EVALUATION AND LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE YOUNG WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING PROGRAMME PILOT

Final Report

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Evaluation of Rural Young Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Programme

Prepared for the Office for Women, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
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<td>Area Consultative Committee</td>
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<td>OfW</td>
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Executive summary

Introduction

In 2006-2007, the Office for Women (OfW) of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) funded a pilot Young Women's Leadership and Mentoring Programme (YWLMP). Urbis was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the pilot programme. This report presents the results of that evaluation.

The YWLMP is a community leadership initiative for young women in regional and rural areas of Australia. Its principal aims are:

- to provide role model and mentoring opportunities to inspire, motivate and educate young women to increase their involvement in leadership roles within the community; and
- to trial the programme in a community setting to determine any modifications for future programmes.

The YWLMP differs from most other leadership programmes in that it comprises a combination of training, mentoring and networking components. It was piloted in three regional locations – the Wheatbelt (Western Australia (WA)), Wide Bay Burnett (Queensland) and Gippsland (Victoria) – from February to October 2007 at a total cost of $365,740.

The key aims of the evaluation were to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the pilot projects and provide advice as to how the programme might be structured and strengthened should it be rolled out nationally. The evaluation comprised in-depth interviews with project management and staff, young women participating in the programme (mentees), their mentors, the conduct of the first wave of a three year longitudinal study of the mentees, and a review of key literature and documentation.

Key findings

- The programme was successfully implemented across the three pilot locations.
- The pilots were successful in recruiting 122 young women and 100 mentors, the vast majority of whom completed the programme. Although this is less than originally anticipated (and required by OfW), the evaluators are of the view that this was a good result, and that recruiting significantly more mentees and mentors would have considerably stretched resources and placed the quality of the programme in jeopardy.
- The pilots were successful in attracting a diverse mix of mentees and mentors. The young women included school leavers, students, small business owners, women working in rural industries, teachers, lawyers and people working in natural resource management.
- The YWLMP was very well received by both the young women and the mentors, and is considered to be a much needed and valued initiative in rural and regional Australia.
- The three-pronged approach – training, mentoring and networking – proved to be critical to the success of the programme.
- The YWLMP has delivered some immediate benefits and outcomes, not only for the mentees, but also for their mentors. Over time, and as the longitudinal study progresses, it will be possible to test the longer term impacts and outcomes of participation in the programme.
- In summary, the pilot programme has delivered some very promising results, at relatively modest cost.

Key outcomes

The majority of the young women have achieved learning and motivational outcomes (immediate and intermediate outcomes) that form the foundation of ultimate outcomes relating to increased leadership activity. These have included:

- increased self confidence, self belief and self esteem to set and pursue goals
• improved self understanding and self awareness
• greater clarity in relation to personal and professional goals
• improved organisational and communication skills
• increased knowledge and awareness of community networks and how to access them
• a new-found awareness of their communities and the talent and opportunities that exist
• greater clarity in relation to specific ways in which they might make a community contribution
• enhanced social support networks.

Several young women have already taken the next steps towards the ultimate programme goal and engaged in leadership and community-based activities that they were not involved with prior to the programme. For example, individual young women have:

• been successful in gaining a position on an Area Consultative Committee (ACC) Board
• taken steps to start their own business
• taken steps to run for local government
• organised a community event
• started a mentoring programme for school children.

There were also valuable outcomes for the female mentors – many of whom developed a greater sense of self-awareness, acquired new skills, and enhanced their own personal and professional networks as a result of being involved in the YWLMP.

Meanwhile, auspicing agencies and the pilot communities have enhanced community capacity as a result of hosting these pilots.

Considerations for future programme design and implementation

As would be expected, there was some diversity across the pilots in terms of their approach, content, quality and implementation. Each pilot had its strengths and potential drawbacks, but critically, each had the flexibility to develop a model to suit the target group, location and context.

Nevertheless, there is room for further strengthening some of the components of the model for any future programme.

• Training
  – better catering for the diverse range of young women with widely varying educational, professional and employment experience
  – a more interactive and participatory approach to training
  – additional training for mentors

• Mentoring relationships
  – greater clarification in relation to the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees
  – recognition that mentoring is a skill and provision of more support to mentors
  – developing mentoring strategies to account for limited face-to-face contact in rural and regional Australia

• Networking
  – a more structured approach to networking
  – more networking opportunities

• Integration
  – greater integration of the three programme components and strongly connecting these components to an underlying conceptual model.
The report concludes with a set of 21 recommended principles to inform the development of any future programme, under the following headings:

- Sound programme planning and design
- Sound governance and organisational support
- Strong community focus
- Supporting and valuing mentors and mentees
- Flexibility and accessibility
- Outcomes focused.
Part A: Overall Evaluation of the Programme
1 Overall Evaluation of the Programme

1.1 Introduction

The Office for Women (OfW) within the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) commissioned Urbis to undertake an evaluation and longitudinal study of the Young Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Programme (YWLMP). The YWLMP has been piloted in three regional locations: the Wheatbelt (Western Australia (WA)), Wide Bay Burnett (Queensland) and Gippsland (Victoria).

This report presents the findings on the evaluation component of the study, as well as the preliminary findings from the first stage of the longitudinal study.

1.1.1 Background and aims of the YWLMP

The YWLMP is one of a number of measures introduced by the Federal Government to support women in leadership positions across various industries and locations in Australia and the Pacific region, such as the Women’s National Leadership Initiative.

The objectives of the YWLMP are as follows:

- to provide role model and mentoring opportunities to inspire, motivate and educate young women in rural and remote areas to increase their involvement in leadership roles within the community; and
- to trial the programme in a community setting to determine any modifications for future programmes.

The anticipated outcomes of the YWLMP are to:

- develop the general and leadership capacity of young women to undertake leadership roles
- increase the governance and goal setting skills of the young women
- increase participation of young women in decision making positions, including local government and non-government organisations, community boards, local industries and business
- increase confidence, skills and knowledge of young women to participate in a leadership capacity in their communities
- increase the mentoring and coaching skills of the mentors
- foster networking opportunities for the young women.

1.1.2 Aim of the evaluation

There are two components to the study: an evaluation of the programme, and a longitudinal study of the YWLMP participants. For the evaluation component, Urbis was required to:

- assess the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the three community leadership pilot projects
- assess the programme against the outcomes for the determinants of a successful leadership programme
- propose a conceptual model for a structured, formal programme for young women in rural and regional locations
- undertake a literature review
- develop a programme logic.
1.1.3 Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation consisted of a literature review; development of an Evaluation Plan and programme logic (Appendix B); and consultations with informants from three pilots. Consultations were conducted from August to October 2007, involving field visits (primarily in group discussions) and telephone interviews. A total of 48 mentees, 18 mentors, 7 pilot management/staff and 3 stakeholders were consulted across the programme.

1.1.4 This report

Part A of this report briefly describes each of the pilots and profiles their participants; provides an overview of the key achievements and outcomes of the programme; identifies critical success factors as well as some programme design and implementation issues; provides a set of recommended principles of a community based leadership and mentoring programme for women living in rural and regional areas; and identifies some key considerations rolling the pilots out as a national programme.

Part B of this report provides a more detailed discussion of the aims and methodology of the evaluation and longitudinal component of the study; the findings in relation to the three individual pilots; and the full findings of the survey (which constituted the first wave of the longitudinal study).

1.2 Brief description of the YWLMP and pilots

1.2.1 Key features and activities of the YWLMP

The YWLMP is a community leadership initiative for young women in regional and rural areas of Australia. One of the unique features of the programme is that it comprises three core components (rather than just focusing on one): training sessions in personal development and goal setting; mentoring, the matching of each mentee with a female mentor; and networking, the linking of mentees into various networks via their mentor and other mechanisms.

1.2.2 Location and auspice organisation

The YWLMP has been piloted in three regional/rural locations around Australia. There were significant variations in both the nature of the locations and the auspice organisations – this was a deliberate decision by OfW to test out the programme in a range of different circumstances.

- **Gippsland, Victoria.** The pilot was auspiced by Baw Baw Shire Council.
- **Wide Bay Burnett, Queensland.** The pilot was auspiced by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC).
- **The Wheatbelt region of WA.** The pilot was auspiced by the Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee (ACC), which is funded through the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS).

1.2.3 Timeline and funding

All three of the pilots commenced operation in February/March 2007. All three finished on 31 October 2007. Each of the pilots were therefore in operation for some seven to eight months.

Each of the pilots received between $120,000 and $125,730 (plus GST) in funding from OfW.

1.3 Profile of participants

Both mentees and mentors were highly diverse in terms of their age and professional and educational backgrounds. This was true both within and across each of the pilots. The ages of mentees ranged from 17 to 51 years of age with most aged between 25 to 35. The professional and educational backgrounds of the mentees were similarly varied and included school leavers, university students, small business owners and operators, women working in rural industries (including operating family farms), school
teachers, university lecturers, lawyers, people working in natural resource management and administrators.

A total of 122 young women were recruited into the programme. This included 93 young women participated as mentees in the full programme (an additional 29 mentees were engaged for a component of the Wide Bay Burnett region pilot).

A total of 100 women participated in the programme as mentors. Mentors were as varied and diverse as mentees in age, educational and professional background. Mentors ranged in age from 33 to 64 years. They included company directors, rural counsellors, alternative health professionals, community development workers, school principals and teachers, journalists, consultants, bankers and finance professionals, tourism operators, police, women working in marketing and communications, small business owners and operators (including operating family farms), local councillors, lawyers and agricultural scientists.

1.4 Key Achievements

1.4.1 Meeting of requirements and specified outcomes of the programme

Pilot requirements

Overall, the programme has been successfully implemented across the three pilot locations, although there has been some variation across each of the pilots, which is to be expected. This is a considerable achievement given the short time frame and the complications of delivering such a programme in regional and rural locations.

In relation to OfW’s requirements of the pilots under their contracts, each pilot:

- achieved a community focus
- arranged the provision of training, support, and acknowledgement of mentors
- arranged training for young women in the areas of personal development, governance and goal setting
- linked the young women with established and recognised pathways to leadership development
- provided for a major celebratory event at the end of the pilot.

Whilst none of the pilots met the requirement to establish and support mentoring relationships for 60-65 women (with most successfully recruiting around 30 mentees) in the consultants’ view the original target set by OfW was unrealistic given the timeframe and allocated budget. This conclusion is supported by the experience of the Western Sydney Women’s Leadership Programme – on which the YWLMP is based – which has recruited around 30 mentees in each round of the programme.

Anticipated programme outcomes

The evidence collected thus far in the evaluation has shown that the programme has been more effective in relation to some of the overarching anticipated outcomes than others, but this also reflects the stage at which the evaluation was conducted. The programme has been most effective to date in achieving the following outcomes:

- increasing confidence, skills and knowledge of young women to participate in a leadership capacity in their communities
- developing the general and leadership capacity of young women to undertake leadership roles
- increasing the governance and goal setting skills of the young women.

1 The Wide Bay Burnett pilot did involve a further 29 women in the programme through a second wave of recruitment, bringing it very close to the number required. However, this involvement was much more limited than the first cohort of mentees.
One of the stated objectives of the pilots was to increase the participation of young women in decision making positions, including local government and non government organisations, community boards, local industries and business.

Whilst the programme has had some impact in this regard, given the pilots have only just been completed, the longitudinal study will provide more evidence over time to assess the extent to which this is the case.

Overall, the programme has also had some impact in relation to the following outcomes:

- fostering networking opportunities for the young women
- increasing the mentoring and coaching skills of mentors.

### 1.4.2 Other key achievements of the pilots

The following key achievements reflect some of the consistent themes across each of the pilots.

#### Retention of mentees and mentors

A key achievement is that the majority of mentees and mentors who were accepted into the programme remained in it for its duration, with only a small number withdrawing.

#### An effective approach

The three pronged model of combining mentoring, training and networking into one programme has been extremely well received by all participants, stakeholders, and pilot management and staff. It has proved integral to some of the positive outcomes achieved by each of these components, reinforcing and complementing each other.

#### Well received by participants

The programme has, on the whole, been well received by participants and well regarded by mentors and mentees. Some 80% of mentees surveyed rated their overall experience of the programme as good or excellent. The majority of mentors interviewed considered the programme to be effective across most areas. The key areas viewed as effective by a large proportion of mentees were meeting other young women (91%, with 57% very effective), building their networks (85%), and increasing their self confidence (80%).

#### Delivered outcomes and impacts

The pilots have, in a short time frame, already led to some discernible outcomes for some young women. There have also been concrete outcomes not only for mentees, but auspicing organisations and the wider community.

#### Significant learning and motivational outcomes

Young women have been given the opportunity to focus on identifying and taking steps to achieve personal and professional goals in a supportive environment.

#### Significant leadership activity based outcomes

Young women are now engaged in a range of activities as a result of participating in the programme.

#### Sustainable outcomes

The evidence collected thus far in this evaluation would indicate that there is potential for considerable sustainable outcomes, but this can only be tested over time as part of the longitudinal study.

### 1.5 Key outcomes

The pilots have demonstrated that a programme of this nature has the potential to have a significant impact on young women living in rural and regional communities. As well as having some notable tangible impacts and outcomes for individuals and their communities, these pilots provided valuable lessons about the challenges associated with designing a quality mentoring and leadership programme in a community and regional/rural setting.
Figure 1 provides an overview of the range of outcomes the programme has achieved to date against a hierarchy of outcomes model. It shows that in addition to being successfully implemented and delivered, the programme has resulted in increased knowledge, skills and awareness for mentees and mentors, as well as having an impact on community capacity and the level of participation by mentees in their communities.

Figure 1 – Overview of Outcomes

1.5.1 Mentees
This programme has had a clear impact for mentees in a range of ways. Overall, there are two key categories of outcomes:

- learning and motivational outcomes
- leadership activity based outcomes.

**Learning and motivational outcomes**
Learning and motivational outcomes have been critical in laying the foundations for mentees to pursue leadership opportunities in the future.

**Increased self confidence, self belief and self esteem**

Many mentees indicated that a major barrier preventing them from working toward their personal and professional goals is not having goals to pursue (37%) and not having a clear path to pursue goals (42%).

Improved self confidence has enabled mentees to make decisions they would not have been able to make previously, including the identification and pursuit of personal and professional goals:
Compared to reported views in January 2007, the proportion of women who reported that they are clear about the goals they wish to pursue rose from 25% to 63%, feeling motivated to pursue their goals from 45% to 94%, and believing they have the ability to pursue their goals from 52% to 94%.

Similarly, there were notable increases in the scores (out of 10) mentees gave themselves in a range of areas compared with January 2007. This was particularly the case for skills relating to setting and acting on goals, increasing from five to eight and five to seven out of 10 respectively.

**Improved self understanding and self awareness** was another commonly reported outcome, as observed by one mentee:

> I have developed a sense of awareness and self observation through every part of the pilot including discussions with my mentor and outside of the pilot in my workplace.

Mentees have developed a **new found awareness of their communities**, as illustrated in the following quote:

> The pilot has expanded my awareness of Gippsland and the more it expands, the more I realise there is so much more to learn and so many ways we can improve our community for all of us.

Mentees have also built their understanding of community issues with the proportion of mentees who reported that they have a clear sense of the issues affecting their community increasing from 51% (in January 2007) to 71%. In addition, the peer mentoring that occurred through the training has helped mentees build a new awareness of the talent and capabilities that exist in their region. As observed by one mentee, ‘it has opened my eyes to the number of talented women in rural areas’.

Mentees have **developed critical skills, knowledge and awareness**, positioning them well to pursue leadership related goals:

- Three-quarters of mentees (75%) have found the programme to be effective in developing new skills including organisational and communication skills.
- The programme has also developed the networking skills of mentees, with 73% reporting increased knowledge and awareness of the value of networks and the role they play in being an effective leader.

Young women have **gained clarity in relation to the personal and professional paths** they wish to pursue and the specific ways in which they might make a community contribution. The programme has provided many mentees with the appropriate time and space where they could focus on themselves and pursue long held goals – this in itself was a major outcome. For example, one young woman was able to complete her University degree whilst participating in the pilot because it gave her a sense of validation about dedicating time to herself and her goals.

Mentees have **enhanced their social support networks**. For many mentees, the programme was a rare opportunity to come out of their often isolated rural communities and meet other women who may be experiencing similar issues and challenges. The most significant impact for some mentors was meeting other women and taking advantage of opportunities for informal interaction which has resulted in new networks and friendships that are likely to continue. For close to 70% of mentees, the programme has been effective in expanding their network of resources and people to help them pursue their goals.

**Leadership activity based outcomes**

Mentees are also engaged in leadership and community based activities that they were not previously involved with prior to the programme.

One of the more notable examples of this kind of outcome included one mentee being successful in gaining a position on an ACC Board. In addition, individual mentees have taken steps to start their own business and run for local government. Others have organised and facilitated a community event for the first time, started a mentoring programme for school children and enrolled in a university degree. One mentee expanded the delivery of a community based employment programme to a new region, aided by access to important networks through her mentor. This has had further impacts professionally for the
mentee: she received a promotion as she was able to demonstrate commitment through achieving her goal. A further mentee completed a traineeship whilst in the pilot, whilst another completed her Certificate 4 diploma to be a trainer and assessor.

Mentees were surveyed in relation to their current and previous levels of community and leadership activity. There were notable increases in current rates of activity, compared to reported activity prior to the programme in relation to the following:

- volunteer at events/activities (from 57% to 76%)
- help organise an event/activity (from 49% to 59%)
- attend forums and conferences (from 63% to 71%)
- become involved in a local community group/event (from 63% to 71%).

Some two thirds of mentees surveyed (64%) said the programme has been influential in their being involved in such activities for the first time.

1.5.2 Mentors

Mentors have also experienced a range of positive outcomes through the programme.

Mentors have benefited from the experience of making a positive contribution to the growth and development of a young woman and being able to observe this growth process. This experience has been extremely rewarding for some:

> It was lovely to get to know my mentee and that she trusts me enough to tell me what she is scared of and what she thinks her weaknesses are. It is rewarding knowing that I have been able to help her.

Similar to the experience of some mentees, mentors have also acquired new skills and enhanced their own personal and professional networks by participating in the programme. Mentors have gained self confidence through being recognised and respected by others for having a valued skill set.

The process of being a mentor has also made some women more self aware. As one mentor commented:

> It has been worthwhile and a personal challenge. I now have an understanding of my weaknesses. It has given me new insights into myself and others.

Similarly, some have also noticed a change in themselves as a result of the process. As another mentor commented: ‘Being responsible as a mentor is a growth process. I have noticed a change in myself.’

1.5.3 Auspicing organisation

Organisations responsible for delivering the pilots have also benefited from they programme.

The programme has enhanced the connection auspicing organisations have with their communities and provided a valuable opportunity to develop the organisation’s awareness of the range of young women in the region and the potential opportunities that are available to these women.

Auspicing organisations have also benefited from the experience in implementing programmes of this nature which positions them well to conduct similar initiatives in the future.

1.5.4 Community

There have been important social capital outcomes for this programme. One of the most significant reported outcomes for the wider community is enhanced community capacity resulting from:

- having a group of women return to the community after participating in the pilot who are more motivated, confident and inspired, as expressed by one mentor:
People will go back into their communities after reaching significant achievements. They will mentor and encourage others.

- broadened community networks through young women networking with other young women outside of their immediate community
- women pursuing their personal and professional goals to benefit others in the community
- greater interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

1.6 Key limitations of the pilots

1.6.1 Limited timeframe

There was a widespread view that the programme was too short. The experience of all three pilots has shown how time constraints can affect the quality of the process, impacts and outcomes of the programme. A limited lead in time presented challenges for the recruitment, selection and matching of mentees and mentors. It also put pressure on Coordinators to develop a training programme with limited time to assess the specific needs and wants of mentees and source appropriate speakers, presenters and trainers (a particular challenge in a regional/rural area). Sufficient time is also required to establish the mentoring relationship and for it to grow. Additional time might also have allowed for auspicing organisations to have greater clarity around the overall drive, vision or rationale that would underpin the approach adopted.

Based on the experience of the pilots, it is recommended that a more reasonable timeframe for a programme of this nature would be 12 months.

1.6.2 Funding

Significantly fewer mentees and mentors were recruited than expected (or indeed as required in the OfW contract). However the evaluators are of the view that the original targets were too ambitious. The numbers achieved were fairly realistic given the timeframe and resources. It is highly unlikely that with the same budget, a programme could have been implemented for 60-65 women that was of the standard delivered across these three pilots to the 30 or so women.

Although not a major limitation, funding did in some cases have an impact on certain aspects of the programme, including the accessibility of childcare and the choice of speakers and trainers available for the training component. For future programmes, the inclusion of a subsidy that acknowledges the costs associated with delivering a programme in a region with low population density and a large geographical area is one recommended strategy that might mitigate some of these negative impacts.

1.6.3 Access and delivery issues

There were some factors specific to a rural and regional context that have presented particular challenges to the delivery of this programme. Travelling significant distances to participate in the training has not only presented challenges to mentees to participate in the programme, but also had an impact on the delivery of key components in terms of the choice of venues, trainers and facilitators available to the pilots.

1.7 Critical success factors

1.7.1 Pilots well managed, delivered and supported

Overall, the pilots were well managed and delivered, with Coordinators demonstrating significant commitment and enthusiasm. This has been pivotal to the programme’s achievements to date. The Coordinators who were appointed had a range of skills and capacities that played an important part in the successful implementation of the pilots. It is also clear that they were passionate about the pilots and for them to succeed. Coordinators achieved efficiencies in the organisation of a training programme with very little preparation time, maintained communication networks, and supported and monitored
mentees and mentors. Coordinators also drew heavily on their personal contacts and networks to source guest speakers and trainers (often at reduced rates), as well as taking on a mentor role in the pilot.

In addition to the passion and commitment demonstrated by Coordinators, the pilots received a high level of support from the auspicing organisations. This provided essential support for Coordinators in their role and the overall efficient implementation of the pilot.

1.7.2 Flexibility in approach

Although each of the pilots worked within a framework provided by OfW, all had a degree of flexibility that enabled them to tailor the pilot to the community context and the needs of participants.

1.7.3 The size of the pilot regions

Although travelling long distances has proved to be a challenge, there has been significant benefit in delivering a programme of this nature to a relatively large region which goes well beyond the boundaries of local government areas. The size of the pilot regions has resulted in positive outcomes for mentees and the community. It has also meant that the networks for rural women have extended beyond their immediate communities. There are a broader range of stakeholders to draw support from and build linkages with, particularly across smaller communities. Often women are experiencing similar issues and challenges, and other communities can share knowledge or experience in overcoming these.

1.7.4 Community-based auspicing organisations

The experience of these three pilots has shown the value of enabling community-based organisations to develop and deliver appropriately targeted mentoring and leadership programmes and their capacity to understand and be responsive to local issues and needs.

All three of the auspicing organisations were well positioned to implement the pilots. Each had a broad regional basis with experience delivering community-based programmes and an existing organisational infrastructure that could support the Coordinator and the administrative and management aspects of the pilot.

In addition, these organisations were well connected to their regions, community networks and key stakeholders. This meant that the pilots were delivered in a context of established credibility and community linkages. This enhanced the efficiencies of the pilots in accessing networks to recruit mentors and mentees, engaging stakeholders to participate in the selection process, and securing stakeholder participation (where appropriate) in components of the pilots, such as training.

1.7.5 Three-pronged approach

This was an interconnected programme across three components: mentoring, training and networking. Although the degree to which these components were integrated did vary, this combination maximised the opportunities for young women to develop new skills and capabilities and build networks.

1.7.6 Opportunities for young women to come together

In a regional and rural context, having the opportunity to come together has proved to be a critical success factor. It enabled peer mentoring – a strong feature across all of the pilots, mainly arising from young women meeting up with each other during the training sessions. Many women often found the informal interaction that occurred during breaks between sessions to be one of the most valuable experiences of the programme. Women in isolated situations do not often have the opportunity to meet people ‘out of their circle’.
1.7.7 Accessibility

It was critical that a conscious effort was made to make each of the pilots accessible as possible to the participants in terms of:

- venues and locations of the training (eg holding the training in three different locations in the one region)
- providing childcare
- reimbursing for the cost of fuel for travel (particularly given the higher cost of fuel in regional and rural areas)
- tailoring the content of the training to meet the particular wants and needs of participants (where possible).

1.8 Programme design and implementation issues

Across each of the pilots, some consistent themes emerged in relation to design and implementation. Overall, participants responded well to each of the components. However, some received more benefit out of individual components than others. Most (34%) mentees surveyed nominated the training as the most beneficial component of the programme, with 25% identifying mentoring and 18% the networking as the most beneficial. For 23% of the surveyed mentees, no one aspect stood out and they indicated that they found more than one component beneficial.

In terms of overall programme management and coordination, the majority of mentees believed the programme had been managed efficiently by the auspicing agencies (91%, including 62% very efficient).

1.8.1 Diversity of participants

This evaluation has found that the diversity of participants had both its advantages and disadvantages to the overall quality, appropriateness and effectiveness of the programme. The reported benefits of having a group of young women from diverse backgrounds, age groups, educational attainment and professional experience included:

- expanding mentees’ sense of community through meeting women outside of their immediate community
- providing quality networking opportunities to discuss issues affecting mentee’s respective communities and show care and support to others experiencing challenges
- support and encouragement provided to young women who lacked confidence to participate in the training.

Nonetheless, the diversity also presented some challenges, including:

- designing a training package that would meet the varied expectations, backgrounds and educational levels of all participants
- matching mentees with mentors who would be able to provide guidance and support relevant to their goals and needs.

1.8.2 Overarching approach

There was considerable variation in the extent to which individual pilots articulated a theoretical underpinning to implementation which, in turn, informed the approach to each of the components of the programme, in particular the mentoring relationship and the mode and content of the training.
It has become evident in this evaluation that a clearly articulated and documented approach is pivotal to a programme that:

- is integrated – each component is interlinked, complements each other and is informed by a theoretical approach
- is sustainable into the future and does not rely solely on the skills, experience and personal connections of the individual Coordinators
- provides clear guidance and support to participants, thereby increasing the likelihood of retaining mentors and mentees
- has clearly defined processes and protocols for the auspicing organisation.

1.8.3 The role of the Coordinator

As noted in 1.7.1, Coordinators have played a critical role in the successful delivery of the programme. Their existing knowledge of and connection with the community was particularly important in terms of the timely recruitment and selection of mentees and mentors. In some cases, Coordinators went well above and beyond what was expected of them in their role, driven by passion for and commitment to their communities.

The evaluation has found that Coordinators were required to perform a wide variety of tasks including being responsible for:

- administrative aspects of the programme (venue hire, catering and accommodation)
- the recruitment, selection and matching of mentors and mentees
- developing the training package and sourcing trainers and facilitators
- in some cases, delivery of the training
- supporting mentor-mentee relationships
- responding to and managing emerging issues relating to mentor-mentee relationships
- preparing reports to be submitted to OfW
- working with Urbis to facilitate involvement of mentees, mentors and staff in this evaluation.

Coordinators were therefore required to have a range of skills in order to perform in their role. These skills included:

- communication and organisation skills
- existing knowledge of and access to community networks, particularly those relating to women and leadership
- the ability to monitor and supervise mentor-mentee relationships, including upholding the privacy of mentees and mentors
- experience in working in community based programmes.

1.8.4 Mentoring

A range of strategies were used to recruit and match mentees and mentors across the pilots. Most used a multi-pronged approach to recruitment ranging from using print media and radio though to the utilisation of personal networks and contacts. For matching, some pilots focused primarily on the goals of the mentees and identifying the match that would best enable the pursuit of these goals. Other approaches were based on personal qualities, compatibility and matching according to the professional sectors participants were working in.
On the whole, participants were pleased with their match. There were only a small number of instances where the match was not considered a complete success, and the mentoring relationships did not flourish in the way that was hoped. The key reasons for this included:

- the distance required to travel to meet face-to-face
- lack of clarity around respective roles and responsibilities
- mentors and mentees being time poor due to work and family commitments
- some mentees not seeing the need or value of having a mentor relative to the other components of the programme
- some mentors not feeling that they had adequate skills or strategies to fulfil their mentoring responsibilities
- perceived mismatches in terms of age, professional background and life experience
- lack of a structured process for the mentoring relationship to develop.

1.8.5 Training

Approaches to the training also varied across each of the pilots. Overall the majority of mentees surveyed (64%) considered the training to be beneficial. All covered the core elements as required by OfW in the areas of personal development, governance and goal setting.

There were a range of approaches to the training across the pilots in terms of style, delivery, format, content, the level of participation of mentees, location and times. The range of styles and approaches to the delivery and content of the training programmes led to varying degrees of interconnectedness across components of the training.

The evaluation found that across the programme, a critical issue that has impacted on the appropriateness, effectiveness and quality of the training component is the diverse range of young women and their considerably varied personal and professional needs and overall expectations of what the training should deliver. There were a number of mentees who expressed dissatisfaction with the training, citing the following reasons:

- many had ‘done it before’, the content was not new
- the delivery style did not lend itself to mentee participation
- the training was too content focused and did not incorporate adequate time for networking
- in some cases, the quality of the trainer was not perceived to be optimal
- the content was not relevant to the goals of the mentee.

This response to the training reflects a range of factors:

- choices about whether the training was sourced from within the auspicing organisation or externally
- making judgment calls about the skills and capacity of internal trainers
- the range of expectations of mentees of what would be delivered
- the attitude of some employers who were generally unsupportive and reluctant to allow mentees to attend training
- the considerable sacrifices some women had to make to participate drove their high expectations of what the training should have delivered.

All pilots included some element of training for mentors which occurred at the outset of the pilots as well as providing written material (including information about roles and responsibilities). Again, the nature of the written material varied across the pilots.
There was a general view across the programme that there was a need for additional preparation and training for mentors. Mentors expressed a desire to develop skills in how to be a good mentor and the types of strategies they might use in their mentoring relationship.

1.8.6 Networking

Although the evaluation has found the networking component to be less formalised and structured compared to mentoring and training, overall participants responded very well to the networking opportunities that were provided. The majority of mentees surveyed (77%) considered this component to be beneficial.

The lack of structure of the networking component was evident both in the original brief from OfW and each of the models across the pilots. Although a lot of networking did occur, there was no explicit framework for these activities with a significant amount of informal interaction generally referred to as ‘networking’.

Some examples of networking opportunities valued by mentees included the Coordinator using their own networks and the auspicing organisation’s networks to provide additional information and referrals to mentees to assist them to reach their goals, and mentors providing mentees with specific contacts or access to relevant networks.

Across the board, mentees expressed a desire for additional networking opportunities, with some specifically requesting more structure and better integration of networking skills into the content of the training.

1.9 Recommended principles of a community-based leadership and mentoring programme for women living in rural and regional areas

The following recommended principles are informed by the findings of this evaluation (in particular the critical success factors in Section 1.7) and the findings of other significant relevant studies including At the Table: Getting the Best People and Making the Right Decisions for Regional and Rural Australia (DOTARS 2006) and the National Youth Mentoring Benchmarks developed by the Youth Mentoring Network (2007).

Sound programme planning and design

1. **Having a philosophy that underpins all aspects of the programme**

   A conceptual framework or theoretical approach needs to be articulated at the outset to provide the foundation for all programme components and activities. This is critical to ensuring that all individual components and activities complement each other and are supported by an overarching rationale.

2. **Evidence based planning and design**

   Programme design should be informed by a needs analysis of young women in the community and an understanding of the target population in terms of their learning and development needs with clearly defined parameters. An understanding of any existing relevant leadership or mentoring programmes in the region is also critical to avoid duplication.

3. **Integrated ‘three-pronged’ approach**

   The programme should include mentoring, training and networking components which are interlinked and designed to complement each other.

4. **Evaluation**

   Evaluation should be planned for at the outset of the programme and respect the privacy and confidentiality of participants.
5. **Realistic time frame**
   The programme timeframe should allow for a quality programme design, through selection and recruitment processes, development of a training programme, establishing systems and processes, and allowing for the mentoring relationship to form and flourish.

**Sound governance and organisational support**

6. **Sound management structures**
   Management structures and systems need to be in place to ensure that there is good communication, support for mentors and mentees, and a capacity to respond to participant feedback (ie continuous improvement).

7. **Skilled coordinator**
   Programme coordinators need to have appropriate skills and experience in the delivery of mentoring and/or community based leadership programmes, as well as an understanding of community networks and the ability to access these networks.

8. **High level programme support**
   Individual Coordinators need to operate within a supportive management structure and have access to wider organisational expertise and infrastructure.

**Strong community focus**

9. **Programme is implemented by a community based organisation**
   Community based organisations experienced in delivering community based programmes should be responsible for implementing the programme.

10. **Build on existing organisational community capacity and infrastructure**
    Programme implementation should capitalise on relevant knowledge, expertise, experience, systems and processes that exist within the auspicing organisation and within the wider community.

11. **Focus on broadening young women’s ‘community of interest’**
    The programme should be delivered in a large region to enable young women to interact with and learn from other young women who live outside their immediate community.

12. **Engage stakeholders and the wider community**
    The programme should seek to engage the wider community and key relevant stakeholders from the outset in the interests of sustaining outcomes, attracting a range of participants, and sourcing practical support in terms of resources, speakers and trainers.

**Supporting and valuing mentors and mentees**

13. **Bring mentors and mentees together**
    Mentors and mentees coming together on a semi-regular basis should be a central feature of the programme to enable interaction, networking and peer support.

14. **Provide quality and appropriate training for mentors and mentees**
    The programme should design and deliver a training programme that is equally focused around the needs of mentors and mentees.

15. **Recognise mentoring as a skill**
    The programme should provide for the training and development needs of mentors and not assume that mentoring is a natural quality of successful women in the community.
16. **Recognise the value of peer mentoring**
   
   The programme design should include a formalised component that enables mentees to mentor each other in addition to having a ‘wiser’ mentor.

**Flexibility and accessibility**

17. **Embrace a diverse range of young women and caters for a range of needs**
   
   Programme design and implementation should be able to cater for a range of age groups, professional and educational backgrounds and life stages.

18. **Flexibility**
   
   Flexibility by both OfW and the auspicing bodies is required to deliver a training and mentoring programme that is appropriate and tailored to the needs of the community.

19. **Provide real solutions to accessibility issues**
   
   Programme design should include specific strategies to enable women to overcome structural barriers so that they can participate in the programme.

**Outcomes focused**

20. **Learning and motivational outcomes focus**
   
   The programme should cater for women who want to develop critical foundation skills (eg self confidence and self efficacy) that will position them well to identify and pursue possible leadership opportunities in the future.

21. **Leadership activity outcomes focus**
   
   The programme should cater for women who have already acquired critical foundation skills and are ready to pursue leadership opportunities.

1.10 **Key considerations in rolling this out as a national programme**

The above principles are recommended to form the basis of future community based leadership and mentoring programmes for young women living in rural and regional Australia. If the YWLMP was to be rolled out at a national level, we also recommend that the following key factors be considered in addition to the principles outlined above:

- There should be sufficient flexibility in the programme guidelines so that auspicing organisations can be flexible in responding to the community context in which they operate as well as meeting the specific needs of individual participants.
- Reporting standards should be developed to provide consistent monitoring and evaluation data in relation to participant profiles and outcomes.
- Programme funding applications should require potential auspicing organisations to provide an overall approach and rational to guide their programme.
- Possible approaches to developing national training modules or training resources for mentors and mentees (or sourcing them from elsewhere) should be considered.
- Funds should be made available to allow the projects the flexibility to provide additional training or, where appropriate, purchase training from another provider.
- Programme funding guidelines should include an access and equity principle in recognition of the travel, accommodation and childcare costs associated with sustaining participation in large geographic areas with remote populations. The inclusion of a subsidy that acknowledges the costs associated with delivering a programme in a region with low population density and a large geographical area is one recommended strategy that could address access and equity issues.
In identifying suitable auspicing organisations to deliver the programme, a prerequisite could be that the organisation has a demonstrated connection with the wider community and experience in the implementation of community based and/or leadership programmes.

For auspicing organisations, greater articulation should be provided in relation to how the three components (mentoring, training and networking) should be integrated and what this means for programme design and implementation.
Part B: Individual Pilot Evaluations
2 Introduction

The Office for Women (OfW) within the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) commissioned Urbis to undertake an evaluation and longitudinal study on the Young Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Programme (YWLMP). The YWLMP has been piloted in three regional locations: the Wheatbelt (Western Australia (WA)), Wide Bay Burnett (Queensland) and Gippsland (Victoria).

This report presents the findings on the evaluation component of the study, as well as the preliminary findings from the first stage of the longitudinal study.

2.1.1 Background and aims of the YWLMP

The YWLMP is one of a number of measures introduced by the Federal Government to support women in leadership positions across various industries and locations in Australia and the Pacific region, such as the Women’s National Leadership Initiative.

The YWLMP and other leadership initiatives for women respond to the findings of a number of key reports over the last 10 years, such as that:

- Women are significantly under-represented in key leadership bodies (Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) 2005) and positions (Elix & Lambert 1998) in regional and rural areas.

- Apart from the intrinsic value of ensuring greater participation of women in public life and community decision-making, industries that are open to diversity in their management and staff are better placed to perform efficiently (DOTARS 2006). They also have a broader set of economic options and are therefore more resilient, economically and socially (Houghton & Strong 2004).

- There are significant barriers to women’s participation in leadership positions within rural industries and communities, such as the assumption that women’s decision-making is fundamentally different or inferior to men’s, family commitments, and a lack of training opportunities available for women (Claridge 1998, p187-190).

- There are some recognised good practice standards which can provide guidance in implementing initiatives such as the YWLMP, in particular the mentoring component. For example National Youth Mentoring Benchmarks have been developed by the Youth Mentoring Network (2007).

The anticipated outcomes of the YWLMP are to:

- develop the general and leadership capacity of young women to undertake leadership roles
- increase the governance and goal setting skills of the young women
- increase participation of young women in decision making positions, including local government and non-government organisations, community boards, local industries and business
- increase confidence, skills and knowledge of young women to participate in a leadership capacity in their communities
- increase the mentoring and coaching skills of the mentors
- foster networking opportunities for the young women.

2.1.2 Aim of the evaluation

There are two components to the study: an evaluation of the programme, and a longitudinal study of the YWLMP participants.
In conducting the first component of the study – the evaluation – Urbis was required to:

- assess the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the three community leadership pilot projects
- assess the programme against the outcomes for the determinants of a successful leadership programme
- propose a conceptual model for a structured, formal programme for young women in rural and regional locations
- undertake a literature review
- develop a programme logic.

All three pilots were to be evaluated and direct feedback provided into the programme’s future design and model.

This report presents the findings on the evaluation component of the study.

The second component of the study is a three year longitudinal study of a group of the YWLMP participants to track their career and community participation pathways following their participation in the programme. This report includes preliminary analysis of the findings from the first stage of this longitudinal study.

2.1.3 Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation consisted of the following three components:

- A literature review of key Australian literature and a selection of overseas literature, primarily from 2002-2007. This tightly targeted review focused on:
  - briefly reviewing the policy context for the YWLMP
  - analysing evaluations of similar types of programmes to the YWLMP (leadership, mentoring and networking), particularly (but not exclusively) those for women and those in regional/rural areas.

The literature review informed the development of the programme logic, methodology and research instruments for the evaluation and longitudinal study. The literature review is provided at Appendix A.

- Development of an Evaluation Plan and programme logic, using the hierarchy of outcomes model. This is attached at Appendix B. The programme logic included evaluation questions and the information sources that were to be used to provide the evaluation data.

- Consultations with informants from the three pilots between August and October 2007. These consultations were conducted on field visits (primarily in group discussions) and via telephone interviews. The numbers consulted in each site were as follows:
  - Gippsland: three pilot management/staff, 17 mentees, 10 mentors and two stakeholders.
  - Wide Bay Burnett: two staff members, five mentees, three mentors and one stakeholder.
  - Wheatbelt: two pilot management/staff, 26 mentees and five mentors.

Question guides for interviews with project management and staff, mentors, mentees, and stakeholders were developed, and then approved by OfW.

Mentees signed consent forms to participate in both the evaluation and the longitudinal study early on in the evaluation.

The methodology for the longitudinal study involves collection of two types of data from mentees in four waves (September/October 2007, February/March 2008, September/October 2008 and September/October 2008):

- An online survey – this was sent to all 93 participants in the first wave, and a total of 45 women (48%) responded (16 for Gippsland, 10 for Wide Bay Burnett and 19 for the Wheatbelt).
Telephone interviews – five mentees were selected for an in-depth interview from each pilot following submission of the online survey responses.

The first of the four waves of data collection has been undertaken to date.

Issues for the evaluation

There were some key issues to be considered in designing the methodology for the project and the timing of key tasks:

- OfW required the report on the evaluation very soon after the completion of the pilots.
- Some pilots were delayed in commencing operation, but generally the evaluation started some two-thirds of the way through the implementation of the pilots.
- The evaluation was completed in a short time frame (of a few months) – this had some implications, such as needing to ask participants to ‘look back’ while they were still in the programme.

Nonetheless, the methodology produced a valuable range of data for the evaluation and first wave of the longitudinal study, which taken together provides a wide range of views on the YWLMP.

2.1.4 This report

This report is divided into two parts. Part A (the previous part) covers the following:

- a brief description of the pilots
- a profile of participants (mentees and mentors)
- key achievements of the pilots
- key outcomes for mentees, mentors, the auspicing organisations and the community
- critical success factors
- programme design and implementation issues
- recommended principles of a Community Based Leadership and Mentoring Programme for Women living in rural and regional areas
- key considerations in rolling the pilots out as a national programme.

Part B (this part) provides a more detailed discussion of the individual pilots, with a chapter on each pilot site. Chapter 3 discusses the Gippsland pilot, Chapter 4 the Wide Bay Burnett pilot, and Chapter 5 the Wheatbelt pilot. Each chapter addresses the following:

- background and context to the pilot
- structure and content of the pilot
- reported impacts and outcomes of the pilot
- assessment of pilot components
- programme management and administration
- pilot design
- suggestions for improvement.

Chapter 6 provides the preliminary results from round one of the longitudinal survey.
2.2 Brief description of the YWLMP and pilots

2.2.1 Key features and activities of the YWLMP

The YWLMP is a community leadership initiative for young women in regional and rural areas of Australia. The initiative has some unusual features:

- It comprises three core components, whereas many previous initiatives have focused on one element only:
  - Training: a series of group training sessions was conducted in relation to personal development, governance and goal setting.
  - Mentoring: each mentee was matched with a female mentor.
  - Networking: mentees were linked into various networks via their mentor and other mechanisms.

- It focuses on young women in regional and rural areas; again it has been rare for projects of this nature to target this specific group.

- It focuses on young women with leadership aspirations, whereas many previous mentoring projects (in particular) have focused on at risk young people.

- The aims of the programme include outcomes for mentors (increasing their mentoring and coaching skills). For many other mentoring programmes, outcomes for mentors are an incidental but not core aim.

The YWLMP model is largely based on the Western Sydney Women's Leadership Programme run by the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC).

2.2.2 Aims of the YWLMP

Under the pilots’ contracts with OfW, the objectives of the YWLMP were described as follows:

- to provide role model and mentoring opportunities to inspire, motivate and educate young women in rural and remote areas to increase their involvement in leadership roles within the community

- to trial the programme in a community setting to determine any modifications for future programmes.

The projects implemented by the pilots were required to:

- have a community focus rather than, for example, be solely based in a business, industry or educational setting

- establish and support mentoring relationships for 60-65 women young women aged between 18 and 35 years, with a high-achieving woman in their community

- arrange the provision of training, support and acknowledgement for mentors

- arrange training for the young women in the areas of personal development, governance and goal setting

- link the young women with established and recognised pathways to leadership development

- provide for a major celebratory event at the end of the pilot

- contribute to and facilitate the involvement of the participants (mentors and mentees) in an independent evaluation study to be conducted by OfW

- provide a progress report, final activity report and an audited Final Acquittal Report to OfW during the implementation of the programme.
2.2.3 Location and auspice organisation

The YWLMP has been piloted in three regional/rural locations around Australia. There were significant variations in both the nature of the locations and the auspice organisations – this was a deliberate decision by OfW to test out the pilot in a range of different circumstances. The pilot locations and auspicing organisations were as follows:

- **Gippsland, Victoria.** Gippsland is a regional area in south-east Victoria, a couple of hours out of Melbourne. It covers an area of 41,434 square kilometres. The pilot was auspiced by Baw Baw Shire Council (through its Community Development Directorate), which has provided a range of services in the Gippsland area.

- **Wide Bay Burnett, Queensland.** The Wide Bay Burnett region extends from the northern edge of the Sunshine Coast to the coastal haven of Agnes Waters, and inland to the orchards and grazing areas of the Burnett. The area includes a mix of regional and rural locations. The pilot was auspiced by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), a statutory corporation which manages and funds priority research for industry development. A key activity undertaken by RIRDC is the RIRDC Rural Women’s Award.

- **The Wheatbelt region of WA.** This region covers a considerable geographical area (over 154,000 square kilometres) which is twice the size of Tasmania. The region has a population of some 70,000, and most of the region is a considerable distance from Perth. There are no major cities in the Wheatbelt region; the largest town, Northam, has a population of less than 10,000 (including the surrounding area). The region has a strong agricultural focus. The pilot was auspiced by the Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee (ACC), which is funded through DOTARS. The ACC is managed by a committee which includes business leaders and representatives from key economic development and community organisations from the region.

All three of the pilots employed either a full- or part-time Coordinator to run the programme.

2.2.4 Funding

The pilots were funded as follows by OfW:

- $120,000 (plus GST) for the Gippsland pilot
- $120,000 (plus GST) for the Wide Bay Burnett
- $125,740 (plus GST) for the Wheatbelt pilot.

2.2.5 Timeline for implementation

All three of the pilots commenced operation in February/March 2007. All three finished on 31 October 2007. Each of the pilots were therefore in operation for some seven to eight months.

2.3 Profile of participants

Both mentees and mentors were highly diverse in terms of their age and professional and educational backgrounds. This was true both within and across each of the pilots. The ages of mentees ranged from 17 to 51 years of age with most aged between 25 to 35. The professional and educational backgrounds of the young women were similarly varied including school leavers, university students, small business owners and operators, women working in rural industries (including operating family farms), school teachers, university lecturers, lawyers, people working in natural resource management and administrators.

A total of 122 young women were recruited into the programme. This included 93 young women who participated as mentees in the full programme (an additional 29 mentees were engaged for a component of the Wide Bay Burnett region pilot).

The majority of women had multiple motivations for becoming involved in the programme. The main reasons included a desire to:
- develop new skills
- build networks and meet other young women
- build self confidence
- gain clarity in relation to their career path
- have a female role model who could provide advice, support and guidance
- identify ways to contribute to the community.

Some young women did not have any particular motivations or expectations, but generally thought that the programme was a ‘good idea’.

In terms of the relative importance of different factors in deciding to sign up to the programme (as reported in the first wave of the longitudinal study), 95% said that ‘developing new skills’ was important, followed by ‘building my networks’ (91%), ‘meeting other young women’ (85%), ‘learning about how I can make a contribution to my community’ (84%), ‘increasing my self confidence’ (82%), ‘having a female role model’ (73%), and ‘getting ahead in my career’ (70%).

A total of 100 women participated in the programme as mentors. Mentors were as varied and diverse as mentees in age, educational and professional background. Mentors ranged in age from 33 to 64 years. They included company directors, rural counsellors, alternative health professionals, community development workers, school principals and teachers, journalists, consultants, bankers and finance professionals, tourism operators, police, women working in marketing and communications, small business owners and operators (including operating family farms), local councillors, lawyers and agricultural scientists.

For mentors, participating in the pilot was an opportunity to:
- connect with the region and younger women in the community
- use their skills and expertise to benefit young women
- develop their own mentoring skills
- extend the work they were already doing in the community
- build community capacity in the interests of the future sustainability of the region
- develop a better understanding of the range of skills and expertise that existed in their region.
3 Gippsland Pilot, Victoria

This chapter discusses the Gippsland Pilot in Victoria.

3.1 Data sources

The following pilot participants and stakeholders were consulted as part of the evaluation:

- three pilot staff
- 17 mentees
- 10 mentors
- two stakeholders.

3.2 Background and context to the pilot

3.2.1 Auspicing organisation

The Gippsland Pilot was auspiced by Baw Baw Shire Council. The Gippsland region is located in the South East of Victoria and covers a geographical area of 41,434 square kilometres, encompassing six local government municipalities. Baw Baw Shire Council has previously been involved in delivering programmes in the Gippsland region which extends well beyond the boundaries of its local government area. Project management for the pilot was located in the Community Development Directorate of Council. A pilot Coordinator was appointed on a nine month contract in February 2007.

3.2.2 Overview of mentors and mentees

**Mentees**

A total of 43 young women submitted applications to participate in the Gippsland pilot as mentees. Following interviews and a number of withdrawals, 33 young women commenced the programme.

Over the course of the pilot, five young women withdrew from the programme, with 28 completing the pilot.

The mentees ranged in age from 18 years to 34 years of age, with the majority of mentees (84%) being between the ages of 25 and 34.

The Gippsland pilot mentees identified a range of reasons for becoming involved in the pilot. These commonly included:

- an opportunity to develop new skills
- an opportunity to build networks and meet new people (especially among those women new to the area)
- a desire to find a 'role model' who could provide advice, support and guidance
- a way of gaining greater clarity in relation to their chosen career: a number of women had very specific objectives relating to furthering their career eg wanting to have a business established and operating by the end of the pilot
- an opportunity to pursue particular personal or professional goals in a more focused and structured way than they had been able to in the past
- a mechanism, for a smaller number of women, to identify specific ways of contributing to the community.
The following comments from mentees illustrate some of these motivations further:

I applied because I was looking for something that might help me gain a clearer direction in terms of my career. I was expecting to expand my professional networks and develop my skills.

I wanted to meet someone who worked in a male dominated industry, like I did, and learn how to handle that.

I’ve never had a mentor up until now – I am in my first job straight out of uni – I was just really interested in the mentoring aspect.

It was an opportunity to learn some leadership skills. Although I’m not in a leadership role at the moment – I wanted more knowledge about that.

One young woman who worked for a rural industry organisation said she wanted to learn more about mentoring so she could set up a mentoring programme at work.

Several women did not have clear motivations or expectations of the pilot, but generally felt that it was a ‘good idea’ and represented a significant opportunity to learn new skills and generally expand their networks. As one stated: ‘I did not know what to expect. It was about me taking away everything I could learn.’ Similarly another mentee commented: ‘It was a good idea and seeing it was a pilot I wanted to support it.’

Mentors

A total of 40 women from across the Gippsland region submitted an application to participate in the pilot as a mentor. Of these, 36 applicants were interviewed and 33 subsequently participated in the programme.

For most mentors, participating in the pilot was equally about learning and development for themselves as it was to share their skills and experience with young women. Significantly, many of the mentors had themselves been mentored, and found this to be a valuable experience which they wanted to offer others. Their main motivations for getting involved in the programme were that:

- The pilot was an opportunity for the women to connect with the Gippsland region and make a contribution to the community.
- The mentors wanted to use their skills and expertise to the benefit of young women.
- The mentors wanted to develop their own mentoring skills.

The following quotes illustrate these further:

I had been involved in another leadership programme for women. That was a very innovative programme. It changed my life.

I had a mentor when I was young, and I saw the benefit of it – I also was feeling isolated where I lived as I am new to the area and wanted to make some contacts.

I’ve had several mentors and I found it very rewarding, I have a diverse background myself and felt I could offer something as well as learn from others.

I have three young daughters and I didn’t want them to be in the same position – and have the same struggles as me. Life experience counts for so much – for a young woman to be able to talk to someone else who has ‘had a go’ I thought would be helpful.

Interestingly, several of the mentors indicated they had not necessarily considered themselves to be a ‘mentor’ before, but there was something about the pilot that had triggered their curiosity and interest. Several were very modest about their capabilities, with some saying it was friends or family members who had suggested that they may make a good mentor:
I hadn’t thought of myself as a mentor. When I read about this in one of the local newspapers, I thought, perhaps I do have something to offer young women.

I work with a diverse range of young people who are disadvantaged. I thought, perhaps I can learn to be a mentor.

Interestingly, part of the attraction to the pilot was the way it had been advertised and promoted. Initial advertisements for ‘high achieving women who see themselves as leaders in the community’ did not necessarily resonate with many of the mentors. Instead, radio interviews and articles which stressed that the aim of the pilot was to provide inspiration and support to young women was a more effective way of reaching potential mentors.

3.2.3 Rationale and community context

The Gippsland region has a respected reputation for promoting the role of women in the area through initiatives such as Women Who Mean Business. Baw Baw Shire Council had also conducted a Gippsland Tourism Industry Leadership Programme as a pilot based on a desire to network outside the boundaries of its local government area and provide leadership within the region. This pilot programme then was viewed by Council as an extension of its leadership initiatives and as an opportunity to develop this programme as a shared initiative across the six Gippsland municipalities.

As noted above, part of the overall approach of the pilot was not to target high profile women in the Gippsland community as mentors, but also to seek out women who were high achieving and experienced in their own right but might not identify themselves as having the necessary skills to be a mentor.

3.3 Structure and content of the pilot

3.3.1 Overview of structure and content

The Gippsland pilot included training, mentoring and networking components, with mentees developing and completing a community project as a central feature. In addition to the five training sessions held across the topics specified in the contract, a briefing session prior to the launch and a wrap-up session at the conclusion of the pilot were held for mentees and mentors. The workshops sessions were used for mentee training as well as facilitating mentee and mentor get togethers.

3.3.2 Training component

The training component of the pilot was delivered in three separate locations in the Gippsland region – Wonthaggi, Warrigal and Sale. It was intended that this would increase the accessibility of the programme across the region, reduce the travel commitment for mentees and provide for smaller training sessions. All training sessions were held during the week. Each day would include a morning and afternoon mentee training session followed by a later afternoon and evening session where mentees and mentors would get together and discuss mentee community projects. The training sessions were delivered by a range of people including the pilot Coordinator, Council staff, the Gippsland Community Leadership Programme and private consultants.

The pilot included the following workshops and events (in chronological order):

- Initial briefings, training and launch of the pilot
  - Initial mentee briefing (mentees only)
  - Initial briefing and workshop for mentors (mentors only)
  - Launch of the Gippsland YWLMP and mentor mentee meeting (all mentees and mentors attended)

- Mentee training sessions and ‘mentor meets’
  - Regional Workshop Session 1: Goal setting and working effectively
Regional Workshop Session 2: Emotional intelligence and leadership
Regional Workshop Session 3: Community engagement
Regional Workshop Session 4: Politics of local government and governance
Women’s leadership expo: Organised by one of the mentees as a community project involving a range of guest speakers and community organisations
Regional Workshop Session 5: Public Speaking and presentation of community projects

- Pilot wrap up and celebration
  - Mentee and mentor wrap up sessions (attended by all mentees and mentors)
  - Gala event and award presentations (attended by all mentees and mentors): The community projects were showcased at this event and the Gippsland pilot yearbook was also launched at the awards ceremony.

Prior to the launch of the pilot, a half day mentee briefing session was held bringing together all mentees. The session addressed the following topics:

- mentoring
- role of the mentor
- role and expectations of the mentee
- responsibilities to self and mentor
- responsibilities to the programme
- the logistics of how the mentoring works.

Each of the workshop sessions included mentee training from 11am-4.30pm followed by ‘mentor meets’ from 4.45-7.30pm. The ‘mentor meets’ were a block of time set aside during which mentees and mentors could meet as part of the mentoring component of the pilot.

Most workshops were delivered in lecture style with some mentee participation. For each of the workshop sessions, mentees facilitated an ice-breaking exercise, presented a gift to the guest speaker/trainer and took notes and reported back to the mentee-mentor session at the end of the day. The aim of this was to give mentees a sense of ownership of the day and provide an opportunity to develop public speaking skills.

The community project was a central feature of the Gippsland pilot. At the outset, all mentees were required to identify a community issue that was of interest to them and develop a community project. In developing their projects, mentees were required to identify personal goals and goals for the community, desired project outcomes, the target community, key project milestones, resources and support required to undertake the project.

A total 27 community projects were undertaken by mentees. The key aim of the community project was to provide an opportunity for mentees to apply newly acquired skills and knowledge in a community context, thereby linking them into a leadership pathway. It was also intended that mentees would be supported by their mentors in undertaking their project, and that the project would be a vehicle for building networks more broadly.

A one-day training workshop was held for mentors prior to the launch of the pilot. The workshop covered the following topics:

- the role of the mentor and relationship boundaries
- mentoring skills – active listening, providing feedback, facilitating goal setting and review, problem solving, encouragement and motivation
- providing support to other mentors
reflecting on and improving mentoring practice.

Mentors were also provided with a training manual including information on their roles and responsibilities, instructional materials and checklists. In addition to the initial workshop, a group meeting for mentors was held in Sale and Warragul later in the pilot. This provided mentors with the opportunity to share their experiences of their mentoring relationship.

3.3.3 Mentoring component

Recruitment and selection of participants
A range of recruitment strategies were utilised to attract potential mentees and mentors which included:

- Print media: media releases in local newspapers throughout Gippsland and an advertisement was placed in the Rural Women’s Network magazine
- Radio: the pilot Coordinator was interviewed on six local radio stations
- Internet: information was available through the Baw Baw Shire Council website
- Utilising existing networks: The Programme Manager from Baw Baw Shire Council and Coordinator presented to the Gippsland Women in Business Association. In addition, the Coordinator made contact with the following networks: Compass Network, Holistic Network, Gippsland Community Leadership Network, Gippsland Women in Local Government Association, Local Learning Employment Networks and Tourism networks. Contact was made with each of the six local government shire councils, within their community development and/or business support sections, and programme information was distributed throughout the shire networks.

The criteria used to select mentees were as follows:

- female aged between 18 – 35 years
- ability to commit required time to the mentoring programme, including discussions with the mentor, attendance at workshops, and completion of individual community project
- willingness and capacity to develop leadership skills through the pilot, and apply skills and knowledge within a community setting
- interest in, and potential to undertake a leadership or decision making role within the community in the future.

The application and selection process
Both potential mentees and mentors were required to complete an application form which included questions about their goals, expectations, previous education and work experience as well as particular areas they could pursue as part of the pilot. They were also required to sign a statement indicating their commitment to the pilot.

The majority of applicant mentees were interviewed in person by a selection panel comprised of the pilot Coordinator and at least two members of the local community or the local council. Interviews were held in each of the six local government areas in the pilot region with a different selection panel, but the pilot Coordinator as a constant. Telephone interviews were conducted where applicants were not able to attend in person. The key purpose of the interview was to gain more information about the mentee in addition to the content of their written application.

Interview questions were developed by the Coordinator, with input from specific panel members and the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee (GACC) Executive Officer. Interview questions related to motivations; personal and professional goals; personality traits; how applicants would see a mentor helping them to reach their goals; desirable qualities of a mentor; understanding of leadership; how they might apply skills developed in the pilot; level of community involvement; and potential ideas for their community project.

The community panel members would generally ask the applicant mentees questions while the Coordinator observed the process whilst also taking note of body language, communication styles etc.
Observing body language was considered to be a valuable way of understanding the personality of the applicant mentees in a way that went beyond their verbal and written responses to questions.

Mentors were also interviewed by a selection panel. The interviews were intended to gain insight into the women’s personal style, expectations and how they interacted with others. The interview questions centred around the women’s motivations to be involved in the pilot; specific outcomes they were hoping to achieve; knowledge, skills and experience they might bring to a mentoring relationship; personality traits; their understanding of the role of the mentor; strategies they might use to establish and maintain a successful mentoring relationship; how they might assist their mentee achieve their goals; what they would expect from their mentee; and their understanding of leadership.

There were mandatory and desirable selection criteria for mentors. Mandatory criteria included:

- being female
- ability to commit required time to the mentoring programme, including discussions with the mentee, attendance at a training day and workshops
- willingness and capacity to assist a young woman to identify and develop their leadership skills through the pilot
- ability to provide a positive role model and inspire and motivate a young woman
- attainment of a level of success and/or achievement in professional, personal or community domains.

The desirable selection criteria for mentors were:

- significant contribution to or involvement in the community, preferably in leadership or decision making roles
- wisdom and knowledge gained through life experience, and an ability to draw on experience to guide a young woman
- sound listening skills and an ability to empathise with others
- sound emotional intelligence skills, including the ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions and emotional relationships.

Both mentors and mentees were required to sign an agreement which included a list of roles and responsibilities. This included an agreement to meet on a weekly basis.

**Matching and introductions**

Following the selection of the mentees and mentors, the Coordinator facilitated the matching process. Mentees and mentors were matched on the basis of the information provided in their original application and the interview. The central factors in the matching process included geographical location, skills, experience, knowledge, motivation, interests and compatible values and personality.

Mentors were assigned a mentee and were introduced to each other for the first time at the pilot launch.

**Evaluation and debriefing**

Mentees were asked to complete an evaluation form at the conclusion of each of the workshop sessions. In addition, wrap up sessions were held for mentees and mentors at the conclusion of the pilot. These sessions were an opportunity for each of the groups to come together and share learnings and experiences. Participants also provided suggestions for future improvements. These sessions were facilitated by an external consultant.

3.3.4 Networking component

The majority of networking took place as a result of the workshop sessions (where mentees would network with each other) and individual mentoring relationships where mentors would help their mentee connect with other organisations or individuals that could assist them pursue their goals or progress.
their community projects. In addition, there were some specific events that provided networking opportunities. These included:

- **The pilot launch.** Those attending the launch included the Chief Executive Officer of Baw Baw Shire Council, the Mayor of Ellington Shire Council and the Executive Officer of the Gippsland Area Consultative Committee

- **The leadership forum.** This included guest speakers who were prominent in their respective professions as well as 20 stalls featuring leadership programmes or volunteer opportunities.

The pilot also received support from the following organisations:

- the Gippsland Community Leadership Programme (GCLP) of which Baw Baw Shire Council, La Trobe City, Wellington Shire Council, Bass Coast Shire Council, South Gippsland Council and GACC are sponsors, is an annual community leadership programme for which YWLMP participants may wish to apply for 2008

- the Gippsland Women in Business network – a Gippsland wide network of women who are in Business and who meet on a regular basis

- the Compass Network – formally the Gippsland Women Who Mean Business – a Gippsland wide network of women who conduct community projects

- the Women in Local Government Network – a Gippsland wide network of women who are interested in entering Local Government with former Local Government Councillors providing guidance, skills building and mentoring

- the Inspiring Young Women’s Network

- GACC Community Engagement Network – a Gippsland wide network of local government and members of the GACC to determine strategies for the GACC Community Engagement Framework.

3.3.5 Pilot management and administration

**Role of Coordinator**

The Coordinator was initially engaged on a part-time contract basis (22 hours per week) which extended to full-time for the period of the pilot commencing February 2007. The key roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator included:

- day to day management, organisation and facilitation of the pilot, including the organisation of venues, speakers, trainers and preparing all necessary material and forms

- monitoring the progress of the mentoring relationship and checking participants' progress monthly

- developing the training programme

- determining any ongoing guidance that might be required

- determining where interventions might be required where mentoring relationships might not be working

- liaising with key stakeholder groups and organisations

- preparing progress reports for the OfW

- liaising with the OfW.

**Support and communication with mentors and mentees**

The Gippsland pilot Coordinator contacted mentees and mentors on a regular (monthly) basis. This would usually involve a phone conversation regarding participant progress and whether the mentoring relationship was meeting the mentee’s expectations. The conversations would not focus on the details of the mentoring relationship but focus more on general process issues such as whether or not meetings were occurring or if both parties had a clear understanding of respective roles and
responsibilities. Feedback was also sought from mentees in relation to the training, how they were progressing with their community project and any other suggestions or comments they had concerning how the operation of the pilot could be improved.

There was also frequent email communication with the Coordinator as required by participants which could be initiated by the Coordinator, mentees or mentors.

A monthly newsletter was distributed to all participants. This included profiles of mentee and mentor pairs, quotes, feedback from training sessions, and information on projects and upcoming events.

Each mentor was assigned another mentor to be their ‘buddy’ which was intended to provide a support network for mentors. As part of this, a group meeting for mentors was held in Sale and Warragul in early September. The meeting was intended to provide mentors with the opportunity to share their experiences of the pilot and the mentoring of their mentees, and seek peer support.

3.4 Overall response to the pilot

The overall response to the Gippsland pilot was positive among the majority of those consulted, including pilot staff, mentees and mentors.

All mentees who participated in the evaluation of the pilot felt that they benefited in some way from their participation in the pilot. However, the degree to which young women found the pilot to be valuable, appropriate and effective in meeting their individual goals and expectations did vary (this is discussed further in Section 3.6). Mentees’ experience of the three components varied, with some mentees enjoying particular components more than others. There were also some mentees who found the pilot more rewarding than others.

Similarly, mentors generally found their experience with the pilot to be rewarding and enjoyable. Given the timing constraints, pilot staff and stakeholders were also pleased with the achievements of the pilot and were able to identify key learnings that will help inform future programmes.

3.5 Reported impacts and outcomes of the pilot

3.5.1 Outcomes and impacts for mentees

The outcomes and impacts for individual mentees varied, as might be expected. For some, the most significant impact was being part of a process of self discovery and self learning while for others it was about achieving a specific goal.

For those women who experienced most benefit from the learning process of the pilot, reported impacts included an improvement in self understanding and self awareness. As one young woman commented:

I have developed a sense of awareness and self observation through every part of the pilot, including discussions with my mentor and outside of the pilot in my workplace.

Some young women have noticed a change in their attitudes toward themselves: ‘The pilot has helped me unlock barriers around understanding my own personality.’

The pilot has also been instrumental in building self confidence. One woman commented that while at the outset of the pilot she did not like to mention to her friends and colleagues that she was in a ‘leadership’ programme, she now feels comfortable and confident that she participated in the pilot:

When I started the programme I was playing down the fact that I was in a ‘leadership’ programme because I was shy about it. Now I feel proud that I was in a leadership programme.

The pilot has helped others to build the self confidence to make decisions that they would not have been able to make previously. One mentor noticed this in her mentee:

She [my mentee] has learnt to say no and that it is OK to pull out of something.
The process of the pilot has enabled mentees to gain clarity around their personal and professional path that they will pursue beyond the life of the pilot: ‘The process has helped me refocus and identify areas I’m passionate about’.

For others, it simply provided them with the appropriate time and space where they could focus on themselves and pursue long held goals – this in itself was a major outcome. For example, one young woman was able to complete her university degree whilst participating in the pilot because it gave her a sense of validation about dedicating time to herself and her goals.

Some women have gained new insights and levels of awareness, particularly in relation to their community. As one reported:

The pilot has expanded my awareness of Gippsland and the more it expands, the more I realise there is so much more to learn and so many ways we can improve our community for all of us.

The most significant impact for some mentees was meeting other women and taking advantage of opportunities for informal interaction, which has resulted in new networks and friendships that are likely to continue. For some, this has also resulted in enhanced outcomes at a community level. For example, one mentee formed a Country Women’s Association group as her community project. Some of the other mentees from her workshop group have since joined this group, which has continued to function beyond the pilot.

Participation in the pilot has helped some mentees overcome personal obstacles that will enable them to contribute in other areas and continue personal growth. For example, one mentee was physically sick with fear of public speaking. As a way of overcoming this, she organised an autism awareness evening as her community project where over 20 people attended. She introduced and thanked guest speakers and facilitated the evening. This woman continued to receive positive feedback well after the event. This had a significant impact on her self confidence as well as contributing to a cause which she was passionate about.

The experience of having a mentor and building a meaningful relationship was in itself significant for many young women. One mentor told the story of her mentee who felt a sense of guilt about not dedicating enough time to her young child because of her work commitments. Her mentor helped her with time management so that she was able to set aside time to commit to a reading programme at her child’s school. This has helped her mentee to regain a level of self confidence while also making a contribution to her community. Similarly, one mentee came to the realisation that she did not need to carry a sense of guilt about balancing work and family responsibilities: ‘I can see that I can have a family and a rewarding job.’

The mentoring relationship has also had a positive impact professionally. For example, one mentee was matched with a mentor with a background in marketing who was able to help her with her community project to update a marketing website.

Interestingly, even for those women who were disappointed in their mentor match and attended little training, the experience of the pilot was still enabling. As one woman commented:

I am so far more secure with my own choice in terms of life management which is probably because I thought my mentor’s life was so significantly out of balance that it enabled me to find comfort in my own choices.

3.5.2 Outcomes and impacts for mentors

The most significant impact for mentors was the experience of being able to make a positive contribution to the growth and development of a young woman. This experience has been incredibly rewarding for some:

It was lovely to get to know my mentee and that she trusts me enough to tell me what she is scared of and what she thinks her weaknesses are. It is rewarding knowing that I have been able to help her.
Some mentors commented that even where they knew that their mentee did not get as much benefit from the training and the community project as they hoped for, they have been able to observe a process of personal development and growth which has resulted in improved self confidence and a much clearer sense of what they might like to pursue in the future.

The process of being a mentor has also made some women more self aware. As one commented:

_It has been worthwhile and a personal challenge. I now have an understanding of my weaknesses, it has given me new insights into myself and others._

Similarly, some have also noticed a change in themselves as an impact of the process. As another mentor commented: _‘Being responsible as a mentor is a growth process. I have noticed a change in myself’._

Another important impact is that some mentors have been able to build their own personal and professional networks by meeting other mentors. It is has also enhanced their knowledge of the range of skilled and experienced women in the region, and served to demonstrate that women leaders exist in the Gippsland region and are able to make a contribution.

### 3.5.3 Outcomes and impact for Community

At a community level, the community projects component of the pilot has already had some important impacts. There were an incredibly diverse range of projects undertaken in terms of scope and topics. Although some mentees found the projects a challenge in terms of finding time to commit and understanding the overall purpose of the exercise, many considered this aspect of the pilot to be the most significant in terms of actual and potential impact for the community. The process of doing these projects has also had an impact on mentees themselves.

One mentee undertook a series of case studies of leading women in the Gippsland region with the purpose of demonstrating that women can have a successful career in the region. Another woman ran a workshop for community organisations to provide training on developing community newsletters. As well as providing training, the workshop was also an opportunity for community groups to network with each other. ‘Dancing around the Countryside’ was a project to organise and introduce modern dance sessions in rural towns with the aim of increasing the health and fitness of school age children. Another project focused on the issue of children’s dental hygiene in a lower socio-economic area. The project involved a poster competition for school children.

‘Engaging Chinese Students with the Community through Tourism’ was a project that sought to identify ways to increase international student engagement with community. This was in response to an identified need to help the growing number of international students feel a sense of belonging in the Central and West Gippsland region, as well as providing opportunities for the local tourism industry. The mentee undertaking this project did some research and wrote a report outlining the needs of students, gaps and recommendations for local councils and tourism operators to inform tourism strategies to enhance student engagement with the wider community. This project has resulted in an evidence base for future decision making and programmes in the region, as well as inspiring this mentee to pursue a Masters in Tourism degree.

At another level, the pilot has formed some important networks and stakeholder relationships that will arguably benefit the wider community through enhancing the ‘mentoring infrastructure’ in the region. This infrastructure includes knowledge about best practice, and skills and expertise that can be utilised to design and deliver future programmes. Stakeholder linkages with the Gippsland Community Leadership Programme proved valuable for sourcing quality speakers for the workshops. Local networks were also strengthened through the selection committee process by engaging local government and community organisations across the region. The Gippsland Mentoring Alliance also provided practical support in the preparation phase of the pilot.
3.6 Assessment of pilot components

3.6.1 Strengths and limitations of each of the components

Training

The Gippsland pilot mentees held varying views on the quality and relevance of the training, with some finding it beneficial and others less so.

Those mentees who rated the training highly emphasised the following features:

- the interesting speakers and topics
- having the opportunity to hear the stories and life experiences of other women
- being introduced to new topics and concepts, such as emotional intelligence
- obtaining information about how structures such as local government operate.

The following comments made by mentees illustrate these responses further:

I think I benefited most from the guest speakers … seeing so many successful women was something to aspire to.

It introduced me to concepts that I had not learnt about before … emotional intelligence and understanding local government. I found them really helpful.

The speakers that came, the way they talked about their jobs and personal experiences … they shared some really personal stuff with us – they were just like us – and they had worked through the journeys and challenges.

The emotional intelligence … how to read people, was very helpful.

For other young women, the key benefit of the training was less to do with acquiring new skills and more focused on meeting new people and building networks.

The training appeared to be rated more highly by younger, less experienced mentees – the workshops exposed them to new ideas, concepts and information. The training was generally less well received by more experienced or career-focused women, many of whom found the training was pitched too low or fell short of their expectations.

The main criticisms of the training were that:

- The content was ‘pitched’ too low for some, more experienced mentees, covering topics they had already studied or been exposed to.
- The quality and effectiveness of the delivery and facilitation was uneven.
- The mode of delivery was insufficiently interactive and participatory.
- The training workshops were sometimes overly long – which some mentees found exhausting given they had had to drive some distance to attend the session.
- There was little time for informal networking during the training sessions.
- There was insufficient training on the mentoring aspect of the pilot.
- The training paid insufficient attention to building confidence as a foundation for learning skills and acquiring knowledge in particular areas.

The following comments illustrate some of these points:

There needed to be greater emphasis on testing theories and ideas, workshopping, brainstorming and group work – it needed to be more interactive.
The pilot focused on the imparting of knowledge in relation to particular topics. However, often the mentees are after self-knowledge, so they can build their self confidence.

I didn’t get much from the training – it was very theoretical – some of the topics were good – but it wasn’t practical enough and I wasn’t excited about going to training.

The training didn’t hit the nail on the head for me. I’d done quite a lot of work on emotional intelligence and found the training on this superficial. I’d have liked training on how you can use that, how you can apply it in the workplace and other settings.

There was general agreement among mentees, mentors and stakeholders that devising a training programme for the full range of ages, skills and expertise within the cohort was a significant challenge, and many of the above comments clearly reflect the varying skills, expectations and needs of the mentees.

Community Project
While the community project has arguably had a significant impact in terms of tangible outcomes for the community and for mentees, there were a range of views about how appropriate this task was for the pilot given the timeline pressures of the pilot and incompatibility with family and work commitments of mentees.

The project was seen by most as a constructive process for encouraging mentees to find ways they could make a contribution to their community and develop their organisational and planning skills. For those mentees who joined the pilot for more career focused reasons, the community project played an important role in helping them understand the other ways in which they could make a contribution to their community. Mentees undertook a diverse range of projects. These included: the creation of a website as a resource for young women who were looking for advice in relation to starting a family while pursuing their career at the same time; the organisation of an autism awareness night; the writing of a series of case studies showcasing the varied talents and successes of women living in the Gippsland region. Many of these projects were significant undertakings.

The intention of the community project component was to extend the boundaries of mentees, however many chose to do projects in their own workplace. While some women would have preferred to do a project outside of their work, they felt that they would have had insufficient time to do this. Some mentees experienced difficulty in finding the time outside of their work commitments to complete their community project. Several mentees and mentors felt that the time commitment required to complete the project was not commensurate with the length of the pilot.

A number of mentors felt that mentees put themselves under undue pressure to undertake large projects within very short timeframes and that this meant the community project dominated their experience of the pilot. Because of the focus on the community project, this meant for some that the mentoring relationship focused on little else. There were thus varying views about the value of the community project. As one mentor stated ‘It got in the way for some and was completely overwhelming for others’. However, another stated ‘The whole idea of the community project is to encourage community leadership. It is a critical component of the whole process’.

Many of those interviewed expressed a desire for the community project to be linked with the training and for additional guidance in completing the project. There was a general sense that greater clarity was needed at the outset of the pilot about the rationale and objectives of the activity. Some suggested that a workshop session should have been dedicated to the project.

Training for mentors
Most mentors interviewed reported that they enjoyed the mentoring training session. It was seen as an opportunity to hear the stories and experiences of other mentors which helped them understand the importance of their role in the programme. Some women, however, thought that the mentoring should have been a much stronger feature of training and support in the pilot. Training was not only seen as important for providing guidance on what a mentor is but also what a mentor is not.

Several mentors felt that they could have got more out of the training and that expectations, roles and responsibilities could have been made clearer. It was felt by some that the training should have provided the opportunity to network more with other mentees. As one woman commented:
There was not a lot of clarity. The opportunity to network more with other mentors would have assisted in their own personal development and assisted them to work through any issues or self doubt they might experience in being a mentor.

3.6.2 Mentoring

Interviewing and selection

The process used for the selection of mentees was generally regarded as effective. The use of a community selection panel that differed from region to region strengthened the community focus of the pilot as well as contributing relevant expertise in leadership and mentoring. It was also considered valuable that the Coordinator was able to be present at all of the mentee and mentor interviews to provide consistency. It was also regarded as important that the interviews were face-to-face, so as to allow the selection panel to get an overall sense of how the applicant presented, not just in terms of their answers to the questions, but also their body language and communication style. Observing body language was seen as important for understanding the way in which applicants communicated and interacted with others. This in turn provided important information to feed into the matching process.

Introductions process

Mentees were introduced to their mentors at the launch of the pilot. While mentees and mentors found this to be an appropriate process, this first meeting was considered somewhat awkward or daunting and lacking structure. Several participants found it difficult to know what to talk about and generally how to go about ‘getting to know’ each other. Some mentors felt that the process was not structured in a way that mentees and mentors could easily build a connection and that it might have been more appropriate to meet with their mentees in a more intimate setting. As one commented:

*The first meeting between mentor and mentee should be facilitated by the pilot. There should have been work in mentor/mentee pairs around boundaries, activities and the scope of the relationship.*

The quality of the match and the relationship

Most mentees and mentors in the Gippsland pilot interviewed were happy with the match and reported a range of benefits on both sides of the relationship. However, a minority of mentees and mentors did not find the mentoring relationship as beneficial as they had hoped or expected.

Having similar personal interests and life experiences was seen by some as a key factor to a successful match, while for others it was having common professional backgrounds. Interestingly, having something in common was not necessarily the key to a successful relationship. Some mentors were able to help their mentees pursue personal and professional goals by providing general advice and support that was not necessarily grounded in having common interests or common life experiences. Some mentees reported enormous benefit out of being matched with a mentor who they would normally ‘run away from’ because they offered them new learning opportunities and encouraged them to take risks.

For those mentees who felt that their mentoring relationship was effective, the main reported benefits included:

- providing very general support and guidance in relation to a range of issues
- providing specific advice and direction based on their professional background and connections they have within the sector relevant to their mentee
- assisting mentees to work through workplace issues
- challenging mentees to ‘think outside the square’
- assisting mentees with their community project
- mentees having an independent person, often an outsider to the mentee’s local community, who could act as a sounding board
• providing mentees with access to personal networks and connections; for example one mentor linked her mentee with guest speakers for a leadership expo she organised as a community project.

Similarly, there were benefits for mentors, with most feeling confident and comfortable that their mentoring relationship would continue beyond the end of the pilot. As one mentor commented: ‘I have loved every minute – we have common interests and we relate well to each other’. A number of mentors indicated that they had themselves benefited from being involved in the pilot. They enjoyed it and found it a rewarding experience to see the growth in the young women they mentored. Some said they themselves had grown in confidence with several wanting to take on mentoring roles again in the future.

Others did not have such a positive experience of the mentoring component. For some mentees it was peripheral to their experience of the pilot even in cases where they believed the match was a good one. As one mentee commented: ‘I did not feel that I needed a mentor…I felt that we needed to have something to talk about’. Some mentees expected to get more out of their mentoring relationship. For example, one mentee was hoping her mentor would have experience in a particular area relevant to her goals: ‘I wanted to be motivated by someone who had experience operating a home business – I did not get this’.

Others were disappointed with the quality of the match but still had a functional relationship in other ways. One woman felt her mentor was too close in age and professional standing:

I am 34 and in a middle management position. I was matched with a 40 year old in middle management position. She pulled out of the programme because she seemed to have a finite idea of what the programme should be achieving and I did not meet that for her – we are still friends and still in contact. One of the things about mentoring is that mentors experience large amounts of self doubt… I was a bit more happy with seeing what the relationship could become but I think my mentor would have preferred someone younger.

Factors that impinged on the quality of the mentoring relationship included mentors being too busy or difficult to contact, and the distance between mentees and mentors which made it difficult to meet face-to-face on a regular basis.

When asked to identify features of a ‘good’ mentor, common responses from mentees included having a genuine interest and commitment to the mentee, and being pleased to help their mentee achieve their goals. It was also important that a mentor should ‘have a sense of other people.’

Networking

Compared with the training and mentoring components, networking was a less formalised and structured aspect of the pilot. Where opportunities were provided, participants generally found these to be of value but expressed a desire for more networking activities to be built into the overall pilot: ‘There was not enough time given to networking, it was left to individuals to do it themselves’.

Networking was understood to include networking amongst mentees, mentors and between mentors and mentees. Networking also included opportunities for mentees to meet other individuals or organisations through the pilot who might also assist them work toward their goals.

Mentors who had formed relationships with other mentors in the pilot reported benefits such as reassurance, skill sharing, clarification of their role, and helping to develop networks for their mentee. Many would have liked additional opportunities to network with other mentors.

Similarly, both mentors and mentees would have liked more of an opportunity for mentees to network with other mentors, particularly where a mentee had a particular goal or project that another mentor could have assisted them with: ‘I believe this part of the pilot could have been facilitated better by networking mentees with other mentors’.

While some mentees found the training to be a good networking opportunity, especially for meeting other mentees, time pressures meant that there was not always adequate scope to meet women in a more social and less structured environment.
3.6.3 Response to the overall package

There was an overall view that it was important that the pilot included three components – the training, mentoring and networking: ‘I don’t think it would have been as effective without all three components’.

Most felt that having the three components was valuable and that they worked well together. One of the reported benefits was that the three aspects worked well together as a package. For example, the mentoring relationship was linked to the workshop sessions and the community project also fed into the mentoring relationship. It also meant that where one component of the programme might not have fully met the expectations of a mentee, it was more than likely that they would find some value in another component.

3.7 Programme management and administration

3.7.1 Overall management and administration

There was a general view that the pilot was efficiently managed and coordinated, particularly given the time constraints within which the Coordinator worked. The Coordinator was generally regarded as being accessible, efficient and effective in her role.

Some felt that there were particular advantages to the Coordinator being engaged on a contract basis who largely worked from home. This meant that the Coordinator was able to maintain a degree of autonomy throughout the project, while still receiving the management and administrative support and assistance from Baw Baw Shire. This worked in favour of the larger regional focus of the pilot.

3.7.2 Marketing and recruitment strategies

Of the range of strategies employed to recruit mentors and mentees, those identified as particularly effective in attracting applicants included radio interviews as well as the Coordinator speaking at specific network forums (e.g., Women in Business). For some mentees and mentors, their spouse or parent had heard or read about the pilot and suggested that they submit an application. As noted earlier, the key for some of the mentors was to ‘pitch’ that they have the opportunity to mentor and assist young women in their community. A ‘pitch’ appealing to leading women in the community did not hit the right note for some of these women, who did not identify themselves as ‘leaders’, but who nevertheless had considerable commitment, skills and capacities to offer as a mentor.

3.7.3 Recruitment targets

The final number of 28 mentees was considerably less than anticipated in the contract (60 mentees). However, given the timeline pressures and resources available, the final number was considered realistic and practical by pilot managers. There was general agreement that the pilot would not have progressed as efficiently and effectively if significantly more participants had been recruited. This clearly raises questions about the level of resourcing of future pilots.

Out of the original 33 mentees accepted on to the pilot, there were five who withdrew. Two withdrew for personal or health reasons; one mentee’s mentor withdrew from the programme and she chose not to be rematched; for others, the pilot did not meet their expectations.

Interestingly, in a number of cases where the mentoring relationship did not work effectively, some of the mentees remained in the pilot by continuing to attend the workshop sessions and complete their community project.

3.8 Pilot design

In terms of the model itself, this pilot was understood by some to be unique compared to other programmes in the region because it addressed a particular set of issues around women in rural and regional communities and the isolation that they experience. The following issues reflect some of the strengths and limitations of the design of the pilot in terms of the auspicing agency, coordination and support provided to mentees and mentors and accessibility.
3.8.1 Auspicing agency

The Gippsland pilot was auspiced by Baw Baw Shire Council. The general consensus was that this arrangement had worked well, and that the Council has been an effective auspicing agency for a programme of this kind.

The keys to the successful auspicing arrangements were as follows:

- Senior management within Baw Baw Shire Council actively supported the management and implementation of the project.
- The staff within the Council with responsibility for managing the pilot had very good project management skills and actively supported the pilot through regularly meeting with the Coordinator and participating in the training workshops and events.
- Baw Baw Shire Council had already implemented a number of leadership and women’s programmes, and so had a good track record to build upon.
- Senior management within the Council are very well networked locally, and are highly visible in the community and have good media contacts (e.g., the General Manager is on radio every week).
- Being a local council, Baw Baw Shire has a ready-made infrastructure for hosting and promoting the pilot. The Council also has a reputation for promoting a strong collaborative approach to initiatives across local government boundaries in the Gippsland region.
- Locating the pilot within the Council was also seen as giving the pilot a lot of credibility in the community, particularly when it was launched by the Deputy Mayor.

It would seem that locating a pilot programme of this kind in a local council is an appropriate strategy. However, several stakeholders struck a note of caution about the suitability of local councils per se to host these programmes. Baw Baw Shire Council is seen to be somewhat ‘out of the mould’, being more progressive and community-focused than many other councils. This would raise some questions about the successful replicability of this approach to auspicing in councils, where the experience and capabilities of Baw Baw Shire Council were absent.

3.8.2 Coordination and support provided to participants

Mentee support

The majority of participants felt that the pilot was effectively coordinated and mentees and mentors were well supported. The evaluation highlighted that not all mentees require the same level of support and communication from the Coordinator. Some mentees said that they would have been comfortable with less communication from the Coordinator. On the other hand, other young women found the level of communication appropriate, giving particularly good feedback in relation to the monthly newsletter.

At times, the pilot found some mentees difficult to engage in the monitoring and support process. This could be a reflection of the diversity of mentees, the demands of their professional and family lives and also the varying support and communication needs.

Mentor support

The majority of mentors enjoyed their role in the pilot and felt that the Coordinator did the best job possible given the circumstances. However, several considered there was room for improvement in terms of mentor support and training. Mentors felt that the pilot was a learning and development process for themselves. Several did not feel confident in their mentoring skills and would have liked additional training and ongoing support to understand and fulfil their role and responsibilities.

Mentors also indicated that they would have liked more feedback from and additional opportunities to meet up with other mentors.
3.8.3 Accessibility issues

Some mentees experienced challenges and barriers to participating in the pilot.

The decision to have the workshop sessions on a weekday and not a weekend was based on feedback from women that it was easier to balance work commitments than to arrange for childcare on the weekends. This also meant however that some women experienced difficulty managing work commitments. A few mentees identified an unsupportive workplace as a barrier, reporting their employers perceived the pilot as taking away precious time from their work commitment. There were a couple of women who applied to be mentees and were accepted into the pilot however their employer would not permit them to take the time away from work to attend the training sessions.

The pressures upon the women at work, particularly those who led busy professional lives made it all the more important that any training attended was a good investment of their time.

3.9 Suggestions for improvement

There were a range of suggested improvements put forward by mentors, mentees, pilot staff and stakeholders to inform future programmes.

3.9.1 Overall areas for improvement

Additional time was a common suggested improvement. There was a general view that additional time would have had a significant impact on the overall quality and effectiveness of the pilot. Specific elements that would have benefited from additional time included finalising the terms and conditions for the pilot, recruitment of mentees and mentors, pilot planning and implementation, specifically the planning of the training sessions and as well as providing for participant involvement in the design of the workshops. Additional lead in time would have allowed for the design of an appropriately targeted training programme as well as appropriate time for the mentoring relationship to develop.

Allowing for more flexibility was also a common suggestion, particularly in relation to the training and using the knowledge of participants goals and needs as an evidence base to shape the components of the pilot. Similarly, meeting the needs of and supporting the mentors was seen as an important area that needs improving in the future.

There was a view that if the pilot was to continue, having the three components would be an important inclusion. However within each of these, some changes could be made to strengthen the programme.

3.9.2 Specific areas for improvement

Training

There was a general view that the relevance and appropriateness of the training component could be improved.

There was considerable support for amending the format and delivery of the training to provide more opportunities for mentee interaction and participation. As one woman commented: ‘Learning comes through trial and error. The training needs to include greater interaction, more moving around and more practical input’.

There was also a desire for a stronger focus on training to be more flexible to meet the diverse needs of participants. For example, the training could take account of relevant education and training or provide mentees the opportunity to access external training to meet their specific needs. As one mentee commented: ‘It needs to have the flexibility to meet the diverse needs of mentees.’ Giving consideration to accessing accredited training modules for mentors was also suggested in areas such as building mentoring relationships, negotiation, active listening, communication, duty of care and confidentiality.

The need for increased mentor training was also identified.

Networking

There was a desire for a more structured and focused approach to the networking component of the pilot.
Mentees enjoyed the opportunity to network with mentees at the workshop sessions but would have liked more time out of the structured training to interact with other mentees.

Although networking opportunities were made part of the pilot launch and the leadership expo, networking was not addressed in the pilot as a particular skill area. Future programmes could include a training component that addresses networking techniques and skills. This would mean that a programme would not just provide networking opportunities, but also training and learning opportunities as to how to effectively network.

There was also a view that the networking component could have facilitated more linkages of mentees with other mentors, to get the maximum benefit of the diverse group of women participating in the pilot.

A more formalised process for mentors to network with other mentors was also a suggested improvement.

**Mentoring**

In terms of improving the quality of the mentoring relationship, additional training and support for mentors as well as making some changes to the matching and introductions process were key suggestions.

The mentoring component of the programme could be further strengthened by recognising that mentoring is a skill and that mentors need to feel supported and validated in their role. As one mentor commented:

> Even the most experienced community and business leaders can experience self-doubt: You can’t assume that they have the skills and the knowledge to be a mentor – they need to be appropriately trained and supported.

Some felt that the programme was overly centred around the needs and goals of mentees which lacked an understanding that mentoring is a two-way process and that mentors need to be equipped with a firm understanding of their role.

As previously discussed, some mentors did not feel confident in their mentoring skills and would have liked additional training and ongoing support to understand and fulfil their role and responsibilities. Having an appropriate support structure could include additional opportunities to meet with other mentors.

Some felt that the matching process could have considered additional factors such as more detail around the mentors interests and the types of activities they enjoy. Allowing the unmatched group of mentees and mentors to come together as a group was also seen as a valuable process where those responsible for coordinating the pilot could meet people throughout the day and ask who they would like to be matched up with.

**Building strategic linkages**

If this pilot was to continue in the region as a programme, this would need to take into account the range of existing programmes and initiatives in the region. Other organisations such as the Red Cross, the Gippsland Community Leadership Programme and the Gippsland Mentoring Alliance are active in this area. It would be important that any additional future programmes capitalise on the existing work, knowledge and resources to avoid unnecessary duplication and the programme was based on best practice principles.

It was also suggested that a future programme could include greater ongoing stakeholder involvement in the form of a steering committee. This would be a way of increasing wider community engagement, stakeholder commitment and enhancing the sustainability of outcomes.

### 3.10 Conclusion

Overall, participants enjoyed their experience of the pilot and found it to be beneficial, worthwhile and a valuable experience. It has shown that young women have many different motivations for becoming involved in a mentoring and leadership programme. This means that designing a programme that is appropriate and meaningful for everyone can be a challenge, requiring sufficient lead in time and
expertise to identify individual needs and requirements and understand what this means in terms of training and skills development.

The pilot has clearly demonstrated the challenges associated with catering for a diverse group of young women who had wide ranging expectations, motivations, life experiences and professional backgrounds. This is particularly challenging for the training component of the programme. Having the three components to the programme – training, mentoring and networking – has been important for catering for this diversity and providing an overall package that has made the pilot a worthwhile experience for many.

Another important lesson from this pilot is that mentoring is a skill rather than a natural trait of successful women. An effective mentoring programme should support mentors as well as mentees.

What this pilot has also revealed is that these programmes are not only important for realising leadership outcomes for young women but perhaps more so for facilitating a critical learning and personal development process that can lay the foundations for future leadership opportunities. Having the confidence to make decisions, take risks and set goals have all been important outcomes for many mentees.
4 Wide Bay Burnett, Queensland

This chapter discusses the pilot in Wide Bay Burnett in Queensland.

4.1 Data sources

The following informants were consulted with as part of the evaluation:

- two pilot staff
- five mentees
- three mentors
- one stakeholder.

4.2 Background and context to the pilot

4.2.1 Pilot participants

Mentees

As discussed in more detail below, this pilot adopted a two-tier approach to recruitment of participants. In the first (original) tier, 32 young women applied to be mentees in the pilot, of whom 29 were successful. In the second recruitment tier, mentees were recruited into the pilot at a later stage by the first tier of mentees (although their involvement was largely confined to participation in the third workshop session). This brought the total number of mentees to 58 for the pilot.

Mentees identified a range of motivations for wanting to participate in the pilot, which typically included:

- an opportunity to develop new skills
- an opportunity to meet new people and build their networks
- an opportunity to further their career
- an opportunity to achieve their professional and other goals, including in a structured and monitored environment as illustrated by the following quotes from mentees:
  
  *I thought I would receive appropriate skills and knowledge from other participants and from my assigned mentor on how to achieve my specified goals.*

  *You will never reach your goals unless you pull the trigger.*

  *I wanted accountability and for someone to keep me in line, rope me in.*

- a chance to increase their self-confidence
- a way to learn how to make a contribution to their community.

Mentors

A total of 38 women applied to be mentors in the Wide Bay Burnett pilot. Of these, 30 were accepted into the pilot.

The main motivations for mentors to become involved in the pilot included:

- providing a natural extension of the work they were already doing in the community:
  
  *I've always been known to get people involved so this was another way for me to do this.*

- a desire to use their skills and expertise to help young women in the region and build community capacity
• an opportunity to develop their understanding of the range of skills and expertise that existed in the region
• a chance to build their awareness of the range of skills and expertise that existed in the region.

4.2.2 Auspicing organisation

The Wide Bay Burnett pilot was auspiced by RIRDC, a statutory corporation formed in July 1990 under the Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development (PIERD) Act 1989 which manages and funds priority research for industry development. RIRDC has a focus on new and emerging industries, with the aim of encouraging diversification of rural enterprises in Australia. The corporation is also responsible for research and development for a range of established rural industries, and key generic issues confronting the rural sector.

One of RIRDC’s key initiatives of particular relevance to the YWLMP is the RIRDC Rural Women’s Award, which is run in conjunction with the State and Territory agencies responsible for agriculture, primary industries and resource development). The award commenced in 2000, and aims to increase women’s capacity to contribute to agriculture and rural Australia through providing support and resources to further develop their skills and abilities. The pilot programme was therefore viewed by RIRDC as a further development of the organisation’s previous work and the award scheme.

4.2.3 Rationale and community context

The Wide Bay Burnett region extends from the northern edge of the Sunshine Coast to the coastal haven of Agnes Waters, and inland to the orchards and grazing areas of the Burnett. The region includes 22 local government areas, with the majority of the population being located in the six largest local government areas of Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Cooloola, Burnett, Maryborough and Kingaroy, and the remaining residents located in predominantly rural shires.

The Wide Bay Burnett region of Queensland was targeted for this pilot for several reasons:

• A number of RIRDC Rural Women’s Award and previous recipients of the ABC Radio Woman of the Year live and work in the region. This was seen as providing a strong network of potential mentors.

• To support and retain young women in the area by providing learning and training opportunities to progress personal and professional goals.

• The region has been drought declared for the past five years and has a high unemployment rate, particularly amongst young people.

The approach and theoretical model

The overall structure and content of the pilot had three key features. Firstly, it utilised an integrated approach using three key interlinked components: leadership, skill development and the mentoring partnership.

Secondly, the pilot had a strong theoretical basis: the Maturity Continuum – Dependence to Interdependence Model. This model was originally articulated by Steven Covey in the book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (1989). This model is used in relation to personal and organisational growth. On the maturity continuum, dependence is referred to as the paradigm of the ‘you’ and ‘I’, emphasising the importance of looking after individual and private needs in areas such as self confidence and self reliance. The interdependence end of the paradigm uses the language of ‘we’, doing things collaboratively and thinking and acting in a collective context.

Using this approach, this pilot was based on the principle that the private needs of participants, particularly self esteem and self efficacy (private realm), need to be developed and nurtured in order for young women to be able to make a meaningful contribution at a wider community level (public realm), as articulated by one staff member:

You need to look after the private side to graduate to the public side… it is about facilitating the move from dependent to independent to interdependent.
In this model, mentors act as role models for their mentees through their individual relationships and also at a collective level through workshop involvement. The identification by each mentee of a goal setting activity was the central activity which brought all aspects of the pilot together, focused mentees’ progression along the maturity continuum, and empowered mentees to identify leadership roles that they might aspire to within the community.

Thirdly, a two-tiered approach was used to allow for maximum community participation in the pilot. The first tier of the pilot commenced with 29 original mentoring relationships. The second tier provided current mentees with the opportunity to invite a guest into the pilot, exposing them to new leadership skills and training, and thereby extending the pilot to 58 community based partnerships.

4.3 Structure and content of the pilot

4.3.1 Overview of structure and content

The structure and content reflected the integrated approach described above, which interlinked leadership, skill development and the mentoring partnership. The training component included four workshops, two of which were attended by both mentees and mentors.

The pilot was run by the Coordinator and the Facilitator, who worked closely together from the initial proposal stage through to the delivery and completion stage of the pilot.

4.3.2 Training component (leadership and development)

The workshop programme was focused around action planning and skills development. It was strongly informed by the key knowledge and skills mentees identified that they required to reach their goals during the initial phone interviews with the Coordinator.

The workshops focused on building skills and capabilities that would provide the critical foundations for mentees’ pursuit of possible leadership opportunities. They were therefore process-orientated, and focused on providing a space in which participants felt validated, supported and connected with other women. External facilitators and trainers were kept to a minimum: ‘the more talking heads there are the less personal growth there will be for participants’.

Leadership and development workshops

The structure and content of the workshop sessions (summarised in Table 3.1) was based on the Maturity Continuum-Dependence to Interdependence Model. The facilitator designed and delivered most of the workshop with mentors sharing the facilitation of some sessions. Each workshop was held in a different location in the Wide Bay Burnett region.

Mentors acted as role models to mentees both in their individual relationships and through their participation in workshops one and four. In Workshop One, mentors shared the facilitation of one leadership lesson, and mentees identified a goal setting activity. In Workshop Three, mentees were required to introduce an invited guest, and those mentees whose mentors were facilitating were also required to introduce their mentor to the participants. In the final workshop and celebratory event, mentees introduced their mentors and shared their own leadership lesson from the programme and their mentoring partnerships.
Table 3.1: Structure and content of the Wide Bay Burnett Workshop Sessions

**Workshop One**

**Welcome workshop, Creating a personal vision and profile:** mentors and mentees met for the first time and were introduced to the pilot as a group. Mentees discussed with the mentors their goal setting activity and what they hoped to achieve for themselves and their community by being involved in the pilot. It was also an opportunity for mentees to gain insight into their mentor’s background and the experience and expertise they would be able to offer.

Specific sessions included:
- Mentoring Partnerships-The Matching Process
- Direct Influencing Stabilising Conscientious (DISC) -Understanding Communication Styles
- Programme Expectations
- Goal Setting Workshop
- Round Table Introductions
- The Mentoring Partnership - Reality Bytes - How to Achieve the Goals
- Mentoring in Action Panel Session.
- The Mentoring Plan - The Relationship Commitments

**Workshop Two**

**Leadership and development workshop, Learning to lead:**

This session comprised the first of the two personal and professional skills development workshops for mentees. The skills and leadership needs were determined by the mentees which included self confidence and self esteem.

Specific sessions included:
- Project Update and Mentoring Partnerships
- Winning What You want Workshop (external facilitator)
- Who are you inviting to Workshop 3?

**Workshop Three**

**Leadership and development workshop, Empowering others:**

This personal and professional skills development workshop was focused on goal setting, self confidence and branding, empowering others and time management and team building. Mentees were asked to invite a guest to the session, acting as a mentor themselves for their invited guests. Four mentors acted as facilitators of this workshop as well as an inspirational speaker. The 2007 winner of the RIRDC Rural Women’s Award was also introduced to mentees. In the ‘workshop rounds’, mentees had a choice of sessions they could attend.

Specific sessions included:
- Chasing your dreams - Achieving Your Goals (guest speakers)
- Workshop Round 1: Mentees had a choice of ‘Empowering Yourself’, ‘My Personal Brand’, ‘Empowering Others’ (run by mentors)
- Workshop Round 2: Mentees had the same options as above, as well as ‘Managing Your Time’, ‘My Personal Brand’, ‘Empowering Others’
- Picture your Fabulous Future

**Workshop Four**

**Celebratory event (World Rural Women’s Day 15th October 2007), Celebrating Leadership:** Mentees and mentors came together to acknowledge achievements of the pilot.

This was the second opportunity for mentees and mentors to come together as a group. The purpose of the event was to finalise the mentoring partnerships between mentees and mentors and the goal setting activities, and celebrate achievements. A training session on public speaking was also included as well as another inspirational speaker.

Specific sessions included:
- If Not Now When? What’s Your Dream (external facilitator)
- Communicating with a group (external facilitator)
- Your Mentoring Partnership
Written materials
The written materials included:

- a one page, three stage programme overview, which focused on individual mentee project goals, providing an overview of the pilot for both mentees and mentors. This was considered important to maintain focus on building and supporting the skills and confidence of mentees as opposed to simply providing information that may not find relevant.
- a workshop workbook manual
- a mentoring manual.

All the above documents (as well as additional reading materials) were provided at the outset of the pilot in one package.

4.3.3 Mentoring component

Recruitment and selection of participants
A variety of avenues were used to recruit mentees and mentors, including:

- a media release
- distributing the Expression of Interest form to a range or organisations
- seeking contacts through key stakeholders such as the Wide Bay Burnett Area Consultative Committee
- actively seeking out key individuals known to the Facilitator and Coordinator, who were personally invited to submit an Expression of Interest.

Potential mentees and mentors applied by completing an Expression of Interest form. Participants were selected through a competitive application process by an independent selection committee, on the basis of their commitment and capacity to achieve in the programme. The selection panel included representatives from the Wide Bay Burnett Area Consultative Committee, the Bundaberg Enterprise Centre, and the Kingaroy State High School. The selection panel reviewed all applications and a short list was generated. Important factors considered in the selection process for mentees included:

- their age
- whether they resided in the region
- their commitment to pursuing their goals
- their ability to commit to the pilot
- their willingness to develop their leadership skills.

Telephone interviews were then conducted by the pilot Coordinator and Facilitator with those on the short list, which included specific discussion of the goals mentees hoped to pursue in the pilot.

Mentors were similarly recruited through an Expression of Interest process and selected by the committee on the basis of:

- their life and work experiences
- their willingness to share their knowledge and skills and time with participants.

Recruitment and selection of mentees and mentors emphasised the importance of being ready for participation in the pilot. Some potential mentors self-selected themselves out of the pilot after realising that they would not have the time to commit to be a mentor.

Matching and introductions
The matching of mentees to mentors was focused on the future (ie what mentees wanted to achieve) rather than the past. It centred around the goals of the mentee, and which mentor would be best placed
to support the mentee to work towards their goals. This meant that individual personalities and personal connections were not critical considerations in the matching process.

Mentors and mentees were introduced to each other for the first time during the first workshop.

Exit strategy
The celebratory event not only marked and celebrated the conclusion of the pilot, but also aimed to help mentees and mentors to make the transition to the next stage. This ‘transition’ was not necessarily about maintaining the mentoring relationship, but more about continuing the pursuit of the mentee’s goals as illustrated in the following quotes from pilot staff:

Transition was about re-evaluating and moving forward.

It is a shame this cannot continue – they [the mentees] don’t want it to finish…but we emphasise that the goal should never finish. They need to think about it as the transition, not the end.

Although mentees were invited to continue their relationship with mentors, there was no expectation that this should occur as explained by pilot staff:

The drive to continue should not come from us [the pilot], it needs to come from them.

4.3.4 Networking component
Whilst the pilot did not actively encourage the referral of mentees onto leadership opportunities, part of the role of the mentor was to facilitate networking opportunities for their mentee (as relevant to their goals).

4.3.5 Pilot Management and Administration
Role of the Coordinator
The pilot Coordinator had responsibility for the overall coordination and management of the pilot. This included responsibility for developing the original proposal to OfW, preparing progress reports for OfW, developing the selection criteria for mentees and mentors, developing forms, and organising mailouts and workshops (including appointment of facilitators and trainers and preparation of supporting materials).

The Coordinator worked closely with the Facilitator, who had particular expertise in mentoring. The Facilitator was primarily responsible for the overall design of the pilot, including development of the workshop agendas and materials.

Support and communication for mentors and mentees
Mentees and mentors were provided with training (in the workshops), as well as supporting written material about their roles and responsibilities. Both groups were encouraged to stay focused on working towards the mentee’s goals and using this as a way of remaining accountable to the programme. Although there was a recognition that mentees and mentors would talk about personal issues outside of their goals, this was not encouraged due to a desire to keep the pilot as structured as possible.

At each of the workshops the Coordinator and Facilitator talked to each of the mentees on an individual basis to ensure that they were meeting with their mentors. Contact was also made with mentees in between the workshops.

Evaluation
Evaluation forms were completed at the conclusion of each workshop.
4.4 Overall response to the pilot

Mentees, mentors and stakeholders have generally responded very well to the pilot:

- Mentees have benefited from their experience of the workshop sessions and their mentoring relationships.
- Mentees have formed strong bonds with some of their fellow participants and have been inspired by guest speakers.
- The workshop sessions have not only proved important for up-skilling mentees but also provided an opportunity for leaders in small communities to meet leaders from other communities, interact with others and share experiences.
- The goal setting activity was beneficial for a range of mentees, regardless of age, education and professional and personal interests. This activity created a space where women were able to focus on themselves and their aspirations in a structured way.
- The pilot has played a key role in providing mentees with enough self-confidence to set and pursue goals.

4.5 Reported impacts and outcomes of the pilot

4.5.1 Overall impacts and outcomes

Mentees

For the majority of mentees, the most significant impacts of the pilot included:

- **Improved self confidence**, which has been an important precursor to enable women to set and pursue personal and professional goals: ‘I now realise that I do have skills I can contribute to my community’. It has also equipped some women to take risks and seize opportunities when they arise.

- **Improved self awareness** – mentees reported a greater sense of self awareness which has helped them to achieve their goals:
  
  *I am more aware, confident and assertive in what I say and do. In my own job I support people to get into the workforce. It was nice to get that kind of support for myself from my mentor.*

- **Providing a space in which women could focus on themselves.** The pilot provided young women who had left the workforce to have children and now wanting to re-enter the workforce the motivation and stimulation they wanted:
  
  *It was just what I needed. I have been out of the workforce for five years. I had lost my self-confidence. I wanted to prove to myself that there was more to me than just being a mum.*

- **Achieving greater clarity around personal and professional goals.** The pilot’s focus on goal setting was particularly important for some mentees as illustrated by the following comments from mentees:
  
  *The goal setting process enabled me to prioritise what is important in my life.*

  *I have learnt a lot about goal setting and how to achieve my goals. I did not think I would have come this far.*

  *I cannot express what a difference this programme has made to my self esteem, motivation and level of organisation. My goals have continued to grow and change – but the bottom line is that I now have identified my goals and priorities.*
**Enhanced social support networks.** Young women were able to build their social support networks by meeting other women through the training. Outside of the workshop sessions, mentees also met up with other mentees socially, which was an important form of support for some. Mentees found an opportunity to talk to other women about personal issues which they may not have been able to do otherwise, due to isolation or family commitments.

Important impacts for a smaller number of mentees included:

- **Increased knowledge of the community and networks to access.** The mentoring relationship played a critical role in increasing mentees’ knowledge of their communities and networks they can access to further their goals:

  *My mentor helped me to get to know who is who in Bundaberg, provided me access to local knowledge and introduced me to new people.*

- **Improved awareness of others in the community,** particularly due to the diversity of mentees:

  *...as one of the ‘older’ members of the group, I have been humbled by some of the amazing young women within our group – girls with stories of very challenged backgrounds who have no chips on their shoulders and just want to get out and do their best for their communities. I feel inspired by them and excited about their future.*

- **Improved organisational and communication skills.** Some mentees have learnt critical organisation and time management skills, such as:

  – turning up on time and attending training was an important outcome for some
  
  – improved coordination and organisation skills - even simple activities like deciding to organise a ‘how the host a murder party’ was a significant step for one mentee, to commit to a task, organise it and deliver it was an outcome for her.

Some mentees experienced quite concrete and specific outcomes in relation to their careers, education and community participation, for instance:

- A mentee spoke at a Queensland rural women’s function.
- Another mentee started her own mentoring programme for school children in the school where she worked, with the support and advice of her mentor.
- One mentee expanded the delivery of a community based employment programme to a new region, aided by access to important networks through her mentor. This has had further impacts professionally for the mentee: she received a promotion as she was able to demonstrate commitment through achieving her goal.
- A further mentee completed a traineeship whilst in the pilot, whilst another completed her Certificate 4 diploma to be a trainer and assessor.

The achievements for some young women need to be understood within the context of their own personal circumstances. For some mentees, being able to organise their work and family commitments to attend all of the workshops, work with other women in a team, and communicate effectively with their mentor were all important impacts. Whilst these could be considered to be small steps for some, they could also be regarded as the critical foundations for the pathway toward leadership: *you don’t need to be a leader to be able to demonstrate leadership qualities*.

**Mentors**

For mentors, the most significant impact of the pilot was being recognised and acknowledged for having a valued skill set. As one mentor commented:

*I have now realised that I have been mentoring all my life and I have been given the opportunity to be formally recognised as a mentor.*
Other impacts reported included:

- The satisfaction of watching their mentee grow and develop: ‘watching them [mentees] grow in self esteem and confidence, forming new friendships.’

- A greater awareness of women’s range of skills in the wider region, reaffirming mentors’ view that there is considerable potential to be harnessed for the future sustainability of the area.

- Enhanced respect in the community and workplace. One mentor commented that she had gained respect:

  *Because I have participated in this programme and got five mentees involved I now have so much more respect from my peers at work. This has been an incredibly positive change.*

**Community**

The perceived impacts for the wider community from the pilot included:

- Enhanced community capacity. There was agreement that the community can only benefit from having a group of women return to the community after participating in the pilot who are more motivated, confident and inspired. As explained by one mentor:

  *People will go back into their communities after reaching significant achievements. They will mentor and encourage others.*

  The pursuit of individual professional goals also had some positive impacts for the community. For example one mentee refined her skills in leather work and jewellery making, which helped her to pass on this skill to others in the community through teaching courses.

- Broadening community networks, due to the broad catchment area: ‘it was great to get experience to go somewhere else outside of our own small community’.

- Participation of Indigenous women in the pilot. Although the pilot did not specifically set out to target Indigenous women or include an indigenous component, Indigenous participants have experienced:

  - a new found respect from the wider community because of their participation in the pilot, as the outcomes of the pilot have become known

  - greater interaction with the broader community, particularly with women outside of their immediate communities: ‘for the Indigenous community this pilot has made a difference’.

- Inspire other women outside of the pilot. As mentees have shared their experience of the pilot with their friends, in some instances this has prompted these other young women to consider what they want for their future. As expressed by one mentee: ‘they wanted to know if they could become involved with the programme as well’.

### 4.6 Assessment of pilot components

#### 4.6.1 Strengths and limitations of each of the components

**Training**

On the whole, most mentees found the content and delivery of the training to be relevant and appropriate, although a minority found it less beneficial than the others.

The mentees who found the training beneficial highlighted the following issues:

- The high quality of the facilitation and delivery.

- The process focused nature of the training, which encouraged the development of mentees' self-esteem due to being in a validating environment and feeling connected with other mentees. Project staff felt that there was particular value in the facilitator not always being a ‘talking head’ at the front talking at participants, but rather working their way around the room.
The variety of topics covered in the workshops, as one young woman commented:

*The topics were broad enough that it related to everyone’s career and goals and it was professional enough that we were all able to learn something new.*

The value of particular workshop sessions eg those on:

- ‘Empowering others’ was an innovative way of introducing new people to the programme and providing mentees with an opportunity to use their communication and relationship building skills in convincing someone outside of the pilot to take part.
- Self-esteem: ‘I enjoyed it. It reaffirmed to me that what I was doing was OK’.
- ‘Self-talk’ was pivotal for one mentee realising the importance of believing in yourself and telling yourself you can achieve goals.

Interaction and discussion. The time management session was delivered by a mentor who worked full time and had a large family. The session turned into an interactive forum where mentees were able to relate their own experience:

*It was delivered in a very professional but nurturing manner. It was extremely inclusive of participants and tapped into the personal experiences, goals and aspirations of the mentors and mentees.*

Observing their fellow mentees develop and developing friendships: ‘coming together is very important, particularly for country towns, it’s important to have a workshop to go to.’

The participation of mentors in the workshop sessions was regarded as particularly valuable by some, both mentees and mentors. It was seen to effectively demonstrate to mentees how ‘others have done it’ and also in validating the skill sets of mentors:

*I was so excited to be asked to deliver training. To do something like that made me feel valued and important.*

The main limitations of the training identified included that some (but only a minority of) mentees:

- did not find the content to be beneficial eg due to not being pitched at the right level:
  
  *I have done a lot of this stuff before so there was not a great impact for me or anything that really stood out.*

- would have preferred weekend sessions so that they could stay overnight and get to know each other better outside of the sessions
- would have liked more opportunities to interact with other mentees so that some of the shyer participants could have engaged more
- would have preferred smaller groups so that the facilitator could provide more one-to-one attention to some mentees; the opportunities for this were felt to be limited in the large group
- (possibly related to the above) found it intimidating to even attend the training, with some mentees being too shy to do so and having almost no experience mixing with other women: *the biggest challenge was getting her into the training room*. Nonetheless, this did not mean that those mentors did not benefit from the training – they were still able to build their networks and gain enough self confidence to conduct conversations with people they met through the pilot.

The training provided to mentors in Workshop One was generally regarded as effective in setting the expectations at the outset of the pilot and defining the role of the mentor. Nonetheless, some found the supporting written material of more value compared with the workshop session: *the first workshop made me feel inadequate. The best training was reading the material given to use*. 
Mentoring
Mentees’ experience of the mentoring component varied. For some it was an inspirational experience that was pivotal to them being able to pursue their goals. For others, it was a minor part of their overall experience of the pilot.

The aspects of the mentoring component which mentees identified as most valuable were:

- the contacts and networks their mentors provided them with access to: ‘My mentor is great, she is always inviting me to functions and events in the region that might be of interest to me’
- sharing knowledge and expertise
- being given the opportunity to see their mentor in action (eg seeing them present or speak at a community event) was valuable for demonstrating that women can be successful community leaders.

Other beneficial aspects of the mentoring included:

- having a role model: ‘I was very happy with my mentor match. She gave me something to aspire to’
- the mutual admiration and respect that defined the relationship: ‘we have mutual respect and admiration for each other – we will definitely keep in touch’
- being matched with a mentor who did not live in their immediate community, or conversely, being matched with someone they already knew (which was especially important for those who were particularly shy and lacking the confidence to participate in the pilot in the first place)
- the fact that accountability was an important feature of the mentoring relationship (and the pilot as a whole); requiring mentors to participate in the first and last workshops provided an incentive for mentors to sustain their commitment to the pilot and support their mentees to achieve their goals.

Nonetheless, some mentees found the overall pilot to be beneficial but did not find the mentoring relationship to be particularly satisfying. Some of the limitations of the mentoring component identified included:

- One mentee felt her mentoring relationship did not work because she already knew her mentor very well and had worked with her in the past. This made it difficult for the mentee to feel completely at ease in discussing her personal and professional goals, and she found that her mentor was not able to help her pursue her goals.
  
  ‘…maybe it is not good to be matched with someone you know… I enjoyed her company but she was never going to be able to help me achieve my goals… my goals were about returning to work and still being able to care for my children. My mentor does not have any children.’

- Some would have preferred more face-to-face contact: ‘I would have liked to visit my mentor. The only reason that I didn’t was because I was busy achieving my goal’. However, distance was not a limiting factor for some, as articulated by one mentee:

  ‘It did not matter that my mentor lived 300km away as she made herself available through phone and email. Also, we met up personally when the opportunity arose through work travel.’

Mentors generally enjoyed the process of meeting and supporting their mentee. Nonetheless, some felt that they should have contributed more to the relationship and were surprised that their mentee did not really need a lot from them: ‘I felt underutilised.’ Some mentors would have also benefited from additional training and networking with other mentors to provide reassurance and guidance throughout the pilot.

Networking
Networking occurred through the training and through mentoring relationships. The training component was seen as particularly critical for sustaining networks.
Although having a very diverse range of women in the pilot did present challenges to the Coordinator and Facilitator in designing the overall package, it meant that mentees were exposed to other women who lived outside of their immediate communities. This networking was important for discussing issues affecting their community (e.g., council amalgamations) and providing an opportunity for mentees to show care and support to other women. Women would also promote community events or initiatives they were organising at the workshops.

Young women liked the networking with other mentees because it expanded their sense of community. As one mentee commented:

> I have met a group of women I would never had been exposed to otherwise… I realised that as a community we forget to be totally inclusive… in our own communities we tend to value the views of those who tend to be more educated – it expanded my understanding of community.

Mentors felt that the networking component did not provide enough for mentors:

> I would have loved more of an opportunity to network with other mentors. The mentees got a lot out of networking with each other in the training and being introduced to people through their mentors. Even if we [mentors] just had another day to get together that would have been great.

### 4.6.2 Response to the overall package

There was agreement by mentors, mentees and pilot staff that it was critical that the pilot included the three components: training, mentoring and networking. The key benefit of the model identified was that it made the pilot more holistic, including provision of mentoring relationships as well as opportunities to come together:

> The more holistic a programme is the better the time spent… women in small rural communities need to network with a broader community.

The integration of the three components of the pilot was also viewed as beneficial, particularly the participation of mentors in the workshops sessions and the goal setting activity forming a central part of the mentoring relationship and the workshops.

### 4.7 Programme management and administration

#### 4.7.1 Overall management and administration

There was a general view that the pilot was effectively coordinated and delivered. Mentees and mentors felt that both the Coordinator and the Facilitator were well equipped to deliver the programme. Although both staff members resided outside of the region, they had well established networks in the region and good local knowledge.

#### 4.7.2 Marketing and recruitment strategies

By far the most effective method of recruiting women into the pilot, both young and more mature, proved to be the one-to-one phone calls of encouragement to apply, following recommendations from relevant agencies. Having the Coordinator as the single point of contact to answer questions regarding the pilot’s aims and expectations was regarded as important in assisting potential participants to assess their suitability for the programme.

The use of a selection committee was seen as a particularly valuable process to engender stakeholder support and ownership of the pilot from the outset.

#### 4.7.3 Recruitment targets

The final number of 29 mentees and 30 mentors in the first wave was less than that required by OfW (60), although the second tier of recruitment of mentees (who had much more limited involvement in the
pilot) brought the numbers to very close to this (58). Given the timeline pressures, the final numbers met the expectations of pilot staff.

The burden of the drought, not only physically but emotionally and socially on the region and its communities, was reported to have reduced the level of interest in the pilot and in the number of applications received.

4.8 Pilot design

The pilot had a strong, documented underpinning philosophy based on the Maturity Continuum Model (as outlined in Section 4.2.3), and this was felt to be beneficial for the pilot. This was regarded as important to enhance the adaptability of the programme, and enable others with varying skill sets to deliver the programme.

Given the limited timeframe for the pilot, the project staff found the specified aims and objectives too broad and ambitious. They therefore decided to mould the pilot in a way that they felt was more realistic, yet still in keeping with the aims of the wider programme. Giving the pilot a clear structure was part of this strategy. Emphasis was placed on increasing self esteem as a critical foundation for development of the skills and capabilities required to seek out and secure leadership opportunities.

4.8.1 Auspicing agency

Although RIRDC has an existing reputation in rural and regional Australia, it was critical that the Coordinator and Facilitator as individuals also had established credibility with the group of mentors and other community stakeholders.

4.8.2 Coordination and support provided to participants

Mentees and mentors generally felt well supported by the Coordinator and Facilitator. Some particularly appreciated the expertise of the Facilitator, who had a background in mentoring rural women.

Both mentees and mentors were happy with the level and nature of communication from the Coordinator, and felt comfortable approaching her with any questions or issues.

Mentors would have liked some additional opportunities for training and networking with their fellow mentors as an added form of support.

4.8.3 Cost issues and challenges

Pilot staff felt that the funding provided for the pilot was not sufficient to design and deliver the programme, given its ambitious aims.

There was a view that the money allocated to the pilot was not commensurate with the desired outcomes and recruitment targets.

4.8.4 Accessibility issues

Providing child care support as part of the workshops proved important to ensuring attendance, and was widely supported.

Mentees made some sacrifices to participate in the pilot. Many took annual leave to attend the workshops and travelled between two and four hours each way with no travel allowance, requiring many to leave home at 6am for a 9am start. Some also found it difficult to be released from work commitments.

Geographical location was not a factor considered in the matching criteria, so some mentees and mentors lived up to five hours apart. This meant that telephone and email were central methods of communication.

Some women who had a positive and beneficial experience of the pilot overall were not able to attend a large part of the training due to clashes with work commitments and the location of the training.
However, this did not detract from the overall benefit of the pilot for those participants, particularly those who had a very supportive mentor and were clear about their goals.

4.9 Suggestions for improvement

4.9.1 Overall areas for improvement

The key areas identified for improvement to the pilot included the following:

- **A longer timeframe for implementation** – there was a general view that, given the aims of the YWLMP and OfW’s requirements of the pilots, a timeframe of 12 months would be more realistic. Additional time was felt to be required to ensure that mentees and mentors are able to develop confidence to drive the relationship.

- **Inclusion of an additional component focused on putting women into decision making roles and equipping them with the appropriate skills to do this.** To deliver a programme that is consistent with the aims and objectives around leadership outcomes, the pilot should have included an additional component that focused on women who were ready to pursue leadership opportunities. This pilot did not focus on putting women into leadership roles - rather, it worked at a much basic level to enhance mentees’ self-efficacy so that they might be able to move into leadership positions into the future. As one pilot staff member commented:
  
  *This pilot was pitched at a whole of community level. Next time it needs to focus on those women who are ready to enter into leadership roles.*

- **Further clarifying and articulating the underlying philosophy of the YWLMP** to emphasise the development of self confidence and self esteem as critical foundations to develop leadership skills: ‘you need to crawl before you can walk.’

- **Reconsidering the target group for the pilot** and whether it should be focused on the same age, education, expertise or life stages as this pilot. Suggestions included the following:
  
  - including narrower age ranges - for example those aged 17-25 or 35-45 years old; it was felt that this might have made the training more relevant to more participants
  
  - having one for women who are established in their careers but looking for the next step, and another for women who need guidance in setting personal and professional goals and have comparatively less experience in work or community life.

- **Developing similar programmes for men** to develop skills and network with other men, given the context of the drought.

- **Making more strategic linkages of the pilot with the RIRDC Rural Women’s Award scheme** to enhance the sustainability of future programmes and their relevance to wider policy and programme agendas. Award recipients are often keen to make a contribution as a form of reciprocity for the opportunities they were afforded as a result of being an award recipient. Award recipients throughout the country could be considered as a potential pool of mentors.

4.9.2 Specific areas for improvement

**Training**

Whilst most mentees responded well to the training, some felt that more could have been done to including training options to cater for differing levels of experience and interests. This would increase the scope of a programme to address all levels of competencies and offer a more diverse range of topics (eg one woman wanted to receive training in project management and marketing to reach her goals). One woman suggested that e-learning options could also be considered suitable. Offering a range of options was seen as a way of retaining the diversity of women in the pilot.
Networking
Both mentees and mentors wanted additional time to network amongst themselves. Additional time could have been allocated in the training sessions for informal interactions amongst mentees. Overnight training weekends were identified as a possible option for allowing mentees to network with each other outside of the training sessions.

Mentors would have particularly liked to meet with other mentors in the pilot.

Mentoring
The following were suggested improvements to the mentoring component of the pilot.

- Provision of additional training and ongoing support to mentors to help them understand and fulfil their role and responsibilities, since some did not feel confident in their mentoring skills.

- Considering different approaches to mentoring that do not rely on face to face contact, due to the challenges of distance and time:

  *For women in a rural and regional setting, there are better, more valuable ways of conducting a mentoring relationship.*

- Improved approaches to matching, included the possibility of having a workshop at the beginning with mentors and mentees unmatched so that the Coordinator and Facilitator could have developed a better knowledge of participants:

  *…rather than being matched before hand you could possibly hold a networking event at the start and see what natural and synchronistic matched occur. I think it would be a lot more effective.*

  The mentoring literature describes this approach as ‘natural matching’.

- More structured focus to peer mentoring, given the time that mentees spend together through the training.

4.10 Conclusion
The Wide Bay Burnett pilot represents an approach that is strongly grounded in a conceptual model of mentoring and leadership development, which has informed the three components of the pilot and enabled an integrated approach. The pilot has demonstrated the value of an integrated and highly structured model which aims to equip young women with foundation skills that will help them identify leadership opportunities in the future.

Mentor participation in the delivery of training has also proved to be valuable for not only imparting skills but also for providing visible role models to mentees as a group.

The pilot has had significant impacts and outcomes for mentees, mentors and the community. Overall, mentees enjoyed the pilot and reported a range of benefits and impacts as a result of their experience.

There have, however, been some challenges for the pilot. The pilot staff responsible for designing and delivering the training programme found it challenging to cater for the range of young women in terms of age, skill and experience – some lacked the self confidence to even attend, while others were seeking additional stimulation. Participants also had to make sacrifices in terms of their work and family commitments to participate in the pilot.
5 Wheatbelt ACC, Western Australia

This chapter discusses the pilot operating in the Wheatbelt of WA.

5.1 Data sources

The following pilot participants and stakeholders were consulted with as part of the evaluation:

- two pilot staff
- 21 mentees
- five mentors

5.2 Background and context to the pilot

5.2.1 Pilot participants

Mentees

39 young women applied to be mentees in the Wheatbelt pilot, and all were accepted. However, three of these women withdrew from the pilot, which left a total of 36 participants in the pilot. The mentees ranged in age from 19-47 years, with an average age of 27.

Most mentees had a combination of motivations for wanting to participate in the pilot. However there was a distinct community focus in the motivations and a desire by many to:

- build friendships and networks with other women in the Wheatbelt:
  
  [I wanted] to develop friendships with women in neighbouring towns in similar circumstances and then expand my skills.

- build self confidence and develop new skills to contribute to existing roles they have in the community:
  
  I have become involved in a committee in a local sports club. I wanted to gain skills to deal with this position, and to be able to help members with any issues they had.

- learn how they could make a contribution to their community: ‘I wanted to meet and network with other women in the Wheatbelt’.

Relative to other factors, career focused motivations were less important for mentees in the Wheatbelt pilot.

Mentors

39 women applied to be mentors in the pilot, all of whom were accepted.

The main motivations for mentors to participate in the programme included:

- they wanted a mentor as a young woman and this was an opportunity to help other young women in the region in this way
- a desire to reconnect with younger women in the region
- being passionate about the challenges experienced by young women in the Wheatbelt and wanting to help women overcome these challenges
- knowing the pilot needed mentors and wanting to ‘help out’.
5.2.2 Auspicing organisation

The pilot is auspiced by the Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee (ACC), which was established in April 1995. This ACC is funded through the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS), and is managed by a committee made up of business leaders and representatives from key economic development and community organisations throughout the region.

ACC's have specific responsibilities in relation to DOTARS, with broader responsibilities to other Australian Government portfolios. The national network of ACCs provides an important link between the Australian Government and rural and metropolitan Australia. ACCs are volunteer, community based organisations which respond to issues in their regions and provide a vital conduit to government on local social and economic conditions.

5.2.3 Rationale and Community context

The Wheatbelt of Western Australia comprises 44 shires, 170 communities and a population of 72,431. It covers 154,862 square kilometres, extending southeast from Perth to Wagin. Yilgarn, Kondinin and Lake Grace Shires make up the eastern boundary, and the region incorporates some 200 kilometres of coastline to the north of Perth.

The pilot aimed to achieve a holistic approach to personal and professional development of the young women with community involvement and leadership as a strong focus. Empowering and up-skilling women was an important feature of the overall approach.

5.3 Structure and content of the pilot

5.3.1 Overview of structure and content

The pilot included four training weekends consisting of a full Saturday and Sunday programme. Mentees were given the opportunity to stay overnight on the Friday and Saturday. The weekend training sessions were a central feature of the pilot, providing for a networking forum as well as a training forum.

Mentees were given the collective task to plan, organise and facilitate a gala luncheon held at the conclusion of the pilot as a major project. It was intended that this process would enable mentees to develop and put into practice organisation and communication skills.

The mentoring component commenced later in the pilot (Weekend Two) when mentors and mentees met each other for the first time (see 5.3.3 for details).

5.3.2 Training component

The four training weekends covered a range of topics including mentoring skills, nutrition and personal presentation advice, personality types, governance and meeting procedures, goal setting and public speaking. The structure and content of the training component was informed by the goals specified by mentees in their original Expression of Interest form.

Mentees came together as a group unmatched for Weekend One. This weekend included training around specific content areas as well as providing an opportunity for mentees to get to know each other. The Coordinator was also able to get to know the mentees in person, and identify their personality types and who they would be best matched with.

During Weekend Two, mentors came together for a day-long training session with an external trainer. Mentees and mentors met for the first time on the second day of Weekend Two. This meant that the mentoring relationships did not commence until July (the pilot was officially launched in May). Mentees also received training in governance and meeting procedures on the second day.

Weekend Three and Four were for mentees only. Weekend Three included training sessions in time management and personal presentation (both by external consultants). A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of communities in the region was an additional exercise undertaken by mentees.
The Weekend Four training topics included media skills, public speaking and goal setting. Two mentors participated in the delivery of the training sessions on media skills and goal setting.

Evening sessions after dinner were used to organise the gala luncheon as well as informal interactions with other mentees.

All of the training sessions were delivered by external facilitators and trainers, two of whom were mentors.

Table 4.1: Structure and content of the Wheatbelt Training Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekend One</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Official Launch introduction of the Mentees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explanation about the pilot expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting to know each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>networking and team building activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Power of Nutrition’ (external facilitator)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>introduction to Myer Briggs personality types (external facilitator)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Weekend Two</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Getting to know you all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expectations of Mentors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentoring skills workshops (external facilitator)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community skills Audit &amp; Socialising in Conference room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Governance skills (external consultant)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meet &amp; Greet Mentors &amp; Mentees</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentoring Time &amp; workshops (external facilitator)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Weekend Three</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Styles &amp; Colours ‘You are what you Wear’ or ‘What not to Wear’ (external consultant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time Matters (external consultant)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community SWOT Analysis</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Weekend Four</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing effective media releases and being interviewed skills (expert mentor)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public speaking skills, self esteem, and exploring &amp; working with difficult personality types (external consultant, Myer Briggs accredited)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gala lunch organisation</td>
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<td>Day 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership and Goal setting workshop (where to from here) (expert mentor)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.3.3 Mentoring component

Recruitment and selection of participants
Methods used to recruit mentees and mentors included:

- advertisements in local newspapers
- information posted (including the Expression of Interest Form) on the Wheatbelt ACC web-site using personal networks of Wheatbelt ACC staff, in particular the Coordinator to generate interest
- the Coordinator and Executive Officer of the Wheatbelt ACC were interviewed about the pilot on local ABC radio
- the Coordinator targeted well known women in the region to participate as mentors.

Pilot staff reported that the Wheatbelt ACC received over 100 inquiries from young women interested in being a mentee, of whom 39 submitted an application (via an Expression of Interest form). This included questions about goals they wanted to achieve, their reasons for wanting a mentor, training and course preferences, and hobbies and interests. All 39 young women who submitted a written application were accepted into the pilot. A decision was made not to interview applicants on the basis that these young women had already demonstrated their commitment and interest in the pilot and fulfilled the following selection criteria:

- being 18-35 years old rural women in or from the Wheatbelt ACC area
- residing or coming from the Wheatbelt ACC area
- demonstrating a desire to participate in the programme and being willing to abide by all the policies and procedures of the pilot
- being able to obtain parental/guardian permission and ongoing support for participation in the programme (if necessary)
- agreeing to a nine month commitment to the programme
- being willing to communicate with the mentor weekly
- completing the selection procedure
- agreeing to attend mentee training sessions as required
- being willing to communicate regularly with the Coordinator of the pilot to monitor the success of the mentoring relationship.

Phone contact was made with the 39 mentees to advise them that they had been accepted into the pilot and to discuss the criteria and expectations for this.

Mentors were required to complete an application form including:

- their education, employment and community involvement history
- their reasons for being interested in the pilot
- their views on the challenges young women face in the Wheatbelt
- their involvement in any boards or committees
- their interests and hobbies outside of work
- examples of activities their mentee could become involved with
- specific requests in relation to the type of young woman they would prefer to be matched with.

The Coordinator conducted a half hour interview with applicants.
Mentors were required to meet the following selection criteria:

- a commitment to making contact with their mentee at least once a month for six months
- living or working in Wheatbelt or surrounding areas
- being able to attend the mentor welcome and training session and meet with their mentee the following day.

**Process for matching**

The Coordinator was able to meet mentees face to face in Weekend One and mentors in Weekend Two. The Coordinator undertook the matching process, informed by the observations from Weekends One, the first day of Weekend Two and the information collected during the selection process. Mentors and mentees met each other for the first time on the second day of Weekend Two.

Critical factors that were considered in the mentee mentor matches were common interests, ambitions and areas of expertise.

5.3.4 Networking component

The networking component of the pilot primarily took place during the training weekends, through mentees networking with each other. This mainly occurred during breaks in between training sessions, particularly on the Saturday evenings during mealtimes. The Coordinator also used her own networks as well as the Wheatbelt ACC’s to provide additional information and referrals to mentees throughout the pilot. This information and referral was designed to assist mentees to reach the goals they identified at the outset of the pilot – for instance, additional training and courses, scholarship opportunities, community grants information etc.

Individual mentoring relationships were also considered a networking opportunity for mentees to be introduced to other individuals or organisations that might further their goals or interests.

5.3.5 Pilot Management and Administration

**Role of the Coordinator**

The Coordinator was responsible for the following aspects of the pilot:

- day to day management, organisation and facilitation of the pilot, including the organisation of venues, speakers, trainers and preparing all necessary material and forms
- monitoring the mentoring relationship
- monitoring the progress of the mentoring relationship and checking participants progress monthly
- development of the training programme, and sourcing appropriate trainers and facilitators
- preparation of progress reports for OfW.

**Support and communication with mentors and mentees**

Mentors and mentees were required to make contact once a month. This largely happened via telephone and email due to the significant distances between many mentees and their mentors.

At the end of each month the Coordinator sent out a form to all mentees and mentors to monitor how the relationship was progressing. The form included information about the frequency and nature of contact, any issues that have emerged and how these were or were not managed, their views on the compatibility of the match and any additional support required.

In addition, the Coordinator had frequent contact with mentees through the training weekends and via email, which was also an important strategy for ‘keeping track’ of mentees.
5.4 Overall response to the pilot

The overall response to this pilot has been very positive. Participants have found the pilot to be effective in a number of ways but in particular for:

- meeting other young women
- building self confidence
- developing new skills.

Nonetheless, young women in this pilot had to make significant sacrifices to participate. Many drove for up to five hours each way to attend the training weekends as well as leaving family and business responsibilities. Making this sort of sacrifice clearly impacted on mentees’ attitudes to the pilot. Some felt that they gave a lot of their time and energy to the pilot and ‘did not get much back.’

While participants did not reflect negatively on the quality of mentor mentee matches and mentoring relationships, the mentoring component was not as central to participant’s overall experience of the pilot. This was primarily due to distance and time, and because many mentees were more focused on the training component of the pilot. It is important to note that this did not have a negative impact on mentees’ overall assessments of the impacts and outcomes of the pilot, but rather reflects the community context for the pilot with isolation and distance preventing a lot of face to face contact.

For mentors, the pilot was a chance to offer professional and life experience in the hope that the mentees would continue to reside in the Wheatbelt region and play an active role in their communities.

5.5 Reported impacts and outcomes of the pilot

5.5.1 Outcomes and impacts for mentees

Mentees have experienced a range of outcomes as a result of participating in the pilot.

These outcomes include those related to leadership activity, for example:

- a mentee has taken up a position on the Wheatbelt ACC Board
- a mentee has taken steps to run for local government
- a mentee has enrolled in a university degree.

The most commonly reported impacts for mentees included:

- Meeting other young women. A large number of mentees considered this pilot to be a rare opportunity to come out of their often isolated rural communities and meet other women who may be experiencing similar issues and challenges. For women with children and involved in running family farms, the weekends away were also seen as valuable respite and ‘time away’. Mentees particularly liked the training component of the pilot because they could interact with other young women.

- Enhanced understanding of community. The peer mentoring that occurred through the training has helped mentees build a new awareness of the talent and capabilities that exist in their region. As observed by one mentee: ‘it has opened my eyes to the number of talented women in rural areas.’

- Improved self confidence and self belief as articulated by one mentee:
  
  I have a far greater sense of self-belief and confidence to commit to an action and follow it through.

- Learning outcomes: Mentees have reported acquiring new skill sets as a result of the training such as goal setting skills and strategies for communicating with different personality types.
5.5.2 Outcomes and impacts for mentors

Given that the mentoring component was not as central to the overall experience of the pilot compared to other components, the range of impacts and outcomes for mentors was not as extensive. Mentors generally reflected positively on their overall experience as a mentor, and cited the following impacts:

- a sense of satisfaction from supporting a young person who is a valuable asset to the community
- new found knowledge of the range and type of young women who live in the Wheatbelt region
- observing the growth of young women in the pilot: ‘it has been great for me to see these young women blossom in the programme [pilot]’
- reconnection with young women in the community.

5.5.3 Outcomes and impacts for the community

The reported outcomes and impacts for the community predominantly related to building community capacity and enhanced networks, specifically:

- Enhanced community capacity to confront challenges. Almost all mentees, mentors and pilot staff reported that the key outcome for the community from this pilot has been that a group of young women will go back to their communities as much more empowered, confident and motivated individuals. This was perceived by most to have a positive impact on the capacity of the community at large to face current challenges associated with drought and isolation.

- A newly established network of young women in the Wheatbelt. Many mentees felt that the new friendships they have formed will be sustained beyond the life of the pilot, and that these new bonds have and will continue to provide a valuable support network.

5.6 Assessment of pilot components

5.6.1 Strengths and limitations of each of the components

Training

Mentees responded most positively to the training component of the pilot. Overall participants enjoyed the training, with most mentees finding it relevant to their personal circumstances and needs. There were others, however, who did not find the content of the training as relevant or pitched at an appropriate level.

Mentees liked the training for the following reasons:

- Networking opportunities. Mentees valued the opportunity to come together with other women in the wider Wheatbelt region. Some gained confidence from hearing the stories of others and making new friendships, as articulated by one mentee:

  It has been good for me to hear positive stories, how others are doing things. It built my confidence.

- Relevant and appropriate content. Mentees found some topic areas more relevant and enjoyable than others. The Myer Briggs personality test and types training was generally very popular as was the governance training. For many, this was because they could relate it to issues in their personal and professional lives. One mentee found the governance training of particular relevance:

  The governance session was very hands on and I could relate it to my community. I wanted more.

The level of interest in the area of governance reflects the group of participants. At the time of the evaluation, many mentees were already active in a range of ways in their communities, whether this was by sitting on a committee at their child’s school, coordinating a community centre, or coaching a
sporting team. Managing and navigating decision making processes and structures was a skill set they were already applying in their everyday lives.

Some of the commonly reported limitations of the training were:

- **Diversity of participants.** The diversity of ages, skills set and stated goals made it a challenge for the Coordinator to design and deliver a training programme that was appropriate and meaningful for all mentees. There were different cohorts of women. Some were more experienced professionally and found that they had covered much of the content of the training previously. As articulated by one mentee:
  
  *The training could have been better catered to those that have done this before – it did not extend me where I wanted to go.*

- **The size of the group.** Some felt that having too many mentees in the training sessions made it difficult to get the most out of it. This was particularly the case when mentors and mentees came together as a combined group.

- **Limited use of speakers and trainers from the Wheatbelt.** Some mentees would have liked more of the trainers to have been from the Wheatbelt region. Mentor involvement in training delivery was a highlight for some as expressed by one mentee:
  
  *The last training weekend was fantastic because we had a couple of local Wheatbelt women talking about their careers and community experiences. It would have been good to have more local presenters.*

- **Inappropriate content.** Some found the training sessions on colour, styles and nutrition to be completely inappropriate.
  
  *Topics such as deportment and healthy eating I found quite agonising. I guess I was expecting training of a more professional nature, on leadership, governance, problems solving, networking in communities etc.*

**Group project**

For most mentees, organising the Gala Lunch was a worthwhile learning process. Many felt that they learnt how to work with different personalities, work as a team and get to know other mentees. Other participants found it to be very time consuming and felt that too many people were involved.

**Mentoring**

Although mentees had very few negative things to say about the mentoring component, it was peripheral to the overall experience of the pilot for many mentees. This was due to a number of factors that are arguably specific to the context of this pilot:

- **Distance** – this meant that at the time this evaluation was conducted, many mentees had not met their mentor face to face and were unlikely to do so until the Gala Lunch marking the completion of the pilot. Many mentees had only met with their mentees once or twice during the course of the pilot.

- **Time** – mentors only met their mentees in the second training weekend which further reduced the time for the relationship to be established and develop within the timeframe of the pilot. A number of mentees found that their mentors were ‘very busy people’ and they were sometimes reluctant to initiate contact.

- **Mentoring was not as important as other components** – some mentees did not feel that they needed a mentor and this was not their primary motivation for getting involved, so this meant they rarely contacted their mentor.
Some of the beneficial aspects of the mentoring relationship identified were:

- **Mentees had an impartial party to consult with** on important issues who was not a family member or close friend.
- **Mentees were linked up with a role model** – mentees were pleased with their match but realised that the pilot represents the first stages of their relationship. As commented by one mentee:

  *My mentor was great. She’s a strategic thinker and level headed. This pilot is just the beginning of our relationship.*

For those where the mentoring relationship was a disappointment, mentees cited the following reasons:

- **Lack of structure and guidance.** The absence of clear guidance and structure to the mentoring component meant that some mentees did not know when it was appropriate to contact their mentor:

  *I wanted clearer guidance and more structure. I was only contacting my mentor if I had a problem.*

- **They got more out of their relationship with other mentees.** Some mentees did not find the formal mentoring component to be particularly beneficial, but regarded peer mentoring as a highlight of their experience. As one mentee commented:

  *I have found mentoring qualities have come from other mentees which has meant that my need to contact my mentor has decreased.*

  For these women, their experience of the mentoring component was through coming together with other women in similar, and also completely different, situations to themselves.

Mentors generally enjoyed the experience of mentoring a young woman, however at the time this evaluation was conducted, few had actually met their mentee face to face. Some had had contact via telephone and email. Similarly to mentees, some mentors were unclear about the scope of their role and responsibilities. As articulated by one mentor:

*There was no structure and process throughout. This made it difficult for me because I am time poor and need to know what I am committing to.*

Others felt that they should have contributed more to their mentee, almost carrying a sense of guilt about not being as involved as they expected they would be:

*My mentee wanted little things and I was expecting to have to give a lot more of myself. I felt like I should have been having a more profound impact.*

**Networking**

Networking occurred predominantly through the training weekends, and was considered to be much less structured compared with other components of the pilot. Some felt that the pilot did not actively promote networking, but rather it was an unintended by product of the other components: ‘networking is a key by-product of the programme, mainly through the training’.

Training effectively became a networking activity for many mentees. This was valued for a range of reasons including:

- meeting other young women experiencing similar issues to themselves who they could share stories with and seek support from
- meeting women who were outside of their immediate community
- meeting women who had had very different experiences or were from completely different backgrounds
- the opportunity to interact with guest speakers and trainers.
Some mentees were able to informally network with other mentors on the Saturday evening of Weekend Two. Although this was not built into the weekend programme, a number of mentees and mentors enjoyed meeting the other participants on an informal basis.

Email proved to be an absolutely essential form of networking, particularly networking amongst mentees. Mentees were able to stay in touch with fellow participants in between the training sessions, often providing information and advice, particularly in relation to community issues.

5.6.2 Response to the overall package
Most participants responded positively to having the three components to the pilot. The three components were seen as important for making the pilot relevant to a diverse range of women and learning styles.

There were some who found the training to be of most benefit because of the peer mentoring outcomes. For many of these women, the formal mentoring component was not central. A small number of women indicated that they would have been happy completing the programme without the mentoring component because of the benefit they obtained from the training or networking.

5.7 Programme management and administration

5.7.1 Overall management and administration
Most mentees and mentors felt that the pilot was efficiently coordinated, managed and delivered. Many mentees noted the ‘extra mile’ that the Coordinator was often required to undertake in order to organise the training weekends.

Some limitations of project management identified included:

- Some felt that where feedback was given about the training, this was not always taken on board in the way that it should have been (ie it was not used to improve or amend the training).
- Some mentees raised concerns about the way in which the internal evaluation of the training sessions was handled and responded to. Participants were asked to include their name on the evaluation forms completed at the end of the training sessions. Responses were sometimes not treated confidentially. For instance, there was also a concern that when written feedback was provided that was not entirely supportive of the content or delivery of the training, this was often used inappropriately by connecting individual women by name to their responses in the training sessions. This lack of confidentiality was also illustrated by the fact that the pilot’s final report to OfW included women’s names with the quotes used – a serious breach of recognised protocols for social research.
- Some mentees found the administrative component required of them (e.g. travel forms, evaluation forms) to be repetitive and unnecessary.

5.7.2 Marketing and recruitment strategies
The pilot used a multi-pronged approach to the recruitment of mentees and mentors. While it is difficult to identify one strategy that stood out as being the most effective, the utilisation of existing networks and contacts of the Coordinator and the ACC was pivotal to the pilot being able to successfully recruit mentors and mentees.

5.7.3 Recruitment targets
Of the 39 mentees accepted into the pilot, three withdrew due to conflicting family, community and/or sporting commitments. While this did not meet the recruitment targets set by OfW, given the resources and the timeframe, 36 was a considerable achievement.
5.8 Pilot design

5.8.1 Auspicing agency
The Wheatbelt ACC is unique in that it covers such a large region of WA. There are very few organisations which cover this catchment area with a similar background in programme delivery, particularly community based programmes. The Wheatbelt ACC has therefore been well placed to coordinate and deliver the pilot given its established reputation in the region, its previous work in community capacity building projects, and its organisational infrastructure (including a governance framework) that can support individuals on the ground delivering these programmes.

Local government was not generally viewed as an appropriate auspicing body for a programme of this nature in this region. Local shires tend to be time poor, understaffed and lacking in funding. With 43 Local Government Areas in the Wheatbelt region, it would be a challenge to have one shire take the lead on behalf of all shires without the organisational capacity to do so.

5.8.2 Coordination and support provided to participants
Mentees have generally felt well supported by the Coordinator. Many commented on the passion and commitment demonstrated by the Coordinator, acknowledging the challenges faced in catering for such a diverse group of young women.

5.8.3 Cost issues and challenges
Distance was a limiting factor given the funds available to the pilot. Funds needed to be allocated to the cost of travel and accommodation for mentees, which put pressure on the budget allocated for training. Many of the external consultants and facilitators offered to provide their services either for free or at a significantly reduced rate. These allowances proved critical to delivering the training component of the pilot.

5.8.4 Accessibility issues
There were three key challenges for the pilot in relation to accessibility:

- Distance provided an extra challenge for most participants, although it did not necessarily stop young women from participating.
- Lack of childcare was a significant issue. Whilst the pilot had funds to reimburse for the costs of childcare, this could only be done where the mentee was able to find accredited childcare. This was almost impossible for most women to find in rural locations.
- The costs associated with travel and accommodation. The pilot reimbursed participants for the cost of petrol and covered the overnight accommodation and meal costs of participants. This was essential to enabling participation but also caused some financial challenges for those coordinating the pilot in terms of ensuring there were sufficient funds to deliver a quality programme.

5.9 Suggestions for improvement

5.9.1 Overall areas for improvement
Some felt that the pilot would have benefited from:

- a clearer drive, vision or rationale
- additional time to improve the selection process and allow adequate time for mentoring relationships to be established and developed
- a more professionalised approach, including an understanding of professional boundaries and an ability to respond to constructive criticism; some highlighted that this was just as important as having community knowledge and connections.
5.9.2 Specific areas for improvement

Training
Some felt that the structure and sequencing of the training could have been improved. For instance the goal setting training was held toward the end of the pilot, whereas some thought that it would have been most effective to have had this at the outset as it underpinned the whole pilot.

Networking
To counter the issues associated with distance and isolation, it was suggested that for future programmes, it should be a requirement that mentees be able to access email. Email was used extensively for the pilot, for instance:
- much of the networking amongst mentees occurred via email
- the Coordinator used email to refer mentees onto other relevant programmes, projects or other opportunities that were relevant to their individual goals and interests.

Some would have preferred a more formalised and structured approach to networking, including training on network techniques or profiling some case studies of what networking involves and how other women have successfully networked.

Mentoring
To be of most benefit to both parties, the mentoring relationship needs clear guidance and structure. Some mentees suggested that it would have been useful to have a set task that provided the basis of the mentoring relationship.

Mentees would have liked the opportunity to meet other mentors. As one mentee stated:

\[ \text{It would have been beneficial to catch up with the mentors as a whole group more often as part of the weekends.} \]

5.10 Conclusion

The overall response to this pilot has been very positive. The networking and skill development opportunities have been particularly valued by mentees. The outcomes of this pilot have been considerable, including individual mentees taking up positions on boards and taking steps to run for local government. Women have also gone through a positive learning and development process that has built their self esteem, enhanced their understanding of their community, and broadened their networks. This has put many young women in a better position to identify possible ways they can make a contribution to their community or leadership roles they might like to pursue.

Many participants have made a significant commitment to the pilot, particularly attending the training sessions which required travelling long distances and, for those with children, arranging overnight childcare.

This pilot has demonstrated that there are particular challenges associated with having a programme of this nature located in a rural setting, where distance often prevents face to face contact. This was part of the reason why mentoring was not central to mentees’ overall experience of the pilot. However, this did not seem to have a significant impact on assessments of the overall quality of the pilot.
6 Preliminary mentee survey results

6.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the preliminary findings of the first of four surveys undertaken as part of the longitudinal study of the YWLMP.

The online survey was sent to all 93 participants in the first wave, and a total of 45 women (48%) responded (16 for Gippsland, 10 for Wide Bay Burnett and 19 for the Wheatbelt).

Subsequent surveys will take place in February/March 2008, September/October 2008 and September/October 2009.

The first wave survey included specific questions about components of the programme, as well as benchmarking questions that will be repeated in subsequent surveys to track participants’ views, attitudes and activities overtime.

The survey results presented in this chapter include the following:
- characteristics of mentees
- reasons for signing up to the programme
- overall rating of experience of the programme
- assessment of the training component
- assessment of the mentoring component
- assessment of the networking component
- attitudes and beliefs of mentees
- skills and attributes of mentees
- activities of mentees.

6.2 Characteristics of mentees

6.2.1 Pilot programme
The greatest proportion of respondents (42%) were participants in the Wheatbelt pilot, with 36% from the Gippsland pilot and 22% from the Wide Bay Burnett pilot.

6.2.2 Age
The ages of mentees ranged from 17 to 51 years of age. The average age was 29 years.

6.2.3 Living and family arrangements
More than half (51%) of the mentees reported that they have always lived in a rural area. Over 70% have never lived in a capital city or major metropolitan centre. Around half each had lived ‘in town’ and ‘out of town’.

Three-quarters (75%) of the mentees lived with a partner, 14% lived on their own, 9% lived with friends and 2% lived with their parents or family members.

The majority of mentees (70%) did not have children.
6.2.4 Employment

More than half (57%) of the mentees were in full-time employment. Some 20% of mentees were part-time employees, 7% were self employed, and 5% were not seeking paid work. A very small proportion (2%) were employers or employed as part of a family business.

Mentees worked an average of 39 hours a week.

Mentees worked in a range of industries, with some 20% in the health and community service industry, 12% each in education and government administration, and 7% in agriculture, forestry and fishing. The remaining 20% were fairly evenly spread across hospitality, cultural and recreational services, local government, environmental and natural resource management.

Across these industries, mentees had a range of occupations, including:

- project managers
- human resource professionals
- community development workers
- farmers
- sales and marketing professionals
- business owners and operators
- journalists
- administration officers
- natural resource management officers
- lawyers
- teachers.

6.2.5 Income

The personal income before tax for most mentees (44%) was within the ranges of $20,000-$35,000 and $35,000-$50,000. More than a third of mentees earned between $50,000 and $70,000. Some 16% earned less than $20,000. A very small proportion (2%) of mentees earned between $70,000 and $100,000.

6.2.6 Education and study

Around one-third (33%) of the mentees were studying, of whom 26% were studying part time. Of these, one-third were studying in the management and commerce field, with the remainder undertaking education, society and culture and agriculture related studies.

The highest level of education for close to two-thirds of the mentees was an undergraduate university degree (40%) or technical or vocational education (26%). Just under a quarter (24%) had either completed some high school or completed high school to Year 12 as their highest level of educational attainment. Just over 10% had a postgraduate university diploma or degree.

6.3 Reasons for signing up to the programme

In terms of the factors encouraging mentees to sign up to the programme, 95% said that ‘developing new skills’ was important, followed by ‘building my networks’ (91%), ‘meeting other young women’ (88%), ‘learning about how I can make a contribution to my community (84%), ‘increasing my self confidence’ (82%), ‘having a female role model (73%), and ‘getting ahead in my career (70%).

When asked about the single most important reason for signing up, nearly 30% said that ‘developing new skills’ as the most important, followed by ‘increasing my self-confidence’ (17%), ‘building my
networks’ (14%), ‘learning how I can make a contribution to my community’ and ‘getting ahead in my career’ (12%). A smaller proportion of mentees nominated ‘meeting other young women’ (10%) and ‘having a female role model’ (7%) as the most important reason for signing up.

The expectations of mentees were in line with their reasons for signing up. Mentees expected to:

- Improve their self confidence
- Develop their skills and knowledge, particularly leadership skills
- Enhance their personal and professional networks
- Enhance their leadership opportunities.

### 6.4 Overall rating of experience of the programme and its components

The programme has, on the whole, been well received by mentees. Some 80% of mentees rated their overall experience of the programme as good or excellent. The key areas that a large proportion of mentees saw as effective were:

- Meeting other young women (91%, with 57% very effective)
- Building their networks (85%)
- Increasing their self confidence (80%).

Overall, participants responded well to each of the components of the programme. However, some obtained more benefit out of individual components than others. Most (34%) mentees nominated the training as the most beneficial component of the programme, with 25% identifying mentoring and 18% the networking as the most beneficial. For 23% of mentees, no one aspect stood out and they indicated that they found more than one component beneficial.

In terms of overall programme management and coordination, the majority of mentees (91% including 62% very efficient) believed the programme had been managed efficiently by the auspicing agencies.

### 6.5 Assessment of training component

Overall, the majority of mentees (64%) considered the training to be beneficial. Similarly, most (59%) indicated that the training met with their expectations. However, nearly a third (32%) felt that it did not. The key areas which the mentees liked most about the training included:

- The style of delivery and format
- The appropriateness of the content
- The quality of the trainers and guest speakers
- Meeting new people and networking
- Participating in the sessions.

### 6.5.1 Areas of training

Training was undertaken across each of the pilots in the areas of personal development, goal setting, decision making and leadership and governance.

The majority of mentees (87%) reported that they undertook a goal setting activity as part of the programme.

In terms of the relative quality of each of these areas of training, goal setting and developing decision making and leadership skills were rated as either good or excellent by 80% and 75% of mentees respectively. This was followed by personal development (73%) and governance (63%). Only a very small number of mentees rated any areas of training as poor.
6.5.2 Training outcomes

Some aspects of the training were regarded by mentees as more effective than others. Training was particularly valued by mentees as an opportunity to network with fellow participants (89%) and for meeting other young women in similar situations to themselves (76%). A smaller proportion of mentees felt that the training was successful in developing their knowledge and skills (71%), setting and working toward personal professional goals (69% and 60% respectively) and increasing their self confidence (56%).

6.5.3 Content and delivery

The majority (90%) of mentees were happy with the delivery of the training, with 73% indicating that they found it to be relevant and nearly 60% feeling that the training was pitched at the right level for them.

However close to 30% did not feel the training was pitched at an appropriate level.

6.5.4 Suggested improvements

Suggested improvements to the training included:

- the selection of more appropriate venues
- improving the format of the training, including a more participatory focus, giving participants the opportunity to test and apply theories and skills they have learnt
- inclusion of more relevant topics, many had ‘done it before’, the content was not new
- reducing the size of the workshop groups
- having additional time for networking.

6.6 Assessment of mentoring component

The majority of mentees surveyed (68%) thought that, overall, the mentoring component was beneficial. Similarly, 82% felt that they were well matched with their mentor. However there were some (9%) who did not feel that they were well matched.

6.6.1 Communication between mentors and mentees

The reported frequency of communication between mentors and mentees over the duration of the programme varied enormously, from not meeting at all through to more than 50 instances. The average number of meetings/discussions was 11.5.

Most mentees (43%) reported communicating with their mentor either once a week or once a fortnight. This was followed by monthly (21%) and once every two months (12%).

6.6.2 Mentee mentor activities

The top five reported activity mentors and mentees did together were:

- mentor sharing stories about her personal and professional journey with their mentee (84%)
- mentor provided mentee with assistance/guidance on a specific project (64%)
- met up over a social lunch/drink (55%)
- discussed the challenges faced in the workplace as a female leader and other facets of life (53%)
- worked together to set professional and personal goals (48%).
6.6.3 Quality of the relationship

Most (73%) mentees believed that they bonded well with their mentor and also felt that they were well supported by their mentor (78%). Similarly, 74% believed their mentor understood her roles and responsibilities and had good mentoring skills (78%).

The majority (62%) believed that their mentor was accessible however there were some (15%) who felt that their mentor was often busy or difficult to reach. Nearly half (47%) would have liked more contact with their mentor.

Nearly 70% believed that they would stay in contact with their mentor however there were some (11%) that did not think this was the case.

6.6.4 Mentoring outcomes

In terms of the reported outcomes for mentees from the mentoring relationship:

- some 80% indicated that their mentor has provided them with a positive role model of how to be an effective leader
- 74% felt that their mentor had provided them with practical advice on how to achieve their goals
- 62% have been helped by their mentor to ‘think outside the square’ and increased their confidence to pursue personal and professional goals
- 58% reported that their mentor has helped them gain knowledge on how to access networks and create opportunities to pursue their goals.

A lower proportion of mentees felt that their mentor had assisted them in setting their goals (46%) or giving them an understanding of the challenges facing their community (26%).

Many respondents were not able to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with the statements relating to mentoring outcomes, instead choosing the ‘neutral’ category. This was particularly the case for the following outcomes:

- giving mentees an understanding of the challenges facing their community (47%)
- assisting mentees in setting goals (33%)
- helping to increase confidence to pursue career and education goals (31%)
- helping to gain knowledge on how to access networks and create opportunities to pursue goals (27%).

This would suggest that at the time of completing this survey, mentees found it difficult to clearly say, one way or the other, the extent to which the mentoring component of the programme has had clear impacts in these areas.

6.6.5 Challenges and areas for improvement

Mentees identified some challenges and areas for improvement they experienced in the mentoring relationship:

- the distance required to travel to meet face-to-face
- lack of clarity around respective roles and responsibilities
- mentors and mentees being time poor due to work and family commitments
- some mentees not seeing the need or value of having a mentor relative to the other components of the programme
- some mentors not feeling they had adequate skills or strategies to fulfil their mentoring responsibilities
perceived mismatches in terms of age, professional background and life experience
lack of a structured process for the mentoring relationship to develop.

6.7 Assessment of networking component

Compared to the mentoring and training components, overall participants responded very well to the networking opportunities that were provided. The majority of mentees surveyed (77%) considered this component to be beneficial. Mentees have gained most out of networking with their fellow mentees. This was reflected in the types of networking activities mentees reported most involvement with and the nature of the outcomes identified.

The majority (68%) reported that they bonded well with their participants and reported that it is likely that they will stay in contact with some of their fellow participants after the completion of the programme (55%).

6.7.1 Networking activities

Out of a list of specified networking activities, mentees were mostly involved in:

- confiding in each other (e.g., venting frustrations, sharing personal stories) (70%)
- sharing resources, contact and opportunities with each other (56%)
- providing support and assistance to each other throughout the programme (e.g., helping each other with a project or task) (51%).

6.7.2 Networking outcomes

The three most commonly reported networking outcomes for mentees were:

- increased understanding of the value of networks and the role they play in being an effective leader (73%)
- networking with more experienced women (e.g., mentors and guest speakers) (73%)
- expanding mentee’s network of resources and people to them to pursue their goals (69%).

6.7.3 Suggested improvements

Some of the suggested improvements to networking included:

- additional time should have been allocated to this component
- more structure should have been given to networking, including training in networking skills
- reducing the size of the group to provide for more meaningful networking
- additional opportunities to network with other mentors.

6.8 Barriers

6.8.1 Barriers to pursuing goals

The five most commonly identified barriers preventing mentees from working towards their goals (in life generally so far) were:

- not having a clear path to pursue my personal and professional goals (42%)
- not having personal and professional goals to pursue (37%)
- not knowing who to talk to (26%)
• the time and financial costs associated with travel (26%)
• having family and caring responsibilities (23%).

While these were the five most common barriers, there were also a large proportion of women who identified the following as not being barriers at all:
• being criticised for being ambitious (61%)
• having family and caring responsibilities (55%)
• lack of support from my family (44%).

When asked to nominate the single most significant barrier to pursuing their goals, the following were identified:
• the time and financial costs associated with travel (22%)
• not having personal and professional goals to pursue (19%)
• not having a clear path to pursue my own personal and professional goals (19%).

6.8.2 Workplace support

Most mentees (78%) reported that their participation in the programme was supported by their employer, with some (8%) indicating that their employer was not at all supportive. For 15%, this was not applicable.

6.9 Attitudes and beliefs

Respondents were asked to indicate how much they disagreed or agreed with a series of statements about their attitudes and beliefs, both at the time of completing the survey and looking back to January 2007.

The responses to these questions tend to indicate that the programme has had a positive impact on mentees’ attitudes in relation to their leadership potential. The results suggest that the programme has had most short term impact in relation to mentees belief in their goal setting capabilities and their capacity to contribute to their community.

Compared to reported views in January 2007, there were considerable positive shifts in attitudes and beliefs in the following areas:
• a rise from 45% to 94% in those who feel motivated to pursue their goals
• a rise from 52% to 94% in those who believe they have the ability to pursue their goals
• a rise from 25% to 63% in those who are clear about the goals they wish to pursue.
• a rise from 26% to 75% in those who feel confident in their ability to mentor others
• a rise from 58% to 87% in those who see an active role in their community that will grow overtime
• a rise from 63% to 91% in those who believe in their ability to make a difference in their community
• a rise from 51% to 71% in those who have a clear sense of the issues affecting their community.
6.10 Skills and attributes

Respondents were asked to give themselves a score out of 10 at the time of completing the survey and looking back to January 2007 in relation to a range of skills and attributes.

The following skills and attributes received the highest average scores and also an average score increase of 2-3 compared with the average scores for January 2007:

- learning from others (7 to 10)
- goal setting (5 to 8)
- making decisions about my future (5 to 8)
- persisting with difficult or challenging tasks (6 to 8)
- time management (6 to 8)
- meeting and getting to know new people (6 to 8)
- taking advantages of opportunities (6 to 8).

6.11 Activities

Respondents were asked to identify activities they were involved with prior to their involvement in the programme, activities they were doing at the time of completion of the survey, and activities they hope to do in the future.

These preliminary results serve to highlight the type and range of activities mentees have become involved with since their involvement in the programme that they were not engaged in previously. It also provides insight into the type and range of activities mentees aspire to pursue in the future.

6.11.1 Current activity

There were notable increases in current rates of activity, compared to reported activity prior to the programme in relation to the following:

- volunteer at events/activities (increase of 19%)
- help organise an event/activity (increase of 10%)
- attend forums and conferences (increase of 8%)
- become involved in a local community group/event (increase of 8%).

There were also moderate increases in reported activity in the following:

- start a community action group/forum
- mentor others
- have a position on the board of a business or organisation in my community
- join a local environment group.

6.11.2 Future activity

Compared to reported current levels of community and leadership activity, there are some notable increases in the proportion of mentees who hope to pursue these activities in the future. These include:

- mentor others (increase from 20% to 80%)
- have a position on the board of a business or organisation in my community (increase from 15% to 55%)
run my own business/be an employer (increase from 20% to 57%)
be a guest speaker at a community event (increase from 17% to 48%)
pursue education opportunities (increase from 44% to 80%).

This suggests that the programme has had a positive impact on the confidence of mentees to pursue a range of leadership paths.

Some two thirds of mentees surveyed (64%) said the programme has been influential in their being involved in such activities for the first time.

6.12 Conclusion

The results show that, overall, mentees have found their experience of the programme to be of benefit and have reported positive shifts in attitudes, skills and activities. Although it is clear that most mentees have already experienced positive impacts and outcomes as a result of their participation in the YWLMP, it is only when the benchmarking data collected in this survey is compared with data from subsequent surveys that the true impact of the programme over time will become evident.

The preliminary results of the first wave of the longitudinal survey has provided valuable information which:

- offers insight into the effectiveness and appropriateness of the programme and its specific components
- provides additional information that has informed this initial evaluation of the programme as a whole
- provides positive indications in relation to the range of impacts and outcomes the programme has had and is likely to have over time in terms of attitudes, skills and activities
- is generally consistent with the qualitative data collected as part of the evaluation (set out elsewhere in this report)
- has established important benchmarking data for subsequent phases of the study.
Appendix A  Literature Review
Evaluation of Rural Young Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Program

Literature Review

Prepared for the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
## Executive Summary

### 1.1 The Policy Context

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Executive Summary

The Young Women’s Leadership and Mentoring Pilot Program is an initiative of the Federal Government. The program aims to provide young women in rural and regional areas with leadership and role model opportunities by linking young women in local community groups with high achieving women from their community.

Women in rural and regional areas are significantly under-represented on rural community and industry leadership bodies, and less likely than men to occupy senior positions in rural industries. A number of barriers to women’s participation in leadership roles in rural and regional areas have been identified including:

- a culture that is not supportive of women in senior positions
- an absence of female role models
- a perception that women are unsuited to leadership roles.

Practical barriers such as childcare and social isolation or distance may also pose barriers to women sitting on leadership boards or taking on more responsibility in the workplace.

Leadership and mentoring programs aim to increase women’s skills and confidence to take on leadership roles, while introducing them to networks which may facilitate greater access to leadership positions in the workplace or on committees and councils.

Primarily, women’s leadership programs are a response to evidence of women’s low participation in formal leadership positions within government, business and the community in general. In this context, leadership programs for women seek to change historical patterns of gender inequity through promoting the skills and confidence of women, and changing the culture of workplaces and communities so that women are accepted into senior and leadership roles. Mentoring often forms part of leadership development programs as a strategy to introduce women to the ‘informal’ culture of workplaces or communities at a senior level, and to assist women to establish both formal and informal networks which may facilitate their path to leadership positions. Evidence from program evaluations of the efficacy of mentoring, leadership and networking programs for women suggest that:

- As a leadership development tool, the purpose of mentoring is to provide a guide for young women. A mentor is not an instructor or teacher in the traditional sense; rather, mentors model leadership skills and support young women to develop confidence in their own capacity.
- Mentoring programs must involve careful selection and matching of mentors and mentees for an effective mentoring relationship to develop.
- Mentoring provides women with opportunities to receive informal career guidance and advice from their mentor, as well as a chance to experience workplace culture and to make contacts/network with senior women.
- Effective leadership programs for women are ones which strengthen women’s ability to initiate and respond to change within a community or sector, offer exposure to challenging and informative role models, and affirm women’s existing strengths in relation to leadership and management skills and abilities.
- Increasing the self-esteem and confidence of women, as well as their skill base, is central to the success of leadership and mentoring programs.
- Programs that offer a multi-level approach to leadership development, involving formal training, mentoring and networking, provide a wide breadth of learning experiences for women. Each component of the program supports and reinforces the others.
- Mentors can benefit from mentoring programs as much as mentees, particularly through the increased job satisfaction that comes through the mentoring relationship.
The young rural women’s leadership and mentoring pilot is a unique approach to leadership development in that it combines a training program with mentoring and networking opportunities in a community setting. This evaluation of the YWLMP has much to contribute to the body of knowledge on leadership, networking and mentoring programs for women.

A longitudinal study will enable analysis of the extent to which the program offers continuing, longer term benefits for the participants, including whether young women who have been through the program are better able to negotiate cultural and structural barriers to women’s leadership. A longitudinal study also has the capacity to evaluate the benefits of the program’s emphasis on assisting young women to develop networks, including the extent to which participants retain the networks they develop and the ways in which networks present ‘informal’ opportunities for leadership development over a period of time.
1.1 The Policy Context

In May 2007, the Howard Government provided funding for a series of pilot programs designed to enhance the leadership skills of young women in rural and regional Australia – the YWLMP. This initiative forms part of a number of measures introduced by the Federal Government to support women in leadership positions across a range of industries and locations in Australia and the Pacific region, including the Women's Leadership and Development Program and the Women's National Leadership Initiative.

Since 1999, the Women's Leadership and Development Program has funded activities run by non-government organisations that strengthen the voice of women, improve the status of women and contribute to policy areas that affect women in Australia. In 2006-07 the program also funded Australian NGO's who are signatories to the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct to build on existing activities in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and East Timor that promote women's participation in leadership roles (Office for Women 2007c).

The Women's National Leadership Initiative seeks to extend Government activities to increase the participation of women in leadership positions and to promote leadership by women in other areas, particularly rural, Indigenous, marginalised and disadvantaged women. The program has included measures to increase the participation of women on Commonwealth Boards and official bodies (Office for Women 2007b). It has also introduced the Sports Leadership Grants for Women Program. The program provides women, particularly those from rural areas, with an opportunity to undertake accredited sport leadership training in the areas of coaching, officiating, sports administration and sport management. The grants scheme was extended in 2005 to include women in high performance coaching and officiating; disability sport; women from culturally, linguistically diverse backgrounds; women in Indigenous rural and remote communities; and general sport leadership (Office for Women 2007a).

These programs are supported by a wide range of Federal Government initiatives such as:

- The Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award, for which the Federal Government is a major sponsor.
- Establishment of the Regional Women's Advisory Council to provide advice to the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) and the Australian Government Minister for Transport and Regional Services.
- The DOTARS Women of Influence Initiative (which started in 2004), which sought to assess the current level of women's representation on rural industry boards and other formal boards and committees, and suggest strategies for increasing women's representation and supporting women leaders to increase their influence in business and communities (DOTARS 2005).
- The Indigenous Women's Leadership Program run by the Office for Indigenous Policy Cooperation (OPIC). This program provides training, education and mentoring to around 70 women annually, who are already playing a leadership role within their communities, to further develop their leadership capacity. Australian State governments also run a number of State-based initiatives such as training and mentoring programs and leadership awards schemes to enhance the role of women in leadership positions across a range of sectors (OPIC 2007).

Alongside this, the Federal and State governments provide funding for, or directly run, a number of leadership programs for rural and remote Australia, including the Rural Community Leadership Program in NSW (a joint collaboration between the NSW Benevolent Society and the NSW Premier's Department), the South Australian Rural Leadership Program and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries' Building Rural Leaders Program. The Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) runs the Young People in Rural Industries Program, which includes a training course and mentoring program.

Both the private and non-government sectors are also involved in leadership programs. The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation conducts leadership training programs and acts as a link between...
government and the private sector. The Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women is an independent philanthropic network that works to support women in rural areas to develop their leadership capacity, and maintains links with various government, community and industry bodies.

1.2 Rural Women in Leadership

A 2005 DOTARS report, *A Snapshot of Women’s Representation on Selected Regional Bodies*, found that approximately 55% of adult women living in rural and regional Australia work, yet they are significantly under-represented on key leadership bodies in rural and regional areas. For instance, representation of women in rural industry bodies (such as research and development corporations, rural representative bodies and companies) ranged from 0-21%, while women held 12-41% of positions on regional organisations (such as area consultative committees, development boards and catchment management authorities).

The report also found that the level of women’s representation in the 10 publicly listed agricultural companies sampled was below the average for the 2004 census of women in leadership (the ASX 200 companies that were surveyed by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency). The study found that in the sampled agricultural companies there were no female chairs compared to a 1.1% national average, no chief executive officers compared with a national average of 2.3%, and 7% board members compared with 8.6% for the national average. Margaret Alston (2000) drew similar findings in her study of rural women, also noting that even when women do hold a leadership position on boards within the agricultural industry, they are likely to be the only woman on the board, or one of only two.

Women also hold a minority of positions on community leadership boards. The 2005 DOTARS report found that only 17% of mayors and 6% of chief executive officers in non-metropolitan local governments were women. Area consultative committees had the highest levels of women’s representation at 28% on the committees and 41% of executive officers (DOTARS 2005).

There are a number of reasons why government, community and industry leaders have supported programs that seek to develop leadership opportunities for women in rural and regional areas. Apart from the intrinsic value of ensuring greater participation of women in public life and community decision-making, recent research provides evidence that industries that are open to diversity in their management and staff are better placed to perform efficiently. Diversity brings to any company a range of views, experiences, backgrounds and skills, ensuring the shareholder and customer base is more adequately represented and that robust and thorough discussion is part of the decision-making process (DOTARS 2006).

Women’s leadership styles have also been shown to differ from men’s, often incorporating facilitative and collaborative approaches with an emphasis on building relationships and developing close networks. This adds potential for a variety of approaches to problem-solving and management within an organisation (Sherman 2000).

A 2004 report commissioned by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Women in Business in Rural and Remote Australia – Growing Regional Economies*, highlighted that regions where women have active roles in business decisions had a broader set of economic options and were therefore more resilient, economically and socially. It was stressed that recognition, support and further training to assist women in management and leadership roles was needed to affirm this strength (Houghton & Strong 2004).

Similar conclusions were drawn in a 1998 report, *Missed Opportunities: Harnessing the Potential of Women in Australian Agriculture*. This study pointed out that while an estimated 48% of rural income is generated by women, less than 20% of decision-makers in rural and regional areas are women. The report stated that ‘this imbalance reduces the diversity in leadership needed to improve performance, both domestically and in a competitive global market’. The study found that diversification of management, specifically to include women, would strengthen and revitalise sectors of the agricultural industry that are currently struggling to compete (Elix & Lambert 1998).
The report also highlighted that women are typically strong in developing intrinsic motivators in industry, such as personal growth, while men traditionally focus on extrinsic motivators such as pay. Such intrinsic motivators are generally associated with an emphasis on stewardship over resource use, and are therefore often linked with the application of new techniques related to longevity and sustainability.

1.2.1 Barriers to Women’s Leadership Participation

The barriers women face to participation in leadership roles within rural industries and communities have been widely researched. For instance Claridge describes three types of barriers:

- **Socialised** barriers include gender expectations placed on women by society, as well as the expectations women have of themselves or other women. Women’s style of communication, negotiation or decision-making is assumed to be either fundamentally different, or inferior, to that of men’s and less suited to leadership positions. This view is often held by men, as well as many women themselves.

- **Situational** constraints include such factors as time and family commitments or social isolation and distance, that prevent women being able to attend meetings or play a more active role in the community or leadership boards.

- **Structural** constraints include tangible structural barriers such as a lack of resources and training opportunities available for women, as well as factors such as a masculine culture within organisations that tends to exclude women (Claridge 1998, pp 187-190).

Claridge’s categories are consistent with other research. For instance, the *Missed Opportunities: Harnessing the Potential of Women in Australian Agriculture* report (1988) identifies some major barriers faced by women such as:

- organisational cultures not supportive of women in higher level positions
- a perception that women are more suited to involvement in ‘community issues’ committees rather than industry bodies
- lack of access to skilled employment with management opportunities
- family unfriendly workplaces, including a lack of flexibility
- a common self-perception among women that their skills and abilities are not adequate for the task
- absence of female role models and mentoring
- lack of recognised skills and experience among women, due to failure of organisations to apply ‘merit’ principles, while valuing a narrow set of traits to represent ‘experience’
- lack of access to training (Elix & Lambert 1998).

Alston’s (2000) study found that women in rural industries are often ambivalent about leadership within the agricultural sector because they find its structures and practices elitist, hierarchical and insular. Having women in positions on leadership boards is also often seen as tokenistic, and not something that will achieve genuine cultural change, as the women on these boards are still expected to operate on terms, and within a structure, determined by male interests and agendas. As Alston notes, ‘women don’t want to be part of structures and organisations that devalue them and they don’t want to be pushing an agenda that does not incorporate their concerns’ (2000, p13). Alston’s study demonstrates that increasing women’s leadership in rural industries and communities is a matter of achieving significant cultural change. Increasing the number of women in leadership roles forms one part of the strategy to achieve such change, but there also needs to be a focus on ensuring cultural change occurs alongside this.

Additionally, women in Alston’s study stated that they perceived barriers to leadership positions for women as a general imbalance of power in relationships between men and women and the devaluation of women’s contribution relative to men’s in rural communities. Practical constraints, such as a lack of time and childcare commitments, were also cited as significant barriers (Alston 2000, p12). However,
while women’s lack of confidence about taking on leadership positions was cited as a barrier, there was a generally high level of confidence in women’s capacity as leaders, and a sense that women have a lot to offer as leaders both within the agricultural industry and communities in general. Women also make a significant contribution to the community in other ways – more often in ways that are seen as ‘legitimate’ for women, such as involvement with schools, community halls and charities (Alston 2000, p 12).

1.2.2 Increasing Women’s Leadership Role in Rural Communities

Strategies recommended by the Missed Opportunities study to increase the influence and participation of rural women as decision makers included setting targets for diversity in management and supporting women to become managers through training and education (Elix & Lambert 1998). Similarly, the 2006 DOTARS report At the Table, on the Inquiry into Women’s Representation on Regional and Rural Bodies of Influence, made the following suggestions for improving rural women’s capacity to act in leadership roles:

- Women are more likely to succeed if they have the support of their families, their communities and their industries; women should be ‘encouraged, given opportunities to develop and perform and recognised for their achievements’ (2006, p 13).

- Women must be supported to find the right networks. The report noted that:

  many women involved in the inquiry were strongly linked to women’s networks, but had more tenuous links with other, more influential networks. Governments, representative bodies and businesses are still heavily reliant on known and trusted industry, service and sporting club networks (the ‘old boys’ network’) to recruit for vacancies. Women are not well connected to the networks from which recommendations are sought, and are therefore unlikely to be front of mind when names are being put forward for consideration to fill vacancies on a wide range of government and industry bodies (2006, p 15).

- More women in chief executive or senior executive positions is necessary to increase women’s overall participation in business and community leadership, as senior management experience is generally a prerequisite to participation in a range of decision making forums, including government boards or committees or a private board.

- It is important to develop the confidence of women so they can reach their potential as decision makers and leaders. Women consistently underrate their skills and capacities in traditionally male-dominated areas.

- Access to affordable, accessible training and development opportunities is limited in regional and rural areas, but is vital to increase the number of women in leadership roles (DOTARS 2006).

Much of the research on women’s leadership in rural and regional areas has, understandably, focused on women’s role in traditional rural industries such as agriculture. Given that these industries continue to be heavily male-dominated there is certainly a need for this emphasis. However, it is important to recognise that women residing in rural and regional locations across Australia are employed in a broad range of industries. Indeed, as Sheridan et al (2006) note, ‘with women in agriculture making up less than 10% of women employed in rural and regional Australia, the experiences of the other 90% of women employed in paid work warrant some attention’.

A 2006 DOTARS report found that in rural areas:

- 21.7% of women are employed in retail trade, accommodation and related services
- 16.2% of women are employed in health and community services.

In both small townships and rural areas, 12.1% of women are employed in the education sector, and in rural areas 15% are employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Additionally, women’s participation in mining industries has increased over the past five years with the recent boom in the minerals sector (DOTARS 2006; Sheridan et al 2006). A focus on leadership must also consider women’s leadership within the community generally, not necessarily in relation to their paid employment, such as the role of women on local councils or area consultative committees.
1.3 Young Women in Rural Communities

There have been many studies and media reports documenting the high number of young people, particularly young women, who migrate from rural and regional areas to cities in search of greater employment prospects or tertiary education. This has particularly been the case over the past few decades as businesses and support services have increasingly shifted away from rural areas and the traditional ‘youth job market’ has disappeared or become casualised (Kenyon et al 2001). Indigenous young people are at particular disadvantage with regards to employment opportunities, often living in the most remote locations while also facing the additional barriers of poverty and discrimination. In rural areas, there is commonly a lack of opportunities for young people to develop their skills and experience, and for young women there are limited role models at higher ends of the employment scale.

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s health undertaken in 1996, and then again in 2000, revealed that young women living in rural areas tend to have lower levels of education than women from urban areas, with almost half of the urban young women in the 2000 survey having a university degree, compared to one-quarter of rural young women (Warner-Smith & Lee 2001, p 33). Rural women, in general, are less likely to have a strong skill and work experience base when they begin motherhood, making it more difficult for them to re-enter the workforce and keeping them at the lower level of the workforce (Warner-Smith & Lee 2001, p 34).

There are many reasons why rural communities and industries would benefit from programs which foster young women’s leadership potential. As well as providing opportunities for young rural women, which may encourage them to stay in rural areas instead of moving to cities, young people are increasingly at the cutting edge of new approaches to land management and the application of new tools and technologies. Young people bring to rural communities the benefit of recent training and a fresh perspective to traditional rural industries. The 2006 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Science and Innovation Awards for Young People recognised the contribution of a number of young women in this area. For instance, the winner of the ‘Australian Wool Innovation’ award was a young woman whose work looked at reducing reliance on inorganic fertilisers, while the 2006 winner of the ‘Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation’ award was a young woman working on eradication of a parasite that affects the profitability of crocodile farms.

1.4 Assessing the Efficacy of Mentoring and Leadership Programs

1.4.1 Limitations of the Literature

Mentoring is a strategy being used more and more frequently as part of leadership training programs within business and industry, as well as in programs for disadvantaged groups (particularly young people) as it has the benefit of one-on-one pastoral care and role modelling (Tobin 2000). The Australian Youth Mentoring Network has developed a set of benchmarks for mentoring programs, which include recruitment processes for mentors, matching of mentors and mentees, training and development for mentees and mentors, monitoring the mentor and mentee match, and an appropriate closure policy for ending the mentor/mentee relationship at the conclusion of the program (Youth Mentoring Network 2007). The Youth Mentoring Network benchmarks have broad applicability, and could be applied to mentoring programs across a range of sectors. However, the bulk of evaluation literature on mentoring for young people relates to therapeutic mentoring programs in areas such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation, crime reduction or support for disadvantaged youth. These differ from leadership mentoring programs in that their focus is often on lifestyle or behavioural role modelling for young people. ‘Good practice’ with these programs includes factors such as integration and collaboration of the mentoring program with other services for young people, and outcomes are often assessed through broad measures such as reduced offending or reduced drug use (Wilczynski 2003; Rhodes & DuBois 2006).

However, there are some aspects of therapeutic mentoring programs which may be of relevance to the evaluation of leadership mentoring. For example, most mentoring programs aim to achieve improved self-esteem and confidence among mentees and many look for outcomes such as enhanced communication skills.
The literature on leadership development programs, particularly for women, tends to be focused on initiatives that have been run within specific institutions or industries. For example, across a number of Western countries women’s leadership programs are increasingly common within the higher education sector and traditionally male-dominated industries such as engineering and science. Many of these programs involve training courses, job rotation, shadowing senior women or internships to enhance experience and knowledge of an organisation. In some cases, mentoring is also part of the program (Berryman-Gink et al 2003; Anderson 2005; Trigg 2006). This type of leadership program is often developed with at least a certain degree of support for increasing women’s leadership, and recognition of the program from within the existing leadership structures of that industry or organisation. As such, the ‘barriers’ faced by women seeking leadership roles may be different to a program for rural women in that the cultural and structural barriers to women’s leadership may be different or less.

This literature review incorporates evaluation of, and research about, both leadership and therapeutic youth mentoring programs, women’s leadership training and rural leadership programs. The objective of the review is to identify areas where these three bodies of literature intersect, and how different aspects of each area can combine to inform the evaluation of a leadership mentoring program for young rural women.

1.4.2 Leadership and Mentoring Programs: Conceptual Approaches

Leadership training programs for women exist across Australia in a number of different forms. Primarily, these programs are a response to evidence of women’s low participation in formal leadership positions within government, business and the community in general. In this context, leadership programs for young women are social change programs. They seek to change historical patterns with regards to the participation of women through promoting the skills and confidence of women, and changing the culture of workplaces and communities (Trigg 2006).

The strategies employed in leadership programs vary considerably, generally including a combination of: leadership skills training, mentoring, internships, affirmative action or broader organisational change initiatives. While the ‘program logic’ is not always clearly articulated in all literature about these programs, it seems most women’s leadership programs are at least indirectly influenced by feminist ideology and generally guided by four key assumptions:

- that structural and cultural barriers exist, which prevent women from gaining leadership positions on an equal basis with men
- that cultural and structural factors can be altered to become more supportive of women leaders through specific educational and ‘organisational change’ strategies, the most important strategy being to increase women’s presence in leadership roles
- that women need specific skills and training to increase their capacity to take on leadership roles
- that the development of women’s confidence and self-esteem will enhance their capacity to take on leadership roles.

Leadership is a loosely defined concept, particularly when used in a community context. ‘Youth leadership’, for example, is also often referred to as ‘youth participation’ or ‘civic engagement’, and the set of skills required to successfully undertake leadership in this context varies from program to program. However, as Conner & Strobel (2007) point out, most youth leadership development programs will look for improved competency in communication and interpersonal skills among program participants. This is particularly the case when leadership is conceived in a community or civic context, as the capacity to engage in a social context – participate in groups, work collaboratively and cooperatively and network – are valued over individually oriented capacities.

Conner & Strobel note that the evaluation of leadership programs tend to focus on either the individual changes experienced by program participants, such as increased awareness of their leadership role and mastery of leadership skills, or contextual factors, such as organisational support for leadership development. Their study of a leadership development program for young women attempts to bridge the division between an ‘individual’ and ‘contextual’ focus by looking at the relationship between
program structure and the young women’s sense of themselves as empowered leaders. The basic program logic model they use is as follows:

Diagram adapted from Conner and Strobel 2007, p 279

The three core research questions developed by Conner and Strobel were:

- What does youth leadership look like in context?
- How do programmatic structures and supports allow youth in the same program to develop different leadership competencies and identities?
- What programmatic changes must be made to accommodate and validate not only different styles of youth leadership, but also different developmental trajectories?

The benefit of this design and set of questions is that it:

- allows for a flexible definition of leadership, to be defined by the program participants and in the context of local issues and local need
- acknowledges that leadership outcomes may not be uniform across also participants
- allows for analysis of the relationship between participants and organisational or community growth, looking at the way and which programs adapt or change as they progress to support the evolving skills of participants.

With regards to mentoring programs, although the objectives of these tend to be broad (particularly therapeutic mentoring as it relates to specific issues such as reduced drug use, or reduced offending behaviour), they are generally designed around a similar rationale that incorporates the following assumptions or evidence as a basis for practice:

- That the role modelling and one-on-one relationship that is a feature of mentoring programs is an effective means of educating young people about ‘informal’ cultural or lifestyle issues, such as learning the ‘unspoken’ rules or social mores of a particular organisation or learning new ways to approach routine activities (Parker 2005 & 2006; Hartley 2004; Joliffe & Farrington 2007; Rhodes 2002).
- The one-on-one attention offered through a mentoring program builds the confidence of young people, and helps them to feel valued and valuable as an individual (Hartley 2004; Rhodes 2002).
- Mentoring offers a young person practical, social and emotional support as well as learning opportunities (Hartley 2004).
- Mentoring assists young people to develop interpersonal communication and relationship building skills. In particular it enhances their skills and confidence in communicating with adults or people in more senior positions (Hartley 2004; Parker 2005; Rhodes 2002).
- Mentors can ‘open doors’ for young people through social or strategic contacts (Rhodes 2002).
Mentoring is an effective strategy for assisting young people to develop networks in a particular industry, organisation or community as it creates an opportunity for the mentor to personally introduce mentees to significant people, providing both a personal connection and implicit character reference by making that introduction. Mentoring can also assist with the acquisition of professional skills and knowledge (MacCallum & Beltman 1999).

Mentoring can assist young people to set goals and become more focused (de Anda 2001).

Careful matching of mentees with mentors ensures the experience is tailored to the individual mentee’s needs.

Mentoring programs are mutually beneficial for both the mentor and mentee (Hartley 2004; Parker 2005).

Development of a trusting relationship between mentor and mentee is necessary for the program to be effective (Sipe 1999; de Anda 2001).

Mentoring connects young people with the wider community, sector or industry by involving members of that community, industry or sector as mentors. This also ensures a wide breadth of community or industry support for the program (Hartley 2004; Wilczynski et al 2004; Wilczynski et al. 2004).

This final point, that mentoring is a strategy by which young people and youth programs make connections to the broader community, touches on similar ground to work being undertaken with rural communities using a social capital framework.

Some researchers have applied some core concepts from community development and social capital literature to the evaluation of rural leadership development programs (Rogers & Barker 2001; Millar & Kilpatrick 2004; Johns et al 2001). For example, Pat Millar and Sue Kilpatrick, from the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Tasmania, adopt a social capital model in their evaluation of three community development programs for disadvantaged communities located on the perimeters of metropolitan centres in Tasmania.

The programs involved training and education support for local community members, particularly women (in one case for young mothers), including a return to school program, a computer education program and an ongoing support program for people attending TAFE. Through the programs, participants developed skills and confidence in working in teams and collaborating with other people. This triggered a leadership process within the communities whereby the women involved in the program became more active in supporting learning initiatives within their community. In other words, the observed benefits of the program went beyond increased knowledge or skills of individual participants. The networking and collaborative skills program participants developed had flow-on effects for people around them, which was an important outcome of the program (Millar & Kilpatrick 2004).

The concept of social capital is very broad, making its definition and practical application difficult to clearly articulate or measure. However, a strong theme in all social capital literature relates to the existence of formal and informal community networks and a high level of social trust and reciprocity, which facilitates cooperation and collective action for mutual benefit. Social capital develops as local people increase their participation in community activities, volunteering and leadership initiatives (Stacey 2004, p27; Millar & Kilpatrick 2004, p5).

A social capital approach to program design is, in many ways, consistent with community development models in that both are concerned with the development of community capacity and resilience. Community development approaches seek to provide community members with the resources and skills to determine and achieve community-driven goals, and improve the quality of life for people living within the local area.

Mentoring can be seen as a means of building social capital in that it connects local people and supports them to build networks and learn from each other. It also fosters a commitment between people to learn from each other, and work collaboratively (Harris & Daley 2006). In her qualitative study of youth mentoring programs, Dianne de Anda (2001) found that one of the motivations for mentors participating in the program was a sense of community and desire to help meet the needs of youth in
their community. The fact that a leadership mentoring program has benefits for both the mentor and mentee, as well as for the community as a whole, places such a program in a category beyond that of a traditional leadership development or training program.

The networking component of mentoring programs also adds a further dimension to the leadership development experience. Social network theory suggests that upward social and economic mobility is associated with large and diverse social networks. Having a greater range of acquaintances creates connections to a diversity of social environments and may facilitate access to resources beyond the reach of an individual’s immediate social sphere. People have been shown to have greater success at finding employment if they have a large number of social contacts and acquaintances. Mentoring is a process of deliberately ‘bridging ties’ between young people and these networks (Zippay 1995). Allison Zippay’s (1995) study of a mentoring program for young mothers found that the program was successful in expanding the social networks of mentees. This didn’t necessarily mean that mentees were directly introduced to potential employers, but that people they met within that expanded social network, including their mentor, introduced them to new ideas or strategies for looking for work. In other words, they were introduced to knowledge that wasn’t available in their immediate social network of family and close friends.

Theories of social capital, community development and social networking may provide a useful model for conceptualising and evaluating a leadership and mentoring program. Certainly, the approach highlights the importance of looking at leadership in context. The type of skills and capacities required to make a good leader are related to the particular needs of a community, organisation or industry, and the process of developing leaders will involve a reciprocal relationship between young women, the community and the organisations with which they are engaged. Evaluation needs to take these contexts into account, by asking questions such as:

- To what extent has the community supported young women to develop their leadership capacities?
- To what extent have community structures changed to accommodate young women’s leadership?

A social capital framework may also inform a leadership mentoring program evaluation through consideration of:

- the extent to which mentees and mentors have become more connected with their local communities through formal and informal networks
- whether there have been any flow-on effects of the leadership program, such as young women encouraging their friends or other young women in the community to aim for leadership positions, or young women increasing their participation in volunteering or other community initiatives
- the barriers or opportunities young women have encountered at a community level
- the supports that already exist in the community for young people to develop their skills, capacities and networks (as this may vary considerably between different areas and have a significant impact on program outcomes)
- the range of individuals and groups that have been involved with the program that may not previously have had connections
- the extent to which mentees have expanded their network of contacts and acquaintances, and the impact this has had in terms of greater access to new ideas or knowledge.

1.4.3 Methodological and Evaluation Issues

Longitudinal studies provide the most comprehensive method of evaluating a program where individual and community change is anticipated over the course of an extended period of time. A longitudinal study of a leadership or mentoring program allows for a pre and post assessment of the program, while also having scope for individuals to reflect retrospectively on the program, and the changes it has made for them as an individual or their community. However, the significant time and resources required for a well-conducted longitudinal study make them fairly rare in program evaluation.
More commonly, evaluation relies heavily on retrospective analysis, including post-program reflection on behalf of participants and administrators. This evaluation design attracts criticism among researchers on the basis that past events may not be accurately recalled or reframed in light of program outcomes, or that the measurement of change has no objective, or external, basis. Other issues which can be problematic in evaluation design include: reliance on poorly or inadequately defined concepts, an absence of control groups, insufficient subject numbers or an unrepresentative sample of subjects (MacCallum & Beltman 2002, p39).

The most effective research design for a leadership program is likely to include: a longitudinal design, a sample of subjects which adequately captures the diversity of program participants, a comparison (control) group, use of a diversity of data collection methods and not relying entirely on participant self-reporting (MacCallum & Beltman 2002, p39). In reality, such a thorough research design is difficult to achieve, particularly finding an appropriate comparison group. A longitudinal study incorporating pre and post measures and a follow-up of participants after the program constitutes a realistic and appropriate evaluation design. MacCallum & Beltman also highlight the importance of focusing on ‘how’ programs achieved their outcomes as well as what the program achieved. In other words, what elements of the program contributed to it achieving its outcomes?

1.5 Good Practice in Leadership and Mentoring Programs

1.5.1 Mentoring Programs
The set of benchmarks for mentoring programs developed by Mentoring Australia (2000) includes:

- a well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
- regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
- establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
- paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills
- written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions
- adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements
- inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and sexuality as appropriate to the program
- adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources
- written administrative and program procedures
- documented criteria which define eligibility for participation in the program
- risk management and confidentiality policies.

The Youth Mentoring Network of Australia further developed these benchmarks in 2007, producing an extensive list that incorporates pre-program planning, program evaluation, organisational governance and management and program operations. The program operations section focuses specifically on facilitating the mentee/mentor relationship from matching people to monitoring and closing the relationship. The benchmarks include:

- a well documented and comprehensive selection and screening process
- training and development opportunities for mentors and mentees
- a well-planned matching process that confirms the roles, responsibilities and expectations of both parties
- a system of monitoring and supporting the relationship that provides opportunities for constructive feedback and assists risk management and quality assurance procedures.

Having been developed through consultation and research, these benchmarks are consistent with elements of good practice for mentoring programs identified through other major studies (MacCallum & Beltman 2002; Smith Family 2000; Dubois 2002; Rhodes & Dubois 2006; Wilczynski et al 2004; Moodie 2004). However, other studies identify more detail about both the conceptual approach and practical application of mentoring programs. MacCallum & Beltman (2002), for instance, suggest that effective mentoring programs are ones which:

- consider the mentee as a whole person (social and personal factors as well as academic and vocational)
- establish collaborative links with communities and other agencies
- involve careful selection and close monitoring of mentor-mentee relationships
- involve assistance and training for the mentors
- ensure all stakeholders are aware of the depth and length of commitment and the nature of the mentoring relationship
- include mechanisms by which mentees can support each other, including some social networking between mentors and mentees.

Wilczynski et al (2004) recommend a similar approach in their set of good practice points for mentoring programs, also adding:

- mentoring initiatives should, as a guiding principle, seek to empower the young people who are being mentored; the goal of empowerment of young people should inform all aspects of project implementation
- mentoring projects should be tailored to meet the needs of the target group – this includes all elements of project design, such as selection, training and monitoring of mentors, the aims of the project, and the nature of mentoring activities.

Harris & Daley’s (2006) study shows that the reciprocal, two-way communication between the mentor and mentee is central to an effective mentoring program. For a mentor, important aspects of their role include active listening and providing appropriate advice, encouraging mentees to be self-reflective and critical in their approach to identifying and solving problems, and providing mentees access to appropriate resources, training and networks.

As a leadership development tool, the purpose of mentoring is to provide a guide for young women. A mentor is not an instructor or teacher in the traditional sense – rather, mentors model leadership skills and support young women to develop confidence in their own capacity. Mentoring also gives the mentee opportunities to guide their own learning and development process. The reciprocal nature of the mentor/mentee relationship allows mentees some control over the shape and direction of their experience. Moreover, as the skills and experiences of mentees develop, the relationship with their mentor can adapt and change to offer the type of support women need at any particular stage of their development as a leader (Denner et al 2005).

Wensing’s (2000) study of mentoring programs for young women in the sporting industry suggests that mentoring is an effective strategy to assist young women with goal-setting as well as increasing their motivation and helping them to develop networks. Mentors provide a role model for young women, and someone who can support them and offer ‘insider’ knowledge of a specific industry or sector (Wensing 2000).

A review of mentoring programs for disadvantaged youth conducted by the Smith Family, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia highlights the importance of ensuring a mentoring program is well connected to similar programs as well as other structures and agencies which may support the mentors or mentees. They note that ‘mentoring is about relationships, [not] just between mentor and mentee, but the multiple relationships and support mechanisms involved in the
mentor program as a whole’ (Hartely 2004). Most research and evaluation work on mentoring programs makes similar arguments, and the idea is consistent with social capital and community development frameworks. Mentoring programs do not exist in isolation - part of their rationale is to assist young people to access and connect with broader structures and people across this community. The program will be more effective if it is integrated with other services, rather than being stand alone (Wilczynski et al 2004).

The literature also highlights the importance of considering the benefits of the program for mentors as well as mentees. Some studies have shown that mentoring can lead to greater job satisfaction and personal self-confidence among mentors, as well as enhancement of the mentor’s reputation and skills in communication and education (Anderson 2005, p 66). It can also be immensely satisfying on a personal and emotional level for mentors if they come to play an influential and supportive role in the lives of young people (Smith Family 2004).

One area that is less clear in the literature is the question of ‘closure’ of the mentor/mentee relationship. Some studies identify a formal act of closure as an important part of the mentoring process, while others focus predominantly on establishing the mentoring relationship but do not specify a timeframe. What is consistently highlighted in the literature, however, is the need for the timeframe of the mentoring relationship to be specified at the program’s beginning, so that all parties are prepared for either the relationship to end, or for it to continue indefinitely. Mentors need to also be aware if the decision about when to end the mentoring relationship is their responsibility, and be skilled to manage this. Additionally, the emotions and feelings of loss that may come with ending the relationship should be considered (Wilczynski et al 2004; Wilczynski et al 2003).

One evaluation of particular relevance to the YWLMP is of the LUCY Program, a women’s mentoring program introduced by the NSW Government in 2003. The objective of this program is to inspire, motivate and educate young women about opportunities available for employment and leadership in major corporations and the public sector. The program was developed in conjunction with the University of Western Sydney, the University of Sydney and the Women Chiefs of Enterprises International. There is a particular emphasis within the program on the finance, economics, accounting and business sectors.

Evaluation of the LUCY program focused on outcomes for participants (including mentees and mentors) and the organisational processes of the program. Questionnaires were the primary method of data collection, and mentees also kept a Reflective Learning Journal.

Results indicated that the program was successful in increasing the workplace skills of the mentees and in assisting mentees to clarify their future career path. Mentees also felt that the mentoring experience assisted them to understand how to create a balance between career goals and lifestyle, something learned through observing the ways in which their mentor managed work and family commitments. This finding emphasises a major benefit of mentoring programs. While training or classroom-based leadership programs can teach about work/life balance in the abstract, directly observing the ways in which an individual woman manages her various commitments may not be something many young women have an opportunity to experience.

LUCY program participants also appreciated the opportunity to receive informal career guidance and advice from their mentor, the opportunity to experience workplace culture and the chance to make contacts/network with senior women. The specific activities that mentees found most useful during the program were: shadowing mentors and talking with other employees, attending meetings, practical experience, and leaning how the workplace operates. Mentors also found the program to be valuable to them personally and professionally. In particular, mentors learned more about the issues facing younger people entering their industries, and came to enjoy, and appreciate the importance of, their role in supporting younger workers. However, some mentors did find the experience challenging in areas such as managing time constraints, negotiating the confidential nature of some work issues and building rapport with the mentees (Parker 2005 and 2006). Evaluation of the LUCY program focused on a series of questions for both mentors and mentees including:

- How well has LUCY raised your awareness of the breadth of job opportunities in the corporate sector?
To what extent has LUCY motivated you to aspire to senior positions in the corporate sector?

Has LUCY changed your view on leadership in the corporate sector?

How useful has LUCY been in providing you with exposure to a network of senior women?

How has exposure to senior women helped you?

Has the experience helped you understand how to create a balance between lifestyle and career goals?

How would you rate the matching of mentees to mentors?

How would you rate the partner relationship with Office for Women? (question for mentors)

What do you think you gained from the mentoring experience?

Did you experience any barriers or difficulties as a mentor?

1.5.2 Leadership Programs for Young and/or Rural Women

A number of leadership programs, such as the abovementioned LUCY program, incorporate mentoring into their range of activities. However, there are also a number of leadership programs for women that use a range of other work-based and educational strategies to train and prepare women for leadership roles. More specifically, leadership programs may include initiatives which allow women to experience working in senior roles, or a leadership internship in which women train with senior people within a company or organisation. Other programs are solely educational-based, with leadership training courses being conducted over a period of days, weeks or months. The training programs often involve an aspect of leadership psychology education and testing to assist participants to better understand their leadership style. Additionally, leadership training often incorporates targeted, knowledge-based training to improve women’s understanding of a specific organisation, industry or sector, along with more generalised leadership skills, such as communication, networking and management.

As noted previously, leadership is an imprecise term. Its application to ‘leadership development’ programs varies widely with regards to the factors program evaluators look for as a measure of program ‘success’. However, several authors have sought to articulate some broad approaches to leadership programs that have some evidence of success with young women and/or in a rural context.

Evaluations of leadership programs suggest that some of the most significant outcomes for participants may only be visible some months after the program has finished, supporting the need to undertake comprehensive longitudinal studies to adequately capture program achievements. For instance, Bray’s (2006) evaluation of an executive women’s leadership program in Northern Ireland identified a number of ‘ripple-effects’ from the program, such as:

- participants continuing to expand their professional networks
- positive feedback participants received from their colleagues as they began to apply their new leadership skills
- positive feedback and professional success that came from increased self-awareness of their personal leadership style.

Leadership programs that aim to increase participants’ capacity to manage a leadership role within a specific industry or sector often include measures relating to this within their evaluation criteria. For instance, a women’s leadership program conducted by Melbourne University (Equal Opportunity Unit 2002) looked for outcomes among participants such as:

- strengthened ability to provide leadership by initiating and responding to change in the higher education sector
- strengthened capacity to manage programs, resources and people within the university context
- exposure to challenging and informative role models
• affirmation of existing strengths in relation to leadership and management skills and abilities.

Conner & Strobel (2007) suggest that some key elements of a successful leadership program working with young women are:

• allowing enough time for leadership skills and confidence to develop (often several months or years)
• ensuring young women receive regular praise and positive reinforcement
• making self-reflection and goal setting a part of the program
• creating opportunities for interactions with adults.

Importantly, the program design also needs to be responsive to the changes being experienced by the young women. As their leadership capacities develop, they should be able to play a greater role in shaping the program in their own design and take more responsibility for program achievements (Conner & Strobel 2007).

On a similar note, as well as looking at leadership development in relation to the program or organisation, evaluation of some leadership programs incorporates a broader social and community context. For example, Rogers & Barker (2001) adopt a social capital framework to identify several components of a successful leadership program for rural communities, including:

• a focus within the program on the role of the individual in collective community action
• the development of a broad-based leadership network
• increasing awareness of regional issues and challenges
• fostering creativity and innovation of thought and action among participants.

Roger & Barker’s points reflect a consistent theme in research relating to the needs of regional and rural communities: the importance of developing innovative and creative solutions to the problems facing communities and industries in these locations. They suggest that leadership programs can provide the skills and capacities required by individuals to generate an active and inquiring community – one that is willing to question government policy when needed and which has the capacity to research and pursue alternative solutions to community and land management problems.

Fostering the greater participation of women and young people, who have a set of experiences different to that of the traditional male ‘farmer’, is seen by many in rural industries and communities as potentially an important avenue for rural and regional renewal. Thus, evaluation of leadership programs targeting young women may find important outcomes in areas where women leaders have been able to introduce new, non-traditional ideas or ways of operating in rural industries and communities.

The Western Australian Department of Agriculture’s Rural Women in Leadership Program, conducted in 1999-2000 as part of a broader Progress Rural WA program, was based on a participatory approach to women and leadership. In other words, it was developed with acknowledgement that change in rural communities needs to be initiated by community members rather than from government in traditional community development programs. Development of the leadership capacity of women was seen as a means to provide community members with skills and capacities to effect change.

Specifically, the Progress Rural WA program involved a leadership training program for rural women over 40 who had been involved in community activities but were unlikely to identify as leaders. The program included a component of self-directed research (Haslam McKenzie 2003, p 141).

Evaluation of the program involved data collected at the end of each training period, then two months after the program’s completion. The outcomes of this were then used as the basis for a series of interviews with selected members of local communities, such as community leaders and locals with a high profile. The interviews aimed to assess whether there had been a noticeable impact within the community following the program.
Findings from this program suggest that it successfully increased the self-confidence and self-esteem of women who participated, while also providing them with a valuable networking opportunity. Overall, a number of women who had been involved with a Progress WA program became more visible and active within their local community (Haslam McKenzie 2003, p145).

The success of the program has been attributed to enabling women who already have a commitment to rural communities and industries to visualise how they can work towards building networks and achieving leadership goals. The women were provided with specific tools and knowledge to assist them to meet their goals and to become initiators of community change (Haslam McKenzie 2003, p146). This strategy is appropriate in terms of the need to not only increase participation of women in leadership roles, but to find strategies for generating cultural and structural change within rural communities and industries. Women need to be equipped not only to take on leadership positions, but to effect change.

1.6 Implications for Evaluation: Outcomes and Measurement

This literature review has drawn from a range of studies about leadership and mentoring programs related to youth and/or women. These have been brought together with research relating specifically to the issues facing women in rural and regional Australia regarding their participation in leadership roles in rural industries and communities. Although there is limited research that relates directly to this program – the efficacy of a leadership and mentoring program for young women in rural Australia – the related bodies of literature that form part of this review combine to provide a useful set of material to inform and guide this evaluation.

The literature suggests three key areas around which program evaluation should be focused:

- the conceptual approach of the program (program logic)
- program structure and process
- program impact and outcomes.

These three elements are consistent with approaches to evaluation that seek to assess the appropriateness of the program design for the specific target group (in terms of whether or not the program is appropriate to the needs of the target group, and whether or not the program logic model is based on an appropriate analysis of those needs), as well as the process, impact and outcomes of the program.

The literature suggests that evaluation of the ‘program logic’ and appropriateness of the program should look at questions such as:

- Does the program meet the needs of young rural women and the needs of the local community?
- Does this program address the barriers young women in rural areas face in terms of access to leadership positions?

This aspect of the evaluation would also assess the core assumptions of the program that inform the program logic model. Some evaluation questions in this regard could include:

- To what extent does this program challenge the structural and cultural barriers that prevent young women in rural areas from gaining leadership positions on an equal basis with men?
- Does increasing the leadership skills and confidence of young women enhance their capacity to gain leadership roles?
- Is mentoring an appropriate strategy for assisting young women in rural areas to develop networks which facilitate their transition into leadership roles?

Evaluation of the program structure and process could include research questions based on the Mentoring Australia Benchmarks and other identified indicators of good practice. This section of the evaluation contributes to answering the question of ‘how’ the program achieved its goals, as well as identifying any problems in program implementation. Some evaluation questions may be:
- Did the program involve consistent contact between mentor and mentee?
- Did all mentors receive adequate support and training to effectively undertake their role as mentor?
- Were mentors and mentees appropriately matched?
- Did the program provide young women with appropriate skills, knowledge and resources to enhance their role as leaders?
- Were all participants made aware of the nature of the mentoring relationship, including procedures for closing or ending the mentoring relationship where relevant?

The third focus of the evaluation is on program impact and outcomes. This relates to whether or not the program met its objectives, as well as looking for any unintended outcomes of the program and longer-term impacts, or flow-on effects. Some evaluation questions may be:

- Were participants able to move into leadership roles as a result of the program?
- Did participants increase their professional and/or community networks as a result of the program?
- What were the benefits of the program for mentors, personally and professionally?
- Do participants feel more confident in their capacity to take on leadership roles as a result of the program?
- Are participants more aware of the particular issues and problems facing rural and regional areas?
- Are participants more capable of responding in a leadership role to the emerging needs of rural and regional communities or industries?

It is clear from the literature that a longitudinal study is the most appropriate and comprehensive research design for evaluating a leadership and mentoring program such as this. The paucity of well-conducted longitudinal studies on the efficacy of leadership and mentoring programs mean that this evaluation will be a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge in this area.

Where longitudinal studies have been conducted to evaluate mentoring or leadership programs, they tend to extend only over a period of months rather than years following the commencement and completion of the program. This may mean that existing studies have not captured the longer-term impacts, if any, of leadership programs. The range of structural and cultural barriers to women’s leadership participation identified in the research points to the need for longer-term studies in this area. Engrained social and cultural patterns do not change quickly, and participants will have to engage in an ongoing process of challenging and confronting these, beyond the course of the program. With this in mind, the evaluation will need to consider some issues related to longer term program outcomes, such as:

- Are young women who have been through the program successfully challenging some of the structural and cultural barriers to leadership participation?
- If participants are not successfully overcoming these barriers, how do they respond?
- Are participants able to sustain the confidence and skills gained from the program over the longer term?
- Are participants continuing to pursue leadership goals despite any initial setbacks or barriers?

In a rural context, it will also be important to assess whether the leadership program has encouraged and assisted young women to remain in rural areas. This may relate to the abovementioned points to the extent that as young women develop the skills and confidence to act as leaders, they may seek industries and communities that are more accommodating of female leaders. This may not be in rural areas.

Consideration of longer terms program outcomes could also include analysis of the specific range of issues cited in the research that act as barriers to rural women’s participation in leadership roles, and
the extent to which the program has challenged these. With reference to Claridge’s three categories of – socialised, situational and structural constraints – some further evaluation questions may include:

- To what extent have participants and other stakeholders changed their perceptions about what personal qualities are needed in successful leaders?
- To what extent have participants changed their perspective on women’s leadership capacities in relation to men’s?
- How have participants personally confronted any clear opposition to their presence in a leadership role?
- Have family or other commitments impeded participants’ capacity to undertake leadership roles?
- Have any practical constraints impeded participants’ capacity to undertake leadership roles, such as geographic distance or isolation?
- Have participants’ experienced cultural barriers to their career or leadership progression, such as a masculine culture? How have they negotiated this?

This section of the evaluation may need to involve collection of detailed information about the specific industry or community within which each participant is located, as there may be localised issues that impact upon the success of the program. For instance, some participants may be working in a sector or industry that is highly supportive of women as leaders. Others may have to confront significant cultural or situational barriers, such as very few women working within that industry or even outright hostility towards senior women. At a community level, there may be factors which act as either a barrier or support to program participants pursuing leadership roles. For instance, communities which have a high level of civic participation or a large number of local volunteer organisations may welcome young women with leadership skills and provide numerous opportunities for them to take on leadership roles. On the other hand, communities with limited community activity are likely to offer fewer leadership options for young women. Inclusion of some case studies in the report may be useful to capture information of this type.

Additionally, a social capital framework may assist in conceptualising the outcomes of the program at a community level – both in terms of factors that may have supported or constrained program success as well as the benefits the program may have brought to rural communities. While some aspects of social capital (such as feelings of trust and reciprocity within a community) are difficult to measure conclusively, and a comprehensive study of increased levels of social capital would be another study in its own right, the concept of social capital can guide research questions and data analysis. For instance, it may be useful to talk to young women about the flow-on effects of their participation in the program and what this might mean from a social capital perspective. For example:

- Have participants become more involved in community activities?
- Have they encouraged other young people to become more involved in the local community?
- Have participants become role models for other young women?

The program may have also involved a range of other community members, such as representatives of the local council or area consultative committees. An increase in community members making connections with, and supporting, young women could be seen as a development of social capital in the local area.

Related to this, the literature also highlights the value of this evaluation incorporating the perspectives of a range of relevant parties, including program staff, mentors, mentees and other community and industry stakeholders. For instance, members of the community or industries, who are not direct participants in the program, may be able to provide insights or observations which mentees or mentors are not in a position to see, such as the extent to which other people in leadership positions have accepted young women in leadership roles. Such stakeholders may also be able to comment on the extent to which they have witnessed changes in the program participant or the benefits the program has brought to the local community.
1.7 Integrated leadership programs: training, mentoring and networking

A number of leadership programs combine some form of training program with a period of mentoring for participants. While the training and mentoring components are generally evaluated separately, overall conclusions tend to relate to the program as a whole. In other words, the extent to which a mentoring program would be effective without a training program or vice versa is not determined. Nor do they articulate the ways in which skills learnt in training can be applied or practiced through the mentoring stage of the program. Furthermore, while establishing networking opportunities tends to be a broad objective of most leadership programs, is not always clearly articulated what this means. Is networking simply being introduced to senior women, or does it involve a longer process of developing friendship ties within a community or sector? Is networking between participants considered to be a successful outcome?

The evaluation of a young women’s leadership program run in Western Sydney (Aquino 2006) overcomes some of these limitations. The program involved young women between 16-25 years of age residing in several suburbs in the West of the Sydney metropolitan area. Its objective was to develop the leadership skills of young women while establishing a network of young women leaders. Participants completed a TAFE training course and were matched to a mentor. While the official mentoring program lasted for eight weeks, the aim was for mentors and mentees to establish a relationship that would continue beyond the life of the project.

The TAFE training course, the networking component and the mentoring component were all reported on separately in the evaluation. Findings indicated that the training component assisted participants to develop leadership skills such as assertiveness, understanding leadership styles and public speaking, although it was noted that there were few opportunities to put these skills into practice through the mentoring component of the program. In other words, the program as a whole could have supported the further development of skills learnt in the training component. However, on the whole, participants found the course to be extremely beneficial in terms of increasing their skills and confidence, while also providing inspiration and ‘insider’ knowledge from women in leadership positions.

The program evaluation looked in detail at the development of networks between program participants. Participants maintained strong links both during and after the program, sharing resources and information, though it was noted that mechanisms for facilitating and expanding this network could be improved. Participants also felt that the mentoring relationship helped them to make influential contacts within their industry or business. In addition the program evaluation mentioned the benefits that would derive from further supporting networking opportunities between mentors, such as enabling mentors to recognise their value as senior women within a community or industry.

Overall, the success of the program related to all three components: the mentoring, networking and training. Mentoring provided young women with hands on experience and knowledge, as well allowing them to make contacts at a senior level. Networking between the participants provided an important resource for support, information sharing and confidence building. The training offered a comprehensive introduction to leadership as a concept and a set of skills, which framed the mentoring experience for participants and enabled them to identify areas where they felt they needed further practice, such as public speaking.

1.8 References


Appendix B  Programme Logic
Program Logic Outcomes Hierarchy

The following diagram and detailed table presents the program logic for the Young Women's Leadership and Mentoring Programme (YMLMP) using an outcomes hierarchy model.

The YWLMP sits within the wider Women's Leadership and Development Programme. The aims of this Programme are to:

- build women’s participation in all parts of Australian life
- focus on capacity building for Australian women
- build women’s capacity to take on greater leadership responsibilities
- consult widely with women in the community
- commission research on issues relevant to women.

The outcomes of the YWLMP are aligned under these aims. It is important to note that the stated anticipated outcomes of the Programme have been integrated into the outcomes hierarchy and 'unpacked' in further detail.
Young Women’s Leadership & Mentoring Program: Overall Program Logic

Ultimate outcomes

- Increased participation of young women in decision making positions (local government and non-government organisations, community boards, local industry and business)
- Increased participation of young women in their communities
- Increased community capacity and leadership (the wider community has benefited from the pilots)

Intermediate outcomes

- Increased individual leadership, goal setting, decision making and communication skills of mentees
- Mentors have enhanced their mentoring and coaching skills
- Pilots have developed effective relationships with other organisations in the local community
- Processes for pilots to assist mentees increase their networking and leadership opportunities
- Mentees are able to identify possible opportunities for participation in their community with the support of their mentors
- Mentees have shown a willingness to pursue these opportunities
- Mentees are able to act on their personal goals
- Mentors have identified and/or facilitated opportunities for mentees
- Mentees have increased their contacts and networks

Immediate outcomes

- Increased knowledge and awareness of networks and leadership opportunities
- Mentor-mentee relationship successfully maintained throughout the pilot period and effectively monitored and supported
- Mentees are able to set personal goals
- Mentees and mentors are retained for the entire pilot period

Activities/outputs/processes

- Mentees and mentors are successfully recruited
- Mentor-mentee relationships established
- Training program and supporting written material delivered
- Networking component delivered
- Processes in place to communicate with, coordinate and support participants

Needs

- A need for greater community leadership in rural/regional communities
- A need to enhance the sustainability of rural/regional communities through greater community leadership
- A need for cultural change in rural and regional communities - women are underrepresented in decision making positions in rural communities
- A need for a programme for young women living in rural and regional communities with a self development and leadership focus as a pathway to building community capacity
- Lack of research that demonstrates whether or not a leadership, mentoring and networking approach is effective in producing improved leadership capacity
- Lack of research about community based mentoring programs in rural and regional locations (usually workplace or career based)
# Young Women’s Leadership & Mentoring Program: Program Logic

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<tr>
<th>Outcomes Hierarchy</th>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
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| **Ultimate outcomes** | - What are the overall impacts and outcomes of the programme for mentees and their communities?  
- How effective was the overall approach in terms of the ‘package’ of components (i.e., mentoring, training, and networking)?  
- How useful and/or appropriate was the overall package or particular project components/activities?  
- Were there specific elements of the pilots that were particularly effective?  
- Are there any ways in which the project could be improved?  
- Did mentees develop a sense of self-efficacy as a result of their participation? (i.e., do they believe that they have something to contribute to their community as a result of this programme)?  
- To what extent have young women been able to use skills and capabilities in a wider community context? (i.e., are mentees participating in community activities that they were not previously involved with)?  
- What are (if any) the types of activities women are currently involved in/pursuing as a result of the programme?  
- To what extent does this model enhance the capacity and skills of mentees as well as their local communities?  
- What are the critical success factors for a community-based mentoring and leadership program for young women? | **Longitudinal study:**  
- Round 1-4 of surveys and follow up in-depth interviews with mentees  
**Pilot evaluations:**  
- Pilot field visits  
  - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentors  
  - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentees  
  - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with stakeholders  
- Existing documentation from pilots  
- Existing data collected by pilots (e.g., post-training evaluation data, attendance records) |
| **Increased participation of young women in decision making positions (local government and non-government organisations, community boards, local industry and business)** | | |
| **Increased participation of young women in their communities** | | |
| **Increased community capacity and leadership (the wider community has benefited from the pilots)** | | |
### Intermediate outcomes
- Increased individual leadership, goal setting, decision making and communication skills of mentees
- Mentors have enhanced their mentoring and coaching skills
- Pilots have developed effective relationships with other organisations in the local community
- Processes for pilots to assist mentees increase their networking and leadership opportunities
- Mentees are able to identify possible opportunities for participation in their community with the support of their mentors
- Mentees have shown a willingness to pursue these opportunities
- Mentees are able to act on their personal goals
- Mentors have identified and/or facilitated opportunities for mentees
- Mentees have increased their contacts and networks

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<tr>
<td>How effective has the programme been in developing the individual skills of mentees? In what particular areas have mentees developed new skills/capabilities they did not have before the programme?</td>
<td>Longitudinal study: Round 1-3 of surveys and follow up interviews with mentees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have young women increased their contacts and networks either with other participants or outside of the programme?</td>
<td>Pilot evaluations: Pilot field visits</td>
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<td>To what extent are mentees able to set their own goals?</td>
<td>- In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentors</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent are mentees able to identify potential networking and leadership opportunities?</td>
<td>- In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have mentors developed their mentoring and coaching skills?</td>
<td>- In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with stakeholders</td>
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<td>Do young women have a greater sense of the issues affecting their communities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What impact has the programme had on mentee’s attitudes about themselves and their capacity to seek out opportunities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What impact has the programme had on mentee’s attitudes about what opportunities are available to them in their community?</td>
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<td>How have key local stakeholders responded to the pilots?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the range of leadership skills/qualities that women have demonstrated throughout the programme? In what ways have they demonstrated these?</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent are mentees aspiring or aiming to take up leadership roles in the future?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the other noticeable changes in attitudes, skills and behaviour of programme participants?</td>
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# Outcomes Hierarchy

## Immediate outcomes
- Increased knowledge and awareness of networks and leadership opportunities
- Mentor-mentee relationship successfully maintained throughout the pilot period and effectively monitored and supported
- Mentees are able to set personal goals
- Mentees and mentors are retained for the entire pilot period

## Evaluation questions
- How did the mentees respond to the mentoring, training and networking components of the program?
- To what extent did the programme activities meet the expectations of mentees and mentors?
- Have mentees and mentors been able to maintain their relationship throughout the programme?
- How appropriate were the mentee-mentor matches?
- Have participants experienced any challenges maintaining their participation in the programme?
- Were mentors and mentees well supported by the pilots?

## Information Sources
- Longitudinal study:
  - Round 1 of the survey and follow up interviews with mentees
- Pilot evaluations:
  - Pilot field visits
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentors
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentees
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with stakeholders
  - Existing data collected by pilots (e.g. post training evaluation data, attendance records)

## Outputs/activities/processes
- Mentees and mentors are successfully recruited
- Mentor-mentee relationships established
- Training program and supporting written material delivered
- Networking component delivered
- Processes in place to communicate with, coordinate and support participants

## Evaluation questions
- Were the targets (number of mentees and mentors) set by OfW met by the pilots, why/why not?
- Were the activities (training, mentoring and networking) of the program successfully delivered?
- Were the activities appropriate?
- Were there appropriate processes in place to manage the activities (e.g. monitoring of the mentee-mentor relationship, strategies for ending the relationship, systems for communicating with participants)?
- How appropriate/effective were the strategies for attracting participants, processes of recruitment?

## Information Sources
- Longitudinal study:
  - Round 1 of survey
- Pilot evaluations:
  - Pilot field visits
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentors
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentees
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with stakeholders
  - Existing documentation from pilots
  - Existing data collected by pilots (e.g. post training evaluation data, attendance records)
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### Evaluation questions
- To what extent does the pilot model respond to community needs?
- What were the set of specific community needs each pilot was addressing?

### Information Sources
- Longitudinal study:
  - Round 1 of survey
- Pilot evaluations:
  - Pilot field visits
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentors
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with mentees
    - In-depth interviews and/or focus groups with stakeholders
  - Existing documentation from pilots
  - Existing data collected by pilots (e.g., post training evaluation data, attendance records)
- Literature review
- Briefing from OfW