

Growing Strong Early Childhood Leaders in Northern Queensland: A Customised Approach

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Acknowledgement of Country



We would like to acknowledge the Muwinina and Palawa people as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay respect to their Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working in the area today.

We also recognise that Aboriginal people have been nurturing and teaching children on this land for many decades, we honour and respect that role.

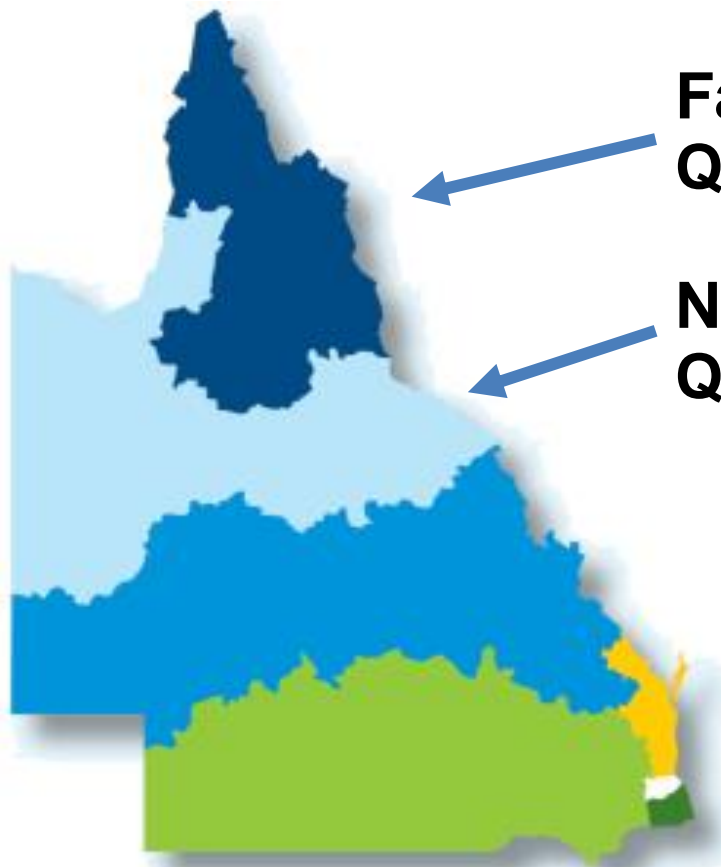


Presentation Overview

- Why? What? How?
- The DoE-JCU partnership
- Stage 1: Research and key findings
- Stage 2: Research and key findings
- Stage 3: Research and key findings
- Where to from here?



**How can we
improve
leadership in DoE
FNQ & NQ region
ECEC services?**



**Far North
Queensland**

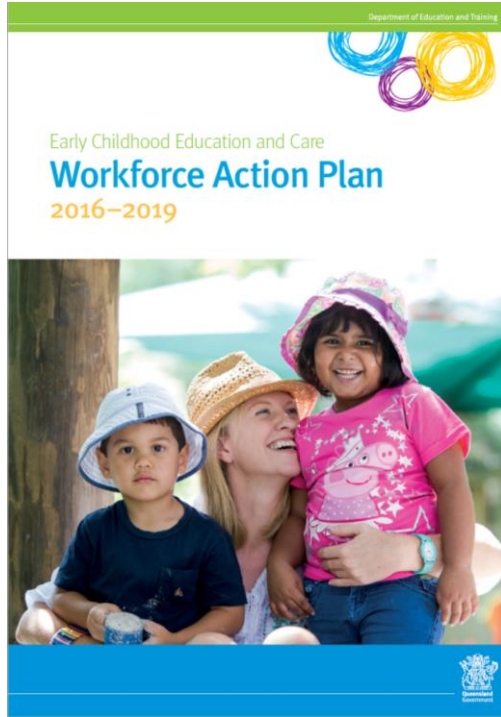
**North
Queensland**



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Why? ECE WAP 2016-2019



“... working in **partnership** with stakeholders to deliver strategies that have a **solid evidence base**, build capacity, and are **responsive** to local conditions and needs” (p. 4)

“... work with sector peak bodies to develop and implement **professional development programs** and practice ...” (p. 5)



Why? ACECQA NQS

National Quality Standard



		WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
1 Educational program and practice	<p>A program helps each child to learn and develop. Experiences stimulate and engage each child.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Your child's interests and ideas are included in the program.Your child is supported by educators to participate in play and learning.	<p>High quality education and care gives children the best start in life.</p>
2 Children's health and safety	<p>Your child's safety and health are important all day, every day. Your child will be safely supervised and will feel secure.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Your child's service takes precautions to protect children from illness and hazards.Food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for children.	<p>Families can be confident that their children are in safe and healthy environments.</p>
3 Physical environment	<p>Indoor and outdoor spaces allow your child to play, learn and develop their skills.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Outdoor and indoor spaces are welcoming and suitable for children.Buildings, furniture, equipment and resources are safe and well-maintained.Children can participate in a range of experiences.	<p>Play and learning help develop skills for life.</p>
4 Staffing arrangements	<p>Qualification requirements and educator-to-child ratios mean greater individual care and attention for your child.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Educators know your child's interests.There are enough staff to ensure children are adequately supervised and receive the attention they need to learn and develop.	<p>Quality care means your child will be educated and cared for by professionals.</p>
5 Relationships with children	<p>Your child will feel safe, secure and that they belong. Positive relationships with educators help your children to play and learn.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Your child is made to feel supported and welcomed.Educators respond to the individual needs and interests of children.	<p>Children need quality care and attention that meets their individual needs.</p>
6 Partnerships with families and communities	<p>When families and communities are part of a service, your child learns and develops better.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Respectful and supportive relationships with families are encouraged.Your family's beliefs and values are respected by the service.The service builds relationships and engages with its local community. <p>The service is well managed and provides a safe and healthy learning environment.</p> <p>Examples of what to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The service has a positive organisational culture.Educators are valued and have a clear understanding of the service's goals and expectations.	<p>You should feel included and a part of your child's service.</p>
7 Leadership and service management		<p>Quality education and care is built on effective leadership.</p>

The National Quality Framework introduces a new quality standard to improve children's education and care services across Australia. Seven quality areas help ensure your child is given the best possible start in life. Over time, all Australian services will be rated against the National Quality Standard.

“**Effective leadership** and governance of the service contributes to **quality environments** for children’s learning and development.”

“**Effective leaders** establish **shared values** for the service and set clear direction for the service’s **continuous improvement**.”



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Why? JCU Statement of Strategic Intent



“Creating a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide through discoveries that make a difference”

- We recognise that knowledge has the power to change lives
- We ignite and support a passion for learning in our communities
- We strive to anticipate and respond to our community’s needs delivering education and research in more flexible ways



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Why? The Literature



- Leadership has ***evolved!***
- Leadership and service quality are linked (Rodd, 2013; Wanaganiyake, et al., 2013)
- Much research, largely ***descriptive***
- Limited models, frameworks, no evidence base
 - Please note: the ECA Leadership Capability Framework and program were *not yet available* at the time
- ***Customised*** and ***evidence-based*** approaches considered most effective (Barber, Cohrsson & Church, 2014; DoE, 2015)



Generation of DoE/JCU Partnership

- Multiple DoE/JCU meetings and collaborations since 2015 at conferences, ECEC professional networks, reference groups, etc
- A chance, informal conversation included discussions of **leadership in ECEC ...**
- JCU conducted preliminary research into leadership needs in both NQ and FNQ regions



Leadership in ECEC Literature

The Gap in the Literature...

A 2016 systematic literature review indicated that a customised, evidence-based leadership professional learning program designed around the *identified needs* of ECEC staff ***had not yet been implemented anywhere in the world ...***



Research Project: Stages 1, 2 & 3



- **Complete needs analysis**

- **Design and deliver customised leadership program**

- **Establish effectiveness of program**



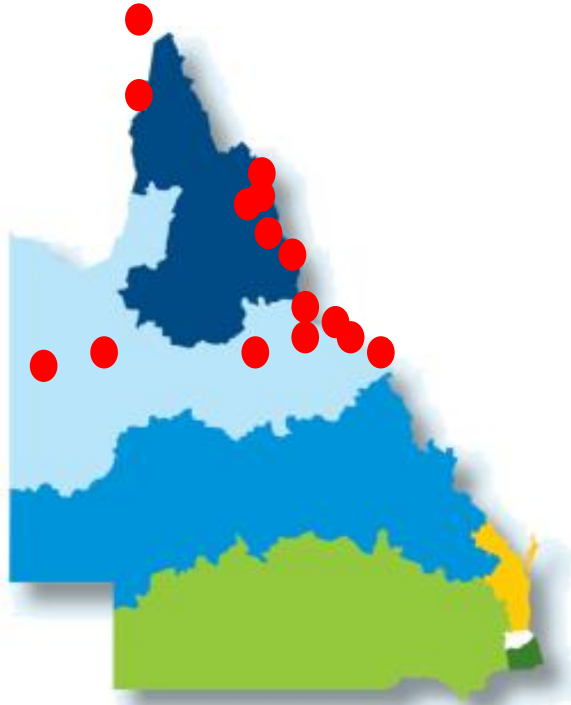
Stage 1 Research: Needs Analysis

Ascertaining Leadership Needs in Two Regions

- **Method:** Qualitative multi-site case study methodology
(Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003)
- **Participants:** 52 Directors and Nominated Supervisors (n=50 female; n=2 male)
- **Data Collection:** Semi-structured focus groups, telephone interview, email communication
- **Data Analysis:** Grounded Theory (Freeman, 1998)



The Scope of the Research



- Cairns
- Mossman
- Tully
- Tablelands
- Thursday Island
- Weipa
- Innisfail

- Townsville
- Charters Towers
- Ingham
- Ayr
- Bowen
- Proserpine/Airlie Beach
- Richmond
- Cloncurry
- Mt Isa



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings

JCU Research Report Delivered to DoE

- Most were **'thrust into the role'**, they did not seek it, felt not well prepared for it
- Some sought HR/business administration training and qualifications out of own funds
- **'Leadership'** was not well understood
- Significant desire for **'how to do'** leadership



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

Key challenges to be addressed by PD:

1. Updated understandings of **leadership**
2. Need for knowledge in **HR/business administration**
3. Enhanced **communication skills**:
 - 'Candid' conversations (staff, children and families)
 - Managing millennials
 - Performance, reward, encouragement, instructions



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

Leadership Quote:

“I probably need some more training ... on being a leader, ‘cause I’m new to it ... so, yeah, training [would be] good to ... change people’s thinking and leadership is a big part of it all – if they don’t respect the person delivering it then they’re not going to take it on board ...”



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

Leadership Quote:

*“My thoughts on myself [are] that **I’m not a very good leader ... I found it too overwhelming at the top to talk to parents and to direct [staff] to do things ... as a leader I find that I struggle ...**”*



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

HR/ Business Administration quote:

*“I’m an **early childhood trained teacher** ... we’re also the **WHS Officer**, the person who has to call [the tradesperson] to fix the leaky toilet ... the **fire emergency person** ... the **accounts manager** ... the person who runs the parents’ group ... the equipment and resources and inventory ... a **mentor, psychologist** ... ”*



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

HR/ Business Administration quote:

*“I’m **early childhood trained**. I’ve come up from being a casual relief person to Assistant to Lead Educator to Assistant Director to Director **my whole life with qualifications** to go with it. But [as Director] **I work in Admin**. I don’t [know how to]do budgets. **I don’t know MYOB**. **I don’t have training in that area whatsoever** ... That’s why I think a lot of places have Directors that come and go so often too ... **they just can’t cope**”*



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

Communication quote:

*“... a difficult conversation with a parent ... whether it be money, head lice ... or the child’s behaviour. **They are very difficult ... very difficult conversations**”*

*“... even though we do communicate really well and I can talk to these girls about anything at all, **I still find I come across wrong at times ...**”*

*“**What do you do if you don’t actually like that person? Do you know what I mean? Situations happen ... that emotion comes in and people swear and yell and slam doors and carry on ... how do you deal with that?**”*



Stage 1 Research: Key Findings Con't

What did DoE do with the findings?

- Engagement of JCU to **design, implement and evaluate** a **bespoke leadership professional learning program** for to up to 28 participants across North and Far North Queensland regions
- JCU experts from Education, Leadership, Conflict Management/Mediation, HR/Business, and Action Research developed a customised professional learning program for NQ and FNQ





Growing Strong Early Childhood **LEADERS** in the North

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Stage 2: Bespoke Professional Learning Program

‘Growing Strong Early Childhood Leaders in the North’ Program Design:

- Participants self-nominated; offered heavily discounted fees to participate

Program design:

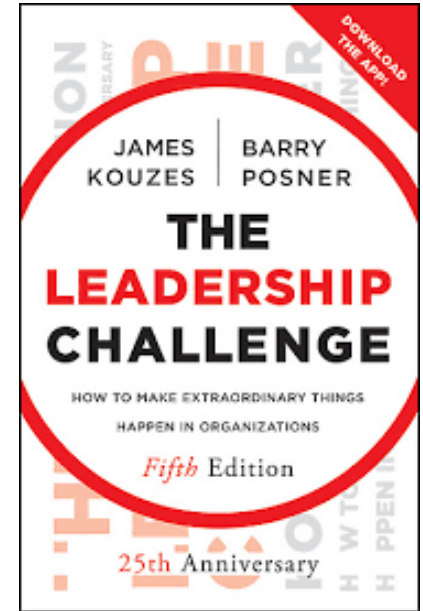
- Intro workshop, face-to-face in TSV & CNS:
 - Expert guest presenters
 - Leadership assessment instrument
- Monthly Teleconferences
- Dedicated Facebook group
- Closing workshop, face-to-face in TSV & CNS
- Sharing of action research projects at Early Years Conference



Stage 2: Bespoke Professional Learning Program

Program Design: Leadership Models & Frameworks

- Researching of **evidence-based leadership models/ frameworks** from around the world
- Using *outsight* to get *insight*
- Selected Kouzes and Posner's *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model*
- Dr Campbell completed **certified leadership training** in Singapore



Stage 2: Bespoke Professional Learning Program

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model™

- Based on **30 years of research**
- **Top-3** leadership books of all time
- Effective leadership = particular knowledge + skills
- **Anyone can learn**
- Application of their framework **proven to work**
- **Synergies** between the model and NQS quality standards



The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model™

“Leadership is the ART OF mobilizing others TO want TO STRUGGLE FOR shared aspirations.”

– Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner

The 5 Practices & 10 Commitments



1. MODEL THE WAY
- Clarify **values**
 - Set the **example**



2. INSPIRE A SHARED VISION
- Envision the **future**
 - Establish a **common vision**



3. CHALLENGE THE PROCESS
- Opportunities for **innovation**
 - Experiment and **take risk**



4. ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT
- Foster **collaboration**
 - Self-determination and developing **competence**





5. ENCOURAGE THE HEART
- Recognise **contributions**
 - Celebrate **values & victories**



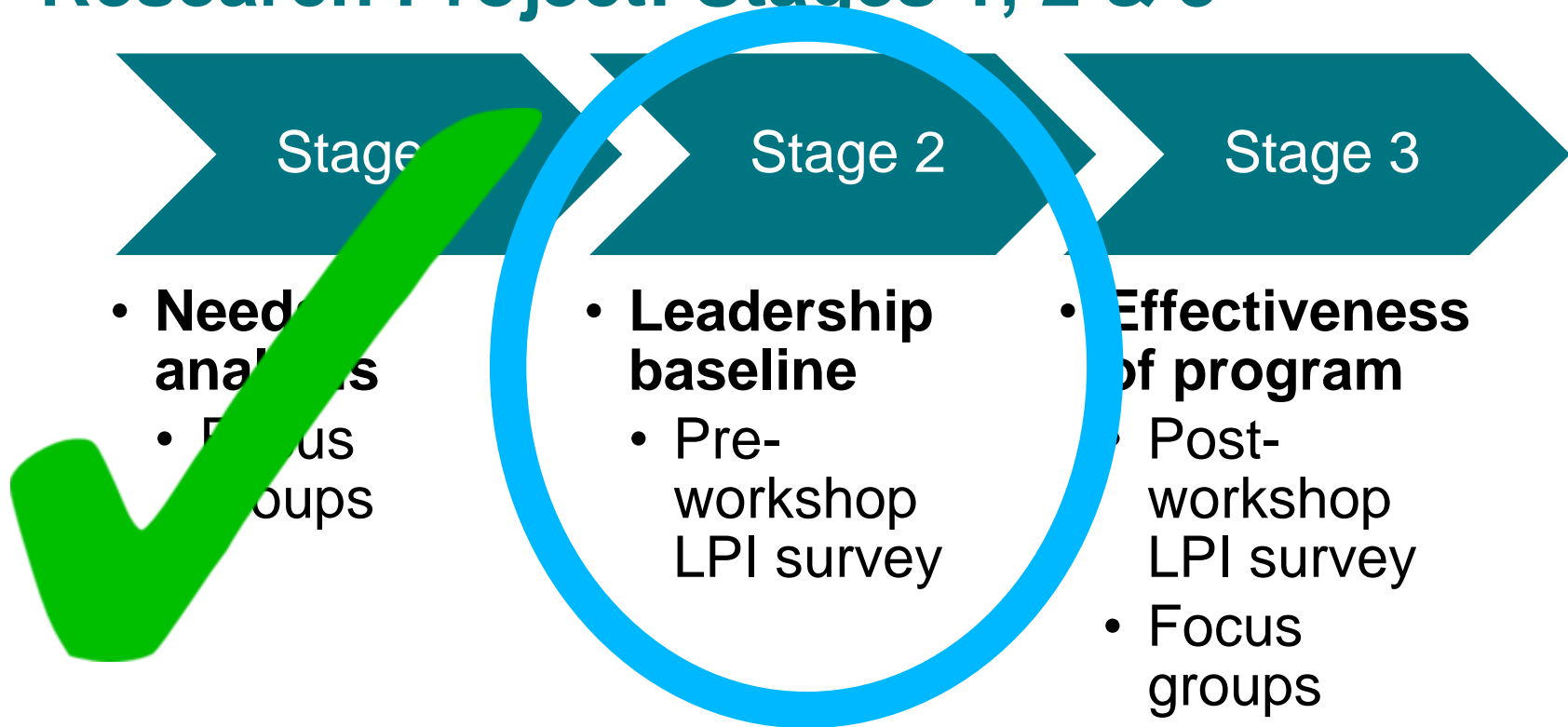
The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Model™

From good leadership to great leadership ...

Examples of Current Practice in ECE Services ...	Examples of Goals to Aim for ...
Staff meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housekeeping• Sharing of Professional Development• Acknowledgment of good practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspiring a shared vision• Communicating purpose and meaning• Building trust• Talking about values and principles• Making sure people support common values
Celebrations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birthdays• Engagements• Weddings• Gaining of qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generating and celebrating 'small wins'• Creatively recognising people's contributions• Publically recognising alignment with values• Following through on promises• Celebrating work accomplishments



Research Project: Stages 1, 2 & 3



Stage 2 Research: Leadership Baseline

- A key aspect of the Introductory Workshops was **ascertaining the participants' leadership knowledge and skills *baseline***
- Via implementation of the **Leadership Practices Inventory™ (LPI)** survey:
 - A psychometrically sound, evidence-based, 30-item, Lickert scale survey of leadership behaviours
 - Participants rate themselves as displaying that behaviour as:
 1. Rarely or seldom
 2. Once in while
 3. Sometimes
 4. Often
 5. Very frequently



Stage 2 Research: Key Findings

Pre-Workshop Leadership Baseline:

- Top 3 **MOST frequently** demonstrated leadership behaviours:
 - 1. I set a personal example of what I expect from others
 - 3. I look for ways to develop and challenge my skills and abilities
 - 4. I foster cooperative rather than competitive relationships



Stage 2 Research Findings

Pre-Workshop Learning

- Bottom 3 **LEAST** behaviours:

- 20. I make it a commitment
- 26. I talk about
- 30. I make sure my contributions

QUALITY AREA 7

Quality Area 7 – Governance and Leadership

Effective leadership and governance of the service contributes to quality environments for children's learning and development. Effective leaders establish shared values for the service and set clear direction for the service's continuous improvement.

Effective leadership

Effective leaders show

Values that guide my actions

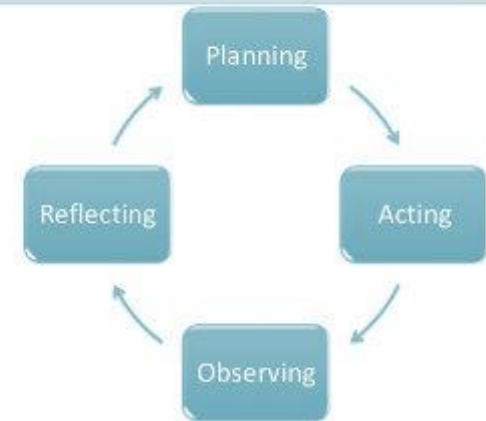
Leadership recognised for their



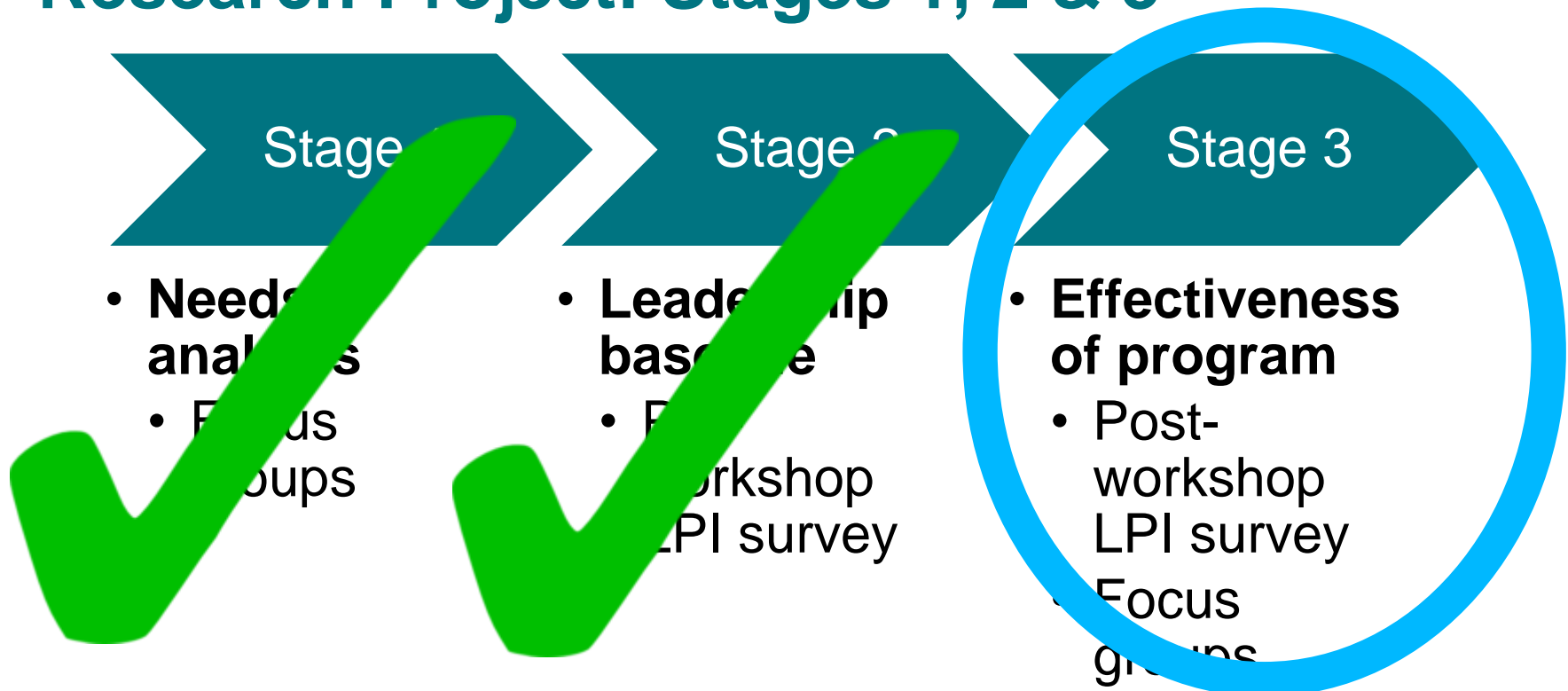
Stage 2 Research: Key Findings

- Participants chose one of their personal three 'least frequently demonstrated' leadership qualities to work on for their action research project
- Participants were supported to do this via an action research workshop by A/Prof Margaret Carter

Action Research Model: Lewin's (1946)



Research Project: Stages 1, 2 & 3



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Leadership Status:

- Analysis of pre- and post-workshop LPI surveys showed:
 - All participants improved 'overall'
 - Most participants more frequently demonstrated all leadership behaviours
 - All participants reported they more frequently demonstrated their bottom 3 least frequently demonstrated leadership behaviours



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: Overall feedback

*“...being pushed out of my comfort zone ... get the **courage to aim for something new** ... do the things I’ve wanted to do ... go further ... we don’t have to think so small, we can think bigger!”*

*“This has been **really beneficial** ... I now do what I say I will do. I do something every week that encourages our staff ... I follow up on everything ... [sharing what I learnt from the program] also made my boss understand and fight for us too!”*



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: Overall feedback

*“In just six months, I’ve **changed so much!** ... It’s a lot of time and energy, but it’s been a great journey.”*

*“[As leaders of an ECEC service] we are CEOs. Hearing Claire say that – and my understanding that – has **changed everything for me.**”*



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: Understanding Effective Leadership

*“[As leaders, we’re] not just ‘delegating’, but giving others leadership opportunities! It’s not just dishing out jobs, but **giving leadership roles to others** ... staff have gone above and beyond now that they understand this, too”*



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: Clarifying Values

*“The biggest takeaway for me was [clarifying our] values ... **The focus on values.** I needed to update our Statement of Philosophy, but I dreaded this ... our current staff hadn’t developed it, it was old, it didn’t reflect us ... **I am now excited** ... Everyone loves it and feels passionate about it. It is ‘us’ ... ”*



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: Clarifying Values

*“... **being clear on our values has impacted on everything that we do.** Even our Enterprise Agreement! We have confidence ... we know what we stand for ... I feel confident enough to speak up for what’s not good enough ... **we know our values and what we stand for.**”*

*“We did the values exercise [that we completed in the GSECLN PD program] ... in a staff meeting. It was really good ... We then **used our values and Philosophy to refine our short and long term goals for the service.**”*



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: Service Culture

*“... **our culture has changed**, the toxicity is gone ... we’ve ‘won our staff over’ and **they are now ‘buying into’ our vision, our values, our new culture**. The progress we’ve made within just this year is amazing. We’ve had our first staff gathering!”*



Stage 3 Research: Key Findings

Post-Workshop Focus Groups: HR/Business Administration

*“I really valued the HR information, and I shared it with my Regional Director. So, **the whole region got excited about it!** And now, the Approved Provider's approach to HR and employment has changed ...”*

*“We changed our whole hiring style because of [what we learnt in the GSECLN PD program] ... we took that to our HR and **we changed everything.** That information was **immensely helpful.**”*



Limitations & Challenges:

- Female-only cohort, no males in the GSECLN program
- Participants stated 'a lack of time' to engage with the program to the fullest
- LPI surveys were self-reported
- Those that demonstrated they needed the most support were most difficult to reach
- Recruitment bias: the people likely to benefit the most from the program would be least likely to apply



Limitations & Challenges Con't:

- Those that improved the most were from 'Exceeding' services
- Unsolicited email communication from a GSECLN PD participant from an 'exceeding' service:

"I would like to reiterate that the support given to those who are from 'exceeding' centres is just as essential to those who may be from 'meeting' or 'working towards' services to ensure that those that support others are also feeling supported and to ensure that these people are not lost to the system"



Where to From Here...?

- Rasch analyse the survey data to drill down deeper into the impact of the program on participants' leadership skills and knowledge





Growing Strong Early Childhood

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