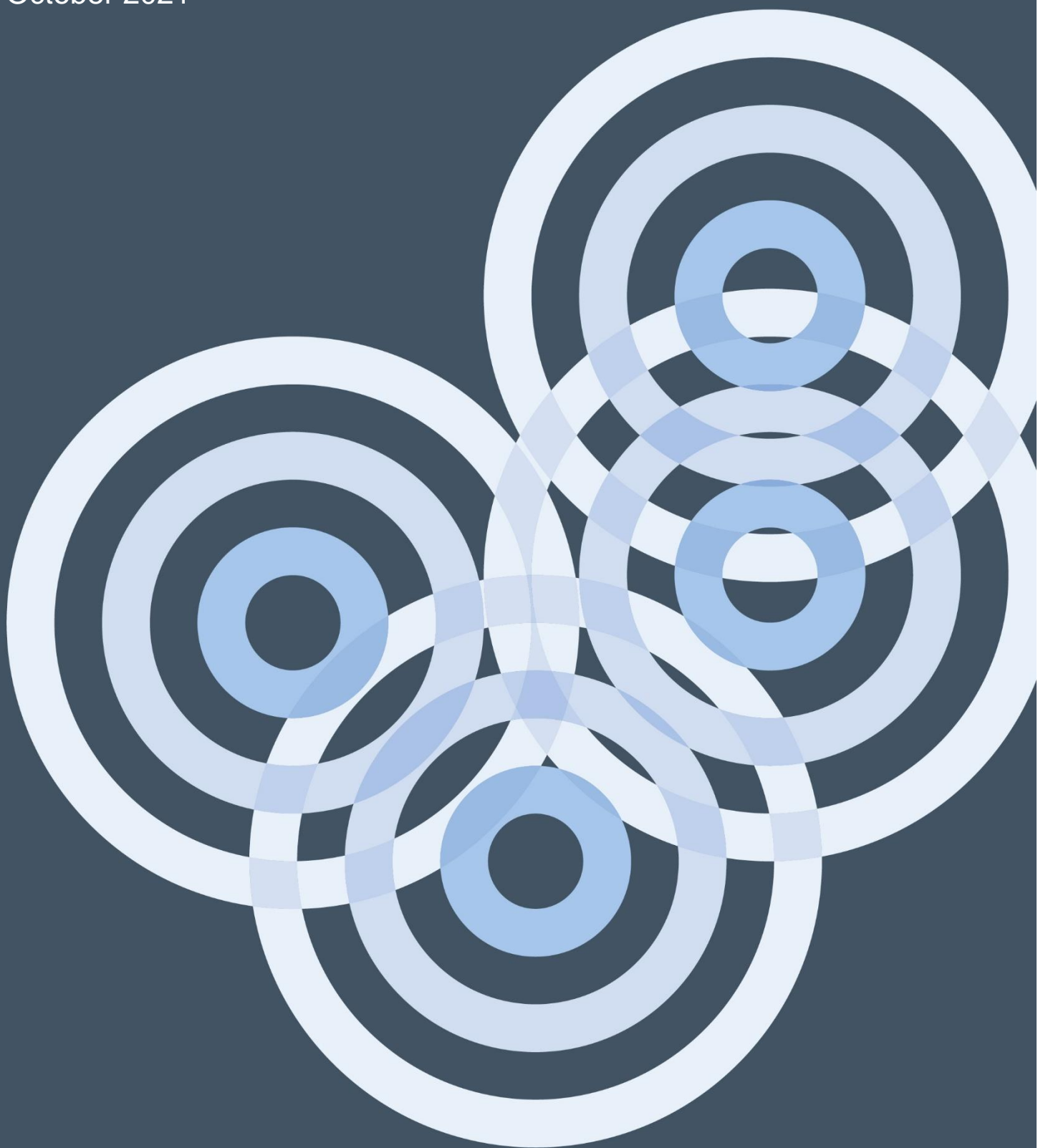




Emerging Leaders Programme Evaluation

Laura Thomas

October 2021



Executive Summary

Introduction

ASDC described the vision of the Emerging Leaders Programme:

“The vision of the ASDC Emerging Leaders Programmes is to encourage innovation and inclusion across the Science Centre sector through a National Leadership Programme which develops practice in emerging leadership, embracing the values of inclusivity, equity and innovation.”

The emphasis has been *“an investment into our emerging leaders, providing skills, approaches and practices that can nurture and support the participants to become the inclusive and dynamic Science Centre leaders for our future”*.¹ “The course was in collaboration with the Inspiring Science Fund, a partnership between UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Wellcome.

This course was designed to develop and support the following skills and attributes:

- Strategic planning.
- Best practice in leadership, including creating an inclusive culture and creating and sustaining change.
- Reflective practice.
- Confidence in their abilities as a leader.

The course was also intended to provide an opportunity for participants to develop relationships with their peers, to feel part of a connected cohort and to extend their professional network.

Course overview

The course ran between July and September 2021, with seven sessions. Six online sessions ran in July and September with the seventh session designed to be an in-person ‘away day’. For the final session, online participation was made available for the majority of activities for participants who were not able to attend.

Online sessions generally lasted for two hours, with a final, optional twenty minutes of informal discussions and Q&A following the programmed activities. Ahead of the sessions the participants were given some book chapters to read (The Leadership Challenge, by Kouzes

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and Posner) and links to articles, short films or short preparation activities. There were some follow-up exercises and this included a regular reminder for the participants to take some time for self-reflection. Throughout the course, ASDC communicated with participants via e-mail and Microsoft Teams, whilst the sessions themselves took place on Zoom. A summary of each of the sessions is provided below. With a brief overview of each session available at the following [link](#).

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Prior to the first session, the Emerging Leaders were paired up and asked to spend some time getting to know each other. They were then asked to introduce each other to the rest of the group. Geno Schell was the keynote speaker for this session. He discussed leadership versus management, spent time breaking down deep-seated stereotypes of leaders, and explored what makes a successful leader and the consequences of having a weak leader.

2. Core Knowledge (15th July 2021).

Chaired by Nick Winterbotham, the second session included contributions from senior leaders (Dr Paul Jennings, Xentuate Ltd and Dr Stephen Breslin, CEO Glasgow Science Centre and Chair of Trustees, ASDC) in the science centre sector on their personal leadership journeys and lessons learned in their careers, particularly in relation to the impact of organisational culture. This included comment on maintaining the balance between undertaking a charitable mission and having a stable financial foundation. The discussion of their leadership journey included a review of the skills developed through a variety of roles.

3. Modelling the Way (22nd July 2021).

Led by Lenna Cumberbatch, this session focussed on how the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion fit into leadership and organisational strategies. The session aimed to develop the participants' understanding of language in relation to diversity and inclusion and how to create an inclusive environment. Guest speaker Sharon Heal, Director of Museums Association shared her experiences with feminist and values-based leadership.

4. A Shared Vision (29th July 2021).

Geno Schnell returned to chair this session which looked at vision statements and how they are used by organisations. Kotter's UCV model was explored, again deconstructing the stereotype of a visionary leader. Sharon Ament was the guest speaker and was interviewed by Geno on her career. Key points raised by Sharon included the importance of having your own identity as a leader and to not only develop your own leadership skills but also the skills of those around you.

Following session 4, the emerging leaders were provided with tools for strategic change to map out their Strategic Initiative and linked with a partner to discuss their challenges in a skilled listening exercise. During the August break in sessions, participants were encouraged to connect with their CEO and their mentor and take the first steps forward with their envisioned Strategic Initiative.

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The content for this session was linked to managing change. Led by Nick Winterbotham, he discussed a range of models and approaches to this. This session included break-out discussions between the participants, allowing them to share their own experiences and impressions of managing change.

7. Away Day (21st September 2021).

The away day was an opportunity for the cohort to spend time together in-person, with lots of opportunities for informal discussions in addition to the timetabled activities and a dedicated 'team-building' slot to support relationship development. The session topics for the day included speakers discussing imposter syndrome and the importance of emotional intelligence for a leader (Tori Handsley, Leadership and Performance Coach) and their own experiences of leading change, including delicate subjects of up-management, burn out and self-care (Donna Speed, CEO, We the Curious). In addition to the guest speakers, some participants shared their own vision of the future of science centres.

Key findings and recommendations

“I am clearer about the leader I want to be in the future and that I do have the confidence to one day lead a centre.”

Overall, the course was a positive experience with a “*good mix of presenters, content and activities*”. The programme has been successful in achieving its goals of developing the following skills and attributes of participants:

- Strategic planning.
- Best practice in leadership, including creating an inclusive culture and creating and sustaining change.
- Reflective practice.
- Confidence in their abilities as a leader.

All participants, regardless of current role or time spent in the sector, have been able to further develop their professional networks. They have built relationships with each other and see themselves collaborating on future projects or getting in touch for advice and guidance. They feel as though they share a similar vision for the future and are keen to work for the benefit not only of their own centres, but the sector in general.

Many participants came into the programme having been encouraged by a colleague or manager. There was often a lack of confidence in their abilities, or a wariness as to whether they were developing the appropriate skills and knowledge for their career aspirations. Through participation, many have had their career aspirations affirmed and for others the experience has broadened their aspirations.

Across the different sources of feedback from participants – post-participation survey, reflection journal entries, focus groups, interviews – there have been many examples of how the programme has resulted in ways in which they have been able to apply learning to their current role or where they can see ongoing impact on them and their organisations. Two thirds of participants feel as though the programme will have an ongoing impact, with the remaining third answering “maybe” when asked in the post-participation survey. Examples of this ongoing impact have been summarised below.

- Some tools have been put into use immediately and popular ones are those which have supported feedback from their own teams on their leadership approach along with those focussing on strategic planning and reflective practice. In some cases, action has been taken to schedule protected time in their diary to carry out planning and reflection. By reinforcing the importance of reflective practice across the sessions (it was referenced by many of the contributors and participants were encouraged to undertake their own practice), not only have participants been able to review the

approach they are taking, they have also been able to use it as an opportunity to review their own leadership style. This has helped to build confidence in their own abilities.

“The course has given me good reason to stop and pause, in a very busy work schedule, to actually look around and take a clear look at where we are heading.”

- Knowledge, particularly in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, has been applied to current projects and planning for future initiatives. For example, how to “*move from equity to inclusion*” and incorporate that into learning programmes. This has included wider impact as the information has been shared with colleagues. In one case, a participant has provided the course textbook to their team and they are reading and discussing their current practice in the context of the course.
- There were multiple ongoing impacts in relation to leadership. For example, for some there was an increased awareness of the influence they have on others has encouraged some to ensure they are leading by example when working with others. Confidence built through the process will also positively impact on the participants’ leadership style and relationships with colleagues.
“I’m changing the way I approach my role and my programme and staff will benefit.”
- Participation has reinforced the importance of developing professional networks and keeping in contact with those around you in order to build relationships. Some participants have been taking concrete steps to reach out.

“The network formed will be (and has been) really useful and supportive.”

The programme from ASDC has positively impacted on participants from a broad range of roles and levels of experience within the sector. This was achieved through a combination of factors, including establishing a safe space for the cohort to feel confident in sharing with others, providing access to a number of experienced leaders from across the sector and specialist expertise relating to leadership and EDI. The mentoring opportunity helped participants to spend time reflecting on the impact of the programme on them and was an important step in consolidating learning. Another key success of the programme was the timing. For this cohort, having experienced significant change in their own organisations, spending time on reflection and on their own personal development in the summer of 2021 was much needed following a period of stress and uncertainty. It provided an opportunity to re-connect with colleagues, to recognise they were not alone in their recent experiences and there was much to share and learn from each other on how they had innovated and adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Minor amendments to the programme format (e.g. include an in-person day at the beginning, maximise the opportunities for group working and for participants to hear from their peers) to support relationship development, the availability of programme information (e.g. share full set of dates at the outset of the programme), the programme description (in order to manage expectations about session content) are recommended but no major changes are necessary.

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The following section outlines the evaluation methods used and describes the data analysis process.

Methodology

The following methods were used in a Mixed Methods approach³. The overall approach was to gain an understanding of the content and format of the sessions and observe how participants interacted with the course leaders and also how relationships developed between the cohort. There is a skew towards qualitative methods and data within the methodology in order to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the programme on the participants.

Item	Description	Purpose
Application form	The application form and post-participation surveys contained questions on skills development, confidence, etc.	To allow for the identification of any changes in skills and confidence levels of participants across the duration of the programme.
Post-participation survey		
Observations	Attendance of both online sessions and in-person away day. All but one of the online sessions was attended.	To better understand the content of the programme and to observe the interactions between course leaders and participants and between the participants.
Reflective diary for participants	A series of questions forming a reflection diary was made available to participants to complete after each session. They could complete this either online or offline and was voluntary. Available to review in the appendix.	To gather detailed feedback on the impact of individual sessions and, where possible, to follow the experience of participants across the training programme.
Focus groups	At the in-person away day, two short focus groups were run with attendees.	To provide an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their experiences as a group and to gain an understanding of the impact on them of participating in the programme.
Interviews	Three semi-structured interviews with participants. The individuals interviewed had differing levels of experience in the sector, ranging from less than 2 years to more than 10.	To provide insight into the impact of the programme on the participants, in particular in terms of longer-term impact.

Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis⁴. This approach allows for connections to be made between different sources of data through the identification of codes and themes.

³ Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education*. 8th Edition. Abingdon: Routledge

⁴ Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2019) Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. 11:4, 589-597

A set of codes and themes were determined prior to analysis, linked to the intended outcomes of the project. As the analysis progressed, these were added to based on the content of the different sources.

GDPR and ethics

When collecting data from participants, appropriate consents were sought, with all work conforming to BERA's code of ethics⁵ and data storage being compliant with GDPR. A data sharing agreement was in place between ASDC and Ondata for this project outlining responsibilities in relation to data storage and collection.

The following section describes the results of the analysis.

⁵ BERA. 2018. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. Available: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>

Results and Discussion

This section looks at the impact of participation in the programme on the participants and reviews the content and format of the programme itself, including the support provided by ASDC.

Motivations for taking part and expectations of the programme

An open call for participants was shared with those in the science centre sector. Following an applications process, eighteen participants were selected. They came from a mixture of roles within middle and senior management across many different types of organisations, with some new to the sector in the previous year or two whilst others had been working within the sector for five or ten years.

In many cases, participants were encouraged to apply by their managers or colleagues. Several had already undertaken some form of leadership and management training. In their applications, participants recognised the benefits of being able to develop their confidence, knowledge, skills and capabilities in relation to leadership. For several, this would directly contribute to achieving their career aspirations of progressing into a role *“beyond middle management”*. Those already in a leadership role were considering how this experience would benefit their own teams, for example *“how I can better support them in their roles”*. Beyond this, participants identified further organisational impact in terms of their relationships with senior staff and they hoped to build their own confidence in order to *“voice my ideas to those at the top of the organisation”*. Imposter syndrome was something frequently referenced within applications and participants were looking for support in challenging their perceptions of themselves.

With regards to the participants' motivations to get involved in the programme, one other key attraction was linked to the opportunity to develop relationships with others in the same sector. For one particular participant, operational pressures reduced the opportunities to get out and meet other people in order to develop their professional network so having a sustained engagement with colleagues from other organisations *“was definitely a reason for applying”*. For some who have recently joined the sector it was a rich opportunity to *“learn more about the sector as a whole”*. Many also described being able to effect wider change if it was done in collaboration with others, for example being able to *“mutually develop new ideas and strategies”*, particularly in relation to equity and inclusion: *“everyone should feel involved, welcomed”* [in science centres]. Participants are motivated to *“break down barriers and build trust and relationships”* with both communities and their own colleagues in order to lead an inclusive organisation.

All participants have experienced challenging circumstances during the previous two years. In this period of uncertainty, centre closures have resulted in lost income and consequently this has meant a reduction in staff. All three participants who were interviewed for the evaluation have seen their teams reduce in size as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as their organisations all underwent some form of restructuring. This has meant the removal of roles or the rewriting of responsibilities. These experiences have had various effects. For some, there has been a focus on operational aspects as they have worked to shift their learning programmes online. Others have had more time to take a more strategic view over what they are doing and look to further improve their offer to visitors when they could reopen. Ultimately, participants have been dealing with almost continual changing circumstances due to the effects of the global pandemic. Several participants identified this as a time to recognise the innovation and creativity exhibited during the period of lockdowns in particular and take the opportunity to collaborate with peers to *“share ideas so that Science Centres are secured for the future”*.

Building confidence, developing skills and knowledge

An almost universally reported impact on participants has been in relation to confidence. There has been a significant positive shift in participants' perceptions of their own abilities and capacities as a leader. One commonly reported aspect was that the programme helped them to identify that they have already *“exhibited the behaviours of a leader”* which has provided a necessary *“confidence boost”*. A review of the reflection diaries and discussion from the interviews has identified that this has been achieved through engaging with the course content, the contributions from the guest speakers and also through hearing from their peers about their own experiences.

In terms of the most impactful aspect of the programme in relation to skills and knowledge development, participants reported a wide range of answers as part of the post-participation survey responses. For some participants their experience has been about consolidating existing knowledge and building their skills in order to feel more confident as a leader. For others there were particular tools from the sessions, including values-based leadership, how to manage upwards, downwards and sideways that they could apply immediately. In the post-participation survey, they were asked to assess improvements to their skills and knowledge in relation to the intended areas of impact. Figure 1 summarises these responses.

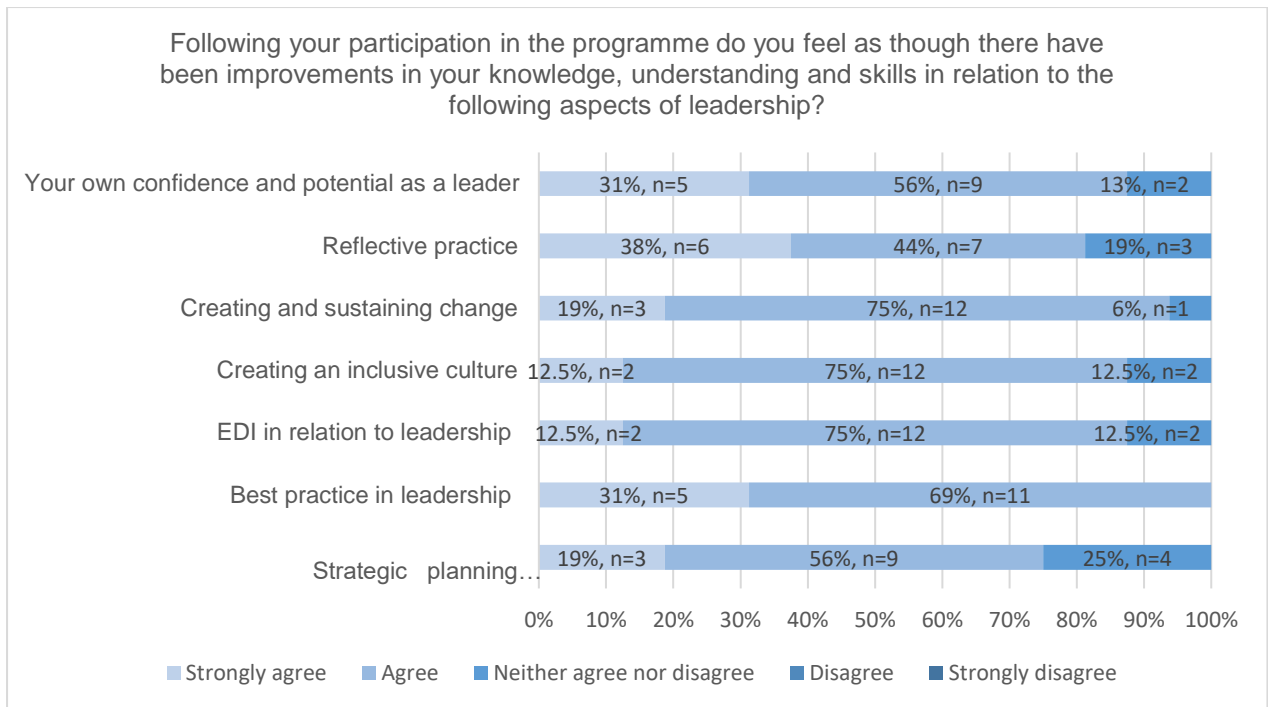


Figure 1. Post-participation survey responses relating to knowledge and skills development

There is a range of experience of the participants and a difference in current roles, (63% were in roles which involved “Head of” or “Manager” in the title, with the other 37% involving “Officer”, “Co-ordinator”, “Advisor”, or “Executive”) and there is a commensurate range in the areas where they think there has been the greatest impact. It is personal to each of the participants. Following completion of the programme, the onus is on the participants to apply the learning to their own roles. Figure 2 illustrates the levels of confidence participants have in relation to applying what they have learned.

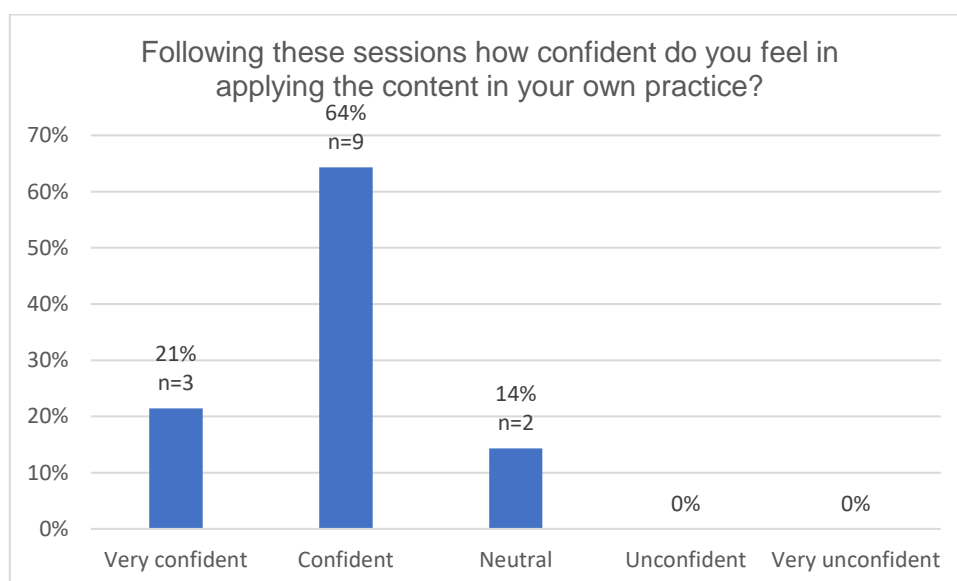


Figure 2. Post-participation survey responses relating to confidence in applying what they have learned

Career intentions and professional development

The breadth of impact continues through into the career intentions of participants. For some, participation *“hasn’t change intentions, but it has supported them”* and for others it has *“broadened my horizons”* such that they are now open to progressing into a CEO role when they had not previously considered it as an option. Others are using it to *“shape my thoughts on how to make changes and have impact in my current role to improve the organisation”*. Whilst the opportunity to reflect on their current role and organisation has meant they have decided to move on from where they are, this will help them achieve their goals and ensure they will be able to *“have the impact I want to have”*.

Equality, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and organisational change

Some of the preparation activities included identifying equality, diversity and inclusion policies within their organisations with follow-up discussion in the sessions critiquing them. As a result, several participants in the focus groups discussed how they went on to challenge their senior leadership team (*“our policies aren’t as good as they could be”*) and reported that the programme content *“opened up a lot of conversations”* with some feeling that this would go on to *“have a longer impact”* within their organisation and without the programme, it would *“have been more difficult to have [those conversations] otherwise without having this to frame it”*.

All centres have experienced some form of organisational change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants have reported being able to see benefits not only *“for myself but my whole organisation”* as they have benefited from gaining insight into the workings of different organisations and how they have managed change. There are other aspects from the sessions which could contribute to a positive organisational culture. For example, one participant intends to take time to reflect and *“re-evaluate our organisation vision, mission and values and think about them in the context of my role and team”*.

Leadership

Through the course content and discussions, the participants’ notions and assumptions of leadership were challenged. This resulted in some finding they had a clearer *“understanding of the leader I want to be”* and for some *“how I don’t want to act as a leader”* as they were challenged to consider leadership styles counter to their own and not just *“from those you admire, because there will be something you can learn from it”*.

Some came into the programme with an awareness of their existing leadership qualities whilst for others, this emerged during the programme. The experience has helped those early in their career or in middle management roles realise that they can be a leader in their current role and that they have been exhibiting leadership qualities throughout their career to date,

resulting in promotion and progression within their organisation. Participants took the opportunity to reflect on their own roles and realised that their ideas of leadership could differ from those of their team and that they may *“not be fulfilling their notions of leadership”*.

Given the operating environment and external circumstances affecting the sector, the programme has come at a useful point in time: *“I found that taking the opportunity to reflect on my aspirations and career goals refreshing and this came at the perfect time.”*

In the focus groups we discussed the qualities of a good leader. The participants described this as someone who is passionate about what they do and who can *“take people on a journey”* with them, whilst being *“honest, open, flexible, approachable”*. In order to be a successful leader, the participants described the central role of reflective practice and a *“willingness to keep learning”* and *“be open to change”*.

Developing a professional network and being part of a connected cohort

Many participants came into this programme with a goal of extending and deepening their professional networks. This has certainly been delivered on for the participants: *“The ELP cohort is a really interesting mix of people from different organisations, role types, regions and so has put me in contact with people I've not met before and through the programme we have formed a community of practice.”*

Throughout the programme there were opportunities to gain advice and support from each other and to build relationships, often through break-out room discussions and also via longer one-to-one discussions outside of the timetabled sessions. One participant shares their experience of getting some advice in one of these sessions: *“It's great to hear how your peers view your situation and can pick apart the positives aspects to things you're concerned about. And it's equally fulfilling to do the same for others. It's great to have the time for this, as it's not always easy to find the time in the workday, or to have your peers close at hand.”*

Following observations of the break-out rooms across multiple sessions, it was clear the participants felt safe and able to share personal experiences with each other, often gaining reassurance talking to others about how they feel. This was clear to the participants as well: *“everybody is just so open to discussing things”* and *“I feel it's a very safe environment”*. The peer discussions were also useful in helping to apply the lessons from the sessions to their own experiences and roles.

Whilst there were multiple opportunities to discuss online in the sessions, the in-person ‘away day’ seems to have solidified this for some people as a lot of this took place during informal conversations over coffee or lunch: *“I discovered that we were often on the same page or dealing with similar situations in our roles at work which allowed for sharing of ideas and*

reassurance from the feelings of being the only one.” However, that’s not to say that those who weren’t able to attend in-person did not feel part of a cohort. For example, one of the online participants of the ‘away day’ felt confident to use the *“network as a sounding board/consultation to shape delivery and strategy”*.

The theme of addressing common challenges came up regularly, as did the benefit of having a shared or similar vision for the future and that by working together and being aware of each others’ work there would be a *“greater impact for the sector”*. The programme has been timely, as it has provided an opportunity for the participants to reconnect with colleagues after a period of 18 months in *“survival mode”*, so *“to be out there and actually creating those new networks and with future leaders and people with the passion for the industry, just really vital”*. It has also been a time where centres are open to new approaches, *“We’re all very open now to being more creative and new ways because we’ve had to adapt”* and through this network participants won’t have to *“re-invent the wheel”* instead they have support and the opportunity for collaboration. Particularly for those new to the sector in the last two years, this has been the first time they have been able to develop relationships with those in the wider science centre sector.

The programme has provided the opportunity for the participants to connect, but they are keen to maintain the contact on their own terms through informal channels such as WhatsApp or e-mail. However, there was interest in being brought back together by ASDC perhaps around the work being done on Strategic Initiatives or finding out how the different participants have gone on to apply the learning from the course.

Programme organisation and content

As outlined in the introduction, the sessions took place online via Zoom with contributions from a range of speakers and discussion between participants taking place in break-out rooms. Some sessions incorporated more discussion than others and those that provided opportunities for break-out rooms were found to be “*overall better*” than those where it was more of a lecture-style of delivery. The break-out rooms, along with the end of session Q&As, were particularly helpful in applying the leadership theory or model to the participants’ own role or situation, without this, participants felt less able to identify aspects they “*could incorporate immediately*”. Some participants would have preferred less time on “*homework*” and more activities and discussion within the sessions. Others felt the break-out sessions were too short and didn’t allow a “*flow to the discussions*”. With regards to the session content and format, the word “*inspirational*” was regularly used to describe the talks and contributions from guest speakers. In terms of their assessment of the sessions overall, the responses to the post-participation survey are in figure 3 below.

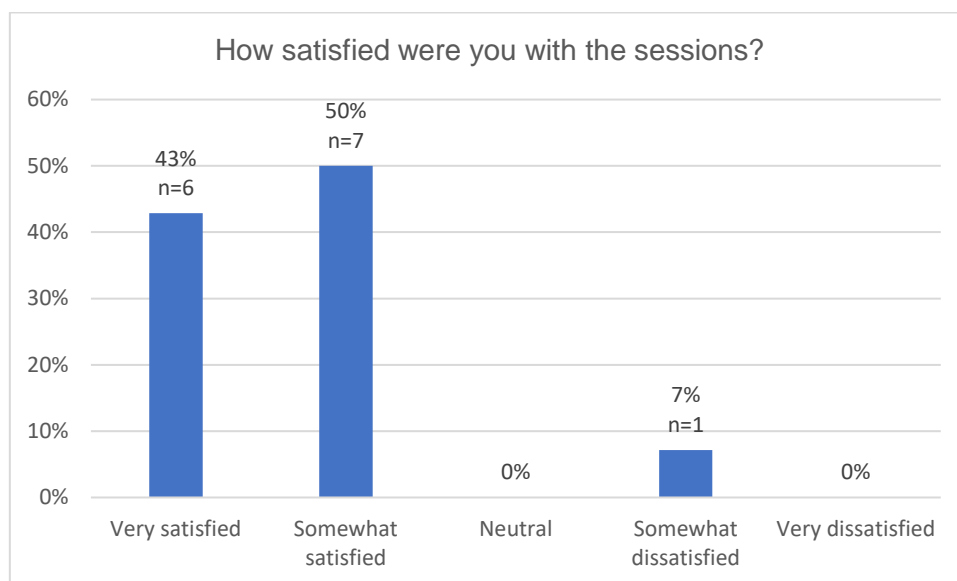


Figure 3. Post-participation survey responses relating to their impressions of the sessions overall

The participant who was “somewhat dissatisfied” with the sessions raised an issue relating to the overall content of the programme. Whereas they had come into this expecting that the emphasis would be more on the “*practicalities of science centres and the sector, into which we could inlay leadership skills and plans*” instead finding the content of the programme focussed on general leadership theory, with examples from the science centre sector. The feeling of the course being around leadership theory in general was shared by other participants.

Significant amounts of the session content related to EDI with participants “*pushed to think about inclusive practice in its entirety*”. However, whilst there were clear impacts on participants in terms of their skills and knowledge and allowing them to challenge their own assumptions and their organisation’s positions, some would have liked to have seen a more consistent thread of EDI in every session. Further feedback on the session content linked to there being some repetition between speakers. For example, participants observed the same high-level principles and points being raised by multiple guest speakers. In one of the sessions, the guest speaker was interviewed by the session chair and this was seen as a way of avoiding repetition of the same leadership points from previous sessions.

In terms of attendance of sessions, participants were expected to be there in-person for all online sessions and the discussions weren’t recorded. Having the sessions online allowed for more people to participate. For example, if the course had been a series of days in person some of the participants would not have been able to get time away from their home and workplace.

Although not originally proposed due to COVID-19-related restrictions, the in-person ‘away day’ was seen to be a very positive conclusion to the programme. Participants would have liked an in-person session at the beginning to aid in the process of getting to know each other. However, the rural location of the event was difficult to reach for some and efforts were made to attend despite a reluctance as participants felt they would gain a lot in terms of relationship development by attending.

The full set of dates for the sessions was not available at the start of the programme and this caused some clashes and issues with participants who perhaps didn’t work on certain days or had other responsibilities. In normal times the summer period is a busy time for science centres and there were additional complications in 2021 as centres were reopening and had to ensure compliance with COVID-19-related regulations. The pause in sessions across August was appreciated and whilst the original intention had perhaps been for this time to be an opportunity to progress their Strategic Initiatives, in general participants were pulled back into operational matters.

In the break between the sessions in August, participants had an opportunity to have a one-to-one mentoring appointment (fifteen of the eighteen participants took part). Not all were able to advantage of this, particularly due to time available and high workload. In terms of the impact of the appointments, this was around career intentions and aspirations or their Strategic Initiative. It was a very positive experience for those who had appointments (all participants who took part in mentoring reported it as “extremely” or “somewhat useful” in the post-participation survey) as they were able to take time to focus on themselves and get some

advice and guidance and some specific tools to put into practice: *“It allowed me to focus on applying what had been learnt and discussed to my specific situation and challenges.”*

One of the aspects explored in the post-participation survey was around barriers to participation. The main aspects were linked to limited time available and high workload. This had consequences in that perhaps people were not able to complete all of the prescribed reading or preparation and follow-up activities (including reflective practice). Some had not previously had much experience of using MS Teams and could have used some guidance on this in order to use it effectively and some organisations limited access to the platform. In terms of planning ahead, having a full set of dates for the sessions would have helped participants organise their availability. The updates on the course were sent via a mixture of e-mail and MS Teams and participants found this confusing at times, with some information and session links only being available immediately beforehand. There was limited interaction on the MS Teams channel. Whilst the vast majority of the participants were “very” or “somewhat satisfied” when asked *“How satisfied were you with the level of communication and support provided by ASDC?”* one person was “somewhat dissatisfied” and this was linked to their negative experience with MS Teams and would have preferred e-mail communication.

The time needed for the activities outside the sessions was greater than expected, with one participant estimating an additional 2 hours was necessary. Not all course preparation materials were available at the start of the programme, with them being added week by week. This meant that some participants weren’t able to read ahead.

The majority of participants (over 80% according to the post-participation survey) expect to complete their Strategic Initiative. However, many are unclear as to how long it will take and are being realistic about wanting to achieve something of use to them and their organisations. The participants did feel as though the sessions provided them with *“some concrete resources that I can go away and investigate”*. The discussions in the sessions also helped them to clarify what they were trying to achieve and others now *“feel more confident”* approaching others for support in delivering the initiative. This aspect in particular will provide participants with a focus for applying their learning and an opportunity to ensure ongoing impact on their own roles and across their organisations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

“I am clearer about the leader I want to be in the future and that I do have the confidence to one day lead a centre.”

All participants, regardless of current role or time spent in the sector, have been able to further develop their professional networks. They have built relationships with each other and see themselves collaborating on future projects or getting in touch for advice and guidance. They feel as though they share a similar vision for the future and are keen to work for the benefit not only of their own centres, but the sector in general.

Many participants came into the programme having been encouraged by a colleague or manager. There was often a lack of confidence in their abilities, or a wariness as to whether they were developing the appropriate skills and knowledge for their career aspirations. Through participation, many have had their career aspirations affirmed and for others the experience has broadened their aspirations.

Across the different sources of feedback from participants – post-participation survey, reflection journal entries, focus groups, interviews – there have been many examples of how the programme has resulted in ways in which they have been able to apply learning to their current role or where they can see ongoing impact on them and their organisations. Two thirds of participants feel as though the programme will have an ongoing impact, with the remaining third answering “maybe” when asked in the post-participation survey. Examples of this ongoing impact have been summarised below.

- Some tools have been put into use immediately and popular ones are those which have supported feedback from their own teams on their leadership approach along with those focussing on strategic planning and reflective practice. In some cases, action has been taken to schedule protected time in their diary to carry out planning and reflection. By reinforcing the importance of reflective practice across the sessions (it was referenced by many of the contributors and participants were encouraged to undertake their own practice), not only have participants been able to review the approach they are taking, they have also been able to use it as an opportunity to review their own leadership style. This has helped to build confidence in their own abilities. *“The course has given me good reason to stop and pause, in a very busy work schedule, to actually look around and take a clear look at where we are heading.”*
- Knowledge, particularly in relation to EDI, has been applied to current projects and planning for future initiatives. For example, how to *“move from equity to inclusion”* and incorporate that into learning programmes. This has included wider impact as the information has been shared with colleagues. In one case, a participant has provided the course textbook to their team and they are reading and discussing their current practice in the context of the course.
- There were multiple ongoing impacts in relation to leadership. For example, for some there was an increased awareness of the influence they have on others has

encouraged some to ensure they are leading by example when working with others. Confidence built through the process will also positively impact on the participants' leadership style and relationships with colleagues.

"I'm changing the way I approach my role and my programme and staff will benefit."

- Participation has reinforced the importance of developing professional networks and keeping in contact with those around you in order to build relationships. Some participants have been taking concrete steps to reach out.

"The network formed will be (and has been) really useful and supportive."

Overall, the course was a positive experience with a *"good mix of presenters, content and activities"*. The programme has been successful in achieving its goals of developing the following skills and attributes of participants:

- Strategic planning.
- Best practice in leadership, including creating an inclusive culture and creating and sustaining change.
- Reflective practice.
- Confidence in their abilities as a leader.

The programme from ASDC positively impacted on participants from a broad range of roles and levels of experience within the sector. This was achieved through a combination of factors, including establishing a safe space for the cohort to feel confident in sharing with others, providing access to a number of experienced leaders from across the sector and specialist expertise relating to leadership and EDI. The mentoring opportunity helped participants to spend time reflecting on the impact of the programme on them and was an important step in consolidating learning. Another key success of the programme was the timing. For this cohort, having experienced significant change in their own organisations, spending time on reflection and on their own personal development in the summer of 2021 was much needed following a period of stress and uncertainty. It provided an opportunity to re-connect with colleagues, to recognise they were not alone in their recent experiences and there was much to share and learn from each other on how they had innovated and adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations in order to enhance the existing programme. Major changes are not necessary but there is the opportunity to make alterations and amendments based on the experiences of the first cohort.

1. Continue to offer a mixture of in-person and online sessions. Holding an in-person event at the beginning and the end of the programme would be an effective way of establishing and building relationships.

2. Share a full set of dates and times for the sessions at the start of the programme. Make all supporting content available as early as possible for sessions to allow participants to read ahead.
3. Review the description of the programme in terms of managing expectations in relation to how science centre-specific the content is.
4. Revisit the recommended reading list and emphasise the existence of the additional content and reading. This would be particularly helpful for those who have previously taken part in leadership and management training.
5. Review the structure and content of the sessions and maximise the opportunities for group-working/relationship development. This could be through increasing the number of break-out rooms or perhaps offering the chance for the participants to undertake a group project. These group projects could be linked to sector-wide challenges.
6. Extend the opportunities for participants themselves to contribute to the content of sessions. For example, the shared vision session at the 'away day' was very popular. Participants enjoyed hearing from their peers and were keen to explore this aspect further.

Appendix: Post-session reflection questions

1. Name.
2. Title of session.
3. What happened during the session?
4. When you think about this session, what key aspect stands out to you? Why?
5. Has this session made you reconsider any views or actions? If so, what?
6. Has the session helped to further develop your confidence, knowledge and skills? If so, how?
7. What will you do as a result? Is there an action you can personally take now or in the future? Is there something you can apply more widely within your organisation?
8. Has the content of today's session impacted on your intended strategic initiative? If so, how?
9. Any other comments to share about the session?

The Emerging Leaders Programme evaluation was undertaken by Laura Thomas of Ondata Research.

Laura has extensive experience in evaluating a range of projects and activities. In addition to evaluation she is experienced with project and resource development, delivery and training for a variety of organisations such as schools, museums, education charities, universities and professional bodies. She is currently undertaking doctoral studies relating to professional development of teachers after having recently completed an MRes in Educational Research with the University of Stirling.



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