Leadership Intensive Program 2021:
Summary of Evaluation Findings and Insights

WIDI WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE | **RMIT** UNIVERSITY

Contents

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Executive Summary

The success of Victoria's wide-sweeping family violence reforms depends on the strength of the sector leaders and the workforce that delivers them.

In line with the vision and priorities set out in *Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response and Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–2022*, the Leadership Intensive Program is designed to build the sector-wide leadership, collaborative practice and change management capabilities of the family violence workforce.

WIDI has been delivering leadership training to the social services sector since 2017, when the Institute piloted its 'Executive Masterclass'. In 2018 the Centre for Workforce Excellence – a division of Family Safety Victoria – commissioned the Institute to deliver the Program – renamed the 'Leadership Intensive Program' – to leaders in the family violence sector. Since 2018, over 450 leaders across metropolitan and regional Victoria have completed the Leadership Intensive Program.

In 2021 the Leadership Intensives were delivered online in line with ongoing public health measures and uncertainties around further lockdowns.

Semester 1

The Semester 1 Program ran from March to June 2021. In Semester 1, several new elements were trialled, including the introduction of Community of Practice groups to support peer-to-peer learning.

A total of 75 participants enrolled in the Semester 1, 2021 program. In contrast to previous iterations of the Program, the Semester 1 cohort was, broadly speaking, drawn from middle management and emerging leaders. Of the 75 participants, 19 (1 in 4) withdrew from the program due to lack of time and excessive workload.

Outcomes and Impact

The majority of the participants finished the Program with enhanced knowledge and training in one or more leadership capabilities, having reflected on their own leadership style, or making new strategic connections that will improve sector-level collaboration among participants.

The participants of the Leadership Intensives appreciated that the Program provided them with the opportunity, time, and space in an online learning environment to connect and reflect with other leaders working in their sector.

For two-thirds of the participants who completed the Program, the Leadership Intensives enabled them to apply new concepts, theories, frameworks, and approaches to inform their leadership practice.

80–90% of the participants reported that the Leadership Intensives helped them to develop strategies to work towards continuous improvement and to promote leading collaborative practice within the social services sector.

A large proportion of the participants (75%) reported that the Leadership Intensive training helped them to motivate and develop their workforces.

Course Design and Delivery

Similar to 2020, in Semester 1 of 2021 over 80% of the participants were satisfied with the content, speakers, and facilitation of the seminar Q&A in the Program.

In earlier iterations of the Leadership Intensives, leaders valued hearing from speakers from outside the family violence sector. In the Semester 1, 2021 Program, however, participants were evenly divided between those who enjoyed hearing perspectives from beyond the sector and those who preferred speakers from within the family violence workforce, who spoke directly about the experience and unique challenges that the sector and its leaders face.

The survey results and interviews show mixed reviews about the effectiveness of the Community of Practice sessions assisting learners to network with other leaders and collaborate on sharing solutions with other leaders.

While nearly all participants felt they would have enjoyed the experience of face-to-face Program delivery, they were also cognisant of the fact that online delivery was very convenient and made attendance possible for many who might not otherwise have been able to participate.

Most of the participants reported that the Canvas Learning Management System was difficult to navigate and overly complex.

Recommendations and Enhancements

Data and recommendations from the Semester 1 program evaluation were used to inform enhancements to the Leadership Intensive Program in Semester 2.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Enhance pedagogy for online content delivery

Speakers were asked to target their presentations to participants who are relatively new to leadership roles and to provide concrete examples of tools or approaches to leadership practice that participants could reflect on and adapt for their own use.

Following mixed results, the Community of Practice sessions were discontinued for the Semester 2 Program. The Semester 1 evaluation recognised that the Community of Practice session was an overreach for the cohort, given their level of seniority, time pressures, and the unprecedented burdens of COVID-19, home-schooling and successive lockdowns. Instead, 20-minute 'break-out rooms' were embedded within the workshops to foster peer-to-peer learning.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Improve the quality of course operations

The Canvas course shell was redesigned and simplified to improve the ease of use and navigation. A refined communications plan was instigated which focused on clear, simple and timely announcements and emails, as well as the sharing of links to pre-readings, seminars, workshops, recordings and surveys.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Strategically navigate 'time pressures' and 'workload issues' faced by leaders

At the start of the Program, the facilitator and participants discussed how they would engage with online learning in order to maximise the benefit for all involved. The presentation component of all seminars was recorded, with recordings uploaded to the Canvas site on the day of the seminar.

The time commitment for the Semester 2 Program was reduced due to the cessation of Communities of Practice and learning tasks.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Sharpen leadership outcomes to provide opportunity for our leaders to self-assess their learning and growth at the beginning, middle, and end of the course

The Program Team introduced MySnapshot in Semester 2. MySnapshot is a self-assessment tool that allows learners to evaluate their prior knowledge and abilities, with the aim of helping them to manage their own expectations and prioritise their learning.

Semester 2

The Semester 1 Program ran from August to October 2021. A total of 72 participants enrolled in Semester 2 and only 1 participant withdrew from the course due to time pressures.

21% of participants had been in a leadership role for less than one year, 24% had been in a leadership role for 1–2 years and a further 24% had been in such a role for 3–4 years. 20% had 5–10 years' experience in leadership, 7% had 11–20 years' experience, while 4% had been in leadership role for more than 20 years.

Therefore, 69% of the Semester 2 cohort had been in a leadership role for 4 years or less. This lower level of experience and seniority, when compared with previous cohorts of the Leadership Intensive Program, created a different level of engagement and focus for the majority of the group, who were at an early stage in their leadership journey and had fewer reference points to draw upon in their career.

Outcomes and Impact

The emerging-leader composition of much of this semester's cohort has significantly affected the scope and nature of the Program's impact.

More than half of the participants interviewed explicitly mentioned that one of their key takeaways from the Program was the confidence boost it afforded them.

Participants valued the fact that their learnings during the Leadership Intensives often validated their own leadership style and approach.

Learners reported that the Program was re-energising and invigorating for them during a time of widespread workplace fatigue and burnout due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The idea of 'influencing up' within their organisation was quite a challenge and a relatively unfamiliar concept to some participants.

Course Design and Delivery

90% of survey respondents were 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the content, speakers, and facilitation of the seminar Q&A.

The composition of the break-out rooms was a recurring theme in the qualitative data. The vastly different levels of leadership capabilities proved challenging for many learners, including participants with more experience leading and those who were newer to leadership.

The MySnapshot self-assessment tool was mostly a missed opportunity for participants, with a low response rate to the final survey preventing most of the cohort from receiving their MySnapshot results. The timing of the final MySnapshot survey coincided with high daily COVID-19 case numbers in Victoria and the introduction of mandatory vaccination policies in many workplaces, which goes some way towards explaining the low survey completion rate.

Efficacy of Implemented Recommendations

Our evaluation findings for the Semester 2 Leadership Intensive Program demonstrate the calibre of the speakers, the strength of the course content, and the extent to which seminar and workshop topics are valued by course participants.

Despite the efforts of the Program Team and speakers to target course content more effectively to the needs and goals of junior and emerging leaders, some topics still proved challenging for this cohort.

The survey results and qualitative data highlight the exceptional communications and facilitation work of the Program Team and the high esteem in which they were held by the Semester 2 cohort. The clear communications and program coordination received unanimous praise from our interviewees.

Another recommendation that was successfully implemented in Semester 2 was the modification and simplification of the Canvas Learning Management System. Participants found it easy to navigate and no significant problems were reported during the Program.

The incredible time constraints and excessive workloads of the cohort, as well as the additional burdens brought by lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic, were more apparent than ever to the Program Team this semester. These pressures adversely affected attendance rates, with a significant number of participants unable to attend the seminars and workshops in person due to competing demands on their time. Despite these constraints, the qualitative data shows that participants felt well supported by the Program Team, who recognised the multifaceted pressures faced by the cohort.

Conclusion / Final Considerations

Despite the cessation of the Program in its current form, we offer the following insights for future training activities and initiatives for the family violence sector.

Online Delivery

The Leadership Intensive Program has been delivered in an online format for the past two years. Participants have shown that they not only understand and adroitly navigate the online learning environment but also appreciate the convenience of online delivery. Remote digital delivery has enabled the attendance of many regional participants and those who are hard-pressed to attend professional development programs in person. Despite these obvious advantages, participants still recognise the benefits of face-to-face training and the opportunity to meet and network with sector colleagues. While the Program has received impressive levels of engagement from online learners, we acknowledge that the group dynamic, peer-to-peer sharing, and dedicated 'head space' of face-to-face learning cannot be fully replicated by digital Program delivery. A blended format of 'hybrid' Program delivery for future training initiatives will be beneficial for this sector.

Sector Perspectives

Participants have benefitted from hearing the diverse perspectives of speakers across the Program. In earlier iterations of the Leadership Intensives, leaders valued hearing from speakers from outside the family violence sector. More recent cohorts, featuring a higher proportion of junior and emerging leaders, have wanted to hear the perspectives of speakers from within the family violence workforce to progress their learning and understanding of feminist leadership, as these speakers communicated their own experiences and the unique challenges that the sector and its leaders face. Maintaining a diversity of perspectives in future training offerings and ensuring close attention is paid to the individual requirements of each cohort or audience are critical elements for successful learning environments.

Barriers to Training

There are several interrelated barriers to completing, or successfully engaging with, the Leadership Intensive Program training that are systemic challenges in the family violence sector. Participants must cope with excessive workload pressures and competing demands upon their time. There is also widespread fatigue and burnout that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional burdens it has placed on sector leaders. Completing the training in the online environment has also meant that many junior or emerging leaders have encountered multiple operational distractions while attempting to focus on their learning. We would urge that the barriers and challenges faced by leaders are considered as part of the development of any future training.

Targeting Training Supports

Four years of delivering the Leadership Intensive Program has shown us that leaders in the family violence sector are not a homogenous group. We must recognise that the varying levels of experience and the discrete subsections of leadership within the family violence workforce means that different supports will be required for leaders at each stage of their career. Any future initiatives must consider the capabilities of leaders and the implications for training. Program content should then be tailored to the particular capabilities of leaders in each cohort.

Government Investment

Victorian Government investment has made it possible for over 450 sector leaders to receive this invaluable training offered by the Leadership Intensive Program at no cost to themselves or their organisation. We note here the importance of funding for any future upskilling initiatives to support family violence workers to undertake training and development. As described in this report, the benefits of training are many and include development and application of new knowledge, building the confidence of leaders, fostering peer networks and relationships and re-energising and invigorating leaders at a time of widespread workplace fatigue and burnout exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the vital role that leaders play in the implementation and success of the Victorian Government's family violence reforms, future investment in supporting leaders to undertake further training and development is justified.

Context

The Leadership Intensive Program is one of a range of initiatives that the Victorian Government has invested in as part of an ambitious vision of a future where Victorians are safe, thriving and living free from family violence.

These reform endeavours are part of the response to the findings of the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The success of Victoria's wide-sweeping family violence reforms depends on the strength of the sector leaders and the workforce that delivers them. In line with the vision and priorities set out in *Building from Strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response and Strengthening the Foundations: First Rolling Action Plan 2019–2022,* the Leadership Intensive Program is designed to build the sector-wide leadership and change management capabilities of the family violence workforce.

WIDI has been delivering leadership training to the social services sector since 2017, when the Institute piloted its 'Executive Masterclass', featuring co-designed course content and a diverse range of guest speakers. Following the success of the pilot program, in 2018 the Centre for Workforce Excellence, a division of Family Safety Victoria (FSV), commissioned the Institute to deliver 12 Leadership Intensive Program streams to build leadership capability in the family violence sector. Since then, the Leadership Intensive Program has been delivered to over 450 leaders across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Introduction

In 2021, COVID-19 has impacted the Leadership Intensive Program in several ways. Firstly, the adverse effects of the 'shadow pandemic'[1] of violence against women and children continued during the extended sixth lockdown in Victoria. Secondly, the excessive workloads, time pressures, workplace stress and fatigue of many Program participants was even more pronounced.

The Program was negatively affected by high participant withdrawal rates in Semester 1, poor evaluation survey completion rates across both semesters, and a sharp downturn in attendance in the second half of Semester 2 that corresponded with rapidly rising COVID-19 daily case numbers and the introduction of mandatory vaccination policies in many organisations. Finally, the delivery of the Leadership Intensives continued to respond to this changing context, which included a fully online Program and compliance with social-distancing requirements.

As shown in Figure 1, the delivery of the Semester 1 Program began at a time when Victoria was in recovery mode with COVID-19 cases in single digits. On the day of the Orientation sessions (20 April 2021), Victoria reported 3 new cases and a 7-day average of 2 cases. Participants who had been working from home were returning to the office and organisations were grappling with hybrid forms of working. Just after the halfway mark in the Program, the Government introduced a snap lockdown for the entire State to manage the spread of

infections from the Delta variant. During Lockdown #4, school-aged children returned to remote and flexible learning. The Semester 1 Program concluded shortly before Lockdown #4 finished.

All of Victoria was in lockdown for the duration of the Semester 2 Program. In line with restrictions in Lockdown #6, home-learning was reintroduced for all school-aged children with exceptions for children of essential workers and children deemed at risk. Limits to childcare and kindergarten access were reintroduced partway through this lockdown, before the Leadership Intensive Program commenced. It is worth noting that a number of participants in the Semester 2 Program were working and undertaking the Leadership Intensive training while also providing remote-learning support to school-aged children and caring for preschool-aged children. The announcement of mandatory vaccines for Authorised Workers on 1 October also had an impact with several participants reporting additional workload associated with implementing the vaccine mandate within their organisations.

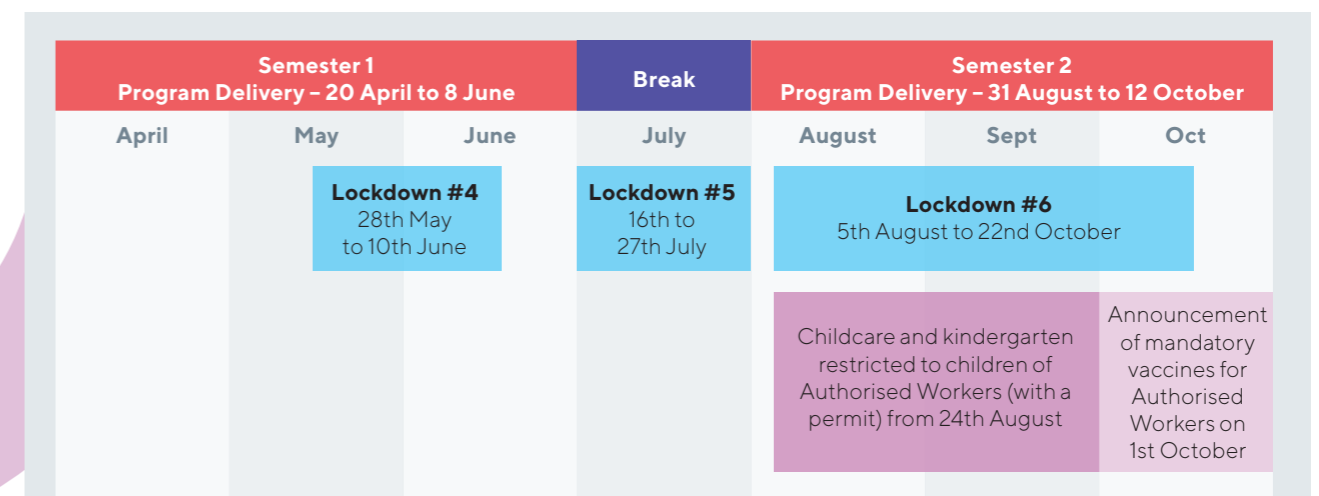| Semester 1 Program Delivery – 20 April to 8 June			Break	Semester 2 Program Delivery – 31 August to 12 October		
April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct
	Lockdown #4 28th May to 10th June		Lockdown #5 16th to 27th July	Lockdown #6 5th August to 22nd October		
				Childcare and kindergarten restricted to children of Authorised Workers (with a permit) from 24th August		Announcement of mandatory vaccines for Authorised Workers on 1st October

Figure 1: 2021 Program Timeline

The results from our 2020 evaluation showed that the participants had strong levels of engagement and high levels of satisfaction with the online facilitation, content, speakers, and program design. Thus, the 2021 model replicated the majority of the features of the 2020 Leadership Intensive Program.

The curriculum development process for both semesters of the 2021 Leadership Intensives also incorporated the recommendations from the 2020 Impact Evaluation of the Leadership Intensive Program report. The program included the development of a semi-structured curriculum based on core topics and participant needs, increased focus on building group trust and collaboration, and a review of the relevance and impact of leadership topics in the family violence sector. Like many other programs, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health measures necessitated that the Leadership Intensives shift to an online environment with content delivery within the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) and face-to-face sessions replaced with the live video conferencing tool, Collaborate Ultra.

The Evaluation

The evaluation uses a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, to inform the overall findings and recommendations. The main benefit of this approach is that it allows the reporting of findings from quantitative data sources, that may be explained by qualitative rationale.

The use of a mixed-methods approach facilitates higher validity and reliability of data, as data drawn from different sources can be triangulated for a more holistic discussion. The data collection process for this evaluation is informed by three key evaluation questions discussed below.

1. Did the Leadership Intensives make an impact?

This evaluation question captures data on skills, knowledge, and capabilities that individual participants developed as a result of their participation in the 2021 Leadership Intensives. The evaluation begins to explore the impacts of the program at the organisation and sector level.

2. How effective was the online course design and delivery?

This question draws together different sources of data to develop an understanding of the online design and delivery experience as well as the barriers and enablers of the impact discussed in question 1.

3. What could be done differently in the future?

This section focuses on the future implications for the 2021 Leadership Intensives based on the insights and findings discussed below.

A range of data collection sources were used to collect data on key metrics such as:

- The pre-course co-design survey to gauge participants' areas of interest and demographics,
- The mid-program post-session survey(s) that provided feedback on individual session experience, [2]
- The end-of-the program outcomes survey which helped us to gain insights on participants' feedback on the outcomes, overall learning experience, and improvements for the future.
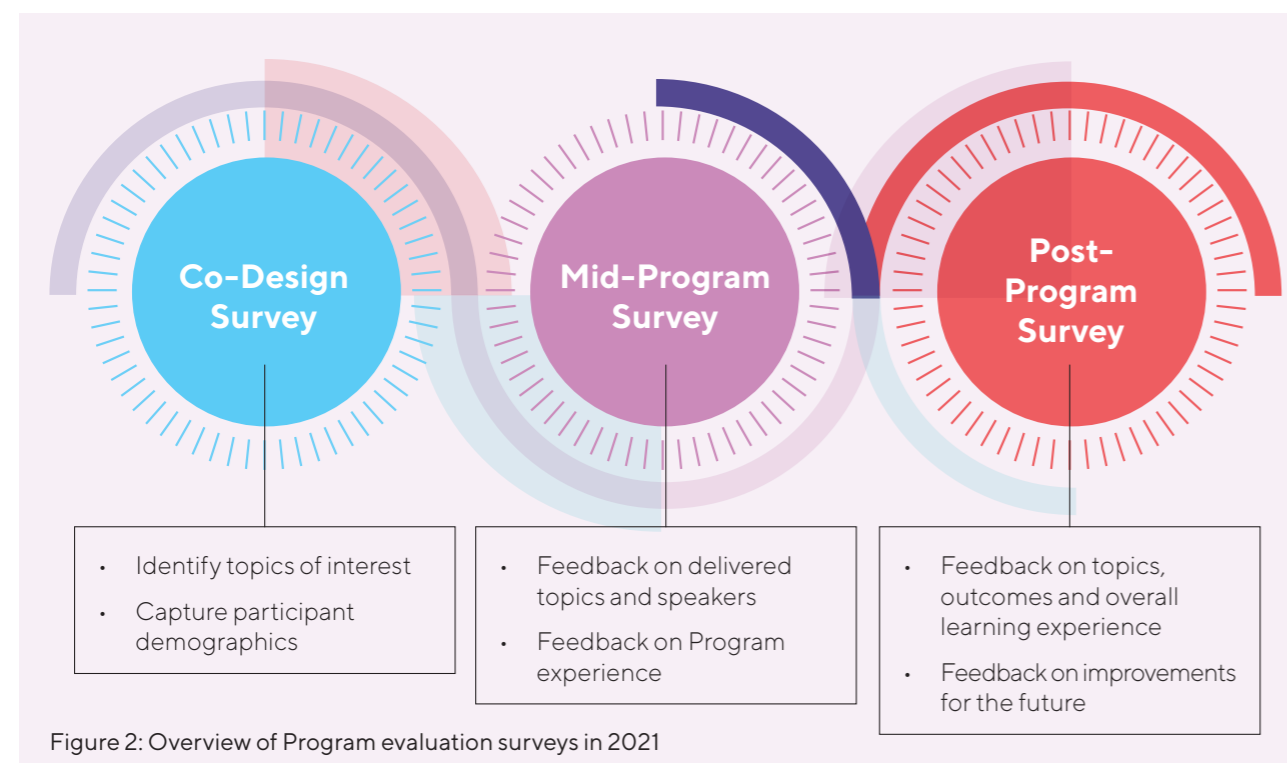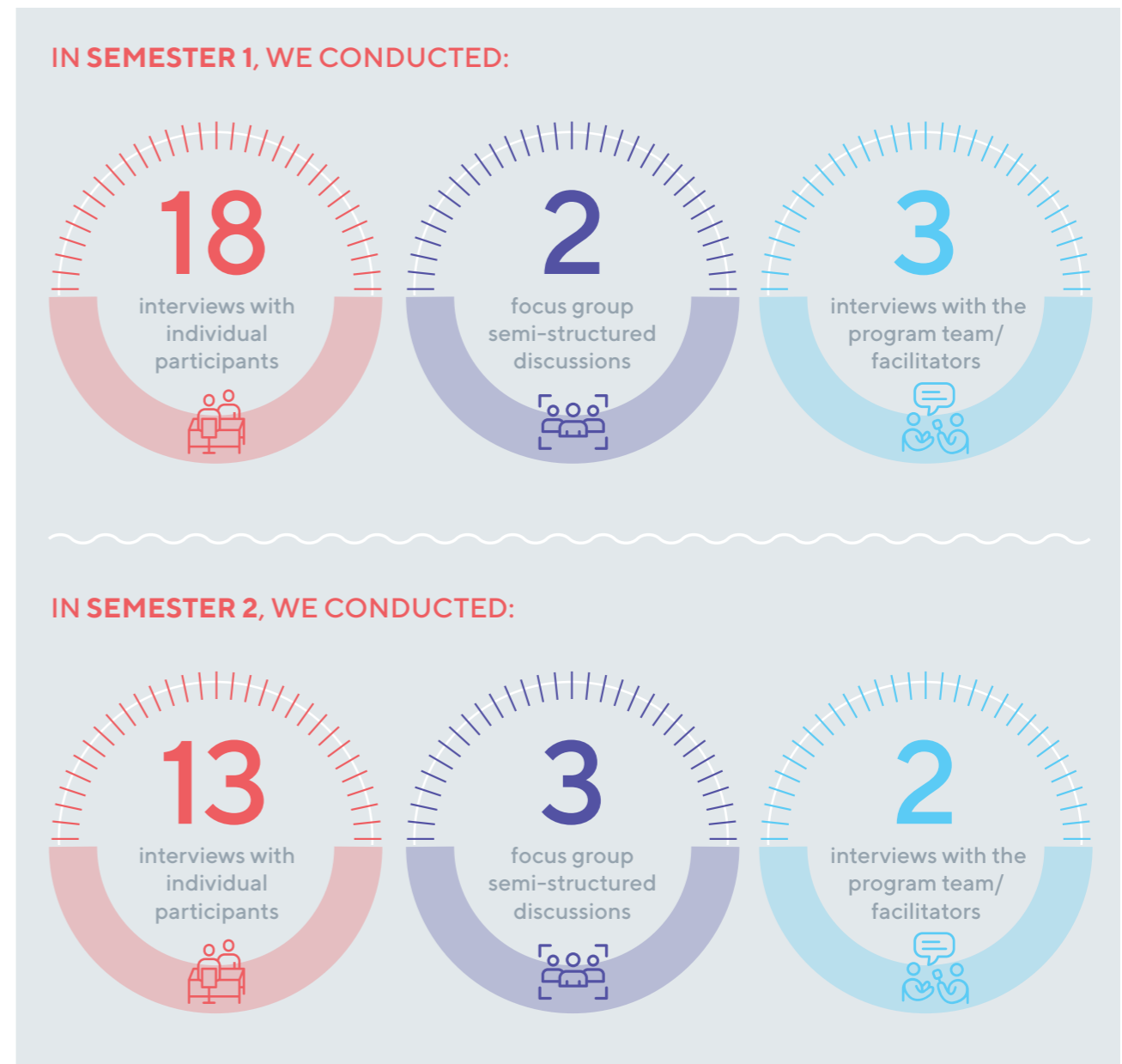
Figure 2: Overview of Program evaluation surveys in 2021

Co-Design Survey
- Identify topics of interest
- Capture participant demographics

Mid-Program Survey
- Feedback on delivered topics and speakers
- Feedback on Program experience

Post-Program Survey
- Feedback on topics, outcomes and overall learning experience
- Feedback on improvements for the future

Most of the survey response items had a 5-point Likert scale rating, yes/no response, or an open-text category on the participants' experience of different aspects of the session. All three surveys were administered through RMIT Qualtrics, and respondents spent approximately 7–10 minutes completing the survey.

The semi-structured interviews with participants and focus groups complemented the largely quantitative survey results by providing rich contextual information about participant experience of the Leadership Intensive Program, including how they have applied new learnings and insights and how they intend to use the learnings from the program to improve overall sector capacity.

IN **SEMESTER 1**, WE CONDUCTED:

18 interviews with individual participants

2 focus group semi-structured discussions

3 interviews with the program team/ facilitators

IN **SEMESTER 2**, WE CONDUCTED:

13 interviews with individual participants

3 focus group semi-structured discussions

2 interviews with the program team/ facilitators

Limitations

The Program evaluation surveys conducted during both semesters of the 2021 Leadership Intensives received lower response rates than previous years. The low response rates can be attributed to the time pressures experienced by the participants, as well as the added burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two short lockdowns impacted the Semester 1 Program and, during this time, many participants were also transitioning to hybrid work. More than 25% of the Semester 1 participants withdrew from the Program.

The Semester 2 Program coincided with the extended sixth lockdown in Victoria and the introduction of mandatory vaccinations in many workplaces. The response rate to the end-of-program survey was only 54%.

We acknowledge that these low response rates imply that it is difficult to draw conclusions from the available data, however, they were triangulated by semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a diverse range of participants and document reviews.

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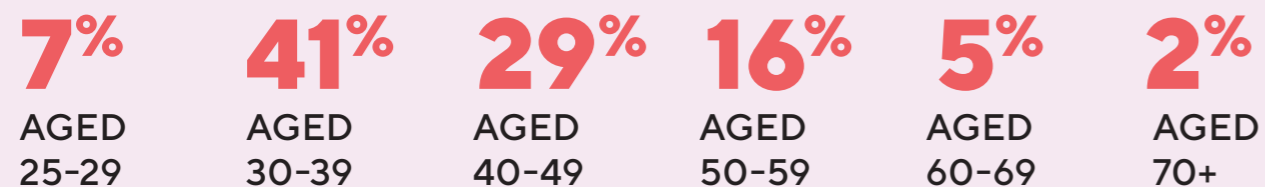# About the 2021 Leadership Intensive Program Participants
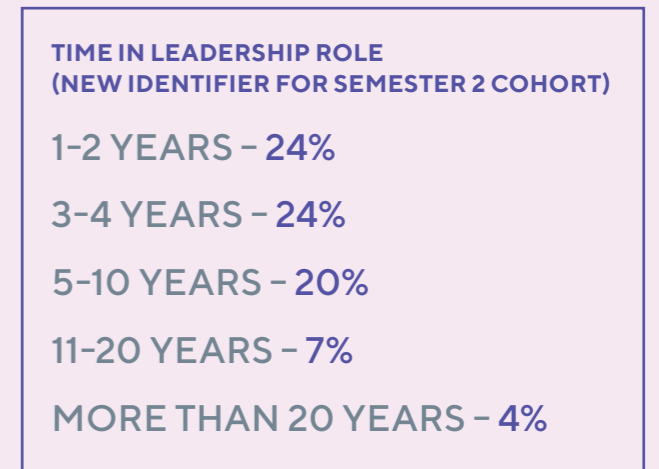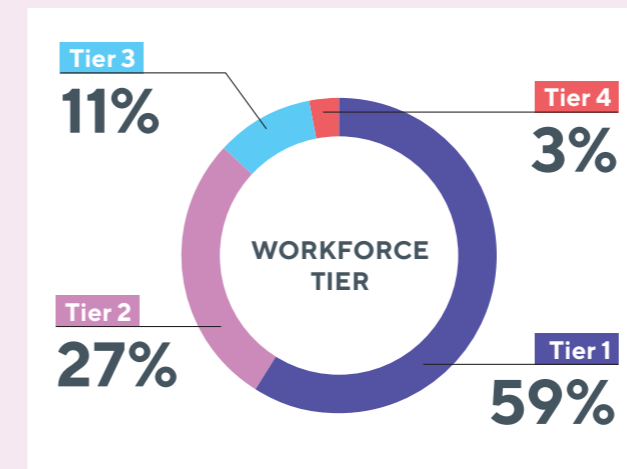
DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF 2021 SEMESTER 1 COHORT

72%
of the participants worked in metropolitan Melbourne

23%
of the participants worked in regional Victoria

5%
of the participants worked in both regional and metropolitan Melbourne

WORKFORCE TIER
- Tier 3 — 10%
- Tier 4 — 3%
- Tier 2 — 28%
- Tier 1 — 59%

PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED AS (%)
- **2%** MALE
- **96%** FEMALE
- **2%** NON-BINARY/GENDER DIVERSE
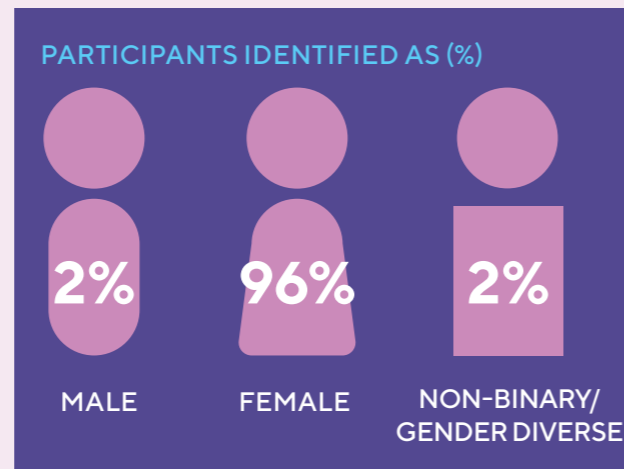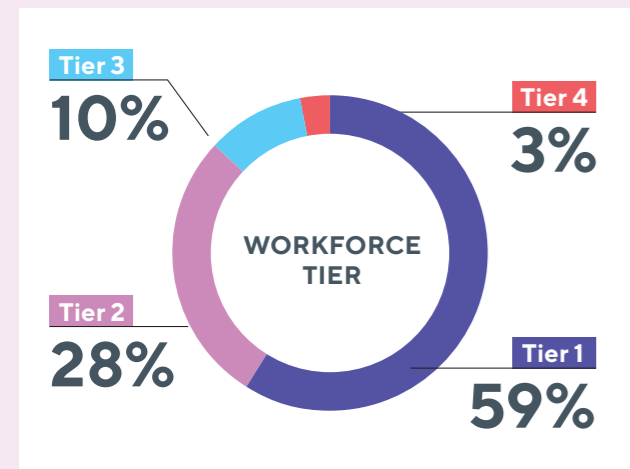
ATSI
None of the participants in Semester 1 identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

LINE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES
- **73%** of participants manage staff
- **27%** of participants do not manage staff

THE MAJORITY OF PARTICIPANTS WERE AGED

7% AGED 25-29
41% AGED 30-39
29% AGED 40-49
16% AGED 50-59
5% AGED 60-69
2% AGED 70+

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF 2021 SEMESTER 2 COHORT

42%
of the participants worked in metropolitan Melbourne

58%
of the participants worked in regional Victoria

PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED AS
- **2.8%** MALE
- **97.2%** FEMALE

WORKFORCE TIER
- Tier 3 — 11%
- Tier 4 — 3%
- Tier 2 — 27%
- Tier 1 — 59%

TIME IN LEADERSHIP ROLE (NEW IDENTIFIER FOR SEMESTER 2 COHORT)
- 1-2 YEARS – 24%
- 3-4 YEARS – 24%
- 5-10 YEARS – 20%
- 11-20 YEARS – 7%
- MORE THAN 20 YEARS – 4%

ATSI
1 participant in Semester 2 identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

LINE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES
- **73%** of participants manage staff
- **27%** of participants do not manage staff

THE MAJORITY OF PARTICIPANTS WERE AGED

6% AGED 25-29
39% AGED 30-39
23% AGED 40-49
31% AGED 50-59
1% AGED 60-69
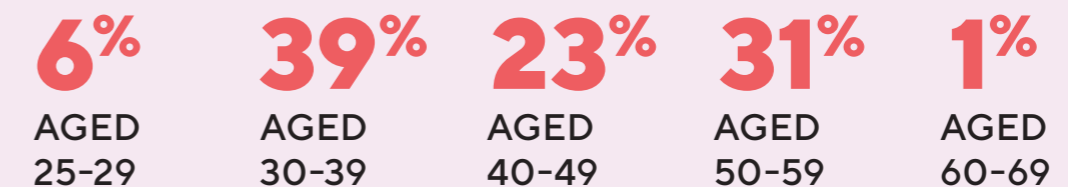
Part 1A: Leadership Intensives Evaluation Summary – Semester 1, 2021
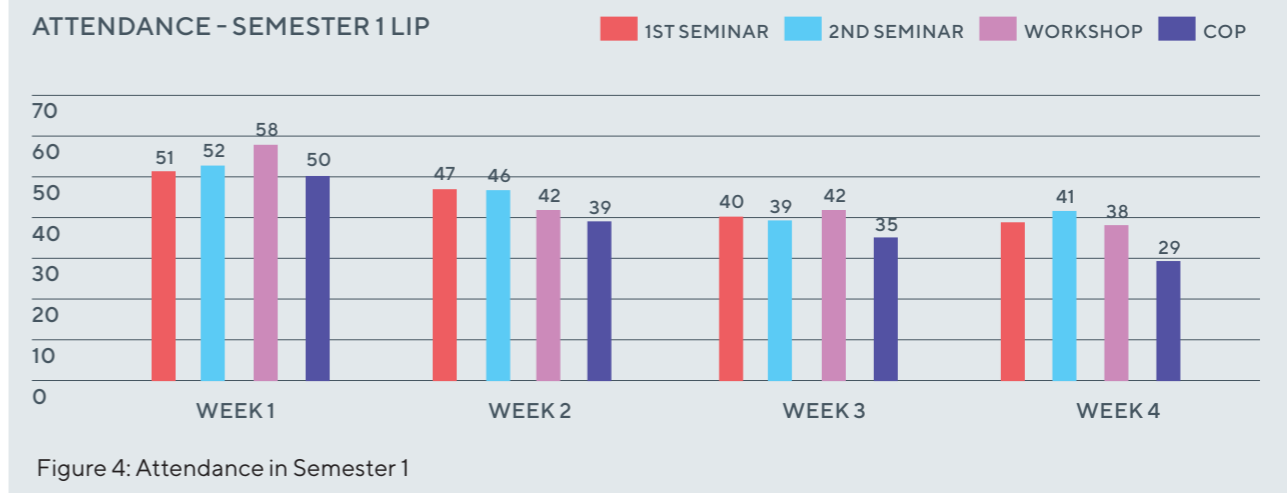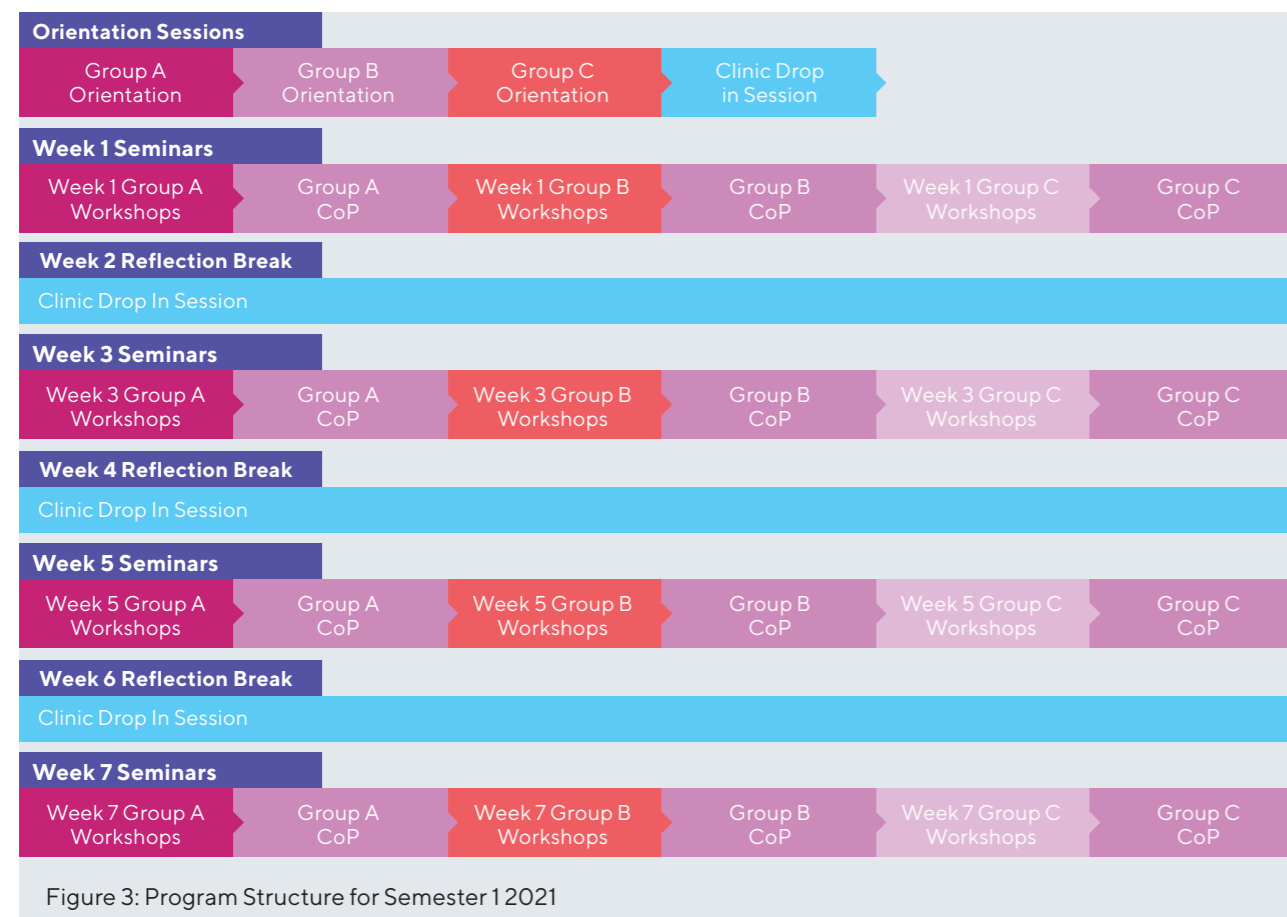
Program Overview

In 2021 the Program continued in the online format, due to ongoing public health measures and uncertainties around further lockdowns.

As in 2020, the Program was designed to support the following learning outcomes:

1. Develop strategies to work towards continuous improvement;
2. Motivate and develop workforces;
3. Undertake robust workforce planning within the organisations and social service sector;
4. Manage change within an organisation; and
5. Promote leading collaborative practice within the social service sector.

In Semester 1, 2021 several new elements were trialled including Community of Practice groups and a Clinic Drop-In Session. 'Communities of practice' were introduced to enable participants to collaborate, build strategic relationships, and progress through the course content together. The assumption was that Community of Practice (CoP) sessions would allow participants to learn from one another, be accountable and make progress with the learning tasks as a part of the Program.

Orientation Sessions			
Group A Orientation	Group B Orientation	Group C Orientation	Clinic Drop in Session
Week 1 Seminars					
Week 1 Group A Workshops	Group A CoP	Week 1 Group B Workshops	Group B CoP	Week 1 Group C Workshops	Group C CoP
Week 2 Reflection Break					
Clinic Drop In Session					
Week 3 Seminars					
Week 3 Group A Workshops	Group A CoP	Week 3 Group B Workshops	Group B CoP	Week 3 Group C Workshops	Group C CoP
Week 4 Reflection Break					
Clinic Drop In Session					
Week 5 Seminars					
Week 5 Group A Workshops	Group A CoP	Week 5 Group B Workshops	Group B CoP	Week 5 Group C Workshops	Group C CoP
Week 6 Reflection Break					
Clinic Drop In Session					
Week 7 Seminars					
Week 7 Group A Workshops	Group A CoP	Week 7 Group B Workshops	Group B CoP	Week 7 Group C Workshops	Group C CoP

Figure 3: Program Structure for Semester 1 2021

Figure 4: Attendance in Semester 1

The topic selection for Semester 1, 2021 was determined based on responses received from a pre-program survey sent to the participants. After the Week 3 and Week 5 workshop session, participants were given the evaluation survey to measure the effectiveness of course content and delivery and to gauge how the program team could improve the learning experience. The Institute delivered 8 seminars and 12 workshop sessions. Drop-in clinics were offered to the participants who needed assistance to navigate the online environment. In addition, participants were encouraged to meet for a 90-minute CoP session every fortnight.

Overall course attendance

A total of 75 participants enrolled in the Semester 1, 2021 program and 19 participants (1 in 4) withdrew from the program. All the participants who withdrew reported lack of time and excessive workload as the primary reasons preventing them from participating in the Program. The operating environment during the Semester 1 Program proved too challenging for many learners to continue their enrolment. The timing of the course coincided with two short, sharp lockdowns in Victoria and many organisations were also transitioning to hybrid working during this period.

The survey results show that, out of the remaining 56 participants, the majority (46–52) of the participants attended the first and second seminar in Week 1 and Week 3 but the attendance appeared to decline in Week 5.

For workshops, all the participants attended Week 1, but the attendance dropped in Week 3 and Week 7. Many participants pointed out their 'inconsistent' attendance throughout the weeks of the program due to workload pressures. Others mentioned that, in hindsight, the Monday/Tuesday timetable clashed with their work meetings at the beginning of the week.

The Community of Practice sessions had a strong start but the attendance dropped by 42% between the first and final week. There are several reasons for this sharp decline in attendance, which will be discussed in the next section.

Outcomes and Impact

This section of the summary report answers the first key evaluation question, '*Did the Leadership Intensive Program make an impact?*' While there's no standard metric for measuring what success looks like in leadership training, global leadership development training programs often experiment with 'softer' metrics that show change is happening. In our case, the Leadership Intensive Program has helped the participants at both individual and organisational levels. While the Leadership Intensive Program was seen as a 'growth opportunity' for several new and emerging leaders, equipping them with skills training and networks required to take bigger roles, other participants saw it as 'a refresher [for] further study' and an opportunity to 'meet likeminded leaders'.

The majority of the participants finished the Program with enhanced knowledge and training in one or more leadership capabilities or having reflected on their own leadership style or making new strategic connections that will improve sector-level collaboration among participants.

The participants of the Leadership Intensives appreciated that the Program provided them with the opportunity, time, and space in an online learning environment to connect and reflect with other leaders working in their sector. Several participants in the interviews reported that the Leadership Intensive Program provided them with the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and reflect in a safe space among other leaders. As one participant reported, '*We don't often have space in our day-to-day work to step away and actually reflect on that kind of stuff. Because the next email comes in, the next meeting is scheduled, and you kind of just go constantly. So [The Leadership Intensive training] was really good to just actually reflect.*'

In addition to providing a reflective space, the survey results show that for the majority of the participants (about 2 in 3), the Leadership Intensives also enabled them to apply new concepts, theories, frameworks, and approaches to inform their leadership practice. Most of the participants (over 80%) also responded that the Leadership Intensives equipped them with adaptive and

collaborative leadership skill sets so that they can draw on the strengths of colleagues in the sector. More than forty per cent of the participants (42%) reported changes in their ability to establish and participate in an inclusive community of practice-led approach.

In terms of specific leadership capabilities, the survey responses show that the majority (80–90%) of the participants reported that the Leadership Intensives helped them to develop strategies to work towards continuous improvement and to promote leading collaborative practice within the social service sector. A large proportion of the participants (75%) reported that the Leadership Intensive training helped them to motivate and develop their workforces. More than half of the participants (50–60%) reported that the Program enhanced their capabilities to manage change within an organisation and undertake robust workforce planning within organisations and the social service sector.

Several participants in the interviews and focus groups also reported that the Program helped them in fostering strategic connections and collaborations which will go beyond the life of the Program. One of the participants stated that

> '[the Program allows me] to be a part of the wider context and getting to know people from all diverse backgrounds and the amount of work that's going into family violence, a lot of new initiatives coming, I think was a good insight for me.'

The Program also had a positive impact on the participants as it afforded the opportunity to think about leadership from a broader organisational perspective. As one of the participants mentioned,

> 'I felt like this [Program] was more about how I use my voice at a leadership level to influence like, organisational change.'

Some participants were impressed by the Community of Practice element of the program and thought that this style of practice was something that they would like to trial in their workplace.

> 'I feel like coming to this training has upskilled me but also made me more intrigued about how we can get the rest of our team into this because I think this should be mandatory training for all leadership … the guts of the training were actually so important, and I think it's such an area that organisations are not doing across the board. So, yeah, in terms of self-care for staff and that sort of thing.'

Several participants were 'thrilled' to report that they had a strong, well-structured Community of Practice experience where there were lots of collaborations and open communication and they planned to continue those informal collaborations.

Course Design and Delivery

This section corresponds to the key evaluation question 2 – *how effective was the online course design and delivery?* There are several different elements of how the online Program design and delivery is evaluated including the overall Program structure and timings, seminar content, speakers, and topics of discussion, workshop facilitation, community of practice, and online delivery components like Canvas, Collaborate Ultra, recordings, announcements, email communication, and pre-reading material.

Speakers from within or outside the family violence sector …

In earlier iterations of the Leadership Intensives, leaders valued hearing from speakers from outside the family violence sector. In the Semester 1, 2021 Program, however, participants were evenly divided between those who enjoyed hearing perspectives from beyond the sector and those who preferred speakers from within the family violence workforce, who spoke directly about the experience and unique challenges that the sector and its leaders face.

Pre-learning material

The pre-learning material is comprised of associated readings and/or video material available at any time to the participant. These resources were shared with learners at the time of orientation.

The majority (75–85%) of the learners reported that they engaged with the pre-session learning material and were satisfied with the learning material for all the topics. Four participants reported that they were interested in seeing more resources on topics such as Leadership in a Time of Crisis and Feminist Leadership practices. Time and workload pressures were the two primary reasons as to why the remaining participants could not engage with pre-session learning materials.

Synchronous online seminars

Seminars are one of the key components of the Leadership Intensives. The format of each of the 8 seminars is:

- Seminar A (55 mins): 30 minutes (recorded), an additional 25 minutes (unrecorded) facilitated Q&A
- [10-minute break]
- Seminar B (55 mins): 30 minutes (recorded) with an additional 25 minutes (unrecorded) facilitated Q&A

Similar to 2020, in Semester 1 of 2021 over 80% of the participants were satisfied with the content, speakers, and facilitation of seminar Q&A in the program.

> 'The other speakers were not within our sector, and I suppose that was challenging for me to link what they were talking about … to how we're doing and … I did not find that relatable at all.'

PARTICIPANT 1

> 'I really appreciated the diversity of … people presenting that weren't from … [the] family violence sector. So it was really good to hear how they do what they do in other settings … those skills and concepts can be transposed into the work that we do.'

PARTICIPANT 2

Satisfaction with seminar speakers and facilitation of seminar Q&A

The majority of the survey respondents were satisfied with all the speakers in the program.

Many of the participants expressed their preference for engaging with speakers specifically from the family violence sector. The lower score for 'Diversity and Inclusion' could be because the content did not resonate with participants. As some of our interviewees reported, this content from outside the sector was less interesting.

About 80% of the survey respondents were satisfied with the overall facilitation of seminar Q&A, while 5–7% were 'neither satisfied nor unsatisfied'. These results of facilitation of seminar Q&A are in line with the results from the satisfaction of speakers.

Effectiveness of the content

The majority (over 80%) of the participants in the Semester 1 Leadership Intensive training rated the content to be 'effective' or 'extremely effective', except for a lower score on the 'Diversity and Inclusion' and 'Communities of Practice' topics.

In several interviews and focus groups, participants reported the need for content and topics in seminars to be more focussed and geared towards leadership in the family violence sector.
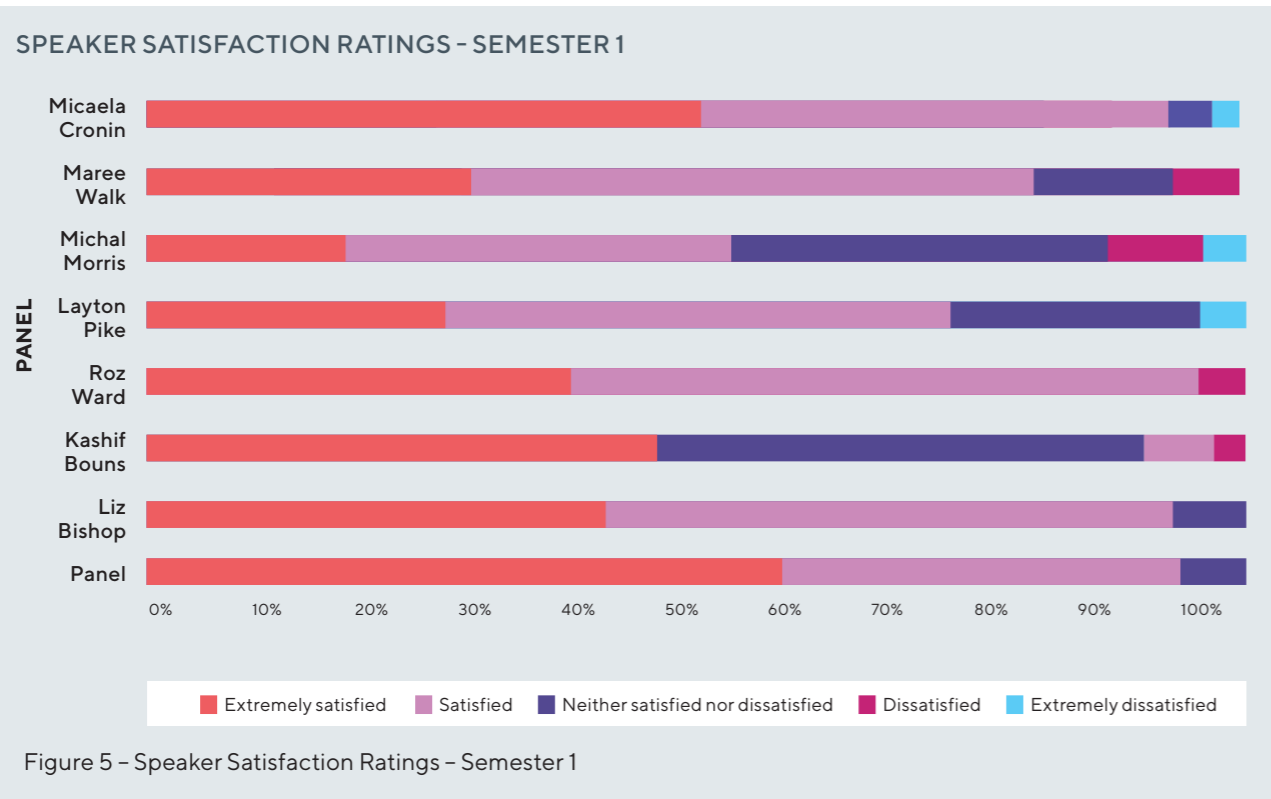
SPEAKER SATISFACTION RATINGS - SEMESTER 1

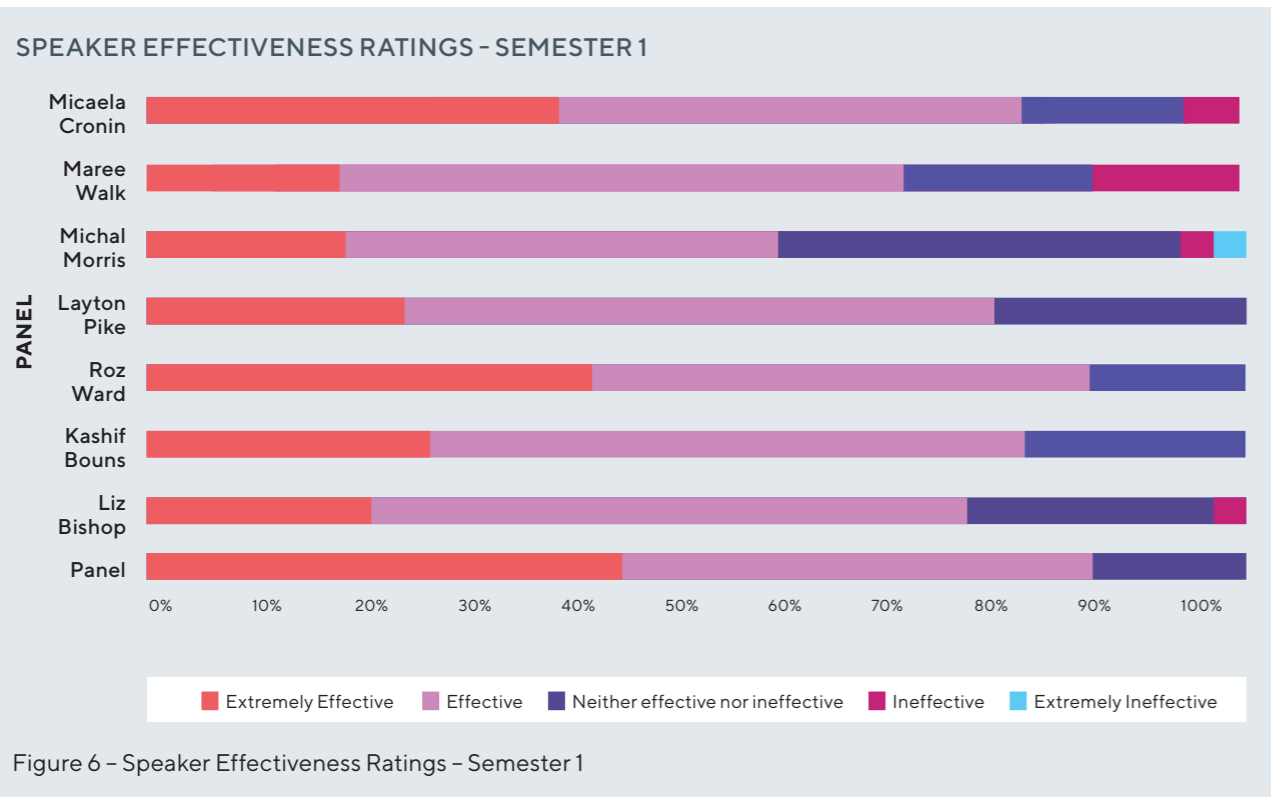Micaela Cronin
Maree Walk
Michal Morris
Layton Pike
Roz Ward
Kashif Bouns
Liz Bishop
Panel

PANEL

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Extremely satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ■ Dissatisfied ■ Extremely dissatisfied

Figure 5 – Speaker Satisfaction Ratings – Semester 1

SPEAKER EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS - SEMESTER 1

Micaela Cronin
Maree Walk
Michal Morris
Layton Pike
Roz Ward
Kashif Bouns
Liz Bishop
Panel

PANEL

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Extremely Effective ■ Effective ■ Neither effective nor ineffective ■ Ineffective ■ Extremely Ineffective

Figure 6 – Speaker Effectiveness Ratings – Semester 1

Workshops

Facilitator-led 90-minute workshops are an integral part of the Leadership Intensive Program. These are aimed at helping participants unpack leadership theory discussed in the seminars into practice and real-world application, including opportunity for small and large group discussions and reflections.

3 in 4 participants were satisfied with the facilitation of Workshop 1 and 2 and the majority of participants (over 80%) were satisfied with the facilitation of Workshop 3 and 4. As one of the learners reported,

> 'I found the mix of having the facilitated [seminars], and then the [workshop] conversation the following day to be really useful and found the facilitator really homed in on what the content of the guest speakers were about. We were able to bring home some of those really clear messages, which was good'.

In the interviews and focus groups, two participants reported how the break-out rooms in the workshops worked well. For example, one participant stated that 'the conversations in break-out room was [sic] much more valuable than community of practice in itself.'

The overall facilitation of the workshops was well received by all the participants. In the words of one of our participants, 'the Tuesday "unpacking" discussions with Catherine were fantastic. She is a great facilitator.' Another participant reported that,

> 'I found that Catherine's facilitation of the workshops really solidified my learning, thank you!'

About 1 in 4 participants rated Workshops 1–4 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied'. In interviews, two participants explicitly stated the need for the workshops to be more hands-on, active learning – geared towards activities like role playing, simulation activities, and troubleshooting real-world challenges faced by the leaders in the family violence sector.

Community of Practice

Participants' responses were polarised in terms of their overall Community of Practice experience. Some didn't find the CoPs beneficial or an effective use of time. Others thought it was 'an absolutely fantastic part of the program itself'. For other interviewees, 'community of practice' was an entirely new concept that they had not been familiar with prior to joining the sessions.

60% of the participants reported that the CoPs assisted them to network with other leaders, while the other 40% reported that they were not sure if it helped them to build connections with others in the sector.

53% of the participants reported that the CoPs helped with collaboration on sharing solutions to sector-level issues.

Over 60% of the participants reported that the CoPs influenced their mindset about partnerships and collaborations within the sector.

Several interviewees commented that, while they enjoyed the social aspect of their Community of Practice, they did not find them particularly 'useful' or 'enlightening'. One of the participants felt that the idea and intent behind CoPs was good but the implementation was poor.

Almost all participants cited low attendance and drop-outs as a key factor that negatively impacted upon their Community of Practice experience. More than half of the interviewees suggested that group numbers in their CoP were too low (usually 3 or 4 attendees and sometimes only 2 people). It was suggested that 8–10 people in each Community of Practice might enable more collaboration and also allow for dropouts or absenteeism. Contributing factors were cited for poor attendance in the CoPs included: work demands, COVID-19/lockdowns, home-schooling, and not making the CoPs a priority.

Some participants were uncertain about the purpose of their Community of Practice session. Several interviewees commented that there was not enough clarity around the learning tasks[3] or the expectations of their CoP, with groups spending a lot of time asking, 'What do you think we have to do?'.

Several participants reported that Maree Walk's 'Communities of Practice' seminar did not usefully relate to the reality of the CoPs. One participant felt that the CoPs did not reflect her own understanding or experience of what a Community of Practice should be. There were several suggestions on the need to set rules and guidelines for how the CoPs should operate.

It is also important to consider that some of the participants had a very positive experience, so much so that they aspired to continue Community of Practice discussions even beyond the life of the Program. As two of the participants reported:

'[The CoP] was probably the best part of the training' and 'I got more probably out of my community of practice than anything else.'

Online delivery

More than one interviewee used the phrase 'double-edged sword' when describing the experience of online delivery. While nearly all participants would have enjoyed the experience of face-to-face Program delivery, they were also cognisant of the fact that online delivery was not only very convenient but was also the element that made attendance possible for many.

'If it wasn't for the online version, I definitely wouldn't have been able to partake in it at all.'

'I really enjoyed, really looked forward to doing the online learning, to be honest, because this past year has been challenging for all, but I think it's the flexibility around how the training was delivered [that] was also a big, big thing for me.'

Similarly, another participant commented:

'I think if we can participate in an online delivery and save two hours and be able to invest it somewhere else, I think that's a win-win.'

In the surveys, participants reported that some of the elements of digital delivery like online seminars in Collaborate Ultra, email communication, announcements, live polls, online workshops and break-out rooms, and reflection week to be more effective than some of the other components like Discussion Boards, the Canvas Learning Management System, and Clinics.

Most of the participants reported that the Canvas shell was *'very hard to navigate'* and overly complex. *'It was a very clunky process'* to locate pre-readings and they found that they had *'lost 15 minutes'* before they located the document they were looking for.

Future Directions

The participants of the Program provided the following feedback on the future direction of the Leadership Intensives.

Course content

The Leadership Intensive Program is now in its fourth year. Several participants observed that in earlier iterations, the Program was offered to CEOs and executive-level leaders, while it is now being offered to middle managers 'lower down the food chain'. As such, some participants felt that the Program needs to be brought 'down a notch' to reach its target audience more effectively. One interviewee explained that

'some of the things we just can't relate to, because we can't have those impacts within the organisation … I know some will down the track as they go through their careers. But the majority within there couldn't make those structural changes within their organisation.'.

Course delivery

Most of the survey respondents (57%) preferred the fully online format of the Program as it is now. A handful of the participants reported a 'self-paced' Program would be better, while others reported that they would prefer something more 'blended'/'hybrid' – which could be a mix of self-paced, online workshops, and face-to-face.

Course length

The survey results show that the majority (62%) of the participants found that the Program was just the right length, and we found similar sentiments in qualitative research as well. A few participants (23%) found that length of the Program could be extended as it would give them more time for reflection and to apply leadership practices and techniques. Only 5 participants reported that the Program length should be cut down.

Although the length of the Program was not a big concern, participants did offer feedback on the overall structure and intensity of the Program. In terms of the structure, the Monday/Tuesday timetable clashed with their work meetings at the beginning of the week. 2–3 participants suggested that the Program could be run over one full day – which could include a set of seminars, workshops, and community of practice, rather than being spread over two half days every fortnight. If they have one dedicated day for the Leadership Intensives every fortnight, this would also reduce 'distractions' from outside course work, including the constant churn of office emails and phone calls. A 90-minute self-organised CoP session felt 'too long' for several participants.

Accredited or non-accredited

There were mixed views on whether there should be an accredited Program with assessed work. About 40% of the participants opted for a certificate (requiring approximately 600 hours of work), 34% expressed an interest in an MBA focussed on the social service sector, 20% reported that they would not be interested in an accredited course, and only 6% showed interest in a diploma. One of the reasons for the mixed response is because learners in this cohort came from a wide variety of leadership levels, including Tier 2- and Tier 3-level leaders, and this indicates the vastly different needs of leaders from different tiers of the family violence workforce.

Barriers to implementation of leadership and change management practices at work

The two biggest barriers to implementing leadership and change management practices within the sector are 'having limited authority to influence' and being 'too busy with other priorities to initiate change'. Lack of support from senior executive positions and the culture of the organisation were amongst other barriers to implementation.

Would participants recommend the Program to others?

Most of the survey respondents (over 85%) stated that others in their organisation or professional network would benefit from undertaking the Leadership Intensive Program and only 5 people reported that they would not recommend the Leadership Intensives to others. One participant in their interview reported that they would like the Program to be more focussed on family violence sector leadership, with more hands-on, practical application and activities for the Program to be relevant for the other leaders. However, all the other participants in the interviews and focus groups reported that the Program met or exceeded their expectations, and they would warmly recommend it to other leaders in the family violence sector, especially to leaders in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Our evaluation has found that the majority of participants finished the Semester 1 Program with enhanced knowledge and training in one or more leadership capabilities or having reflected on their own leadership style or making new strategic connections that will improve sector-level collaboration among leaders.

The evaluation of the Semester 1 Program identified four key areas for ongoing improvement to the Leadership Intensive Program team that are directed to addressing the current challenges and improve the overall effectiveness of the Program. These recommendations are drawn from the quantitative feedback received in the surveys, reflections of the program team, and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with participants.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Enhance pedagogy for online content delivery

In online education, content is no longer king – but the cohorts are. This means that we need to pay more attention to how we make the Leadership Intensives more interactive so that a group of participants advances through the material together, in 'cohorts', in both live and asynchronous learning environments — with active, hands-on learning components at the core.

A few participants and a speaker mentioned that one of the ways to improve interactivity in the online course is through running structured break-out rooms in seminars and workshops using prompts to guide the discussion, reflection, and problem-solving among learners to actively engage with the content, community, and facilitator at the same time. Further, 4–5 participants also recognised the need to make learning more tangible – perhaps simulation activities, particularly about the family violence sector.

One of the speakers also recommended making seminars more bi-directional, as opposed to

one-way, meaning there is an exchange of knowledge between the speaker and participants, as well as participants with fellow participants so that the whole experience is a dialogue, not a static lecture. This exchange also forces the speaker to be more accountable, otherwise, it feels like 'speaking at the screen' instead of 'speaking to the participants'. The speaker also proposed if there is a possibility to engage with the participants in small 'break-out rooms' to be able to support them.

Studies have found that what psychologists and neuroscientists call 'interleaving' learning — where instructors mix different topics, ideas, and activities during the study, forcing learners to intentionally switch between them, rather than focusing on a single subject — can result in better learning outcomes for participants. In the online Leadership Intensive Program, it is crucial to give participants a chance to engage in different modalities – break-out rooms, role-playing, discussion prompts, reflection time, polls, chats, simulation activities – with the facilitator, speaker, and other learners.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Improve the quality of course operations

The majority of the learners reported that they enjoyed the Program format of seminars and workshops but, in terms of Program operations, Canvas was hard to navigate.

One participant stated that 'the learning system is the most difficult platform to navigate.' Another participant reported that the platform was challenging because there were lots of clicks and lots of ways to navigate around and the platform didn't speak to their remote system. Our key recommendation is to design a Canvas Program shell that is intuitive and easy to follow for learners. The creation of an intentional design of the Canvas shell is not enough on its own. It is also important to provide a 'how-to' guide and/or tutorial that

explains how to navigate the session links, Program content, and discussion forums. Further, the facilitator can also run a poll in Week 1 to gauge how participants are finding the overall Canvas shell navigation, as well as what else might be improved to enhance the learner experience.

Another recommendation in this category is to devise a Program communication plan before the Program launch. This plan provides the details of email communications and the announcement sequence for pre-Program, during the Program, and post-Program activities for both participants and speakers. A coherent communication plan is directly related to a better learner experience in online courses.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Strategically navigate 'time pressures' and 'workload issues' faced by leaders

Time and again, participants in the Semester 1 Program reported excessive workloads and time pressures as the main reasons for the decline in their attendance and engagement with the Program.

It appears to be an organisational and system-level challenge faced by the majority of the participating leaders rather than a Program design and delivery

issue. One of the participants even reported that during the Program sessions, they were 'easily distracted' by the number of emails and other work commitments competing for their time.

The expectation should be that if a leader is attending a Leadership Intensive Program or course, other work-related commitments are effectively distributed for that time period.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Sharpen leadership outcomes to provide an opportunity for our leaders to self-assess their learning and growth at the beginning, middle, and end of the course

Both in 2020 and Semester 1, 2021, participants have shared anecdotal evidence of how the Leadership Intensive Program has helped them to improve their leadership skills and competencies, build connections, and to develop meaningful relationships with other sector leaders.

However, this anecdotal evidence is not enough for our participants to fully digest and make sense of their learning and progress. The introduction of a process to enable leaders to self-assess their learning and growth at the beginning, middle and end of the course would be beneficial and support leaders to progress to the next level.

Implications for Semester 2 Leadership Intensive Program

Data from the evaluation was used to inform enhancements to the Leadership Intensive Program. This section describes how the Project Team addressed the feedback and recommendations from the evaluation of the Semester 1 Program.

As noted in Part 1A, some of the issues identified through the evaluation are related to individual, structural or system-related factors (e.g., workload pressures related to high demand for services, organisational-level support for training and development, time pressures). While the Project Team cannot influence these structural and systemic factors, where possible the Project Team implemented changes to support participants in Semester 2 to engage in the Program and to ensure a high-quality learner experience.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Enhance pedagogy for online content delivery

Program content/presentations

Speakers for the Semester 2 Program were briefed on the characteristics of the cohort which included many participants who are relatively new to leadership roles. Speakers were asked to pitch their presentations at the level of the participants and to provide concrete examples of tools or approaches to leadership practice that participants could reflect on and adapt for their own use.

Speakers were asked to present for 20–25 minutes to allow time for questions and discussion. The facilitator encouraged participants to engage with speakers by turning on their camera and sharing questions/reflections as well as by sharing questions and comments through the live chat function.

The facilitator also talked to each of the speakers about workshop activities related to content areas which would deepen participants' understanding of the content.

Peer-to-peer learning

While the Community of Practice was valued by some participants, this approach was not suited to most of the participants, many of whom are struggling with significant workload pressures. The Project Team understands that participants value opportunities to discuss content/topics in smaller groups and in Semester 2 embedded peer-learning opportunities in the workshops.

The workshops included opportunities for small group discussions which support peer-to-peer learning and building connections and networks. In this way, participants were given an opportunity to discuss the Program content with their broader workshop group as well as smaller groups of 6–8 people.

There was potential to convene the same groups of participants across multiple workshops, but the Project Team decided to change the membership of the break-out rooms for each workshop to enable participants to talk to a range of people and also to mitigate against the risk of any participants who were unable to attend.

The group discussions were structured to support participants to deepen their understanding of the content.

Accessibility

One participant in the Semester 2 Program indicated that they have accessibility requirements, and the Project Team liaised with this participant to confirm their requirements. The Project Team worked with RMIT's Equitable Learning Advisors to ensure that the Program materials met accessibility standards and to put in place appropriate measures for the participant who identified that they would require support.[4]
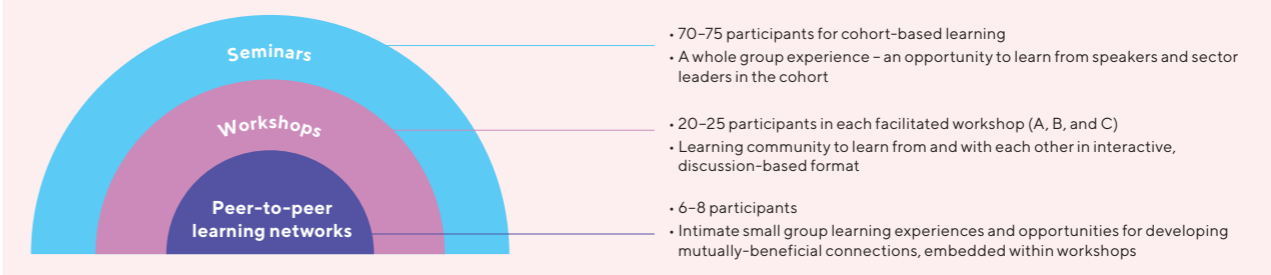

- 70–75 participants for cohort-based learning
- A whole group experience – an opportunity to learn from speakers and sector leaders in the cohort

- 20–25 participants in each facilitated workshop (A, B, and C)
- Learning community to learn from and with each other in interactive, discussion-based format

- 6–8 participants
- Intimate small group learning experiences and opportunities for developing mutually-beneficial connections, embedded within workshops

Figure 7: WIDI Semester 2 Leadership Intensive Program Course Delivery Model

Improve the quality of course operations

Communications

In Semester 2 the Project Team streamlined Program communications. A Communications Plan was developed for the Semester 2 Program based on the following principles:

- Use clear, concise language;
- Provide information when it is needed;
- Include easy-to-follow links where appropriate (e.g., link to seminar, link to evaluation survey); and
- Target communications where necessary (i.e., reminder to participants who have not yet completed the evaluation survey).

The two key communication channels that used in Semester 2 were:

- Dedicated email account (fssileadershipintensives@rmit.edu.au); and
- Announcements via the Canvas system which were sent to participants email addresses and were visible both on the 'Home' page and in the 'Announcements' page in the Canvas site.

The Project Team planned and monitored communications using a collaborative Project Management Tool (Asana Board).

Calendar invitations

Participants in the Leadership Intensive Program use different communication systems for online collaboration including Microsoft Teams and Zoom. In these platforms, links are usually included in a calendar invitation for a specific event/meeting. In Semester 2, the Project Team sent calendar invitations to all participants with links to each seminar and workshop. This means that participants were able to join each seminar and workshop by simply opening the relevant calendar invitation and clicking the link provided. The Project Team explained in communications with participants that links would be active from 10 minutes prior to the start of each seminar and workshop. Participants were also able to access seminars and workshops directly via the Canvas site on the 'Collaborate Ultra' page.

Online learning platform

The Project Team simplified the design of the Canvas site for Semester 2, 2021 to allow for easier navigation. The Project Team used the template of the Canvas site from 2020 as a model for the redesign. As noted in the Impact Evaluation of the Leadership Intensive Program 2020, 88% of participants rated the Canvas Learning Management System 'effective' or 'extremely effective'.

The structure of the Canvas site was streamlined and has fewer pages. All of the content for each set of seminars included:

- The title of the seminar, name of the speaker;
- An outline of the topic;
- Pre-learning activities / resources with links; and
- Associated Learning Outcomes.

The Orientation Session in Semester 2 included a 'live tour' of the Canvas site to familiarise participants with the platform and participants were also provided with an opportunity to ask questions about the platform.

In Semester 1 there was a single Collaborate Ultra session that was used for all seminars, which some participants found confusing. In Semester 2 there were separate links for each seminar that were clearly marked with the date and topics. Participants could access the seminars via the links provided in the calendar invitations.

A virtual 'Drop-In' session was held each week that the Program content was delivered. These open sessions provided an opportunity for participants to meet with Project Team members to discuss any technology-related issues.

Strategically navigate 'time pressures' and 'workload issues' faced by leaders

Acknowledging / addressing workload pressures

At the start of the Program, the facilitator and participants discussed how they would engage with online learning in order to maximise the benefit for all involved. As in Semester 1, 2021 and 2020, the presentation component of all seminars was recorded and recordings were uploaded to the Canvas site on the day of the seminar.

The seminar on 'Managing Change Fatigue' described some of the insights developed through neuroscience about online working / learning and provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on how to lead effectively in hybrid working environments.

Contact hours / workload

The time commitment for the Semester 2 Program was reduced due to the cessation of Communities of Practice and learning tasks. In Semester 1, the Communities of Practice increased the contact time by 6 hours over the course of the Program and participants spent additional time on learning tasks. The time commitment for participants in Semester 2 was:

- Pre-reading (6-8 hours);
- 8 seminars (8 contact hours);
- 4 workshops (6 contact hours); and
- Reflection time (varies by participant).

Participants were also asked to contribute to the evaluation as follows:

- Pre-program survey (15 minutes);
- Week 1 and 2 survey (15 minutes);
- Week 5 and 6 survey / end-of-program survey (20 minutes);
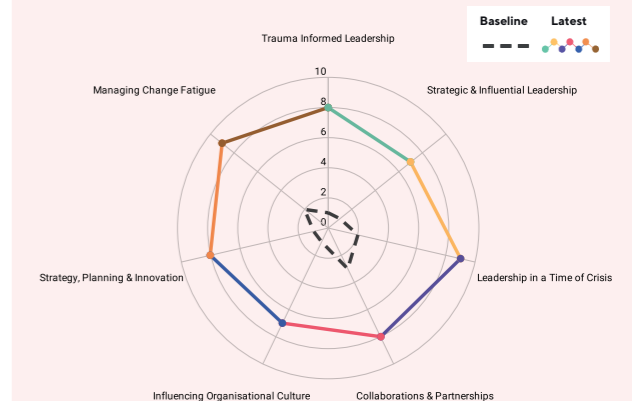- Interview/focus group (up to 45 minutes).

Sharpen leadership outcomes to provide opportunity for our leaders to self-assess their learning and growth at the beginning, middle, and end of the course

Introduction of self-assessment tool

The Program Team introduced a new tool called MySnapshot as part of the evaluation in Semester 2. The tool allowed participants to assess themselves against the framework of the knowledge delivered in the Leadership Intensive Program, by evaluating their own ability and competency including prior knowledge or transferable skills. This helped participants to not only manage their own expectations but also enabled them to prioritise their own learning.

The participants completed a 15-minute survey at the beginning and end of the course to evaluate their performance on different leadership skills and outcomes, and received a report that illustrated their leadership score.

Figure 8: An example of MySnapshot report from Performative Speaking online program

Leadership Intensives Evaluation Summary – Semester 2, 2021

The program team observed that the Semester 1 and 2 cohorts in 2021 had 'a different kind of energy' in the sense that 'they were just so overwhelmed by their lot'. It was clear how incredibly challenging their roles were in the day-to-day and the level of fatigue from living through an extended lockdown, workloads intensifying, and the complexity of family violence cases increasing as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.[5] With these challenges in mind, and not wanting to overburden participants, the program team introduced a streamlined version of the Program in Semester 2 that implemented the recommendations from the Semester 1 evaluation. Figure 9 provides an overview of the Program Structure for Semester 2 2021.

The Canvas course shell was redesigned and simplified to improve the ease of use and navigation. A refined communications plan was instigated which focused on clear, simple and timely announcements and emails, as well as the sharing of links to pre-readings, seminars, workshops, recordings and surveys.

Following mixed results, the Community of Practice (CoP) sessions were discontinued for the Semester 2 Program. The recommendations from the Semester 1 evaluation recognised that the Community of Practice session was an overreach for the cohort, given their level of seniority, time pressures, and the unprecedented burdens of COVID-19, home-schooling and successive lockdowns. Instead, 20-minute 'break-out rooms' were embedded within the workshops to foster peer-to-peer learning and as a hybrid model of what was intended in Semester 1. Learning tasks and worksheets were also ceased in Semester 2, which again recognised the incredible time constraints and workloads of participants.

An additional refinement to the Semester 2 Program was the introduction of MySnapshot, a self-assessment tool that allows learners to evaluate their prior knowledge and abilities, with the aim of helping them to manage their own expectations and prioritise their learning.

The topic selection process and pre-course readings as well as the duration of online seminars, workshops, and drop-in clinics remained the same as Semester 1.

Figure 9: Program Structure for Semester 2 2021
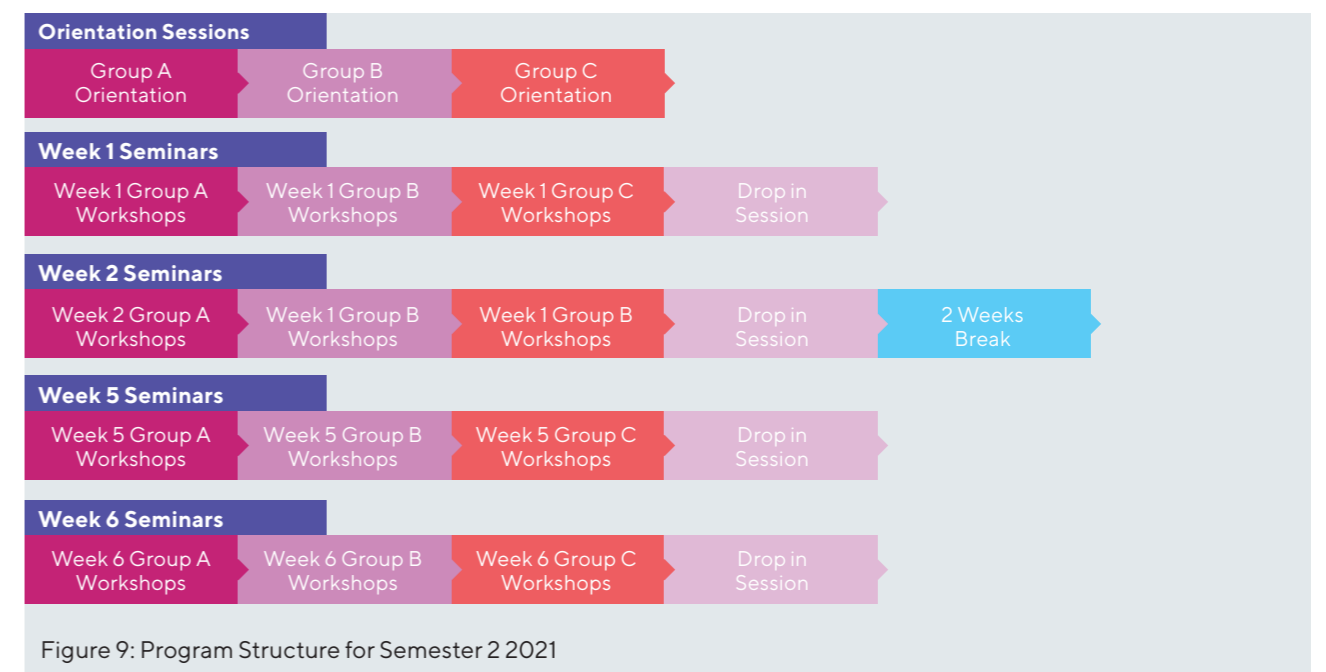
2. Overall course attendance

A total of 72 participants enrolled in the Semester 2, 2021 program and only 1 participant withdrew from the course due to time constraints. This compared favourably with the poor retention rate in Semester 1, where over 25% of participants withdrew from the Program, citing excessive workloads and pressures of time as the primary reasons.

96% of participants attended the orientation session and the majority (90–96%) of participants attended the 1st and 2nd seminars in Weeks 1 and 2. There was a significant drop in attendance after the two reflection weeks, however, with attendance for the 1st and 2nd seminars in Weeks 5 and 6 dropping to 49–51 (69–72%) participants. This timing coincided with the introduction of mandatory COVID-19 vaccines for Authorised Workers in Victoria which had an impact on many of the participants' workplaces. The vaccine mandate was announced on 1st October with all Authorised Workers requiring their first dose by 15th October and full vaccination by 26th November.[8] One guest speaker explained that this was causing chaos in the sector, so it is possible that this external factor was responsible for the lower attendance rates in the second half of the Program.

For the workshops, 89% and 82% of participants attended Weeks 1 and 2, but attendance also dropped significantly after the two weeks' break during the school holidays. Just 55% and 52% attended Weeks 5 and 6. One reason for this decline in attendance was

the steady rise in COVID-19 cases during the Semester 2 Program. In Victoria, the daily case numbers climbed from 120 during orientation week to 1,536 in the final Week 6 Workshop session. Daily case numbers exceeded 1,000 throughout October 2021.[7] Multiple participants were forced to leave workshops partway through in the final week due to a positive COVID-19 case at their work, or their workplace being declared a Tier 1 exposure site.

Some participants expressed their disappointment at their 'patchy' attendance throughout the Program due to workload pressures. Often participants' ability to 'carve out time in their diary' came down to having 'control over how they used or manage their time' and possessing the seniority to be able to structure their own work.

To illustrate this point, one participant was also backfilling on reception in their workplace during their workshop session one week. They had their headset on trying to answer the phones, while also contributing to the workshop and break-out room discussions.

Others explained that they did not attend the sessions in real-time due to work commitments, but caught up on them later at a more convenient time. One interviewee related that she loved the fact that the seminars were downloadable and compatible with other devices, as she would listen to the sessions she had missed 'while I went on a walk … just being able to do that is so good and so nourishing.'

Outcomes and Impact

As for Semester 1, this section of the summary report answers the first key evaluation question, *Did the Leadership Intensives Program make an impact?* Similar to previous evaluation results, the Leadership Intensive Program delivered in Semester 2 has helped the participants at both individual and organisational levels.

The emerging-leader composition of much of this semester's cohort has significantly affected the scope and nature of the Program's impact. The fact that many participants were junior managers, team leaders, or very new to a leadership role, meant that the key learnings and outcomes were of a different nature this semester.

Participants referred to their leadership capabilities as 'a work in progress' and reported that the Leadership Intensive had '*begun a process of developing me as a leader*'. Commonly, much of their learning about leadership to date had been informal, intuitive or 'ad hoc'. Similarly, another participant related that the Program had
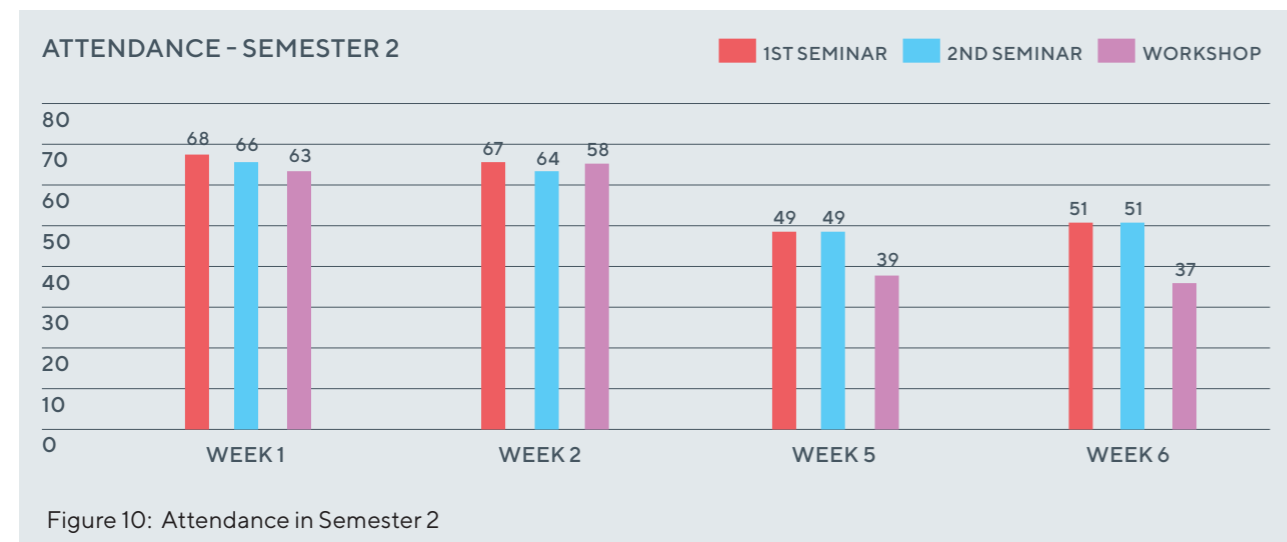
'made me aware of myself as a leader … it's given me direction' and 'it helped me to think about myself as a leader. And that was really exciting and novel and strengthening'.

One striking and recurrent theme was the way in which the Program had improved participants' confidence and motivation to explore their capabilities:

'I came out of it with more confidence … I don't necessarily see myself as being in a leadership role … I really gained confidence and even a bit of inspiration and motivation to look at leadership roles and leadership opportunities moving forward.'

Indeed, more than half of the participants interviewed explicitly mentioned that one of their key takeaways from the Program was the confidence boost it afforded them. As one participant stated:

'[the Program] just increased [my] confidence to stop second guessing some of the things that I was thinking and feeling and doing when maybe other leadership styles are quite different to mine.' Equally, 'it gave me confidence or encouragement to continue on the [leadership] path I'm on' and 'it improved my confidence in terms of intuitive stuff that's actually leadership.'

ATTENDANCE – SEMESTER 2

Legend: ■ 1ST SEMINAR ■ 2ND SEMINAR ■ WORKSHOP

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
1ST SEMINAR	68	67	49	51
2ND SEMINAR	66	64	49	51
WORKSHOP	63	58	39	37

Figure 10: Attendance in Semester 2

Participants also valued the fact that their learnings during the Leadership Intensives often validated their own leadership style and approach:

'[The Program] helped me to see that I am heading in the right direction and that as a leader I am not expected to know and fix everything'

PARTICIPANT 1

'It validated a lot of what I was already doing, so perhaps I wouldn't second guess myself so much.'

PARTICIPANT 2

Interestingly, several participants reported that the Program was 're-energising' and 'invigorating' for them during a time of widespread workplace fatigue and burnout due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

'It came at a great time when my motivation was low, because of this lockdown where there wasn't much novelty. It was just a constant grind. I needed that injection of new ideas and it was just fabulous.'

Participants also appreciated the dedicated time to collectively reflect and learn alongside colleagues in the sector and the opportunity to make new sector-level connections with other leaders. One interviewee most valued

'the experience of connecting with other people in similar situations and knowing that we were all facing the same challenges'. Another enjoyed 'learning new skills, new ideas, new ways of doing and being and connect[ing] with other professionals currently in the sector'.

One interviewee felt that it was gratifying to have

'very valid frustrations ... recognised. If you know other, more experienced leaders are feeling that as well [then] that's sort of just part of the territory'. Another enjoyed 'the ability to collaborate and network with other leaders in the FV sector and hear their experiences. It was overall, a very grounding and educational experience.'

Some participants were uncertain as to whether the Program had changed their leadership practice and thought 'it might be a bit too early to tell'. For others, the impact of the Program was compelling and immediate:

'This course awakened a deeper, critical and reflective thinking about my leadership practice that transcended into philosophy, strategy, communication and science. I cannot wait to apply the knowledge in practice, and re-energise my own practice.'

Many participants stated that there were self-care practices that they wanted to put into place for themselves and their staff as a result of attending the Program, particularly after the last two years of working from home and often being isolated from other team members. As one participant commented,

'[The program has] really grounded me and humbled me as to what a leader needs to be. And that means working for the best interests of everybody.'

Several participants also shared that they now intend to develop a safety plan with their staff.

Occasionally, the Program content was too high-level and theoretical for some participants in this cohort, who 'found that really hard'. Sector-wide issues of managing change fatigue and the challenges of supply versus ever-increasing demand were interesting and important to some people, while other learners 'were looking really glazed' and that level of thinking 'was a bridge too far'. As one participant commented,

'I thought that some of the material was really excellent, and I thought some of it was really difficult for me to get a grasp on.'

As one program team member reported, this cohort 'wanted managerial stuff around the everyday' and 'they were really interested in the "how-tos" in a very practical meat-and-potatoes kind of way'. The Program facilitators observed that this semester's learners were 'hungry for the practical' and yearned for the tools to perform their roles better in order to manage and survive their day-to-day jobs. In line with this, one participant reflected that they liked the Program best 'when ideas were broken down to practical applications by the presenters. The "how to" components helped me'.

As many learners in this semester's cohort were at an early stage in their leadership development, the idea of 'influencing up' within their organisation was quite a challenge and a relatively unfamiliar concept to some of them. In this way, thinking of sector-wide scope and change was often not feasible:

'One takeaway [for me] is the importance of knowing your boundaries as a leader [and] where your sphere of influence ends.'

Similar to the Semester 1 survey results, the two most common barriers to implementing leadership and change management practices within the sector for this cohort are 'having limited authority or influence' and 'being too busy with other priorities to initiate change'. In the qualitative data, time pressures were also cited as a key barrier to change:

'Everyone is so conscientious, and the busyness keeps you from stopping and giving yourself the opportunity to reset your mind and allow for creativity. And that's one of the things I learned in this course: the importance of giving yourself the space to be creative.'

The culture of the organisation, lack of support from senior and executive positions, the conditions of funding or service provisions were the next most common barriers to implementation.

Course Design and Delivery

This section corresponds to the key evaluation question 2 – *how effective was the online course design and delivery?*

In the Semester 2, 2021 Program, the time commitment for the pre-reading, seminars and workshops remained the same as Semester 1. Following feedback from the Semester 1 cohort, the Program was simplified, with no learning tasks or worksheets included in the workshops, and the discontinuation of the community of practice sessions.

Orientation week was followed by the first two weeks of seminars and workshops. Reflection weeks were held in Weeks 3 and 4 over the Victorian school holidays, with no other break weeks scheduled. There were no activities included during these break weeks. T he Program then concluded with Weeks 5 and 6 back-to-back.

Several participants commented they enjoyed the university-style 'lecture and tutorial' format of the seminar and workshop. Some learners would have liked the seminar and workshop delivered on the same day, rather than spread across two days. Others enjoyed the chance to reflect upon the seminar content:

'I liked having overnight to let some things sink in so that you could actually discuss them the following day.'

'Having it pulled across two days ... allowed me to reflect on what was delivered the day before. I think there's something quite important about almost 24 hours to go: "So how did that land? What do I agree with? What resonates with me or what would work? How could I see this working in my team and in my organisation?"'

Most participants enjoyed the content delivered across six weeks, but some said they would prefer the Leadership Intensives delivered across two full days.

'For me because we're so busy it worked to have it in small snippets across the six weeks, particularly with the school holidays not being impinged upon. So, I thought that was a really sensitive approach.'

PARTICIPANT 1

'I would prefer two full days instead of over two months.'

PARTICIPANT 2

The vast majority (4 out of 5) survey respondents found that the Program was just the right length. A few participants (16%) felt that the length of the Program should be extended and only 1 participant reported that the Program length should cut down.

Dissimilar sentiments were expressed in the interviews, where several participants expressing regret that the Program was too short:

'I think we just felt like we were all getting started and then it was over' and 'It's a very short period of time to cram so much into.'

Several participants expressed a preference for a deeper dive into less topics:

'I think there would be more benefit if it was just one topic each week. I think you could more readily engage.' Additionally, if the seminars 'were a bit longer, we could have pulled that apart or teased apart a bit more'.

'I wondered sometimes … whether we could have delved a little bit deeper into some of the areas that, particularly for me, were areas where I was a newbie.'

Pre-learning material

As in Semester 1, participants in the Semester 2 Program were provided with pre-learning materials to introduce them to each topic. These materials included articles, book chapters, resources, tools and templates that had been provided by the guest speakers.

The level of engagement with the pre-readings for the seminars was, on average, 77%, with the reported engagement level as high as 95% for Micaela Cronin's seminar on 'Trauma-informed Leadership'. Overall, 85% of survey respondents were 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the pre-session learning material.

In the qualitative data, most participants described the readings as 'excellent' and 'essential':

'I think it helped to contextualise what you were about to learn. It already primed you to know what was key.' They also enjoyed the self-paced nature of having these resources readily accessible online: 'I loved the learning resources, so even if I couldn't participate in the workshop, at least I had all the resources there for myself to go through at my own time and my own pace.'

A few participants observed that there might have been a stronger connection between the pre-readings and seminars for some of the presenters: 'sometimes there wasn't much explanation or link to what they presented'.

Several participants expressed their regret that pressures of time and workloads prevented them from engaging with the pre-session learning materials.

'I probably could have got a lot more out of it if I'd done some more reading, but I just didn't have the time.'

PARTICIPANT 1

'I didn't have time to do the pre-reading but I'm hoping I can refer back to that in time.'

PARTICIPANT 2

One participant reflected that

'The timing wasn't good for us in terms of mandatory vaccinations and … low staffing levels … so I probably didn't have as much time as I would have liked to do the readings. I think that it would have been better if I'd been held a bit more accountable to do more of the readings and actually be in a small working group to talk to those readings in a lot more detail.'

Synchronous online seminars

The 8 seminars delivered in Semester 2, 2021 retained the same format as the previous semester. Participants' appreciation of the content, speakers, and facilitation of the seminar Q&A exceeded the results from Semester 1, with, on average, 90% of survey respondents reporting they were 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied'.

Several participants expressed a preference for longer sessions for the presenters. As one learner explained,

'The amount of time allocated to each seminar was very short for the amount of information they were trying to impart.'

Satisfaction with seminar speakers and facilitation of seminar Q&A

On average, 9 out of 10 survey respondents were satisfied with all the speakers in the program.

The qualitative data cited Micaela Cronin (Seminar 1), Maree Walk (Seminar 2) and Dr Fiona Kerr (Seminar 7) as the most popular and influential sessions, which reflects the survey results. Interviewees particularly enjoyed Seminar 7: 'The absolute stand out for me was Dr Fiona Kerr. The managing change fatigue session was excellent and just ticked all the boxes.' Learners also valued the discussion of adaptive leadership strategies in Maree Walk's seminar. One participant appreciated the way in which Cronin and Walk included personal stories as part of their presentations:

'It was great to hear about personal experiences of the presenters. It made the content highly relevant and also humanised leadership!'

Several learners would have preferred the whole session devoted to trauma-informed leadership and the neuroscientific discussion around managing change fatigue:

'There were certain topics that would be better to have for the whole session rather than two topics [and] two different speakers, especially the neuroscience [seminar] and trauma-informed leadership.'

The seminar topic 'Strategy, Planning & Innovation in an Adaptive System' received a varied response from our interviewees. While some participants recognised the calibre of the speaker, the pitch of the presentation failed to connect with others. This would suggest that at least some of the content this semester needed to be targeted more effectively to the needs and goals of junior and emerging leaders:

'I totally zoned out and that was the feedback from most of our group afterwards. He was such a high-level thinker. I like literally could not follow. Couldn't understand.'

On average, 91% of the participants were either 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the overall facilitation of the seminar Q&A, while 3% were 'dissatisfied' or 'extremely dissatisfied' and 5% were 'neither satisfied nor unsatisfied'.[8] These survey results regarding the facilitation of the seminar Q&A are in line with the results from the satisfaction with speakers.

Effectiveness of the content

The majority (over 89%) of the survey respondents in the Semester 2 Leadership Intensive Program rated the content to be 'effective' or 'extremely effective'.

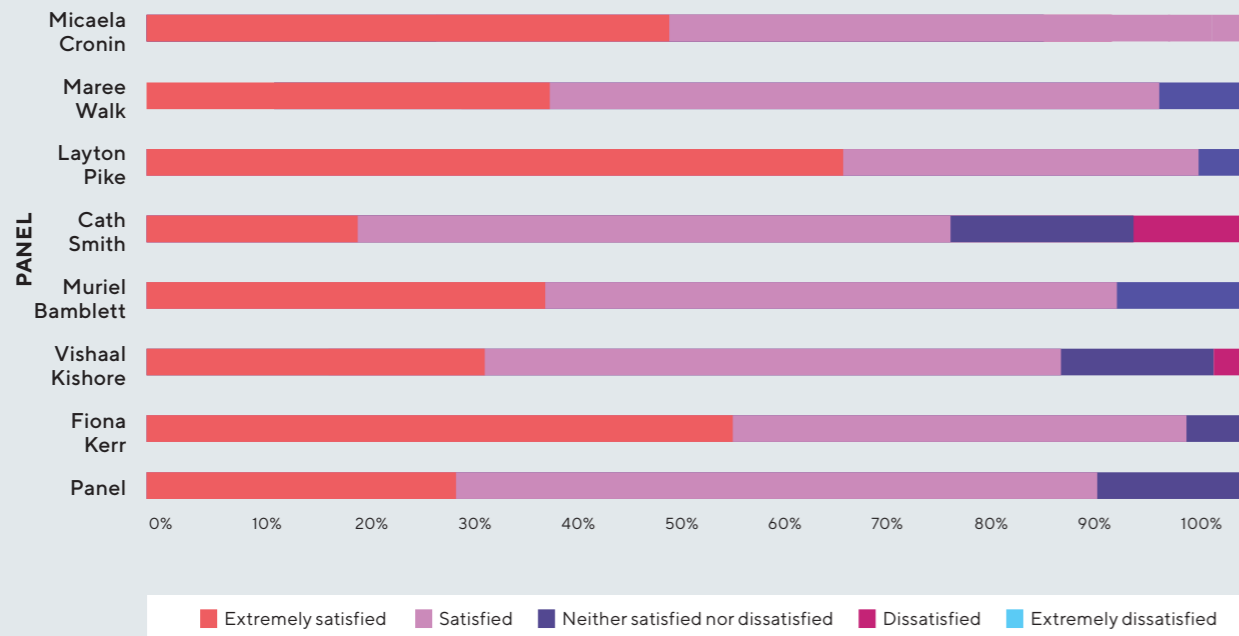## SPEAKER SATISFACTION RATINGS - SEMESTER 2

Legend: Extremely satisfied | Satisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Extremely dissatisfied

Figure 11 – Speaker Satisfaction Ratings – Semester 2

SPEAKER EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS - SEMESTER 2

Legend: Extremely Effective | Effective | Neither effective nor ineffective | Ineffective | Extremely Ineffective
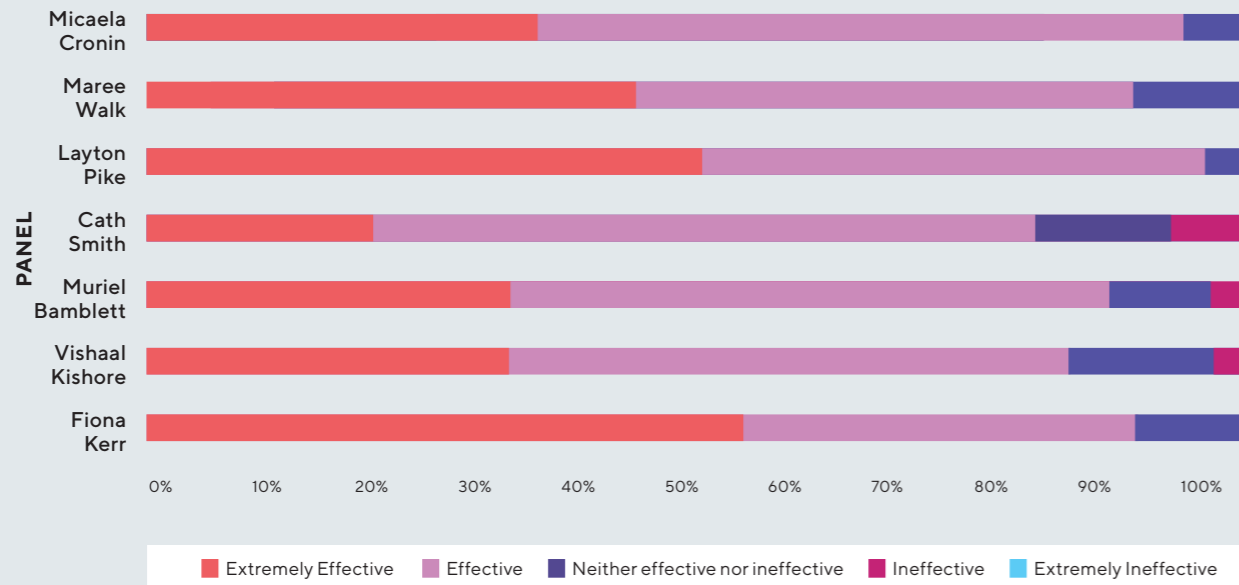
Figure 12 – Speaker Effectiveness Ratings – Semester 2

Workshops

Between 90–91% of survey respondents were 'satisfied' or 'extremely satisfied' with the facilitation of the four weekly workshop sessions, while between 77–88% found the workshops activities were 'effective' or 'extremely effective' in helping Program participants to explore the application of topics.

The high satisfaction rate with the facilitation of the workshops was also evident in the qualitative data. One participant commented that

'Catherine was great and her training skills are very evident'. Another learner found that 'the facilitation was professional, yet grounded and supportive'.

'I love the host, Catherine. She was very, very positive and supportive and thoughtful.'

Learners generally enjoyed the way in which ideas introduced in the seminars were summarised and expanded upon in the workshops, recognising that much of 'the learning comes from the workshop'. 'I got heaps out of the workshop component,' related one participant. Another liked 'learning new concepts at each session and digesting them the following day at the workshops'.

Perhaps the most important element of the workshop component for learners was the opportunity to share stories, network and connect with other leaders in the sector. Receiving validation from peers and the chance to exchange ideas and experiences was a highlight for many:

'I really enjoyed the group workshops – it was great to connect with amazing leaders in the FV sector [who] bring their experience and knowledge to the group.'

PARTICIPANT 1

'It felt validating and it was really nice to have people say "Oh, that sounds really hard what you're dealing with", or "You sound like you're doing a really good job."'

PARTICIPANT 2

Break-out rooms

The workshops for Semester 2, 2021 included a group-work component in which participants were allocated to smaller break-out rooms for around 20 minutes to discuss themes from the seminars on the previous day. The break-out rooms were randomly assigned, which aimed to allow for a diversity of voices while also providing participants with the opportunity to interact with as many peers from different organisations as possible.

The break-out rooms were deliberately designed by the program team as a way to embed the 'community of practice' concept into the workshops, so participants were in a sense 'getting the best of both worlds' without needing to attend a separate CoP session.

Participants were briefed on the purpose and focus of each break-out room discussion by the facilitator prior to these breakout sessions and, when they returned to the main workshop discussion, each group was invited to discuss the findings talked over in the break-out rooms.

77% of survey respondents rated the break-out rooms as 'effective' or 'extremely effective' in allowing them to reflect upon and deepen their understanding of their own leadership style and to also meet and mingle with other sector leaders, while 74% felt these smaller group discussions helped them to explore the practical application of the topics.

The composition of the break-out rooms was a recurring theme in the qualitative data. The vastly different levels of leadership capabilities proved challenging for many learners, including participants with more experience leading and those who were newer to leadership. Some felt that emerging leaders with little or no experience in leadership either did not participate or made irrelevant contributions, while in other groups experienced managers dominated the conversation. *'I did not get much from the group break outs because of this,'* stated one participant. Another felt that

'people can be shy to share in the break-out rooms while others take up a lot of space. There have been very supportive conversations for those willing to open up, but no everyone is getting a chance to share or speak.'

One learner suggested that the solution might be *'getting people who are at similar stages in their leadership journey to be in groups'*. Another thought that the Program should only be offered to *'Team Leader[s] and above. I found practitioners in break-out rooms had less to offer in this leadership space.'*

Preferred composition of the cohort

Qualitative data and facilitator observations from past iterations of the Program have identified the composition of the cohort as a vital influencing factor upon participant experience. 45% of survey respondents felt the Leadership Intensives would be most effective if the participant group was comprised of the family violence workforce and broader social services sector, while 23% felt that it should be widened to the not-for-profit and government sectors, 19% thought the Program should be open to anyone who is interested and 13% felt it only should be offered to the family violence and primary prevention workforce.

Online drop-in sessions

In Semester 2, drop-in sessions, previously named 'The Clinic', were run every Wednesday on weeks with seminars and workshops. In the first week the drop-in sessions had two participants join, but both did not need assistance and instead were curious about what the sessions were for, and stayed for a while to talk with the Project Team. In subsequent weeks, there were no attendees in the drop-in sessions.

One participant suggested that these sessions could

'be used a bit more intentionally. … perhaps that time could be used as an hour a week for a bit more of a deep dive if people wanted to continue a conversation.'

Discussion boards

As found in the previous online iterations of the Program – and, indeed, in 2018 when the Program was delivered face-to-face – the discussion boards were very underutilised in the Semester 2 Leadership Intensives. The 'eMeet and greet' board only received 14 introductions from the 71 participants.

Only one other discussion board was created for Semester 2, to discuss Session 1: 'Trauma-Informed Leadership' and 'Strategic and Influential Leadership', in which one participant shared an activity called 'mindfulness minute' with the broader group. Other participants were informed of this activity being shared during workshop sessions, but this post only received one 'like' and no comments from other participants.

The Project Team decided that discussion boards were not needed for the remainder of the Program, due to underutilisation.

MySnapshot

In Semester 2, 2021 a new self-assessment tool, 'MySnapshot' was added as part of the evaluation of the Program. This software allowed the participants to reflect on their initial understanding of the content that they are learning in the Program, and then compare this to their understanding of the same content at the end of the Program through the production of a report and web-style graph.

About MySnapshot

MySnapshot is an innovative methodology and digital teaching tool that provides personalised reports for each learner. When the individual takes a snapshot, they self-reflect on their current understanding and performance of the key components that make up the knowledge or skill they're learning. The insight the individual gains in their understanding and application of the desired knowledge or skill, in turn helps them to review, prioritise and plan for the next step in their learning journey. When they do a further snapshot, they can assess their effectiveness and track their progress.

The MySnapshot system increases the clarity, resolution and connections of what it is being taught. This optimises for the individual's learning, application and success.

Key functions of the MySnapshot methodology are:

1. Provide a distilled, coherent and visual model of the knowledge or skill.
2. Communicate clearly what performance looks like at different stages of mastery of the knowledge or skill.

As shown in Figures 13 and 14, participants were provided with a report highlighting:

a) how they rated their abilities in relation to each topic at the start and the end of the Program; and

b) why they gave themselves those ratings.

The data used in Figures 13 and 14 is sample data only. Aggregated data is included in the evaluation report for the 2021 Leadership Intensive Program.

Test Anonymous
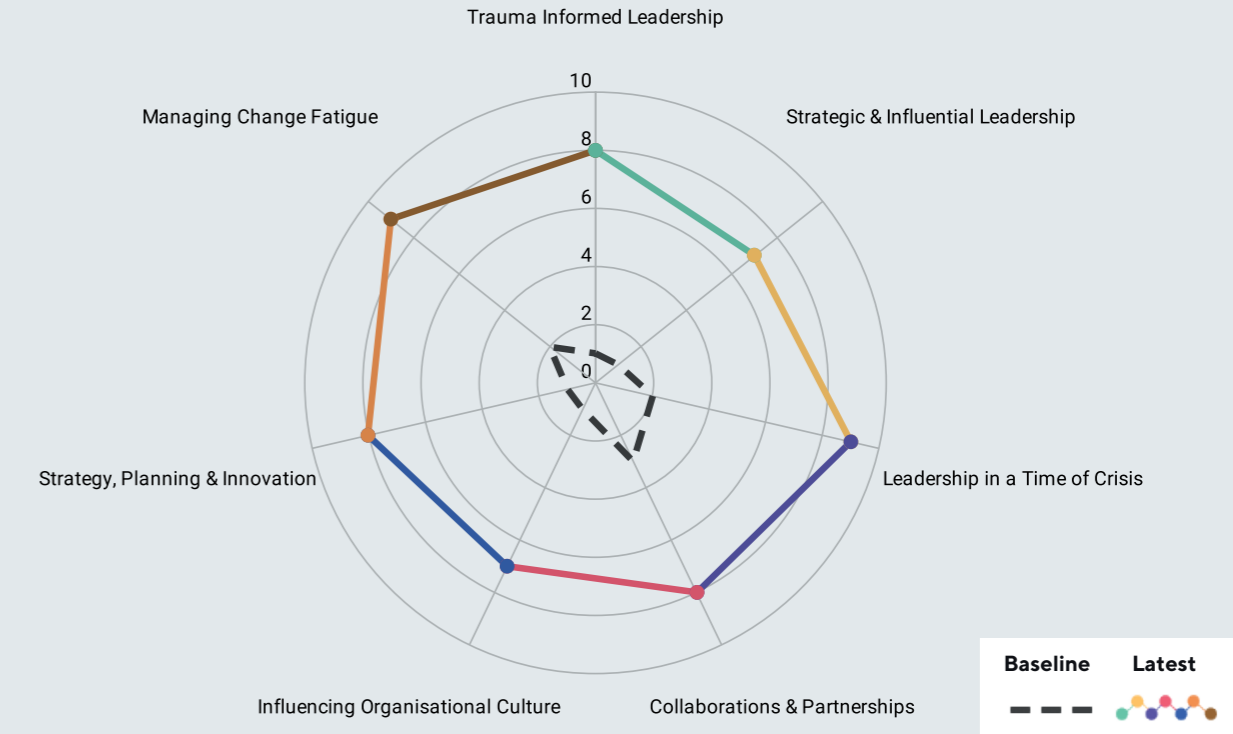
			Baseline 30 Aug 21	Latest 8 Oct 21
Trauma Informed Leadership	My ability to both understand the impact of vicarious trauma for myself and for the people I work with and identify and implement trauma informed approaches.		1	8
Strategic & Influential Leadership	My ability to understand adaptive leadership concepts and apply those concepts within my leadership practice.		1	7
Leadership in a Time of Crisis	My ability to respond appropriately to crisis and lead positive change within my organisation.		2	9
Collaborations & Partnerships	My ability to develop and sustain effective partnerships to achieve shared goals.		3	8
Influencing Organisational Culture	My ability to critically reflect on organisational culture, identify and understand issues of cultural sensitivity, and influence meaningful change.		1	7
Strategy, Planning & Innovation	My ability to identify and pursue strategic opportunities to drive change at an organisational and system level.		1	8
Managing Change Fatigue	My ability to empathise and create emotional connection with my team to sustain its energy.		2	9

Figure 13 – Example of MySnapshot Report – Scores

Test Anonymous

	Baseline, 30 August 2021	Latest, 8 October 2021
Trauma Informed Leadership	This is a new area for me. I have some knowledge of trauma informed approaches but a limited understanding of the theory and frameworks upon which these approaches are based.	I have developed a deeper understanding of trauma informed leadership practice and the frameworks and tools that can be used to embed a trauma informed approach.
Strategic & Influential Leadership	I have some sense of adaptive leadership concepts but not a deep knowledge or understanding of this topic.	I have a better understanding of theories and key concepts related to adaptive leadership and I am confident that I will be able to apply these in my leadership practice.
Leadership in a Time of Crisis	I have experience responding to crisis as part of my work however I would benefit from a deeper understanding of how to identify and pursue opportunities to lead positive change within my organisation.	I feel like I have the knowledge and tools to understand and respond to crises inside and outside of my organisation.
Collaborations & Partnerships	I have experience working with a broad range of stakeholders within and outside of my organisation. I am interested in learning more about how to ensure that these partnerships meet the needs of all parties and can be sustained over time.	I have a better understanding of how to develop partnerships for mutual value and benefit.
Influencing Organisational Culture	I am aware that my identity/experience shapes my interactions with colleagues within and outside of my organisation. I am keen to learn more about how to develop an organisational culture that values and respects diversity including cultural diversity.	I have a better understanding of the cultural load borne by my staff.
Strategy, Planning & Innovation	I can see opportunities for growth and change within my organisation however my experience in driving change is limited.	I have a better understanding of how to develop and implement strategy by working with others.
Managing Change Fatigue	I have developed good working relationships with my colleagues and peers and am able to recognise when team members are starting to struggle however I have found it challenging to create emotional connection working online during the pandemic.	I am able to empathise with my team and provide them with advice and support.

Figure 14 – Example of MySnapshot Report – Comments

Nine out of ten participants in the Program completed the initial MySnapshot survey. Unfortunately, there was a poor completion rate of just 44% for the second and final MySnapshot survey. Two reminder emails were sent out for this to be completed. The timing of the final MySnapshot survey coincided with high daily COVID-19 case numbers in Victoria and the introduction of mandatory vaccination policies in many workplaces,[9] which goes some way towards explaining the low final survey completion rate. The program team felt that this was a missed opportunity for many course participants to both chart and reflect upon their leadership practice and learnings.

Despite this low rate of engagement, participants who did complete the second MySnapshot survey generally found it to be a worthwhile and valuable experience. On average, participants saw a 22% increase in their self-rated ability to understand and critically reflect upon the leadership styles and practices covered in the Program. The seniority and level of experience of participants had a significant impact on their individual MySnapshot results. One team leader who had been in a leadership role for less than one year perceived a 76% increase in their understanding of the core topics of the Leadership Intensives, while another participant in a senior executive role received only a 5% boost to their self-rated abilities upon completion of the course.

The MySnapshot tool served to signal at the outset of the Program that participants should expect to see a shift in their understanding of core topics. It gave focus to the learner and the idea of their development in a structured way, mapping their progress visually. One participant who received their results *really liked the visual mapping so it's not just a whole bunch of words*. Another reflected that '*I don't think it necessarily added anything for me*'.

Online delivery

The simplification of the Canvas shell and the attention to detail on all Program communications was greatly appreciated by course participants and this was reflected in the survey responses and qualitative data. 97% of participants rated the program team's email communication as 'effective' or 'extremely effective'. Learners particularly valued the ease of access to all seminars and workshops, with emails providing direct links shortly before each starting time as well as the access to recorded seminars, with additional emails announcing when they were available to access.

94% of respondents found the live online seminars in Collaborate Ultra as well as the recorded seminars to be 'effective' or 'extremely effective', while 87% found the Canvas set up to be 'effective'. Participants noted that Canvas was 'very easy to navigate'. They had 'no issues at all' and it was all 'very easy, very simple' because 'the setup for the course was fantastic'.

One outstanding evaluation outcome was the degree of praise for program team member Alyssa Warland, whom participants described as '*brilliant*' and '*amazing*'. Her work made the Program *so well organised and well-co-ordinated*'. One learner commented,

'I loved that Alyssa sent me reminders all the time once the pre-readings were there. That was so helpful and it was like having a personal assistant.'

PARTICIPANT 1

'Certainly, the facilitation, I have to say, and the supports were stellar. I've not ever experienced such good kind of technical support.'

PARTICIPANT 1

'Catherine and Alyssa worked hand-in-glove. [They] worked brilliantly. I think that the way in which they held a technical kind of virtual audience was fabulous.'

PARTICIPANT 2

As per the evaluation results from Semester 1, most learners would have preferred to complete the Program face-to-face, but also recognised the necessity and convenience of the online format, particularly for regional participants: 'When it comes to the choice between doing the course or not doing the course, I go "Let's do it online"'.

PARTICIPANT 1

'I think it made it much more accessible for me, though I certainly concede the benefit of actually sitting in person and doing all that. I don't think that anything can truly replace that.'

PARTICIPANT 2

Learners also recognised the online environment as a barrier to building networks and collaborations across organisations: 'It would be so much better if it were face-to-face, particularly around the group discussions ...I think that we do much better in terms of networking and group cohesion when we're all together.'

PARTICIPANT 1

'It would have been so much different if we were all in one room and [could] mingle around the coffee table and chat ... that's where the sharing always happens ... you miss out on that opportunity obviously doing it online.'

PARTICIPANT 2

Efficacy of Recommendations Implemented in Semester 2

RECOMMENDATION 1

Enhance pedagogy for online content delivery

Our evaluation findings for the Semester 2 Leadership Intensive Program demonstrate the calibre of the speakers, the strength of the course content, and the extent to which seminar and workshop topics are valued by course participants.

The streamlined Program, which required less contact hours from time-poor participants due to the discontinuation of learning tasks, worksheets, and Community of Practice sessions, was another success. Participants generally found the peer-to-peer learning opportunities provided by the break-out rooms in the workshops to be valuable, but the different levels of seniority were problematic for some, with more experienced leaders often not wanting to be grouped with those who were new to leadership.

Despite the efforts of the Program Team and speakers to target course content more effectively to the needs and goals of junior and emerging leaders, some topics still proved challenging for this cohort.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Improve the quality of course operations

The survey results and qualitative data highlight the exceptional communications and facilitation work of the Program Team and the high esteem in which they were held by the Semester 2 cohort. The clear communications and program coordination received unanimous praise from our interviewees.

Another recommendation that was successfully implemented in Semester 2 was the modification and simplification of the Canvas Learning Management System. Participants found it easy to navigate and no significant problems were reported during the Program.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Strategically navigate 'time pressures' and 'workload issues' faced by leaders

The incredible time constraints and excessive workloads of the cohort, as well as the additional burdens brought by lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic, were increasingly apparent to the Program Team this semester. These pressures adversely affected attendance rates, with a significant number of participants unable to attend the seminars and workshops in person due to competing demands on their time. The qualitative data also demonstrated that a significant number of interviewees were not able to complete the readings or prepare adequately for each session.

This semester's cohort encountered considerable distractions from operational pressures during live Program sessions, which made online learning difficult for many.

Despite these constraints, the qualitative data shows that participants felt well supported by the Program Team, who recognised the multifaceted pressures faced by the cohort.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Sharpen leadership outcomes to provide opportunity for our leaders to self-assess their learning and growth at the beginning, middle, and end of the course

The introduction of the self-assessment tool MySnapshot was a mixed success. Poor final survey completion rates prevented more than half of participants from receiving their results. The Program Team considers this to be a missed opportunity for many participants to chart the growth in their abilities and competencies across the duration of the Program and to prioritise their own learning.

Final Considerations

Family violence has a long-lasting impact on individuals, families and communities. Victoria already has strong foundations on which to solidify its response to family violence.

Despite this significant groundwork, the sector faces gaps and obstacles that are limiting the effectiveness of its goals, policies, and programs. To address key elements of these limitations, the sector needs a wider cadre of leaders, workforce capacity and capability, support mechanisms and infrastructure to support leaders and the workforce.

In response to this need, since 2018 the Leadership Intensive Program has contributed to building the sector-wide leadership capability of family violence leaders. In 2021 the Leadership Intensives once again proved to be effective and impactful in preparing the current and next generation of family violence leaders who shoulder the responsibility to systemically end family violence in Victoria.

Despite the cessation of the Program in its current form, we offer the following insights for future training activities and initiatives for leaders in the family violence sector.

Online Delivery

The Leadership Intensive Program has been delivered in an online format for the past two years. Participants have shown that they not only understand and adroitly navigate the online learning environment but also appreciate the convenience of online delivery. Remote digital delivery has enabled the attendance of many regional participants and those who are hard-pressed to attend professional development programs in person. Despite these obvious advantages, participants still recognise the benefits of face-to-face training and the opportunity to meet and network with colleagues and peers from the sector. While the Program has received impressive levels of engagement from online learners, we acknowledge that the group dynamic, peer-to-peer sharing, and dedicated 'head space' of face-to-face learning cannot be fully replicated by digital Program delivery.

A blended format of 'hybrid' Program delivery for future training initiatives will be beneficial for this sector.

Sector Perspectives

Participants have benefitted from hearing the diverse perspectives of speakers across the Program. In earlier iterations of the Leadership Intensives, leaders valued hearing from speakers from outside the family violence sector. More recent cohorts, featuring a higher proportion of emerging leaders, have wanted to hear the perspectives of speakers from within the family violence workforce to progress their learning and understanding of feminist leadership, as these speakers communicated their own experiences and the unique challenges that the sector and its leaders face.

Maintaining a diversity of perspectives in future training offerings and ensuring close attention is paid to the individual requirements of each cohort or audience are critical elements for successful learning environments.

Barriers to Training

There are several interrelated barriers to completing, or successfully engaging with, the Leadership Intensive Program training that are systemic challenges in the family violence sector. As we have detailed extensively in this report, participants must cope with excessive workload pressures and competing demands upon their time. There is also widespread fatigue and burnout among the family violence workforce that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional burdens it has placed on sector leaders. Completing the training in the online environment has also meant that many emerging leaders have encountered multiple operational distractions (emails, phone calls, interruptions) while attempting to focus on their learning. Others have had difficulty negotiating study leave or dedicated time to complete their professional development training.

Time pressures are also a key barrier to implementing leadership and change management practices within the sector, with many participants being too busy with other priorities to initiate change. Less experienced leaders are stymied by their limited authority or influence within their organisations.
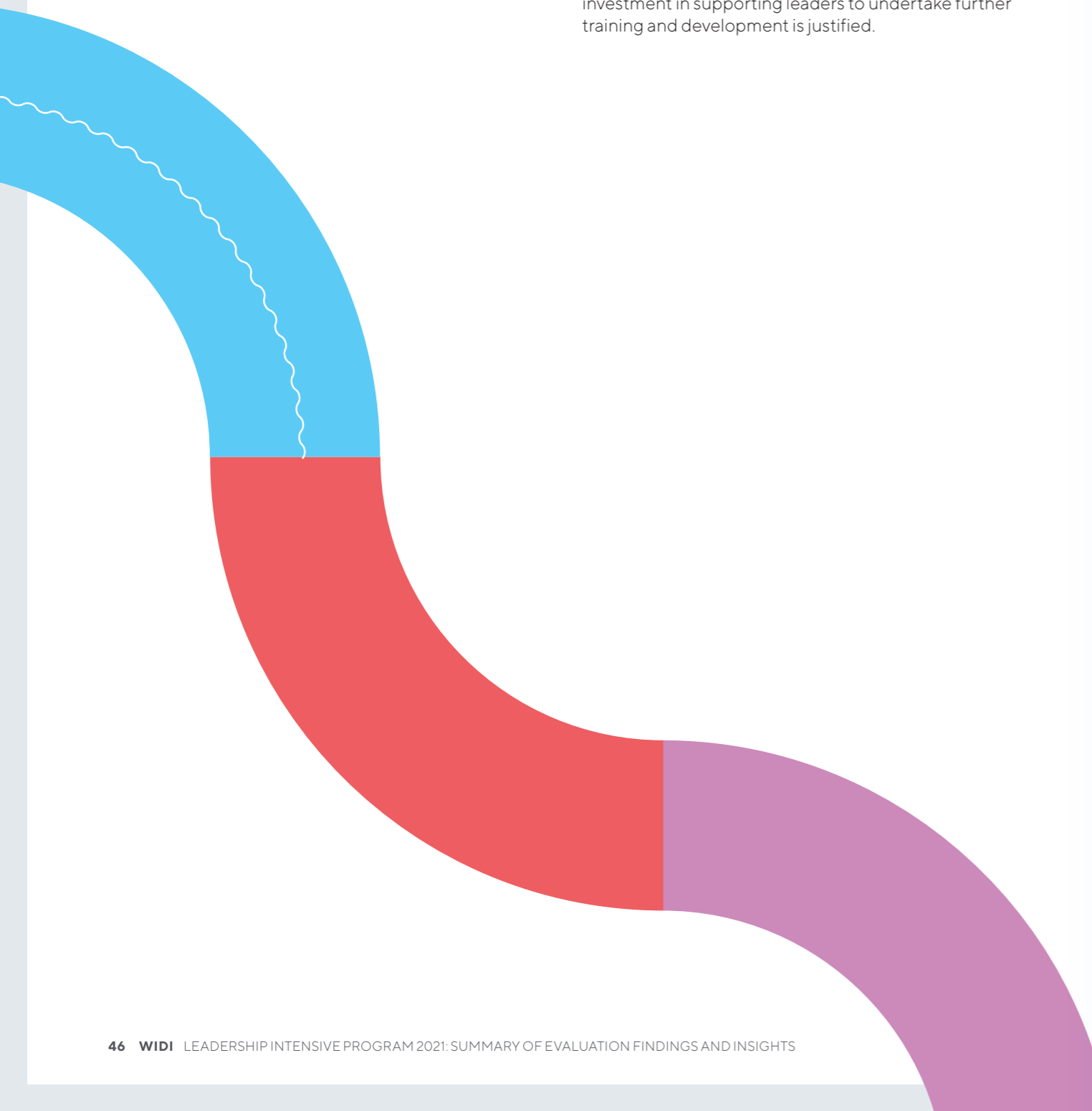
We would urge that the barriers and challenges faced by leaders are considered as part of the development of any future training.

Targeting Training Supports

Four years of delivering the Leadership Intensive Program has demonstrated the diversity of leaders in the family violence sector. We recognise that the varying levels of experience and the discrete subsections of leadership within the family violence workforce means that different supports will be required for leaders at each stage of their career. Any future initiatives must consider the capabilities of leaders and the implications for training. Program content should then be tailored to the particular capabilities of leaders in each cohort.

Government Investment

Victorian Government investment has made it possible for over 450 sector leaders to receive this invaluable training offered by the Leadership Intensive Program at no cost to themselves or their organisation. We note here the importance of funding for any future upskilling initiatives to support family violence workers to undertake training and development. As described in this report, the benefits of training are many and include development and application of new knowledge, building the confidence of leaders, fostering peer networks and relationships and re-energising and invigorating leaders at a time of widespread workplace fatigue and burnout exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the vital role that leaders play in the implementation and success of the Victorian Government's family violence reforms, future investment in supporting leaders to undertake further training and development is justified.

Appendices
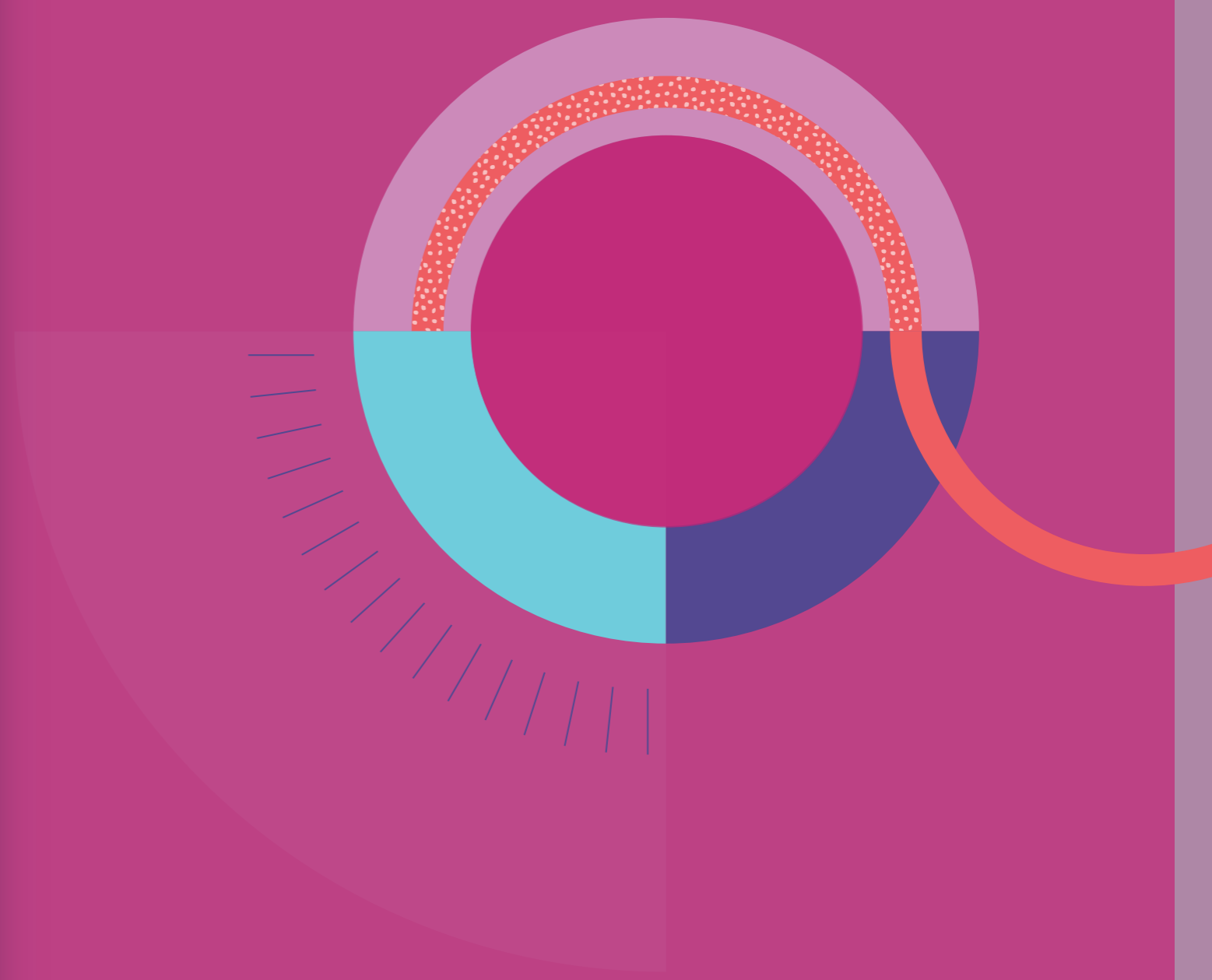
Appendix 1

Learning Tasks

To help focus the Community of Practice groups, participants were provided with four learning tasks which are outlined below. The learning tasks were not formally assessed and were designed to be either peer or self-assessed.

TASK NAME	DESCRIPTION
LEARNING TASK 1 **Strength based professional profile**	Participants were asked to write a professional profile for LinkedIn, outlining their strengths, experiences, self-care, proudest achievements and mentoring experience. Participants were then asked to create a LinkedIn profile (if they did not have one already) and connect to the Alumni of the Program through the Leadership Network Group on LinkedIn. 29 participants from the semester 1, 2021 cohort joined the LinkedIn group. It is unclear how many of these participants did not have a LinkedIn profile before joining the Program.
LEARNING TASK 2 **Active participation in the CoP group**	Attendance and participation in the CoP groups was unto itself listed as a learning task. Participants had four main objectives in the CoP groups; 1. Attendance and participation in the CoP; 2. Support the completion of individual leadership innovation case study of group members (see Learning Task #4) 3. Adopt an active role, give and receive group feedback on processes, share knowledge 4. Create a group name for your CoP in collaboration with other members and share this via the discussion board 5. Complete the weekly CoP evaluation form with CoP members in the session. Use this for Learning Task #3 Of the 56 participants who completed the Program, 15 participants attended every single CoP session, 23 participants attended 3 CoP sessions total, 7 participants attended 2 CoP sessions total, 5 participants only attended 1 CoP session total and 6 people did not attend a single CoP session.
LEARNING TASK 3 **CoP reflection: case study**	The first of the case study learning tasks was a 500 to 1000-word case study on the participants experience within the CoP. This case study was to allow the participants to reflect on the processes of working as a group to solve leadership challenges. This was broken into two parts: *Part One: What were the highlights of working in a CoP?* *Part Two: What extra challenges arise when using collaborative problem-solving?* Participants were asked to post their case study in the discussion board on Canvas to share their insights with the rest of the participants. 8 participants completed this task.
LEARNING TASK 4 **Leadership innovation case study**	The second case study and final learning task was to write a 500 to 1000-word case study on a personal leadership challenge that participants are currently or have previously been facing. For the case study, participants were to choose one challenge from their CoP group then draw on discussions from seminars, workshops and the experience within the CoP to design an intervention or series of steps to overcome this challenge. This was broken into two parts: *Part One: Describe the leadership challenge.* *Part Two: Describe the design of the intervention, the intended impact and/or actual impact.* The participants were given a Leadership Challenge mind map as a resource for this task and the CoP groups were asked to create an agenda that supports each participant to draw on the wisdom of the group to look at the implications of, and strategies for addressing the challenge. The agenda created was to be used to provide peer support for participants and to debrief any interventions and subsequent learnings. Participants were encouraged to share these case studies on the Leadership Intensive Program Network LinkedIn Group or where appropriate publicly on LinkedIn or in sector newsletters. 3 participants completed this task.

Table 1 – Learning Tasks – Semester 1, 2021

Appendix 2

This section provides a comprehensive outline of methodology including the five-step approach adopted to complete the evaluation.

Methodology

This summative evaluation report uses a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data, to inform the overall findings and recommendations. The main benefit of this approach is that it allows the reporting of findings from quantitative data sources, that may be explained by qualitative rationale.

The use of a mixed-methods approach facilitates higher validity and reliability of data, as data from different sources can be triangulated for a more holistic discussion. The data collection process for this evaluation is informed by three key evaluation questions discussed below. Figure 15 provides five key steps in the methodology. Each step of the approach is detailed below.

Evaluation questions

Any evaluation begins with the formulation of key questions that are tailored to the policy interest at hand. This initial stage involves clarifying the scope and purpose of the evaluation.

The evaluation of the 2021 Leadership Intensive Program builds on findings and outcomes presented in past WIDI evaluation reports. The evaluation gathers data that contributes to answer the following questions:

1. Did the leadership intensive program make an impact?

This evaluation question captures data on skills, knowledge, and capabilities that individual participants developed as a result of their participation in the 2021 Leadership Intensives. The question begins to explore the impacts of the program at the organisation and sector level.

2. How effective was the online delivery?

This question draws together different sources of data to develop an understanding of the online design and delivery experience and what are barriers and enablers of the impact discussed in question 1.

3. What could be done differently in the future?

This question mainly discusses the future implication for the 2021 Leadership Intensives based on insights and findings discussed in the report.

It is out of the scope of this evaluation to draw any causal links to understand the causality between the various forms of impact, the enablers of the impact, and barriers to implementation of the content covered in the Leadership Intensive training.

Data sources

A range of data was collected by the WIDI evaluation team. This report draws on multiple data sources. The list of data sources used for this evaluation include:

- document reviews e.g., pre-course registration forms, attendance records, scheduling;
- post-session feedback survey of participants;
- A separate post-Leadership Intensive course survey for outcomes and experience;
- Semi-structured interviews;
- Focus groups with a sub-sample of program participants; and
- Conversations with facilitators.

Data collection on key metrics

A range of data collection sources were used to collect data on key metrics such as:

- The post-session surveys that provided feedback on individual session experience;
- End-of-the-program outcomes survey that helped us to gain insights on participants' feedback on the outcomes, overall learning experience, and improvements for the future.

Most of the survey response items had a 5-point Likert scale rating, yes/no response, and an open-text category on the participants' experience of different aspects of the session. All surveys were administered through RMIT Qualtrics, and respondents spent approximately 7–10 minutes completing the survey.

In Semester 1, we received 66 pre-program surveys. The post-seminar 1–4 survey received a response rate of 98% (n=55 out of 56) and the post-seminar 5–8 survey/post-program survey 70% (n=39 out of 56).

In Semester 2, we received 54 pre-program surveys. The post-seminar 1–4 survey received a response rate of 69% (n=49 out of 71) and the end-of-program survey 54% (38 out of 71).

Evaluation	Identify data sources	Data collection on key matrices	Data analysis and insights	Findings

Figure 15: Report Methodology

In part, the low response rates to the surveys can be attributed to the time pressures experienced by the participants, as well as the added burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the extended sixth lockdown in Victoria, which coincided with the Semester 2 Program. Also, WIDI was conscious of not wishing to overload network participants with requests, given that many participants reported in the workshops and interviews that their workload was significant. Though the low response rates come with a large margin of error, they were triangulated by semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a diverse range of participants and document reviews.

The semi-structured interviews with participants complemented the largely quantitative survey results by providing rich contextual information not only about participant experience of the Leadership Intensive Program but also how they have applied new learnings and insights on how they intend to use the learnings from the program to improve overall sector capacity.

In Semester 1, a total of 18 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups (comprising of total five participants) were completed, representing 41% of the total participants.

In Semester 2, a total of 13 semi-structured interviews and three focus groups (comprising of total six participants) were completed. Although this represents just over one-quarter of the total participants (27%), the findings and insights reached saturation.[10] The sample sizes, diversity, and depth of data-enabled cross-referencing provided sufficient evidence to have confidence in overall findings.

Figure 16 provides the overall data collection process employed for improving the validity and reliability of the data collected and enhancing the overall confidence in findings and recommendations.
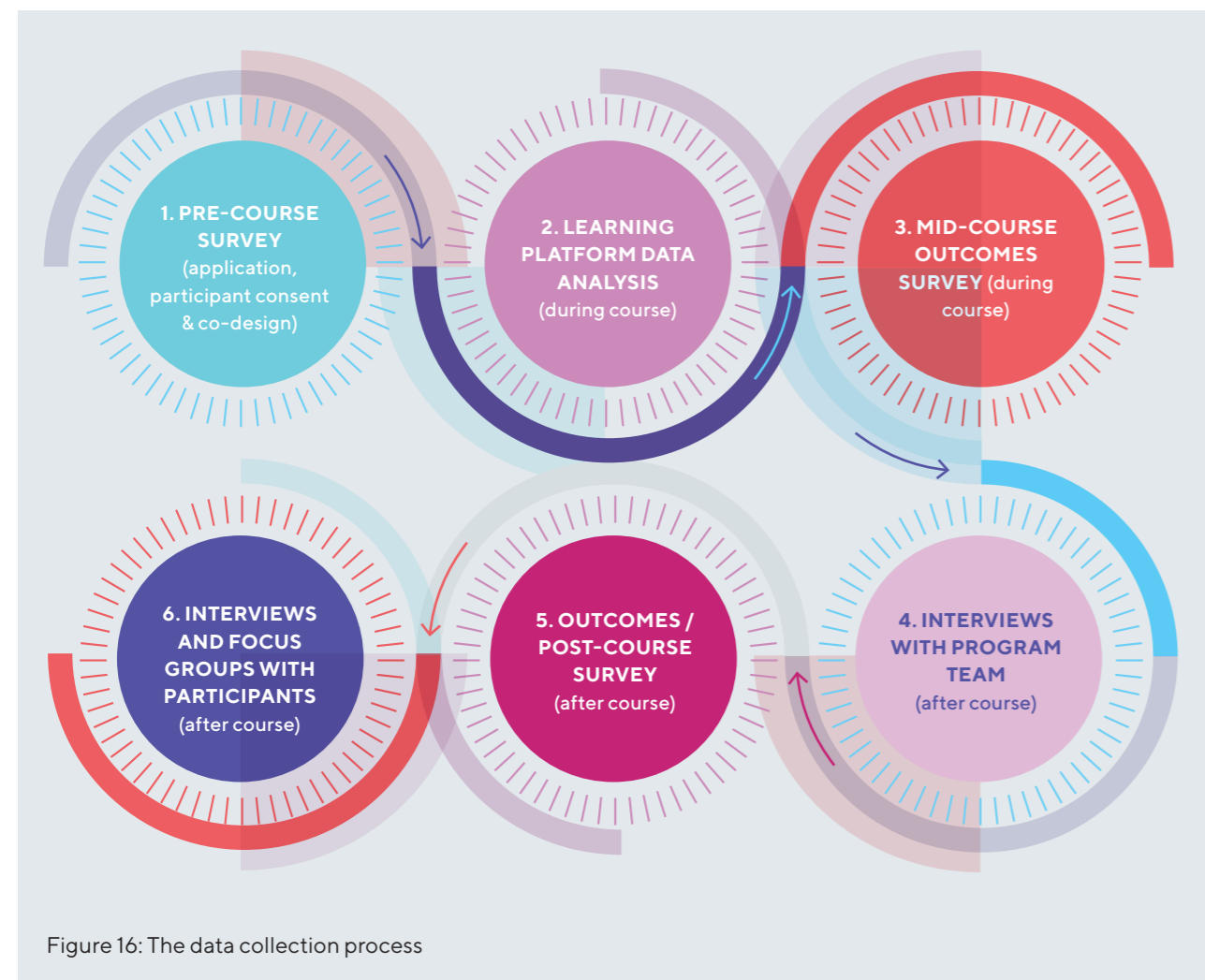
Data analysis and interpretations

This information collected from all the aforementioned data sources provides the foundation for the analysis of the evaluation questions and associated hypotheses. The data will be used to:
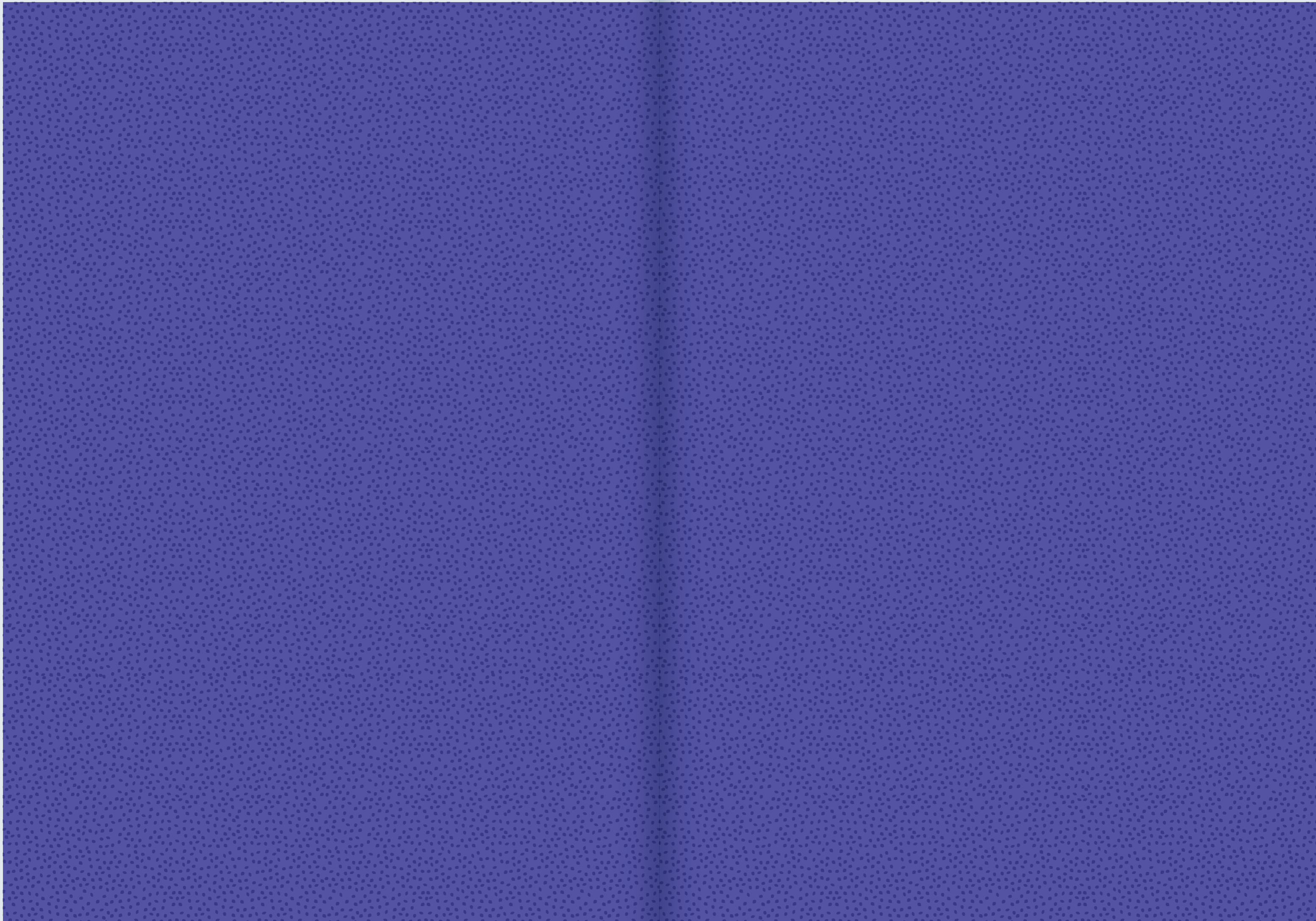
Triangulate multiple measures: To increase validity, the data collection plan relied on multiple sources of data to interpret survey results through triangulation of data. This triangulation of data would make it more likely that findings from the overall evaluation may be used to apply to the other organisation in the sector. However, it is important to consider that the sample size of the program is too small to make any generalisation.

WIDI conducted the quantitative analysis largely using Microsoft Excel including Pivot Tables and testing Correlation and Linear Regression where relevant. Codebooks were used to category analyse interview and focus group transcripts. WIDI analysed transcripts from interviews and focus groups in the following four steps:

- Transcribed the interview or focus group in situ, and refined transcripts with reference to recordings as required;
- Conducted first round of coding to map to the key evaluation questions;
- Second round of coding to map to the sub-categories of the key evaluation questions;
- With this coded data: understood patterns, wrote key findings, and developed insights, while also collating key quotes to illustrate trends in qualitative and quantitative data.

Figure 16: The data collection process

Endnotes

1. See N. Pfitzner, K. Fitz-Gibbon and J. True. (2020). 'Responding to the "shadow pandemic": practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women in Victoria, Australia during the COVID-19 restrictions'. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

2. In Semester 1, a post-session survey was conducted after Sessions 2 and 8, while in Semester 2, one post-session survey was distributed to participants following Session 4.

3. See Appendix 1 for details of the learning tasks in the CoPs.

4. While this participant completed the Program, they did not, in the end, require any accessibility support.

5. For more on the increased complexity of family violence cases during the pandemic, see N. Pfitzner, K. Fitz-Gibbon and J. True (2020). 'Responding to the "shadow pandemic": practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women in Victoria, Australia during the COVID-19 restrictions'. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University, Victoria, Australia; Workforce Innovation and Development Institute (2021). 'Leadership Journeys: An exploration of the retention and career progression among graduates of the Leadership Intensive Program (2018–2020)'.

6. Vaccination Required To Protect Workers And Victoria | Premier of Victoria 1 October 2021

7. 'Daily New Cases in Victoria', **https://www.coronavirus.vic. gov.au/victorian-coronavirus-covid-19-data, accessed 23 November 2021**.

8. A further 1% of survey respondents left this question blank.

9. 'Vaccination Required to Protect Workers and Victoria', **https:// www.premier.vic.gov.au/ vaccination-required-protect-workers-and-victoria, accessed 24 November 2021**.

10. Saturation describes the point at which ongoing interviews supply no new information. At this point the relevant data is 'saturated'.