

High Achieving Teachers Program evaluation

Summary report

September 2023

This document

The Australian Government Department of Education commissioned dandolopartners to evaluate the High Achieving Teachers Program.

Background

The Australian Government Department of Education (the Department) commissioned dandolopartners (dandolo) to evaluate the implementation and impact of the High Achieving Teachers (HAT) Program.

HAT Program

The HAT Program objective is to support the growth of alternative, employment-based pathways* into teaching as a mechanism for improving access to quality teaching and education for all Australian students, regardless of their location.

The program funds two different employment-based pathways that recruit university graduates and place them in secondary schools while they complete an initial teacher education course, with a view to becoming fully-qualified teachers:

- Teach for Australia’s (TFA) Leadership Development Program (LDP)
- La Trobe University’s (La Trobe) Nexus program (Nexus)

Evaluation

The evaluation ran from August 2021 to mid-2023, with a focus on the 2020, 2021 and 2022 LDP and Nexus cohorts.

This report summarises our assessment of the program and key findings. It seeks to answer three key questions:

- Was the program objective met?
- What are the key elements of success for the pathways currently funded under the HAT Program to show they are meeting the program objective?
- Based on the findings, what should the Australian Government consider in the future?

This report includes summative findings about the program’s implementation and impact.

Section	Pages
Introduction	1
Executive summary	2
Our approach	3
Snapshot of existing programs	4-5
Evaluation findings	6-7
Future considerations	8
Appendix: Data sources and limitations	9

**A prospective teacher undertaking an employment-based pathway completes an accredited initial teacher education qualification while employed in a school, either in a support capacity or with conditional registration. This differs from a traditional pathway into teaching where a prospective teacher completes an accredited initial teacher education qualification before entering a classroom.*

Executive summary

Overall, the HAT Program has met its objective. We have identified seven critical elements for success for employment-based teacher pathways.



Was the program objective met?

- The HAT Program has largely achieved its objective over the 2020-2022 period.
- The HAT Program is supporting the growth of employment-based pathways into teaching.
 - LDP and Nexus participants typically become high-quality teachers in the classroom.
 - The HAT Program is currently delivering for students in secondary schools across five jurisdictions in Australia. Most LDP and Nexus participants are placed in schools that are in regional or remote areas, or face disadvantage.
 - However, participant retention in the above schools remains a challenge post program completion.

Page 6



What are the critical elements of success for the programs to show they are meeting the objective?

- We have identified seven critical elements that should be present in employment-based teaching pathways:
- Stakeholders are aligned on the objective of the program.
 - The program structure is designed to provide positive outcomes for both schools and participants.
 - The program has a clear attraction and recruitment strategy.
 - Participants are well supported to meet the demands of the program.
 - Participants are adequately remunerated.
 - Stakeholders form strong partnerships and communicate effectively.
 - The program has an effective approach to data to measure program impact.

Page 7



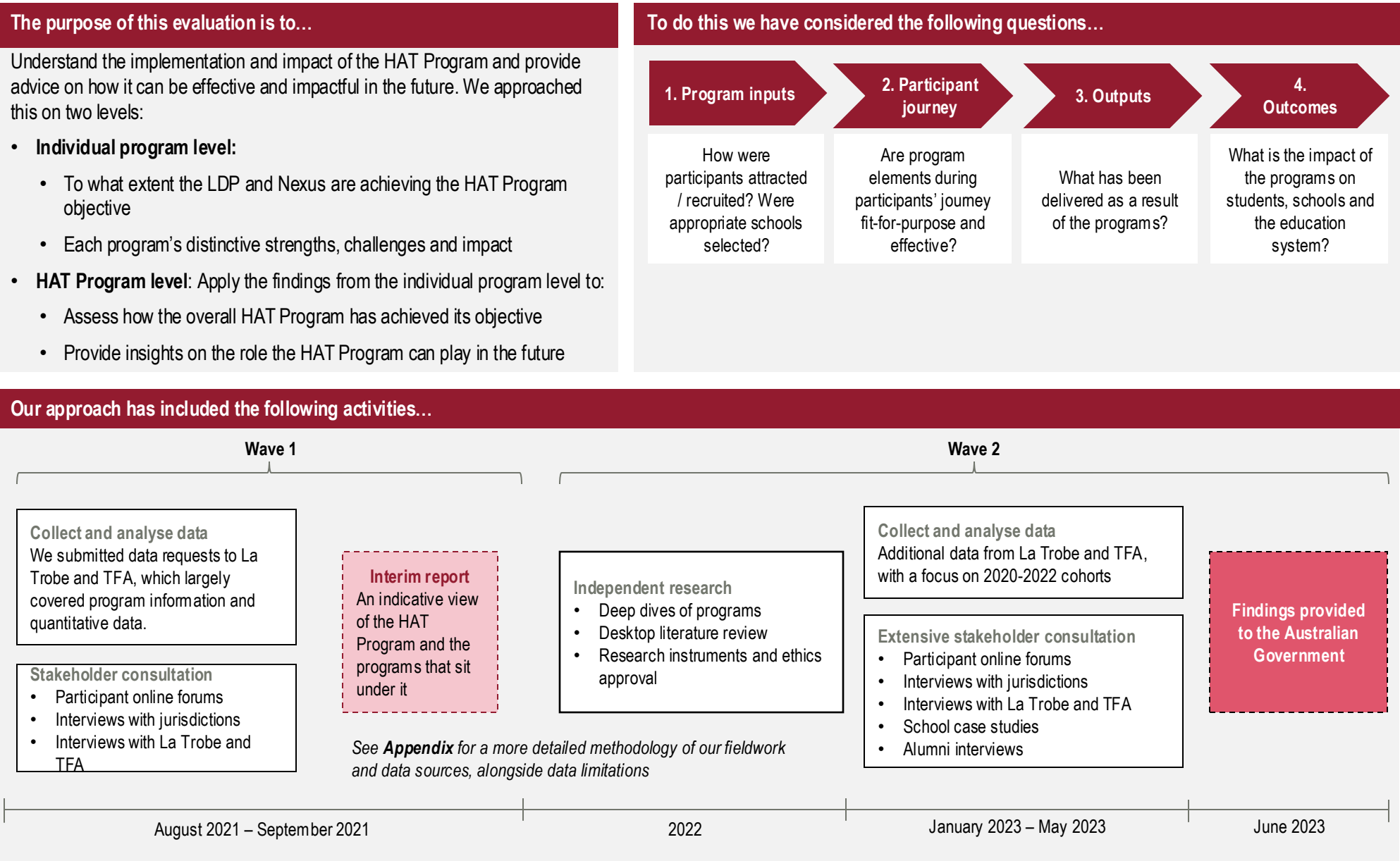
Future considerations

- In 2022 the Australian Government committed to expanding the HAT Program by funding an additional 2,260 places from 2023 to 2026.
- In the future, there are opportunities for the Australian Government to:
- Allocate additional HAT Program funding based on objective assessment criteria.
 - Take a more strategic approach to value-add to Australia’s burgeoning alternative, employment-based initial teacher education landscape.

Page 8

Our approach

We undertook extensive quantitative and qualitative fieldwork and analysis over a two-year period to inform the evaluation.



Our approach has included the following activities...

Wave 1

Collect and analyse data

We submitted data requests to La Trobe and TFA, which largely covered program information and quantitative data.

Stakeholder consultation

Participant online forums

Interviews with jurisdictions

Interviews with La Trobe and TFA

Interim report

An indicative view of the HAT Program and the programs that sit under it

Independent research

Deep dives of programs

Desktop literature review

Research instruments and ethics approval

Wave 2

Collect and analyse data

Additional data from La Trobe and TFA, with a focus on 2020-2022 cohorts

Extensive stakeholder consultation

Participant online forums

Interviews with jurisdictions

Interviews with La Trobe and TFA

School case studies

Alumni interviews

Findings provided to the Australian Government

See **Appendix** for a more detailed methodology of our fieldwork and data sources, alongside data limitations

August 2021 – September 2021

2022

January 2023 – May 2023

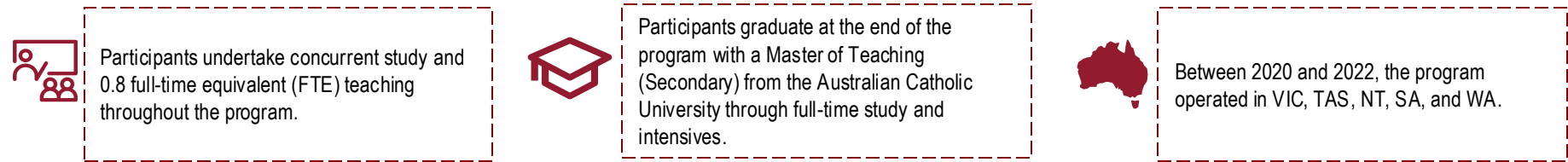
June 2023

3

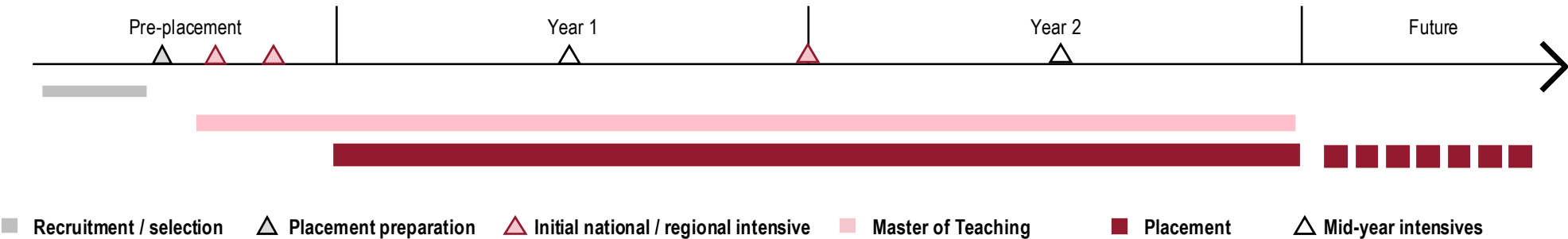
Snapshot: Leadership Development Program delivered by Teach For Australia

The Leadership Development Program (LDP) is an employment-based pathway into teaching that aims to fight educational inequity by developing and placing high achievers in remote and disadvantaged secondary schools across Australia.

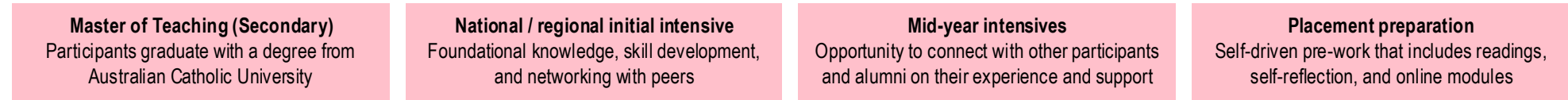
Participants become teachers in their respective fields through concurrent study and paid placements



The LDP is a two-year program, with initial study and support beginning the October prior to the first teaching year



The program consists of four academic components....



...and mentoring and peer support

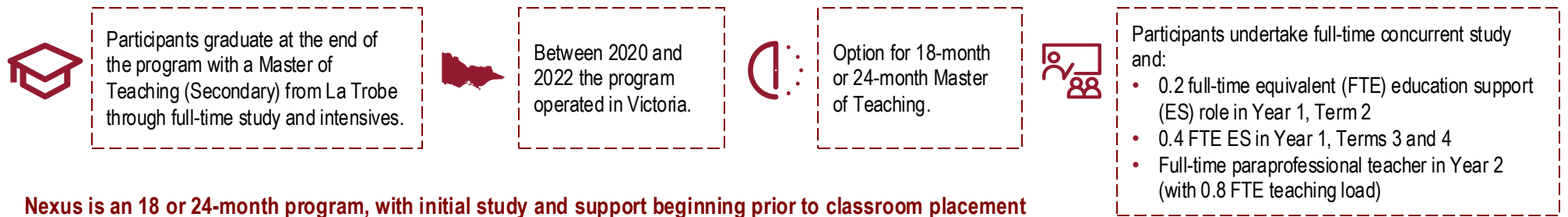


Sources: Interview with TFA staff and <https://teachforaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/LDP-Brochure-digital.pdf>

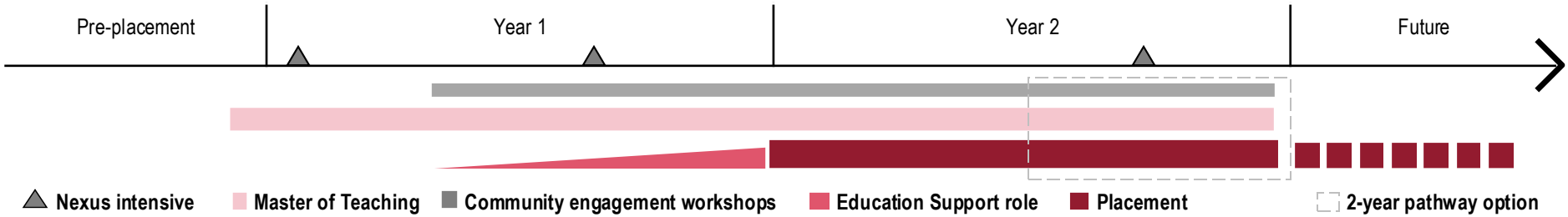
Snapshot: Nexus program delivered by La Trobe University

The Nexus program is an employment-based pathway into teaching with a strong focus on social justice that aims to develop and place teachers in economically and culturally diverse secondary schools in Victoria.

Participants study full time and gradually increase their classroom load to become full-time paraprofessional teachers by their second year.



Nexus is an 18 or 24-month program, with initial study and support beginning prior to classroom placement



The program consists of learning components....

Master of Teaching (Secondary)
Participants graduate with a degree from La Trobe University.

Nexus intensives
Three 2-4 day intensives to build knowledge, skills, and network.

Community engagement workshops
Fortnightly workshops to support teaching in hard-to-staff schools.

... classroom placements...

Year 1 - Education Support
Paid, routine support to teachers in the classroom under supervision.

Year 2 - Paraprofessional
Paid, paraprofessional teaching under direction of other school professionals.

... and mentoring and peer support

Classroom mentor
Experienced teacher at placement school observes and provides support.

Nexus network
Nexus participants and alumni who share experiences and support.

Sources: Interview with Nexus staff and <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/school-education/preparing-educators/nexus-program>

Assessment against HAT Program objective

The HAT Program has largely achieved its objective over the 2020-2022 period.

Breakdown of HAT Program objective



Support the growth of alternative, employment-based pathways into the teaching profession...



...as a mechanism for improving access to quality teaching and education...



...for all Australian students, regardless of location.

Assessment based on available evidence

- The HAT Program is supporting TFA to grow the LDP in several jurisdictions as an employment-based pathway into teaching.
- The program has also enabled the establishment of the Nexus program, which serves as an alternative model that introduces participants to the classroom more incrementally.

- LDP and Nexus participants become high-quality teachers in the classroom who start from a lower base compared to graduate teachers but develop rapidly over the course of their respective pathways.
- Participants also bring distinctive value to schools, depending on each individual pathway's target participant cohort and program structure.

- The HAT Program is currently delivering for students in secondary schools across five jurisdictions in Australia.
- Almost all LDP and Nexus participants are placed in disadvantaged schools, and most are placed in regional and remote schools. However, retention in these areas remains a challenge post program completion.

Critical elements of success for employment-based pathways into teaching

Employment-based pathways into teaching should have certain structural and program elements, while focusing on retention in both the pathway itself and teaching more broadly.

Stage of program	Program element	Critical elements for success
Pre-program	Stakeholders are aligned on the objectives of the program	Program managers, school leadership, and participants are aligned on the objectives of the program and expected outcomes of participating, prior to commencing.
	The program structure is designed to provide positive outcomes for both schools and participants	A pathway structure where schools will see a rate of return by the end of the participant's journey through the program. In other words, the program is structured so that schools will see sufficient teaching capacity by the end of the participant's journey in the pathway to justify school engagement in the program.
		A program structure and / or the presence of program elements to mitigate a high workload.
	The program has a clear attraction and recruitment strategy	A clear mission statement to underpin attraction and recruitment.
		A rigorous recruitment process that selects candidates who have a passion for teaching and are aligned to the program's mission statement.
		A proactive recruitment strategy that successfully reaches and attracts target participant cohorts.
Throughout the program / post-program	Participants are well supported to meet the demands of the program	Supplementary training beyond the Masters content of traditional pathways (e.g., intensives, tailored units for alternative pathway cohorts) that bridges the gap between theory and application.
		Additional level of support* throughout the pathway to reduce attrition (e.g., at their school, with the provider, and with their peers to be able to get feedback on their teaching practice, get pastoral care, and discuss any challenges).
		Aim to place two or more participants from the same cohort, at the same time, so schools can derive greater value from the program by having multiple participants contribute to the school and participants can receive peer support from one another.
	Participants are adequately remunerated	A wage is provided to participants during the pathway that offsets the opportunity cost of undertaking the program.
	Stakeholders form strong partnerships and communicate effectively	Strong relationships between program manager and schools, school leadership, and jurisdictional education departments, and clear processes to develop those partnerships and work collaboratively.
	The program has an effective approach to data to measure program impact	Rigorous data collection processes and systems, including mechanisms for stakeholders to provide feedback and insights to inform program change in the future.



The presence of these elements will increase the success of employment-based pathways achieving the HAT Program objective as well as:

- Increase both participants' and schools' overall level of satisfaction with the program, and
- Improve the likelihood of participant completion and retention, both in the program and in teaching.

* This refers to support not typically offered in mainstream pathways

Future considerations

In the future, there are opportunities to 1) allocate HAT Program funding based on objective assessment criteria and 2) use the program more strategically to value-add to Australia's burgeoning alternative, employment-based initial teacher education landscape.

In 2022 the Australian Government committed to expanding the HAT Program by funding an additional 2,260 places from 2023 to 2026. 700 and 60 places have already been allocated to the LDP and Nexus programs respectively.

Future allocation of HAT Program funding

The Australian Government could allocate funding to:

- a) Existing employment-based pathways – LDP and Nexus program
- b) Other employment-based pathways, or
- c) A combination of both.

To determine the most appropriate mix of pathways, we recommend considering objective criteria:

- a) The pathway should contain the critical elements of success for an employment-based pathway
- b) The pathway should align with the HAT Program objective
- c) The pathway should offer value for money and be sufficiently scalable
- d) The overall mix of pathways should be sufficiently diverse to satisfy the program objective.

Role of the HAT Program in the future

The two possible options for the future of the HAT Program are:

- a) Remain a flexible funding program to support employment-based pathways into teaching on a case-by-case basis, or
- b) Take a strategic approach to supporting different pathways based on clear policy rationale.

Potential policy rationales the Australian Government could consider for a more strategic approach include:

1. HAT Program as an incubator

The Australian Government could pilot new employment-based initial teacher education (ITE) pathways that would otherwise 'not get off the ground.'

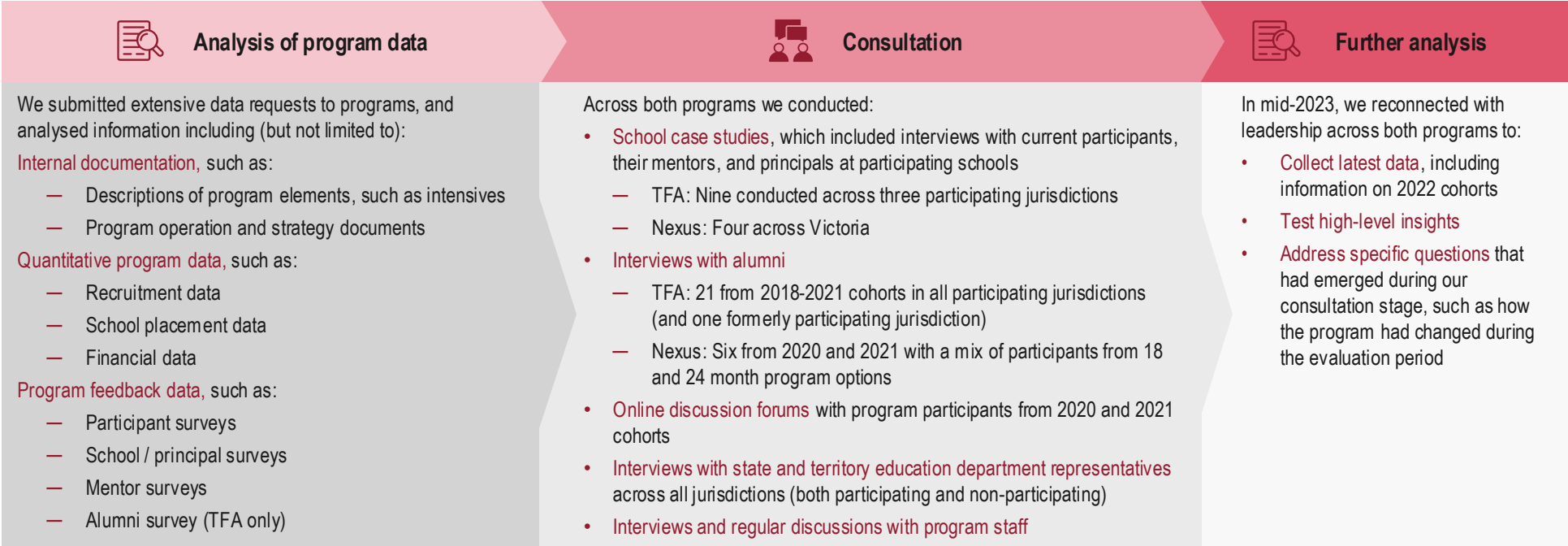
2. HAT Program as a gap-filler

The Australian Government could support employment-based ITE pathways that fill specific gaps in particular jurisdictions or other contexts such as remote areas.

Appendix: Data sources and limitations

This evaluation was informed by extensive consultation across relevant stakeholder groups, and available program data that was provided by both TFA and La Trobe. We note that there are data limitations to assessing teacher effectiveness.

How we used data for this evaluation



Data limitations

Implications

