Lead Teams Programme Evaluation

Supporting the Leadership Development Framework

Evaluation supplied by SCARLATTI, June 2023

Background

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency) is implementing a Leadership Development Framework (LDF).

The framework is expected to support all levels of leadership at Fire and Emergency, and to encompass everyone who is a part of Fire and Emergency, including volunteers, paid firefighters and operational staff, and non-operational staff.

As part of embedding this framework, the Leadership Development Team piloted the 'Lead Teams' programme among volunteers and at National Headquarters (NHQ).

Fire and Emergency is only at the start of their journey with the LDF. The Lead Teams programme is the first cab off the rank and has only been piloted. It's important to keep this early stage in the process in mind when viewing the feedback in this report presentation.

Lead FENZ
Oversee and integrate complex systems. Strategy formation.

Lead System
Strategic alignment and implementation, thought leadership, shape and reshape systems.

Leadership skills are cumulative

Lead Leaders
Tactical implementation, translate strategy to action, delivering across geographical area, branch or group.

Lead Teams (people leaders)
Achieving results through others.

Lead Self (personal leadership)
Technical and professional development, progressing work objectives, getting things done.

Everyone, all the time

The Lead Teams programme

The Lead Teams programme was aimed at emerging and current team leaders among volunteers and at National Headquarters (NHQ).

The 'Lead Teams' programme objectives were to:

- Learn more about themselves as leaders
- Develop capabilities needed to build a high performing team
- Develop communication skills
- Strengthen peer relationships with other leaders across the organisation

Three cohorts **(34 people)** participated in the programme as part of the pilot.

Two NHQ cohorts (n=21)   One volunteer cohort (n=13)

What we wanted to know

Fire and Emergency contracted Scarlatti, a research and evaluation firm, to conduct an independent evaluation of the 'Lead Teams' pilot programme to understand:

- how programme implementation had gone,

- the programme's effectiveness with supporting leadership development and

- what will support a nationwide rollout for the programme?

This document provides the insights Scarlatti identified through that evaluation work.

How we evaluated this programme

Scarlatti used a mixed methodology approach, looking to survey programme participants, and then interview participants, facilitators, managers and direct reports or people who work with participants.

Note: some participants suggested we speak to a direct report who had also been on the programme with them. In these cases we gathered feedback from a participant and a direct report perspective in the same interview, which means the total number of people we spoke with is less than the total number of interviews.

Surveys to programme participants

22	Survey responses
69%	Response rate
10	Volunteers
12	NHQ

Interviews with programme participants, facilitators, managers, and direct reports or people who work on a team together

	19 Interviews	17 People
Programme participants	12 8 NHQ 4 Volunteer	14
Direct reports/ work together	4 2 volunteer 2 NHQ	
Managers	1	1
Programme facilitator	2	2

Overview of our findings

Lead Teams programme **success stories** for the implementation and effectiveness

Recommendations to improve implementation, effectiveness, and nationwide rollout

Opportunities to strengthen broader leadership development foundations within Fire and Emergency, which will be critical for programme success

Success stories

- **Overall logistics and facilitation**
- **Content that supports leadership development**
- **Positive changes to leadership**

Programme logistics

Participants were positive about how the programme logistics were managed, and how it was facilitated

Six of the 12 participants said the logistics worked well when asked general questions about programme highlights, overall implementation and recommendations for changes to logistics, delivery methods or other aspects of implementation. People also said having strong facilitation was important.

Planning time, overall logistics and balance of delivery methods

Strong facilitation

4 of the 12 specifically mentioned the strong facilitation

6 of the 12 participants interviewed said the logistics worked **"really well"**

" *...there was plenty of notice given and we got a timetable for the year, you know, for the nine months of when the courses we're gonna be, so I think that side of it's okay logistically*

Participant, volunteer

" *<<facilitators>> are a delight. They are wonderful and they delivered it really well.... yeah, they were both really good facilitators of the course and very knowledgeable*

Participant, NHQ

Programme content

Participants felt programme content was strong and supported leadership development

Most participants highlighted the Deeper Signals activity immediately when asked about programme highlights. For some of them, seeing their core drivers and recognising how those influence the way they approach things was a lightbulb moment. The activity also helped people think about differences in what drives others and how that may mean some people approach things differently.

10 out of the 12 participants interviewed
highlighted the Deeper Signals unit in particular
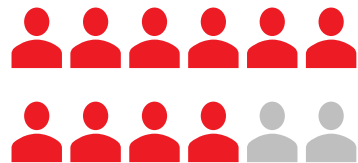
I think a big part of it was the Deeper Signals work, so me understanding who I am and what makes me tick, but also recognising how others tick"

Participant, NHQ

Effectiveness of leadership

Participants reported improved communication, and more confidence and skills to engage in development conversations

Participants most often highlighted communication when asked about whether anything had changed with their leadership. For many this started with listening to others in a different way than they had before to make sure they understood where people were coming from, and then adapting communication as needed. It also meant engaging in one-on-one conversations that focussed on connection and understanding who people are rather than a purely transactional focus.

8 of the 12 participants interviewed
mentioned changes to communication
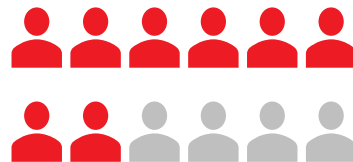
3 participants
also discussed team building and prioritising and planning

I'm more tactful, I know how to get things without ordering it…"
Participant, NHQ

One thing that came out of the programme was setting up these one-on-one development conversations that are not entirely transactional to do with work, to really set aside that time…"

Participant, NHQ

Effectiveness of leadership

Those who report to or manage programme participants also noticed changes.

Managers, direct reports and team members provided similar feedback around participants being more thoughtful about checking in with people, asking more questions, and adapting their approach and communication style.

> " He'll pull us aside and talk more often. *He asks more questions.* He's more involved in the brigade and each person. I think *he's better at communicating.* He prompts with more questions."

Direct report to a volunteer participant

> " What I've noticed is that <<participant>> is *asking a few more questions* to test the political environment or situation he's in at times, and he's *just taking a little bit more time just to methodically work through the approach* before he then launches into it, which is really encouraging to see."

Programme participant manager - NHQ

Increased connections

Participants felt the programme supported connections beyond their team

While people felt the programme helped make connections with others involved in the programme, carrying those connections forward seemed most valuable and most purposeful for volunteers.
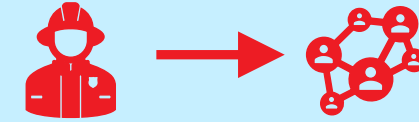
Increasing collaboration was particularly valuable for volunteers

55% of participants surveyed indicated that the programme was very or extremely helpful for developing strong peer relationships with other leaders in the organisation

Extremely (n=3)

Very (n=9)

Moderately (n=10)
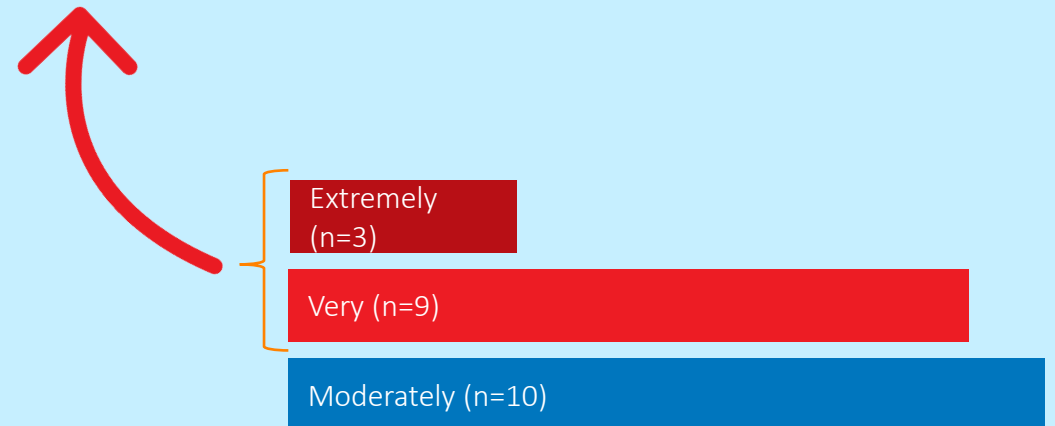
Developed stronger relationships with other leaders in the organisation

Increased connections

NHQ participants said they might run into each other as part of their everyday work and the programme helped to support those connections.

Volunteers made active efforts to reach out to other volunteers who had been on the programme with them. A few noted that volunteer brigades can sometimes be quite insular so having the opportunity to get to know other brigade leaders and connect with them was valuable.

Since the programme they had connected with other volunteer participants to talk about and learn how they were managing things within their brigade and were thinking about how they could partner and train together in different ways.

One volunteer had asked another volunteer participant to facilitate team building activities with his brigade.

"
…as a result of being on the course, you know, now I talk to them quite a bit about how they run their brigades, how they deal with challenges that we kind of all come across, it's just a level of openness there."

Participant, volunteer

Recommendations

Improving implementation and effectiveness and supporting nationwide rollout

Recommendations

A lot of the feedback in this section is expected for a pilot. When organisations implement something new there will be a learning curve with what works best. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the programme and found a lot of value in it.

These recommendations should be understood within that context: these are things people suggested would make the programme even stronger.

Some of this feedback also starts to hint at the recommendations included in the last section of this slide deck around the broader leadership foundations at Fire and Emergency.

Participants often talked about programme feedback and this broader leadership context together. The two types of feedback have been separated to ensure a clear set of programme recommendations that are able to be integrated into programme planning immediately.

This section focusses on the programme-specific recommendations.

Review length and timing

Review face-to-face and online sessions

Explore Kaupapa Māori options

Clarify target audience

Improve visibility

Increase manager buy-in

1. Length and timing

Consider shortening the programme length and review timing.

Six months seemed to be the preference for how long the programme should be, with most people giving responses generally in this timeframe. People felt it was still important to have time between the face-to-face sessions so they could absorb and think about the things that had been covered. They felt the amount of time between these sessions could be condensed. The large gaps between the face-to-face sessions and a multi-week hiatus over the Christmas/fire season diluted the programme for some people and a few participants noted the drop-off in attendance over time.

Another person interviewed suggested that if the programme does have to go over the Christmas/fire season, it might work better to have at least one face-to-face session scheduled after the break to help maintain engagement.

Sixty-four percent (n=14) of those surveyed were **moderately to not at all satisfied** with the frequency of engagement

"

The nine-month process was just way too long, it sort of watered down what we'd done... if it was more condensed it would have a lot more value."

Participant, volunteer

Participant suggestions:

- Shorten to no more than **six months**

- Start in autumn to **remove the break over Christmas and the fire season**

2. Review face-to-face and online sessions

Consider extending the amount of time in each face-to-face session to increase value.

Face-to-face really valuable (6 participants)

More time in these sessions (two of the six)

Cannot do without face-to-face (one of the six)

Many people felt the face-to-face sessions were most valuable. Two people suggested extending the amount of time spent in each face-to-face session could be a way to make the most of those sessions (e.g., from one day to one and a half days). Extending the time might also make the sessions feel more worthwhile for people who had to travel to attend.

While people appreciated having some online activities in between face-to-face sessions, these sometimes offered less value when participants were unprepared. A few people mentioned the challenge with breakout rooms during these sessions as many participants had little to contribute.

Consider how to get maximum value out of online sessions even if participants are unprepared for them

- Scheduling evening sessions for volunteers worked well

- Flexibility to join sessions for either cohort worked well for NHQ participants

- Breakout rooms were a challenge as people had little to contribute if they hadn't prepared

3. Kaupapa Māori options

Different options could be explored for how the kaupapa Māori unit is facilitated.

A few people commented that this unit was valuable, although one person said it was a big topic that could almost benefit from having its own programme. Another appreciated the respect with which facilitators approached what could be a sometimes quite sensitive topic. Two suggested it could be strengthened by having an experienced Māori leader facilitate, whether that be someone from within Fire and Emergency or a local iwi. One of these participants also suggested holding it at a marae where some of the value the course touched on "were amplified."

Another suggestion was to have more resources and supports for Māori leadership, such as Māori coaches and mentors, as well as Māori leadership frameworks. By extension including Pacific coaches and mentors could also be valuable. Including leadership frameworks and resources that had an Aotearoa/New Zealand and Fire and Emergency context was also suggested.

Suggestions

- Include frameworks with a specific Māori, Aotearoa, and Fire and Emergency context

- Have an experienced Māori leader facilitate the kaupapa Māori unit and consider holding at a marae

- Include Māori coaches and mentors

4. Target audience

Review how cohorts are managed, and what level of leadership experience the programme is targeted at

Nine people talked about clarifying who the programme was best targeted at so that managers could be thoughtful about who they sent on the course. A few people said it was important for Fire and Emergency to be sure they were identifying people who were ready and wanted to be leaders.

Programme participants also fell across the range of leadership development. Some had no leadership knowledge or experience, were not currently leading a team and didn't expect to do so any time soon. For these people, the programme materials and examples sometimes felt too focussed on direct management. Examples about someone on your team bringing a problem to you didn't resonate with them. They would have benefitted from more examples and learning around things like organisational or influential leadership, where there is no direct management relationship and you are instead focussing on how to lead in other ways.

The nine* people who talked about **getting the right people in the programme** in their interviews mentioned three things:

Want to / are ready to be a leader n=4	Direct management vs no formal leadership n=3	Different places in leadership journey n=3

...don't just say here's a course - managers go put someone on it. Make sure you are identifying the right people so that your investment is effective

...framing it that everybody ... has the capacity to be in a leadership position or... can influence and lead whether that's in a formal structure or not

if the course is focused on leadership and on leadership development then having people in the same part of their journey... would be beneficial

*People sometimes mention more than one theme in their comments so themes total to more than nine.

4. Target audience

Other programme participants had been in a leadership position for some time and/or had participated in previous leadership development courses.

At least two people in this situation reported that while they thought the programme was great, they didn't get a lot of new learning from it. One of these individuals felt like they were sometimes coaching others in the course rather than engaging in their own leadership development.

Creating more clear criteria about who the programme is most appropriate for will help ensure the right people participate.

Providing other leadership development options for people at different places in their leadership journey would also be valuable.

When asked what would support a nationwide rollout, some people also talked about the logistics of doing so with NHQ and other non-operational staff, full-time career firefighters/operational staff, and volunteers.

Feedback included the need to consider those who are on shift work, rosters, and possible regional implementation. A couple of people mentioned the need for a conversation with the union around policies for training with full-time career firefighters.

Participant suggestions:

- **Clarify who** is most appropriate for the programme

- **Implement other options** for those at different places in their leadership journey

A few people also mentioned **logistics** if the programme is to include volunteers, paid operational staff, and non-operational staff (e.g., rostering, regional)

5. Improve visibility

Improve visibility of the LDF and the Lead Teams programme

One potential challenge with the programme is the lack of visibility of the LDF and the Lead Teams programme. Ensuring people are aware of in-house training and development options can be a challenge in any large organisation. This may be the case even more so when it is a new programme.

Most people we interviewed who were not programme facilitators had limited or no awareness of the LDF. Those who did have some awareness were all in NHQ.

Improving visibility of the LDF and the Lead Teams programme will be important so that participants and managers know that the programme is available and who is right for it. Some participants reported not knowing what the programme was about until they started it.

A couple of people pointed out that some of the activities in the programme could be quite confronting for someone who is not expecting them or does not want to participate in them.

Among the 15 people interviewed who were not programme facilitators, awareness of the LDF was limited.
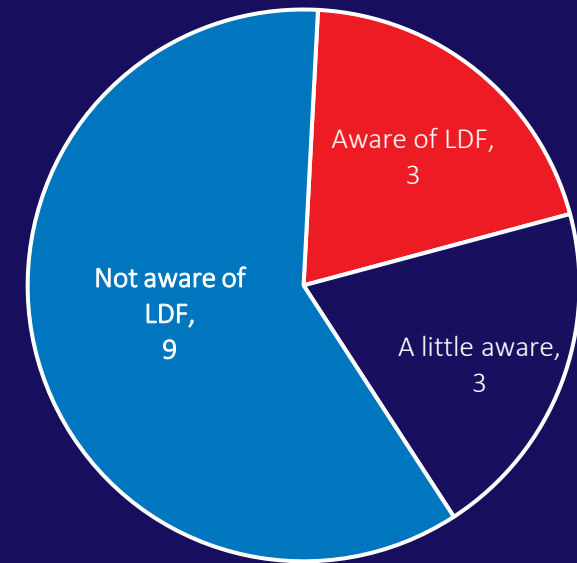
Others did not know what the Lead Teams programme was about until they started it.

6. Manager buy-in

Build manager buy-in to support participants on the programme

Create a clear understanding of what support looks like and why it is important.

Ensuring manager buy-in and support to ring-fence time for programme learning is another challenge in most large organisations, particularly an organisation that has a large remit as Fire and Emergency does, or the organisation is going through significant change. Often people are at full capacity covering BAU. Finding additional time for development work can be hard.

In some cases the lack of visibility may also have been at play. A couple volunteers weren't sure their managers knew they were on the course. While a few people said their manager talked with them about the programme during their regularly scheduled check-ins, others said there had been no follow-up.

Creating both visibility of the programme and a clear understanding about the kind of support participants need and why will be important for programme success.

> *Those opportunities in the actual development of that is only as good as your direct management line wants it to be."*
> Participant - NHQ

> *They need to make sure that not only the person being on it is committed but also their managers. Because if you don't have a supportive manager, this will be quite difficult. It's there's a lot of expectations for you to do work that isn't your BAU, if there's pressure on you where you can't get to the coursework of the programme, it's just setting them up to fail."*
> Participant - NHQ

10 out of the 12 participants interviewed said manager support is critical to success
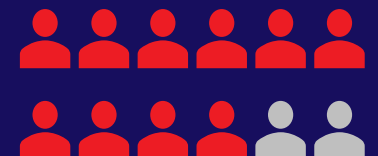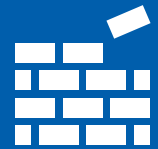
Considering the broader LDF

Lead Teams is only one layer of the framework. This section covers feedback about the broader view of what will support leadership development.

Recommended steps for strengthening the foundation

Participants' feedback about the need for a broader leadership foundation or programme went beyond the current higher-level LDF. It was about the 'how' of Fire and Emergency implementing strong leadership across the whole organisation. Without this roadmap for the how, participants were struggling to see how the Lead Teams programme could be successful. Some of this work may already be underway, but, if so, participants knowledge about it was lacking.

This section maps the key steps that people highlighted in different ways during their interviews.

1. Define leadership

2. Identify future leadership needs

3. Develop a talent management plan

4. Plan resources and timelines

5. Set leadership expectations

6. Create visible leadership pathways

7. Address potential barriers and build enablers

1. Define leadership

What does leadership look like at all levels of the LDF and across Fire and Emergency?

This is about defining what good leadership will look like at Fire and Emergency, and what is expected of leaders at all levels.

*"Where does the **consistency** lie in terms of Fire and Emergency's **expectations of leaders**?...*

*What is the **foundational knowledge** we as Fire and Emergency expect our leaders to have?"*

Participant - NHQ

2. Identify future leadership needs

How many leaders will you need, when and in what roles?

Three participants talked about how important it is for Fire and Emergency to not only focus on leadership needs now, but to have a long-term view of leadership needs into the future.

I guess that's what the organisation needs to look at it... **what is the plan for the next 5-10 years? How many leaders do you want?** *And how many positions or roles there are that you wanna fill up...*

Participant, volunteer

3. Develop a talent management plan

How do you identify potential leaders?

Once Fire and Emergency has a clear view on leadership needs, participants talked about Fire and Emergency having a clear talent management plan, or strategy for identifying potential leaders.

So there's no formal mentoring coaching kind of system. There's no formal talent management system. There's no yeah, **there's just no real framework for developing anyone really other than in that very linear trotline operational skill set.**

Participant, NHQ

The strategy we have for looking at the whole life cycle across our organisation *from recruitment, through progression, through positions, through development, across into leadership roles.* **How we go about that?**

Anonymous

4. Plan resourcing and timelines

Where does leadership development fit within training and progression structures and how will Fire and Emergency support it?

Implementing a leadership development plan is a significant undertaking. Implementing even the Lead Teams programme required resource and time from both those who facilitated and participants. To implement leadership development at all levels of Fire and Emergency and across all groups (volunteers, non-operational staff, and operations staff) will require a long-term view for resourcing and timelines.

*So we need to do the work in devising from a **strategic level** what our path forward **as well as the near-term tactical** application of that.*

Participant, volunteer

*…**resourcing to take to scale**… **enabling our service delivery** to do this stuff, so if they could run programmes and that mechanism is a pretty huge apparatus to get that…*

Anonymous

*…that coordination part would be absolutely crucial…. **funding** and the, you know, that **coordination support**…*

Anonymous

5. Set leadership expectations

Ideally all leaders at Fire and Emergency, and particularly those in senior leadership roles, would model good leadership. There would also be an expectation that all people leaders have regular development conversations within their teams.

How will senior leaders model expectations and good leadership?

We need the senior leadership to be actively promoting this sort of language, you know that leadership development matters, those human skills matter. And for them to be ideally role modelling that by engaging in that leadership development and talking to people

Anonymous

How should people leaders support development in their teams right from the start?

If they identify possible future leaders in the brigade or even in our organisation, then start investing on them and start talking to them

Participant, NHQ

6. Create visible pathways

Seven participants mentioned that they don't see a leadership pathway at Fire and Emergency. They would like to see a clear path that shows people how they can progress in their leadership and what opportunities there are.

How can you create and share clear leadership pathways for volunteers, paid career staff and non-operational staff?

I feel like there is no pathway at the moment in Fire and Emergency in terms of what is next for leadership development…

Participant, volunteer
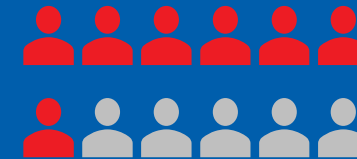
7 out of the 12 participants interviewed mentioned the lack of a visible leadership pathway at Fire and Emergency

7. Address potential barriers and build enablers

Supporting broader leadership development will require a focus on potential barriers and enablers. What participants focussed on with barriers and enablers differed based on their individual circumstances and history with Fire and Emergency.

Three people called out divisions between operational staff and non-operations staff and volunteers. Four people mentioned gender imbalances and potential biases not-only within Fire and Emergency but with the public as well.

One person noted that people will always approach male colleagues first. Another noted the lack of female volunteers in some brigades.

Consider any limits for leadership opportunities for current and former volunteers

"So I will probably never be able to be a group manager or a district manager.... I didn't come from a career background or off the trucks is what we normally say."

Participant, NHQ

Create more connection between operational and non-operational (back-office) staff

"…we as an organisation have put a glass ceiling between our frontline and our, I'll say the organisation that supports the frontline. And I think we need to find ways to break through that glass…"

Participant, NHQ

Look at how to support diversity and inclusion

"We need to make sure that we have a woman's development lens on most pilots…"

Participant, NHQ

7. Address potential barriers and build enablers

Feedback around modernising culture largely came from volunteers, with a couple saying that brigade leadership can sometimes be stuck in old ways of doing things. One volunteer noted that absent changes to policy around how brigade leadership is managed (e.g., limited tenures for those in leadership roles), they anticipated little change to existing barriers in this area.

A few people also noted that a key enabler will be to strengthen and continue building a learning culture at Fire and Emergency, so that creating development plans and looking for opportunities to grow in your development areas is expected and supported.

Look at options to modernise the culture

"I think there's a lot of people in the organisation that are very kind of set in their ways and they really embody the past culture… and what we had on this course were the kind of people that were up and coming looking forward and it's a good environment to sort of be away from your standard brigade culture…."

Participant, volunteer

Look at what might support a learning culture where people think more about their development plans

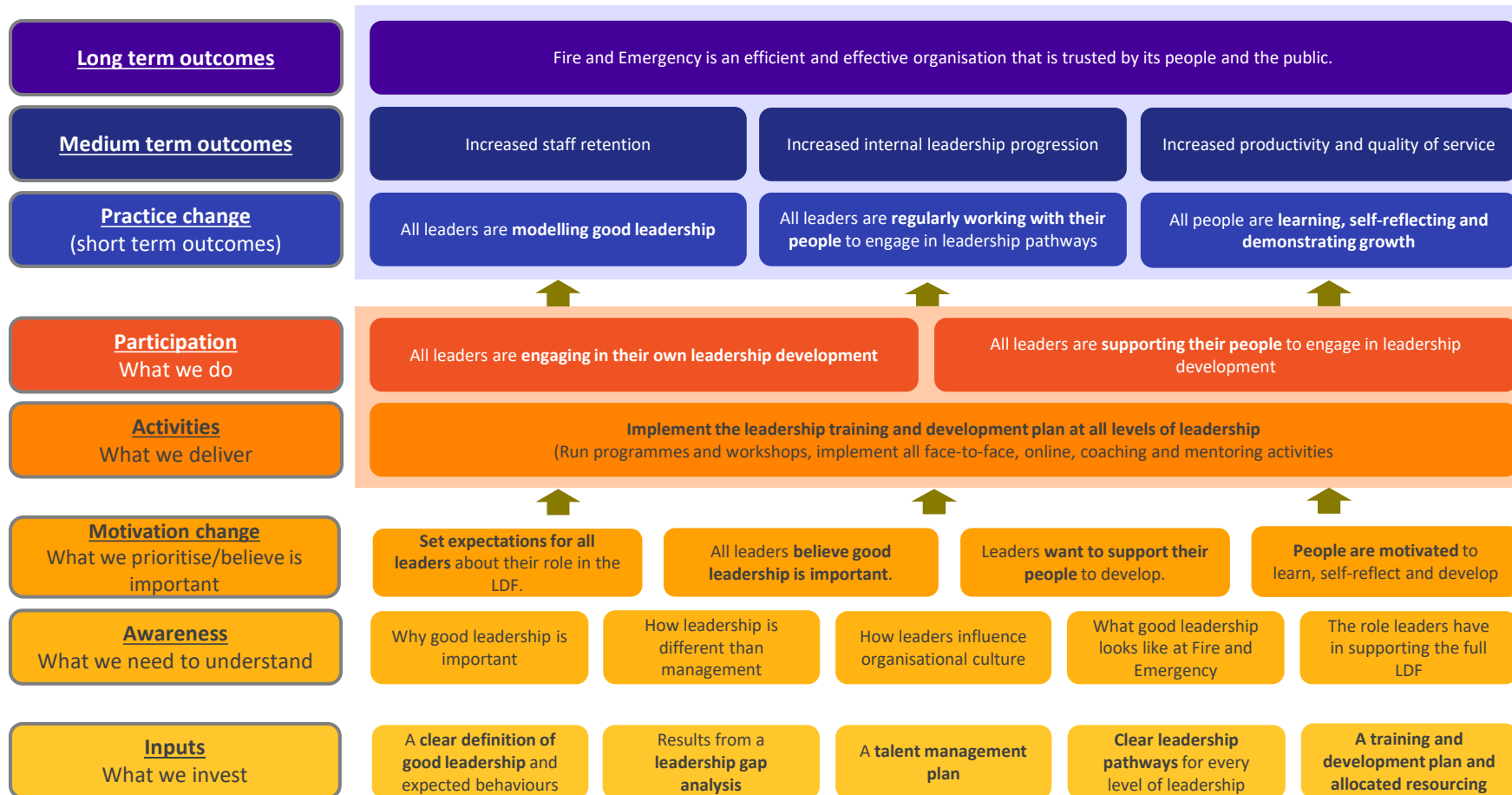*"The biggest one is culture… a culture of reflection, a culture of learning, big macro…. So it's a learning culture enabler. In our organisation, training is part of what you do and it's essentially mandatory. … Um, this is learning outside of that construct and it's voluntary, it's optional."*

Anonymous

Revised LDF Logic Model

Fire and Emergency has already developed an intervention logic model (ILM) for the high-level LDF. The feedback above could be incorporated into that ILM to provide guidance on how Fire and Emergency could implement the framework, track progress toward outcomes, and measure success. As part of the evaluation support, Scarlatti has created a version of the ILM with this information incorporated. Future work on the LDF could include developing a dashboard to support measuring progress toward outcomes.

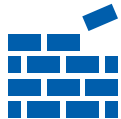|	
Long term outcomes	Fire and Emergency is an efficient and effective organisation that is trusted by its people and the public.
Medium term outcomes	Increased staff retention / Increased internal leadership progression / Increased productivity and quality of service
Practice change (short term outcomes)	All leaders are **modelling good leadership** / All leaders are **regularly working with their people** to engage in leadership pathways / All people are **learning, self-reflecting and demonstrating growth**
Participation What we do	All leaders are **engaging in their own leadership development** / All leaders are **supporting their people** to engage in leadership development
Activities What we deliver	**Implement the leadership training and development plan at all levels of leadership** (Run programmes and workshops, implement all face-to-face, online, coaching and mentoring activities
Motivation change What we prioritise/believe is important	**Set expectations for all leaders** about their role in the LDF. / All leaders **believe good leadership is important**. / Leaders **want to support their people** to develop. / **People are motivated** to learn, self-reflect and develop
Awareness What we need to understand	Why good leadership is important / How leadership is different than management / How leaders influence organisational culture / What good leadership looks like at Fire and Emergency / The role leaders have in supporting the full LDF
Inputs What we invest	A **clear definition of good leadership** and expected behaviours / Results from a **leadership gap analysis** / A **talent management plan** / **Clear leadership pathways** for every level of leadership / **A training and development plan and allocated resourcing**

Overall evaluation summary

Feedback was really positive

People found value in the programme and think it should continue

A few improvements could be made

People gave consistent feedback about key opportunities for improvement for nationwide roll out

A broader leadership roadmap is needed

Visibility of broader leadership work is important for the Lead Teams programme to be successful

fireandemergency.nz