



Australia Awards
Women's Leadership Initiative

Developmental Leadership, Coalitions and 'Thinking and Working Politically'

The overall **goal of the Women's Leadership Initiative** is that "WLI alumni are holding positions of influence that contribute to long term development outcomes for the Pacific".

Developmental Leadership is defined as: a *political process of mobilising people and resources* in pursuit of *shared goals* for the *common good*. This definition has its origins in political science. It recognises that the exercise of leadership is shaped by the cultural, historical, institutional and political culture in which it is exercised – it is a dynamic process involving ongoing negotiation, sharing of skills and resources, and the identification of a common goal.

Developmental leadership is both a *collective* and *political* process. Can be exercised in all spheres and 'levels' of society (not just in Government, or in senior roles). Developmental leadership involves:

- **Thinking and Working Politically (TWP)**, i.e. understanding that both political and technical dimensions are central to developmental change.
 - **Thinking politically involves:** thinking strategically and innovatively ("politically") to resolve problems in different ways in the same contexts. This involves a understanding of the context in which you operate (Why are things the way they are? Who wins? Who loses?). Doing your homework on your 'issue'.
 - **Working politically involves:** mobilising people and resources in support of a goal: leaders seldom work on their own. This involves supporting, brokering, facilitating and aiding the emergence and practices of (public or private) developmental or reform leaderships, organisations, networks and coalitions at any level, and across all sectors.
- **Coalitions** are groupings of individuals and/or organisations working together on a common development problem. Coalition members bring different capabilities, resources, and social and political capital to the coalition, contributing to the achievement of a common goal.

Leadership approaches and tools used on WLI

WLI supports women scholars to exercise developmental leadership in the Pacific – where diverse cultures, large distances, competing national and regional priorities and agendas, and constrained resources all make the process of change complex, difficult and often unpredictable.

WLI offers a range of diagnostic and management tools that can be directly applied to challenges in participants' own organization, community or national context. They encourage leaders to think creatively, take informed risks, and to work with others to overcome the deeply entrenched, complex problems that define most development challenges.



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Key elements of the WLI approach include:

- Creating space for participants to identify, analyse and progress key reforms or changes they wish to make;
- Allowing participants to pause and reflect on their own leadership style;
- Encourage networking and collective action.

Adaptive Leadership and Ontological Leadership are two leadership approaches / frameworks used on WLI. Both offer relevant tools and resources for those wishing to exercise developmental leadership, or leadership of change for the common good.

Adaptive Leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive. The adaptive leadership framework focuses on gradual, long-term process of change which builds on the past, while challenging the 'status quo'. It involves a small scale experimentation, taking informed risks, and understanding the context and system in which a challenge/ issue is located.

Ontological Leadership refers to the nature and function of *being* for a leader and the *actions* of effective leadership. It focuses on human leadership skills to develop a way of being to lead self and others, including communication, trust, assessments, moods, physiology and self-care. Ontological approaches help students access their own leadership potential and encourage the "natural self-expression" of leadership skills, i.e. a way of being and acting in any leadership situation that is a spontaneous and intuitive effective response to what one is dealing with.