



# Evaluation of the SLA program – Executive Summary

4 November 2022

**Nous Group** acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, who maintain their culture, country and spiritual connection to the land, sea and community.

This artwork was developed by Marcus Lee Design to reflect Nous Group's Reconciliation Action Plan and our aspirations for respectful and productive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first cohort for the Social Impact Leadership Australia (SILA) program has been a success. SILA delivered overwhelmingly positive outcomes for the CEO participants. SILA is also on track to deliver outcomes at the organisation and for-purpose ecosystem levels.

The SILA program is designed as a ground-breaking program that aims to disrupt common ideas of leadership. It ambitiously aims to catalyse change and achieve impact across three intersecting pillars:

- supporting **individual leaders** by improving their understanding of self while building self-leadership and leadership cultures
- supporting **for-purpose organisations** by aligning self-leadership with organisational strategy to advance organisational capability
- creating a stronger **for-purpose ecosystem** by building a network of system-thinking leaders that can lead for social impact and navigate the complex social ecosystem.

## SILA ACHIEVED POSITIVE OUTCOMES ACROSS MULTIPLE LEVELS FOR CEOS

CEOs were very positive in their overall assessment of the program with a strong net promoter score of 86 out of 100 – 16 out of 19 CEOs that responded to the post-program survey rated the program 10 out of 10. For context, an NPS score above 80 is seen as a world class result.<sup>1</sup>

Central to the very high satisfaction ratings from CEOs were the individual outcomes the program achieved for the participants. CEOs reported increased knowledge and understanding of leadership and social impact theories and tools, improved understanding of self and self-confidence to apply new skills and mindsets in their role.

Critically, over 80 percent of CEO survey respondents agreed to some degree that they can now better manage their wellbeing as a leader.

<sup>1</sup>Qualtrics, *What is a good Net Promoter Score?*, accessed 4 November 2022, available at: <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/customer/good-net-promoter-score/>

## ORGANISATIONS EXPERIENCED MOSTLY POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Almost every stakeholder - including CEOs, their SUL and board delegates - interviewed felt their organisation's investment of time and energy into the program was justified. This endorsement was found even though some organisations experienced significant disruption due to the program, namely during and after the sabbatical period.

Although too early for many to identify tangible changes in performance, all the CEO survey respondents agreed to some degree that their organisation has or is likely to enhance its capability and culture and to experience tangible improvements across key business measures due to their participation in SILA. Several stakeholders shared organisational changes that they have already witnessed. This includes new organisational behaviours and mindsets, new approaches to leadership development and, in a few cases, tangible improvements in capability and performance.

## THERE ARE EARLY SIGNS OF ECOSYSTEM IMPACT

SILA is on track to have broader impact at the ecosystem level. This evaluation has documented examples of individual CEOs pivoting towards systems leadership and emerging collaborations between participants. The improvements in organisational capability also have the potential to have ripple effects on sector leadership capability.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY WILL STRENGTHEN SILA FOR FUTURE COHORTS

Positive outcomes were achieved in the face of significant challenges due to COVID-19 and the novel nature of the program. This meant that the SILA program team were both trailblazing new ground whilst rapidly adjusting program design and delivery.

Although positive about the benefits of the program, all stakeholders provided useful feedback on different aspects that can improve. This means there is an opportunity to build on the success of cohort one and learn from its shortcomings to improve the program for future cohorts.

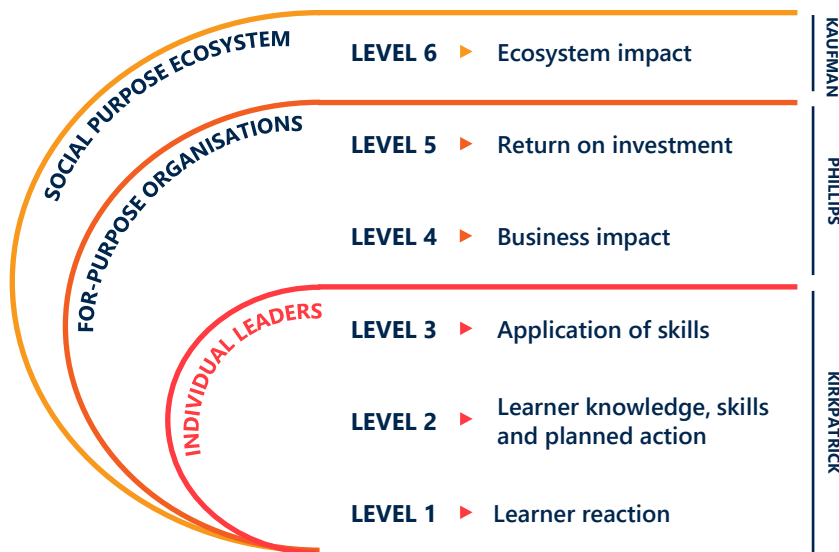
# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FUNDINGS

## BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) has engaged Nous Group (Nous) to complete a long-term evaluation of the SILA program. This report focuses on the experience of the first 23 participants that completed the SILA program from July 2021 through to June 2022.

Nous has used a modified model for leadership evaluation based off the Kirkpatrick, Phillips and Kaufman models<sup>1</sup>. This modified model allows the evaluation to assess outcomes across the individual, organisation and ecosystem levels as per the objectives of the SILA program (see *Figure 1*). The rest of the executive summary provides an assessment of the extent to which SILA has achieved its stated objectives across the six levels. It then provides a summary of the key recommendations to improve the program.

Figure 1 | Modified model of leadership evaluation for the SILA program

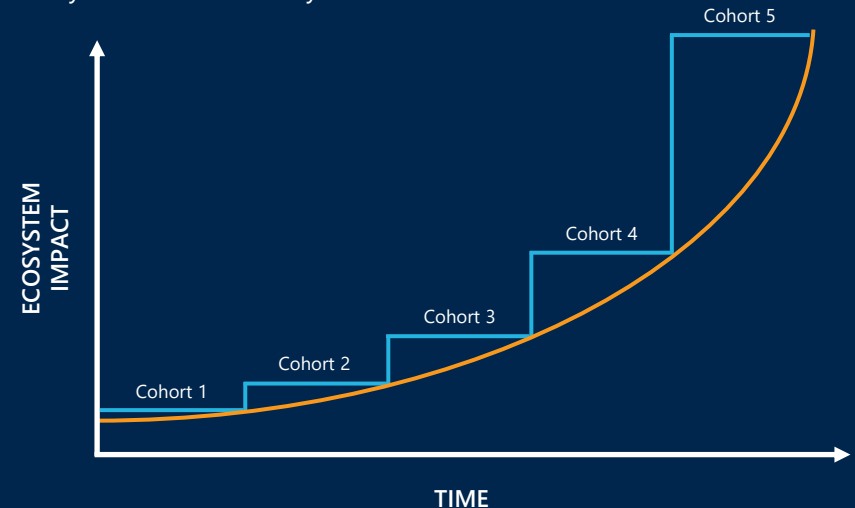


## THE COHORT ONE EVALUATION REPORT IS THE FIRST OF FIVE.

The five cohort reports will be followed by an overall summative evaluation report to identify the program's impact and outcomes on individuals, organisations and the ecosystem.

The evaluation of the program will focus mostly on formative findings early on to inform future direction. Each cohort specific evaluation will also include summative aspects to assess the impact of the program on individual participants and their organisation. It is likely that individual and organisation outcomes will fully manifest one to two years post program completion. For this reason the evaluation will follow up with program participants one year and two years post program completion.

The long-term nature of the evaluation will allow it to explore the cumulative impact of SILA on the for-purpose ecosystem. It will be difficult to observe the program's tangible influence on the ecosystem in the early cohort evaluations. Later cohort evaluations and the final summative report will highlight these cumulative impacts. The graph presents expects ecosystem outcomes may accumulate over time.





<sup>1</sup>D.L. Kirkpatrick & J.D. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs*, 1994; R Kaufman & JM Keller, *Levels of Evaluation: Beyond Kirkpatrick*, 1994; J Phillips, *How much is the training worth?*, Training and Development, 1996.

# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

The following seven pages provide a summary of the evaluation findings against each level of the Kirkpatrick, Phillips and Kaufman modified model. The findings are organised against the key evaluation questions for each level. It starts with the program's outcomes and impact on CEO participants and then moves to the outcomes and impact on organisations and the ecosystem. The executive summary then outlines the program experience for the CEOs and their organisation more broadly. This section ends with a summary of the key recommendations. For each key evaluation question Nous has provided an overall assessment drawing on all the evaluation data. For longer-term outcomes, such as the ecosystem and organisational outcomes, Nous has indicated the extent to which the SILA program is on track to achieve those outcomes. For each assessment Nous has provided a rationale, which is detailed further in the body of the report.

## 1. Evaluation assessment of CEO outcomes

<b>LEVEL 2 ▶</b> Learner knowledge, skills and planned action	Did the CEO participants learn new knowledge and skills?	
Evaluator assessment		Achieved Level 2 outcomes for CEOs.
Rationale <i>See page 20 of final report</i>	<p>CEO participants increased their knowledge and understanding of leadership and social impact theories and tools. Three key themes supported this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Almost all CEO participants shared at least two or three impactful theories or tools that they learned through the program.</li> <li>2. Each retreat improved participant understanding of the core concepts covered for over 90 percent of survey respondents.</li> <li>3. The online learning materials provoked learning.</li> </ol>	
<b>LEVEL 2 ▶</b> Learner knowledge, skills and planned action	Were the CEO participants ready and willing to apply the new skills?	
Evaluator assessment		Achieved Level 2 outcomes for CEOs.
Rationale <i>See page 21 of final report</i>	<p>CEO participants improved their understanding of self and increased their self-confidence to apply new skills and mindsets in their role. Four themes supported this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For some, the exploration of self was transformational.</li> <li>2. Stronger personal relationships outside of work was an unexpected benefit for three CEOs.</li> <li>3. SILA helped over half CEO participants overcome 'imposter syndrome'.</li> <li>4. All CEO participants were more confident that they can make a difference.</li> </ol>	

Average rating of participants who rated that their understanding of key concepts improved by some or a significant extent at:<sup>1</sup>

Retreat 1 (n=16) – **91%**  
 Retreat 2 (n=16) – **94%**  
 Retreat 3 (n=10) – **95%**

**89%** of CEO survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that **they have clear ideas about how they can use the new skills and knowledge.**<sup>2</sup>


<sup>1</sup> Post-retreat surveys

<sup>2</sup> Post-program participant survey (n=19), Nous analysis

# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

<b>LEVEL 3</b> ▶ Application of skills	Have the CEO participants successfully applied their new skills in their role?	
Evaluator assessment		Mostly achieved Level 3 outcomes for CEOs
Rationale	<p>CEO participants have implemented new leadership behaviours due to their experience on SILA. Three areas of behaviour change were most common:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Almost all participants are thinking more strategically with a systems lens.</li> <li>2. Some participants are more comfortable delegating and distributing decision-making.</li> <li>3. Some participants can better manage their own and others' wellbeing.</li> </ol>	
<i>See page 22 of final report</i>		

## 2. Evaluation assessment of organisation outcomes

<b>LEVEL 4</b> ▶ Business impact	Did SILA have positive impacts on Step-Up Leaders?	
Evaluator assessment		On track to achieve level 4 outcomes.
Rationale	<p>Most step-up leaders improved their understanding of self, their CEOs and their organisation while learning new leadership skills. Three key themes supported this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Over half of SULs gained a deeper understanding of whether the role of CEO was right for them.</li> <li>2. Some SULs gained a greater appreciation for their CEO and their role.</li> <li>3. The CEO role provided many SULs a broader understanding of their organisation.</li> </ol> <p>Most step-up leaders have demonstrated greater confidence and implemented new behaviours post their time as CEO. Five themes supported this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stepping up resulted in a tangible increase in confidence for half of SULs.</li> <li>2. Over half of the SULs have implemented new behaviours thanks to their increased understanding and confidence.</li> <li>3. Over half of the SULs have taken on additional or different roles and responsibilities to reflect their increased confidence and new capabilities.</li> <li>4. The SILA experience helped some SULs and CEOs to form stronger relationships.</li> <li>5. SILA had a limited impact on six SULs. This was due to external personal factors, burnout during the step-up period and prior experience in the CEO role.</li> </ol>	
<i>See page 23-24 of final report</i>		

**84%** of CEO survey respondents agree to some degree that **they can now better manage their wellbeing as a leader.**<sup>1</sup>

**94%** of SUL interviewees identified that they **learned new knowledge or skills** due to SILA.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Post-program participant survey (n=19), Nous analysis

<sup>2</sup> Post-program interviews with 18 SULs, Nous analysis



# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FUNDINGS

<b>LEVEL 4</b> ▶ Business impact	Did SILA have positive impacts on organisational culture and/or performance?	
Evaluator assessment		On track to achieve level 4 outcomes.
<b>Rationale</b>  <i>See page 25-26 of final report</i>	<p>SILA contributed to new organisational behaviours and mindsets in some organisations. The evaluation identified four examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Surviving and in some cases thriving without the CEO invigorated organisational confidence as reflected by almost half of the SULs.</li> <li>2. Providing step-up opportunities across multiple layers inspired new mindsets and behaviours within half the organisations.</li> <li>3. Learning from and addressing cultural issues raised during the organisational diagnostic process has resulted in three organisations realigning behaviours and mindsets to improve culture.</li> <li>4. Experiencing adverse outcomes during the step-up-period supported two organisations to develop a sharper understanding of their organisation's values.</li> </ol> <p>Some organisations expect or have already experienced improved organisational performance due in part to SILA. Seven CEOs have already experienced improvements, while eight CEOs stated that it was too early to tell although they remained positive about likely impacts. There were four key areas in which organisations expect or already have experienced positive business impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Better leadership and management capability.</li> <li>2. Stronger networks for fundraising and knowledge transfer.</li> <li>3. Organisational restructures implemented to improve performance.</li> <li>4. Higher ambition to pursue more influential projects and initiatives.</li> </ol>	
<b>LEVEL 4</b> ▶ Business impact	Did SILA have positive impacts on organisational approaches to leadership development and succession planning?	
Evaluator assessment		On track to achieve level 4 outcomes.
<b>Rationale</b>  <i>See page 27 of final report</i>	<p>SILA has influenced new mindsets and behaviours for leadership development and succession planning across some organisations. Stakeholders identified four shifts due to SILA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shifting from a focus on technical skills to soft skills development.</li> <li>2. Extending leadership development opportunities to middle management.</li> <li>3. Incorporating a broader range of approaches to support leadership development.</li> <li>4. The program has clarified some boards' views on their succession planning.</li> </ol>	


**100%** of CEO survey respondents agree to some degree **that their organisation has or is likely to enhance its capability and culture and to experience tangible improvements across key business measures** due to their participation in SILA.<sup>1</sup>

**100%** of CEO survey respondents agree to some degree that **they intend to continue to invest in their own and their senior leadership teams' leadership development.**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Post-program participant survey (n=19), Nous analysis




# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FUNDINGS

<b>LEVEL 5</b> ▶ ROI	Was the organisational investment in SILA justified?	
Evaluator assessment		Achieved Level 5 outcomes for organisations.
Rationale <i>See page 28 of final report</i>	<p>SILA has already delivered a positive return on investment for participating organisations. Two themes support this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participant CEOs, SULs and board delegates expressed a positive qualitative return on investment and confirmed that their investment in the program was justified.</li> <li>2. Two board delegates mentioned that external circumstances had impacted the ability of their organisation to get the most from the program but they still expect positive return in the future.</li> </ol>	

**50** out of **52** interviewees stated that **the investment they made into the program was justified.**<sup>1</sup>

## 3. Evaluation assessment of ecosystem outcomes

<b>LEVEL 6</b> ▶ Ecosystem impact	Did SILA have a positive impact on the social purpose ecosystem?	
Evaluator assessment		On track to achieve Level 6 outcomes.
Rationale <i>See page 29-30 of final report</i>	<p>There are early signs of broader outcomes for the for-purpose ecosystem, including individual CEOs pivoting towards systems leadership, emerging collaborations between participants and potential ripple effects on sector leadership capability. Four themes support these findings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Half the CEOs shared an explicit intention to drive purposeful collaboration.</li> <li>2. Over half the organisations are taking steps to be more systems-oriented.</li> <li>3. Some participants have began working with SILA peers to increase the impact of their organisation.</li> <li>4. Some stakeholders indicated that the capability uplift may positively impact the overall performance of the sector in the long-term.</li> </ol>	



**95%** of CEO survey respondents agree or strongly agree that **they can make a difference** in their organisations and **across the sector by using what they have learned.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Post-program interviews with 21 CEOs, 18 SULs and 13 board delegates, Nous analysis

<sup>2</sup> Post-program participant survey (n=19), Nous analysis

# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

## 4. Evaluation assessment of program design and delivery for CEOs

<b>LEVEL 1</b> ▶ Learner reaction	Was the overall learner experience for the CEO positive?		Was the program relevant to the CEO's role?	
Evaluator assessment		Achieved Level 1 outcomes for CEOs.		Achieved Level 1 outcomes for CEOs.
<b>Rationale</b>  <i>See page 32-36 of final report</i>	<p>Several aspects of program design and delivery have enabled SILA to deliver positive outcomes for CEOs. Four themes supported this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effective program design and delivery supported a positive CEO learner experience. Almost 95 percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the overall learning experience.</li> <li>2. The program was relevant to the CEOs role and provided the right amount of challenge to all but one CEO. The setting, format and content resonated with participants and the responsibilities of their roles.</li> <li>3. The unique combination of elements amplified outcomes at the individual, organisation and ecosystem levels. The multifaceted approach supported the participants to scaffold their learning and translate it into action and helped participants to build strong interpersonal relationships.</li> <li>4. The SILA program team successfully adapted the program to meet emerging needs. Through changing the timeline and sequence of the retreats to enable an in-person experience and adding leadership circles to foster interpersonal engagement during the lockdown.</li> </ol> <p><b>Stakeholders identified several areas for improvement, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication from the program team at the start was confusing and overwhelming for some. The lack of clear timelines and expectations at the start created confusion. CEOs were asked to do too much within short timeframes at the outset.</li> <li>• The integration and sequencing of elements could improve. Some elements felt disjointed from the rest of the program, specifically the executive coaching and the organisational diagnostic and facilitated workshop.</li> <li>• SILA could deliver greater impact through targeted alumni engagement with participants. Stakeholders highlighted three key benefits from extended engagement: keeping CEOs accountable following the program; strengthening the SILA network of peers (including for SULs); facilitating connections and transfer learnings between cohorts.</li> </ul>			

**100%** of CEO survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that **the program was relevant and useful to their role.**<sup>1</sup>

**98%** of CEO survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that **the program was engaging, that the program's delivery method was modern and professional and that they were satisfied with the overall learning experience.**<sup>1</sup>

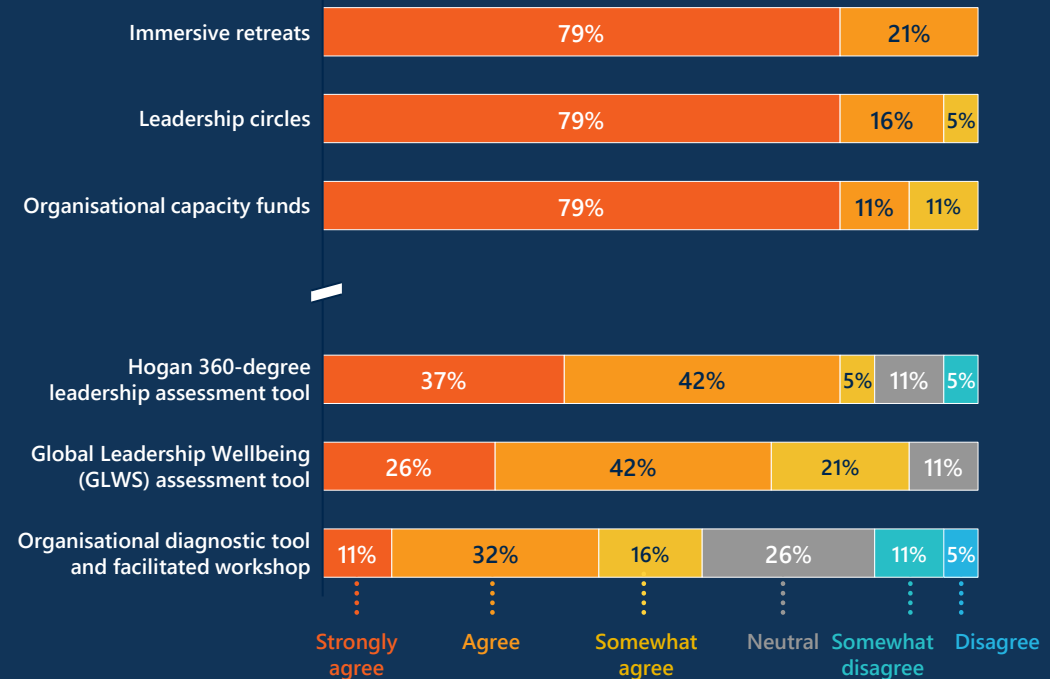
<sup>1</sup> Post-program participant survey (n=19), Nous analysis

# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

<b>LEVEL 1 ▶</b> Learner reaction	Was the learner experience of each element positive for the CEO?
Evaluator assessment	 <p>Mostly achieved level 1 outcomes across elements for CEOs.</p>
Rationale	<p>Each element played a unique role within the program with opportunities to improve the design and delivery for some elements.</p> <p>As shown to the right, the three most valued elements are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The immersive retreats – provided an opportunity to engage with content and develop relationships.</li> <li>2. Leadership circles – provided a safe space to be vulnerable and share ideas.</li> <li>3. Organisational capacity funds – supported a range of needs and encouraged participation.</li> </ol> <p>The three elements with the most room for improvement are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organisational diagnostic and facilitated workshop – lacked integration with the rest of the program.</li> <li>2. GLWS – required a reassessment to track improvements.</li> <li>3. Hogan 360 assessment – lacked sufficient guidance and alignment with the sector.</li> </ol> <p>The coaching element also received lower scores than anticipated. This was due to an inconsistent experience for CEOs and SULs. Further detail on this is provided on <a href="#">page 42</a>.</p>

See [page 38-43](#) of final report


The top three and bottom three rated elements based on the survey question - *I found the following valuable (n=19)<sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> Post-program participant survey (n=19), Nous analysis

# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

## 5. Evaluation assessment of program design and delivery for SULs and organisations

<b>LEVEL 1 ▶ Learner reaction</b>	Was the learner experience for the SUL and broader organisation positive?
Evaluator assessment	 Mostly achieved Level 1 outcomes for SULs and Boards
<b>Rationale</b>  See <a href="#">page 33-34, 37</a> of final report	<p>Several aspects of program design and delivery have enabled SILA to deliver positive outcomes for SULs and organisations.</p> <p>Two themes support this finding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The unique combination of elements amplified outcomes at the individual, organisation and ecosystem levels. The various elements supported the organisations to engage with and benefit from SILA. The mix of elements contributed to setting the foundations for broader ecosystem level impact.</li> <li>2. The SILA program team successfully adapted the program to meet emerging needs. Extending coaching and individual leadership assessments to the SUL cohort was valuable.</li> </ol> <p><b>Stakeholders identified several areas for improvement, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SUL learner experience was mixed due to an ad-hoc approach and poor guidance to navigate the sabbatical element. Some SULs mentioned not having learnt much from their experience whereas others were burnt out during their step-up period.</li> <li>• Boards were not engaged in the program to their full potential. Board members felt in the dark as to what the program entailed and more specifically what the benefits would be.</li> </ul>

*"It's been a really positive experience and made a huge change in what we do individually and as an organisation."*

– SUL, interview

*"It was all pretty vague to me. I sort of I struggled with; what are we doing? What's happening here? Why are we doing it? Who are they again?"*

- Board delegate, interview

# SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FUNDINGS

## 6. Recommendations for program improvement

The evaluation has identified a series of recommendations that build from the findings outlined above. The recommendations aim to improve the design and delivery of SILA and to enhance outcomes for individuals, organisations and the ecosystem. The recommendations are:

- 1 Improve the integration of program elements through better sequencing and a more connected program delivery team.
- 2 Streamline communications and leverage administrative supports at the start of the program to lessen the load on CEOs.
- 3 Improve guidance for CEOs, SULs and their organisations to manage the organisational diagnostic funds and the sabbatical period.
- 4 Design and implement an alumni engagement strategy to support learning, accountability and networking.
- 5 Design program features to better integrate SULs into the program.
- 6 Develop an engagement strategy to better integrate boards into the learning environment.
- 7 Consider element specific changes against how they support the overarching recommendations outlined above.

Further details on each recommendation, including potential actions, are provided in the final report.



A bigger idea of success

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