



District 86 Toastmasters Meeting

Located in Southwestern and Central Ontario Canada

District 86 Program Quality Report

2026 to 2027 Program Quality Director Update

Status as of August 28, 2026

Prepared for: District 86 District Council
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1. Executive Summary

District 86 has entered the 2026 to 2027 program year with a strong foundation and, importantly, with sufficient time to influence the outcomes we want to achieve by June 30, 2027.

The Program Quality strategy for the year is built around a simple premise:

We should not wait until June to discover how the year ends. The leading indicators we measure today tell us where the District is headed and give us time to change the outcome.

The District's primary Program Quality objective is **a minimum of 61 Smedley Distinguished Clubs** by June 30, 2027.

This is an ambitious objective, but it is grounded in the performance foundation established last year. District 86 finished 2025 to 2026 with **49 Distinguished Clubs against a goal of 45**. The objective for this year is therefore not simply to repeat last year's performance, but to build a more consistent system that moves more clubs toward quality outcomes earlier in the year.

As of August 28:

2,093 members are in District 86.

517 of 679 club officers have been trained, representing 76.14%.

32 clubs have all seven officers trained.

79 clubs have four or more officers trained.

76 of 101 clubs have submitted Club Success Plans, and all 76 were submitted early.

All submitted plans have been reviewed by Area and Division leaders.

143 education awards have been earned, representing approximately **7% of the 2,100 year end education award goal**.

The District has established a **1 Member to 1 Level** education objective.

Analysis indicates that the Pathways challenge is fundamentally an **onboarding challenge**, with almost 80% of members not enrolled in Pathways having joined within the past year.

The PQD and CGD teams are working closely together because **membership growth, retention and program quality are interconnected elements of the member experience**.

These indicators suggest that **Smedley Distinguished is well within reach if current momentum is sustained and translated into consistent club level action.**

2. The PQD Vision for 2026 to 2027

The role of Program Quality is ultimately not about accumulating DCP points.

It is about creating clubs where members:

- receive value from their membership;
- understand how to use the Toastmasters education program;
- have opportunities to participate;
- receive encouragement and feedback;
- develop relationships;
- progress through Pathways;
- take on leadership responsibilities;
- achieve meaningful educational milestones; and
- choose to continue their Toastmasters journey.

The DCP is therefore best viewed as an **outcome measure**, rather than the entire definition of club quality.

The member experience is the leading indicator, and DCP recognition is the lagging indicator.

This distinction is important.

If we focus only on DCP points, we risk reacting to problems after they have already become significant.

If we monitor the member experience, onboarding, mentoring, education participation, officer readiness, Club Success Plans and membership trends, we can intervene while there is still time to change the outcome.

3. The 2026 to 2027 Destination: 61 Smedley Distinguished Clubs

The District's official objective is:

61 Smedley Distinguished Clubs

The progression represented by the District objective is:

Achievement	District Objective
Distinguished	46
Select Distinguished	51
President's Distinguished	56
Smedley Distinguished	61

The year therefore has a very clear destination.

The objective is also intentionally greater than simply repeating last year's result.

District 86 finished 2025 to 2026 with 49 Distinguished Clubs against a goal of 45.

The opportunity this year is to turn that success into a repeatable club quality system.

That means identifying clubs early, understanding what is preventing them from progressing, and connecting them with the right resource at the right time.

4. Reading the Leading Indicators

One of the most important changes in District 86's approach this year is the deliberate focus on leading indicators.

It is too early in the program year to measure success by the number of Distinguished Clubs. As of August 28, there are currently zero Distinguished Clubs, which is entirely expected at this stage of the year.

Instead, we are looking for evidence that clubs are developing the behaviours and completing the activities that ultimately lead to Distinguished Club achievement.

How are we doing?

Are clubs building the behaviours that produce Distinguished Clubs?

The current assessment is approximately 70 or more clubs demonstrating positive indicators of club health and progress.

This is encouraging because these behaviours are appearing early in the year, when there is still considerable opportunity to build on them.

Where are clubs getting stuck?

The primary opportunities identified so far are onboarding and mentoring.

This finding is particularly significant because it connects directly with the Pathways analysis. Almost 80% of members who are not enrolled in Pathways have been members for less than one year. This suggests that the greatest opportunity is not simply encouraging members to use Pathways but ensuring that new members receive the support and guidance they need from the beginning of their Toastmasters journey.

What support will change the trajectory?

The District is responding with targeted resources rather than a one size fits all approach.

The Onboarding Team is:

- providing best practices and direct support to new clubs;
- providing training and resources to established clubs; and
- helping clubs strengthen the first experiences of their members.

The Mentoring Team is taking a similar approach by helping clubs establish effective mentoring practices and supporting the connection between mentors and new members.

The Pathways Team is providing:

- regular office hours;
- workshops;
- guidance on navigating Base Camp;
- support for understanding Pathways projects; and
- assistance for both members and club leaders.

Are members actually progressing?

It is too early to tell.

The 143 education awards earned as of August 28 provide an initial baseline, representing approximately 7% of the annual goal of 2,100 awards. However, meaningful conclusions about the rate of member progression should be made later in the year as more members have had an opportunity to participate, complete projects and achieve levels.

An encouraging early signal

There is already evidence of significant DCP activity. Three clubs have achieved at least five DCP goals, providing an early indication that some clubs are moving rapidly toward the behaviours associated with Distinguished Club performance.

The objective now is to understand what these clubs are doing well and how those practices can be shared with other clubs.

The PQD approach is therefore:

Identify the signal → Understand the barrier → Provide the right support → Measure progress → Share what works

This allows District 86 to intervene early, while there is still time to influence the June 30, 2027 outcome.

The message to District Council

We are not measuring August by how many Distinguished Clubs we have. We are measuring August by whether clubs are building the conditions that will produce Distinguished Clubs in June.

And at this point in the year, the indicators are encouraging.

DCP Points	Clubs
0	37
1	39
2	14
3	4
4	2

5	4
6	1
7+	0

This creates an important coaching picture.

64 clubs have already earned at least one DCP point.

There are 11 clubs at three or more points, creating an early acceleration pipeline.

At the same time, 37 clubs currently have zero DCP points.

That number should not be interpreted as a prediction of failure. In August, it is an opportunity for early intervention.

The District's strategy is to segment clubs according to their needs:

High performing clubs

Objective: Accelerate and replicate

Stable clubs

Objective: Deepen engagement and retention

At risk clubs

Objective: Recovery through focused coaching

This is fundamentally different from applying the same intervention to every club.

5. Club Success Planning: From Compliance to Ownership

One of the strongest early indicators is Club Success Planning.

As of August 28:

76 of 101 clubs have submitted their Club Success Plans.

Importantly:

- all 76 submissions were **early**;
- the official submission deadline is September 30;
- all submitted plans have been reviewed by Area and Division leaders.

This represents more than a compliance achievement.

The intention is to make the Club Success Plan the **foundation of the Area and Division coaching process**.

A club's priorities should flow into its Area Success Plan, and Area priorities should inform Division planning.

This creates a connected planning architecture:

Member needs → Club Success Plan → Area Success Plan → Division Success Plan → District support

The remaining 25 clubs represent an immediate opportunity to complete the planning cycle.

6. Officer Training: Building Leadership Capacity

Officer training is another important leading indicator.

As of August 28:

517 of 679 officers trained, representing 76.14%

The club level picture is:

- **32 clubs, 7 of 7 officers trained**
- **47 clubs, 4 to 6 officers trained**
- **21 clubs, 0 to 3 officers trained**

The District target is:

100% officer training by August 31.

The importance of officer training extends beyond meeting the Toastmasters requirement.

Trained officers are better equipped to:

- execute their Club Success Plan;
- understand their responsibilities;
- support members;
- conduct effective meetings;
- use available District resources;
- address member experience challenges; and
- build a culture of achievement.

The Officer Training Cup incentive reinforces this philosophy by rewarding clubs for each officer trained and providing additional recognition when all seven officers are trained.

The final 24% should therefore be viewed as **leadership capacity waiting to be activated**, rather than simply an administrative percentage remaining.

7. Education: 1 Member to 1 Level

A major Program Quality objective for 2026 to 2027 is:

1 Member to 1 Level

The District has established a year end objective of:

2,100 education awards

As of August 28:

143 education awards have been earned

That represents approximately:

7% of the annual goal

The significance of this initiative is greater than the number itself.

Educational achievement is one of the clearest ways to demonstrate that a member is receiving value from Toastmasters.

A member who progresses through a Pathways level has:

- participated;
- completed projects;
- received feedback;
- developed communication or leadership skills;
- invested time in their development; and
- experienced tangible progress.

The 1 Member to 1 Level initiative therefore gives clubs a simple way to translate the Toastmasters promise into measurable member outcomes.

8. The Pathways Finding: We Have an Onboarding Challenge

One of the most valuable pieces of analysis completed to date concerns Pathways engagement.

The analysis shows that **almost 80% of members who are not enrolled in Pathways have been members for less than one year.**

This changes the intervention.

The District does not appear to have primarily a **Pathways motivation problem.**

It has an **onboarding problem.**

That is an important distinction.

If a new member does not understand:

- what Pathways is;
- how it connects to their goals;
- how to select or begin a project;
- how to navigate Base Camp;
- how to find help;
- who their mentor is; or
- what their next step should be,

then asking them to use Pathways is unlikely to solve the problem.

The solution is to improve the first part of the member journey.

9. The Member Journey

The PQD strategy therefore connects three functions:

Onboarding + Mentoring + Pathways

The desired journey is:

Welcome → Connect → Navigate → Participate → Achieve

Onboarding

The Onboarding team will:

- support newly chartered clubs;
- help established clubs improve their onboarding practices;
- share best practices;
- help clubs create a consistent first experience for new members.

Mentoring

The Mentoring team will help ensure:

- mentors are assigned quickly;
- new members have someone to turn to;
- mentors understand their role;
- mentees receive support;
- mentoring supports the member's Pathways progress.

Pathways

The Pathways team will help members and club leaders:

- understand the education program;
- navigate Base Camp;
- understand projects;
- progress through levels; and
- turn learning into achievement.

This creates a deliberate pipeline:

New member → Onboarding → Mentor → Pathways → Projects → Education Award

The objective is not to push members through a program.

It is to **remove friction from the member journey**.

10. Club Quality and Moments of Truth

The District's club quality strategy also incorporates the **Moments of Truth** approach.

Dashboard data can tell us where something may be wrong.

It cannot always tell us why.

For example, a club may show:

- low education activity;
- weak Pathways participation;
- declining membership;
- incomplete officer training; or
- stalled DCP progress.

Those are signals.

The next step is diagnosis.

The PQD approach is:

Identify → Diagnose → Prioritize → Coach → Follow Up

Moments of Truth, club visits, member feedback and conversations with club leaders provide the qualitative information necessary to understand the underlying issue.

This enables Area and Division Directors to become **coaches rather than inspectors**.

11. A More Targeted Club Support Model

The PQD team will support a segmented model.

High performing clubs

Objective: Accelerate

Questions include:

- What are they doing exceptionally well?
- Can their practices be replicated?
- Can they mentor another club?
- Can they become examples for the District?

Stable clubs

Objective: Deepen engagement

Questions include:

- Are members progressing?
- Are new members being onboarded?
- Are mentors assigned?
- Are education goals being achieved?
- Are members attending and participating?

At risk clubs

Objective: Recovery

Questions include:

- What is the root problem?
- What are the one or two highest value actions?
- Who owns those actions?
- What support is required?
- When will progress be reviewed?

12. Incentives: Making the Journey a Game

The District has developed a broad 2026 to 2027 incentive program designed to reinforce the behaviours that lead to club success.

Philosophy is important:

Reward the behaviours that create Distinguished Clubs, not only the final outcome.

The program includes incentives around:

- Club Success Plans;
- Pathways progression;
- DCP milestones;
- meeting excellence;
- education achievement;
- Triple Crown;
- mentoring;
- officer training;
- elections and officer list submission;
- contests;
- quality meeting streaks;
- overall Program Quality achievement;
- Fall Event participation; and
- Spring Conference participation.

The incentive framework includes:

Activity	Points
Club Success Plan submitted	50

Officer trained	25
Education award	20
Triple Crown recipient	50
Distinguished	100
Select Distinguished	150
President's Distinguished	200
Smedley Distinguished	300

The program also introduces **badges, levels, leaderboards, monthly missions and mystery rewards** to make the journey visible and engaging throughout the year.

This is deliberately designed to allow clubs of different sizes and circumstances to participate and experience success.

13. Recognition as a Program Quality Strategy

Recognition is not being treated as an afterthought.

Recognition reinforces the behaviours we want repeated.

The incentive program therefore provides opportunities to recognize:

- progress;
- education;
- training;
- mentoring;
- meeting quality;
- contest participation;
- Distinguished achievement; and
- exceptional contribution.

The objective is to make achievement **visible, personal and celebrated**.

Recognition also creates opportunities for the PQD team to connect directly with clubs and members.

14. The PQD Team

The scale of the District requires a team approach.

The 2026 to 2027 PQD team includes dedicated leadership for:

- Program Quality;
- Education;
- Pathways;
- Mentoring;
- Onboarding;
- Club Success Plans;
- DCP;
- TLI;
- Officer and leadership training;
- Incentives;
- Meetings;
- Contests;
- Contest Readiness;
- FreeToastHost;
- Easy Speak;
- IDEA;
- DTM;
- Fall Event; and
- Conference planning.

This structure is important because Program Quality is not one person's responsibility.

It is a **District wide support system**.

The team exists to provide:

Tools. Training. Coaching. Recognition. Support.

The goal is to make it easier for Area Directors, Division Directors, club officers and members to get the help they need when they need it.

15. PQD and CGD: One Member Experience

Program Quality and Club Growth cannot operate independently.

The CGD function focuses heavily on:

- membership growth;
- recruitment;
- retention;

- club health; and
- sustainable membership.

PQD focuses heavily on:

- education;
- engagement;
- onboarding;
- mentoring;
- leadership;
- club quality; and
- member achievement.

But the member does not experience these as separate departments.

The member experiences **Toastmasters**.

A club that attracts members but fails to engage them will struggle.

A club that provides excellent education but cannot sustain membership will struggle.

A club with excellent officers but poor onboarding will struggle.

A club with strong membership but weak member achievement will struggle to create long term value.

Therefore:

PQD + CGD = Club Health

The two functions must continually exchange information, identify risks and coordinate interventions.

16. Fall District Event

The Fall Event will be held:

November 22, 2026

Waterloo, Ontario

In person

The event is designed to combine learning, recognition and celebration.

Planned highlights include:

- an international keynote presentation;
- a workshop with Region 5 Advisor **Leslie Benfield**;
- District Of The Year Awards; and
- the Humorous Speech Contest Final.

The international keynote speaker is currently anticipated to be **World Champion Mike Carr**, subject to final confirmation.

Early bird tickets are currently available.

The event is intended to be more than another District gathering.

It is an opportunity to:

Learn → Connect → Celebrate → Re energize

17. Spring Conference

The District is planning its Spring Conference for:

April 30 to May 2, 2027

Kitchener, Ontario

The event remains **pending final contract details**.

No theme has yet been established.

The Spring Conference will provide an important opportunity to:

- recognize progress;
- provide advanced learning;
- develop leaders;
- celebrate members;
- strengthen relationships across the District; and
- create the final momentum toward June 30.

The objective is for the Spring Conference to be **no less impressive than the Fall Event**.

18. The Next 90 Days

The next 90 days will be particularly important because this is the period in which the District can still influence the eventual June outcome.

The immediate priorities are:

1. Finish officer training

Move from **76.14% to 100%**.

2. Complete Club Success Plans

Move from **76 to 101 clubs**.

3. Turn plans into action

Ensure Club Success Plans become living documents with:

- priorities;
- owners;
- deadlines;

- measures; and
- follow up.

4. Strengthen onboarding

Focus particularly on members in their first year.

5. Activate mentoring

Get mentors assigned quickly and ensure the relationship produces engagement.

6. Drive 1 Member to 1 Level

Turn educational progress into a normal part of club culture.

7. Identify clubs requiring intervention

Use the dashboard to identify signals early and validate them through conversations and club visits.

8. Celebrate progress

Recognize the clubs and members who are demonstrating the behaviours we want to see repeated.

19. What Success Will Look Like

By June 30, 2027, success should not be defined solely by whether the District reaches 61 Smedley Distinguished Clubs.

Success should be visible throughout the year.

Club leadership

- 100% officer training;
- officers who understand their responsibilities;
- Club Success Plans being actively used.

Member experience

- strong onboarding;
- timely mentor assignment;
- increased member participation;
- stronger understanding of Pathways.

Education

- sustained progress toward **2,100 education awards**;
- more members completing levels;
- more clubs developing an education culture.

Club quality

- fewer clubs waiting until spring to address problems;

- earlier interventions;
- more clubs progressing steadily through the DCP.

Recognition

- members and clubs regularly celebrated for progress;
- incentives driving the behaviours that create quality.

District performance

- a stronger pipeline of Distinguished Clubs;
- stronger membership and retention;
- and ultimately **61 or more Smedley Distinguished Clubs**.

20. The Measures That Matter

The District should continue monitoring a concise set of leading indicators.

Leading Indicator	August 28 Status	Desired Direction
Membership	2,093	Sustainable growth
Officer training	76.14%	100%
Clubs at 7/7 training	32	Increase
Clubs with 4+ trained	79	Increase
Club Success Plans	76/101	101/101
Education awards	143	2,100
Clubs with DCP progress	64	Increase
Clubs at 3+ DCP points	11	Increase
Smedley Distinguished	0 currently	61

The goal is to continually ask:

Are these indicators moving in the direction that makes 61 Smedley Distinguished increasingly likely?

If the answer is yes, we accelerate.

If the answer is no, we diagnose and intervene.

21. The District Council's Role

The District Council has an important role in this strategy.

The ask is not simply:

"Help us reach 61."

The more important request is:

"Help us make sure every member gets the greatest possible value from their Toastmasters experience."

District Council members can help by:

- encouraging clubs to ask for help early;
- connecting clubs with Area and Division resources;
- identifying barriers before they become crises;
- encouraging members to participate in Pathways;
- supporting onboarding and mentoring;
- celebrating educational achievement;
- sharing successful practices;
- participating in District learning events; and
- reinforcing a culture where asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

The District has resources available.

Use them.

22. Conclusion

District 86 is not starting the 2026 to 2027 program year from scratch.

We have:

- a strong prior year foundation;
- a clear objective;
- early Club Success Planning;
- strong officer training momentum;
- a measurable education goal;
- a new understanding of the onboarding challenge;
- dedicated Pathways, Mentoring and Onboarding resources;
- a growing incentive system;
- a broad PQD team;
- close cooperation between PQD and CGD; and
- sufficient time to influence the outcome.

The most important message is therefore one of **confidence combined with urgency**.

61 Smedley Distinguished Clubs is within our reach.

But it will not happen because we hope it happens.

It will happen because clubs receive the right support, at the right time, for the right problem, and because we consistently turn data into action.

The PQD team is ready.

The CGD team is ready.

The Area and Division leaders are essential to the execution.

And every member has a role in creating the experience that makes Toastmasters valuable.

Ask for help.

We're here for you.

61 is the objective. Excellence is the journey.