



Public Sector
Commission

Building Leadership Impact

Conditions for
positive leadership
change



Leading in the public sector

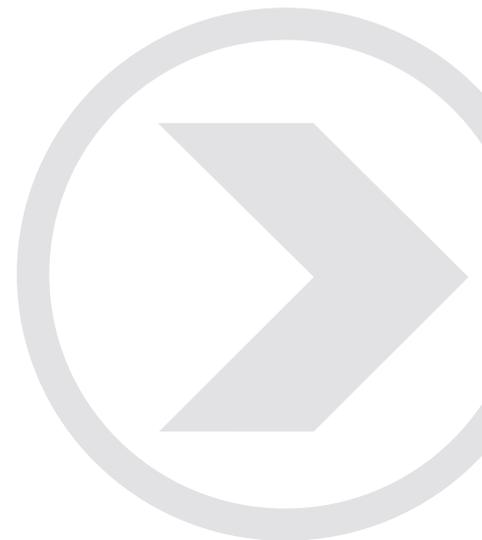
Public sector leaders operate within a unique environment where they are responsible for delivering on their own agency's strategy while also being cognisant of the wider context and public value of their work.

They tackle emergent and ongoing policy challenges to improve the impact of public services, working across organisational boundaries, sectors and jurisdictions.

They have to make space for innovation while managing risk and being accountable for results.

They must support fast moving political agendas, and manage and transform vast public agencies. They must motivate and inspire their workforces, and be highly skilled in leading in culturally informed ways. They must also be trusted partners to citizens and an ever growing number of stakeholders.

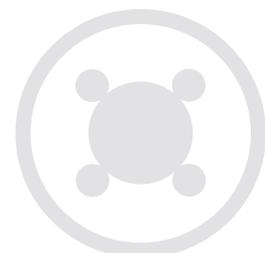
All this while promoting the highest level of personal and professional ethics, integrity and values.



I am providing both clear direction and tangible help for agencies to further develop an environment that **supports leaders on their improvement trajectory.**



Sharyn O'Neill





From the Commissioner

Public sector leaders are at the heart of government effectiveness and so much is, and should be, expected of them.

Each day I see great leadership across our sector at all levels from seasoned agency leaders to those taking their first tentative steps. I recognise that public sector leadership has never been so challenging or complex, and I know firsthand that it is a significant but rewarding responsibility.

Over the years, agencies have supported leaders through development programs, resources and activities that have promoted an understanding of effective leadership, generated useful conversations about leadership, and provided support and guidance.

Through this, we have produced some outstanding leaders who have gone on to be part of the bedrock of public sector achievement.

As we strive to be at our best to serve Western Australians, the road ahead will continue to be filled with equal measures of success and challenge. To meet the challenge head on, I believe we need to get more from our leadership – and I do not mean leaders working harder or longer as many are already stretched. Instead, we need to make better use of what we have by helping the best to further their impact, supporting those yet to reach their peak and nurturing upcoming leaders.

This means assisting each leader to make deliberate incremental positive changes to aspects of their leadership behaviours, bringing about significant gains in the overall impact of leadership for a high performing sector.

We need in place not just some but all of the conditions necessary for leaders to make productive changes to their leadership.

Central to these conditions are the leadership behaviours and mindsets expected, and activation of personal responsibility to improve.

It is important to work as one sector on this endeavour, adopting a shared language, an integrated approach and a proactive commitment to build impact through positive leadership change.

To achieve this, I am providing both clear direction and tangible help for agencies to develop an environment that supports leaders on their improvement trajectory.

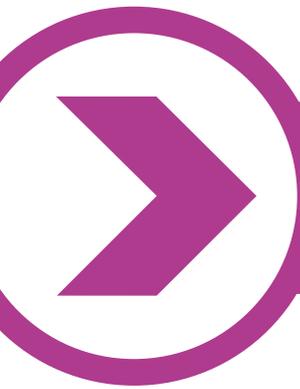
This includes the expected leadership behaviours and mindsets in various contexts; guidance and tools for reflection and feedback; and concrete development pathways and learning resources.

These elements come together for agency use as an integrated whole – a deliberate move away from a more traditional and narrow view of leadership development with unrelated activities and programs.

The strength of leadership in our sector and lifting its impact is a shared responsibility. I do not underestimate how hard it can be to change some aspects of the way we lead to generate greater impact.

I ask you to join with me in committing to Building Leadership Impact by considering your agency approach to leadership and putting in place all the conditions to best support leaders to embark on a process of positive improvement.

Sharyn O'Neill
Public Sector Commissioner



Setting the conditions for positive leadership change

The task of leading in the public sector is big for those who take it on – and so is the challenge of developing strong leadership to meet evolving demands.

This is why having in place the key conditions for leadership change is so important for leaders to flourish. Prime among these is setting clear expectations.

Leadership is often referred to as the ability to motivate and influence a person or a group – to maximise their impact – towards the achievement of a goal.

Good leaders seem to understand people's needs and motivations, and align these individual interests with the overall purpose to achieve a particular end. Great leaders do this day in and day out, year after year, having an impact in a wide variety of contexts and circumstances.

This includes those who lead thinking in knowledge areas and specialist functions. Their work is also transformative and likewise has demands in terms of influencing and working with others.

New insights

Contemporary research provides new insights into leadership, suggesting that the variation between the effectiveness of leaders largely comes down to a few key attributes including the mindsets each leader brings to their work as powerful influences on behaviours.

It confirms that leadership is fundamentally about people – complex, individual, deeply psychological and relational.

Knowing this, the challenge is how to go about building leadership impact.

Many organisations have approached this challenge by producing various descriptions of leadership competencies and developing a huge variety of courses and training to improve these competencies. There is a myriad of leadership frameworks, conferences, programs, speakers, resources and tools – each targeting aspects of leadership development.

However, for people to lead more effectively or in different ways it is imperative to be clear not only about what changes are needed but how these changes can be brought about in practice and in the context in which each leader is operating.

There is a big difference between increasing *understanding* of good leadership and actually *changing* leadership behaviours. Behaviour change in any context can be confronting as it requires individuals to look closely at themselves and to challenge their long held values, beliefs and practices.

Effective behaviour change

One of the least effective ways to change someone's behaviour is by *telling* them how they should be different. A more productive approach is to create an environment where leaders can see for themselves what they need to change and how to go about it. In this way, they take responsibility for their own behaviour change.

Behaviour change is always incremental and, to be lasting, it needs to be personally internalised and well embedded in context and practice. There is no silver bullet to

enhance leadership performance given its highly personalised nature. But what is well known about leadership success is that it thrives when an environment for change is proactively established and fostered.

Personal responsibility

The process of change begins with a leader having the desire to change. Many efforts at improving leadership behaviours and providing tools to support this bear little fruit because the individual is not open to change in the first place. An essential component of any leadership improvement strategy is to activate personal responsibility and the desire to be better.

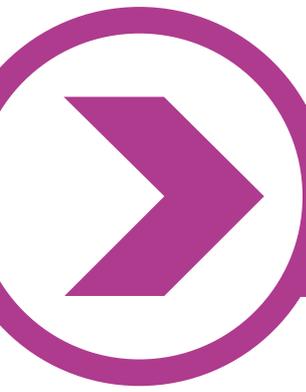
There is a number of other important conditions that agencies need to put in place to provide valuable concrete direction and assistance to individual leaders and their managers to help them reflect and commit to a leadership behaviour change pathway.

For some, this pathway may mean changes in specific areas; for others, it may mean broader changes. For the leadership talent pipeline, it is about what those leaders need to change to move successfully into new leadership contexts with increasing demands and challenges. For everyone, it is about continuous improvement.

There are 6 conditions needed to create the environment for positive behaviour change:

- 1. Clear expectations in context**
- 2. Robust self reflection**
- 3. Personal responsibility for growth**
- 4. Understanding what “good” leadership looks like**
- 5. Productive feedback**
- 6. Opportunities for development and extension**

While these are often dealt with as discrete activities, it is more powerful to deal with them as integrated and complementary elements of a comprehensive approach to leadership development.

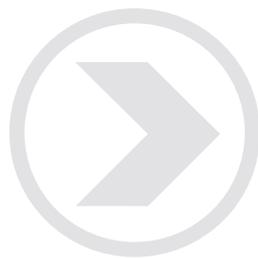


Putting in place the conditions for success

Taking on board the understanding of improving leadership from a behaviour change perspective and the necessary elements for success, Building Leadership Impact provides clear direction about the conditions for leadership impact as well as tangible support for leaders on their personal improvement trajectory.

Building Leadership Impact includes Leadership Expectations which details expected behaviours, associated mindsets and behaviours in action in different leadership contexts; an array of guidance and tools focused on the behaviours and mindsets that can be used for self reflection and feedback; and concrete development pathways and learning aligned with the leadership contexts.

“ **Building Leadership Impact** is designed specifically for the sector with its unique demands and circumstances. ”



1. Clear expectations in context

Most of the time, understanding the leadership role and the expectations that come with it begins with knowing what outcomes need to be met and how the role contributes to the organisation. Whether these are defined by the leader or for the leader, they need to be clear, manageable and well communicated. This is fundamental to any other condition for change.

As part of Building Leadership Impact, Leadership Expectations specifies 7 core leadership behaviours expected in the public sector. Leadership behaviours are visible – they are how individuals present and conduct themselves and how others experience them. They are concrete, explicit and can be shaped and developed over time.

Leadership Expectations is the basis for implementing the other conditions for positive change.

Behaviours are driven by mindsets – and it is these mindsets that determine what the behaviours look like. Mindsets are the thought patterns that leaders bring to their work including their values, beliefs, motivations, preferred working style and how they approach their work. They are often not visible but influence discretion, judgement and decision making, and define the way people carry out tasks and solve problems.

Leadership Expectations specifies not only the behaviours but also the associated mindsets that powerfully drive effectiveness. This is a key shift in the approach to leadership.

The behaviours and mindsets are set in 7 leadership contexts. Each context reflects the contribution of work including where and how a role adds value to the agency and sector; and the level of complexity, responsibility and accountability. Context is also related to the time span between

decisions being made and outcomes being realised.

The expected behaviours and mindsets are the same for everyone but what they look like in action varies according to context. The first and foundational context relates to personal responsibility for those not in a “traditional” leadership role and forms the basis for all other leadership contexts.

Leadership Expectations describes each leadership context, and articulates the expected behaviours and mindsets.

Expected behaviours and associated mindsets

The expected behaviours are to ...

- **lead collectively**
consciously adopting the mindset **“I am part of something bigger”**
- **think through complexity**
consciously adopting the mindset **“There is more than one solution”**
- **dynamically sense the environment**
consciously adopting the mindset **“There is always more to the story”**
- **deliver on high leverage areas**
consciously adopting the mindset **“Some actions are more powerful than others”**
- **build capability**
consciously adopting the mindset **“We are only as good as our people”**
- **embody the spirit of public service**
consciously adopting the mindset **“We do everything for the public good”**
- **lead adaptively**
consciously adopting the mindset **“I am forever curious, forever learning”**.

2. Robust self reflection

With the high demands of public sector leadership, it is easy for leaders to get caught up in the day to day work at hand and leave no room for self reflection.

Self reflection is a critical part of what makes good leaders as it gives them the opportunity to think deeply. It encourages a level of self awareness and consciousness about their practice. It enables them to identify areas for improvement as well as areas where they are strong.

People learn by reflecting on their behaviours, experiences and mistakes. Unless they question themselves about what their experiences mean and think actively about them, research has shown that they won't make any changes. Self reflection enables people to move from experiencing to understanding, which provides the basis for making changes to behaviours.

“ Looking in the mirror can be challenging and it takes courage – but it is a **hallmark trait of a good leader.** ”

Leadership Expectations guides critical self reflection by providing examples of expected behaviours in action at increasing levels of mastery in each leadership context.

3. Personal responsibility for growth

An essential component of leadership growth and improvement is personal responsibility where leaders take full accountability for their actions, decisions, thoughts and more.

The 7 contexts for leadership described in Leadership Expectations has Personal Leadership as the first context for all staff to use for reflection, regardless of their role or level.

Everyone starts here and carries personal leadership into all subsequent leadership contexts they may transition to.

The focus of this context is on understanding and managing self; paying attention to quality; developing and nurturing relationships; communicating with purpose; and sharing ideas, knowledge and skills.

This is not only an essential base block, it also permeates every aspect of leadership progression.

“ Being **personally responsible** is being self aware and this begins in the earliest stages of leadership. ”

Leadership contexts

➤ **Personal Leadership**

Leadership in this context is about the work of individuals not yet in traditional leadership positions who make a direct and immediate difference to the agency.

➤ **Leading Others**

Leadership in this first formal positional leadership context is about motivating and enabling others to deliver high quality work that contributes to the agency.

➤ **Leading Leaders**

Leadership in this context is about getting results through leaders and their teams in a single business area, and by influencing leaders in other business areas.

➤ **Multiple Area Leader**

Leadership in this context is about leading teams to achieve the strategic direction of a number of different business areas and to implement the associated operational strategies.

➤ **Executive Leader**

Leadership in this context is about shaping complex initiatives covering multiple business areas as well as having a key responsibility in corporate governance.

➤ **Agency Leader**

Leadership in this context is about having end of line responsibility for shaping and delivering agency corporate strategy and governance that deliver key government services.

➤ **Statewide Leader**

Leadership in this context is about end of line responsibility for shaping policy at whole of state and sector levels to drive long term sustainable service delivery and create public value.

4. Understanding what “good” leadership looks like

So what does good leadership actually look like? Instead of letting leaders grapple with what is required, it is important to paint a picture in practical terms to ensure consistent understanding of the expected behaviours.

In Leadership Expectations, specific examples of expected behaviours in action are given for each leadership context at 3 levels, showing what is needed for development and mastery for each expected behaviour.

This lets leaders know what “good” looks like in every context.

At the developing level, demonstrated behaviours are evolving and starting to add value. At the proficient level, demonstrated behaviours are appropriate for the leadership context and have room to grow. At the mature level, demonstrated behaviours are those expected of someone who is fully developed in the context and can stretch.

“ There are examples of specific behaviours at 3 levels of mastery: **developing, proficient and mature.** ”

The examples give leaders a concrete mechanism against which they can reflect on their own performance and assess their maturity. They also allow leaders to gauge their readiness to move to a new leadership context, and understand the shifts needed in their behaviours and mindsets to transition successfully.

5. Productive feedback

One of the most powerful strategies to bring about behaviour change is the timely giving and receiving of professional feedback that is clear, supportive and gives forward direction.

To move towards improved and more effective behaviours, leaders must be receptive to feedback including feedback that is uncomfortable. Those who learn best tend to seek out feedback and can process it mindfully with a high likelihood of acting on the feedback to guide their behaviour change.

The organisational leadership environment needs to teach and support the giving and receiving of feedback including non-threatening behaviourally focused feedback, coaching to help interpret and use feedback, and linkages between performance improvement and valued outcomes.

Leadership Expectations provides the basis for specific conversations about expected behaviours and mindsets, and how these are demonstrated in each context. Building Leadership Impact also includes guidance that has examples of how feedback can be sought, processed and acted on in each leadership context.

This is further supported by guidance to improve how the feedback loop is enacted both for leaders themselves and for leaders providing feedback to their staff.

“ Feedback needs to be **honest, practical and helpful,** reflecting the strong relational aspect of leadership. ”

6. Opportunities for development and extension

One of the biggest challenges in any development is to ensure the skills and capabilities learned are applied on the job. The further the distance between acquisition and application, the less likely the learning is put into practice.

A rich and contemporary resource of local and international learnings has been curated to build leadership capability across all contexts for now and the future. These Development Maps are aligned specifically to the 7 leadership contexts.

The learning includes an abundance of topics to explore, with activities and ways to experiment and practice. Articles, videos, podcasts, reflection questions and practical tools are just some of these resources. With 24/7 online access, leaders can choose when, how and what to read, watch, listen and action.

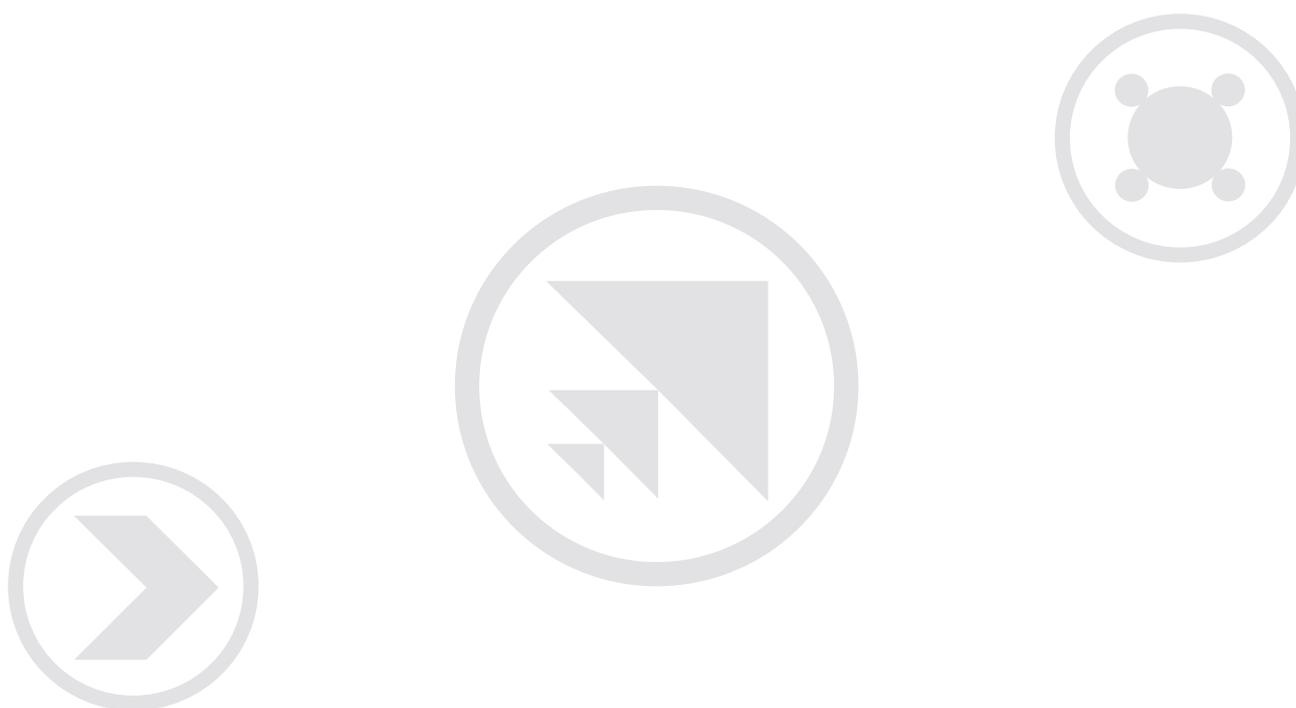
Leaders can direct their own learning at their own pace, based on their reflections and assessment as well as feedback from others.

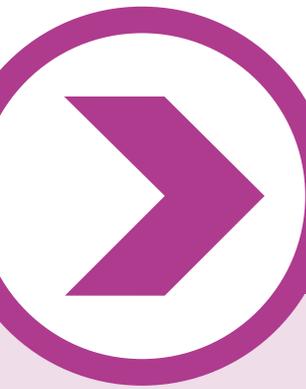
There are also workshops and resources for agencies to implement to develop leaders at the Personal Leadership context. A large proportion of people in the sector operate in this context, adding operational value through their work that has a significant impact on the community. A strong emphasis on developing and supporting those in this context is crucial to improve leadership across the sector.

Public sector agencies as well as the Public Sector Commission have their own high quality leadership programs, resources and experiences constructed over the years.

Many of these are fit for purpose to support the new approach to building leadership impact or can be re-aligned to complement this approach.

“ Leaders can direct their own learnings based on their reflections and feedback from others. ”





Committing to building leadership impact across the sector

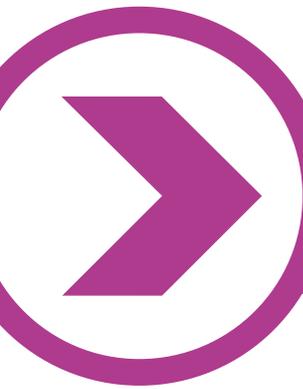
Building leadership impact across the sector requires a twofold commitment – of leaders to their own leadership and of leaders to the leadership of their agencies.

In relation to the first, leaders need to take proactive steps to improve their own leadership behaviours including:

- **owning the need for behaviour change**
- **undertaking honest self reflection**
- **understanding what behaviours are expected**
- **consciously adopting the required mindsets**
- **engaging in productive feedback loops with others**
- **demonstrating the expected behaviours and mindsets in their leadership context and working to increase mastery**
- **supporting and developing current and aspiring leaders.**

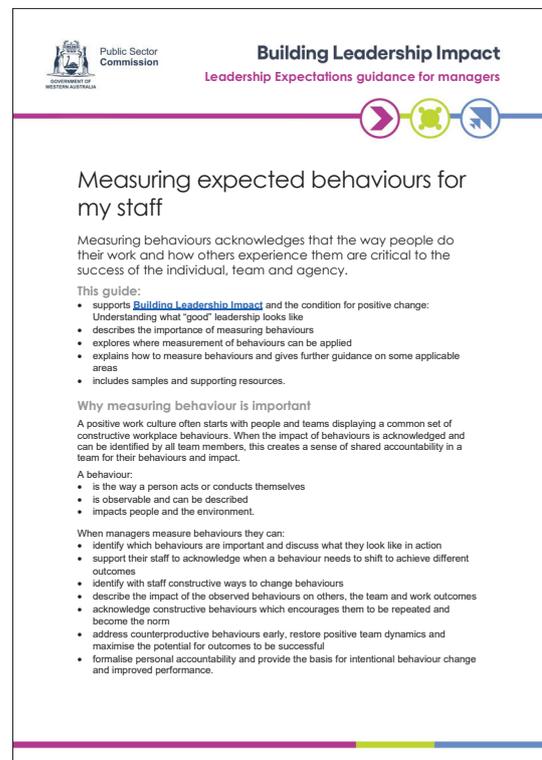
In relation to the second, leaders need to continue to create a strong leadership environment by setting the conditions in their agencies to:

- **reinforce the expected behaviours and mindsets**
- **lead and model positive leadership behaviours and mindsets from the top and in all contexts**
- **bring about positive behaviour change in practice**
- **develop in all staff the expected behaviours and mindsets for their leadership context**
- **support leaders to self reflect and engage in productive giving and receiving of feedback, and setting an environment where this is the norm**
- **increase the understanding of what good leadership behaviours are in context**
- **provide leaders with opportunities for reflection and development**
- **celebrate leadership improvements and excellence.**



Integrating the approach to build leadership impact

Building Leadership Impact is a new approach to leadership development for the public sector with all resources, guidance and support aligned and integrated.



Leadership Expectations sets out the leadership behaviours and mindsets expected in different leadership contexts. It includes behaviours in action at 3 levels of mastery, and guidance on the changes required to successfully move from one context to another.



Helping leaders and agencies implement Building Leadership Impact is guidance on specific topics such as giving and receiving feedback; and on embedding the expected leadership behaviours in their people practices. This guidance supports the conditions needed to successfully set the environment for positive behaviour change for leadership.



The Learning and Development Prospectus includes 2 key elements that are available only through agencies:



Supporting employees on their personal leadership journey



Enhancing leadership behaviours through curated learning



Compiled to display the range of opportunities for everyone in the sector, the prospectus covers Public Sector Commission offerings. These include induction and graduate programs as well as learning experiences for staff at different classification levels and leadership contexts.



We are proud to deliver our services from Whadjuk Noongar boodja. We acknowledge and pay respect to Elders, Traditional Owners and Custodians from the many land and language groups of Western Australia.

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