



E-Leaders 2013

A Evaluative Report into
Online Leadership, Learning and
Networking for Rural Women



National Rural Women's Coalition

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“I am so grateful to the National Rural Women's Coalition for this wonderful opportunity. I have learnt so much throughout the program and had my eyes opened to what is possible. The E-Leaders journey has sparked curiosity and given me the skills to see that the only limitations are those I place on myself. The program exceeded my expectations and I now feel I have more confidence to take these new skills and make a bigger contribution to my business and community”.

Funding for the E-leaders program was provided by the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This funding is gratefully received by the NRWC and used for the advancement of rural, remote and regional women.



The National Rural Women's Coalition

The National Rural Women's Coalition works to support and grow vibrant rural, remote and regional Communities throughout Australia. The National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) provides a collaborative national voice for women living in rural, regional and remote Australia and does this by:

- Representing the diverse views of women in rural, regional and remote Australia.
- Providing advice to the Australian Government on policy issues relevant to the views and circumstances of rural women.
- Contributing to building a positive profile of rural women, their achievements and issues.

The core activities of the NRWC revolve around:

- Advocacy for women.
- Influencing policy and decision-making.
- Building capacity within women's organizations and for rural, remote and regional women.
- Reflecting the diversity of the women's sector.

Current Directors of the NRWC are the Australian Local Government Women's Association; Australian Women in Agriculture; Country Women's Association of Australia; National Rural Health Alliance; Women's Industry Network Seafood Community; two rural Aboriginal Women and one Independent Director.

The National Rural Women's Coalition is funded by the Office for Women in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Funding for the e-leaders program was provided to the National Rural Women's Coalition by the Office for Women and the NRWC is truly grateful for this funding and support.



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

About E-Leaders 2013

The National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) has embraced emerging technologies as a tool to offer short web-conferencing webinars for women who live in rural, remote and regional locations. With no down time, babysitting fees or travel costs, women can take part in learning and networking experiences from the convenience of their own homes. The added benefit of this is that there is no guilt that is often associated with caregivers leaving home, business and family to attend training and information sessions. The web conferencing software used is free for participants and allows for open and collaborative communication and is proven to foster strong networks amongst the women who join the sessions.

The NRWC has a strong desire to improve the leadership skills of rural, remote and regional women so they can represent themselves, their communities and industries and work towards building a vibrant, sustainable and viable future for rural, remote and regional Australia. In 2013, the NRWC offered an online e-leaders webinar course over the period August – November, on a weekly basis. Twenty rural, remote and regional women from all corners of Australia were selected to do the course from a total of seventy-two applicants. Participants were able to interact in a virtual classroom and network with rural, remote and regional women from all corners of Australia. Throughout the course, women were invited to provide feedback on the course in the form of 'weekly reflections' and it is these weekly reflections from which the majority of the data for this report was captured. However, pre and post surveys were completed by the women to gauge knowledge and skill levels in generic leadership areas. Quotes taken directly from the surveys are written in italics throughout this report.

"Each speaker provided me with a defining moment. Lesley - I am a leader in my community, I am leading by example. Cath Duncan - how to get to the 'destiny' of a goal. Angela Bollard - understanding the way some is and why they may respond to you makes others behaviour less confronting and gives us an opportunity to tailor the way we may respond to particular personality type. Michelle Prak, know your audience. Kerry, I am the pebble that could cause the ripple effect. Fiona, be adaptable, think about how does this affect my environment".

Executive Summary

The 2013 E-leaders course saw seventy-two women place an expression of interest with the National Rural Women's Coalition to do the program, and twenty women were accepted after a rigorous merit selection process had been completed. Of these twenty women, eighteen completed all the requirements of the program. There were ten formal learning sessions offered, and the average attendance was 7.77 sessions per e-leader.

The content of two topics was found to be useful and relevant for 100% of the survey respondents. These topics were *Community Capacity Building* and *Towards Sustainability*. 81% of the women found the *Leadership* and *Personality* sessions relevant and useful; 50% found the *Building Leaders* sessions extremely useful and 50% of the women found the *Goal Setting* sessions useful and relevant. Women were asked to rate how beneficial the course had been on a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being of immense value and 0 being of no value. All participants rated the course at 6 or above.

The growth in learning in different generic leadership skills and knowledge sets can be measured by the following:

Making a Difference - E-leaders were asked to self-assess their level of skills and knowledge on their ability to make a difference in some aspect of their business or community. 6% of e-leaders thought they had strong skills and knowledge at the start to the course, whilst at completion, 61% self-assessed themselves as having strong skills.

Adapting to Change – At the start of the course, 37% of e-leaders agreed that they had strong and adequate skills to enable them to adapt to changes in some aspect of their business or community. Upon completion, 77% had strong or adequate skills to cope with change.

Relationships – Only 6% of the women self-assessed themselves as having strong skills and knowledge that would enable them to foster effective working relationships with the necessary people in their business or community. By the course completion, 38% of women had strong relationship skills.

Goal Setting – 49% of the e-leaders rated themselves as having strong or adequate skills in goal setting at the start of the course. By the end of the course, 81% of women believed they could undertake effective goal setting in their business or community.

Leadership Skills – Prior to the course, only 6% of the women rated their knowledge and skills to be a leader in their community or business as strong. By the end of the course, 64% believed they had strong leadership skills.

About the Data Gathering Tool - the Weekly “Reflections” Survey

It is important to have a process that critically examines the E-Leaders program in order to make judgments about the learning, to improve the effectiveness of e-leaders and to inform future E-Leaders planning. E-Leaders 2013 employed an ongoing weekly evaluation process of collecting information about the impact of the E-Leaders content upon the participants. This enabled the NRWC to identify areas for improvements as the course unfolded. Summative evaluations were also completed once the course was completed to determine the extent that E-Leaders had achieved its goals. The evaluation was undertaken by the NRWC Program Manager.

After each webinar, the Program Manager would use a customized survey administered by survey monkey and invite E-Leaders to undertake reflection and provide feedback on the session. A desirable trait of effective leaders is that they are reflective practitioners. The survey comprised of 5 questions, thus ensuring that the time commitment to complete the survey was not too onerous. The surveys contained selected response items using a likert scale, with four or more options presented as well as open-ended items for which the respondent constructed the response. The five questions were ordered in a straight forward and logical manner. Responses were anonymous unless participants chose to identify themselves. The responses were then collated and shared with the group so the reflections contributed to the group learning. This process could be likened to the debrief chat after a meeting or lecture – however it was done virtually.

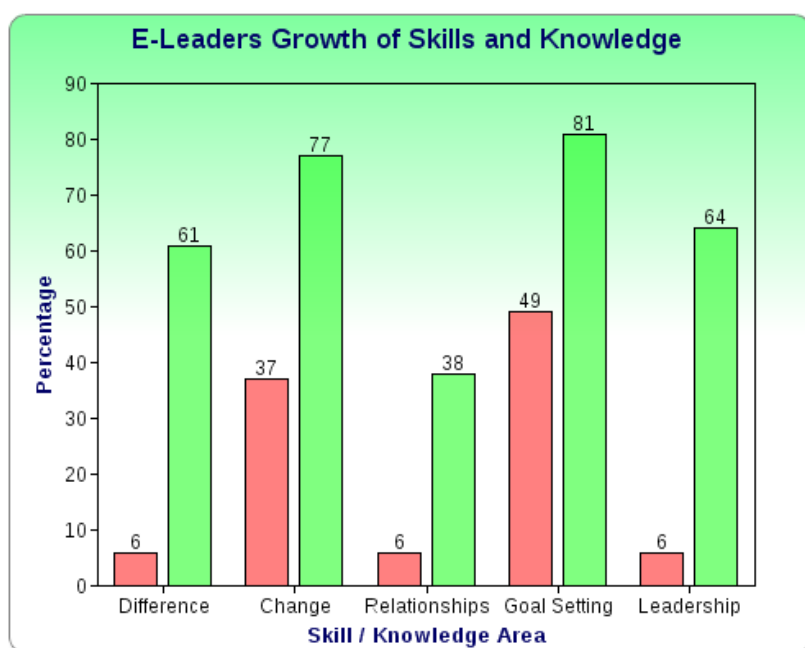
At the conclusion of the E-Leaders Program, the Program Manager collated the findings to inform this document. This report will be used to inform strategic and operational planning for the National Rural Women’s Coalition, future funding applications and planning for e-leaders courses.



E-Leaders Participant Ley Webster

Evidence of E-Leaders Growth of Skills and Knowledge

A longitudinal study was undertaken which asked e-leader participants to self-assess their level of skills and knowledge in certain areas. In this trend study, questions were asked of e-leaders prior to the start of the course, and six weeks after course completion. These two surveys were able to measure the growth of skills and knowledge of the e-leaders from start to close of the course.



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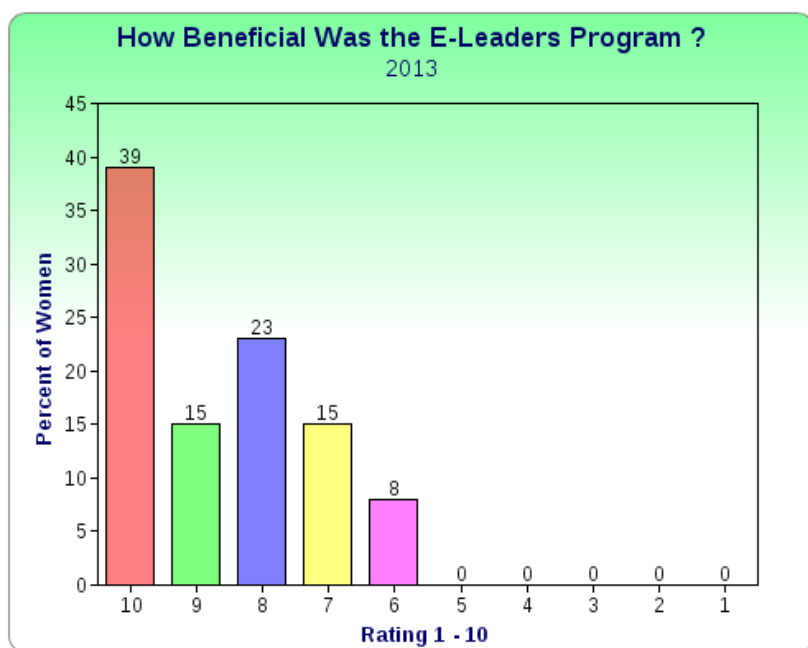
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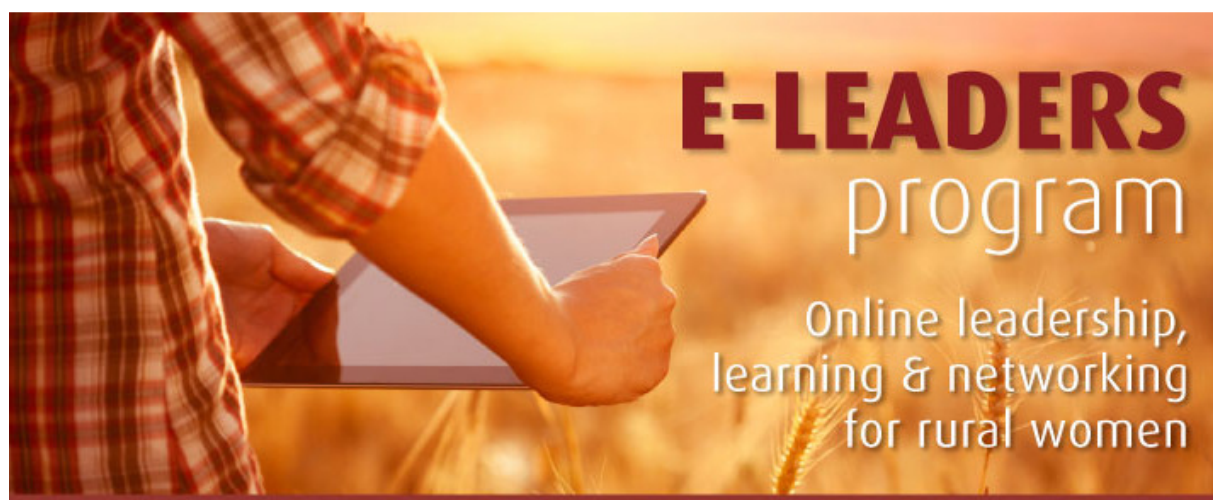
Rating	% of Respondents
10	39%
9	15%
8	23%
7	15%
6	8%
5 or below	nil

E-Leaders Participation

Twenty women were selected to do this course from a total of seventy-two women who put in an expression of interest by the due date. Eighteen women completed all of the requirements of the program and participated in sessions on a regular basis. As the sessions were recorded, women who were not able to attend were sent a link and were able to listen to the recording after the session. Personal reasons not related to the content of the program prevented the two women who did not complete the course from participating fully.

The course had an average attendance of 7.77 sessions per e-leader. There were three women with 100% participation. The attendance rates for the 10 featured sessions were:

Number of Sessions Attended	Number of Women
4 Sessions	1
5 Sessions	-
6 Sessions	4
7 Sessions	2
8 Sessions	4
9 Sessions	4
10 Sessions	3



Building Leaders - Bianca Jurd

The first two sessions of the 2013 e-leaders program examined the qualities that make a leader. The e-leader participants learnt how to improve their leadership skills and how to become more resilient and adaptive to change. The presenter was Bianca Jurd. Bianca is a facilitator and program coordinator for the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. She facilitates many of the Foundation's programs including, *Training Rural Australians in Leadership (TRAIL)*, for emerging leaders. Bianca also designs and coordinates custom programs. She gathers her experience from a diverse background spanning 15 years and five Australian states and territories, where she worked in the public, private, not-for-profit and trade sectors. Familiar with complex and challenging settings, her work has predominantly involved a "thinking outside the box" approach. Her dual passions for experiential education and breakthrough thinking drive her to invest in assisting Australia's rural leaders, giving them the skills needed to face the industry's toughest challenges.

First Session

In the post session reflective survey, e-leaders were asked about their defining learning moment. Responses included using the Leadership Maturity Framework; the different stages of leadership; the different "circles" of leadership style and how you can progress through them and the Steepo exercise. Overwhelmingly, women nominated the Leadership Maturity Framework as the most defining learning content. Comments included:

"Learning about the Management framework and seeing the level I am currently and the levels I need to go through. It was also great to understand where other work colleagues sit within this frame work. The session on stretching was very relevant to me also".

"The Leadership Maturity Framework helped explain the characteristics of myself and people in my life. I found the information about how different types of leaders relate to others and how we can relate to them more effectively really useful".

The women were invited to reflect upon the behaviours / skills they need to develop to be a rural leaders in 2013. Most women nominated aspects of growing confidence and assertion, however other topics included awareness of personal thinking; communication, understanding the big picture and taking oneself out of one's comfort zone. Comments included:

"I already have a suite of some of the 12 traits of an effective leader. The challenge for me will be to work with a mentor to discuss areas that I can work on to be in a position to influence and be an effective leader in my community and/or organisation".

"Being a 'change agent' is something I need to work on. Having the courage to speak out about challenging issues and things that need to happen to affect positive change is definitely something I struggle with. Also, I haven't thoroughly analysed the context of my workplace and the

community. If I worked on this I think I would have a better understanding of what was needed to develop myself further. Understanding my context would give me more confidence and more direction to move forward”.

“I need to learn to influence leaders in their various stages. I also need to “let go” and make sure I am inclusive of everyone on a team. The big thing for me will be applying context to my project and the various committees I am on. That was enlightening”.

A sample of reflective comments received at the end of the Building Leaders sessions included:

“A great reminder of how important it is to stretch in order to grow”!

“I really enjoyed the session, I learnt information on three new leadership themes to add to my existing knowledge. This program is extremely valuable and current in terms of content, delivery style and building capacity and networks of women in RRR. - thankyou NRWC / staff for creating this opportunity - already I feel like it is brilliant”!

“This was a fantastic session. Very rich and a lot of information to digest that will take until next week to deal with. Excellent applicable lessons and some incredible new concepts”.

Second Session

At the close of the second session, e-leaders were asked what they have learned about themselves as a leader. Comments included:

“That I am a leader! That several of the attributes discussed are ones I am constantly employing and value as part of who I am. I am a reflective person to say the least, and used this as a tool as a teacher everyday to guide where I took myself and my students and our learning. I need to employ these skills, and work on some of these other attributes to kick myself up the framework in my current role as a working wife and mother”.

“I have learned that I do already have attributes of a leader and that I have been working through the Leadership Maturity model without realising it. This has given me encouragement to keep growing and learning”.

“That I have a long way to go but well on the way”!

“I have a lot more going for me than I first thought”.

“I definitely have leadership qualities. I can grow into leadership and continue to mature my leadership style over time”.

E-leaders were asked how useful they found the two *'Building Leaders'* sessions. 50% of the women found it extremely useful; 40% found it somewhat useful; 10% found it useful. No one identified the content as being somewhat irrelevant or very irrelevant.



Emma Taylor – E-Leader Participant

Personality in Leadership - Angela Bollard

E-leaders were given the opportunity to use an accredited personality assessment (Myers Briggs Type) indicator so they could learn more about their personality type and how to better communicate with those around them. Discussions took place on how to foster effective working relationships and enhance capacity to communicate effectively through better understanding of how others might perceive you. Angela Bollard presented this session. Additionally, each e-leader had a 30 – 40 minute phone consultation with Angela where they discussed their MBTI in depth.

Angela has led a varied and successful career, with experience in executive management, policy and governance. Angela worked as a lecturer at the University of Western Australia and the Curtin University of Technology for nine years. As a qualified coach and mentor, Angela also runs her own mentoring and executive coaching practice and particularly enjoys working with women as they prepare for leadership positions. She is an accredited Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) practitioner and has broad experience in the design and delivery of skills development programs for adult learners. Working as a policy advisor and speech writer for two NSW Premiers, Angela has first-hand experience working with leaders. She has also worked extensively with boards and senior executive teams.

E-leaders were asked what was the one thing they learned about themselves as a result of completing the MBTI. Comments included:

“Learnt many things. Mainly, I now understand the reasons why my concern for others is a real motivating factor for me. I also came to realise that this has been out of balance and it's time to bring my focus back to what I may like in life too”.

“It was very interesting to learn my personality type - particularly what introversion meant and why needing time to recharge away from people was important. Actually it was great to learn each of my personality characteristics and I now feel empowered to be able to utilise this knowledge into the future including determining MBTI of others so as to work more collaboratively and successfully”.

“It clearly pointed out that I am likely to keep looking at lots of choices and not decide until the deadline! I am now looking at making myself have mini deadlines to reduce my own stress levels & be more understanding to other people's personal needs”.

“I learned I can sometimes be so dispassionate and factual that I unintentionally come across as cold and hurtful. I also learned some great things about myself too ... I feel more accepting of myself”.

E-leaders were asked to apply their learnings about MBTI to their project and reflect on implications it may have for them. Comments included:

“Knowing my personality type has explained many things for me. For my project, I have come to realise that I will need the support of others with strengths in different areas of MBTI to fully consider all aspects involved. Without this, there will be a risk that I will become overwhelmed with worry about other people”.

“My profile highlighted that I am just as concerned with the process as the outcome. Therefore, I need to highlight the big picture first in order not to lose half my audience before I get to the detail”.

“It’s great to know what my MBTI is and does explain why I have put my hand up do the project I have chosen. In order for my project to be successful requires dedication, someone committed and a lot of hard work”.

“Interestingly, my project will involve dealing mostly with men and I happen to have a conventionally masculine personality profile! My project concerns an emotive and controversial issue, so I feel I now have more tools to help communicate effectively and influence potential partners to work with me”.

“My project involves a working party of 4 members. One member is quite assertive, one is quiet and two are easy going. I will be able to use what I know about myself to relate better to the other members of the working party. It will also enable me to be more productive because I will be less focused on 'taking things personal’ “.

Final comments included:

“I loved this session it was so very useful to a lot of aspects in my life and I am now thinking about MBTI in conversations that I am having”.

“Loved it. Great access to a powerful tool”.

“Everyone was clearly were 110% enthralled with Angela's first session ... it was incredibly engaging and informative. This kind of knowledge is what you need to break through the leadership ceiling”.

“I should have done some research about this topic so I could have been more interactive in the session. I did work out my personality type and I did the phone consult but I did not feel that I knew enough about the info to discuss it or get the most out of the session. I am only just getting my head around what each quality means”.

E-leaders were asked how useful they found *the personality in leadership* sessions. 81% of the women found it very relevant and useful; 18% found it mostly useful.

Goal Setting - Cath Duncan

The goal setting sessions examined how to set realistic goals and achieve them as well as using the powerful process of visualisations. Cath Duncan is an organisational development business consultant and a professional coach with over 20 years' experience. A member of the Institute of Management Consultants, Cath operates a consulting business focussing on aiding the performance of businesses, teams and people. Cath helps people to achieve their goals and to build skills (or courage) for making the tough decisions, bold choices, and challenges they may face on the way. Cath holds a Master of Social Science, Social Ecology majoring in Organisational Development from the University of Western Sydney. She has studied and worked overseas in the UK and USA and her client list is impressive including such companies as Rio Tinto/ Hamersley Iron and Royal Dutch Shell.

First Session

The topics that had the biggest impact on the e-leaders included using goals, identifying priorities, mapping projects in steps, SMART goals, identifying personal circles of influence and concern and time management.

E-leaders were asked to identify one thing they would need to focus on in the coming week in order to progress their projects. Comments included:

"Setting goals for milestones throughout my project so I have a clear direction of where I am heading and what I need to achieve in the coming weeks".

"With my project, I have gone right back to step 1 - thinking about it. Mind-mapping my project ideas based on my original thoughts of 'why am I here?' is my current work in progress. The ideas are starting to flow once again and that's a relief".

"I will break my project down into a series of themes, then individual steps for each theme, all with set deadlines".

"I need to revise my project goals, make sure they are what I want to achieve and transform them into SMART goals".

Women were invited to reflect on the webinar format, and 73% of women were very satisfied with the format and their ability to network and participate in each session. All other women identified as being satisfied with the opportunities to network and learn using webinar technology.

Final reflective comments included:

"Thanks again to everyone, facilitators and fellow members it is amazing how similar many of our personal struggles are".

"Great to have a project to directly apply this knowledge to - makes it all sink in".

"We seem to be really gelling as a group ... the discussion and questions are fantastic, and it's great to be connecting on the LinkedIn page".

"I really enjoyed the goal setting session! Thank you".

Second Session

In the second session, the topics which were most popular were mind mapping, getting to the destiny or core of a project, time management, visualization,

"I thoroughly, yet unexpectedly, loved and thrived on the mind map lesson"!

E-leaders were asked to identify what they have learned about themselves as a leader undertaking their project. Comments included:

"That I will be a more effective leader if I have clarity around my goals in life and business. This clarity helps to keep me focused and more efficient and effective".

"That I limit myself when I find things difficult e.g. I am into detail, not big picture thinking so I avoid doing it but to my own & the project's detriment. Just need to give it a go and can always ask for help".

"That there are tools and resources (like mind-mapping, SMART goals, and Cath herself!) that can be used and called upon to assist in my development, both as a leader and from the perspective of project-building".

"I can disengage the uptight part of my personality by getting creative with colour, drawings and mind maps".

E-leaders were asked how useful they found the *goal setting* sessions. 50% of the women found it mostly useful and relevant and 50% found it mostly useful.

Social Media – Michelle Prak

Leaders in 2013 need to understand the power of social media. Michelle Prak presented a session where e-leaders could learn about using social media to get your message across to a desired audience. Michelle Prak has worked in communications for 20 years and has a special interest in social media. Michelle holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and a Masters in Communications Management. She consults to some of South Australia's largest organisations, helping them plan their use of social media and to train their staff. Michelle is a member of the Public Relations Institute of Australia and caretaker of the Adelaide social media club, SocAdl.

Some of the key topics which e-leaders enjoyed learning about in this session included Facebook and twitter, priority posts, social media plans, mega data and privacy.

*"Finally someone explained Twitter in a way that I understood. I've even been finding new organisations and companies to follow that are related to my business ... and I've been posting! I really enjoyed getting on Twitter for a walk-through with everyone else. That practical workshop somehow took the *eek* factor away".*

"It's not as scary as it looks. There are very different functions for business vs. personal use. They are a very powerful tool to help promote business and industry".

"This was an excellent session and gave a great overview of social media and the benefits and also downside of them. I learnt heaps about twitter, opened an account and started tweeting. I also learnt more about Facebook even though I do use this from time to time".

As a result of doing this session, e-leaders were now going to work on developing social media strategies for their projects; engaging in social media and using hash tags. Comments at the conclusion of these sessions included:

"Really loved this section"!!!

"Such an important part of the success of any project - must be embraced in this day and age".

Community Capacity Building - Kerry Andersen

E-leaders had the opportunity to find out ways that they could make a difference to the sustainability of their community. By examining case studies of others who have successfully undertaken community capacity building projects, they were able to look at what they can do to influence sustainable change. These sessions were presented by Kerry Anderson who is passionate about rural communities and rural people.

Kerry has a small business background with qualifications in marketing and adult education. Since 2006, she has worked with Community Leadership Loddon Murray on a number of innovative and highly successful regional projects including Women Leading Change in agriculture and The Big Conversation for northern irrigators. Kerry was a finalist in the 2011 Victorian Rural Women Awards for a project entitled Operation Next Gen that subsequently took her to the USA exploring entrepreneurship in rural towns. A pilot project, currently taking place in the rural Victorian towns of Birchip, Boort and Cohuna, is achieving great results.

Session 1

E-leaders were asked how their understanding of building community capacity had changed as a result of attending this webinar. Comments included:

"We can lead change. We can create small projects and the ripple effect will take place".

"The approach to building to community capacity can take many forms but success is more likely when strategies are locally driven, focus on the positive and start with what the community already has, build on exiting community strengths to move towards what is needed".

"My understanding of building community capacity expanded exponentially as a result of this webinar".

"My understanding of the principles of community capacity have increased dramatically. As I look around my local community, I can now identify why it is some projects seem to make a real difference and others don't. Hopefully I can take Kerry's advice on building on a shared interest, not focusing on the differences".

"Oh wow, the possibilities are endless. I am really inspired to make building community capacity a central part of my local business chamber, where I'm a committee member".

E-leaders were asked to identify their ongoing work in building connections, as an aspect of and to their projects. Comments included:

"Finding the confidence to invite more people into FVAG and to have conversations and to share info. Feel less threatened and intimidated by new experiences and relationships".

"To build connections around my project with farmers, and food producers and the wider community. To build awareness around the importance of supporting local producers, eating locally and good health. I also hope to organise a community event - Christmas or New Year's gathering to bring my small community together".

"I recognise I have a lot of work to do to build more connections. In the past, I have been too easily put off my project by subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) resistance. In order to build more effective connections, I now know I need to change my approach".

Other comments included:

"Kerry's knowledge and enthusiasm was so inspiring and made me realise that we all need to step up to make a difference and that we can all contribute in some way".

"Enjoyed reading and hearing about real life examples of community capacity building as well as being driven by the energy and enthusiasm from a few fellow e-leaders".

"Loved this session with Kerry. So inspiring to see what can be achieved when communities come together supportively".

"I really enjoyed the websites Kerry had available to use as a practical example of how others are going about community building".

Session 2

E-leaders appreciated being able to learn about the steps involved in leading a community project; creating core messages, developing strategy, identifying target audiences and key people and the range of economic and social aspects that need to be considered. Comments included:

"Develop the capacity to listen! Focus on the shared goals, not the differences. Look more widely when developing a plan - seek out other projects with good results - learn from them".

"The reminder again to develop my pitch so you are ready to pitch it to relevant people on the spot so you are prepared!!" "The more you clutter it up with detail the less people will remember."

"I am an ideas person. I need to harness that and keep it under control by creating a plan, goals and deadlines. Partnerships are also essential".



The women were invited to share aspects of their learning about community capacity building and what this may mean for their project. Comments included:

"I need to talk to people more and be more open to the ideas of others. I can see I have been missing opportunities by not developing my capacity to listen. After this, I expect I will be re-visiting my plan and strategy. Very exciting!"

"Putting detail into project plan and having more conversations".

"Mentoring... the thought of having different mentors for different areas of my life / business".

"Communicating these lessons to my fellow business chamber committee members, then brainstorming simple ways we can start integrating this into our strategic plan for next year".

E-leaders were asked how useful they found *the community capacity building* sessions. 100% of the women respondents found it very useful and relevant.

Towards Sustainability – Fiona Simpson

This topic examined the future of agriculture and how the sustainability of all facets of primary production can be maintained and enhanced. Fiona Simpson presented two sessions. She lives on the family farm with her husband Ed and their children Jemima and Tom. Plantation Trading Pty Ltd is a mixed 5500 ha farming operation near Premer on the Liverpool Plains in NSW. As director of the enterprise, Fiona is responsible for the administration, marketing and risk management of the business. Fiona holds a Bachelor Degree in Arts/Business, and has tertiary qualifications in workplace training and adult education. In 2011, she was the first woman to fill the role of president of NSW Farmers and was re-elected as president in July 2012. Fiona is passionate about ensuring a strong future for agriculture, and maintaining a strong and united voice to ensure that farmers' voices are heard and taken into account at all levels of Government.

Session 1

E-leaders were asked about the sustainability of their projects and comments received included:

"I have a lot more thinking to do about the sustainability of my project. At the moment, it's just me and I now recognise that I need to develop so more interest and support for my project for it to be successful long term".

"I would love for my project to have ongoing sustainability into the future, however it requires people to drive it, and funding to ensure that future events can be held".

"It is important to be adaptable and reassess".

"We can't do everything ourselves for long term sustainability work/life balance. But as long as we acknowledge we may be out of whack for a while, you can push through it.

Women e-leaders were asked to outline what they learned about themselves in generating and holding personal sustainability. Comments included:

"I re-discovered that I love learning! The joy of learning new things, meeting new people and expanding my thinking has been so energizing that I think it will give me the enthusiasm for my own personal sustainability for a long time. The support of others in the program and my family have contributed to this also. I have learnt that there are many rural women out there with similar values and I have loved the connection".

"That there are many elements to personal sustainability and that the availability and access to information and further learning is a limiting factor for me living in a rural community. Also the important of strong and viable networks".

Session 2

E-leaders had to identify their key learning's from the 'towards sustainability' topic. Feedback included:

"Evaluate and identify needs then be proactive towards achieving that goal; consideration of triple bottom line".

"To connect with others and adapt".

"I think Fiona's sessions perfectly complemented those on community building in that the message was: those of us at grassroots level can control the sustainability of our communities. I also loved that Fiona challenged definitions of sustainability, examined the topic from multiple perspectives and gave us inspiring examples".

When asked what they had learned about themselves as a sustainable leader undertaking a community project, the following comments were included:

"Be willing and positive to adapt and evolve and identify needs with others".

"I am a leader in my community - I have good connections with community and I am happy to learn, to adapt and work hard to achieve an outcome".

"As with all the topics in this course, I feel empowered to drive change. I'm very excited by the possibilities and am pleased other rural Australian communities have paved the way and are available for inspiration/guidance. My eyes have been opened ... the tools are there for me to embrace".

E-leaders were asked how useful they found the content of the *Towards Sustainability* sessions. 100% of the women respondents found it very useful and relevant.

Webinar Facilitation and Technology Feedback

At various intervals throughout the program, E-leaders were invited to provide feedback on the webinar technology (Blackboard Collaborate) and the facilitation of the weekly webinar sessions. The following feedback was received:

Webinar Facilitation

"Kerryn has a wonderful approach as "host" ... I love how she tries to individually message or talk to each as person as come online and encourages us to have a social catch up while we're waiting for the sessions to start. I think it says a lot that most of us are online up to half an hour early!"

"It's great having Kerryn present at every meeting to facilitate. She knows everyone and makes it feel like a really friendly and welcoming environment every time you log in for a session".

"I'm so pleased that I have had this opportunity to undertake the e-leaders course. It has really given me much to think about and apply here on in. Thanks for the opportunity".

"I congratulate everyone involved in the coordination and delivery of the 2013 e-Leaders Program it has been extremely well run program and reinforces the professionalism of the NRWC - congratulations Kerryn for coordinating the program and the webinar sessions!"

"The organisation was excellent and moderation was professional".

"The webinars are truly a fantastic tool. Kerryn did a wonderful job of moderating them and I thoroughly enjoyed them. As we went along I gained more confidence to put my hand up and ask questions or make comments. The ability to also chat between all the participants on the chat room was also invaluable".

"10/10. Kerryn is very organised and did a terrific job coordinating and chairing the sessions".

"I found the webinars very inclusive and encouraging. It was easy to master the technology. The moderator was well equipped".

"I was extremely impressed with the organisation of e-leaders and the moderation of the webinar sessions. Well done and thank you".

"I loved the webinars. They are almost the most interactive that you can get without being in the same room. The facilitators were wonderful and very supportive".

Webinar Technology

Participants were invited to provide feedback on the webinar technology. E-leaders were asked to rate how they found the interaction between participants. Twenty-five percent of the women said it was awesome and the best. Seventy-five percent rated the webinar technology as mostly engaging.

“I love the webinars and think that the format is perfect for all participants and their situations”.

“I am really enjoying it. The webinar format isn't new to me; however, the opportunity to engage in two-way communication is. Other webinars I've been part of are just someone talking ... participants have their microphones disabled and comments set to only go to the host. This may allow greater control for the host and speaker. However, how can we truly learn and interact if we can't have a conversation! I've really enjoyed getting to know everyone and the LinkedIn page is the next logical step to continuing our relationships beyond this course”.

“The webinar I find fascinating. It is such a great tool for this environment. I would like to use face time or Skype to see if it give a more realistic feel to the class room. I have no idea how you set it up to work with and I would be interested in learning about Webinar more”.

“Maybe making the white board a bit more interactive so that presenters can write and point while they are giving their webinar to help people follow along easier. Having some more sessions where everyone needs to present something. I think this helps the quieter members speak up and gain more confidence in themselves”.

What Worked Well?

All E-Leaders were invited to reflect at the completion of the program as to what they believed worked well. Comments included:

“It was wonderful to have the opportunity for personal and professional development via webinars and from home. The structure of the webinars was great and the topics were very relevant. I found 7pm at night to be a very difficult time in my household and had trouble focusing on each webinar (but I understand the issues with time differences across Australia). I would suggest considering dividing the group into two so the groups are smaller and to allow for more interaction. The groups could determine the best time of the day for their webinars (i.e. one group have webinars during the day for those that work from home or have flexibility and the other group have evening ones). It would have also been good to have the opportunity to be allocated a NRWC board member mentor for each participant. The last session also ended quite abruptly and there seemed like no further opportunity for the group to re-unite and to give an update on each person’s projects. Final comment is that it would be good to have been given a pdf of the presentations and handouts to be able to reflect on the session”.

“What worked well: - great communication of the program online - sound and transparent process to apply for e-leaders - excellent planning, coordination, implementation and reporting of e-leaders Program - excellent exposure to use new webinar technology with IT support - great to have project coordinator as main contact - Kerryn did a great job keeping if on track as did Karen - great to receive constructive feedback on project proposals from NRWC board members and e-leaders group - the professionalism, quality, content and enthusiasm of all presenters was exceptional - a big thank you for giving up their time and expertise! - great opportunity for RRR women to connect, learn, engage and build our skills and networks through e-leaders program and through future networking on LinkedIn, Facebook, email etc. What could be improved: - define project deliverables within timeframe of e-leaders - projects should be scalable e.g. in context of e-leaders timeframes participants should deliver small project goals even if overall project is part of a larger project - extend duration of e-leaders to 24 weeks which includes 'own time to work on project' during every fourth session e.g. weeks 1,2 theory, week 3 discussion and week 4 application of theory etc. - group to create greater opportunities to network via email, phone etc. - ensure that content being delivered fits within appropriate time slot e.g. 2 hrs. or 2 x 1 hrs. etc. - NRWC to provide funding for follow up webinar a for e-leaders to reconnect 1-6 months post e-leaders based on project update and report back, evaluation report back and other topics - NRWC to explore possibility of establishing an e-leaders alumni to participants to keep networking, connecting and having conversations - investigate opportunity to download sessions as podcasts that can be uploaded onto phones, iPods, tablets etc (mp3 files) - after each session, send out a reminder email on following Friday about session evaluation and second follow up for feedback due on Sunday”.

"I loved the program and particularly enjoyed connecting with other like-minded women who want to make a difference in their communities. Another project follow-up session as the very last session prior to completing our reports would have been really helpful in terms of bringing the whole course together and applying it to my project. I thought the course ended abruptly and I felt cut-off and almost thrown in at the deep end. A final session for everyone to brainstorm their personal and project progress would have really capped off an awesome opportunity".

"What worked well? The flow of the sessions worked well - each session built upon the information covered previously. It was excellent to be exposed to such a high level of professionals through the webinars".

"Please keep up the good work. I really enjoyed all components of the course. It would be great to perhaps towards the end when we were finalising our project reports to have a 2nd project session so we could bounce a few more ideas off each other and the mentors again. Looking forward to the follow up session sometime in 2014".

"A fantastic program that I found very beneficial. I think an optional physical get together would be beneficial at the beginning to help cement relationships within the group from the start".

"I loved the experience. I felt the technology associated with all the presentations and communication with the group was great. The course has confirmed that I am moving in the right direction with what I want to achieve in the community. I was introduced to some new ideas that I will take with me and develop further skills. The course and the discussions within the course helped me to identify with the leader in me and it gave me the extra incentive to work on a project that will have a positive impact on my community. I have the courage to move forward and to work on future projects".

"Good size and mix in group selected. Was sorry to miss the interactive session with mentors (was on holidays and had logistical issue) though the ability to listen to recorded session was fantastic. Session time worked best for me with daylight savings (8-10pm) once kids in bed".

"It was my first time participating in webinar. I was extremely impressed and not sure why it is not used more. The weekly sessions worked very well, my only criticism is that it ended so abruptly, no real goodbyes to each other no wishing each other well. Unsure if my final project was received, unsure if any feedback is given to me about that final submission".

"I am extremely happy that I completed the course. The topics covered were very informative and I believe well-chosen and applicable. I would recommend for others to undertake this course".

"I found it very difficult to make a mid-week session, however the recordings were great. Can I suggest that a Sunday night would have been a better time for me"?

“What worked well: 1. The webinar format was fun, convenient and made it easy for those of us who think we're shy to actively contribute. 2. The structure of the program was clear and well-defined from the beginning. I knew exactly what to expect and what was expected of me. 3. Kerryn was an excellent moderator. She engaged us individually and made it easy to express our ideas. 4. Most of the sessions were life-changing ... I particularly enjoyed those with a practical component. The highlights for me were: Angela Bollard, Michelle Prak and Fiona Simpson. 5. We had an excellent group of women who want to keep in touch. What could be improved: 1. The introductory session was a little underprepared and chaotic 2. Some of the presenters lacked presentation and teaching skills. Those who understood how to get their message across and engage an audience very obviously stood out ... Angela Bollard and Michelle Prak had us enthralled. Is it possible to give presenters a short list of tips on how to make the most of their presentations? 3. A couple of the sessions went on too long, especially for those of us in daylight savings”.

What Could be Improved?

All E-Leaders were invited to reflect at the completion of the program as to what they believed could be enhanced to improve the e-leaders program. Comments included:

“Having reference notes prior to the sessions would have been fantastic. Being able to review them before the session would have allowed me to organise my thoughts better and improved my note taking. Cath Duncan's notes were amazing”.

“I did find receiving emails about the following days course not enough notice. Sometimes I did not access my emails on the day of our course and I would miss information. Receiving that info a couple of days before would have worked better for me not sure about others. When day light savings came in that also caused a few problems with time changes and log in times”.

“I think there was too many surveys”.

“The mode and execution of delivery was great. I do believe that at times there was a bit of time wasting during set up and confusion with day light savings”.

Content for Future E-Leaders Courses?

All E-Leaders were invited to suggest possible content for future e-leaders courses. Comments included:

"It would have been nice to hear from one or two of the participants from the last e-leader group".

"Machinery of Government "e.g. how is policy developed at AG level and how can women in RRR have input into policy formation?" - pick three big issues of RRR areas and identify panel sessions with three speakers representing different views - concept is for participants to gain a greater understanding of diversity of views across RRR areas - writing grant applications".

"Communication techniques. Some of us have difficulties expressing ourselves and our ideas in a group without feeling intimidated".

"Perhaps you could run a short session with some of the 1st E-Leaders participants or even someone inspiring (from your Cuppa with program) to tell their story how they found their path of making a difference to their business/ community".

"The list could be endless, however I think there is more than enough content to cover in the allocated timeframe".

"Networking Mentoring".

"1. How to engage with local government, especially the processes of asking for and getting help, and how to effectively lobby for change. 2. How to get people excited about projects, especially getting volunteers and keeping up the momentum. These two topics might make better A Cuppa With sessions, though".

Conclusion

The 2013 e-leaders program was a successful program which assisted rural, remote and regional women to undertake the next steps in developing their personal leadership skills. The funding for this e-leaders program was provided by the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the e-leaders program was a key part of the 2012 – 2013 workplan for the National Rural Women's Coalition. The e-leaders course assisted the NRWC to achieve its strategic goals.

This report will be used by the NRWC to provide feedback to the following:

- NRWC Board of Directors – the report will inform the board of the outcomes from the course in 2013 and will provide feedback which can be used to modify future webinar based learning to rural, remote and regional women.
- NRWC Contractors – there are a number of contractors who worked diligently to deliver the e-leaders program and this report will be shared with them so continual improvement of their services can be engaged.
- Office for Women – this findings in this report assist in keeping the Office for Women fully briefed of not only the work of the National Rural Women's Coalition, but also the outcomes.
- Rural Women – All participants in the 2013 e-leaders course will be sent an electronic copy of this report.
- Marketing – the NRWC will use this to assist in the marketing of future e-leaders courses.
- Information – the NRWC will share the findings in this report with relevant persons who might be interested in the work of the NRWC. This may include government ministers and departmental staff and any future funding applications which the NRWC may generate.