Evaluation of the Future Leaders Program

Final report

December 2023

dandolopartners

Introduction

The Australian Government Department of Education commissioned dandolopartners to evaluate Teach for Australia's Future Leaders Program pilot.

The Department of Education (the Department) commissioned dandolopartners (dandolo) to evaluate the Future Leaders Program (FLP) pilot – a school leadership development program run by Teach for Australia (TFA).

- The Australian Government funded the FLP to test a new approach to professional development for aspiring school leaders to increase the supply, quality and retention of school leaders in regional and remote Australia.
- The FLP is a year-long professional development program that consists of workshops, coaching, peer learning and hands-on leadership experience. It targets aspiring school leaders in regional and remote schools that have an ICSEA score below 1000.
- The pilot was originally intended to run for two years but a program underspend (due largely to COVID related factors) allowed the program to be extended for a third year. WA and NT have participated in the program in each year. A small number of Catholic schools in NSW and Queensland have also participated (in years 2 and 3 respectively).

This report sets out findings on the design, implementation, outputs and outcomes of the FLP for the first and second cohorts in 2021 (C1) and 2022 (C2) respectively. The evaluation does not examine the 2023 cohort in detail.

dandolopartners previously produced two interim reports to provide the Department and TFA with continuous feedback. The findings from these have been incorporated into this final report.

Report structure

This report has two sections: an outline of key findings and recommendations, and two appendices covering the outputs and outcomes of the program to date.

Fieldwork completed for this report

May 2023
- Interviews with C2 participants (5/72 – 7%)
- Interviews with C2 principals (2/55 – 4%)
- Interviews with C2 coaches (8/8 – 100%)
- Analysis of TFA survey data from principals, participants and colleagues
- Program comparator analysis

Sept. 2021
- Interviews with each member of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)
- A group interview with coaches (4/6)
- An online focus group of Cohort 1 participants
- An independent review of curriculum and pedagogy

April 2022
- Interviews with C1 participants (9/35 – 25%)
- Interviews with C1 principals (6/29 – 20%)
- Interviews with C1 coaches (6/6 – 100%)
- Analysis of TFA survey data from principals, participants and colleagues

Key findings

Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation focused on the FLP as a two-year pilot, with the objective of sharing learnings and making recommendations for programmatic improvements.

In scope	Out of scope
Evaluation of the FLP as a two-year pilot, to test a specific school leadership development model for regional, rural and remote Australia and share learnings with jurisdictions and program providers.	Evaluation of the FLP as a fully-fledged program that has been embedded for a significant period of time.
Use of raw quantitative data supplied by TFA and analysed by dandolo.	Use of quantitative data collected directly by dandolo, noting that dandolo collected and analysed extensive qualitative data.
Comprehensive analysis for FLP Cohort 1 (2021) and Cohort 2 (2022).	Comprehensive analysis for FLP Cohort 3 (2023), noting that the evaluation concluded in mid-2023.
Programmatic recommendations on how to improve the FLP in its current form.	Recommendations on whether – and how – to fund the FLP in the future, noting this is a decision for the Australian Government.

Evaluation on a page

The FLP is a unique and valuable program in the school leadership development landscape. Despite its infancy, the program appears to be having a positive impact on the supply, retention and quality of school leaders in regional and remote Australia.

Program outputs

In its first two years, 100 teachers completed the program, and 74 teachers are currently participating in Cohort 3.

The program has expanded into four jurisdictions, with a good spread of participation in these areas.

Program quality

The FLP's individual project components (coaching, workshops, peer networking and innovation projects) are high quality, but it is the unique combination and interconnection of program components that provides value to participants. Overall, participants were very satisfied with the FLP across the first two cohorts.

Program impact

The FLP has had a high impact on participants' leadership knowledge, skills and confidence. Most participants are having some positive impact on their colleagues and school environment. The program was particularly impactful for experienced educators needing a 'push' into leadership and ambitious educators who might have burnt out without the support.

Program value

As a pilot, the FLP has delivered value. In all participating jurisdictions, the FLP appears to have filled a gap in high quality professional development courses for educational leadership specifically targeted in regional and remote Australia. We estimate that this has improved the supply, retention and quality of school leaders.

Program recommendations

We recommend the program continue to make iterative improvements and other changes, including:
- Maintaining the high-quality package of program components
- Scaling based on availability of quality coaches and jurisdictions in most need
- A competitive procurement process

Program summary

The Department commissioned TFA to deliver a professional development program for high-achieving teachers who aspire to lead in regional, rural and remote schools.*

Purpose of the FLP

In response to evidence of emerging shortages of school leaders in Australian schools, particularly in regional and remote schools, the Australian Government provided a grant of $7.54 million to Teach For Australia (TFA) to design and implement a school leadership development program with the following objectives:
- increase the quality of school leadership training and development in regional and remote schools
- strengthen the school leadership pipeline in regional, rural and remote schools by:
  - increasing aspirations among teachers in regional and remote schools to become school leaders, including principals
  - increasing the supply of teachers with high quality leadership skills who can fill available leadership positions,

The FLP was originally intended to run for two cohorts in 2021 and 2022. A program underspend (due mainly to COVID-related factors) allowed the program to run for a third cohort in 2023. The evaluation does not examine the third cohort in detail due to time constraints and the original evaluation design.

Program design

The FLP is designed to **equip participants with the skills, knowledge and confidence required to transition to positions of leadership,** either in their schools or another regional or remote school.

Pilot cohorts

Cohort 1 (2021): 43 teachers from 29 schools across Northern Territory (NT) and Western Australia (WA).

Cohort 2 (2022): 72 teachers from 55 schools across NT, WA and Catholic schools in NSW and QLD.

Selection criteria

Teachers must have:

- 2+ years of teaching experience
- Aspirations and motivation to move into a leadership position
- Willingness to live and work in outer regional, remote and very remote communities
- Written endorsement from their school principal to participate in the program

Teachers must work at:

- Schools that are classified outer regional, remote or very remote
- Schools that have an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) score of less than 1000

Content and delivery

The one-year program includes:
- Four intensive workshops and peer networking
- Coaching and one-to-one support
- Individual school innovation projects
- TFA's Leadership Competency Framework

Content is intended to:
- Align with Principal and Teaching Standards
- Reflect best practice
- Be flexible to participant needs

Progress

Two cohorts have successfully completed the program to date and a third cohort is currently underway.
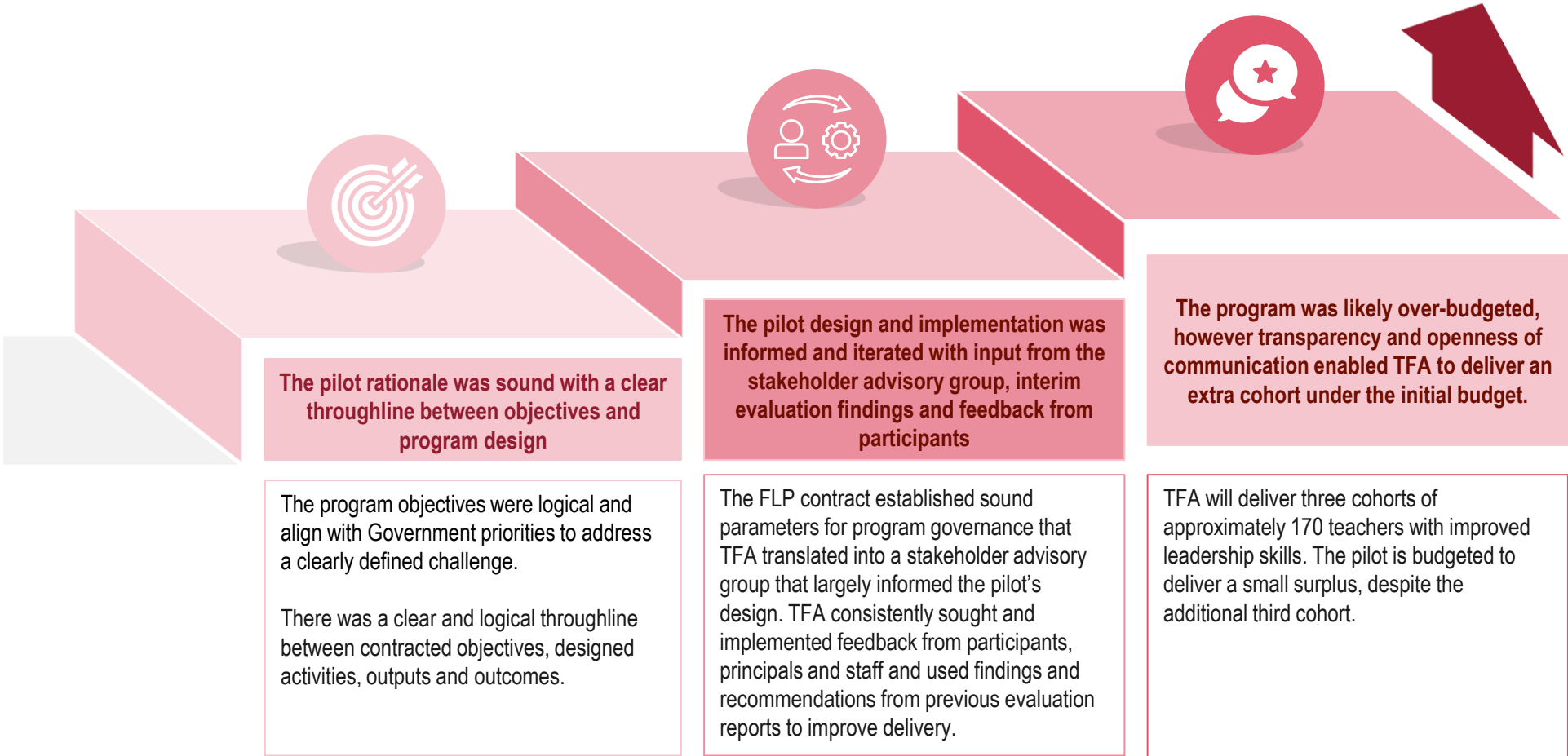
The program faced some initial challenges due to COVID-19, however, has since gone on to improve and iterate its in-person delivery.

We have seen positive outcomes from the program from the first two cohorts.

* Using the ABS classification, eligibility is open to 'outer regional', 'remote' and 'very remote' locations. A small number of schools from 'inner regional' locations have also been granted special dispensation to participate in the program based on their characteristics.

Pilot policy and governance

The FLP was scaffolded well by the Australian Government and TFA. Continuous improvement mechanisms and transparency has supported TFA to iteratively improve the program during implementation and increase the value of the initial investment.

The pilot rationale was sound with a clear throughline between objectives and program design

The program objectives were logical and align with Government priorities to address a clearly defined challenge.

There was a clear and logical throughline between contracted objectives, designed activities, outputs and outcomes.

The pilot design and implementation was informed and iterated with input from the stakeholder advisory group, interim evaluation findings and feedback from participants

The FLP contract established sound parameters for program governance that TFA translated into a stakeholder advisory group that largely informed the pilot's design. TFA consistently sought and implemented feedback from participants, principals and staff and used findings and recommendations from previous evaluation reports to improve delivery.

The program was likely over-budgeted, however transparency and openness of communication enabled TFA to deliver an extra cohort under the initial budget.

TFA will deliver three cohorts of approximately 170 teachers with improved leadership skills. The pilot is budgeted to deliver a small surplus, despite the additional third cohort.

The FLP's Learning Competency Framework

Program content is relevant to emerging leaders in regional and remote schools and the cohorts they serve.

- **Extensive stakeholder engagement helped to ensure the program content is relevant.** The FLP was designed following extensive engagement with jurisdictions and stakeholders, helping to ensure content meets their needs and is relevant to regional and remote schooling.

- **The clear focus on 'two worlds learning' (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) reflects the cohort of students participants serve.** It is genuine and 'lived' by TFA and the course content. This element is unique, highly relevant, and could be a model for others.

- **The program may not be fully meeting the needs of very remote participants.** Some stakeholders believe that the content may need to be adjusted to fully meet the needs of very remote participants, while acknowledging it is hard to balance and ensure relevance for all.

> I like the diverse range of presenters we have had and diverse range of topics. The highlight for me so far was the work around resilience and wellbeing for leaders. (FLP participant)

> There is no other program like it specifically targeting aspiring leaders in regional schools. (FLP coach)

TFA designed a logical, high-quality program and aligned with the best evidence of what works.

> We were impressed with the quality – use of research, data and 'two worlds' learning that has informed the design and delivery of the Future Leaders Program. (Bruce Armstrong and Tony Mackay)

- **The program content is rigorous and evidence based.** It is designed in line with contemporary evidence on leadership practice and what constitutes good professional learning. Our expert reviewers do think it could benefit from a more explicit theory of action.

- **The implementation plan for course content is intentional, detailed, thorough and flexible.** This ensures the program is quality and has integrity, while being responsive to needs.

- **Participants value the content.** We heard from participants, their coaches, their employers and their peak associations that the course content is high-quality and meets the needs of participants.

- **There is some tension concerning the program's 'load'.** The expectations are appropriate for the rigour and cost, but some participants expressed concern at the load, particularly holiday workshops.

Pilot outputs and design quality

The FLP's individual project components are high quality, but it is the unique combination and interconnection of program components that provides value to participants.

Program components		Interconnected program design
Workshops	Participants across both cohorts were highly satisfied with the workshops and felt that the content was relevant to their development.	The workshops served as an informal meeting ground for peer learning and connection. Workshops provided space for participants to surface challenges and connect content to their school innovation projects.
School innovation projects	The innovation projects allowed participants to embed their learnings from the program in practice and collaborate with teachers and students for greater school impact.	The innovation projects were a key point of discussion during coaching sessions with participants. The workshop content was used as a tool to discuss approaches and guidelines for the innovation projects.
Coaching	Coaching was the most valuable component of the program for participants. It helped them to develop their leadership toolkit and reduce feelings of isolation.	The individualised approach to coaching meant participants were supported to connect and embed learning from across the pilot and situate it in their own contexts with their coaches' help.
Peer learning	Participants had mixed responses to the peer learning opportunities across cohorts. In cases where peer connections were formed, participants highly valued the relationships.	Peer learning was encouraged by coaches and participants told us they found the networking opportunities at the in-person workshops to be meaningful to their experience.

FLP's learning capability framework

The content and structure of FLP was underpinned by the learning competency framework TFA developed in consultation with key stakeholders through the stakeholder advisory group.
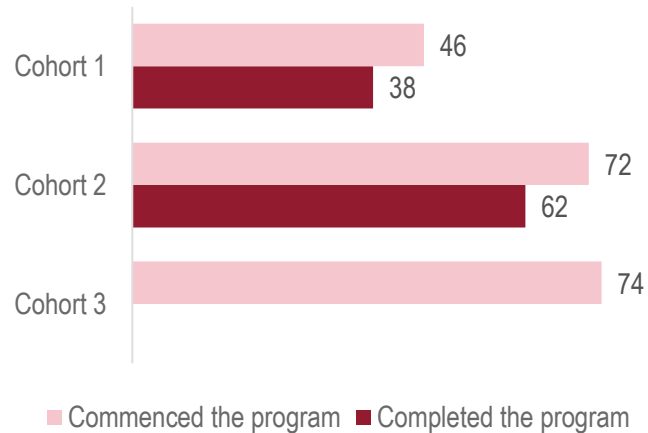
A best practice review found that the content, structure and delivery based off the learning capability framework was high quality, relevant and in line with best practice professional development in education.

Participant characteristics

In its three years of delivery, 100 teachers have completed the program, with 74 teachers currently participating in Cohort 3. The program has expanded into four jurisdictions, with a good spread of participation in these areas.

Cohort growth

There has been a steady growth rate of participants in the FLP across the three cohorts, with a proportionate attrition rate.

Cohort 1: 46 (Commenced the program), 38 (Completed the program)
Cohort 2: 72 (Commenced the program), 62 (Completed the program)
Cohort 3: 74 (Commenced the program)

■ Commenced the program   ■ Completed the program

Geographic locations

Teachers come from a good spread of schools across regional WA and NT. The Catholic school sector in QLD and NSW have a smaller pool of remote and very remote schools to access.

The schools are broadly representative of regional jurisdiction breakdowns, with the one major exception being a higher percentage of WA participants from outer regional areas.[1,2]

Legend
- Very remote
- Remote
- Outer regional
- Inner regional
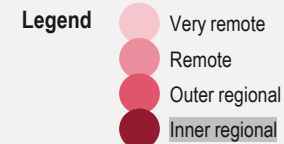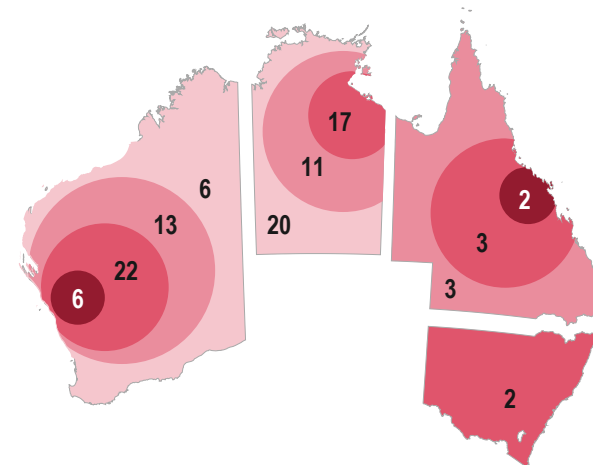
Participant archetypes

There are two broad participant archetypes that have successfully participated in the FLP: 'Sprinters' who are actively seeking to improve their leadership capability and 'Marathon Runners' with high potential and experience, who need a 'push' into leadership.

Across all three FLP cohorts, we are seeing some trends in the 'types' of participants in the program. Experience levels and confidence entering the program influence the nature and extent of the program's impact on the participant. As the pilot has progressed, we are seeing increasingly more 'marathon runners' enter the program.

Sprinters

- Typically earlier in their teaching career
- Actively seeking out opportunities to develop their leadership capability
- Applied for the program through their own volition
- May have moved to regional and remote Australia because there are more opportunities to grow more quickly

I've been in a lot of PD programs before and thought it was going to be downloading information and that would be it. The FLP program doesn't do that – it makes you work... One of the things that has kept me regional is the opportunity for growth. The things I can do here, I couldn't do in a bigger city. I plan to stay for at least the next two years. (Participant - Cohort 2)
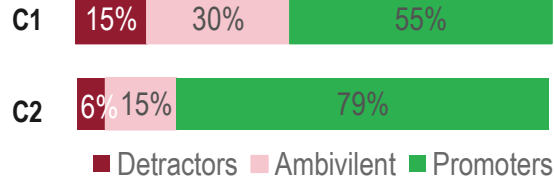
Marathon Runners

- Mid-career teachers who have taken on informal leadership roles within their own schools but mostly still in the classroom
- Have been identified as showing leadership potential by their peers / school leadership
- Required a tap on the shoulder from school leadership or encouragement to apply from their peers
- May have stronger ties to the regional community they live in

I've been teaching for 17 years and decided to apply for the FLP after changing from the State system to Catholic. The program didn't change my career aspirations, but it built my confidence and showed me that there are multiple different pathways to leadership and has broadened what leadership roles look like to me. (Participant – Cohort 2)

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Pilot satisfaction

Overall, participants were very satisfied with the FLP across the first two cohorts (C1 and C2).

	C1	C2
	88%	**94%**

	C1	C2
	100%	**94%**

C1 | 15% | 30% | 55% |

C2 | 6% | 15% | 79% |

■ Detractors ■ Ambivilent ■ Promoters

Participants across both cohorts reported high levels of satisfaction.

I am very happy to recommend it to other educators from all over Australia! (Participant – Cohort 2)

Agree / strongly agree that they are satisfied with their experience in the FLP

By far the best PD I have had the privilege of attending. (Participant – Cohort 2)

Agree / strongly agree the FLP team provided adequate support throughout the program

My coach was amazing and very supportive. (Participant – Cohort 1)

Participant level impact

The program increased participants' confidence, knowledge and skills across the key leadership skill sets.

Participant level impact

Across both cohorts (2021 and 2022), the FLP has:

- Had a positive impact on participant leadership knowledge, skills and confidence
- Led to small changes in participant leadership behaviour and practice
- Led some participants to aspire to leadership positions to a larger extent and in some cases has correlated with them moving into formal leadership positions
- 46% of participants across both cohorts reported promotions since starting the program.

Leadership competency skills

Self leadership knowledge and skills
Across both cohorts, participants reported a large increase of preparedness in self leadership skills, and all feel at least somewhat prepared in these aspects of leadership.

Technical expertise
In addition to reporting an increase in preparedness relating to technical expertise, we saw evidence of confident implementation of these skills through some of the school innovation projects.

Relational leadership knowledge and skills
Participants and their coaches focused on their increase in relational leadership skills in interviews. This is supported by the largest increase in preparedness compared to the other aspects of leadership. Some participants attributed this to being able to work through conflicts and tough conversations with coaches.

Influence and systems thinking skills
Participants also displayed confidence when we discussed impact at the school and regional education system level. They understood the factors and levers available to them in order to implement change at a school level.

School level impact

There is evidence that the FLP is having a positive impact on participants' colleagues and the broader school environment. Schools see value in repeated participation of their school in the FLP and this may enhance school level impact in the longer term.

Impact on staff

Across both cohorts, there is evidence that participants were impacting other staff members through their innovation projects and general involvement and learnings from the FLP.

C1 **C2**
100% **75%**

of principals reported a positive impact on staff as result of the FLP program.

Three more aspirant leaders have been supported by me to apply (for the FLP). (Principal – Cohort 2)

Impact on the school environment

Principals reported seeing impacts / benefits in their school environment. This was mainly articulated as impacts from the participants' school innovation projects.

C1 **C2**
87% **70%**

of principals have seen their school benefit from the fellow's participation in FLP

"I think there was a real positive impact on the school, the project was very applicable for our school and very necessary. (Principal – Cohort 1)

Impact on students

In some cases, the innovation projects have had direct impact on students through the development of extracurricular activities and clubs. It is still too early to determine if long term impact can be sustained.

C1 **C2**
87% **63%**

of principals agree that participants' innovation project is improving outcomes for students at their school

My students have had a positive effect from the tutoring sessions program as they have now passed subjects that they were struggling with before. (Participant – Cohort 2).

Analysis limitation:

There was lower engagement from principals in Cohort 2 both in survey responses and interview participation, which created a limitation in measuring school environment impact and may explain the lower degree of reported impact across the three domains.

Principal buy-in for the FLP program is important for maximising school impact, as they can either be an enabler or roadblock for program components like the innovation projects.

Region level impact

We are yet to see long term impact for regions generally, but there are solid building blocks for improved supply, quality and retention.

Region level impact

Two years of delivery means it is still too early to tell whether the FLP is having an impact at the region level, however we can see that:

- There is an increased supply of quality leaders in regional education, and there is indication that most want to stay regional.

- The FLP may be helping to mitigate transience in the regions through providing a scarce professional development opportunity that is specific to regional education.

- The program has the potential to scale and grow this impact in the future

Before FLP, leadership in our region as a whole was more reactive rather than proactive. (Principal – Cohort 2).
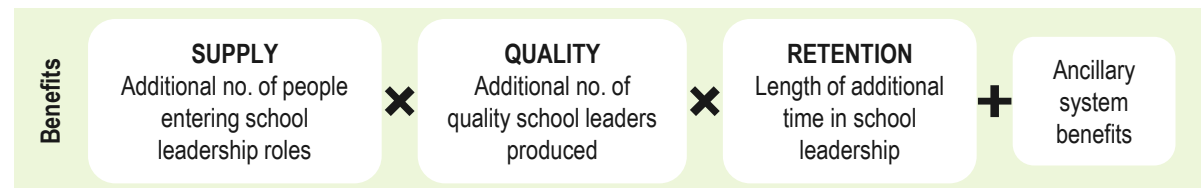
Considerations

- TFA could consider more directly targeting the 'Marathon Runner' archetype in future recruitment, as this group tends to have more established 'roots' in communities and greater incentive to stay in rural, regional and remote areas.

- 'Sprinter' archetypes may respond better to additional incentives to remain in rural, regional and remote areas long term.

Applying a value assessment framework

Overall, we estimate that the FLP improves the supply, retention and quality of school leaders in regional and remote Australia. The Australian Government currently bears all costs.

Benefits

| SUPPLY Additional no. of people entering school leadership roles | × | QUALITY Additional no. of quality school leaders produced | × | RETENTION Length of additional time in school leadership | + | Ancillary system benefits |

Costs

| Cost per participant to Australian Government | + | Cost per participant to State and Territory Governments | + | Ancillary system costs |

Supply
We estimate that the FLP has increased the supply of school leaders through a) shifting the aspirations of its participants or b) increasing participants' confidence to pursue leadership roles earlier.

Quality
The FLP increases the quality of school leadership through a program that consists of high-quality components and has shown to have impact on its participants' knowledge, behaviour and confidence.

Retention
We estimate that the FLP increases the chance that a school leader stays in leadership positions in regional and remote Australia, particularly through increasing preparedness for and confidence in school leadership and thereby preventing burn-out.

Ancillary system benefits
- School innovation projects – Schools are benefiting from successful implementation of participants school innovation projects.
- Peer to peer learning – There is some evidence of colleagues of FLP participants learning from their behaviour changes and role modelling, increasing the quality and morale of teaching in some schools.
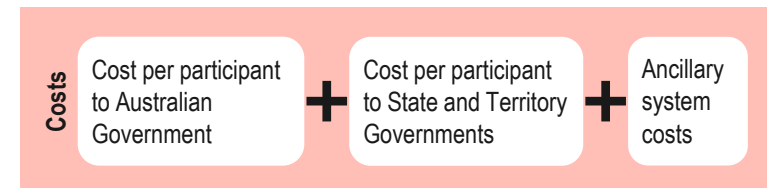
Cost per participant to Australian Government
The Australian Government bears all costs relating to the program.

Cost per participant to State and Territory Governments
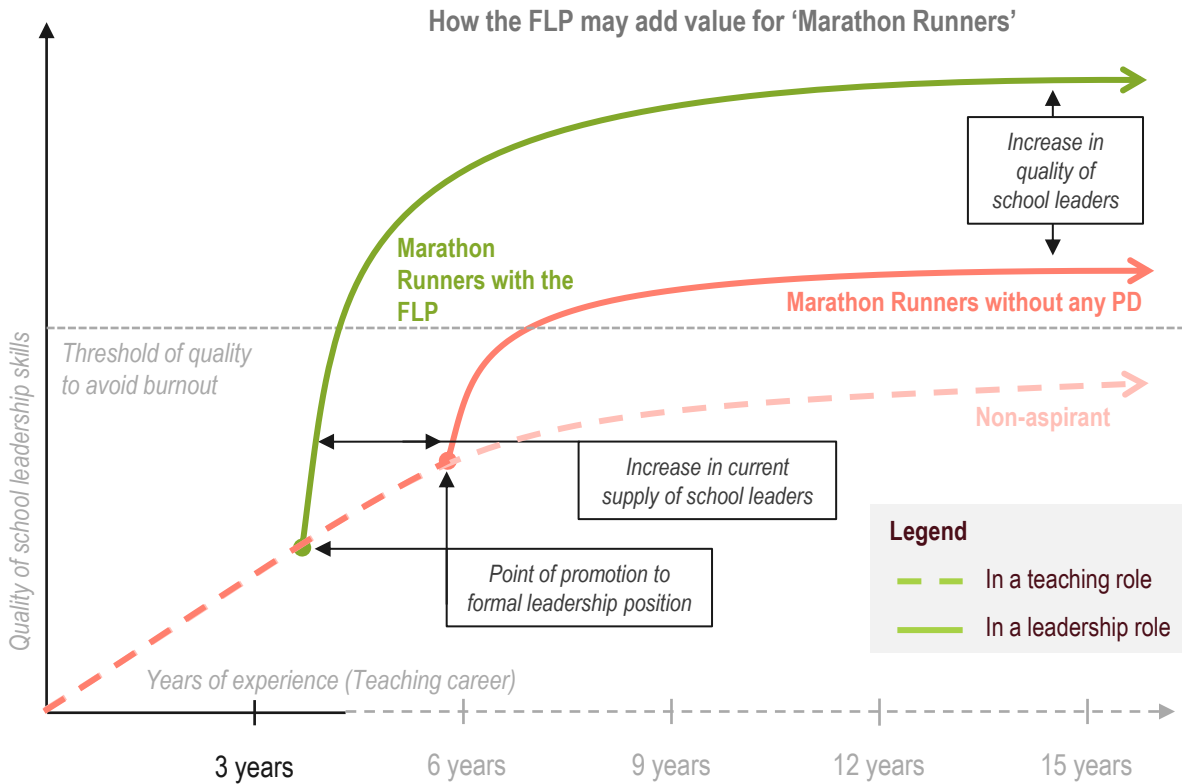Currently there are no program costs faced by State and Territory Governments or other sectors (including Catholic / independent jurisdictions).

Ancillary system costs
Since workshops are completed during school holidays, and participants complete their school innovation projects and coaching in their own time, there is no cost for relief teaching.

How the FLP benefits with 'Marathon Runners'

For 'Marathon Runners', we heard that the FLP accelerates their transition into leadership while also improving the quality of their leadership.

How the FLP may add value for 'Marathon Runners'

- *Quality of school leadership skills* (vertical axis)
- *Years of experience (Teaching career)* (horizontal axis)

Marathon Runners with the FLP

Marathon Runners without any PD

Non-aspirant

Increase in quality of school leaders

Threshold of quality to avoid burnout

Increase in current supply of school leaders

Point of promotion to formal leadership position

Legend
- – – In a teaching role
- —— In a leadership role

3 years / 6 years / 9 years / 12 years / 15 years

Note that we cannot yet know what happens to the FLP participants more than 2 years after FLP as the pilot has only been running since 2021.

Comparing 'Marathon Runners' who have completed the FLP to not having received any professional development

- 'Marathon Runners' have leadership aspirations when they enter the FLP, but are yet to have the confidence to seek them out

- For this group of participants, the FLP increases the quality of their leadership skills more quickly and to a higher degree than they would have without the program

- The FLP also increases this group's confidence, and may increase the likelihood that they will seek out and apply for formal leadership positions sooner
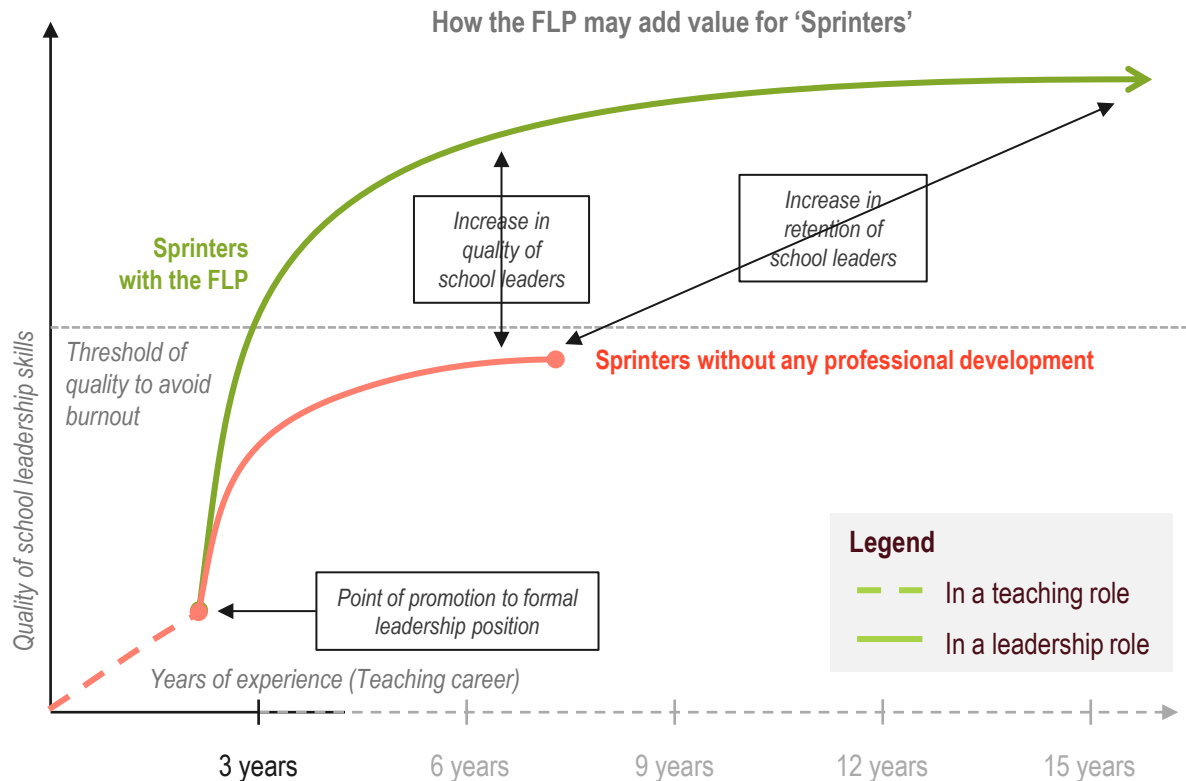
A note on Non-aspirants

- The FLP targets aspirant leaders, so by design, there is a group of teachers that the FLP does not access who may have leadership potential but are not willing to enter leadership roles

Note: Dandolo have created the framework to visualise the value that the FLP brings compared to alternative cases. The vertical axis represents quality of leadership skills and the horizontal axis represents time. While this visualisation is informed by our fieldwork and independent data analysis, it has been created for illustrative purposes.

How the FLP benefits with 'Sprinters'

For 'Sprinters', we heard that the FLP improves the quality of their leadership and may increase the likelihood that they will remain quality leaders in regional and remote areas over the medium to longer term.

How the FLP may add value for 'Sprinters'

Increase in quality of school leaders

Increase in retention of school leaders

Sprinters with the FLP

Sprinters without any professional development

Threshold of quality to avoid burnout

Quality of school leadership skills

Point of promotion to formal leadership position

Years of experience (Teaching career)

Legend

– – In a teaching role

—— In a leadership role

3 years   6 years   9 years   12 years   15 years

Note that we cannot yet know what happens to the FLP participants more than 2 years after FLP, as the pilot has only been running since 2021.
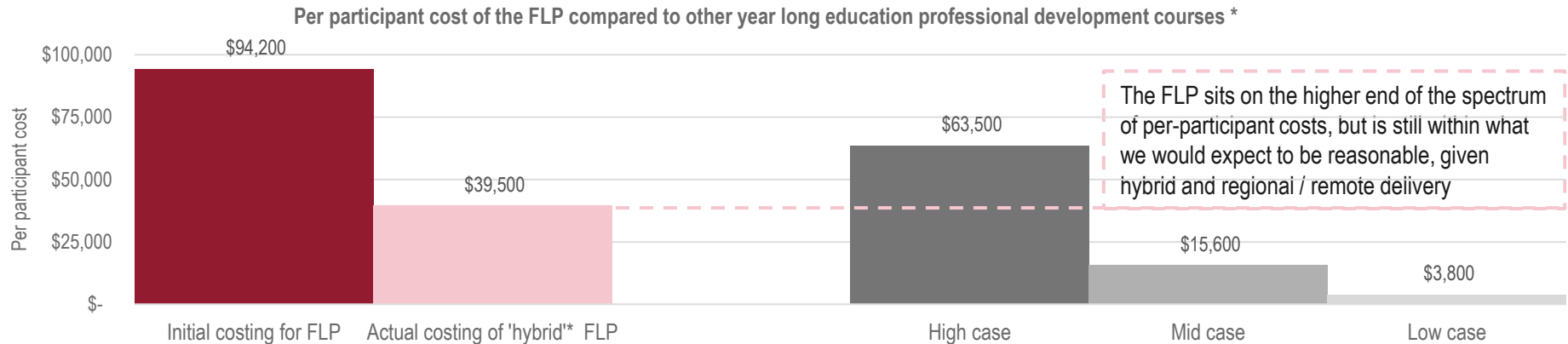
Comparing 'Sprinters' who complete the FLP to no professional development participation

- We know that for some participants, the FLP had no impact on promotion to formal leadership. These participants were already seeking promotions and would likely have entered into leadership positions regardless of the program.

- However, one of the key challenges in the regions is that early-career aspirant leaders go into leadership too early. They burn out without the tools to sustain themselves in leadership positions.

- We found that the FLP provides tools for 'Sprinters' to increase their quality of leadership and this may help prevent burnout, sustain their practice, and increase the likelihood that they will stay:

1. In leadership roles and

2. In regional / remote Australia

- It is possible that, without the FLP, these participants would seek other professional development opportunities.

Note: We have created the framework to visualise the value that the FLP brings compared to alternative cases. The vertical axis represents quality of leadership skills and the horizontal axis represents time. While this visualisation is informed by our fieldwork and independent data analysis, it has been created for illustrative purposes.

Cost comparison

The actual cost of the FLP is much lower than the initial estimation. The actual cost is likely to be significantly higher than other leadership development programs, but appears reasonable given the unique combination of intensive, high-quality components, and regional delivery.

Per participant cost of the FLP compared to other year long education professional development courses *

Per participant cost

$100,000	$94,200
$75,000	
$50,000	
$25,000	
$-	

- Initial costing for FLP: **$94,200**
- Actual costing of 'hybrid'* FLP: **$39,500**
- High case: **$63,500**
- Mid case: **$15,600**
- Low case: **$3,800**

The FLP sits on the higher end of the spectrum of per-participant costs, but is still within what we would expect to be reasonable, given hybrid and regional / remote delivery

Initial costing for FLP: Based on two years of delivery, 80 participants and total budget of $7,535,000

Actual costing of 'hybrid'* FLP: Based on delivery in 2022, budget for 2023 and ~140 participants total, including set up and wrap-up costs. Excludes 2021, given delivery costs were substantially different due to wholly online delivery during Covid-19 pandemic.

High case: Estimate based on an 11-month long principal preparation program (delivered online in 2021) with a similar cohort size that included workshops, mentoring and an internship.

Mid case: Estimate based on a fully online 8-month program with a similar sized cohort that contained workshops, some peer learning and 12 hours of 1:1 mentorship.

Low case: Estimate based on an 8-month long program for education system leaders (delivered online in 2021) with a cohort size of ~300 that included workshops and mentoring.

* Dandolo were unable to find a comparable course that featured a similar cohort size, amount of content, all components that the FLP delivers and in a regional setting. We have instead compared the FLP per participant cost to programs that have some similar features. And provided a high, mid and low case to demonstrate that the actual FLP per participant cost fits within the ballpark of what we would expect a of professional development course (particularly delivered in regional / remote Australia).

Recommended program improvements

If the FLP is to continue in the future, we recommend iterative programmatic improvements to design and delivery; recruitment and selection; and governance and procurement. We also recommend considering opportunities to scale the FLP to ensure the program is having systemic impact.

Iterative improvements

Growth considerations

Design and delivery

We recommend the FLP start reviewing the cohort's demographics, career backgrounds and remoteness / school contexts, and adapting curriculum and pedagogy based on need.

We do not recommend removing any program components. If there are calls to reduce costs, any changes may impact the effectiveness of FLP overall, because the components are interrelated.

Recruitment and selection

To balance out the 'tap on the shoulder' approach to recruitment, we recommend creating a recruitment and marketing strategy that:

- Targets under-represented cohorts and encourages self-nomination
- Continues to reaches aspirant leaders through multiple marketing avenues
- Targets specific regions / areas where the most need exists
- Allows for deferment if the program continues for multiple years
- Considers the risks / benefits of the 'school clustering' trend that we are seeing, where schools become repeat customers of the program

Governance and procurement

To ensure a robust and sustainable program in the future, we recommend considering a competitive procurement process to revisit costing the FLP in a post-COVID context while delivering the full package of high-quality program components.

As part of this competitive procurement approach, there should be a focus on building stronger buy-in from a broader number of state and territory jurisdictions (including non-government schools) to ensure the FLP reaches communities most in need.

Vertical and horizontal scaling

If / when considering opportunities for vertical scaling, we recommend:

- Scaling vertically on the basis of quality coach recruitment
- Determining cohort size in a particular jurisdiction / region based on how many coaches are available and their capacity to coach in a given year

In considering if and where to horizontally scale the FLP, we recommend focusing on jurisdictions with:

- Higher numbers of remote and very remote schools
- Less available professional development for aspirant leaders (focusing on regional and remote contexts)
- Higher numbers of schools experiencing disadvantage (ICSEA score below 1000)
- Higher levels of teacher attrition and school leadership role vacancies

Program components to maintain

If the FLP is to continue in the future, we recommend maintaining a continuous improvement approach to the design and delivery; recruitment and selection; and governance and procurement elements of the program to ensure high quality learning and outcomes.

Maintaining best practice

Design and delivery

The program design has maintained a high standard of quality based on the best practice review completed for the interim evaluation report. To continue this into the future, we suggest the FLP should:

- Be continually adapting content and delivery based on feedback from participants and emerging evidence around professional development
- Preserve the quality of coaching, given we heard it is the most impactful component of the pilot
- The unique combination of high value project components.

Recruitment and selection

Participants of the program are of a high caliber with strong leadership potential. The FLP should continue to utilise word of mouth recruitment strategies and maintain a high threshold for participant eligibility.

Governance and procurement

If the FLP is funded on a national basis, it will be important to have continued engagement with key stakeholders, through a stakeholder advisory committee or other type of governance group, to support sustaining impact longer-term

Appendix 1 – Components of the Future Leaders Program

Component introduction

The FLP's individual project components are high quality, but it is the unique combination of components that provides value to participants.

FLP's learning capability framework

The content and structure of FLP was underpinned by the learning competency framework TFA developed in consultation with key stakeholders through the stakeholder advisory group.

A best practice review found that the content and delivery based of the learning capability framework was high quality, relevant and in line with best practice professional development in education.

Workshops
Page 24

Participants across both cohorts were highly satisfied with the workshops and felt that the content was relevant to their development.

School innovation projects
Page 25

The innovation projects allowed participants to embed their learnings from the program in practice and collaborate with teachers and students for greater school impact.

Coaching
Page 26

Coaching was the most valuable component of the program for participants. It helped them to develop their leadership toolkit and reduce feelings of isolation.

Peer learning
Page 27

Participants had mixed responses to the peer learning opportunities across cohorts. In cases where peer connections were formed, participants highly valued the relationships.

Overall, participants were very satisfied with the program across both cohorts

The combination of project components was a key driver of value for participants. In general, the components were well designed and complimentary to each other in developing learning amongst both cohorts.

C1	C2	
76%	84%	Rated 8 or above to the question: "how likely are you to recommend the FLP to a friend or colleague?"
88%	94%	Agree / strongly agree that they are satisfied with their experience in the FLP
100%	94%	Agree / strongly agree the FLP team provided adequate support throughout the program

Summary of program outputs (Cohort 1 and 2)

The program had a high level of engagement from participants across both cohorts. The iterative approach of the FLP meant that the program could deliver higher value for Cohort 2.

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Workshops	**8** workshops conducted virtually **92%** or more attended virtually across the 3 workshops **88%** of participants were satisfied with the workshops	**9** workshops conducted with mixed delivery **74%** or more attended in person across the 3 workshops **3** attended online for workshop 2 **90%** of participants were satisfied with the workshops
School innovation projects	**85%** of participants said the innovation projects improved their performance as a leader	**86%** of participants said the innovation projects improved their performance as a leader
Coaching	**6** coaches were involved in the first cohort **94%** agree/strongly agree that their leadership practice has improved as a direct result from coaching	**8** coaches were involved in the second cohort **91%** agree/strongly agree that their leadership practice has improved as a direct result from coaching
Peer learning	**85%** of participants met less than 3 times over the year **44%** thought the peer learning clusters had a positive impact on their leadership development	**70%** of participants met at least 4 or more times over the year **98%** thought the peer learning clusters had a positive impact on their leadership development

Workshops

Participants were satisfied with the workshops; they found the content relevant and were able to build peer networks.
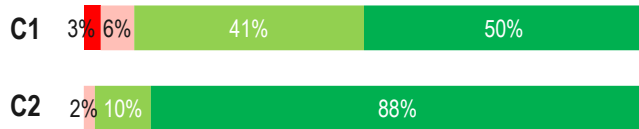
Workshop 1

Timing: 3 full days in April school holidays

Mode: C1 virtual

C2 in person

Content overview: Course content, social building, First Nations, relational leadership, technical leadership skills.

Satisfaction:

"I would recommend participating in this workshop to colleagues"

C1 3% 6% 41% 50%

C2 2% 10% 88%

Workshop 2

Timing: 3 full days in July school holidays

Mode: C1 virtual

C2 in person / virtual option available

Content overview: Social and relational leadership skills, cultural leadership, innovation project work.

Satisfaction:

"I would recommend participating in this workshop to colleagues"

C1 3% 9% 27% 61%

C2 23% 77%

Workshop 3

Timing: C1 2 full days in September school holidays

C2 3 full days in September school holidays

Mode: C1 virtual

C2 in person

Content overview: social and relational leadership skills.

Satisfaction:

"I would recommend participating in this workshop to colleagues"

C1 4% 6% 16% 74%

C2 40% 52%
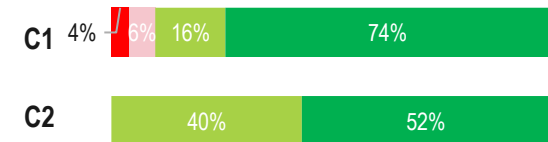
8% of participants had no response to this question in cohort 2

I feel affirmed, inspired and ready for action. (Participant – Cohort 2)

Most relevant and organised professional learning I have attended. (Participant – Cohort 2)

I feel it has been extremely beneficial to connect with colleagues not only in my state but across the country. It would be a good opportunity to network with these amazing people again in person rather than online. (Participant – Cohort 2).

Legend
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
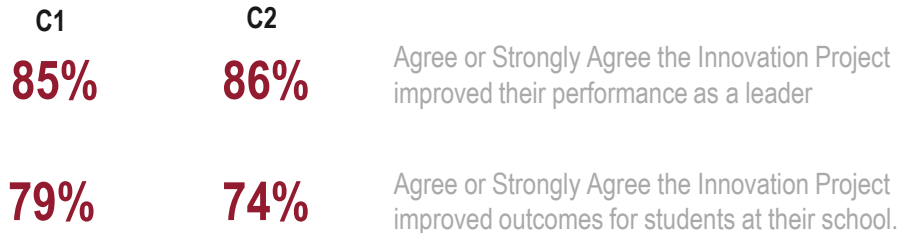- Strongly disagree
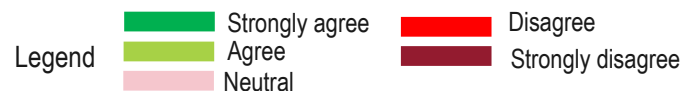
School innovation project

Participants were able to implement their learnings through the innovation project and felt it improved their performance as leaders.

Design

Participants designed and implemented school innovation projects as part of the learning model. These projects were designed as a tool to embed learnings from the workshops in the 'real life' context of their schools and problem solve barriers to a school improvement initiative that they see value in, in real time with their coaches.

Satisfaction with school innovation projects

Participants across both cohorts were satisfied with the school innovation projects and felt it gave them a chance to implement their learnings from the FLP. For many in the program, the innovation projects gave them the tools to take their 'ideas for change' and make them 'actions for change.'

C1 **C2**

85% **86%** Agree or Strongly Agree the Innovation Project improved their performance as a leader

79% **74%** Agree or Strongly Agree the Innovation Project improved outcomes for students at their school.

> We now have a permanent student leadership role for Aboriginal students. This has had a fantastic impact on them personally, giving them an opportunity to develop leadership skills. They are able to to celebrate their culture and has provided inspiration to younger students to strive for success. (Participant – Cohort 1)

Case study

One participant from a school in WA used the innovation project as an opportunity to materialise a long-term project idea that they had been considering – a science program designed to encourage students to develop an interest in physics, chemistry and mathematics.

With the help of their coach, they delivered a successful school innovation project through:

- Considering what was required to get the project up and running and planning accordingly

- Understanding how the project would relate to the whole school system and fit within existing school improvement priorities

- Generating 'buy in' from their Principal and other teachers at the school through relationship building

- Successfully sourcing funding to ensure project sustainability

Enduring implications of the project

The project has been popular with under-represented groups at the school, such as First Nations cohorts, girls, and disengaged students.

The project has engaged the wider community by holding a science fair with students from different primary schools in the region and has been featured in local news.

> I feel like I have the tools now to be able to guide other teachers if they need support to run a project. (Participant – Cohort 2)

Coaching

The depth of engagement from FLP coaches, along with their lived experience and professional expertise, made coaching a highlight for participants.

About the coaches

6 Coaches in cohort 1

8 Coaches in cohort 2

The FLP coaches are ex-teachers or ex-principals from a rural or remote settings in participating Jurisdictions.

Coaches are often retirees with capacity to invest significant time into their coaching relationships.

About the coaching sessions

Due to COVID-19, FLP coaching was held virtually for the first year of the program. In the second and third year of the program, coaching was held via a hybrid approach.

Content, delivery and duration of coaching sessions generally took a flexible approach by focusing on the needs of individual participants.

Across both cohorts, participants felt they received the right dose of coaching throughout the program.

C1 **C2**

85% **84%** of participants felt the frequency of coaching was 'about right.'

Value of the coaching

The coaches' lived experience provided participants with a trusted sounding board to workshop and develop their leadership abilities.

Coaches visited their participants' schools at least once during the program. This was especially impactful for those in remote settings.

Participants reported the individualised approach to coaching that coaches offered was valuable and experience affirming.

Participants highly valued their experiences with the FLP coaches

90% Across both cohorts felt that their leadership practice had improved as a result of the coaching

93% Across both cohorts said their leadership coach positively contributed to their leadership development

> I feel that having a leadership coach has been great. It really helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses and has allowed me to become a better person both personally and professionally. (Participant – Cohort 1)

> I have found the coaching, and access to the other coaches during the professional development to be invaluable and an asset to my development as a school leader. (Participant – Cohort 2)

> It's been amazing, reliable and inspiring! (Participant – Cohort 2)

Peer networking

Most participants found the peer networking opportunities to be valuable and enduring post program. Those who attended the workshops virtually, or who did not prioritise their peer network clusters, reported a lower sense of belonging with their cohort.

Peer learning clusters

The peer learning clusters were designed to encourage and facilitate collateral learning and build networks between participants. Groups were made up of 3-4 participants who were expected to meet at least 7 times throughout the course of the program to unpack and develop their learning from the workshops and individual coaching sessions. The cluster sessions were designed to be self directed and arranged by group members.

In cases where participants were unable to attend the peer learning clusters, they attributed this to inconvenient and 'out of hours' timing of the sessions.

Cohort 1

85% of participants met less than 3 times over the year

44% agree/strongly agree that the peer learning clusters had a positive impact on their leadership development

Following our evaluation of Cohort 1, we concluded that the intent of the peer learning clusters was sound, but that execution could be improved by defining coordination responsibilities clearly and encouraging the clusters through advocacy from coaches.

I felt there was no accountability for the peer learning clusters therefore we did not engage as much. (Participant – Cohort 1)

Cohort 2

70% of participants met at least 4 or more times over the year

98% agree/strongly agree that the peer learning clusters had a positive impact on their leadership development

In Cohort 2 there was a clearly defined peer learning approach provided to participants that detailed suggested topics for discussion, proposed cluster meeting dates and sample agendas for the sessions. These improvements are reflected in the higher rates of engagement in peer learning in Cohort 2.

I thought the groupings providing a mix from a variety of school backgrounds and states was essential (Participant – Cohort 2)

Workshop networking

Participants found the incidental conversations and networking at the in-person workshops to be highly valuable.

- Face to face connections were more impactful for peer networking building than the virtual workshops

- Participants were able to connect with peers that they might not have met through the peer learning clusters

About half of the participants from Cohort 2 reported building lasting connections after attending the workshops in person.

57% of Cohort 2 agree/strongly agree that they regularly communicate with other participants outside of the FLP programming

Meeting in person was the biggest benefit of this program. I believe I received more valuable knowledge being in person and having the ability to discuss and collaborate with my peers. I found this a lot better than the virtual. (Participant – cohort 2)[1]

C1
100%

C2
74%

I have strengthened my connections with my peers over the last three days.

Appendix 2 – Impact of the Future Leaders Program

Summary of impact

The FLP has had a high impact on participants' leadership knowledge, skills and confidence. Most participants are having some positive impact on their colleagues and school environment. There are signs of potential regional impacts in the longer term.

The FLP's impact can be assessed on three key 'levels' in relation to a jurisdiction's education system:

Participant level impact
Page 30 - 33

Across both cohorts (2021 and 2022), the FLP has:
- Had a positive impact on participant leadership knowledge, skills and confidence
- Led to small changes in participant leadership behaviour and practice
- Led some participants to aspire to leadership positions to a larger extent and in some cases has correlated with them moving into formal leadership positions.

School level impact
Page 34

In two years of delivery, the FLP has:
- Helped school colleagues improve their own teaching practice and leadership skills, and
- Had an impact on the school environment more broadly through school innovation projects
- Multiplied its school level impacts in schools with consecutive participation.

This impact on colleagues and the broader school environment has given stakeholders confidence that the FLP can contribute positively to school outcomes in the future.

Region level impact
Page 35

Two years of delivery means it is still too early to tell whether the FLP is having an impact, however we can see that:

- There is an increased supply of quality leaders in regional education, and there is indication that most want to stay regional

- The FLP may be helping to mitigate transience in the regions through providing a scarce professional development opportunity that is specific to regional education

- The program has the potential to scale and grow this impact in the future

Participant impact (1/2)

The program increased participants' confidence, knowledge and skills across each key leadership skill set.
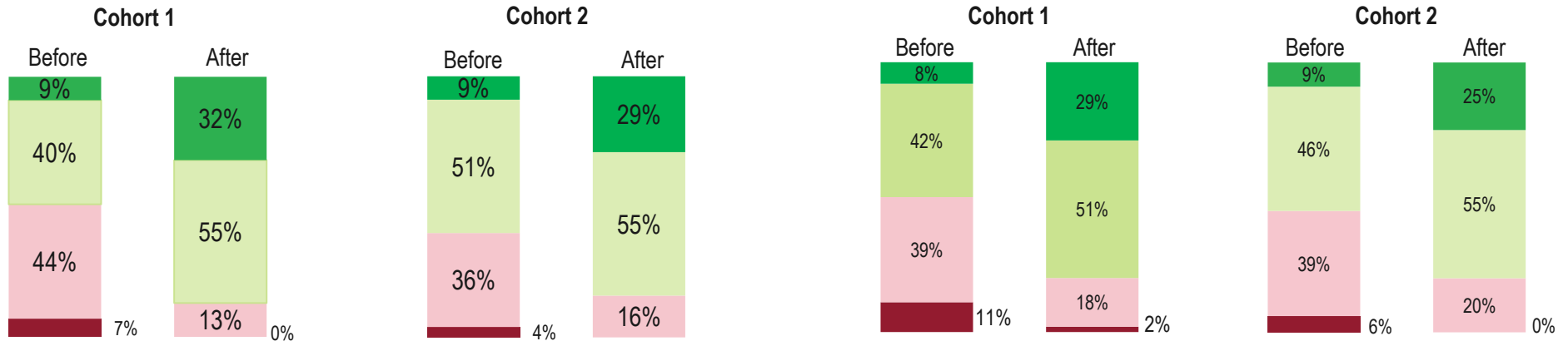
Self leadership knowledge and skills
Personal goal setting, development and time and stress management

Cohort 1

Cohort 2

Participants reported a large increase of preparedness in self leadership skills, and all feel at least somewhat prepared in these aspects of leadership.

In interviews participants spoke with self awareness and clarity around their areas for development and how they now manage stress, showing strength in this leadership aspect.

> The FLP has had a great positive impact on my confidence within Leadership. I felt a bit like an imposter, but I know now that I have great skills and I have spent the last year working with my coach and other members of my school community to implement a tutoring program to assist the Year 9 girls. (Participant – Cohort 2)

Technical expertise
Assessing performance, implementing curriculum and using data to drive outcome

Cohort 1

Cohort 2

Across both Cohorts we saw an increase in preparedness relating to technical expertise, we saw evidence of confident implementation of these skills through some of the school innovation projects. This was particularly around the projects relating to using data and evidence and those around curriculum improvements.

> The FLP gave me insights into skills I could bring into that situation, to be able to develop a shared pedagogical approach for reading in early childhood. (Participant – Cohort 1)
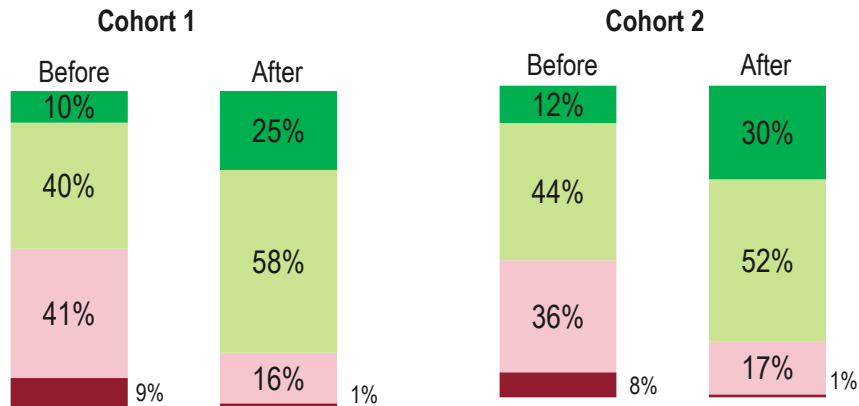
Legend
- Very prepared
- Prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not very prepared

dandolopartners
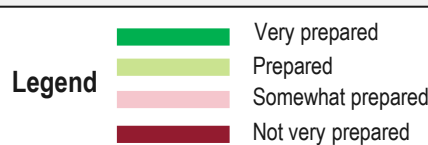
Participant impact (2/2)

The program increased participants' confidence, knowledge and skills across each key leadership skill set.

Relational leadership knowledge and skills
Managing staff, conflict resolution, collaboration and building relationships

Cohort 1

Before
- 10%
- 40%
- 41%
- 9%

After
- 25%
- 58%
- 16%
- 1%

Cohort 2

Before
- 12%
- 44%
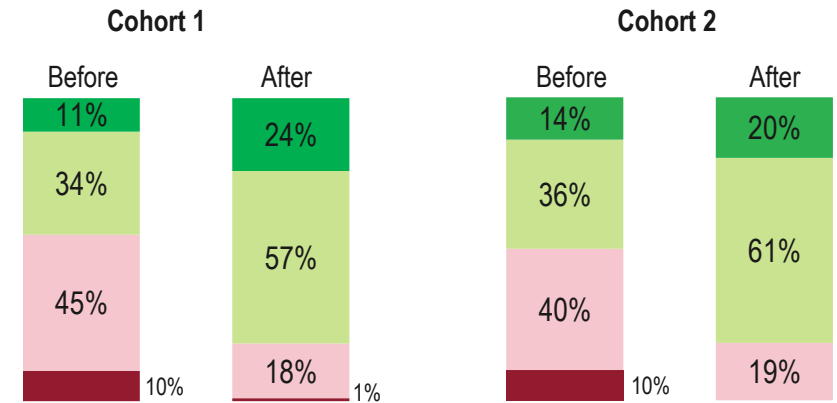- 36%
- 8%

After
- 30%
- 52%
- 17%
- 1%

Across both cohorts, we heard from participants that relational leadership was a key focus area in their coaching sessions. This is supported by the second largest increase in preparedness compared to the other aspects of leadership. Some participants attributed this to being able to work through conflicts and tough conversations with coaches.

> I'm now a relational leader rather than being an instructional leader. I check-in with staff, understanding the things that impact them and how they are going. (Participant – Cohort 1)

Influence and systems thinking skills
School goal setting and development, creating culturally safe learning environments

Cohort 1

Before
- 11%
- 34%
- 45%
- 10%

After
- 24%
- 57%
- 18%
- 1%

Cohort 2

Before
- 14%
- 36%
- 40%
- 10%

After
- 20%
- 61%
- 19%

Participants displayed confidence when we discussed impact at the school and regional education system level. They understood the factors and levers available to them in order to implement change at a school level. This aspect of leadership was on average, the biggest improvement in preparedness for participants, particularly for those in Cohort 2.
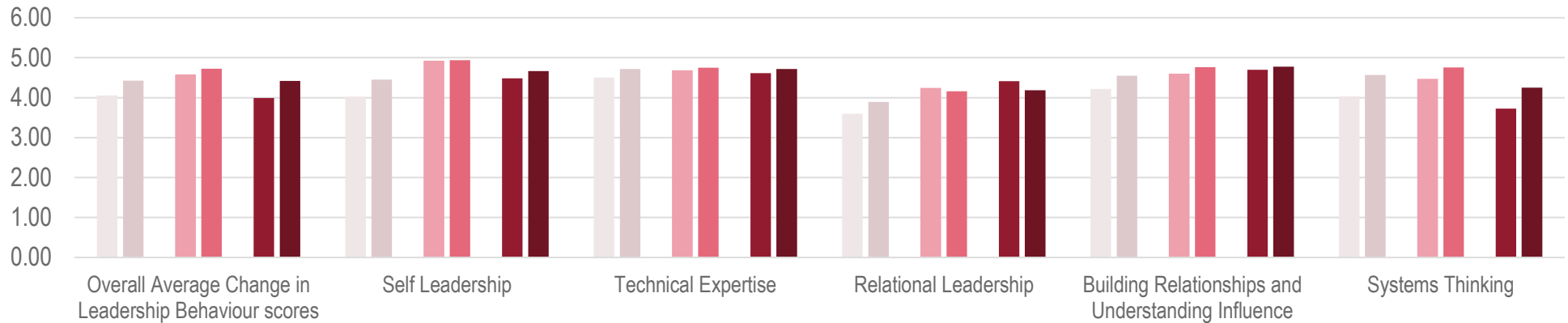
> The 360 feedback process was rigorous but very impactful. A lot of the feedback was not what I expected or wanted, but it made me realise how much I didn't know about leadership. I've become more accepting and understanding of perspectives around me and I'm no longer scared of feedback. (Participant – Cohort 2)

Legend
- Very prepared
- Prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not very prepared

dandolopartners
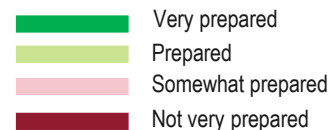
Participant behaviour and leadership

Across both cohorts, we have seen small improvements in participant leadership behaviour and practice, according to their peers and leaders. Participants expressed value in the self reflection and feedback mechanism of the 360 degree survey.

Chart categories (x-axis): Overall Average Change in Leadership Behaviour scores, Self Leadership, Technical Expertise, Relational Leadership, Building Relationships and Understanding Influence, Systems Thinking. Y-axis from 0.00 to 6.00.

Feedback and reflection

Across almost all of the leadership and behaviour areas participants, colleagues and principals reported a small improvement in skills post program.

Relational leadership was the only category where colleagues and principals felt some participants' skills had declined. We hypothesise this may be due to a combination of factors, including:

- **Gaining a better understanding of what leadership skills require.** Upon completion of the program, participants told us they were optimistic about their skillsets prior to entering the program and were humbled to develop their leadership toolkit.

- **Dealing with conflict.** Some participants experienced tension or conflict with leaders at their school which may have affected impressions of relational leadership. For these participants, managing these conflicts was a key focus of their coaching sessions.

C1	C2
100%	**75%**

of principals agree they have seen a positive impact on the participants leadership development as a result of their participation in the FLP

Reflection for participants

The 360-feedback component of the program was a tool for self reflection that participants valued. For some participants, it also served to reinforce their developed self confidence during the program.

> The 360-degree feedback was rigorous but at the end of the day very impactful. It showed me what my strengths were and my areas for growth… I used to be afraid of feedback but I'm not anymore. (Participant – Cohort 2)

Legend

	Before	After	
			Participant self-assessment
			Colleague assessment
			Principal assessment
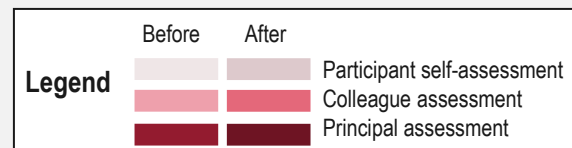
Change in participants' aspirations and career progression

While aspirations remained largely the same for the FLP participants, the program generally gave them the tools and confidence to get there.

Aspirations

The aspirations of participants pre and post program show marginal positive changes, as seen in the table below.

When speaking with participants and coaches, they said the value of the program was not in changing their goals, rather building their confidence and skills to progress into leadership roles. Participants felt the program broadened their knowledge of what leadership roles in schools can be and pathways to achieve them.

In some cases, rather than changing aspirations the program has worked to accelerate participant's leadership aspirations for the marathon runner archetype.

In the next 3 – 5 years, you intend to:	Cohort 1		Cohort 2	
	Before the FLP	After the FLP	Before the FLP	After the FLP
Seek a promotion at your current school	56%	53%	32%	24%
Continue in your current position	42%	41%	30%	23%
Move to another school sector	2%	4%	3%	8%

Career progression

Across both cohorts, over half of participants think they wouldn't be in the same position if it weren't for the FLP. These changes were most material for Cohort 2, who were more successful in progressing their career post program.

C1 **C2**

68% **74%** Agreed / strongly agreed that they would not be in the same position in their career today, had they not completed the FLP

45% **73%** Were successful in their applications for new positions post program

Participants from both cohorts told us it was the increased confidence from going through the program and improved skillset that motivated them to apply for career progressing positions post program.

Partaking in the program has given me the confidence to participate in more leadership roles at my school. It has also shown my leadership team that I am willing to give this a go. (Participant – Cohort 1)

Belief in myself as a leader. Providing strategies to deal with the 'harder' parts of leadership such as difficult conversations, managing up and time management. (Participant – Cohort 2)

School level impact

There is evidence that the FLP is having a positive impact on participants' colleagues and the broader school environment. Schools see value in repeated participation of their school in the FLP and this may enhance school level impact in the longer term.

Impact on staff

Across both cohorts, there is evidence that participants were impacting other staff members through their innovation projects and general involvement and learnings from the FLP.

C1 **C2**
100% **75%**

of principals reported they saw a positive impact on staff as result of the FLP program.

Examples of impact on staff:

- The innovation projects were done in collaboration with other staff members as the FLP participants often had to generate 'buy in' from their colleagues for their projects. In some cases, committees were formed to help the rollout of these projects.
- Supporting and inspiring colleagues to pursue their own leadership aspirations.

"Three more aspirant leaders have been supported by me to apply (for the FLP). (Principal – Cohort 2)

- Collateral learning between the FLP participants and staff members.

Impact on the school environment

Principals reported seeing impacts / benefits in their school environment. This was mainly articulated as impacts from the participants' school innovation projects.

C1 **C2**
87% **70%**

of principals have seen their school benefit from the fellow's participation in FLP

There was less feedback from principals in Cohort 2 which created a limitation in measuring school environment impact.

"I think there was a real positive impact on the school, the project was very applicable for our school and very necessary. (Principal – Cohort 1)

There was lower engagement from principals in Cohort 2 both in survey responses and interview participation, which may explain the lower degree of reported impact.

Principal buy in of the FLP program is important for maximising school impact, as they can either be an enabler or roadblock for program components like the innovation projects.

Impact on students

In some cases, the innovation projects have had direct impact on students, such as the development of extracurricular activities and clubs.

While it is too early to tell whether impact on students can be sustained, principals seemed confident that the FLP (both the participants and their school innovation projects) was a positive influence on the student outcomes.

C1 **C2**

87% **63%**

of principals agree that the fellow's innovation project is improving outcomes for students at their school

73% **55%**

of principals have seen a positive impact on students at their school as a result of the fellow's participation in FLP

My students have had a positive effect from the tutoring sessions program as they have now passed subjects that they were struggling with before. (Participant – Cohort 2).

Outcomes for regions

We are yet to see long term impact for regions, but there are solid building blocks for improved supply, quality and retention.

Long term impact is still unclear

As the FLP is still in its pilot phase, we are unable to measure long term impact for regions. What we can say, is that the program has been designed well to support participants by building peer networks, developing outcomes for the archetypes and filling a gap in professional development offerings.

FLP's peer networking

- **Valuable for participants –** it was a strong theme from Cohort 2 that the peer connections built a professional community that participants could access for advice and to reduce feelings of isolation and burnout
- **Valuable for principals and schools** – in some cases we found principals valued the connections participants had made with other teachers across their region and country as it worked to lift the overall quality of leadership in their area

Before FLP, leadership in our region as a whole was more reactive rather than proactive. (Principal – Cohort 2).

Regional impact looks different for different archetypes

As identified, the two archetypes have different motivators for joining the program. At this early stage, 'Marathon Runners' are a growing cohort in the program who are likely to already have established roots in their communities and participation in the program may further incentivise their retention by upskilling and building the confidence of this group to take the next step in their career.

FLP fills a gap in professional development

In all participating jurisdictions and diocese, the FLP is providing a unique and high value professional development option. In regions that face the challenges of RRR education, the FLP is having a positive impact on supply, quality and retention of educational leadership.

Considerations

Through Cohort 2 and 3 of the program, there has been an increased consolidation of participants from the same schools participating in FLP. This can be beneficial to regions as it upskills a greater pool of educators and facilitates learning between educators in regional areas.

However, the degree of remoteness can affect the peer networking opportunities for participants of the program, which may decrease long term outcomes for regions. TFA could consider how it can tailor the program further for remote school participants so that they can get the most out of peer networking opportunities.

TFA could consider more directly targeting the 'Marathon Runner' archetype in future recruitment, as this group tends to have more established 'roots' in communities and greater incentive to stay in rural, regional and remote areas.

Sprinter archetypes may respond better to additional incentives to remain in rural, regional and remote areas long term.