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***Lead with  
impact***

Early Childhood Australia  
**Leadership  
Program**

Information booklet



**Early Childhood Australia**  
A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) has been a voice for young children—from birth to eight years of age—for over 80 years. As the peak non-profit, independent early childhood advocacy organisation in Australia, ECA acts in the interests of young children, their families and those in the early childhood sector.

Effective leaders achieve goals and optimise outcomes by being a positive influence on themselves, on others and on their organisations. Especially within the context of early childhood education and care settings, the link between high-calibre leadership and better outcomes for young children is well established. Recognising the significance of supporting effective early childhood education and care leadership across Australia, ECA has developed a dynamic online program—the *ECA Leadership Program*. ECA developed the *Leadership Program* and the *Leadership Capability Framework* in response to consistent feedback from the sector requesting in-depth leadership resources. The Framework and the Program were created in close consultation with leaders and experts from across the sector to meet the professional needs of leaders in early childhood education and care environments.

The *Leadership Capability Framework* is the sector's first benchmark leadership framework. It demonstrates best practice in leadership and has been quality assured by practising early childhood leaders.

As a strengths-based, short-term program designed to benefit both current and aspiring early childhood leaders in diverse settings, the *ECA Leadership Program* builds on the *Leadership Capability Framework* with engaging content and interactive online learning resources.



### First you must **Lead self**

Pace-Marshall (2006, p. 19) reminds us that ‘...leadership is first about identity: we lead *who* we are ... we lead from our deepest centre of purpose and meaning.’ The Framework and Program enables leaders to further develop self-awareness and reflect on their own personal experiences, theories and enactment of leadership.

**Lead self** acknowledges the self-knowledge, personal resilience and ability to contextualise, understand and accept the intellectual and emotional demands that are needed to deal with the complexities of work.

### Then you can **Lead with and for others**

This dimension captures leadership with and for others, as well as the collective sense of leadership, which is collaborative. **Lead with and for others** acknowledges the important role that leadership plays in leading by example—modelling, mentoring, coaching and monitoring.

### Together you will then **Lead within and beyond the organisation**

This dimension captures leadership of the organisation and leadership beyond the organisation. **Lead within and beyond the organisation** acknowledges the importance of leadership capacity to manage change and lead through shared vision and purpose, communicating the vision and guiding the change process.

*The ECA Leadership Program broadened my view of leadership and has very useful tools to guide leaders in any early childhood setting.*  
—Participant feedback

# Flexible learning

The ECA *Leadership Program* was developed specifically for the early childhood education and care sector, following extensive consultation with academic and practice experts across Australia.

ECA understands the complex and often demanding workloads that early childhood leaders and aspiring leaders are managing. The ECA *Leadership Program* is fully self-directed and can be undertaken at a pace that suits you—over 12 weeks or up to 12 months. It includes a combination of hard-copy and interactive online learning resources.

By completing the ECA *Leadership Program*, participants will:







- be motivated by professionalism to recognise their own strengths, develop a strong professional identity, and believe that high standards begin with themselves
- analyse their own experiences and their own and others' cultures and diverse needs, and compare perspectives
- reflect on how educators can use their leadership as advocates for children, families and the profession
- hear how sector leaders have engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to respect children's rights and diversity
- unpack where governance and management sit within creating cohesive and effective teams, reflecting on the importance of existing culture and change management concepts using their understanding of leadership and personal leadership strengths and development needs, and create a *Personalised Professional Learning Plan*.

# Leadership capabilities

The program is underpinned by the ECA *Leadership Capability Framework*, and covers six capabilities and 21 key aspects, with descriptors organised under three distinct leadership dimensions:

- Lead self
- Lead with and for others
- Lead within and beyond the organisation

## Capabilities

	Makes children's learning, development and wellbeing the core focus
	Addresses children's rights and honours diversity of all kinds in positive, constructive and courageous ways
	Builds respectful, trusting, nurturing and equitable professional relationships
	Builds respectful and genuine partnerships with families and communities
	Collaboratively develops a culture of ethical inquiry
	Collaboratively creates a cohesive and effective team

## The benefits

The ECA *Leadership Program* offers many benefits and will support current and aspiring leaders in the sector. Through the program, you will discover the early childhood sector's first *Leadership Capability Framework*. The *ECA Framework* will establish a vision for leadership at all levels and in all contexts within early childhood education and care settings.

## Individual benefits

Participating in the program will enhance your leadership skills, knowledge and capabilities, and help you excel in a wide range of leadership-related activities, including:

- communicating clearly, openly and persuasively to influence others
- organising and managing resources and time
- hiring and managing teams
- making genuine connections with children and staff, families, communities and other networks
- managing conflict in productive and courageous ways
- developing an understanding of governance
- pedagogical leadership
- staying up to date with emerging trends, innovative technologies and new knowledge
- developing a strong professional identity.

***Leaders, regardless of how experienced they are, never stop learning.***

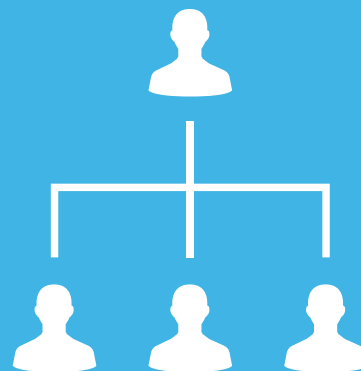


## Organisational benefits

Organisations must be strategic about developing and nurturing future leaders. Why?

Improving leadership skills service-wide can significantly improve the effectiveness of work teams and, ultimately, the quality of pedagogical practice delivered to children and families. Capable, consistent leadership can also increase productivity and reduce staff turnover within your service.

Nurturing future leaders with targeted leadership professional learning through the *ECA Leadership Program* will support succession planning and offer career pathways for employees.



*The program was really practical and user-friendly. I liked how you can work at your own pace. It was very informative and will be useful in my day-to-day work. —Participant feedback*

The program will equip participants with the skills needed to:

- guide teams toward a common vision, framework and understanding of leadership
- transform leadership into a shared responsibility
- establish a collaborative working environment
- help manage staff transitions, especially during staff turnover
- allow each person to perform to their best ability.

The organisational benefits of investing in leadership professional learning include:

- improved staff retention rates, reducing the expense and disturbance associated with recruitment
- ongoing quality improvement
- ensuring that curriculum and pedagogy reflect contemporary views, ways of knowing and knowledge construction
- establishing and maintaining a highly professional workplace and culture.

- building a collaborative and cohesive team culture
- improving practices and enhancing professional relationships
- establishing a culture of feedback, trust and openness in which working collaboratively with families runs through every part of the setting
- translating strategic vision and goals into specific plans in collaboration with educators, children and families
- building culturally safe settings.

## Why enrol?

It is recognised that effective leadership is vital to the success of early childhood education and care settings (see Waniganayake et al., 2017). Without skilled and committed leaders to help shape teaching and learning, there is limited opportunity to create and sustain high-quality learning environments. Research also shows that leadership is second only to teaching as an influence on learning, and that the quality and practice of leadership are linked in a consistent and demonstrable way to improved student outcomes and educational equity (Leithwood et al., 2006; Mitgang, 2012; Reeves, 2008).

Many leaders in the sector often 'land' in leadership or managerial roles and learn on the job. The *ECA Leadership Program* will enable sector leaders and managers to benchmark, develop and map their own professional learning skills. Participants will be able to create their own *Personalised Professional Learning Plan* (specific to their current working environment) and complete the program online, at their own pace.

Successful completion of this practical and engaging program will help establish a shared vision and language among teams and cement the foundations of best practice leadership within services.

The program has been mapped to the *National Quality Standard* and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, and will contribute to ongoing quality improvement and Quality Improvement Plans.

An *ECA Leadership Program* certificate is awarded to each participant upon completion.

*I really enjoyed the ECA Leadership Program. Its content is unique, poses lots of challenges and reflective thoughts. I love how the videos show ... the leaders in this sector leading their team, it gives me much encouragement and thought on how to become a better educator and leader.*

—Participant feedback





# Program overview

This program is designed to help you become an effective leader and deliver the best results for children, families, your team, your service and your community. As you progress through each course, you will learn all the elements of successful leadership and discover a range of innovative leadership strategies, practices and tools to achieve your career and organisational goals.

The *ECA Leadership Program* includes nine self-paced online learning modules and three engaging online webinars.

## Module: Leadership in early childhood education and care

This module is divided into key concepts that focus on first building your understanding of the importance of leadership in early childhood education and care, and then identifying your own experiences of leadership. Towards the end of the module, you will be asked to plan for your learning and development, focusing on your own leadership intention.

## Module: Leadership and me

This module is about the personal beliefs that shape our leadership. The module presents a range of views about leadership from renowned thinkers and introduces the idea that leadership operates at different levels.

## Webinar: Doing, being and becoming

This webinar examines what it means to be a leader within early childhood education and care services. Whether you're an individual or a team, everyone can be a leader. Join presenter Dr Sandra Cheeseman as she explores good examples of everyday leadership and how educators can use their leadership as advocates for early childhood education and care.

## Module: Leadership Capability 1

This module introduces ECA's **Leadership Capability 1: Makes children's learning, development and wellbeing the core focus**, and maps your strengths and needs for this Capability.

Practice focus:

- Pedagogy
- Agency
- Assessment for learning
- Documentation
- Learning spaces and resources
- What it means to have credibility as a leader.

## Module: Leadership Capability 2

This module introduces ECA's **Leadership Capability 2: Addresses children's rights and honours diversity of all kinds in positive, constructive and courageous ways**, and maps your strengths and needs for this Capability.

## Webinar: Addressing children's rights and honouring diversity

A panel-style webinar brought to you by two teams of leaders who talk about how they have engaged with Aboriginal communities to honour children's rights and diversity, and include children's rights and diversity in their programs. These leaders explore the ways in which they have thought about leadership for diversity and equity, and how children's rights have motivated their leadership decisions.

### Module: Leadership Capability 3

This module introduces ECA's **Leadership Capability 3: Builds respectful, trusting, nurturing and equitable professional relationships**, and maps your strengths and needs for this Capability.

### Module: Leadership Capability 4

This module introduces ECA's **Leadership Capability 4: Builds respectful and genuine partnerships with families and communities**, and maps your strengths and needs for this Capability.

### Module: Leadership Capability 5

This module introduces ECA's **Leadership Capability 5: Collaboratively develops a culture of ethical inquiry**, and maps your strengths and needs for this Capability.

Practice focus:

- Reciprocal communication
- Connections
- Continuous learning
- Reflective practices
- Evidence-based decisions.

### Module: Leadership Capability 6

This module introduces ECA's **Leadership Capability 6: Collaboratively creates a cohesive and effective team**, and maps your strengths and needs for this Capability.

Practice focus:

- Governance and management
- Culture and change
- Shared leadership
- Strategic and political acumen
- Sustainability.

### Webinar: Collaboratively creates a cohesive and effective team

A panel-style webinar that explores what leadership looks like in each leader's service/organisation. This webinar unpacks where governance and management sit within creating cohesive and effective teams, and how this often varies from setting to setting. With this in mind, there is a strong focus on the importance of existing culture and change management concepts when building teams. The leaders on the panel also speak about their service and the ways in which they have thought about leadership for building interconnected and effective teams, and how their decisions/styles have motivated their leadership decisions.

### Module: Program summary and reflection

This module is the final module in the ECA *Leadership Program*. This module deepens your knowledge and understanding of research and development in leadership. You will consolidate what you have learned throughout the program and finalise your *Personalised Professional Learning Plan*.

### Personalised Professional Learning Plan

Using your understanding of leadership and your own leadership strengths and development needs, this is where you will finalise your *Personalised Professional Learning Plan* and confidently take the next step on your leadership journey. You can also request feedback from sector leaders.

# The ECA Leadership Capability Framework explained

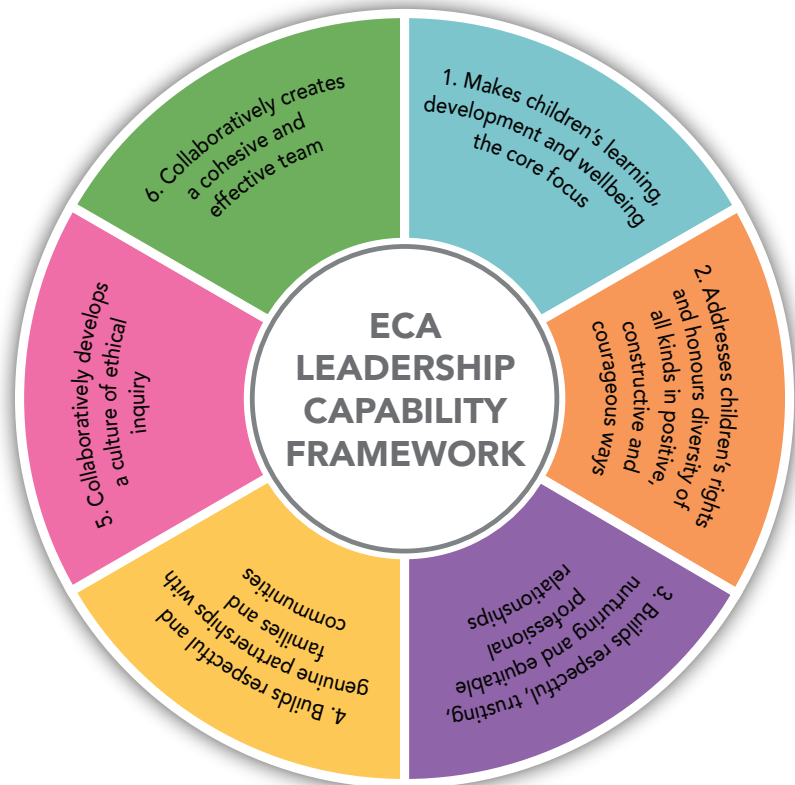
The *Leadership Capability Framework* underpins the *ECA Leadership Program*. It was developed by education and care leadership experts specifically for the profession. It demonstrates best practice in leadership and establishes a vision for leadership that can be applied at all levels and in all contexts within early childhood education and care settings. Designed to support you and your team to take responsibility for professional growth, the Framework will become your pathway towards building personal and professional capacity and professional identity.

## The ECA Leadership Capability Framework comprises:

- six leadership capabilities
- 21 key aspects of effective leadership.

The Framework reflects what we know about leadership capabilities in education and care settings and the nature of leadership more generally. The importance of quality leadership in education and care settings is identified in the *Early Years Learning Framework (V2.0)* (AGDE, 2022a), *My Time, Our Place (V2.0)* (AGDE, 2022b) and the *National Quality Framework*.

Quality Area 7 of the *National Quality Standard* (ACECQA, 2023, p. 288) focuses on effective leadership and governance, highlighting that effective leaders establish shared values that reflect the service context and professionalism, and set a clear direction for continuous improvement.



## Who can enrol?

The ECA *Leadership Program* is specifically designed for leaders in education and care contexts, including aspiring leaders. The leadership stories and case studies featured in the program include early childhood, outside school hours care, family day care and school settings.

Intended audience:

- Educational leaders
- Team or room leaders
- Experienced early childhood educators and teachers
- Experienced and new service directors and managers
- Early childhood consultants
- Aspiring leaders.

## Flexible timeframes

You can enrol in and commence the ECA *Leadership Program* at any time.

The program is self-paced, and the online resources within the program will be accessible online for one year from the date of purchase. While it is possible to complete the program in just three months of part-time study, it may take longer depending on your availability and whether you choose to engage with any additional resources as you work through the modules.

**Join over 1,000 educators,  
teachers and directors  
who have already  
enrolled in the ECA  
Leadership Program.**

*This course provided an excellent balance of theory and practice that enabled me to develop my leadership skills and capabilities. Regardless of how many years' experience you may have, it's a valuable resource for all early childhood practitioners.*

**—Participant feedback**





## What is included?

When you enrol in the ECA *Leadership Program*, you will gain 12-month access to online professional learning courses and an ECA *Leadership Program* folder. The program includes:

- nine self-paced online modules
- three interactive webinars
- exclusive online forums
- *Personalised Professional Learning Plan*
- tailored feedback from respected leaders
- hard copy guide to the program
- evidence-based *Leadership Capability Framework*
- printed Certificate of Completion upon self-paced completion of the program.



# Ready to enrol and get started?

Continue your education and care professional journey with the ECA *Leadership Program*.

Visit the ECA Shop to enrol in the program: <https://shop.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/product/ecalpl/>

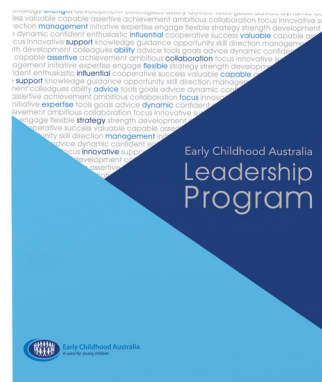
Once enrolled, you will receive access to the online program and program folder.

## How much does it cost?

Discounts for ECA Members and ECA Learning Hub subscribers apply.

For purchases outside Australia, please contact ECA on **+61 2 6242 1800** as additional postage charges will apply for your *Leadership Program* pack.

To sign up multiple individuals, contact the ECA Customer Service team. ECA offers bulk-purchase pricing for 15 or more individuals.



## Find out more

For more information or queries, please contact the ECA Customer Service team on **(02) 6242 1800, 1800 356 900** (free call in Australia) or email [leadership@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:leadership@earlychildhood.org.au).

The context of early childhood is continually changing and becoming increasingly complex. Roles are changing and expanding. Old solutions to issues and problems do not always work. These 'change challenges' suggest a real imperative for the field to develop new and robust frameworks for leadership that can support people in facing, grappling with, initiating and facilitating change rather than simply reacting.

—Fasoli et al., 2007



No one person holds the key to understanding the complexities of leadership, nor a template for finding the correct answers. Instead, leaders need to create a space in which professional identity can be crafted through ongoing dialogue and reflection.

—Stamopoulos, 2012

Leadership for learning is a journey of joint inquiry, exploration and reflection that can involve everyone who believes in making a difference for children.

—Waniganayake & Semann, 2011



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Find out more at [www.ecaleadership.org.au](http://www.ecaleadership.org.au) or call **1800 356 900** (free call in Australia)