



Bridging the Gap Package:

# **Personal Portfolio Projects**

## **Note for the Tutor on Personal Portfolios Projects**

Implementing personal portfolio projects in adult literacy programs is a wise choice for a number of different reasons. First of all, personal portfolios reinforce a person's accomplishments in both life and learning. Secondly, the creation of a personal portfolio calls for the development and acquisition of a range of different competencies. Thirdly, personal portfolios provide literacy tutors with a thorough overview of a learner's goals, skills, and experiences. Finally, personal portfolios are also useful outside of school. They are practical to have for learners who are applying for admission to formal education programs and they are valuable when developing a resume and when seeking employment.

## **Different Needs, Different Portfolios**

It is important to keep in mind that each adult literacy learner has his or her own specific, needs, goals, and background which should be reflected in his or her personal portfolio. A personal portfolio should take on a life of its own. The style and content of personal portfolios will vary considerably. For example, an adult learner who is looking for work would more than likely design a portfolio with a professional edge – or one that focuses on workplace skills and achievements. On the other hand, a learner who is purely interested in upgrading his or her skills to function with more ease in society would design a portfolio that reflects personal interests, background, hobbies, community involvement, etc. Whereas there is really no “one size fits all” type of portfolio, it is important that tutors get to know their learners sufficiently in order to guide the progress of personal portfolio projects.

Tutors must also be aware of each learner's specific abilities and limitations. While some learners may be able to independently work on their portfolios, other will require a considerable amount of guidance. It is up to tutors to determine to what extent they will need to assist learners with the development of personal portfolios. Such assistance may come in the form of providing suggestions on what to include in the portfolio, to sitting down with the learner and helping him or her write a personal statement and goals. Tutors may also wish to provide ideas on where to acquire reference letters and how to get involved the community. Furthermore, tutors should be prepared to help learners identify past achievements and prior learning.

**Tips for Implementing Personal Portfolio Projects** (see Student Instructions):

1. Explain the purpose and uses for the portfolio.
2. Emphasize the quality of the portfolio expected.
3. Help learners get started: help them write their personal goals or statements.
4. Give suggestions on where and how to get reference letters.
5. Give suggestions on how to get involved in the community.
6. Give suggestions on how and what to add to the portfolio.
7. Remind learners that a portfolio varies according to each individual.
8. Stress the fact that a portfolio can be used as a self-selling tool.
9. Regularly monitor the development of the learner's portfolio. Give constructive feedback on how to improve the portfolio.
10. Help learners to review and edit writing in their portfolios.
11. Conduct assessment of the portfolio at different stages of its development. Remember that the creation of a personal portfolio requires the development and acquisition of a range of competencies.
12. Make sure learners understand that the organization and presentation of the portfolio is very important.
13. Show samples of successful portfolios – let learners know what is expected of them.
14. Brainstorm ideas of what to put in their portfolios so that learners understand the range of material that they can include.
15. Make lists of how a portfolio can be used and/or how a portfolio could be organized.
16. Give examples of how portfolios are useful outside of school.

**Assessing Portfolios**

Portfolios are designed to emphasize a person's strengths, which makes them an ideal tool for competency-based assessment. They do not only allow tutors to easily observe a learner's background, skills, and goals for learning, they also provide samples of a learner's writing and organizational skills. There are different ways to assess a learner's portfolio. One way is to determine which category of competence is to be assessed in advance and then examine work from the portfolio that would demand successful performance in that category. For example, should a tutor choose to assess the learner's

competence with “Setting Goals” (See assessment chart **1.A. Lifelong Learning: Setting Goals**), they should cross-examine evidence from the portfolio with the competency-based assessment for setting goals. Once assessment has taken place, the tutor should point out the learner’s accomplishments (i.e. which competencies have been successfully established) and what needs more work (i.e. which competencies are off-track).

Beyond assessing skills for reading, writing, and learning, personal portfolios also provide ample opportunity to assess a learner’s competence in communication, information technology, and citizenship. It is up to you as the tutor to guide learners, through providing suggestions and samples, on what to include in their portfolios. Naturally, you will want the learner to demonstrate a range of competencies with his or her portfolio. It is therefore advisable to encourage the learner to take on projects or add documents that demonstrate newly acquired competencies. For example, a learner may not have demonstrated skills in environmental or community awareness. It would therefore be a good idea to support the learner in finding out more about his or her community. You could then elaborate on this by finding out about environmental practices in the community. Once the learner has discovered more about his or her community, he or she may write a letter or come up with an action plan for implementing more environmental practices in the community. This letter or action plan would fit nicely in a personal portfolio.

**Note:**

Tutors should use the competency-based assessment charts to determine which skills need to be developed and to implement lessons and activities accordingly.

**Things to look for when assessing a learner’s portfolio:**

- completeness
- presentation of ideas
- visual appeal
- diversity and quality of selections/evidence
- realistic goals
- writing accuracy (word choice, spelling, grammar, mechanics, etc.)
- organizational strategies (methodology)
- evidence of understanding the process of developing a portfolio

- appropriateness for the intended purpose of the portfolio
- clarity of the message for the intended audience
- ability to deal with everyday print
- samples of academic writing
- basic computer skills
- ability to use Internet
- word processing skills
- media literacy
- self-reliance
- positive attitude
- health awareness
- citizenship awareness
- environmental awareness
- community awareness
- evidence of numeracy
- professionalism