

# Evaluation of the Future Leaders Program

Initial report

September 2021

# Introduction to this project

## Introduction

The Future Leaders Program (FLP) is a pilot leadership development program targeting aspirant and emerging school leaders from lower-socioeconomic status outer regional, remote and very remote schools funded by the Australian Government. The program is delivered by Teach for Australia (TFA) and being piloted in WA and the NT.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) has commissioned dandolopartners to evaluate the FLP. This evaluation will run from mid-2021 to mid-2023 and include an initial report (this document), cohort one and cohort two reports, and a final report.

The evaluation is aimed at determining whether the FLP has **increased the supply and retention of quality leaders in lower-socioeconomic status regional, remote and very remote schools**. Our full evaluation framework can be found in appendix 1.

This interim report is focused on providing advice to DESE about any significant issues that need addressing or any easily identifiable improvements that could be made to the program prior to the commencement of cohort two in 2022.

To complete this initial report, we:

- Reviewed data and documents provided to us by TFA and DESE.
- Spoke to key DESE staff, TFA staff and all members of the FLP Stakeholder Advisory Group.
- Held an online focus group with all FLP cohort one participants.
- Held an online workshop with all FLP coaches and mentors.
- Reviewed the course content and pedagogy.

# This report

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| Appendix 2 – Review of course content and pedagogy | Attached |

## Scope of this report

This initial report covers key findings on:

- Policy and governance.
- Recruitment and selection.
- Learning model.

This initial report does not include key findings about mid-to-long term outputs or outcomes, but does offer some initial insights.

# Executive summary

# Findings on a page

There are no critical design issues with the Future Leaders Program (FLP) pilot. There are some minor or emerging issues that need addressing, preferably prior to cohort two in 2022.

## Key findings

The program:

- Is aligned with Australian Government school leadership objectives and priorities.
- Has logical and appropriate design, contractual and evaluation settings.
- Is well governed and very well informed by stakeholder perspectives.
- Is targeting the appropriate participants – experienced teachers, who are motivated to lead, from disadvantaged regional schools.
- Has a rigorous application process that is high quality yield and most participants selected have remained in the program. Has content that is relevant, logical, high-quality and aligned with the best evidence of what works.
- Is a quality delivery model that is evidence-based and has proven to be resilient and responsive.
- Has the support of jurisdictions, sector peaks, principals and participants.

## Issues for attention

- **The program is underspent.** But this seems to be as a result of COVID-19 disruptions to the service delivery model, rather than any underlying issue with the design or delivery of the program.
- **The program marketing was not optimised.** More effort should be made to source a broad range of applicants from as many schools in the participating jurisdictions as possible. Effort should be made to ensure there is less reliance on recruiting participants through ‘taps on the shoulder’ in future.
- **There is an information deficit.** A significant number of participants report feeling underprepared for the course demands. This has led or contributed to some dropping out or withdrawing their applications.
- **The post-program landscape for participants is unclear.** There seems to be no clear plan for ‘what comes next’. TFA or jurisdictions or both need to consider who owns this post-program landscape, and what will be offered, or there is a risk that the learning might be lost.

**“The FLP has significant merit in tackling the issue of the supply of high-quality school leaders in regional and remote communities by building both capacity (leadership pipeline) and capability (leadership quality) to meet the educational needs of children and young people in those communities.”**

- Bruce Armstrong and Tony Mackay

# Recommendations on a page

We have 13 recommendations for improving the FLP prior to the commencement of cohort two in 2022.

## Policy and governance

**1.1** TFA should aim to select over 40 participants in 2022 to account for a slight shortfall in number of participants in 2021.

**1.2** DESE should discuss the implications for the program's underspend with TFA and come to a mutually satisfactory solution. A larger cohort two is one option to consider.

**1.3** TFA should seek additional representation for the Stakeholder Advisory Group, with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative and a current regional principal.

## Recruitment and selection

**2.1** DESE and TFA should work together to bring additional jurisdictions on board for the program. This will grow the pool of applicants and further road-test the model.

**2.2** TFA should increase their marketing effort to ensure that all principals and schools in the relevant regions are informed about the program, encouraging 'bottom-up' applications while not preventing solicited / tap-on-the-shoulder applications. This will also help test the true market size.

**2.3** TFA should increase the number of information sessions about the program and disseminate clear information about the program, its benefits, and its demands.

**2.4** TFA should develop coach, principal and participant handbooks (separate to initial marketing) for those who apply to the program, so the program content and demands are clearly understood. This will help to align expectations of TFA and participants.

**2.5** TFA and jurisdictions should continue to encourage and seek ways to support applications from typically underrepresented groups in school leadership such as women, Indigenous, CALD, and special school staff.

## Learning model

**3.1** TFA should further consult remote participants and their principals to ensure the course content is relevant to their cohorts and circumstances, then adjust if necessary. In doing so, it is critical to balance the unique needs of this group of participants with the needs and circumstances of outer regional, remote and very remote participants.

**3.2** TFA should consider whether the program content and delivery could benefit from a more comprehensive 'theory of action'. A theory of action links curriculum and pedagogy design principles, approach, scope, sequence, content and delivery. Increasing the clarity of FLP's 'theory of action' would ensure fidelity and alignment.

**3.3** TFA should reintroduce the in-person elements of the program as COVID-19 restrictions allow, but maintain the key aspects of online delivery where it is sensible and cost-effective to do so. The shift to heavy online delivery came at some cost, but also resulted in development of innovative pedagogy.

**3.4** DESE, TFA and participating jurisdictions should immediately consider how to support participants after they complete the program – especially given the lack of in-person experiences because of COVID-19. This could include light 'refreshers', regional collaborative networks, and less intensive networking opportunities.

**3.5** TFA and jurisdictions should consider how to further 'spread the word' beyond the immediate cohort. Separately to Recommendation 3.4, which deals with how to ensure participants remain 'current' post-completion, there is further opportunity to establish them as champions of the program and its intellectual property.

# Background and context

# The Future Leaders Program (FLP) pilot

DESE commissioned TFA to deliver a professional development program for high-achieving teachers who aspire to lead in outer regional, remote and very remote schools.



## Purpose of FLP

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) has commissioned Teach For Australia (TFA) to run **a professional development program that strengthens the school leadership pipeline in outer regional, remote and very remote schools in Australia.**

TFA were given a grant of \$7.54mil to deliver the program to two cohorts over two years.



## Program Design

The program is designed to **equip participants with the skills, knowledge and experience required to transition to positions of leadership** in their schools.



## Pilot Cohort

**The first cohort (2021) enlisted 43 teachers from 29 schools** across the two participating jurisdictions of **Northern Territory and Western Australia.**

Cohort two will roll out in 2022.



## Selection Criteria<sup>1</sup>

Teachers must have:

- 2+ years of experience.
- 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 program includes:

- Four intensive workshops and peer networking.
- Coaching and one-to-one support.
- Individual school innovation projects.

Content is intended to:

- Align with Principal and Teaching Standards.
- Reflect best practice.
- Be flexible to participant needs.



## Progress

**Cohort one is nearing program completion**, having completed 3 out of 4 workshops.

**The program has faced some challenges** (particularly due to COVID-19) **but seems to be tracking well to meet government objectives.**

1. Selection criteria taken from excerpt of the contract.

# This evaluation

We have developed a comprehensive evaluation framework.

## Objective

Increased supply and retention of quality school leadership in low-socioeconomic status outer regional, remote and very remote schools.

## Areas of focus

- Policy & governance
- Recruitment
- Learning model

## Outputs & outcomes

- Participant knowledge and capability
- Participant confidence and behaviour
- Participant aspirations and attitudes
- Participants in leadership

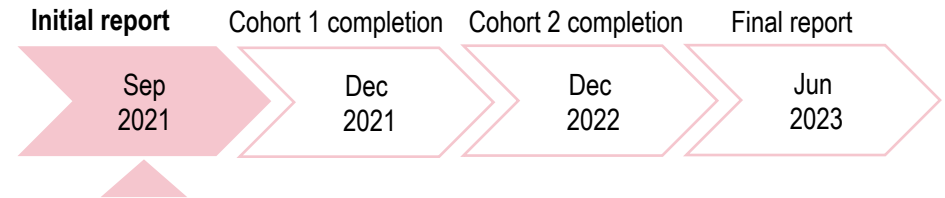
## Lenses of analysis

- Does FLP deliver on its objectives?
- Can the FLP be improved and scaled?
- How effective is FLP vs comparators?
- Does the program offer value vs comparators?

Our full FLP evaluation framework and methodology is in Appendix 1

This report is an initial review with limited scope.

## Timeline of this evaluation



This report will be submitted near the completion of FLP's first cohort.

## Fieldwork completed for this report

- Interviews with each member of the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)
- A group interview with coaches
- An online focus group of cohort one participants.
- An independent review of curriculum and pedagogy.

## What is in scope for this report

This initial report looks at key findings on:

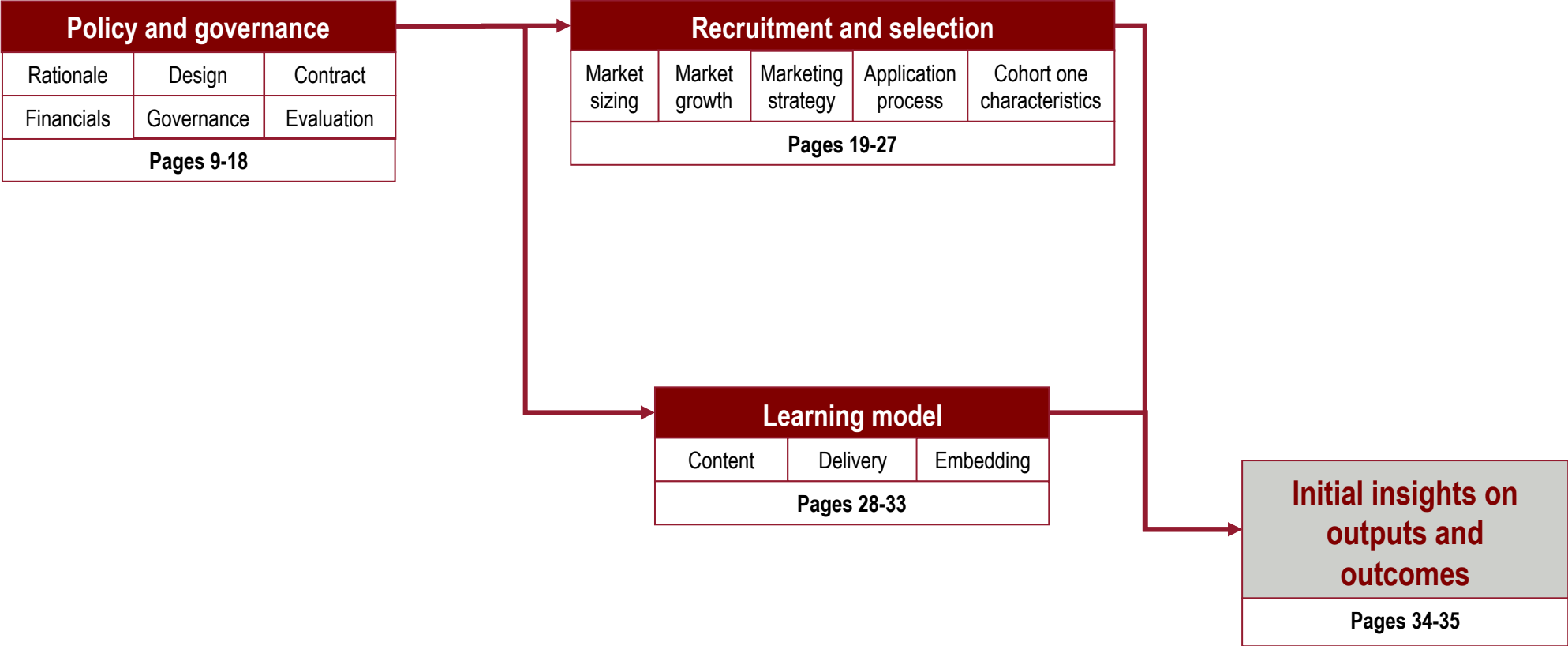
- Policy and governance.
- Recruitment and selection.
- Learning model.

This initial report is not a full evaluation and does not have key findings about mid-to-long term outputs or outcomes.



# Structure of key findings in this report

Our key findings are structured around three sections based on the key policy levers for the program, followed by limited initial insights on outputs and outcomes.

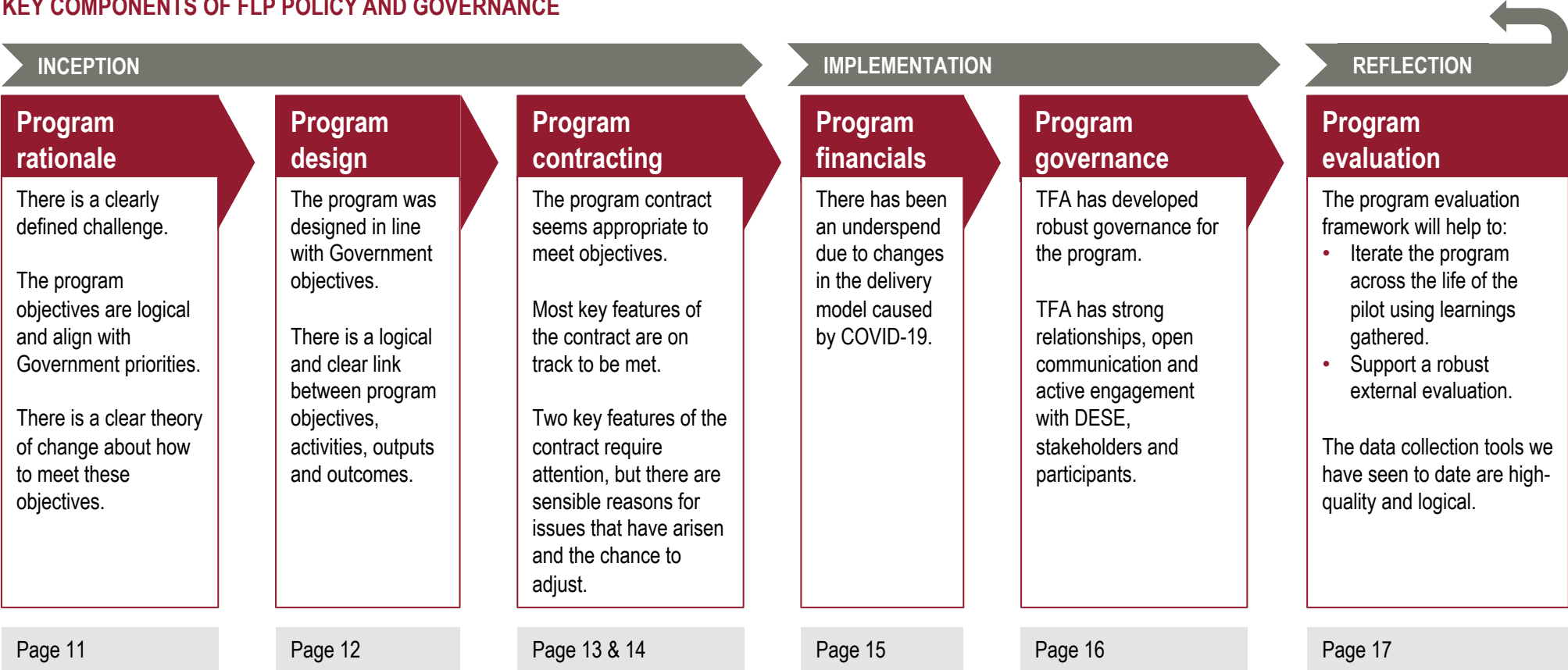


# Policy and governance

# Policy and governance overview

The policy scaffold of the FLP is logical, gives the program a good chance of success and provides a strong foundation upon which to assess the pilot's viability, effectiveness and sustainability.

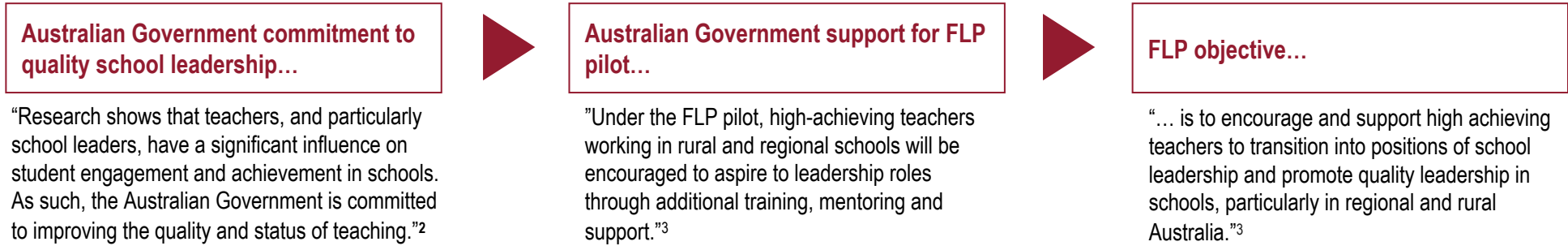
## KEY COMPONENTS OF FLP POLICY AND GOVERNANCE



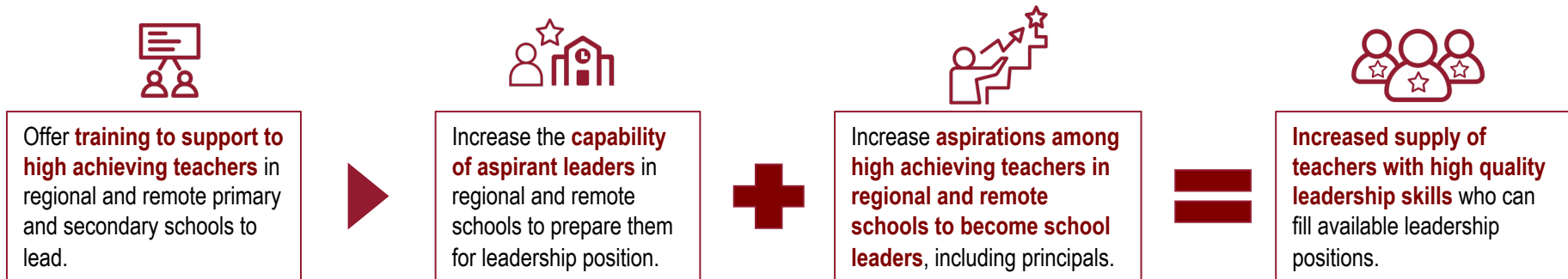
# Program rationale

The Australian Government has committed to improving the quality of teaching and school leadership and has invested in the FLP pilot to do so. The rationale and theory of change for this investment is clear.

## A clear commitment that is driving investment...



## ...in a program that is underpinned by a logical theory of change.<sup>1</sup>



1. Objectives from the contract excerpt, visually adapted  
 2. DESE website – landing page. (verbatim)  
 3. DESE website – Future leaders program page. (verbatim)

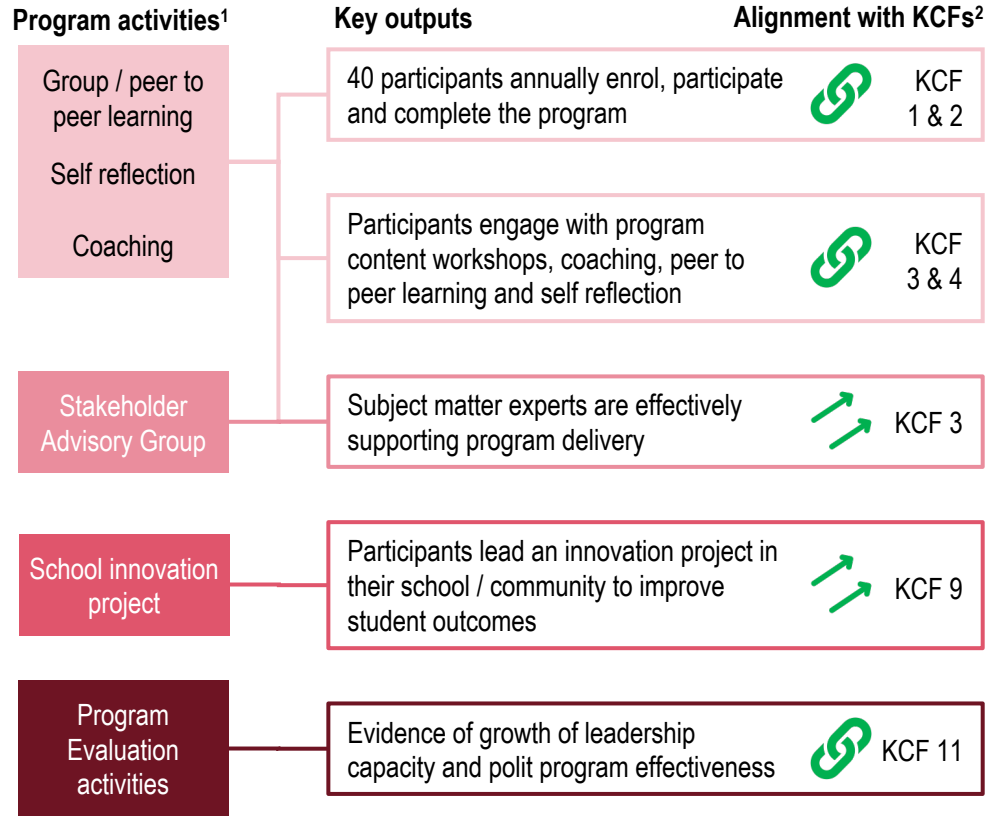
# Program design

The design of the FLP pilot matches Australian Government’s objectives and the program’s theory of change. There is a clear and logical through line between contracted objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes.

## FLP was designed in line with Government objectives.

- ✓ The program evaluation framework uses key language that directly reflects Australian Government objectives.
- ✓ The program is catered to regional and remote contexts and there is strong evidence of responsiveness to cohort.
- ✓ The program is designed to focus on:
  - Regional and remote context.
  - Supporting participants to grow their aspiration to be leaders.
  - Providing opportunities enact learning.

## Program activities are connected to outputs that either directly link or align well with key contract features (KCF).



## TFA’s Program outcomes<sup>3</sup> directly connect to Government objectives.



1. See Slide 25 – 30 for our assessment of the quality of these activities  
 2. See slide 12 Program Contracting for Key Contract Features  
 3. Source: TFA FLP Evaluation Framework



# Program contracting (1/2)

Our assessment of key contract features shows clear alignment with Government objectives for school leadership and the program. The majority of the key contract features are tracking well, with two notable exceptions.

| SUMMARY OF KEY CONTRACT FEATURES <sup>1</sup> |  | Alignment with the Department's objectives | Tracking well? |
|---|--|--|----------------|
| 1   | Recruit, select, deliver and ensure completion of one intake of at least 40 High Achieving Teachers each year (2021 & 2022).   | ✓  | *              |
| 2   | Recruit participants that have at least 2 years experience and are permanently employed in teaching or middle leadership roles in schools and have the written endorsement of principals and are located in schools in outer regional, remote or very remote areas with an ICSEA score rating of less than 1000.   | ✓  | ✓              |
| 3   | Design a high quality and effective school leadership development program that is aligned with the <i>Principal Standards</i> , the <i>Leadership Profiles</i> and the <i>Teacher Standards</i> and reflects best practice.  | ✓  | ✓              |
| 4   | Design a program that is contextually relevant for participants, flexible to address individual needs and provide opportunities for practical and hands-on leadership experience.  | ✓  | ✓              |
| 5   | Develop a leadership competency framework reflecting the beliefs, attitudes, mindsets and skills/capabilities participants need to be successful in the program, how the training/learning components will develop these attributes, and how the competency framework aligns with the <i>Principal Standards</i> , the <i>Leadership Profiles</i> and the <i>Teacher Standards</i> . | ✓  | ✓              |

Although 43 applicants were accepted into the program, over the course of the year several have dropped out. Less than 40 will complete the program in 2021.

**LEGEND**

✓ Tracking well

\* Note

1. Key contract features are summarised from the contract excerpt provided by the Department.

# Program contracting (2/2)

Our assessment of key contract features shows clear alignment with Government objectives for school leadership and the program. The majority of the key contract features are tracking well, with two notable exceptions.

| SUMMARY OF KEY CONTRACT FEATURES <sup>1</sup> |  | Alignment with the Department's objectives | Tracking well? |
|---|--|--|----------------|
| 6   | Regular and consistent program delivery throughout the program and includes a blend of face to face, online and practical learning modules.  | ✓  | *              |
| 7   | Include mentoring and coaching to program participants delivered by experienced current or former school leaders.  | ✓  | ✓              |
| 8   | Provide program participants with access to peer networks to reflect on the training, their personal development and experiences, incorporating cultural competency training.                              | ✓  | ✓              |
| 9   | Build effective partnerships with each Partner School and program participants and other key stakeholders.   | ✓  | ✓              |
| 10  | Convene and governance committee that include, at a minimum, a representative from each of the Department, TFA, Relevant Approved Authorities and Peak Principal Associations.                             | ✓  | ✓              |
| 11  | Provide key reporting documents including a Stakeholder engagement plan, Recruitment and selection plan and an evaluation framework to enable effectiveness and impact of the pilot program to be tracked. | ✓  | ✓              |

Due to COVID-19, it was impossible to deliver a blended program. TFA's intention is to run face-to-face sessions when possible.

**LEGEND**

✓ Tracking well

\* Note

1. Key contract features are summarised from the contract excerpt provided by the Department.

# Program financials

The Australian Government provided TFA with \$7.535 million to deliver the FLP pilot to two cohorts in 2021 and 2022. Nearing the end of cohort one, the program is underspent by 16.1%. This is due to the changes to the delivery model caused by COVID.

| Line item                             | Contracted budget | Forecast spend |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Program management & coordination     | \$1.20m           | \$1.25m        |
| Recruitment, selection & admissions   | \$0.67m           | \$0.47m        |
| Program design & delivery             | \$2.30m           | \$1.85m        |
| Measurement & impact                  | \$0.48m           | \$0.27m        |
| Marketing & stakeholder engagement    | \$0.55m           | \$0.40m        |
| School stipend for time release       | \$0.15m           | \$0.15m        |
| Program set-up, overhead & management | \$1.69m           | \$1.69m        |
| Provision for accreditation           | \$0.50m           | \$0.25m        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                          | <b>\$7.54M</b>    | <b>\$6.33m</b> |

Underspend on delivery as a result of impacts of COVID on delivery model, shifting much of the provision online, which reduced cost.

TFA expects 2022 delivery will absorb much of the current underspend as COVID restrictions ease, especially if more jurisdictions / participants are added.

Underspend as a result of TFA not yet significantly pursuing FLP accreditation.

This should be a focus of contract management for the remainder of the pilot.

TFA is currently projecting a surplus of around \$1.2m versus the program budget.

Implications for this should be discussed between TFA and DESE.

Some of these costs are partly or fully fixed. If the number of participants increased, the current 'cost per participant' may reduce, though variable costs will rise as more participants are added.

Analysis of the program scale, cost profile, value for money vs comparators – and options to improve all three – will be a key feature of future evaluation reports.



# Program governance

The FLP contract establishes broad parameters for program governance. TFA has translated this into an effective and responsive governance model, but there are improvements that can be made.



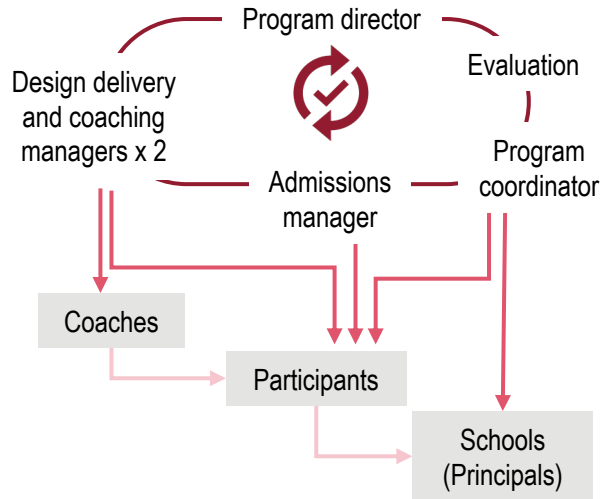
There is a strong, transparent relationship between the Department and TFA.

- ✓ TFA have met reporting requirements to date.
- ✓ TFA are responsive to requests from the Department.
- ✓ TFA have been responsive to our requests as external evaluators.
- ✓ Evidence of flagging issues as they arose in a timely manner (e.g. COVID-19 limiting ability to hold blended sessions).



TFA has an experienced project team with a commitment to engagement with participants, principals and providers.

- ✓ The project team are functioning well, with multiple team members acting as touch points for key stakeholders.



TFA has established a representative Stakeholder Advisory Group to act as the governance committee.

## The Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) is made up of:

- ✓ **Participant peak bodies**  
Primary and secondary principal associations in both participating jurisdictions.  
  
Note: some peak bodies were included in the SAG after design of the program had been completed. However, they are now on board and engaged.
- ✓ **Expert advisor**  
The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
- ✓ **Participating jurisdictions**  
WA and NT education department representatives.
- ✓ **The funder**  
DESE.

“ TFA are approachable, collaborative, and a real and genuine partner. Both parties are there for the right and genuine reason, strong relationship ”

- SAG Member

## Stakeholders report that engagement is:

- ✓ Genuine.    ✓ Responsive.    ✓ Effective.
- ✓ Timely.    ✓ Transparent.    ✓ Self-reflective.

# Program evaluation

The internal TFA evaluation framework provides a strong basis for measuring the impact of the program.



## Data is being collected from key stakeholders

- Participants.
- Coaches.
- Principals / schools.
- Stakeholder Advisory Group.



## The data collection tools that have been developed are robust

- Questions are appropriate.
- Does not over-burden participants.
- Backed up by quality data collection processes and infrastructure.



## Data is collected at regular and logical points in the program

- Baseline surveys of participants.
- 360-degree surveys.
- Feedback after each intensive workshop.
- Planning an alumni survey that tracks post-program career progression.



## TFA are focusing on reasonable indicators to demonstrate impact in the future

- Mapping participant's leadership skill progression against baseline measures.
- Understanding coach, principal and school perceptions / satisfaction with FLP.
- Tracking course satisfaction of participants, jurisdictions and stakeholders.

This framework is complemented by a strong culture of evaluation.



## A commitment to flexibility

TFA content design has a strong foundation but is flexible in delivery and focus areas and can enable adjustment based on early data collection activities.



## A strong evaluation culture

TFA has a strong culture of learning and evaluation and have been engaging very well with us as the external evaluator.



## Appropriate expertise

TFA have embedded an evaluation specialist in the project team that has enabled the evaluation framework to be well suited to program needs.

# Policy and governance recommendations

We have identified three opportunities to address issues or make small improvements to policy and governance prior to cohort two in 2022.

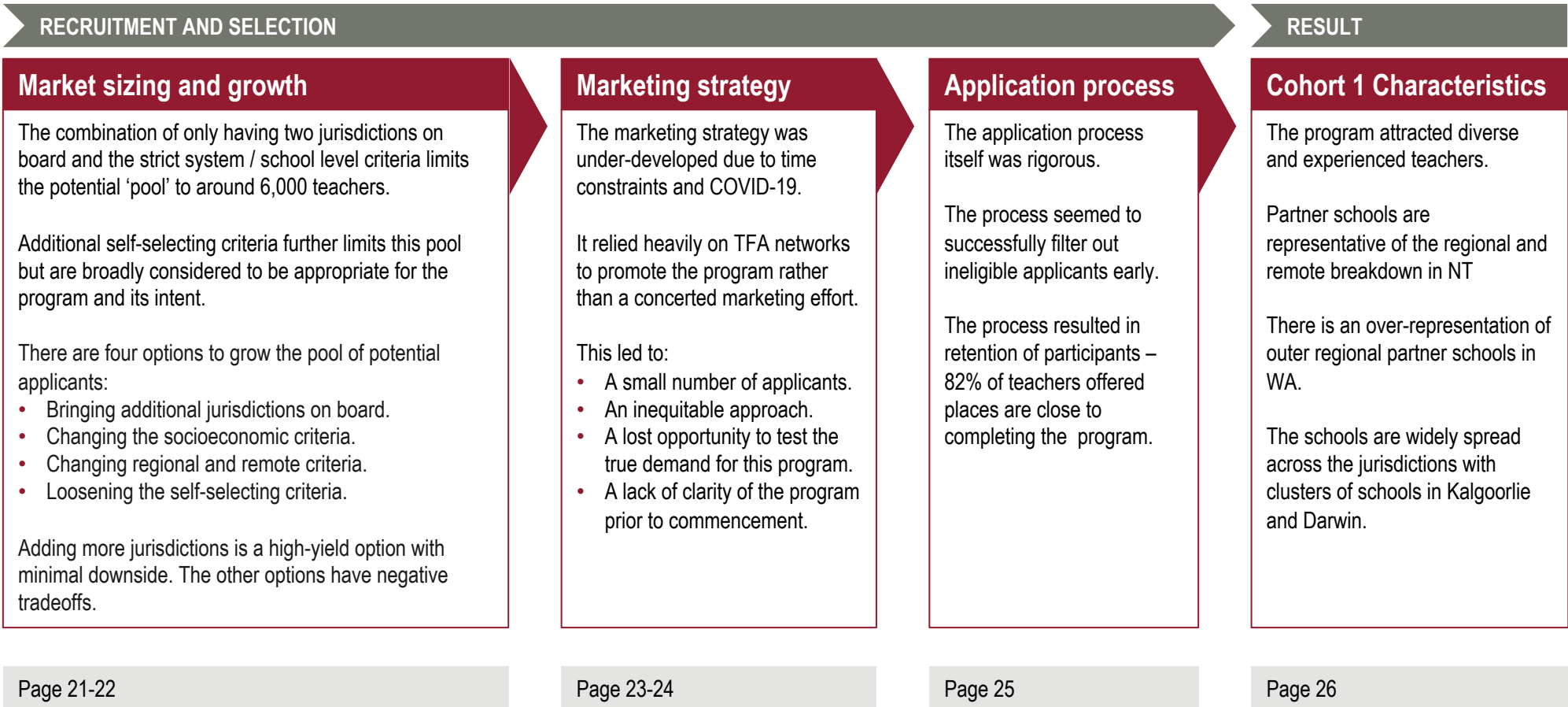
| Component of FLP   | Challenge or issue   | Recommendation   |
|--------------------|--|--|
| <b>CONTRACTING</b> | Cohort one has less than the required 40 participants in 2021. | <b>1.1</b> TFA should aim to select over 40 participants in 2022 to account for a slight shortfall in number of participants in 2021.  |
| <b>FINANCIALS</b>  | TFA is currently projecting a surplus of around \$1.2m.        | <b>1.2</b> DESE should discuss the implications for the program's underspend with TFA and come to a mutually satisfactory solution. A larger cohort two is one option to consider.   |
| <b>GOVERNANCE</b>  | Less than ideal representation on Stakeholder Advisory Group.  | <b>1.3</b> TFA should seek additional representation for the Stakeholder Advisory Group, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative.</li><li>• A current regional, remote or very remote principal.</li></ul> |

# Recruitment and selection

# Recruitment and selection

The recruitment and selection process for cohort one delivered a strong first cohort of participants for the FLP. There are options to grow the market, improve marketing and improve the information provided to participants.

## KEY COMPONENTS OF FLP RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION



Page 21-22

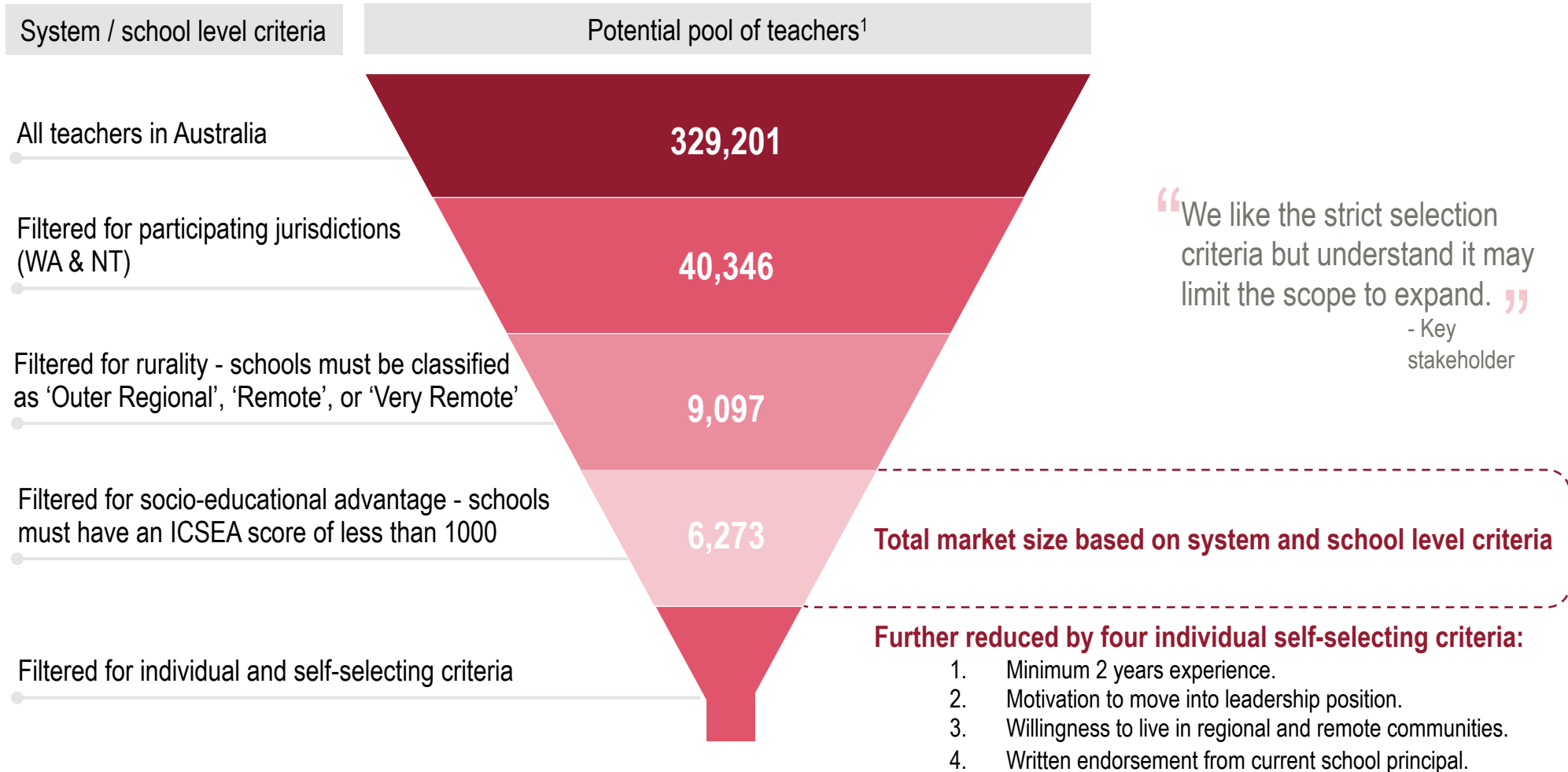
Page 23-24

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# Eligibility criteria and implications for potential market

Under current settings the 'market size' for the FLP is relatively small, with a maximum of around 6,273 teachers eligible for the program. This is sufficient for a two-year pilot program.



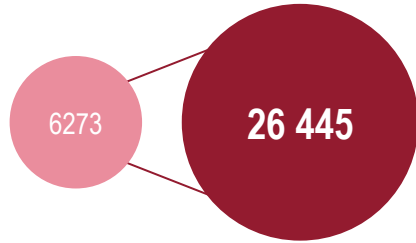
1. Data source: MySchool 2020 data

# Options to grow market size

| Recruitment and selection |                    |                     |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Market sizing and growth  | Marketing strategy | Application process | Cohort 1 characteristics |

In any scale-up of the program after the two-year pilot phase, it would be desirable to grow the market of potential participants. Introducing the FLP to more jurisdictions offers the highest benefit with no negative trade-offs.

## Offer to more jurisdictions<sup>1</sup>



Offering FLP Australia wide with the same selection criteria the potential market size would grow 421% to 26,445, assuming all jurisdictions / sectors sign on.

Adding jurisdictions is an opportunity to:

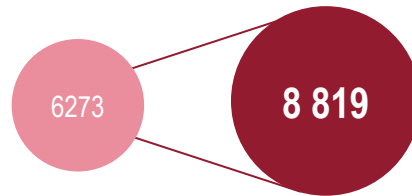
- grow the market without sacrificing selection rigor
- make the Federal Government funded FLP a national or near-national program.

While the FLP may be more relevant to some jurisdictions – namely those with a greater proportion of regional and remote schools – it should still be offered to all over time.



Recommended option to grow market size

## Change socioeconomic criteria<sup>1</sup> Change definition of regional/ remote<sup>1</sup>



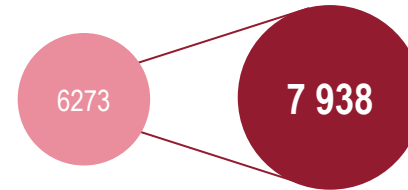
Amending the school socioeconomic status criteria would increase the market in WA and NT to 8,819, by increasing the maximum ICSEA score from 1000 to 1100 (one standard deviation)

However, doing so would shift the focus of the FLP from targeting the bottom half of SES schools, meaning the FLP would no longer be targeting disadvantaged schools.

The median ICSEA score is 1000, so any increase to this would involve schools who are considered above average in socio-educational advantage.



Not recommended given the intent of the program is to benefit disadvantaged schools.



Broadening the definition of regional and remote to include inner regional would increase the market in NT and WA to 7,938. However, we heard almost universally from stakeholders that this would cause negative impacts:

These include:

- **Unaligned context** – Inner regional schools more closely resemble metro than remote schools.
- **Diluted focus and content** - Would shift some of the focus to inner regional, when true market gap is programs for outer regional, remote and very remote leaders.
- **Diluted system learning** - We may lose the chance to learn what works for outer regional, remote and very remote schools.



Not recommended given intent of the program is to prioritise outer regional and remote schools.

## Loosen individual criteria

“ The selection process was exceptional and rigorous leading to high caliber participants. ”

- Key stakeholder

Loosening the individual self-selecting criteria would not grow the total market but would reduce those filtered out by strict settings.

However, given the scale of investment in program participants, it is appropriate to have rigorous self-selecting criteria to control entry into the program. Stakeholders value this.

Ensuring that potential program participants are motivated to lead, willing to live in outer regional, remote and very remote areas, supported by their principals and at the right time in their leadership journey are the correct settings.



Not recommended, given quality candidates are necessary for a successful program.

1. Data source: MySchool 2020 data

# Marketing strategy (1/2)

| Recruitment and selection |                    |                     |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Market sizing and growth  | Marketing strategy | Application process | Cohort 1 characteristics |

A limited marketing effort led to low levels of organic application from teachers and an overreliance on ‘taps on the shoulder’. This could be improved for cohort two.

The marketing effort was time constrained and limited.

**Marketing was slightly disorganised and unbalanced between the jurisdictions.**

- Bringing on the two participating jurisdictions at different times – and late – led to marketing challenges. For example:
  - Only one jurisdiction (WA) was on board when the virtual information session was held.
  - A small Facebook marketing campaign had to be paused in WA to allow space for NT applicants.

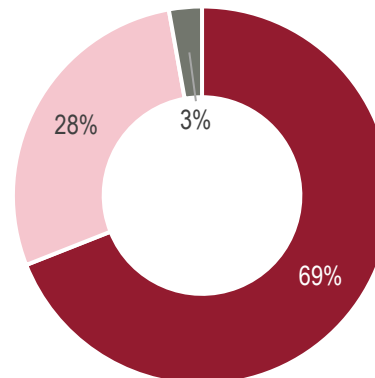
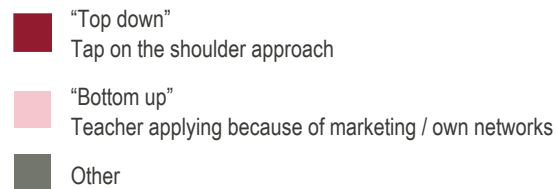
**Because of this, recruitment was overly reliant on somewhat inequitable TFA and jurisdictional networks.**

- Communications targeting principals to identify teachers was prioritised over encouraging teachers to self select. For example:
  - Tapping into TFA alumni network.
  - Emails to seek help of education departments.

This is reflected in the very high proportion of cohort one participants who were ‘tapped on the shoulder’ to apply.

**69% of applicants were “tapped on the shoulder” to apply**

How applicants heard about FLP <sup>1</sup>



This led to...



A small pool of applicants in an already constrained market, heavily reliant on word-of-mouth and incomplete networks.



An inequitable approach that missed an opportunity to support more under-represented groups into leadership.



A lost opportunity to test the true depth of market demand for this program during its pilot phase.

1. Source: FLP C2021 Applicant Report (dandolo aggregation of responses)



# Marketing strategy (2/2)

Limited marketing collateral resulted in some teachers lacking an understanding of the program content and time commitment prior to commencement. To some degree, this has resulted in some participants feeling overwhelmed.

There was limited marketing collateral / information provided to applicants.

This is reflected in some teachers feeling there was a lack of clarity...

... and led to at least some teachers feeling overwhelmed.

- Marketing collateral included:
  - One school flyer.
  - One teacher flyer.
  - One Facebook sponsored post.
- In addition, one virtual information session was held for WA.
- Minimal pre-program information or material was provided to participants, schools and coaches.

“ Would be good to see a bit more clarity around the program expectations, the level of work required and what the program intent is. ”  
- Coach (interview)

- Several participants withdrew prior to commencement, stating an inability to commit to intensive workshops. (See slide 25 for a breakdown of withdrawals)
- Other participants stated they felt underprepared for the time commitment, but ‘stuck with’ the program.

“ There wasn't a lot of information shared about the program and expectations to participants and schools. ”  
- Participant (OFG)

“ I would agree with others that the workload has been something I didn't consider when I signed up and there wasn't really a clear indication of what was going to be expected. ”  
- Participant (OFG)

“ It was not very clear what to expect from this workshop and what the goal of this initial intensive was, nor how it fits in the overall program as a whole – in particular the following intensives. I understand it is the program's first year, however. ”  
- Participant (TFA survey)

- Further into the year, this has led to some participants feeling overwhelmed by the program workload.

“ This was an exhausting workshop. It felt huge to be doing this as a part of our one-week holiday. ”  
- Participant (TFA survey)

“ On top of the extra learning required in the holidays, and during the term, it was really hard to get through. ”  
- Participant (OFG)

## NOTE

Due to time constraints, program content was designed during recruitment, however COVID-19 forced TFA to change the delivery mode at short notice.

We appreciate that developing information about content and delivery prior to cohort one commencing would have been very challenging given these circumstances.

# Application process

Despite a rigorous application process, 81% of applicants were accepted into the program.

## Applicant progression<sup>1</sup>



### The process successfully filtered ineligible applicants

- 70% of applications that were started ended up being completed.
- The process successfully filtered applicants who were ineligible because of:
  - Self-selecting factors – experience or location.
  - Lack of principal endorsement.
- Those who were filtered out usually didn't make it past the first section, so the process was efficient and didn't waste the time of ineligible teachers.

### The process 'yield' was 81% - 45 / 55 applicants received offers

- All participants who completed applications were invited to the Virtual Assessment Centre.
- Of the 55 completed applications:
  - 5 were rejected.
  - 5 applicants withdrew prior to offers.
  - 2 applicants did not accept offers.

### 82% of participants have 'stuck'

Of the 8 that withdrew:

- 2 withdrew before the program began due to inability to commit to workshop intensives.
- 1 withdrew due to change in personal circumstances.
- 3 withdrew due to change in work circumstances and no longer able to commit the time (moving schools / moving roles).
- 2 withdrew for maternity leave.

## Feedback received on application process

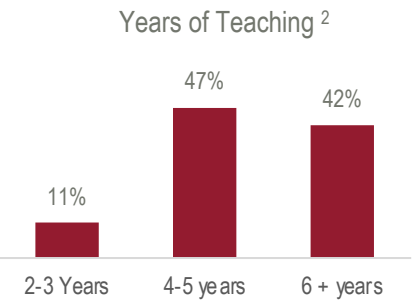
- Stakeholders believe the application process led to a cohort of high achieving teachers. They were pleased to see principal endorsement, which increases the chance of quality applicants and also increases engagement with participating schools.
- Participants for the most part, enjoyed the application process.

“ We found the selection process to be exceptional and rigorous leading to high quality participants ” - SAG member

# Cohort one characteristics

The program attracted 43 experienced and diverse teachers.

**89% of participants have over 3 years of experience...**

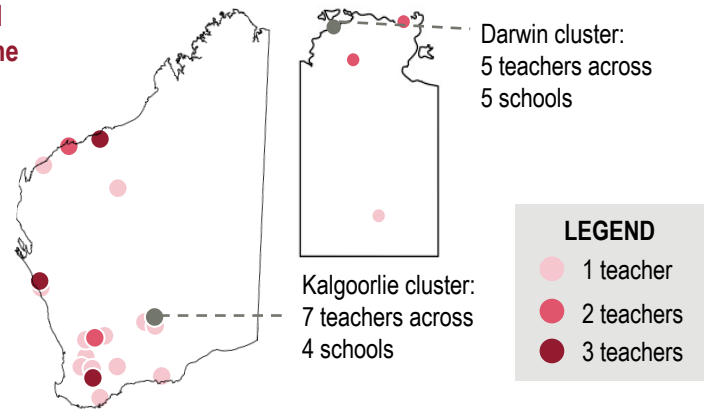


**...And teachers said the program came at the right time in their career.**

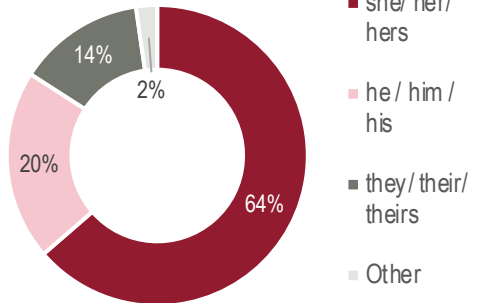
“ It has come at the perfect time. I have just really started my leadership journey and I was struggling to work out what it was I needed to focus on to grow. ”  
 - Program participant<sup>3</sup>

The teachers work at a total of 29 schools across participating jurisdictions.

**Teachers come from a good spread of schools, with some notable clusters...**



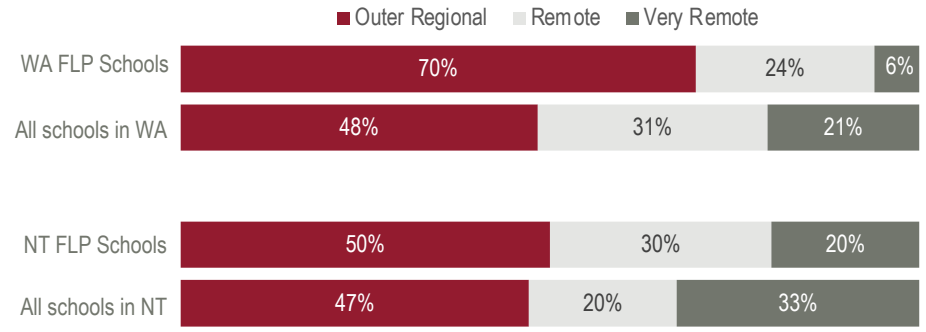
**The cohort has strong gender diversity<sup>2</sup> ...**



**... and some degree of cultural diversity.<sup>2</sup>**

**7%** of participants identify as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD).  
**2%** of participants identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

**...the schools are broadly representative of regional jurisdiction breakdowns, with the one major exception is a higher percentage of WA participants from outer regional areas.<sup>1,2</sup>**



Sources:  
 1. MySchool 2020 data  
 2. FLP cohort one participant data  
 3. dandolo online focus group of cohort one participants

# Recruitment and selection recommendations

We have identified five opportunities to address issues or make small improvements to recruitment and selection prior to cohort two in 2022.

## Component of FLP

**MARKET GROWTH**

**MARKETING STRATEGY**

**COHORT ONE CHARACTERISTICS**

## Challenge or issue

Cohort one was drawn from a small pool of potential applicants.

Small percentage of organic applications not testing true depth of current market.

Limited amount of marketing material distributed about the program.

Evidence of some participants, principals and coaches having a lack of understanding prior to program commencement.

Cohort one is reasonably diverse, but there is merit in seeking to improve diversity.

## Recommendation

**2.1** DESE and TFA should work together to bring additional jurisdictions on board for the program. This will grow the pool and further road-test the model.

**2.2** TFA should increase the marketing effort to ensure that all principals and schools in the relevant regions are informed about the program, encouraging 'bottom-up' applications while not preventing solicited / tap-on-the-shoulder applications.

**2.3** TFA should increase the number of information sessions about the program and disseminate clear information about the program, its benefits, and its demands.

**2.4** TFA should develop coach, principal and participant handbooks (separate to initial marketing) for those who apply to the program, so the program content and demands are clearly understood. This will help to align expectations of TFA and participants.

**2.5** TFA and jurisdictions should continue to encourage and seek ways to support applications from typically underrepresented groups in school leadership such as women, Indigenous, CALD, and special school staff.

# Learning model

# Learning model

Program content and delivery is informed by best practice and has been well received by stakeholders. There is evidence of participants embedding their learning. TFA and jurisdictions should give more thought to the post-program landscape.

## Content

The content is logical, high-quality and aligned with the best evidence of what works.

The implementation plan for course content is intentional, detailed, thorough and flexible.

Program content is relevant to a regional and remote context.

Participants found the content to be relevant and responsive to their needs.

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## Delivery

The delivery model was quickly and successfully adjusted to online delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the hope to switch to a blended model when feasible.

The delivery model is also flexible enough to be responsive to participant needs and feedback.

The program delivery was well received by our expert advisors, participants and stakeholders.

Our expert advisors confirm the delivery scope, sequence and duration was consistent with best practice and could be a model for other programs in future.

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## Embedding

The jurisdictions and other members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group are optimistic participants can embed their learning in their own school contexts during the program.

The school innovation project provides a good vehicle for embedding and we have seen some evidence of participants embedding their learning through the SIP.

However, additional thought needs to go into how program alumni can be supporting to continue to embed their learning after completing the program.

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# Content

| Learning Model |          |           |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Content        | Delivery | Embedding |

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.

## April and July workshop feedback

The content was relevant to my development as a leader<sup>1</sup>



Overall, the content was relevant to my school context<sup>2</sup>



■ Strongly disagree ■ disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

“ There is no other program like it specifically targeting aspiring leaders in regional schools. ”  
- FLP coach

“ 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

Content is logical, high-quality 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.

“ The program totally aligns with the best research AITSL has on effective, specific preparation for principals. Many programs do not meet this standard, but FLP does ”  
- AITSL representative

1. TFA workshop feedback survey results (average across all sessions)  
2. TFA workshop feedback survey results (average across both workshops)

# Delivery

The program's delivery model is high-quality, evidence based, and could act as a model for others.

"We believe that this program has the hallmarks necessary to be a model for others, in both design and delivery."

- Bruce Armstrong and Tony Mackay

- **The program pedagogy is rigorous and evidence based.** It is designed in line with contemporary evidence on leadership practice and what constitutes good professional learning.
- **The duration, scope and sequence of the program is appropriate.** It exposes the participants to critical domains of practice, combined with other design elements and associated pedagogical practices that are necessary to bring about the desired shifts in thinking and behaviour.
- **The delivery model is responsive.** Course designers and leaders are self-reflective, responsive to feedback, and committed to responding to participant needs – all the while being committed to sound principles of program design, integrity and excellence.

## April and July workshop feedback <sup>1</sup>

The different activities included in this session supported my engagement with the content.



This session provided opportunities for me to collaborate effectively with others.



■ Strongly disagree ■ disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

It has proven to be resilient and effective in responding to the challenges of COVID.

- **The coronavirus pandemic significantly disrupted the delivery model of the program.** A program that was supposed to feature in-person intensives and other opportunities to come together quickly shifted online.
- **Stakeholders, coaches and participants praised TFA for their agility and responsiveness in quickly shifting the program model.** Given the circumstances, the program has proven to be adaptable.
- **The shift has occurred without compromising quality.** The intentional design approach taken by TFA enabled a pivot to online delivery without significantly compromising the integrity of the program.
- **Nevertheless, the loss of in-person experiences has been somewhat detrimental to the program.** As COVID restrictions allow, participants would benefit from physically meeting together to develop relationships and connections given the isolation that they normally experience.

“ The sound quality was a little distracting at times, I think because of the microphone moving. The circle was fantastic - setting the values and expectations first was invaluable - I actually feel more connected with the group at the end of today and was amazed at how such a safe space was created virtually. Thank you. ”

- Participant (workshop feedback)

“ The virtual environment was set up to be a safe space for all participants where you were welcomed and thanked for having a go and sharing your opinions/experiences. I felt this was very important as everyone is connecting for the first time. ”

- Participant (workshop feedback)

1. TFA workshop feedback survey results (average across all sessions)



# Embedding

The program has the support of jurisdictions and sector peaks. It has a real chance of ‘sticking’.

- **The program is almost universally praised by jurisdictions, principal peaks and other key stakeholders.** All stakeholders we spoke to were glowing about the course and its content.
- **Jurisdictions appreciate the program.** It is well targeted, designed well, and fills a gap for aspirant leaders that is very hard to fill. One sees it as a best practice model that they would look to replicate if necessary.
- **There is some unease that jurisdictions may get left ‘holding the bag’.** One jurisdiction told us there is unease at the highest level of the organisation that, having now signed up, they’ll be left to find funding for it.

“ This is the first program that might sustain itself, through action research working with teaching and learning teams in the schools. ”  
- SAG Member

There are early signs that participants are embedding their learning.

- The program **provides an opportunity to embed the learning** through the school innovation project (SIP). Which has allowed participants to **contextualise their learning** and lead a project **focused on student outcomes**.

“ I see [the SIP] as a way of embedding, and a magnificent way of connecting to the framework and lovely weaving through of the learning. ”  
- Coach (interview)

- Participants feel that the SIP has helped them to actualise their learning

“ [The SIP] has been very useful to me ... it has allowed me to achieve goals that I had previously not set for myself in such a sequential way. ”  
- Program participant (OFG)

- 4 participants have risen to leadership positions during the program and have been able to embed their learning in a true leadership context with support from their coaches.<sup>1</sup>

But the post-completion landscape for participants needs attention now and is the most obvious initial risk.

- **There seems to be no clear plan for what comes after completion.** Cohort one participants will ‘graduate’ from the program at the end of 2021, yet there appears to be no plan for keeping them engaged with the program or each other.
- **It is not clear who owns the post-completion terrain or who is thinking about it:**
  - Some stakeholders are concerned that the ‘design as we go’ approach means not enough thought has been given to what comes next.
  - It’s not clear if TFA is thinking about it or sees this as their responsibility.
  - It’s not clear if jurisdictions are thinking about it or see this as their responsibility.
- **Given the scale of investment in the program, learning loss is unacceptable.** Because we know that ongoing professional networking and learning is a critical element of converting professional learning into outcomes, this needs attention now.

1. Note: We are not yet able to identify a causal relationship between the program and this leadership progression.

# Recommendations for the learning model

We have six recommendations for content, delivery and embedding. The most pressing is to consider the post-program landscape now for the current cohort to minimise the risk of learning loss and wasted investment.

| Component | Challenge or issue   | Recommendation  |
|-----------|--|---|
| CONTENT   | Ensuring content is relevant for very remote teachers.                         | <b>3.1</b> TFA should further consult remote participants and their principals to ensure the course content is relevant to their cohorts and circumstances, then adjust if necessary. In doing so, it is critical to balance the unique needs of this group of participants with the needs and circumstances of regional and remote participants. |
| CONTENT   | Underlying theory of action for content and delivery is not explicit.          | <b>★ 3.2</b> TFA should consider whether the program content and delivery could benefit from a more comprehensive 'theory of action'. The links between design principles, design approach, scope and sequence, content and delivery is not always clear. A clearer through line would ensure fidelity and alignment.                             |
| DELIVERY  | Covid-19 restrictions inhibiting a blended delivery model.                     | <b>★ 3.3</b> TFA should reintroduce the in-person elements of the program as COVID restrictions allow, but maintain the key aspects of online delivery where it is sensible and cost-effective to do so. The shift to heavy online delivery came at some cost, but also resulted in development of innovative pedagogy.                           |
| EMBEDDING | There appears to be no plan to support alumni after completion of the program. | <b>3.4</b> DESE, TFA and participating jurisdictions should immediately consider how to support participants after they complete the program – especially given the lack of in-person experiences because of COVID-19. This could include light 'refreshers', regional collaborative networks, and less intensive networking opportunities.       |
| EMBEDDING | Opportunity to utilise alumni as representatives and advocates of the program. | <b>★ 3.5</b> TFA and jurisdictions should consider how to further 'spread the word' beyond the immediate cohort. Separately to recommendation 3.4, which deals with how to ensure participants remain 'current' post-completion, there is further opportunity to establish them as champions of the program and it's intellectual property.       |

## Initial view on intermediate outcomes

# Initial view on intermediate outcomes

There are some positive signs of progress towards meeting short-term objectives.

## Participant knowledge and capability

Participants have told us that they have gained useful knowledge and experience.

“ The program has provided me with some knowledge and skills that I am sure are necessary in any leadership role. ”

- Participant (OFG)

“ I loved all of the sessions, I feel like I've learnt so much about things that will not only help build my skills as a leader but also empower those around me. Thank you! ”

- Participant (workshop feedback)

Participants are very positive about the contribution their coach is having on their knowledge and capability development:

**94%** of participants agreed that coaching was helping to reinforce concepts and skills from the workshops.

**94%** of participants agreed that coaching is helping to improve their leadership skills.

## Participants in leadership

At least **4 participants** have moved into leadership roles during the program. Coaches are seeing that other participants are increasingly confident to apply for roles.

“ They've got that confidence to apply for the leadership roles. ”

- Coach (interview)

“ They are talking in leadership. They get stuff. The project has been a great vehicle. ”

- Coach (interview)

## Participant aspirations, attitudes and behaviour

In the baseline 360-degree survey conducted by TFA, participants show high skills according to their networks compared to their self-rated score. This shows:

1. That the teachers in cohort one are high achieving.
2. That there is room for confidence in their own ability to grow.

“ It's all starting to click into place for them, they are seeing the benefits, some doubters are now shining. Setting up yarning circles and influence in other schools. ”

- Coach (interview)

86% of participants believe that participation in the program workshops have shifted their thinking about educational leadership.



■ Strongly disagree ■ disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

**These are very early signs of progress against the program's expected outcomes.**

**We are not yet able to make conclusive statements about the achievement of these outcomes or whether they are likely to be met.**

**This will be a critical feature of future evaluation reports.**

# Appendix 1 – Evaluation Framework and methodology

# Evaluation framework for the FLP

## Overall objective

**Increased supply and retention of quality school leadership** in low-socioeconomic status outer regional, remote and very remote schools.

## Domains

- Policy & governance
- Recruitment
- Learning & embedding

## Outputs & outcomes

- Participant knowledge & capability
- Participant confidence & behaviour
- Participant aspirations & attitudes
- Participants in leadership

“Good quality school leadership.”

“Increased supply and retention of school leadership.”

## Analysis

- Does the program deliver on objectives?
- How can the program be improved?
- How effective is the program versus comparators?
- Does the program offer value versus comparators?
- Can the program be scaled?

| Domain  | Design  | Implementation   | Outputs  | Intermediate outcomes                            | Long-term outcomes                                 |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | Was design of the FLP appropriate to address the problem?   | Was the FLP implemented as intended and contracted?  | What outputs have been produced by the FLP?  | What early outcomes can we attribute to the FLP? | What long-term outcomes have been achieved by FLP? |
| <p><b>Policy and governance</b></p> <p>“The program was well conceived.”</p> <p>“The program was well governed and managed.”</p> <p>“The program was well substantiated.”</p> | <p>Was there a clear program rationale and theory of change?</p> <p>Was there an effective and accountable governance model?</p>  | <p>Was the program contracted in a way that reflected the theory?</p> <p>Was the program implemented consistent with theory of change?</p> <p>Was the program governed and managed consistent with model?</p> <p>Was the program delivered on budget and on time?</p> <p>Were contracted KPIs met?</p> |  |  |  |
| <p><b>Recruitment</b></p> <p>“Teachers know about the program.”</p> <p>“The <u>right</u> teachers were selected.”</p>   | <p>Did the program target the right candidates?</p> <p>Was the marketing and recruiting process designed to get the best possible candidates?</p> <p>Did the program attract sufficient candidates to match the available resourcing?</p> | <p>Was the selection process run consistent with design?</p> <p>Were the right candidates selected?</p> <p>Were enough candidates selected?</p>  | <p><b>Marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # teachers that are aware of the program.</li> <li>• # teachers that applied to the program.</li> <li>• % of applications eligible for program.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recruitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # teachers that commence the program.</li> <li>• % of applications that were selected for program.</li> <li>• Demographics and profile of successful candidates.</li> </ul> |  |  |

| Domain  | Design  | Implementation  | Outputs   | Intermediate outcomes  | Long-term outcomes  |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
|   | Was design of the FLP appropriate to address the problem?   | Was the FLP implemented as intended and contracted?   | What outputs have been produced by the FLP?   | What early outcomes can we attribute to the FLP?   | What long-term outcomes have been achieved by FLP?  |
| <b>Learning &amp; embedding</b><br><br>"Participants were happy with the program."<br><br>"The program had impact on individuals."<br><br>"The program benefited participants' schools in the short-term."<br><br>"The program led to participants in leadership roles in the longer-term." | Was the program's curriculum fit for purpose and best practice?<br><br>Was the program's pedagogy fit for purpose and best practice?<br><br>Was there a plan to embed the program in participants' schools?<br><br>Was there a plan to sustain and spread good practice in the school system? | Was the curriculum implemented as intended?<br><br>Was the pedagogy implemented as intended?<br><br>Was the program embedded in participants' schools as intended?<br><br>Was the program leveraged to the benefit of school systems? | <b>Course completion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of participants that completed each unit.</li> </ul> <b>School embedding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% demonstration innovation projects linked to school priorities.</li> </ul> <b>System leverage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% demonstration innovation projects linked to regional priorities.</li> </ul> | <b>Participant knowledge and capability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of participants satisfied with design and delivery.</li> <li>Change in participant leadership scores (LCF skills &amp; capabilities).</li> </ul> <b>Participant aspirations and attitudes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in participants intending to apply for leadership roles.</li> <li>Change in participants' commitment to regional education and leadership.</li> <li>Change in participants confidence / attitude / perception of leadership.</li> </ul> <b>Participant behaviours</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in participant leadership scores (LCF behaviours).</li> <li>% of principals satisfied the program improved participants' leadership.</li> </ul> <b>Participants in leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in participants demonstrating leadership in their school.</li> <li>% of system stakeholders who think program helped improve leadership.</li> </ul> | <b>Participant knowledge and capability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued demonstration of improved alumni leadership scores (LCF – skills &amp; capabilities).</li> </ul> <b>Participant aspirations and attitudes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in alumni applying for leadership positions in low-SES regional schools.</li> </ul> <b>Participant behaviours</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued demonstration of improved alumni leadership scores (LCF – behaviours).</li> </ul> <b>Participants in leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in alumni currently in leadership positions in low-SES regional schools.</li> </ul> |



|            | Stage 1 – Project initiation, baseline analysis + interim report   | Stage 2 – Fieldwork  | Stage 3 – Comparator and destination analysis  | Stage 4 – Reporting  |
|------------|--|--|--|--|
| Stage      | July to September 2021   | Cohort One – Oct 2021 to Feb 2022<br>Cohort Two – Jan 2022 to Feb 2023   | February 2023 – April 2023   | May– June 2023   |
| Activities | <p><b>Project kick-off and evaluation framework workshop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree scope, timelines and fieldwork approach.</li> <li>• Confirm stakeholders and engagement strategy.</li> <li>• Confirm or modify evaluation framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data and document request</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source from DESE and TFA key documents and data.</li> </ul> <p><b>Workshop with TFA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop with TFA to discuss methodology and evaluation framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>Develop project plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise scope, fieldwork approach and milestones.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data and document analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse data / documents to inform fieldwork and interim report.</li> </ul> <p><b>Interview participating jurisdictions and key stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview NT and WA education departments.</li> <li>• Interview other members of FLP Stakeholder Advisory Group.</li> </ul> <p><b>Online focus groups with participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold initial online focus group with cohort 1 participants to establish baseline perspectives and data.</li> </ul> <p><b>Review course content + pedagogy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use expert advisors to review course curriculum and pedagogy and provide recommendations for improvement.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Existing TFA foundational fieldwork...</b></p> <p>Utilise TFA fieldwork</p> <p><b>...supplemented by deep-dive dandolo fieldwork...</b></p> <p>Interview non-participating jurisdictions</p> <p>Interview participating jurisdictions</p> <p>Interview participating teachers at key times during program</p> <p>Interview participating teachers' principals at key times during program</p> <p>Online focus groups first term after program</p> <p>Analyse TFA instruments</p> | <p>Post program leadership and destination analysis</p> <p>Teach To Lead (TTL) comparison</p> <p>'Counterfactual' comparison</p> <p>'Non-participant' comparison</p> <p>Comparator program comparison</p> <p>Impact and value assessment</p> | <p>Draft report</p> <p>Test findings</p> <p>Final and summary report</p> <p>Present findings</p>   |
| Outputs    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation / project plan (Aug 2021)</li> <li>• Interim report (Sept 2021)</li> <li>• Content and pedagogy report (Sept 2021)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft and final cohort 1 report (Feb 2022)</li> <li>• Draft and final cohort 2 report (Feb 2023)</li> </ul>   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report (May 2023)</li> <li>• Final report (Jun 2023)</li> <li>• Summary report (Jun 2023)</li> <li>• Presentation (Jun 2023)</li> </ul> |

## Appendix 2 – Curriculum and pedagogy review

# Review of Teach for Australia's Future Leaders Program curriculum and design Approach

By Anthony Mackay and Bruce Armstrong

14 September, 2021

## About the review

This review is an independent assessment of the curriculum and design approach of the Future Leaders Program (FLP), completed within the context of the broader evaluation of the program by dandolopartners. The findings of this review have informed the broader dandolopartners evaluation, but also constitute a standalone and independent product for consideration by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

## About the reviewers

**Tony Mackay** is a leading international expert in education policy and research, including leadership development. He is the current CEO and Board Co-Chair of the Washington D.C. based National Center on Education and the Economy, the current Chair of the Australian Council of Educational Research, the former CEO of the Centre for Strategic Education, and the former (inaugural) Chair of AITSL, the immediate past Chair of ACER, and former (inaugural) deputy chair of ACARA. He is also a previous board member of TFA.

**Bruce Armstrong** is a former education executive and secondary school principal with unrivalled experience in school leadership development and transformation. He led the transformation of large secondary schools, established the world-leading Victorian Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership, and led school workforce and school leadership reform strategies as deputy secretary of the Victorian education department.

## Scope and methodological approach

The review is a point-in-time review of the FLP curriculum and pedagogy based on a review of all available content and discussions with TFA staff. It is not a full evaluation of all program content, because much of it is yet to be developed.

In completing the review, the reviewers considered FLP artefacts provided by TFA, including:

- Future Leaders Program Implementation Plan.
- Design Principles.
- Leadership Competency Framework.
- Curriculum scope and sequence.
- Session plans and associated materials for several workshops.

These materials were supplemented with a question-and-answer session with TFA staff.

This review was focussed on an assessment of one of the program objectives: **Quality - increase the quality of school leadership training and development in remote, regional and rural schools.**

The reviewers approached this task by drawing on the evidence base of what constitutes effective school leadership<sup>1</sup> and high-quality professional learning<sup>2</sup> that is most likely to build the desired leadership capabilities.

As Robinson (2008) observes “The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes.”<sup>3</sup>

The reviewers used this lens to discern whether the curriculum content and learning experiences were directed to developing high-quality school leadership practice that positively influences individual and collective teaching expertise in a professional learning culture to secure a strong rate of progress for all learners.

In addition, the reviewers were sensitive to the context of this program that was designed specifically to meet the needs of school leaders in regional, rural and remote settings. Recent research by Leithwood et al (2019) has highlighted how effective school leaders understand and respond appropriately to the different contextual demands that they face.<sup>4</sup>

On this basis the following key findings and recommendations are made.

### Summary of findings

The reviewers 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. The equity challenges in the Australian education system emphasise the need for a school leadership development program that takes seriously the challenges to equip school leaders to be properly invested in to meet the needs of the regional, rural and remote communities that they serve. We believe that this program has the hallmarks necessary to do that effectively and to be a model for others, in both design and delivery, when considering on-line leadership development opportunities.

### Key findings

1. The FLP has significant merit in tackling the issue of the supply of high-quality school leaders in regional, rural and remote communities by building both capacity (leadership pipeline) and capability (leadership quality) in place to meet the educational needs of children and young people in those communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2014, *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles*, AITSL, Melbourne.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2018, *Leading for impact: Australian guidelines for school leadership development*, AITSL, Melbourne.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, V, Lloyd, C & Rowe, K 2008, ‘The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types’, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 5 pp 635-674.

<sup>4</sup> Leithwood, K, Harris, A & Hopkins, D. (2019): Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited, *School Leadership & Management*, DOI:10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

2. The program has been carefully and thoughtfully designed, taking into account the contemporary evidence base on leadership capabilities and domains of practice combined with extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure it was aligned with FLP objectives and the needs of regional, rural and remote participants.
3. The 9 design principles explicitly reference 'Two Worlds' learning, drawing attention to the Indigenous and non-indigenous communities that these school leaders serve. The genuine and integrated enactment of this principle in design and delivery may be a unique and critical feature of the Future Leaders Program (FLP) in comparison to other school leadership development programs.
4. The FLP implementation plan is detailed and thorough taking account of:
  - Purpose, objectives and stakeholder engagement
  - Leadership competencies
  - Detailed Costings
  - Roles and Responsibilities
  - Evaluation processes
  - Governance and risk management
5. The intentional design approach and methodology has enabled a pivot to on-line delivery without compromising the integrity of the program objectives. The production quality and delivery methodology is responsive to participants whilst maintaining program integrity and commitment to excellence.
6. The one-year duration of the course, and the scope and sequence of the curriculum, expose the participants to critical domains of practice combined with other design elements and associated pedagogical practices such as peer to peer learning, coaching and the innovation project that are necessary to bring about the desired shifts in thinking and behaviour expected by the program.
7. One issue that learning designers confront in a program like the FLP is workload for participants. Setting the right level of expectation for a well-researched and extensive curriculum often comes down to the individual circumstances a participant may be experiencing in the program itself (that is the degree of learning challenge) combined with the challenges in the setting they are working. Our view is that the design approach offers the right mix of challenge and support (zone of proximal development) that exemplifies one of the design principles – 'rigorous not onerous'. Evaluation of participant feedback by cohort overtime will enable adjustments to course design.

### Recommendations

1. The program would benefit from a more explicit theory of action that provides a through line in the each of the steps in the design approach from the design principles through the scope and sequence to delivery to ensure fidelity and alignment. The explicit theory of action could be linked to the program logic enabling greater rigour in program evaluation and return on learning.

2. That consideration be given to seek, from participating jurisdictions, an investment in further capability, platforms (such as the online learning management system) and online tools to leverage and scale the intellectual property to regional, rural and remote communities. This would allow for the blended or hybrid model to be further developed to assure the quality of the learner experience.
3. The program for school leaders drawn from regional, rural and remote communities would benefit from physically meeting together to develop relationships and connections (when COVID restrictions allow) given the isolation that they experience, despite the flexibility that on-line delivery has afforded.
4. Continue to amplify and integrate the unique program design principle of 'Two Worlds' learning.
5. Monitor and evaluate each design element to assess both the individual and combination of features that are most efficacious in improving leaders' mindsets and behaviours that are most influential in improving student outcomes. There is an opportunity to further validate the already demonstrated value of peer-to-peer learning, Study Groups and coaching in context.
6. Continue to explore innovative pedagogies in an online environment.