

Short-term evaluation of Leading for impact: Australian guidelines for school leadership development

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Executive summary

Published in December 2017, *Leading for impact: Australian guidelines for school leadership development* (LFI) sets out evidence-based guidance to support a nationally coherent and standards-based approach to leadership development in all jurisdictions and schools. The purpose of this evaluation is to understand awareness, uptake and use of LFI among AITSL stakeholders, specifically systems/sectors and school leaders, in the short and medium term (six months to four years). Findings are based on the initiative's monitoring and evaluation framework, and data from the 2019 and 2021 AITSL Stakeholder Surveys¹, AITSL's Professional Growth Network² (PGN) surveys in 2017 and 2019, a principal survey in 2018 and website analytics for accompanying digital resources as of 2020. Recommendations for future action draw on the LFI guidelines and were developed in consultation with the project team.

Evaluation findings

- According to results from the 2019 and 2021 AITSL stakeholder surveys (n=4,199 and n=1,950 respectively), 40% of respondents are aware of LFI. Awareness of LFI was higher among the target audiences: 95% of PGN members in 2018, and 63% (2019) and 64% (2021) of school leaders were aware of LFI (stakeholder surveys).
- In 2021, 71% (n=136) of school leaders and 57% (n=45) of education sector organisation (ESO) stakeholders who were aware of LFI had engaged with the framework. Most stakeholders in 2019 (68% of principals, 71% of deputy/assistant principals and 61% of ESO) indicated they have been influenced by LFI.
- School leaders reported (70% principals and 61% deputy/assistant principals in 2019) that systems/sectors have used LFI to make changes to leadership policies in their jurisdictions.
- Most school leaders and ESOs reported using LFI to inform or adjust their 'ongoing professional development for new and existing leaders', 'school leader development strategy and culture' and 'identification and development of future leaders' (2019 Stakeholder Survey).
- In 2019 and 2021, the 360° Reflection Tool was the most used AITSL tool that was aimed at school leaders. The 'Leadership Scenarios' and 'Interactive Leadership Profiles' had a high level of awareness, but were less commonly used than the 360° Reflection Tool.
- Aspects of LFI that had low uptake among school leaders and ESOs were 'recruitment activities targeting leaders from under-represented groups' and a 'focus on achieving diversity in leadership teams'.
- Just over half (65%, n=13) of the principals consulted in 2018 reported undertaking principal preparedness activities.

Planned and potential actions

- Continue to promote LFI and resources supporting implementation, particularly among school leaders in remote and regional areas where there may be a lack of professional development opportunities for staff in their schools on the pathway to leadership.
- Develop guides for aspiring and new principals to self-assess their readiness for the role and identify targeted support, as well as induction resources for newly appointed principals.
- Continue to promote (or develop) tools and resources, such as the 'Evaluate principal preparation programs' resource and 360° Reflection Tool, to support principal preparation programs and experiences. Promotion of these resources could target program providers and system/sector representatives.

¹ The AITSL Stakeholder Survey was administered using an opportunity (non-probability) sampling methodology and distributed via direct invitations, AITSL Mail, the AITSL website, social media and requests for AITSL stakeholders to share with their networks.

² The PGN consists of individuals from 24 education systems and sectors in Australia with responsibility for the professional learning and/or the development of school leaders and teachers.

Introduction

Background

Released in December 2017, *Leading for impact: Australian guidelines for school leadership development* (LFI) support a coherent and strategic approach to school leadership development across Australia and an equitable, standards-based professional learning experience for school leaders at all levels. The guidelines recognise that working across both the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (Principal Standard) and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (Teacher Standards) is vital for reflecting on and improving leadership practice. LFI builds on the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (the Charter) and the *Australian Teacher, Performance and Development Framework* (the Framework). It is primarily designed to guide system and sector leaders across jurisdictions, and principals and other leaders in schools and early childhood education settings.

LFI has two components, as follows:

Leadership development

- Focuses on developing leadership capacity more broadly
- Describes how to develop and sustain school leadership at all levels
- Recognises leadership emerges and develops when a range of opportunities to lead and high-quality professional learning experiences are provided

Principal preparation

- Focuses on specific role preparation required for principalship
- Acknowledges the distinct role of the school principal within the broader leadership of a school
- Outlines how to prepare individuals for this position and provide ongoing development following appointment to the role.

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

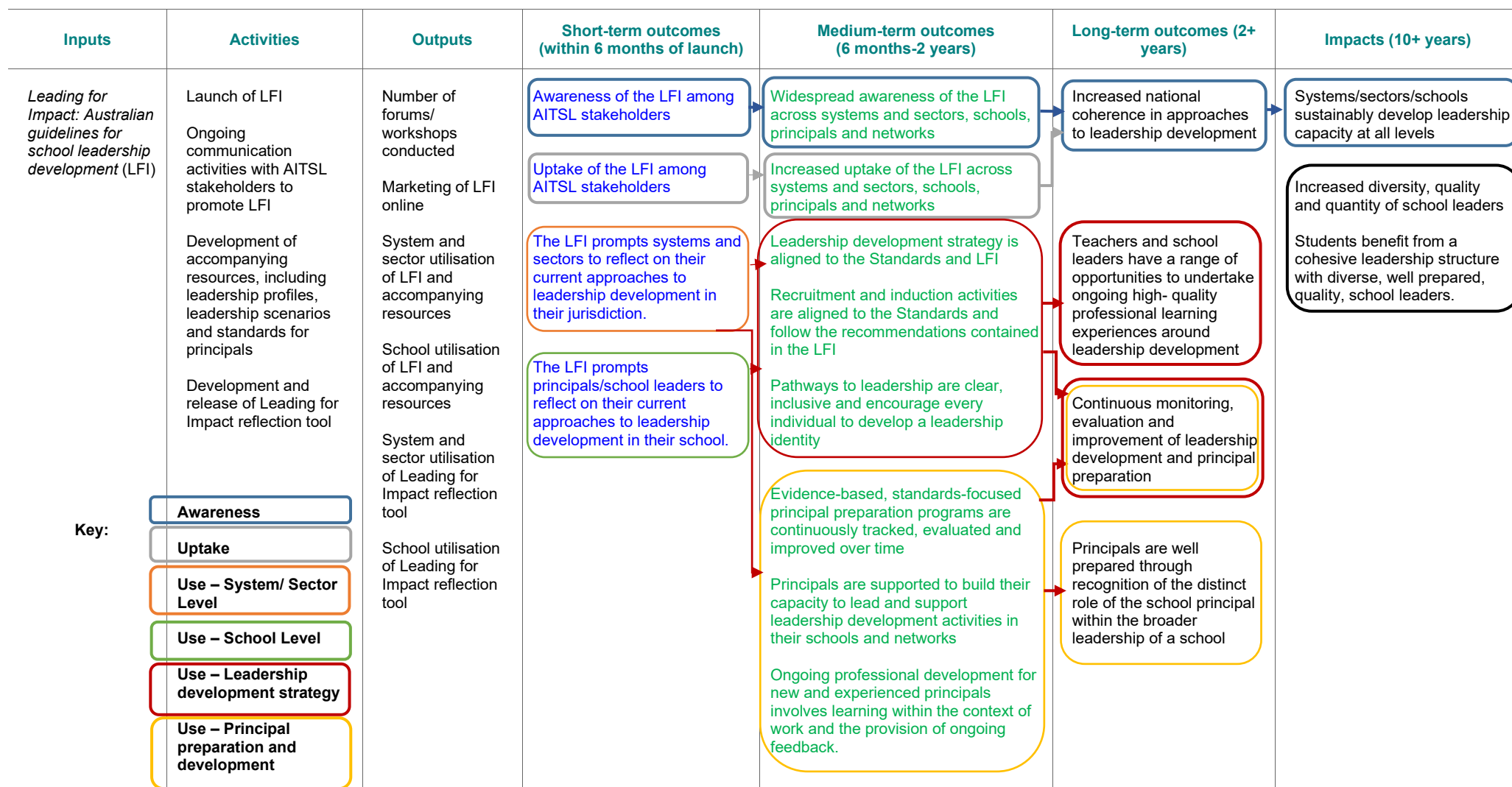
A program logic and evaluation framework for LFI was finalised in August 2018. This internal AITSL evaluation of LFI includes reporting against the short- and medium-term outcomes and their respective performance indicators. The intended results (outcomes and impacts) by target group are mapped in the program logic below. The performance indicators define the particular characteristic or dimension of the outcome by which change is measured.

The evaluation provides insight into:

- Awareness of LFI and accompanying resources among AITSL stakeholders
- Uptake of (and intention to use) LFI among AITSL stakeholders
- Use of aspects of LFI by AITSL stakeholders.

Program logic

The program logic describes the inputs (in this case the national framework is the input), activities, outputs, short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, and impacts of the program. The awareness, uptake and use outcomes are colour coded based on whether they apply at the system or school level or for the leadership development or principal preparation strategies.



Methodology

This section describes the data sources and analytical approach for the evaluation. Table 1 outlines the outcomes and performance indicators from the evaluation framework relevant to this evaluation, which form the organising structure for the findings.

Table 1: Organising framework for the evaluation

Theme	Outcome	Performance indicators
National framework (LFI)		
Awareness of the policy	Awareness of LFI among AITSL stakeholders	Levels of awareness of LFI overall (by role, sector, state, remoteness, and time as educator)
		Website pageviews and time on page of the LFI framework
Uptake of the policy	Uptake of LFI (and intention to use) among systems/sectors, and school leaders	Stakeholders report engagement, use, or intention to use LFI overall (by role, sector and state, as well as by number of years as educator and degree of remoteness)
	LFI prompts systems/sectors and school leaders to reflect on their current approaches to leadership development in their jurisdictions and schools, respectively	Benefit rating of LFI (2021 only) The extent to which systems/sectors and school leaders agree LFI prompts reflection on current approaches to leadership
Use of aspects of the policy	How LFI is being used to inform and/or adjust approaches to leadership development, and preparation and development of the principal role (medium-term outcomes on the program logic)	Types of situations and circumstances (e.g. frequency, descriptions of situations), under which school leaders would use/use the guidelines
		The extent to which strategies or activities align with the guidelines
Accompanying resources		
Awareness, uptake and use of accompanying resources	AITSL stakeholders are aware of digital resources that accompany the LFI policy	Pageviews and time on page on accompanying resources
		Stakeholders report awareness and use of accompanying resources

Data sources

AITSL Stakeholder Survey

The AITSL Stakeholder Survey is an important source of data for measuring AITSL's impact. It has been administered in 2016, 2019 and 2021 and has been updated over time to reflect current work. The evaluation primarily used data from the 2019 and 2021 surveys. The 2019 survey obtained baseline measures for new work initiated since 2016, including LFI.

An opportunity (non-probability) sampling methodology has been employed each time the survey has been administered. The 2019 and 2021 surveys were distributed via direct invitations, AITSL Mail, the AITSL website and social media and with requests for AITSL stakeholders to share to their networks. The distribution periods and total responses for the two surveys are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Sampling periods and number of responses for the 2019 and 2021 AITSL Stakeholder Surveys

	Start Date	End Date	Days open	Total responses
2019	27 March	12 June	77	5,561
2021	23 February	11 April	48	2,595

Survey logic was used to ensure that respondents only answered questions relevant to them, which means the number of respondents for each question varies. Respondents who were 'unsure' of their awareness or engagement of the LFI were excluded from the analysis. Respondent postcodes were used to classify remoteness based on the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) remoteness structure](#). Statistical analysis was conducted for comparisons between groups of interest, either one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in the case of scale vs. categorical variables or chi-square tests for non-parametric comparisons in the case of categorical vs. categorical variables.

For comparisons between 2019 and 2021, data harmonisation and weighting occurred. Weighting is used to adjust the relative contribution of each respondent based on their observed characteristics (e.g. age, location) to ensure any detected longitudinal trends are not attributable to changes in respondent characteristics. All counts and percentages in this report when directly comparing survey years are based on weighted data. By using weights to control the contributions of data from people within certain demographics, the demographic profile of the sample can be held constant over time (and anchored to one survey year). The anchor year in the present analyses is 2019, which means that the characteristics of respondents were weighted to be halfway between the characteristics observed in 2019 and the average of all other years (2016 and 2021). A Random Forest classification method was used to calculate these. As weighted data can give fractional counts of individual respondents, all count data (including participant n) is rounded to the nearest integer and reported in whole numbers of respondents.

Professional Growth Network (PGN) surveys

Initiated in March 2014, the PGN comprises individuals from 24 education systems and sectors in Australia responsible for professional learning and/or performance and development for teachers and school leaders in their jurisdiction. AITSL works in partnership with the network to further develop resources and tools and support the implementation of policies driving Australian educators' professional growth.

Surveys were administered to the group in July 2017 to collect baseline information during the first and last meetings of 2018 (March and October) and the following year in March 2019 as part of program monitoring.

The March 2018 meeting focused on developing the outcomes framework for LFI; the March 2019 meeting was about reviewing the Principal Standards, with only a brief update on LFI. The 2019 meeting included a presentation on ways to improve principal professional learning and career pathways and asked attendees to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Principal forum

In November 2018, AITSL convened a two-day consultation with 20 principals (or assistant/deputy principals) to gather feedback on resources being developed to support LFI implementation (herein referred to as the '2018 principal forum'). Most principals were from government schools (n=13), with three from independent schools and four from Catholic schools. A survey was administered during the meeting as part of program monitoring.

Web analytics

For this evaluation, website analytics of the following digital resources supporting the policy have been included to supplement awareness data from the stakeholder survey: Interactive Leadership Profiles, School Leadership Self-Assessment Tool, and Resources to build leadership in Australian schools (which includes the 'What is' Guides, LFI videos and reflection tools).

The metrics used to indicate awareness over time are unique visitors (visitors with different IP addresses) and time-on-page. Data on most PDF downloads were unavailable for this evaluation, so the HTML versions of the national frameworks are considered a proxy for awareness of the policies. Note that the 'time on page metric' is an average for all users and could be skewed by outliers.

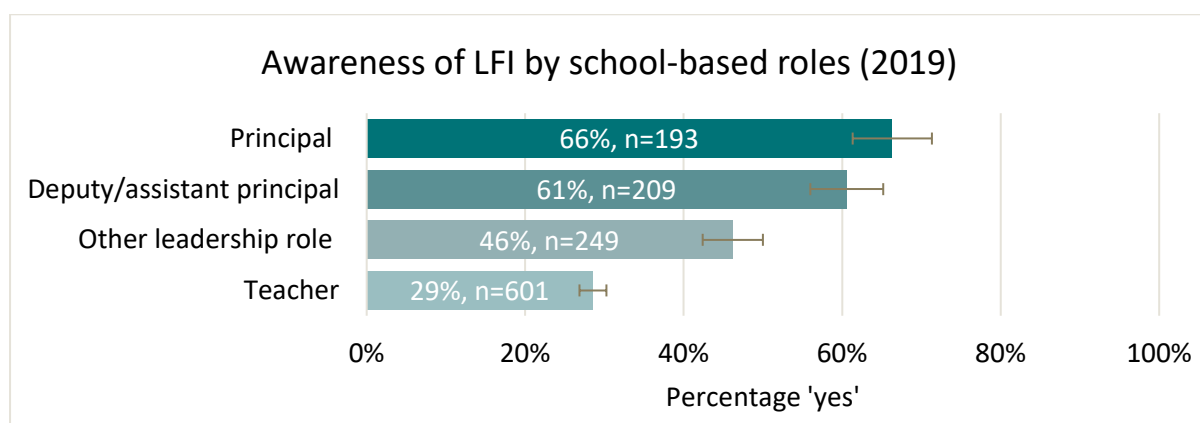
Evaluation findings

1. Awareness of Leading for impact

Awareness among school leaders

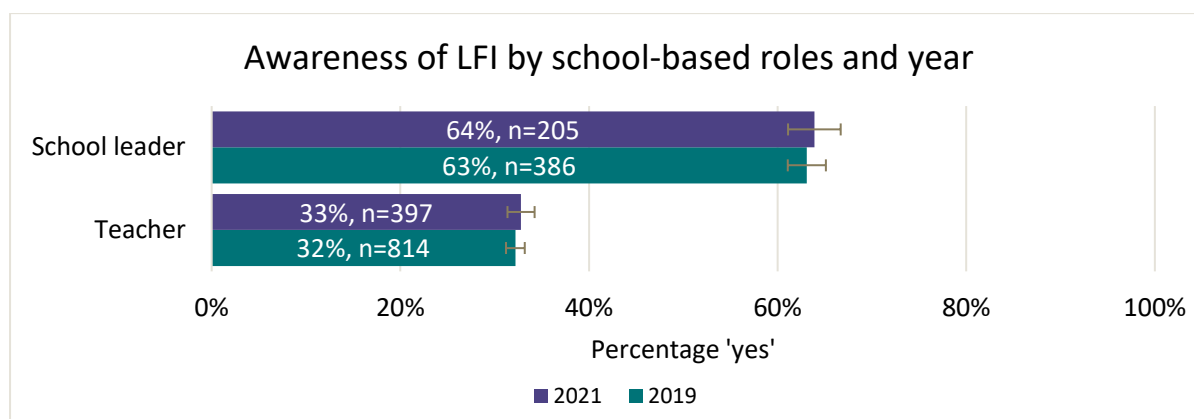
The 2019 AITSL Stakeholder Survey provided the first broad measure of awareness of LFI among AITSL stakeholders. Results indicated that 40% (n=1,680) of all stakeholder survey respondents were aware of LFI. Awareness was higher for specific stakeholder groups. Specifically, principals and deputy principals had the greatest level of awareness at 66% and 61%, respectively, while 46% of respondents in other leadership roles³ were aware of LFI (*Figure 1*). As a respondent group, school leaders and other leadership roles had a higher level of LFI awareness (average of 55%) compared with teachers (29%).

Figure 1: 2019 awareness of LFI by school-based role (n=3,280)



In the 2021 AITSL Stakeholder Survey, results indicated that 40% of all survey respondents were aware of LFI (n=780). Longitudinal analysis (*Figure 2*) found that awareness of LFI remained steady between 2019 and 2021 for school leaders⁴ at 63% and 64% and teachers at 32% and 33%, respectively.

Figure 2: Awareness of LFI by school-based roles, year



³ 'Other leadership role' is a teacher who is also Head of School or Campus, or Head of Department.

⁴ 'School leaders' are principals and deputy assistant principals grouped together.

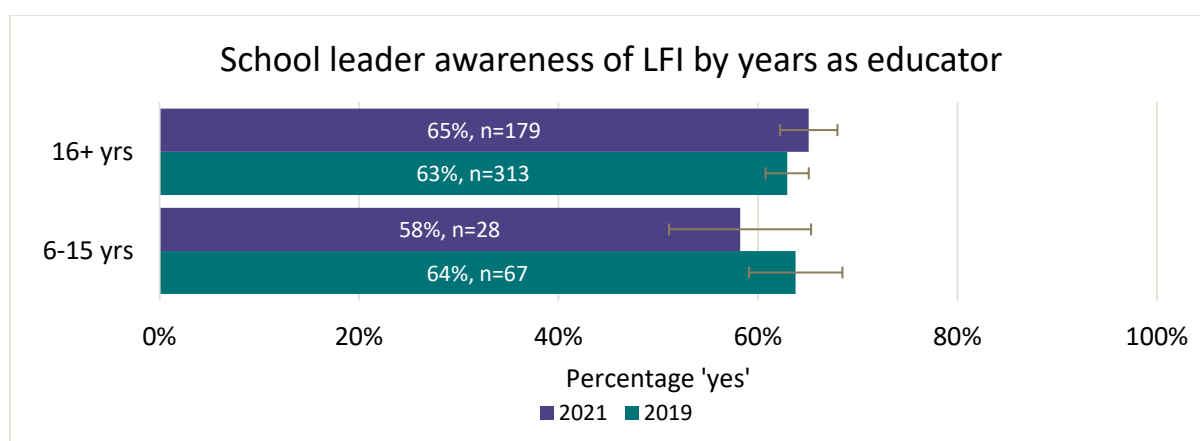
Awareness by number of years as an educator

When assessing school leaders' awareness of LFI in 2019 based on the number of years as an educator (0-5 years, 6-15 years, or 16+ years)⁵, there was no statistically significant difference between respondents with 6-15 years' (64%, n=67) and 16+ years' (65%, n=313) experience. Similarly, in 2021, there was no statistically significant difference in awareness between school leaders with 6-15 years' experience (58%, n=28) and 16+ years' experience (65%, n=179) (*Figure 3*).

In 2019, there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' awareness of LFI by years as an educator: 26% at 0-5 years (n=103), 31% at 6-15 years (n=240) and 35% at 16+ years (n=506). A higher proportion of experienced teachers were aware of LFI than teachers at the beginning of their career. When teachers were surveyed again in 2021 there was no difference between years as an educator and awareness of LFI: 27% at 0-5 years (n=38), 31% at 6-15 years (n=113) and 33% at 16+ years (n=246).

These results indicate that years as an educator primarily do not influence educators' awareness of LFI, except for teachers in 2019 with 16+ years' experience who were more aware of LFI than their less experienced counterparts. Teachers could be considered a secondary audience of LFI if they are interested in developing into leaders in their schools, but teachers are not the primary audience of the policy. The findings for school leaders are expected given the respondent group is LFI's intended audience regardless of years of experience as an educator.

Figure 3: School leader awareness of LFI by years as an educator and year



Awareness by jurisdiction

Longitudinal analysis of school leaders' awareness of LFI by jurisdiction between 2019 and 2021, or within each year, showed no statistically significant differences.

Awareness by degree of remoteness

There were no statistically significant differences in school leaders' awareness of LFI between 2019 and 2021, or within either 2019 or 2021, based on remoteness category.

Awareness by school sector

When comparing school leader awareness of LFI by school sector, there were no statistically significant differences between 2019 and 2021.

⁵ In the 2019 Stakeholder Survey, as there was only one school leader respondent with 0-5 years' experience as an educator, this experience bracket has been excluded from comparisons by years of experience.

Awareness among systems and sectors

In October 2018, AITSL facilitated a meeting with the PGN, made up of system and sector representatives from across Australia. PGN attendees were asked if they were aware of LFI. Of the 19 network members responding to the question, 95% were aware of the policy. The overwhelming level of awareness among this stakeholder group is not unexpected, as many of the network members were engaged in creating LFI from the outset.

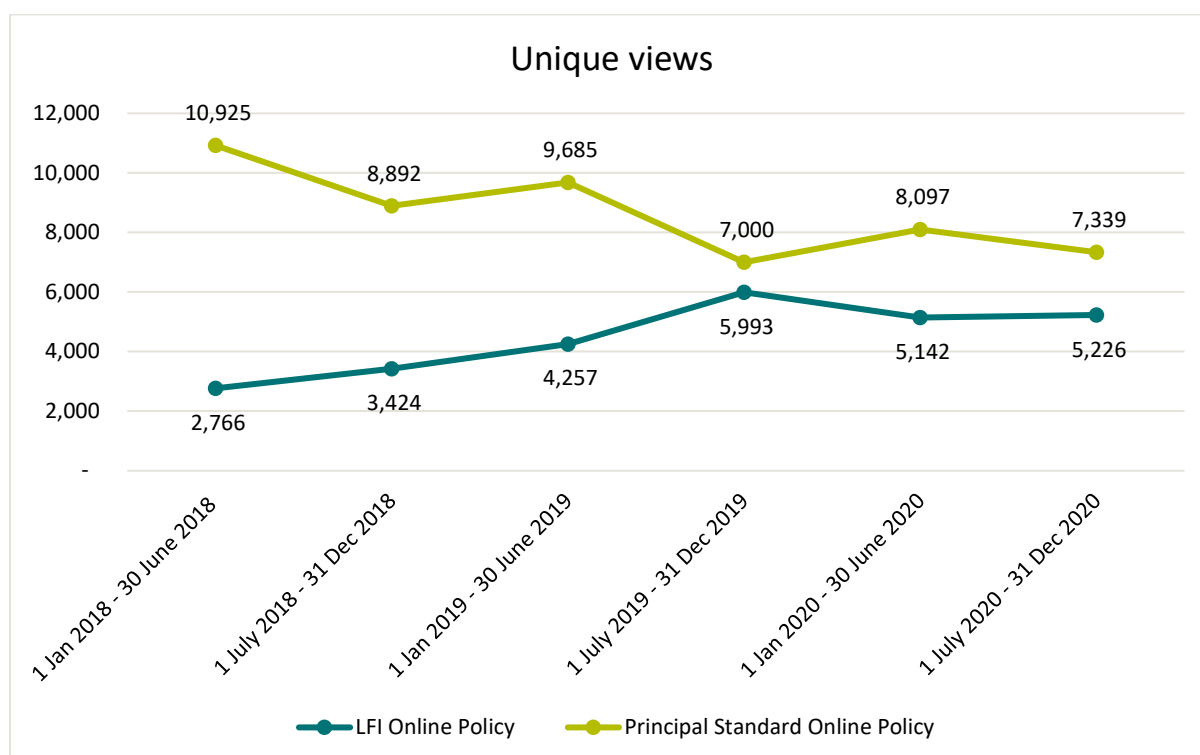
In comparison, data from the 2019 and 2021 stakeholder surveys indicated that respondents who work in education sector organisations (ESO) were only moderately aware of LFI in both 2019 at 52% (n=186) and in 2021 at 49% (n=80).

Awareness of LFI (web analytics)

AITSL webpage views and direct downloads of the LFI PDF offer a measure of LFI awareness. Between 9 March 2018, when the policy was published on AITSL's website, and 30 April 2021, there were 6,881 downloads of LFI. Six-monthly unique views of the HTML version doubled between January 2018 and December 2019 and held relatively steady at just above 5,000 unique views throughout 2020 (*Figure 4*). In comparison, for the same period, six-monthly unique views of the HTML version of the Principal Standard (released in 2011) had been on a slightly downward trend. Web analytics data for the Principal Standard within three years of its release was not available for comparison. The AITSL website was updated in 2017, and web analytics are only available from the date when the site went live. However, the Principal Standard's total unique views were higher than LFI between 2018 and 2020, indicating more people were aware of the Standard as reflected in the 2019 Stakeholder Survey. Based on unique views, LFI awareness as of the end of 2020, within three years of its release, is appropriate for its maturity compared with the Principal Standard, which has been online for nine years at the time of this report.

Time spent on a webpage was used as an indirect measure of engagement with LFI. Since 2018, time spent on the LFI HTML page has gradually increased, from three minutes in the first six months of 2018 to close to five minutes in the last six months of 2020. This increase of time spent on page indicates that stakeholders continued to engage with LFI (since 2016, the average time spent on a page for all AITSL webpages is 1 minute 43 seconds). In addition, time on page for LFI is higher than the Principal Standard, which has a six-monthly average of no more than three minutes in the same period.

Figure 4: Unique views of LFI and Principal Standard (HTML versions)

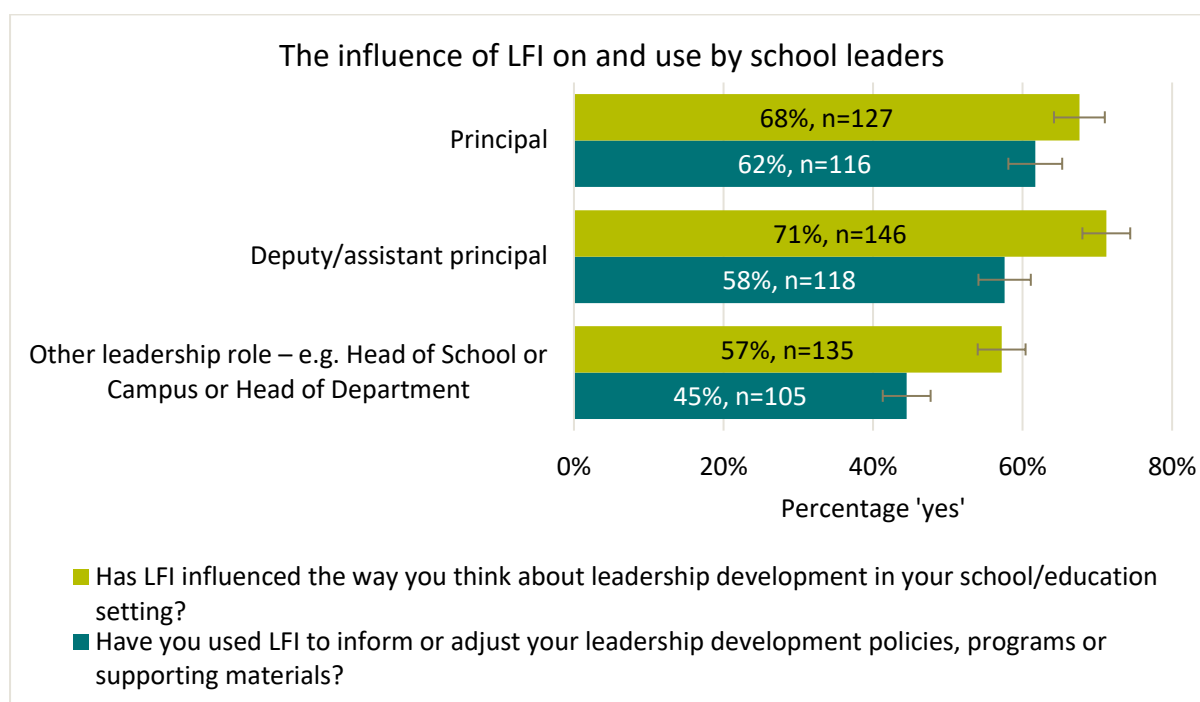


2. Uptake of Leading for impact

Uptake among school leaders

Of the school leader respondents to the 2019 Stakeholder Survey who were aware of LFI, many agreed that LFI had influenced how they thought about leadership development in their school/education setting (*Figure 5*). Moreover, a similar proportion of principals who found that LFI influenced their thinking about leadership development (68%) had also actively used the policy to adjust or inform the leadership development policies, programs or supporting materials in their schools (62%). Deputy/assistant principals and respondents in other leadership roles also found the policy influenced their thinking on leadership (71% and 57%, respectively); however, as expected, a lower proportion of these stakeholders (58% deputy/assistant principals and 45% other leadership) had used LFI to inform or adjust their school's leadership policies, programs or resources, compared to principals.

Figure 5: Proportion of school leaders who have been influenced by and used LFI (n=639)



In the 2019 Stakeholder Survey, of the school leaders and teachers in leadership roles who had not used LFI to inform or adjust their leadership development policies, programs or supporting materials (n=288), 60% reported an intention to use the policy. The remaining 40% of these leaders (n=114) were asked why they had no intention to use the policy. The selected responses, listed from most to least, are as follows:

- Our school was already following the recommendations (18%, n=21)
- I found the recommendations irrelevant/unhelpful (18%, n=21)
- Our school does not have its own leadership policy (18%, n=21)
- No time to implement new policy recommendations (16%, n=18)
- Other (33%, n=33).

Of the 33% who selected 'other' as a reason for having no intention to use the policy and provided an open-text response (n=33), 10 respondents stated they already had strategies, programs, processes and/or practices in place. In addition, several of those in other leadership roles (n=4) said they were 'not in a position to implement the policy'. The remaining comments referred to a general lack of appreciation for the framework or motivation to use it.

Of the 20 attendees at the 2018 principal forum on leadership development who were aware of the LFI policy (85%, n=16), the majority (81%, n=13) said LFI had changed the way they thought about leadership development in their school. Approximately half (46%, n=6) said they had used the policy to inform or adjust their leadership development policies, procedures or supporting materials. The remaining principals who had not used the policy indicated they intended to use LFI in the future.

All the principal forum attendees in 2018 were also asked an open-ended question: 'When and how would you use Leading for impact to guide your approach to leadership development?' Of the 17 responses, some (n=6) indicated they would use it strategically, as a framework for school leadership policy, plans or capacity building, or as a basis for strategic discussions with their executives or system leaders. There were also comments related to potentially using LFI for internal professional development processes and professional learning/coaching conversations with aspiring principals and other leaders (n=4). Three respondents were unsure. Respondents who indicated they had used LFI

to inform or adjust their leadership development policies (n=6) provided examples of how they have already used the national framework:

- *Building school policy, leadership team*
- *Personal reflection with leadership team and middle leaders - we all need to be leaders and active in leadership (and aspirational hopefully).*
- *In coaching my deputy principals - when completing my own annual performance plan.*
- *PDP conversations with Assistant Principal and Shadowing Principals.*
- *I use the guide to inform my PD Plan. I use the guide's recommendations to reflect on my practice. I use the reference list to dig deeper into the evidence base.*

Uptake by number of years as an educator

An examination of the influence and use of LFI in 2019 based on school leaders' number of years as an educator showed no statistically significant differences. For principals specifically, there was no correlation between the number of years employed as a principal and whether a principal was influenced by or used LFI. Principals were equally likely to be influenced or use LFI no matter how long they had been an educator.

Similarly, for teachers in other leadership roles, years of experience as an educator did not make a statistically significant difference to whether LFI influenced their thinking (6-15 years, 63%, n=43; over 16 years, 54%, n=88), or whether they had used LFI (6-15 years, 46%, n=31; over 16 years, 44%, n=71).

Uptake by degree of remoteness

An examination of whether school leaders were influenced by and used LFI in 2019 based on their remoteness area also indicated no statistically significant differences.

Engagement with LFI

The 2021 Stakeholder Survey asked respondents who were aware of LFI, 'Have you engaged with any of the following national frameworks [LFI]? Yes, no or unsure'. For the purpose of the survey, 'engagement' is a measure of stakeholders' interaction with/use of the framework. This question was a new addition to the stakeholder survey in 2021, and as such, there is no data for previous years. The respondent group with the highest proportion of engagement was school leaders at 71% (n=136), significantly higher than teachers at 40% (n=141). These results are to be expected as school leaders are intended to be the primary audience of LFI.

Uptake among systems and sectors

In the October 2018 PGN meeting, system and sector representatives were asked, 'Has the Leading for impact policy influenced the way you think about leadership development in your jurisdiction?' Of the 19 system and sector representatives responding to the question, 18 said the policy had influenced leadership development in their jurisdiction (95%); one respondent had not examined the policy yet.

System and sector representatives were also asked, 'Have you used the Leading for impact policy to inform or adjust your leadership development policies, programs or supporting materials?' Of the 18 respondents to this question, seven (37%) indicated that they had used the LFI guidelines to adjust their policies and programs; two indicated they had used the LFI guidelines to update their programs (but not policy). A further seven showed they were in the process of using the LFI guidelines to inform their programs or policies. The remaining two respondents were new in their roles and were unsure.

Of the seven respondents who indicated they were in the process of using the guidelines, one system head commented: *"Our system is yet to develop a Leadership Strategy. We are having initial discussions and consultations. 'Leading for Impact' has been recognised as an important resource going forward."* Another explained that *"the independence of the sector means we do not have a*

leadership development policy, but it [LFI] has strongly informed our aspiring principal programs. Deepening pedagogical expertise/leading change / interpersonal skills is a focus.”

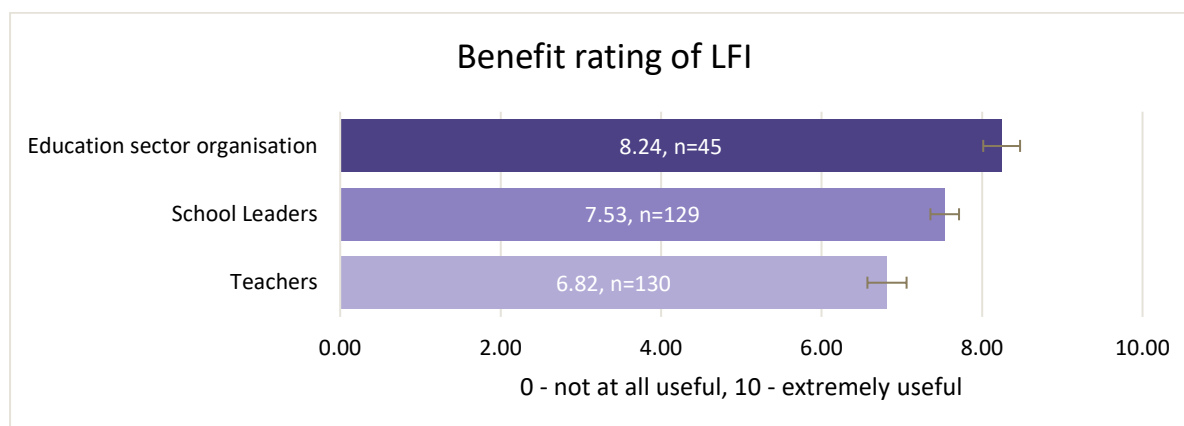
Complementing the PGN survey results, the 2019 Stakeholder Survey asked ESO stakeholders who were aware of the policy whether LFI influenced the way they thought about leadership development in their sector/jurisdiction. Of the 202 respondents, 61% (n=123) agreed that LFI influenced their thinking around leadership, and 46% (n=93) had used LFI to inform or adjust the leadership policies, programs or supporting materials in their sector/jurisdiction. In the 2021 Stakeholder Survey, respondents who were aware of LFI were asked whether they had engaged with the framework (response options: yes, no, unsure). A new question was added to the 2021 survey and as such, there is no data for previous years. Of the ESO stakeholders who were aware of LFI in 2021, 58% stated they had engaged with the policy (n=45).

While the proportion of ESO stakeholders in 2019 who agreed LFI influenced their thinking is lower than the 2018 PGN results (95%), it is worth noting that PGN members are highly engaged AITSL stakeholders with direct responsibility for leadership development in their jurisdictions. Overall, these results suggest high levels of use of LFI among system/sector representatives.

The benefit of LFI to education in Australia

In the 2021 Stakeholder Survey, respondents who were aware of and reported engaging with LFI were asked to rate on a scale from 0 (not at all useful) to 10 (extremely useful), ‘To what extent do you believe these national frameworks [LFI] benefit education in Australia?’. This question was also a new addition to the stakeholder survey in 2021, and as such, there is no data for previous years. The benefit rating of LFI was highest among ESO respondents (mean = 8.2), followed by school leaders (mean = 7.5) and teachers (mean = 6.8) (*Figure 6*). This indicates the framework is perceived to be beneficial by its target stakeholders, specifically system and sector stakeholders, and school leaders.

Figure 6: The benefit of LFI for education in Australia rating of LFI by role (2021)



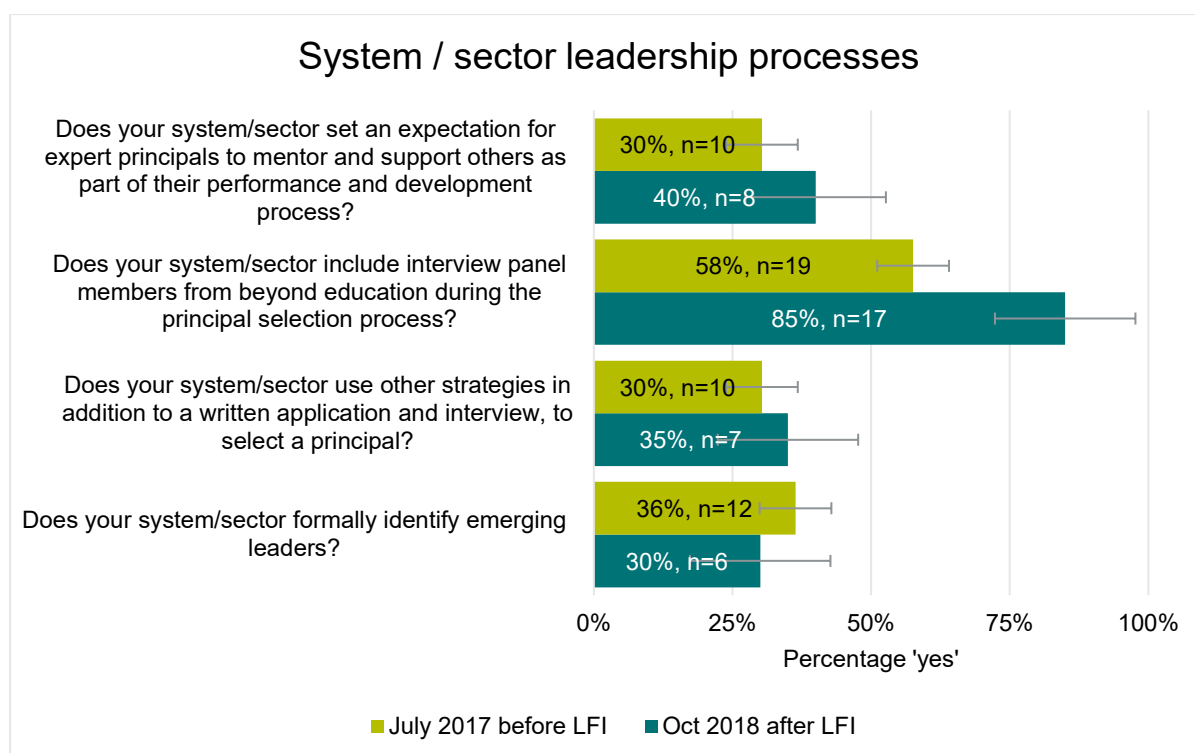
3. Use of Leading for impact

Aspects of LFI used by systems and sectors to inform or adapt their leadership development approach

In July 2017, before introducing LFI, PGN meeting participants were asked a series of questions on their current leadership development processes. In October 2018, after the policy was released, PGN meeting participants were asked an identical set of questions to determine whether the policy's introduction had contributed to changing leadership processes in their system/sector. A comparison of the 2017 and 2018 survey results shows modest increases in most leadership processes, except for the formal identification of emerging leaders which dropped from 36% (n=12) agreement in 2017 to 30% (n=6) in 2018 (*Figure 7*). This decrease however is not statistically significant.

Qualitative responses from the PGN in 2017 indicated that the degree to which leadership processes were implemented depended on the practices of each sector and whether there was already a specific policy in place to guide leadership development in the jurisdiction.

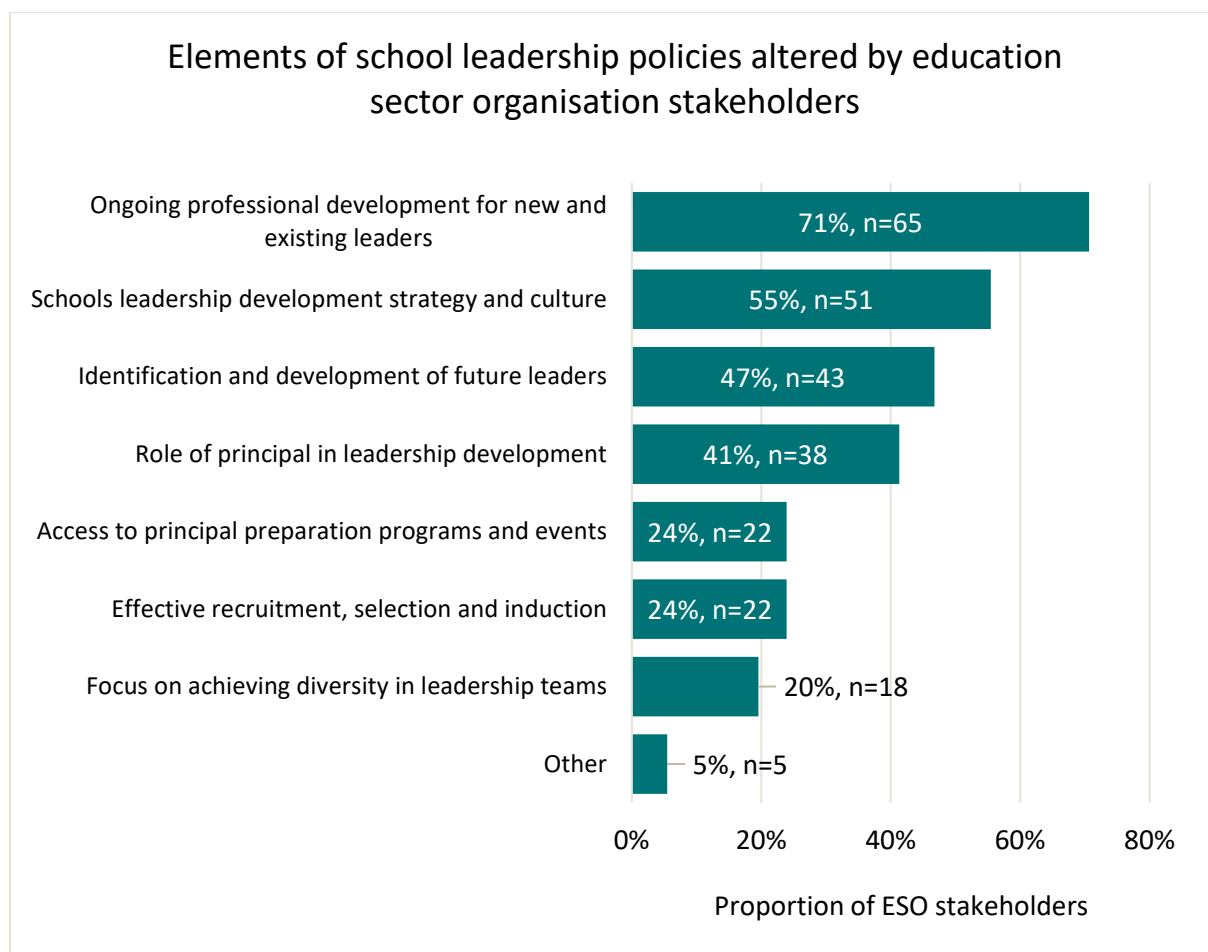
Figure 7: System and sector leadership development processes before and after LFI was introduced



The 2019 Stakeholder Survey asked those employed at ESOs if they had adjusted or improved elements of their leadership development policy since using LFI (Figure 8). Of the 92 ESO stakeholders who responded to the question, 71% (n=65) reported adjusting or improving the 'ongoing professional development for new and existing leaders' element of their leadership development policy/program/supporting materials, as well as 'schools leadership development strategy and culture' (55%, n=51) and 'identification and development of future leaders' (47%, n=43). Changes related to 'effective recruitment, selection and induction' (24%, n=22), 'access to principal preparation programs and events' (24%, n=22) and 'focus on achieving diversity in leadership teams' (20%, n=18) elements were less commonly reported.

To assess whether reported use of LFI at the system and sector level had filtered down to the schools, school leader respondents in the 2019 Stakeholder Survey were asked if they 'knew whether their system/sector had changed any leadership policies within the 12 months' before undertaking the survey. Of the 617 who responded to this question, 70% of principals (n=128), 61% of deputy/assistant principals (n=122) and 57% of teachers in other leadership roles (n=133) recalled a change in policy, program or activity within the past year (2018-2019). This confirms the results of the October 2018 professional network survey in which nine of 18 respondents indicated they had used the policy to make adjustments, and seven indicated they were in the process of doing so.

Figure 8: Elements of school leadership development policies which were improved or altered by ESO stakeholders since using LFI



Of the ESO respondents in the 2019 Stakeholder Survey who were not currently using LFI (n=110), 57% (n=63) indicated they intended to use the policy to adjust their leadership development programs or supporting materials in the future. This is in line with professional network feedback at the March 2019 meeting in which members acknowledged that policies took time to change and said they would use LFI to guide their leadership development programs.

The remaining ESO respondents in the 2019 Stakeholder Survey (43%, n=47) who had no intention of using the policy were then asked to select a reason why. The selected responses, listed from most to least commonly reported, are as follows:

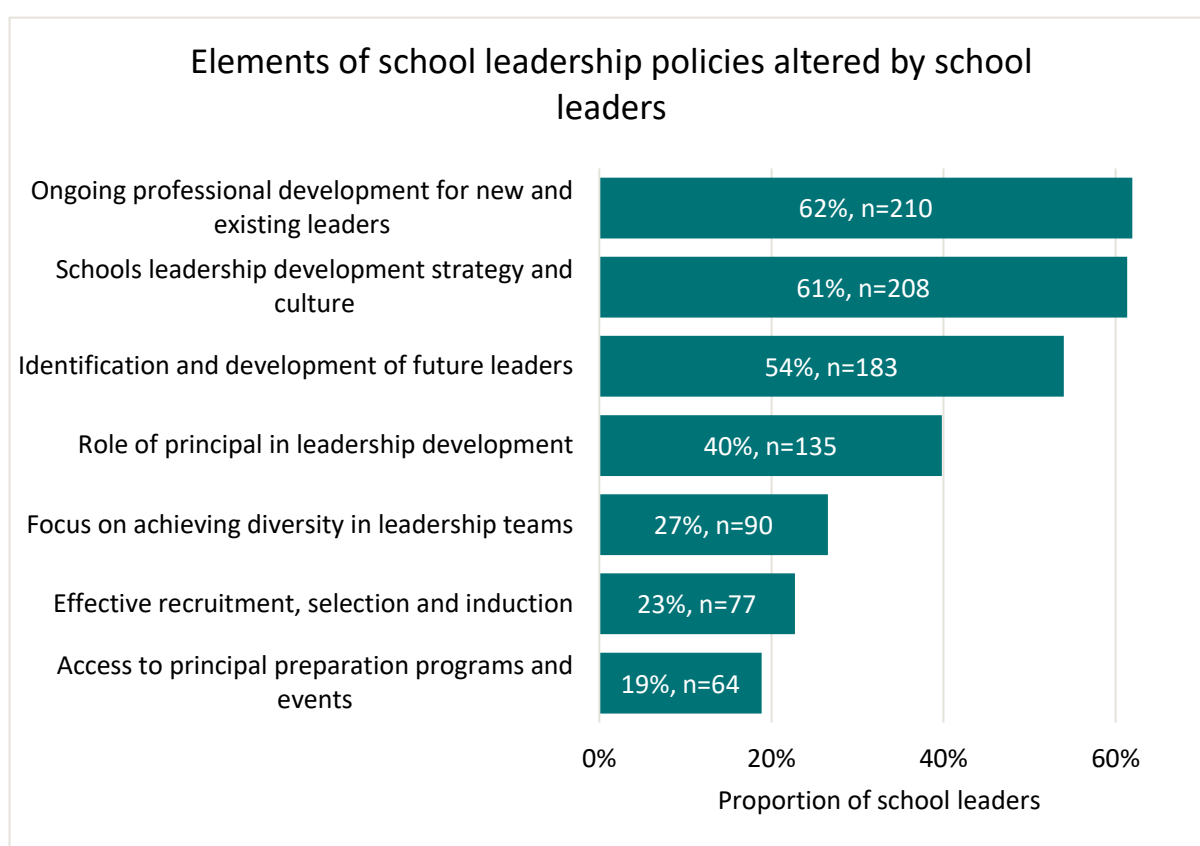
- *Not relevant to my position (60%, n=28)*
- *Our sector/jurisdiction was already following the recommendations (23%, n=11)*
- *Our sector/jurisdiction does not have its own leadership policy (9%, n=4)*
- *We found the recommendations irrelevant/unhelpful (4%, n=2)*
- *Other (4%, n=2).*

The most common reason for not using LFI by ESO stakeholders was 'not relevant to my position.' This response may reflect this respondent group's broader makeup in terms of role seniority (implying degree of control over policy implementation), noting that respondents were not asked to specify the nature of their role/responsibilities in the survey, and that only 8% (n=28) of the total 330 ESO respondents selected this option.

Elements of LFI used by schools to inform or adapt their leadership development approach

In the 2019 Stakeholder Survey, the school leaders and other leadership roles who had used LFI (n=339) were asked which elements of their school's policy/program/supporting materials they had altered or improved since using LFI (Figure 9). Many had improved or altered the following elements: 'ongoing professional development for new and existing leaders' (62%, n=210); 'school leadership development strategy and culture' (61%, n=208); and 'identification and development of future leaders' (54%, n=183). These elements of leadership development that were altered or improved were also highest for ESO stakeholders, reported previously (Figure 8). Likewise, for school leaders, the following were among the least altered/improved elements of their school's leadership development policy: 'focus on achieving diversity in leadership teams' (27%, n=90); 'access to principal preparation programs and events' (19%, n=64); and 'effective recruitment, selection and induction' (23%, n=77).

Figure 9: Elements of school leadership development policies which were improved or altered by school leaders and other leadership roles (n=339)



According to attendees of the 2018 principal forum who reported having used LFI to inform or adjust their leadership development policies, programs or supporting materials (n=6, as reported in section 2), the most common element of their school's policy they had changed was the 'role of principal in leadership development', followed by (from most to least) 'school leadership development strategy and culture', 'identification and development of future leaders', 'ongoing professional development for new and existing leaders' and 'access to principal preparation programs'. None of the respondents selected 'effective recruitment, selection and induction' as an element of their school's leadership development policy they had changed. As there were only six attendees who responded to this question, exact proportions for each response option have not been shown.

Principal preparation

The LFI guidelines are presented in two sections: leadership development and principal preparation. The latter focuses on specific role preparation for principals and outlines how to prepare individuals for principal positions, including ongoing development following appointment to the role.

As part of monitoring the changes in schools' leadership development, the 20 principals (or assistant/deputy principals) from the 2018 principal forum were asked some questions about their principal preparation programs and activities.

In general, principals felt moderately supported by policies and procedures for ongoing principal development in line with the Principal Standard (68%, n=13). When asked, 'Has your system or sector recently changed any leadership policies, programs, or activities?', most principals (85%, n=17) said they had changed within the last 12 months. Most principals reported that their system or sector had a clear leadership development strategy (75%, n=15). When asked details about the strategy, the 15 principals reported that the strategy: had been communicated to them (87%, n=13); was inclusive (53%, n=8); encouraged every individual to develop leadership identity (53%, n=8); and included purposeful strategies to identify future leaders (40%, n=8).

Just over half (65%, n=13) reported undertaking any principal preparation activity, of which most (n=10) agreed that principal preparation helped developed their management and leadership skills, including business and strategic acumen. However, only two of 13 respondents said it helped them track and evaluate growth and development over time. The selected responses, listed from most to least, are as follows:

Did your principal preparation program or activities (proportion of respondents who agreed):

- *Develop your management and leadership skills, including business and strategic acumen (77%, n=10)*
- *Strengthen your interpersonal skills (54%, n=7)*
- *Increase your capacity to lead teaching and learning and have a positive impact on student outcomes (54%, n=7)*
- *Deepen your pedagogical expertise (38%, n=5)*
- *Track and evaluate your growth and development over time (15%, n=2).*

The principals themselves reported undertaking some good practices in terms of developing future leaders in their schools; however, compared with other practices, they had a less favourable view of the professional learning they received to build their capacity to prioritise leadership development. The selected responses, listed from most to least, are as follows:

In your role as a principal, do you:

- *Recognise the importance of your role in supporting future emerging leaders (100%, n=20)*
- *Have leadership development of others embedded into your PD [Professional Development] goals (85%, n=17)*
- *Consider the diversity of the leadership teams you create in your school (75%, n=15)*
- *Receive targeted professional learning to build your capacity to prioritise leadership development (60%, n=12).*

When asked whether certain conditions were present in their school or available in their system or sector, most principals (75%, n=15) reported ongoing effective adult learning experiences for current and aspiring principals. However, only 20% reported the presence of recruitment activities to target under-represented groups. The selected responses, listed from most to least, are as follows:

Are the following conditions present in your school, or available in your system or sector?

- *Ongoing effective adult learning experiences for current and aspiring principals (75%, n=15)*
- *Provision of ongoing feedback for both new and experienced principals (65%, n=13)*
- *Recruitment and induction activities align to the Principal Standard (35%, n=7)*

- *Recruitment activities targeting leaders from under-represented groups (20%, n=5).*

4. Awareness, uptake and use of resources supporting implementation

AITSL provides several resources and tools that support the implementation of LFI, including the Interactive Leadership Profiles, Leadership Scenarios, and the School Leadership Self-Assessment Tool (SLSAT)⁶: In 2019, AITSL published additional resources, namely the ‘What is’ Guides, case study videos and reflection tools tailored to schools and systems and sectors. This section examines awareness and use of the policy’s accompanying resources among the target audience (school leaders and ESO stakeholders) and awareness of these resources based on website analytics.

Awareness and use of accompanying resources

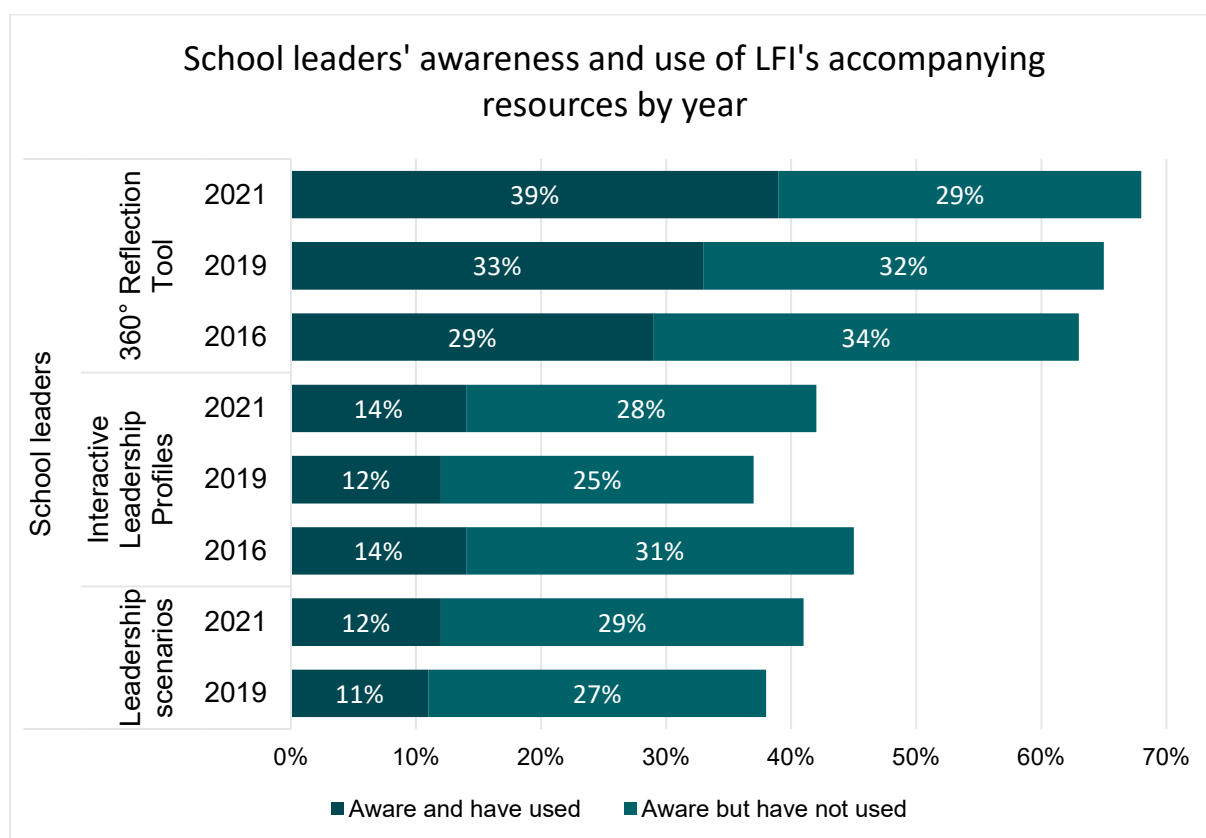
To supplement the LFI policy, AITSL promotes leadership resources on the LFI landing page and web pages related to building leadership development in schools. These resources are designed to be shared among school leadership teams and aspiring leaders, or by system/sector representatives to schools in their jurisdictions. The analysis in this section focuses on awareness and use of seven key resources identified by the project team as supporting or associated with the policy:

- **The 360° Reflection Tool:** an online tool for principals and other school leaders to gather feedback on the leadership behaviours they exhibit in their daily practice, aligned to the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. This tool costs \$280.50 per user.
- **Leadership Scenarios:** videos, guidebooks and resources that draw on the real-life experiences of new principals in developing strategies for everyday challenges.
- The Interactive Leadership Profiles: an ‘interactive online tool that helps [leaders] explore the leadership action statements and targeted resources.’
- **‘What is’ Guides:** documents that unpack what high-impact school leadership looks like and how the Professional Practices can be used to develop capacity.
- **Leading for impact videos:** they show high-impact leadership across four Australian schools. Each school’s story is presented in two videos, and a case study video provides examples of the distributed and collaborative nature of leadership.
- **Reflection tools:** two documents that bring the recommendations within Leading for impact to life to help build leadership capacity at a school or at a system/sector level.

Awareness and use of the ‘360° Reflection Tool’ has increased over time (29% in 2016, 39% in 2021) and it is AITSL’s most recognised leadership tool. The same proportion of school leaders reported being aware of and using the ‘Interactive Leadership Profiles’ in 2016 (14%) and 2021 (14%), while awareness of the Profiles among school leaders who have not used them fell by three percentage points over the same period. Despite this decline, awareness and use of the Profiles was still higher in 2021 than it was in 2019. Similarly, awareness and use of the ‘Leadership Scenarios’ among school leaders increased slightly between 2019 to 2021 (*Figure 10*).

⁶ The SLSAT was decommissioned in March 2021 and replaced with the downloadable Leadership Reflection Tool.

Figure 10: School leaders' awareness and use of LFI's accompanying resources by year



Web analytics of accompanying resources

Web page views of the 'SLSAT' and 'Leadership Profiles' were also used to measure awareness. From this data, the 'SLSAT' landing pages and 'Leadership Profiles' landing page with introductory content⁷ garnered the highest number of unique views between January 2018 and December 2020. Unique views for each spiked between January and June 2019. The higher page views during this period may coincide with the lead-up to and early months of the school year when educators are setting goals and planning professional development. Higher page views in the first half versus second half of the year is consistent with web analytics for the AITSL website, where total unique visitors tend to be higher in the first half of the year. While the 'SLSAT' unique page views were high, the tool's active use was low, prompting AITSL's development of an offline-capable self-assessment tool, the 'Leadership Reflection Tool', released in March 2021.

Further resources supporting LFI include the 'Resources to build leadership in Australian schools' page. This webpage promotes the PDF 'What is' Guides and reflection tools, and LFI videos, which were a relatively new set of resources supporting LFI with web analytics available only from 1 July 2019. Analysis of this webpage revealed that average unique views were at their peak in the first six months after release (July to December 2019) at 780 views, dropping to below 400 views in 2020. However, users spent on average almost five minutes on the page, indicating they were engaging with these resources.

⁷ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/understand-the-principal-standard/leadership-profiles>

Conclusion

The evaluation shows that LFI has achieved its intended short-term outcomes. Stakeholder survey data on awareness reveals that the national framework, released in December 2017, had reached a large proportion of its target audience by 2019 and remained steady in 2021. There were high levels of awareness among school leaders (at all stages of their career and location) and system/sector representatives. Between 2018 and 2019, page views of the online LFI policy doubled and held steady throughout 2020. In terms of uptake (and intention to use), 95% for professional network members in 2018 and more than half of school leaders and ESO employees responding to the 2019 Stakeholder Survey indicated that LFI promoted reflection on their current leadership development approaches. Findings on awareness and uptake indicate that once stakeholders are aware of the policy, they intend to use it in the future or have already used it.

There are strong indications that some medium-term outcomes of the policy have filtered down to schools. Most school leaders and ESO stakeholders aware of the policy in 2019 used the following aspects of LFI to inform or adapt their leadership development approaches: 'ongoing professional development for new and existing leaders', 'school leadership development strategy and culture' and 'identification and development of future leaders'.

Just over half of the principals consulted in 2018 reported undertaking principal preparedness activities. Most agreed that principal preparation helped develop their management and leadership skills, including business and strategic acumen. In addition, principals felt moderately supported to build their capacity to lead and somewhat felt that leadership pathways are clear, inclusive and encourage every individual to develop a leadership identity.

However, there are some opportunities to improve LFI uptake and use as intended over the medium to long term.

According to the principal forum in 2018, LFI had not yet impacted some of the more complex, on-the-ground practices (e.g., recruitment and diversity in leadership). The 2019 Stakeholder Survey corroborated these results, with ESO stakeholders reporting the following aspects of LFI that were least used to improve or adjust leadership policies in their jurisdictions: 'focus on achieving diversity in leadership teams' and 'effective recruitment, selection and induction'. This result was understandable given the age of LFI at the time of these surveys. However, further promotion and development of these aspects of the policy could be a future priority.

For school leaders and ESO stakeholders in the 2019 Stakeholder Survey, 'access to principal preparation programs and events' was among the least altered/improved element of their leadership policies; similarly, in the 2018 principal forum, only half of principals consulted had undertaken any principal preparedness activity. Increasing principals' participation in preparation activities requires LFI to be promoted further to systems/sectors and professional learning service providers, along with aspiring and new principals.

Based on the 2019 Stakeholder Survey, SLSAT and the 360° Reflection Tool garnered the highest reported levels of awareness and use among school leadership respondents; this result was consistent in 2021 for the 360° Reflection Tool. A small fraction of school leaders actively used the Leadership Scenarios and Interactive Leadership Profiles, with use increasing between 2019 and 2021.

Recommendations

Findings indicate that an increase in school leader and system/sector awareness of LFI can have a positive flow-on effect on uptake and use. As such, AITSL could consider promoting LFI to stakeholder groups with low awareness and increase engagement with the least used aspects of the framework.

Planned actions

- Continue to promote tools and resources that support the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* and *Leading for impact: Australian guidelines for school leadership development*.

Potential actions

- Develop resources for aspiring and new principals to self-assess their readiness for the role and identify targeted support. This would include specific elements related to readiness for principalship in rural and remote schools and support for principals in short-term relieving roles.
- Develop induction resources for newly appointed principals that can be tailored to individual needs and contexts, and which:
 - include a focus on health and wellbeing
 - complement professional learning, mentoring and support from experienced principals
 - help newly appointed principals make informed choices about professional learning experiences to help them engage in leadership across a range of contexts.