feel welcome. This house didn't just teach me English - it helped me find my place in Tasmania."

REFLECTION:

This story shows how our approach of seeing potential rather than just need creates ripple effects throughout the community. Maria's journey from isolated newcomer to community connector demonstrates the power of our values in action.

Troubleshooting Common Problems

"It feels too generic/corporate"

Solution: Always pair network messages with specific local examples. The brand story is the foundation, but your house's unique personality and local stories make it real and relevant.

"People don't seem to 'get it'"

Solution: Focus on stories rather than statements. Instead of saying "we foster belonging," tell a story about someone who found their place at your house.

"It's too much to remember"

Solution: Start with one core message and practice it until it feels natural. Gradually add more elements as the team becomes comfortable.

"Our community is different"

Solution: The brand story is flexible - adapt the language and examples to fit your community while maintaining the core themes and values.

"Staff/volunteers aren't using it"

Solution: Make it practical and relevant. Show how brand messaging makes their conversations more effective, not more complicated.

"I don't know what to say when people ask what we do"

Solution: Try using this script: "We're a community hub that brings people together. We help people connect with others, learn new skills, and find ways to contribute to their community. For example, [give one specific example from your house]. Would you like to know more about what we do?"

"Our stories all sound the same"

Solution: Focus on different aspects:

- Connection story: How someone made friends or found support
- Skills story: How someone learned something new
- Contribution story: How someone started helping others
- Community story: How a group created something together

PART THREE

"I can't remember all the brand values"

Solution: Pick ONE value that your house does really well and focus on that. Examples:

- If you're great at Inclusion: Always mention how everyone is welcome
- If you're great at Collaboration: Always mention how people work together
- If you're great at Respect: Always mention how everyone's contribution matters

"People don't seem interested in what we offer"

Solution: Lead with outcomes, not activities: Instead of "We run a craft group" try "We connect people so they can make friends and learn new skills through our craft group".

"I'm not good at writing"

Solution: Ask for help and use the templates in this handbook as a guide.

"Our participants don't want to share their stories"

Solution: Always ask permission first. Use first names only. Focus on positive outcomes. Let them read what you've written before sharing. Explain that their story might help someone else. If they are still not comfortable, then find another story.

Quick Answers to Common Questions

"What makes you different from other community organisations?" → We're community-owned and community-led. Our programs are designed by local people for local needs. We're part of a trusted network that's been strengthening Tasmanian communities for decades.

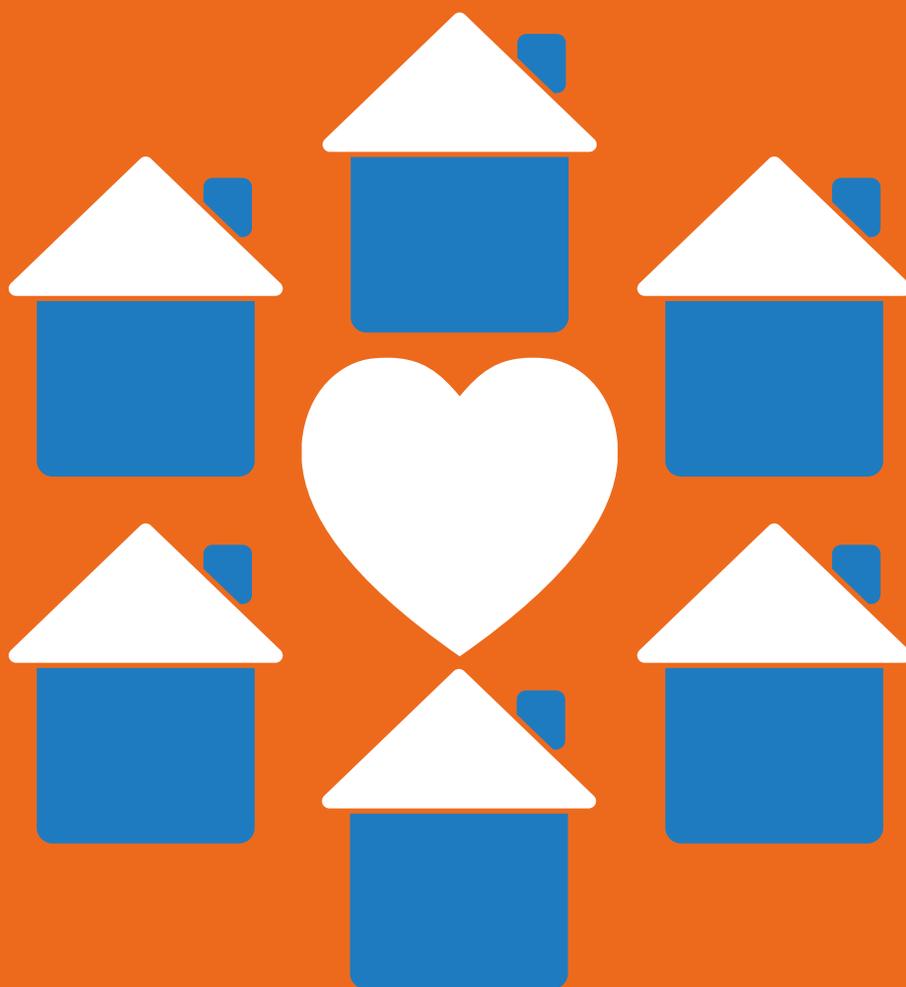
"How do you decide what happens at your House?" → Our community tells us what they need. We listen to local people and create programs that respond to real needs and interests.

"Can anyone come to your House?" → Yes, everyone is welcome. We believe every person has something valuable to contribute and everyone deserves to feel they belong.

"Can I change the elevator pitch in this handbook?" → Yes, but keep the core message about connection and belonging

"Can I use stories from other Houses?" → Ensure you have consent from the particular House

Appendix - Examples, Templates and Further Guides



PART FOUR

The 30-Second Elevator Pitch

Template: "Hi, I'm [Name] from [House Name]. We're part of a network of community hubs that bring people together. At our house, we listen to and work with the [your location] community to drive meaningful change. We are committed to positive, place-based community development and believe when people feel connected and supported, whole communities thrive."

Example: "Hi, I'm Mandy from xxx Neighbourhood House. We're part of a network of community hubs that bring people together. At our house, we listen to and work with the Moonah community to drive meaningful change. We are committed to positive, place-based community development and believe when people feel connected and supported, whole communities thrive."

The 2-Minute Presentation

Template: "[House Name] is part of the Neighbourhood House Network - community hubs across Tasmania that create opportunities for everyone.

What makes us unique is [example of our work]. We provide welcoming spaces where people can connect, learn new skills, and contribute to their community.

We do this through [2-3 specific examples], always putting our values of inclusion, respect, and collaboration at the center of everything we do.

Whether someone needs practical support, wants to make friends, or wants to help others, we help them find their place and their path forward."

PART FOUR

Newsletter Article Example

Using the Brand Story framework:

"At [House Name], we believe everyone deserves the chance to learn and grow. That's why we're excited to share Jenny's story.

A year ago, Jenny was nervous about computers but needed digital skills to find work. With support from our volunteer Mark and encouragement from other participants, she's now confident online and helping other beginners feel welcome.

This is how neighbourhood houses across Tasmania create stronger communities - by connecting people and building confidence.

Want to join our computer class? Call us on [number] or drop in Wednesdays at 10am."

Example Social Media Posts

Program Promotion: "Looking for connection and belonging? At [House Name], we create stronger communities by bringing people together. Join us for [activity] - because everyone has something valuable to contribute!"

Share photo of previous activity that shows people interacting with each with happy, engaged expressions.

Success Story: "This is why we do what we do! [Brief story about impact]. At [House Name], we believe in the power of community to transform lives."

This could be a 15-20 second video or Reel from the manager or staff member recounting the story.

Event Announcement: "Join us for [event] at [House Name]. We're part of the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Network - creating spaces where everyone belongs and can contribute. See you there!"

Using photos or a video, share the location and a visual expression of what to expect so people get a clear understanding.

PART FOUR

Funding Application Narrative:

Organisational Background: [House Name] Neighbourhood House is part of the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Network, a collection of community-owned spaces across Tasmania that are the heart of local communities.

Our network purpose is to create stronger communities by connecting people, building capacity, and fostering belonging. [House Name] specifically contributes to this vision by [house unique elements]. We operate with the core values of inclusion, respect, collaboration, and adaptability, ensuring that [specific local context/needs]. This project aligns with both our individual house priorities and our network-wide commitment to [relevant theme: connection/local leadership/community development/foundation for better futures].

Expected Outcomes: Through this project, we anticipate [specific measurable outcomes] that will contribute to our vision of thriving communities where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to participate and contribute.

Suggested Monthly Action Checklist

To help establish a routine, this action checklist can be a useful way to practice storytelling.

Week 1:

- Collect at least one story
- Practice elevator pitch
- Update one communication using brand messaging

Week 2:

- Use story in newsletter or social media
- Train one volunteer on brand messaging
- Review website for brand consistency

Week 3:

- Collect community feedback
- Share story with network (if appropriate)
- Plan next month's communications

Week 4:

- Review what worked well
- Identify areas for improvement
- Plan next month's focus

PART FOUR

Training Your Team (1-Hour Session)

Session Plan:

Opening (10 minutes)

- Pairs share: "Why are you passionate about neighbourhood houses?"
- Introduce brand story concept

Core Message Practice (20 minutes)

- Present the core message with local examples
- Practice elevator pitches in pairs
- Q&A

Scenario Practice (20 minutes)

- Role-play different situations:
 - New person walking in
 - Phone inquiry
 - Community event introduction
 - Stakeholder meeting

Story Collection (10 minutes)

- Collect real stories from your house
- Practice identifying values in action
- Plan next steps

PART FOUR

Suggested Implementation Timeline

Week 1: Foundation

- Train core team on brand story
- Update key materials
- Practice elevator pitches

Week 2: Daily Use

- Integrate brand messaging in conversations
- Update website and social media
- Start collecting stories

Week 3: Community Engagement

- Use brand messaging in all communications
- Collect community feedback
- Share stories (with permission)

Week 4: Review and Adjust

- Evaluate what's working
- Gather team feedback
- Plan next month's focus

Monthly Ongoing

- Collect and share stories
- Train new volunteers
- Review and update materials
- Measure community response

PART FOUR

Measuring Success

Simple Feedback Questions:

For Community Members:

- "How well do you understand what we do here?" (Scale 1-5)
- "How would you describe us to a friend?"
- "What words describe the atmosphere here?"

For Staff:

- "How confident do you feel explaining what we do?" (Scale 1-5)
- "How well do you understand our role in the community?" (Scale 1-5)

If you love gathering data you could track these numbers that show your impact:

- Community event attendance
- New inquiries per month
- Social media engagement
- Volunteer applications
- Referrals from other organisations

PART FOUR

Example Community Feedback Survey

DATE:

"How well do you feel you understand what [House Name] is about and what we offer?"

Very well. Somewhat well. Not very well. Not at all

"How would you describe [House Name] to a friend?"

"What words would you use to describe your experience at [House Name]?"

Example Staff Confidence Survey

This could be used during a training period. Ask your staff to complete before and after training.

"How confident do you feel explaining what our Neighbourhood House does to someone new?"

Very confident Somewhat confident Not very confident
 Not confident at all

"How well do you feel you understand how our house fits into the broader Neighbourhood House Network?"

Very well Somewhat well Not very well Not at all

Communication Tracking (only if you love data and have capacity)

- Community engagement levels (attendance, inquiries, etc.)
- Referral patterns and sources

NOTES



Neighbourhood Houses
Tasmania