

How does WLI support local leadership?

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Strengthening women's leadership is an essential part of supporting greater Pacific leadership of development.

In recognition of this, WLI supports emerging Pacific women leaders to understand the process of development and their part in it. It provides a structured program of leadership offerings that enhances women's knowledge, skills, confidence and networks and provides them with opportunities to work together to pursue positive social change. WLI provides support across four interlinked areas:

Developing leadership identity, skills and knowledge

WLI's core offering is an 18-month leadership development program offered to up to 30 women Australia Awards scholars from across the Pacific each year. This is complemented by the 6-month online *LeadershipConnect* program, which is open to male and female Australia Awards scholars from the Pacific, as well as individual leadership coaching and bespoke mentoring.

Building relationships and networks

WLI activities provide opportunities for participants to build relationships and networks with current and previous WLI participants, Pacific leaders, and individuals and organisations working to pursue change in their areas of interest.

Applying learning to practice

While practical application of leadership skills is emphasised across all activities, selected participants also have the opportunity to apply for small grant to undertake projects in their home countries on development issues or challenges they identify. These projects enable them to put their leadership skills into practice. Addressing gender-related barriers to women's leadership

Addressing gender-related barriers to women's leadership

In recognition of the significant barrier that gender norms pose to women's leadership, the program is integrating a stronger focus on engaging with men to build male allyship and support for women's leadership.

WLI's approach is informed by a significant body of research on developmental leadership. Developmental leadership recognises that social change is inherently political because it is concerned with power, how it is exercised and by whom, and therefore necessarily involves contestation and risk. Change happens when 'motivated and strategic individuals who have the incentives, values, interests and opportunity to push for change' work collectively to 'contest the ideas underpinning the status-quo and legitimise an alternative set that can promote change'.

WLI's approach to leadership focuses on what it means to 'be' a leader, with structured opportunities for self-reflection built into leadership training and individual coaching. This aims to support women to develop their leadership identity.



WLI aims to contribute to change by providing women who already have the interest and drive to pursue change with experiences that help further develop their skills, knowledge, confidence and networks and their perception of themselves as leaders. In doing so, WLI helps equip women to lead change.

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Given that change is often highly political, WLI emphasises the importance of thinking and working politically. This provides a way of thinking about development challenges that helps women better understand the barriers and opportunities for change. The program also emphasises adaptive leadership, which supports women to increase their level of comfort with uncertainty and to reflect on and learn from their experiences and adapt their leadership practice in response.

In keeping with the view that developmental change is achieved through collective efforts, WLI emphasises the development of skills and knowledge that can support women to build and maintain relationships and networks and work effectively with others in coalitions. WLI activities also connect participants with each other both within and across cohorts and with more experienced leaders. These experiences provide opportunities for women to develop relationships that they can draw on for support throughout their leadership journeys.

Finally, in recognition of the importance of addressing the underlying barriers to women's leadership, the program has expanded its focus on working with men to build male allyship for women's leadership, including by mainstreaming gender across all activities as well as providing targeted opportunities for men to critically examine the gendered nature of leadership in their different cultural contexts.

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To learn more about WLI,
please contact us:

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