



# Social Media E-Leaders 2014

---

A Evaluative Report into  
Online Social Media Learning and  
Networking for Rural Women



National Rural Women's Coalition

## Contents

The National Rural Women's Coalition	3
A Word From the President	4
About Social Media E-Leaders 2014	5
Social Media E-Leaders Course Content	7
About the Social Media E-Leaders	9
Evidence of the Growth of Skills and Knowledge of E-Leaders	11
Acknowledgement	20
Conclusion	21



## 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.
- Delivering innovative leadership projects. More information at [www.nrwc.com.au](http://www.nrwc.com.au)

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; one rural Aboriginal Woman 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.



## A Word from the President

One of the key successes of the National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) has been the implementation of the E-Leaders projects.

The NRWC has embraced emerging technologies as a tool to offer short web-conferencing webinars for women who live in rural, remote and regional locations. The web conferencing software use, Blackboard (Bb) is free for participants. The webinar encourages open and collaborative communication which has resulted in fostering strong networks amongst the women who join the sessions.

Surveys, undertaken by the NRWC at regular intervals, have seen multiple and strong requests from rural women to develop high level skills when using social media to proactively benefit their business or community group. This training would enhance not only their leadership role, but also contribute hugely to their business sustainability, their community not-for-profit work and general communication. The importance of in-depth social media training plays a vital role in the way we communicate with business partners.

In 2014, the NRWC offered an online e-leaders webinar course over the period September – December, on a weekly basis. Social Media E-Leaders is the fourth NRWC E-Leadership project which ensures that rural, remote and regional women have the skills and knowledge to represent themselves, their communities and industries so they can work towards building a vibrant, sustainable and viable future for RRR Australia.

None of this would have happened without the commitment of the facilitator, Cathie Denehy who shared knowledge of the media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Instagram and Pinterest. Cathie identified trends and opportunities for expansion; gave tips and tricks for leveraging social media technology and pushed the boundaries of social media to increase the group's learning through constant engagement, support and encouragement. The NRWC also acknowledges the professional commitment of the E-Learning Coordinator, Kerryn Suttor and the NRWC Program Manager, Karen Tully. Their skills, knowledge, organizational talents and abilities ensured the outstanding success of the program.

The Directors recommend this report on a project that evidences a valuable investment in building professional and personal communication using social media platforms. The Directors appreciate that the Program Manager, Karen Tully has captured the key intent and results from the 2014 Social Media E-Leaders Program in such a commendable document.

*Dr Pat Hamilton*

*President – National Rural Women's Coalition*

*January 2015*



## About Social Media E-Leaders 2014

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. However, surveys undertaken at regular intervals have seen multiple and strong requests from women to have high level skills when using social media to proactively benefit their business or community group. This would enhance not only their leadership role, however also contribute hugely to their business sustainability or community not-for-profit work and general communication.

The 2014 E-leaders course saw sixty-nine rural, remote and regional Australian women from all corners of Australia place an expression of interest with the National Rural Women's Coalition to do the program. Twenty women were accepted after a rigorous merit selection process had been completed. Of these twenty women, all completed the requirements of the program. There was a total of 16 hours of learning delivered via interactive webinar technology, plus an additional two hour welcome 'getting to know' each other session prior to commencement of the e-leaders course, where participants introduced themselves and gave a brief explanation of their intended social media goal. The two hour sessions were held at 7.30 pm (AEST) on Wednesday evenings. Participants were provided with an extensive and detailed workbook (supplied in PDF format) for each module, prior to each webinar.

Learning was supported by the establishment of a private mentoring group on Facebook which was monitored by the engaged Social Media expert contractor (Cathie Denehy) during the e-leaders course and was also available for an additional 30 days post course. Instructional videos were provided from time to time to provide answers to questions and learning which required a more visual approach. Each webinar was supported by a presenters PowerPoint.

Participants were able to interact in a virtual classroom and network with rural, remote and regional women from all corners of Australia. Prior to undertaking the course, a pre-course survey to ascertain the current level of social media knowledge and skill levels in generic areas was administered. Upon completion of the E-Leaders course, the same survey was administered to measure the learning that had taken place.

Cathie Denehy was contracted as the Social Media E-Leaders Course presenter. Cathie Denehy is a regional business women who has built a successful social media strategy business. She maintains a loyal following through her use of social media platforms including Facebook and



Twitter. Cathie also conducts social media training for small business owners, government not-for-profit organisations and multi-national companies.

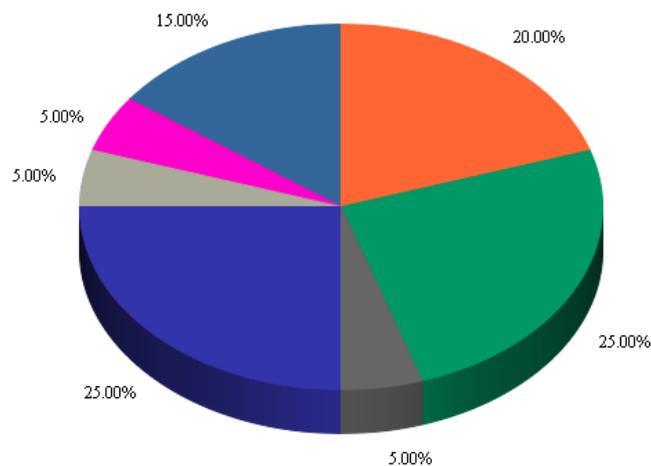
## Social Media E-Leaders Course Content

The key goal of the E-Leaders Social Media Program was to focus on building skills for rural, remote and regional women in the area of social media. Using collaborative webinar technology, participants developed a social media plan and learned strategies to improve marketing outcomes using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and Google+. It was expected that successful applicants would have an 'intermediate level' of experience with both Facebook and Twitter and be prepared to open an account with YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and Google+.

Participants were selected via a merit selection process and had to demonstrate that they were rural, remote or regional women actively engaged in a community group or the not-for-profit sector, primary industry operation (agriculture, fisheries or forestry) or small business that would benefit from them having more intense social media skills. The women also had to commit fully to actively participate in the collaborative weekly workshop sessions and be willing to connect with the other E-Leaders to share ideas and network. The selection process took into account a range of diversity indicators e.g. isolation and current access to professional development and professional networking opportunities. A total of 20 women were selected from the 69 applicants, with 10 positions in the course being offered to rural business owners (primary producers or small business) and 10 positions for women involved in community groups. 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.

Women E-Leaders By Project Type

■ Primary Production   
 ■ Paddock to Plate / Food / Marketing   
 ■ Women   
 ■ Health and Wellness   
 ■ Natural Resource Management  
■ Youth   
 ■ Other

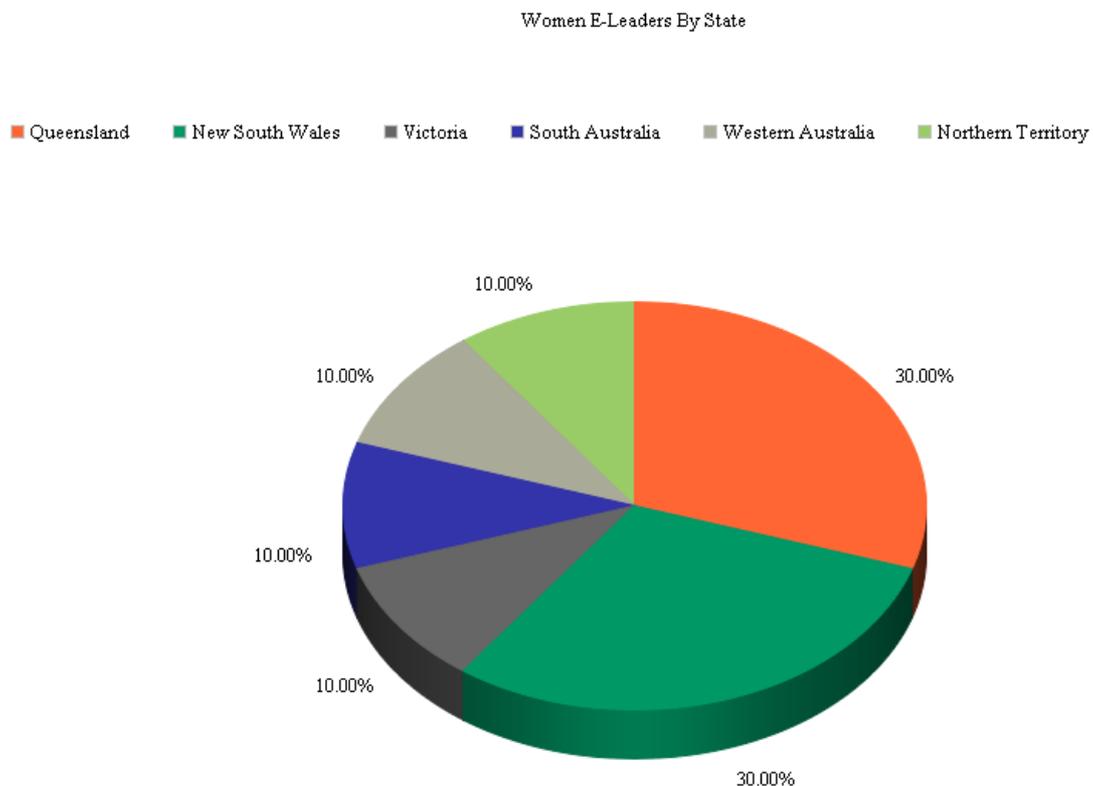




There was a range of participant project topics, and these can be broadly grouped into key areas. There were 5 E-Leaders who developed social media projects in the area of both Paddock to Plate / Food / Marketing and Health and Wellness. Four women worked in the area of Primary Production; and one each in the area of women's interests; natural resource management and youth. Three e-leaders had topics which were not easily categorized.

## About the Social Media E-Leaders

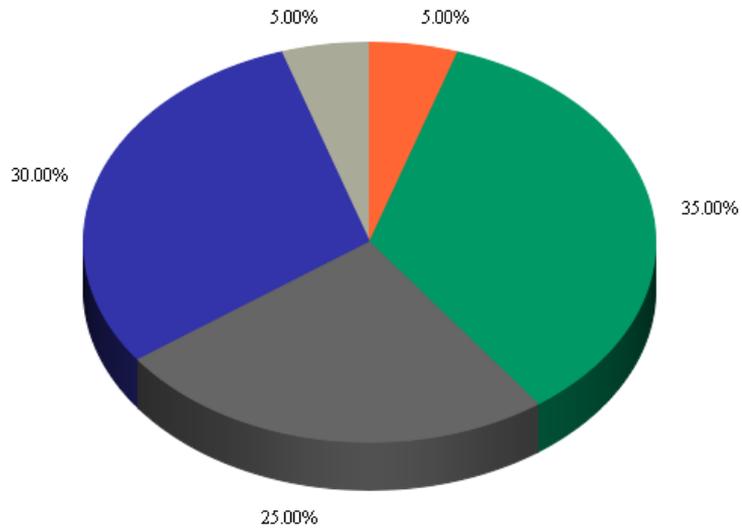
The twenty women selected came from the states of Queensland and New South Wales (6 each state); Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Northern Territory (2 each). There were no applications received from women living in Tasmania or the ACT, despite the fact that promotions were undertaken in these areas via social media and utilizing the networks of the NRWC member organisations. There were four E-Leaders who identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and one woman who was an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI).



The rural, remote and regional women e-leaders represented a diverse range of ages. Seven women were aged from 18 – 25 years; six women were 46 – 55 years old; five women were aged between 36 – 46 years, and there was one e-leader who was aged 55 years or greater, and one aged 18 – 25 years old.

Women E-Leaders By Age

18 + 25 + 36 + 46 + 55 +

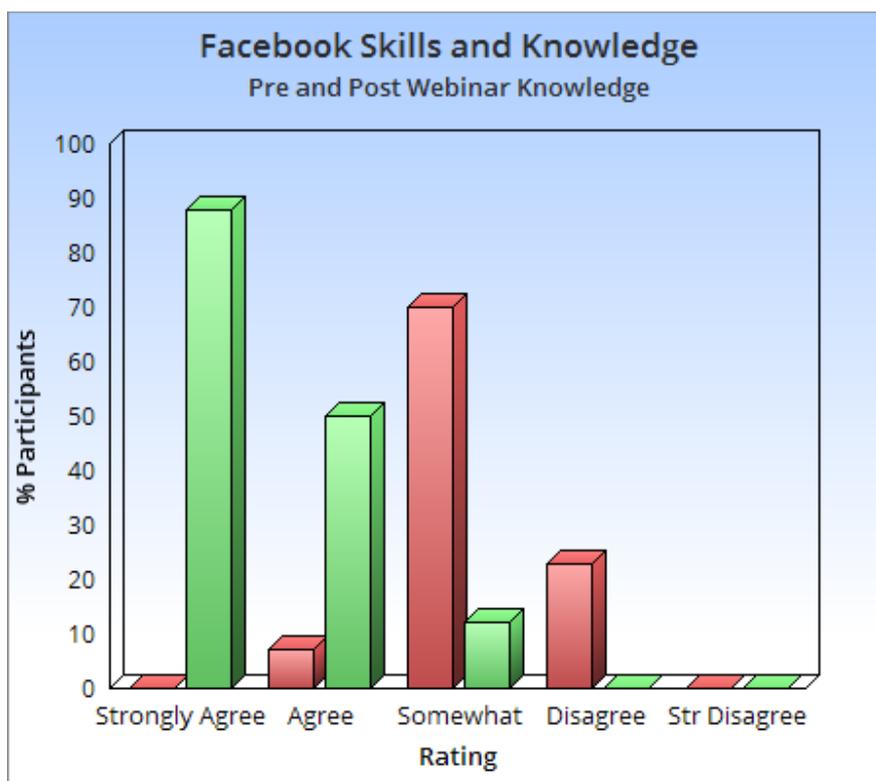


## Evidence of Social Media E-Leaders Growth of Skills and Knowledge

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 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.

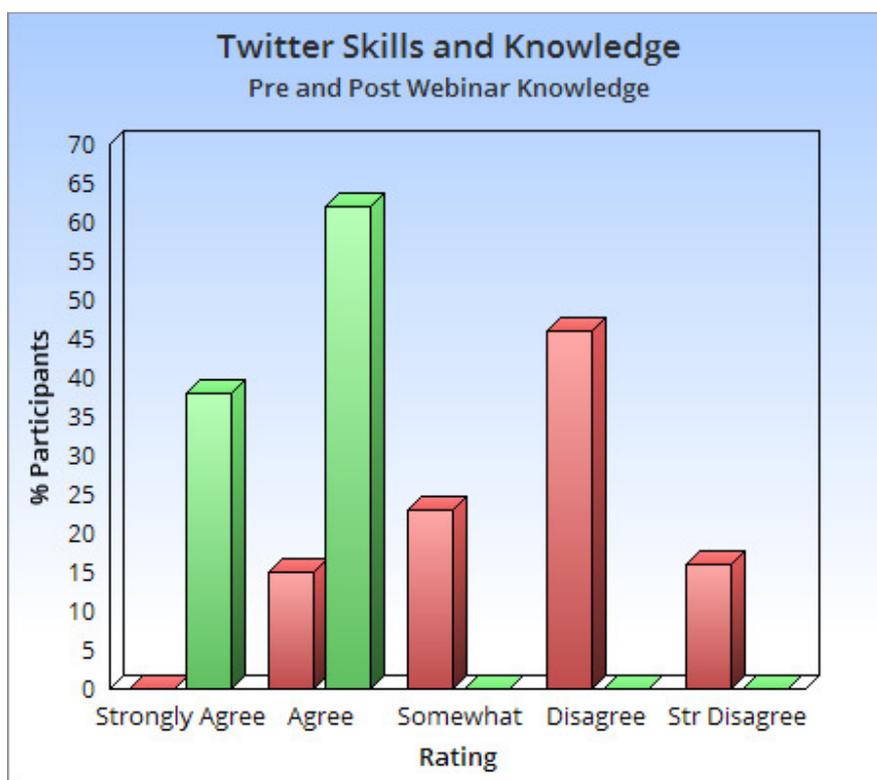
### Facebook

Using Facebook can assist small community groups and businesses to reach all the people who matter most to them. E-Leaders were asked to self assess their level of skills and knowledge on using Facebook with their community group or business. Before the course, there were not any women who rated themselves as strongly agreeing that they had high level skills, however 88% rated themselves as having high level Facebook skills at the end of the course.



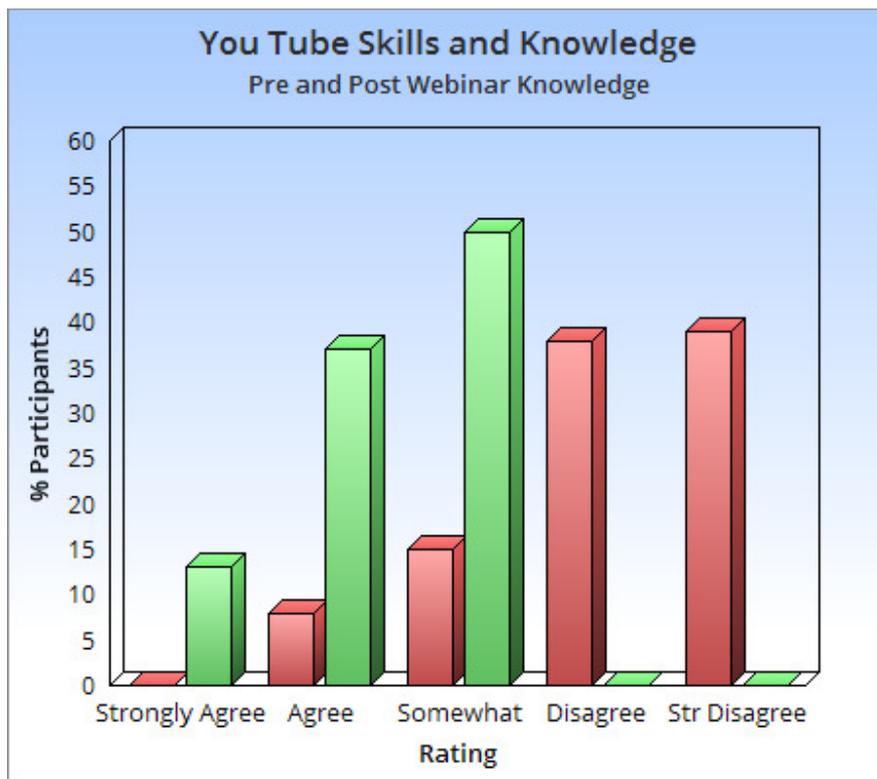
## Twitter

Primary Production businesses and community groups across the globe are using Twitter to generate awareness, connect with members and customers and drive sales. Women were asked to self assess their skills and knowledge in using Twitter. Before the course 62% of the e-leaders believed they did not have any skills in this area. Upon completion of the course, all women agreed that they had skills to adequately use Twitter.



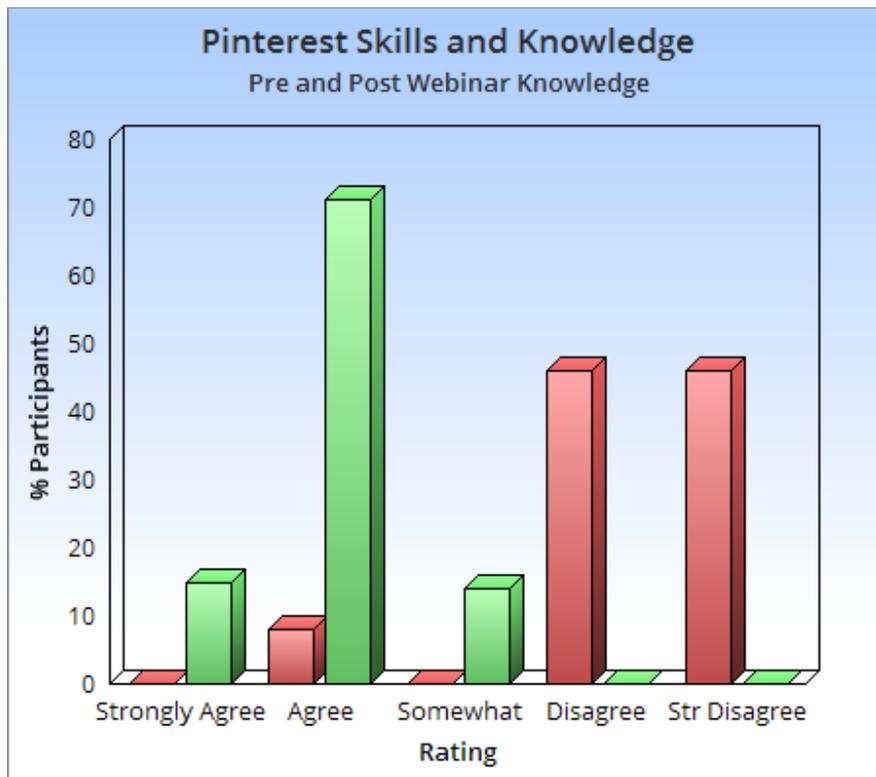
## You Tube

Using video is a great way to attract visitors to a website and keep people engaged and connected. In our impatient, busy world, many people would prefer to watch a video instead of trying to digest a huge chunk of written information. Since more consumers are spending time online instead of watching TV, the popularity of watching videos online is growing exponentially. Prior to commencing the E-Leaders program, 77% of the women did not have knowledge and skills to use YouTube. Once the course was completed, 50% of the women agreed that they had great skills in this social medium.



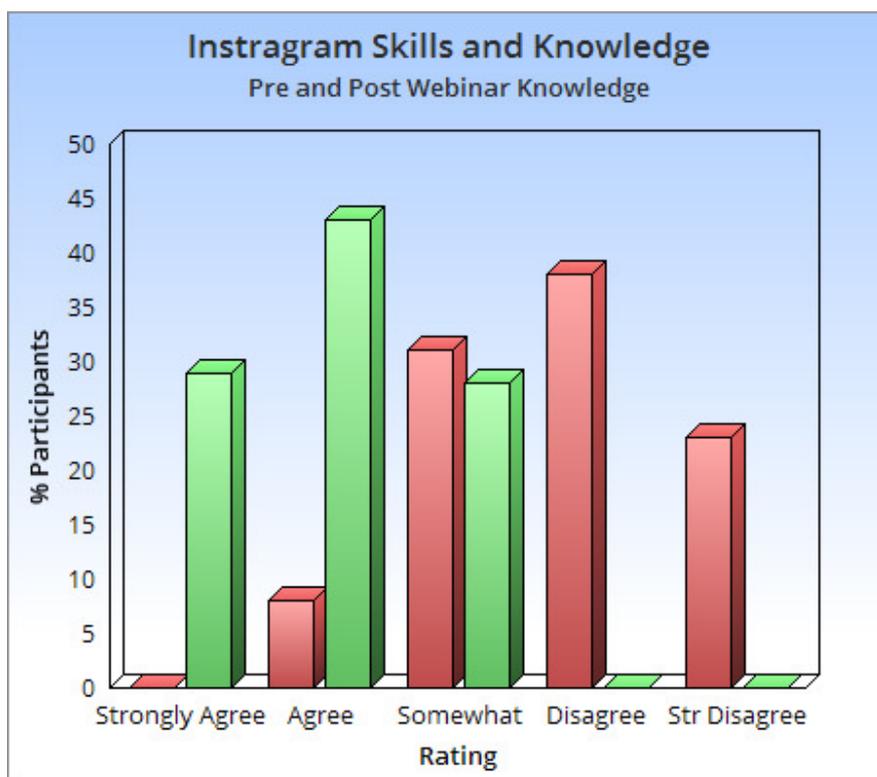
## Pinterest

Millions of people use Pinterest every day to save the inspiration and things they need to carry out plans and pursue interests for their business or community group. Ninety-two percent of the women believed that they did not have skills and knowledge in using Pinterest prior to commencing E-Leaders. At the completion of the course, 86% agreed they had skills to use Pinterest.



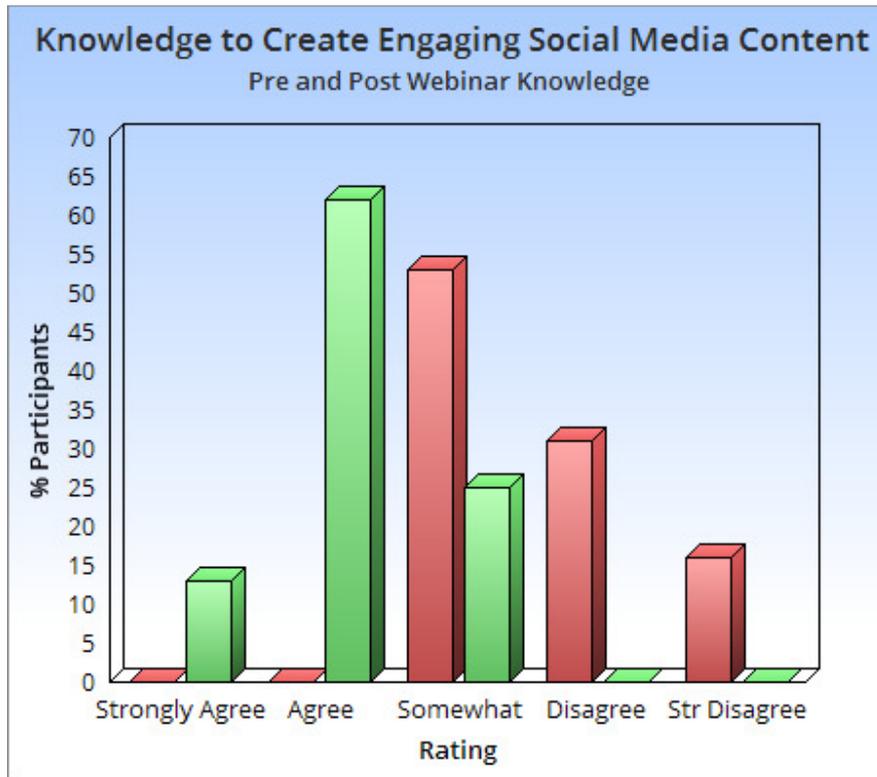
## Instagram

Instagram provides an attractive opportunity for businesses and community groups to brand themselves and attract more followers. Only 39% of women agreed that they had skills and knowledge to use Instagram prior to starting the course. Upon completing Social Media E-Leaders, all women had some skills to use this medium.



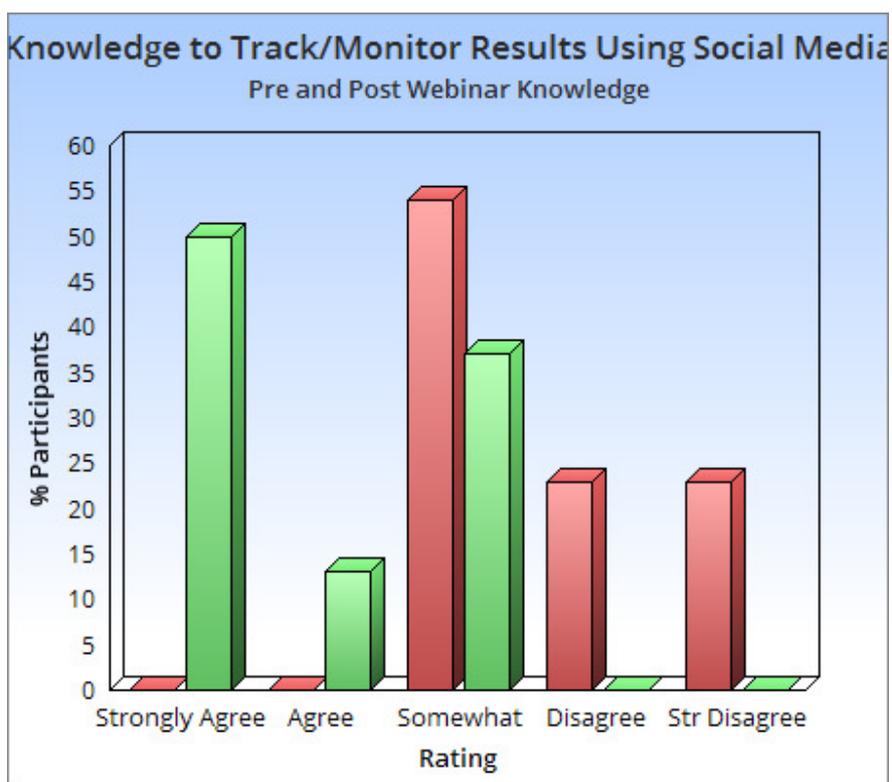
## Creating Content

The ability to create engaging content to use with social media is crucial. Prior to the course, 53% of women agreed somewhat agreed that they had skills in this area. Once the course was finished, all women had skills to create engaging content.



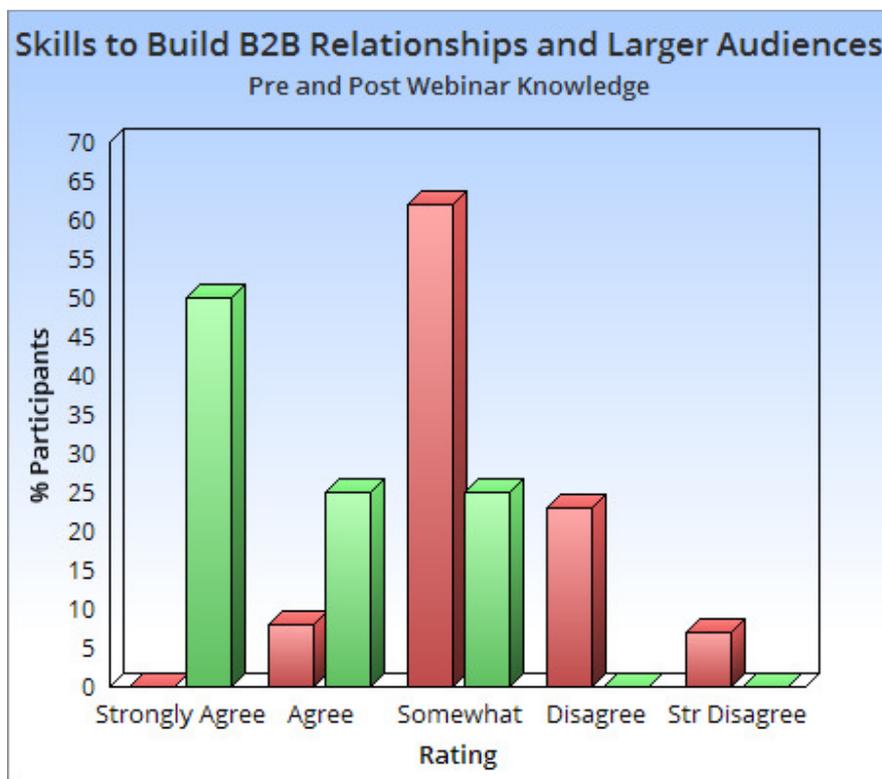
### Track and Monitor Social Media Use

The ability to measure, monitor, understand and engage with social media users is all important. When a user can gain insights into real-time use, powerful social intelligence can be built up. Prior to the start of the course, 46% of the women did not have any skills in tracking and monitoring. Upon completion of E-Leaders, 100% of the women had usable skills.



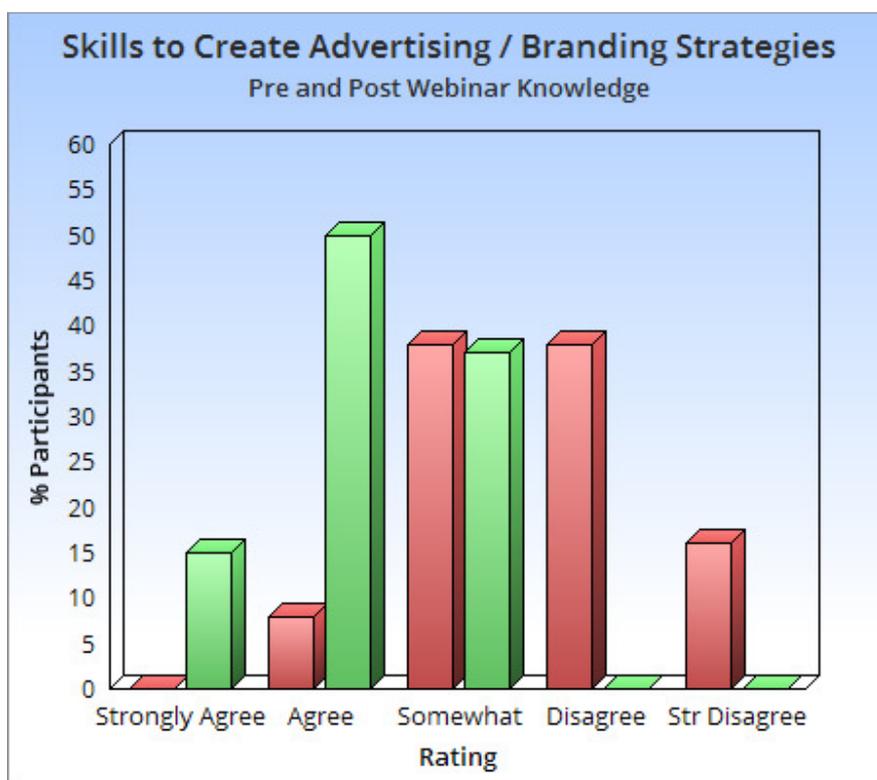
## Build a Larger Audience and Nurturing Business To Business Relationships

Nurturing relationships with your customers is a crucial part of growing a successful business or community group. In this age of social media communication, caring for your customers / supporters has never been more important. At the start of the course, only 7% of the women had good skills in this area. Upon completion, 75% of the e-leaders rated themselves as having good skills.



## Successful Advertising and Branding

Creating a strong brand will increase the effectiveness of social media advertising and marketing. By developing an impressive brand, women can strengthen their relationship with their supporters. Prior to the course, 54% of women did not have any skills or knowledge in advertising successfully or creating a strategy in line with their brandings. Upon completing E-Leaders, 63% agreed they had good or better skills in this area.



## Conclusion

As identified throughout the report, the 2014 Social Media E-Leaders program was successful in enhancing the personal and professional skills and knowledge of rural, remote and regional women and assisting them to undertake the next steps in developing their social media skills.

Successful outcomes for participants included:

- Investment in building personal and professional relationships
- Development and implementation of integrated social media strategies for business, community and not-for-profit organisations.
- Widening their network through connecting more effectively and efficiently.
- Tips and tricks for leveraging social media technology.

The E-Leaders program was a key part of the 2014 – 2015 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 Social Media E-Leaders course in 2014 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 2014 Social Media 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.



## Acknowledgements

The National Rural Women's Coalition thanks the following people for their support to this successful Social Media E-Leaders Program.

- NRWC Directors Dr **Pat Hamilton** and **Irene Mills AM** for their support in the merit selection process of applicants.
- NRWC Contractor **Kerryn Suttor** for her skillful and diligent leadership provided to the planning and operationalization of Social Media E-Leaders.
- Course Presenter **Cathie Denehy** for enthusiastically sharing her knowledge with the Social Media E-Leaders.
- NRWC Program Manager **Karen Tully** for oversight to the program, and for undertaking all aspects of the evaluation of E-Leaders.
- NRWC Bookkeeper **Keli McDonald** for financial management.
- The **Office for Women** in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for providing the funding to use for the advancement of rural, remote and regional women.