PACE

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE
FOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS
FOR IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE WOMEN

PARTICIPATE

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Multicultural
Centre for
Women's Health
Putting Immigrant & Refugee Women's Health First

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PACE

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www.mcwh.com.au

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Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

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FOREWORD

Women now make up 30% of our MPs in the Australian parliament. However, only a handful of these 'leading' women are from immigrant and refugee communities, amounting to a disappointing 2% of the total number of Australian MPs. This very low level of representation is paralleled in our state parliaments.

Yet, women from immigrant and refugee communities, who make up approximately 16% of our population, have so much to offer as leaders. Although their contribution remains largely unrecognised, immigrant and refugee women lead every day in the most important contexts of our lives. They lead as workers, colleagues, students, teachers, mothers, grandmothers, community members and carers. Leadership is about transformation and change. It is about envisioning positive change and finding a way to make that happen. A woman does not have to be in a formal leadership position to honourably and effectively be a leader.

It is so much harder for immigrant and refugee women to achieve formal leadership positions. There are a host of barriers such as discrimination, non-recognition of overseas qualifications, the legacy of migration which leaves women–even once they have successfully settled–with interrupted lives, disrupted education and career paths, fragmented families, and sometimes ongoing trauma and distress. On the rocky playing field that we call the job market, immigrant and refugee women have to try harder for the same outcomes, achieve much more for the same rewards, travel further along the same path, and very often they do.

What the handful of immigrant and refugee women in our parliaments lack in numbers, they more than make up for in quality! They also have a very particular and important perspective: a perspective from the margins of representation and as such, is broad and insightful and does not turn a blind eye to what is happening to those in our communities who are more vulnerable, often un-represented and unheard, and yet so important to the social fabric.

The PACE Leadership Program has certainly seen this special and important perspective among the group of wonderfully skilled and capable immigrant and refugee women participants. Throughout the program the women have considered some key questions: What does leadership mean for me, as an individual and for us as a group? How do we, as immigrant and refugee women, do leadership differently? These key questions must form the foundation of successful women's leadership programs to ensure that they are accessible, appropriate and meaningful for immigrant and refugee women.

This Best Practice Guide provides a framework for women's leadership programs that are exactly that: accessible, appropriate and meaningful. This Best Practice Guide is an indispensible resource for anyone developing a women's leadership activity and I am confident that it will be well utilised.

Dr. Adele Murdolo
Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE PACE BEST PRACTICE GUIDE AND WHY HAS IT BEEN DEVELOPED?

The PACE Best Practice Guide summarises the outcomes of an extensive review of national and international literature of leadership capacity-building initiatives for immigrant and refugee women (see Appendix B). In addition, this Guide is a product of numerous consultations with representatives from migrant resource centres, ethnic community councils, ethno-specific organisations and other non-government organisations working with immigrant and refugee women (see Acknowledgements page 32).

This Guide is one of the key strategies of the PACE Project, which is being conducted by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) with funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission. The Project aims to build the capacity of immigrant and refugee women to seek out and participate in formal leadership opportunities. The PACE Project is due to be completed by end-August 2010.

WHO CAN USE THE PACE BEST PRACTICE GUIDE?

This Guide is for people who work with immigrant and refugee women and their families either in government or non-government organisations, and educational institutions. It can assist them in their leadership program development and help to ensure that their services are culturally responsive to immigrant and refugee women's needs.

WHAT INFORMS THE BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES?

This Guide is informed by human rights principles, feminist principles, and principles of multiculturalism (see Multicultural Victoria Amendment Act 2008). For the purposes of program development, human rights principles, particularly participation and inclusion, guide all the phases of the programming process.

A rights-based approach provides the structure that frames and strengthens feminist principles such as non-discrimination and empowerment. The framework provides a way of addressing the inequality, injustice and disadvantages that impact on immigrant and refugee women's capacity to take up formal leadership roles. This Guide uses the acronym PACE to describe these particular principles:

Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realised.

(Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006)

PARTICIPATION ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION ENGAGEMENT
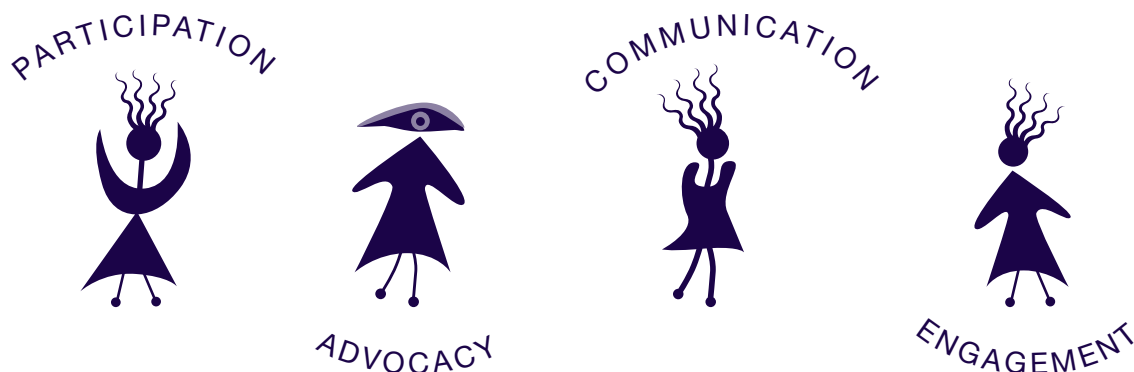
The key principles together aim to increase women's capacity to:

•   participate in the workforce, civic and community life;

•   advocate on issues inhibiting them and/or other women from participating;

•   communicate leadership qualities and skills; and

•   engage with issues and others in the community for the purposes of providing ongoing support to other immigrant and refugee women.

WHY 'PACE'?

By emphasising the key principles, the PACE acronym offers an alternative, more user-friendly language with which to promote and gain support for 'leadership' from women and their families across various immigrant and refugee communities. Most importantly, the exclusion of the word 'leadership', allows women to identify and define for themselves the terms of their skill and knowledge development for participation.

DEFINING THE PACE BEST PRACTICE APPROACH

The PACE Guide is informed by a review of national and international literature relating to leadership and participation initiatives for immigrant and refugee women. Amongst the literature, which includes research publications, project reports, and training manuals, there are different understandings of terms such as 'community development', 'capacity building', 'power' and 'empowerment'. As such, the PACE Guide does not offer definitions; instead, it discusses leadership and participation in terms of principles and processes.

Leadership is considered to be inclusive, participatory and horizontal, and serves both women and men of all backgrounds.

Empowerment is therefore a process (rather than just an outcome) 'in which individual, relatively powerless persons engage in dialogue with each other and thereby come to understand the social sources of their powerlessness and see the possibility of acting collectively to change their social environment.

In this process each participant is personally empowered, undergoes some personal transformation, but in the context of reciprocal aiding of others in doing so, in order that together they might be empowered to engage in collective action. (Young 1997, p.91)

Within this understanding, the issue of power is represented within empowerment processes as social, cooperative and enabling.

'Immigrant and refugee women' refers to all women from immigrant communities, including refugee and asylum seekers and women from both emerging and established communities. Unless otherwise stated, 'immigrant and refugee women' and 'women' are used interchangeably in this Guide.

Anecdotal and research findings highlight the limited levels of participation by women in general, and immigrant and refugee women in particular, in formal leadership at both local and state levels. In an endeavour to enhance women's participation in leadership, the Victorian Women's Policy Framework (2008-11) Priority Area 4 focuses on women's representation and equity, including promoting their full participation in community and public life and representation as decision makers and leaders (Office of Women's Policy 2008). In the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Women's Project: Final Report (2005), the Office of Women's Policy highlights the key issues facing immigrant and refugee women and in Recommendation 21 urges the development of women's leadership skills in an endeavour to enhance their community participation and leadership in community organisations. However, as the findings of the consultation process outlined below illustrate, there are several barriers to immigrant and refugee women's active participation in economic, civic and community life.

DIVERSITY

It is important to recognise that immigrant and refugee women, as with all individuals and groups, are diverse. In addition to cultural and linguistic diversity, immigrant and refugee women differ from each other according to a range of other factors: age, socio-economic status, education, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. Identity, circumstances and opportunities can be influenced by a combination of factors, which can change over time and can influence women's needs, interests and concerns.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS

Cultural differences and understandings of Australian and/or Western values, systems and expectations have implications for immigrant and refugee women's engagement in leadership. Cultural and religious beliefs include, for example, a commitment to community and for some women family duties and responsibility take precedence. Although consultation participants often referred to women feeling that they were caught between preserving their own culture (from their country of origin) and trying to assimilate into a new culture, no mention was made of the diversity of factors impacting on immigrant and refugee women's lives. In situations when women feel caught between two cultures, it may be the case that women are grappling with issues related to other aspects of their identity (see 'Diversity' above). Care should be taken when using 'culture' as an explanation for women's (non)participation because it can simplify and obscure other factors that could and should be addressed in program delivery.

ACCESS

There are numerous barriers to access and equity for immigrant and refugee women relating to public services. Lack of access to public transport; physical accessibility of services; as well as lack of access to suitable child care services were identified as major impediments to women's participation.

LANGUAGE

Low English language proficiency is a major barrier to immigrant and refugee women accessing resources such as health, employment and housing services. Immigrant and refugee women with low English proficiency, and who are also newly arrived in Australia, have the highest rates of unemployment compared with other overseas-born women and men (Alcorso and Schofield, 1991). In addition, exclusion from employment, financial and housing security have an impact on women's capacity to participate: almost 60% of non English-speaking background Victorians report not attending community events, compared with 48% of other Victorians, and 13%, compared with 10% of other Victorians report a low sense of community (Allen Consulting, 2008). This limits participation in the social, political and economic life of the community, as well as opportunities to take up formal leadership positions. Participants in the consultation process also highlighted the lack of bi-lingual and culturally competent workers as hampering access to both information and services.

Financial and housing stress is more likely to impact on women from immigrant and refugee communities, with 7.5% of people not proficient in English unable to pay their mortgage or rent on time, compared with 4.6% of people born in Australia

(Poljski and Murdolo 2009)

ACCESS TO FORMAL EDUCATION

Immigrant and refugee women are least likely to participate in formal education. The problem is often aggravated by low English literacy levels. Although there is very little statistical data about the education participation rates of immigrant and refugee women, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 'Education and Work' (2009) reveals that, while more women (52%) were enrolled in a course of study, only 27% of people born overseas were enrolled compared to the rest of the population. Research also shows that lack of recognition of already acquired skills and qualifications drive women to take up unskilled and low-status jobs which place them in a position where it is difficult to gain the education and training required for promotion (Alcorso, 1995).

LACK OF VISIBLE ROLE MODELS

The lack of visible women role models amongst immigrant and refugee communities contributes to women's low participation rates. While many immigrant and refugee women have been and continue to be actively involved in community life, the women themselves are often unnoticed for their contributions. Although there continues to be many barriers to active participation in social and political life, many women have expressed the desire to learn from 'women in action': they want to know what other women are doing and the path they have negotiated in order to rebuild and manage their lives (PACE 2009 consultations). There is a need to bring immigrant and refugee women–through their stories–to the forefront, so that other women might be inspired, learn of effective strategies adopted, and feel less isolated in creating their own path to leadership.

DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Immigrant and refugee women face discrimination on numerous fronts, which can lead to stereotyping and labelling, social exclusion and isolation. The term 'intersectional discrimination' recognises that a person, especially women, may be discriminated based on several aspects of their identity at the same time. For example, immigrant and refugee women not only experience discrimination based on their gender, but also because of their race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, language, religious beliefs and political beliefs. As women go about their everyday lives, their access to education, the economy, housing, health, the legal system and government decision making can be severely affected by gender and racial discrimination (see Women's Rights Action Network Australia).

"Sometimes it's not about what you feel, but how other Australians feel about you–we try our best to understand Australian culture, why don't Australians try to understand us?"

Immigrant Woman

Women with disabilities are further excluded on the grounds of their disability, with the potential of limiting their equal and active participation. Access to disability services is also hindered by the Social Security Act 1991(s94) which stipulates that migrants with disabilities must have been Australian residents for at least 10 years in order to access Disability Support Pension (National Ethnic Disability Alliance, 2009). This further entrenches isolation and marginalisation of immigrant and refugee women with disabilities, as it limits access to services such as employment, education and health.

MIGRATION AND (RE)SETTLEMENT ISSUES

The immigration experience and feelings of isolation can also impact on mental health and wellbeing. In addition to the fragmentation of families, the situation is exacerbated by lack of family support in a new country, particularly where family expectations and responsibility in the home, such as childcare and household chores, come first. Consultation participants noted that women's participation in 'leadership' activities may be misinterpreted as going against family and cultural values and norms. This view is reiterated in a report by the Commonwealth Office for the Status of Women (2001) which notes that women who want to improve their lives run the risk of being labelled as denigrating their spouse and community. Resettlement issues such housing, employment, children's education and residency/visa status, are also set as higher priorities, with consultation participants noting that the needs of the family (spouse and children) often take precedence over the woman's own needs.

The lack of recognition of immigrant and refugee women's existing skills and leadership qualities has also been identified as a barrier to participation, particularly because of difficulties in obtaining recognition for overseas educational qualifications (Scheelbeek, 1993). This leads to women taking up lower-skilled jobs, impacting negatively on their mental health and wellbeing, and participation (Gwatirisa, 2009).

"Women with overseas qualifications don't have the time or the money to update their qualifications, or they feel they are too old because they need to earn money for the family; instead, some women will work in manual labouring jobs."

Settlement Services Worker

EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

Unemployment and financial insecurity impact negatively on women's mental and physical health and wellbeing; and consequently diminishes their participation in the community. Research shows that immigrant and refugee women have lower employment levels and lower financial literacy. This is exacerbated by a lack of knowledge of Australian systems, limited access to services as well as the unavailability of culturally and linguistically competent service providers (Poljski and Murdolo, 2009).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women in abusive relationships find it difficult to seek support within the community, especially if their own community is intent on displaying a positive front. Women's visa conditions also pose a problem in regard to accessing support services. For example, women are afraid to access legal support services for fear of deportation or that alerting relevant authorities of violence in their relationship will jeopardise their visa applications (Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, 2006).

KNOWLEDGE OF SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS

Some of the issues highlighted by consultation participants included lack of knowledge of Australian political, legal and health systems. This means that women have difficulties working out what leadership opportunities are available to them. Immigrant and refugee women are interested in skills development, but do not have, or do not know how to, access relevant service providers. Moreover, understanding systems pertaining to matters such as health and finance often take precedence over seeking out formal leadership opportunities.

In 2006, immigrant and refugee women had a substantially higher unemployment rate than the national average (5.5%), and a proportionately higher unemployment rate than Australian-born women (4.8%). A higher proportion of immigrant and refugee women were not in the labour force (52%), compared to Australian-born women (39%).

(Bertone and Leuner, 2007)

> "Most women are far more sophisticated–than we give them credit for and articulate what they know in different ways."
>
> *Migrant Resource Worker*

Consult, build trust: women should define their own skills.
Leadership skills women already have are at times unacknowledged and therefore underused. In this regard, leadership programs should be tailored accordingly, respecting and building on the knowledge and skills women already have. Also try to involve women community leaders–someone women can identify with–throughout the project cycle, including co-facilitating the sessions and contributing to the development and content of training material.

Take into account the level of establishment and generational factors to help identify what type of skills and knowledge women will be responsive to. For example, established migrants and/or older women might be more likely to be concerned about health issues, while newer migrants and/or younger women might be more concerned about learning the language, up-skilling and employment, or settlement issues in general. It should be noted that some programs available now were not available to early migrant groups. For example, low English language skills among some Italian and Greek migrants could be linked to the lack of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes during earlier waves of migration. There is also a need to consider the conditions associated with various visa types, especially in relation to work and study entitlements.

> "Sometimes a woman's health and wellbeing is determined by the health and wellbeing of her family."
>
> *Migrant Resource Worker*

Introduce participation as an important personal issue for women.
Skill and knowledge development is considered important by women, particularly in building confidence and self-esteem; however this does not necessarily translate to an interest in formal leadership. If this is the case for some women, consider the ways in which participation and leadership could be presented as a need: how will it positively impact on their personal and community life? For some women, this might be developing skills in order to place them in a better position to support their families; or skill development for navigating Australian society. This must be expressed explicitly, including how the process will build on women's existing skills such that it is not viewed as 'having to go to school', something some women might not feel comfortable or confident in doing (see section on Promotion).

Conveying rights and responsibilities might be too abstract and alien if not broken down into issues that can be related to particular needs and personal circumstances. For women who have family responsibilities, for example, one way to gain support and participation for the program might be to access women through their children, through the provision of parenting information, so that women can feel 'culturally allowed' to participate.

Encourage the continued development of English language skills: for some women it may be the first step in participation. In addition to developing communication skills and self-confidence, attending English classes can help women develop time management, organisational and computer skills. Attendance at English classes can assist with establishing contact with the broader community and can help open the doors for attendance at other classes, such as employment focused classes. A focus on language development can also help bridge the gulf between women and their children.

Also keep in mind that for some women, English proficiency may be more about connecting with family than it is about participating in community. Be aware that English proficiency can be tied to level of need and the migration circumstances of the individual woman. For some (older) women, for example, it might be enough to enable them to interact with neighbours.

Appropriate labelling/naming of initiatives can impact on access. Initiatives relating to the prevention of domestic violence are often a good example of appropriately naming projects to ensure women's participation: the concept of 'home safety', for example, is preferable to 'domestic violence'. In a similar way, couching 'leadership' in terms of skill development–such as PACE–might be more agreeable to some women. For other women, emphasising the role of leadership for human rights and justice could be a more compelling message.

"I know of one woman who walked more than 2kms, often in the heat, to buy milk at the supermarket rather than the nearby milk-bar, so she could avoid having to engage in conversation."

Settlement Services Worker

"The proper labelling of projects should focus on skills women already have and not what they lack– 'Non-English Speaking Background' is inappropriate–after all, women are not 'non-men'!"

Multicultural Services Worker

PACE

ASSESSMENT:
IDENTIFYING WOMEN'S NEEDS

- Assessment should be informed by the key issues relevant to the women and any other issues relevant to the women's community.

- Carefully consider who the program is targeting. For example, does the community respect the advice and experience of older women? If targeting refugees: have they come from camps or large towns? What is their level of education?

- Keep in mind that lead time for setting up a women's group, especially in preparation for leadership, is lengthy.

- Consult with women in their usual meeting place and in their comfort zone, in order to develop trust.

ANALYSIS:
HOW CAN WOMEN'S NEEDS BE MET IN
RELATION TO THE CHALLENGES?

- Women's needs, despite ethnicity, are complex and diverse as differences in experiences and cultural values are highly individual. Past experiences in the country of origin, coupled with the migration experience itself, contribute to an individual's ability to settle in a new country. While individual contexts and circumstances are major contributing factors to participation, it is also important to recognise the collective thinking of some groups. Some women in tight-knit communities may need more encouragement to explore beyond their immediate community.

  It might also be the case that women are less likely to be aware of their rights because gender divisions within the family are still an issue. Also, for refugees, the claiming of rights for survival has become the mindset, as opposed to rights for civic participation.

- Women are faced with **conflicting priorities** with settlement issues and taking care of the family taking precedence. The long processing time of permanent residency applications often means that women feel like they are living in limbo and the need to balance work and study, including learning English, can also leave very little time for women to take up other commitments.

- Women's knowledge of rights and responsibilities is generally associated with **family responsibilities and cultural obligations**, the bonds of which are often stronger compared to English-speaking families. Knowledge about family rights may also be limited because issues are usually kept 'within the family' and so women are less likely to seek information and access relevant services. Women might also feel compelled to follow community and family ideals for fear of being ostracised.

  Women can feel empowered and make a contribution within their own environment and within their own comfort zone–regardless of English fluency–if they feel supported.

- **Gender roles and issues still persist** especially in relation to the private sphere of the home and impact on women's capacity to take up leadership roles in the public sphere. Women may be 'leaders' at home, but this does not necessarily mean women are valued outside of the home. Gender divisions are still strong in the Australian community and as such, it is important to note the division of gender roles may not be specifically a cultural issue, as not all families, or women, are the same.

  The acceptance of women as leaders in some communities is limited; however, it may be easier for older women to take up leadership roles especially if they are respected as mother figures and/or are seen to be bearers of knowledge and experience.

  The impact of migration can also shape culturally-based gender roles in negative and positive ways. As such, women's needs may need to be considered in relation to men's perceptions. Men's culture shock and loss of identity in a new country can impact on women (as women still have a more defined role within the family). For example, some men might see women's (and older children's) social security payments as a sign of independence - how do men and women manage such a situation? In this context, women participating in leadership roles might be viewed as engaging in something that will break up the family.

"Economic wellbeing is not owned by one culture."

Immigrant woman

"For most people in new surroundings, let alone migrant and refugee women, home is the only environment you feel you can control."

Multicultural Worker

- Women are often **held-back by self-perception and their own expectations** about their suitability, appropriateness and abilities in relation to their role as a woman in Australia, and also their role outside of the family. Factors might include low English proficiency, lack of confidence, and cultural obligations. Women who are aware of their rights and responsibilities within the Australian context may nevertheless feel powerless, disenfranchised and excluded from claiming their rights because of their ethnicity, religion and entrenched ideas about gender.

- Knowing where to begin: for most women this is the first step to participation. Especially for the newly arrived, with little or no family support, misinformation is more likely to occur if sourced through friends and informal contacts.

PREPARATION AND PLANNING

EVALUATION

Planning and evaluation are closely linked so evaluation of leadership projects and programs will be more effective if, from the beginning, an evaluation plan is included as part of the preparation and planning. Evaluation provides a framework for ensuring program sustainability and continuous program improvement.

Evaluation ought to be conducted throughout the different stages of programming. Evaluation can be resource intensive and it may not be feasible or sensible to evaluate every aspect of the program, so it is crucial that the purpose, extent and nature of any evaluation are carefully considered during all stages of the program. If the budget allows for it, consider outsourcing the task to an external evaluator.

> Evaluation provides a framework for ensuring sustainability and continuous program improvement

Table 1: Types of Evaluation

Process Evaluation	*Impact Evaluation*	*Outcome Evaluation*
Is used to assess the elements of program development and delivery, that is, the quality, appropriateness and reach of the program.	Is used to measure the immediate program effects and, therefore, can be used at the completion of stages of implementation (that is, after sessions, at monthly intervals and/or at the completion of the program).	Is used to measure the longer-term effects of programs and is related to judgements about whether, or to what extent, a program goal has been achieved.

There are many resources available on-line that can assist with the development of evaluation tools - see for example The Department of Planning and Community Development's Evaluation Step-by-Step Guide (2008). Evaluation tools are best used in combination with other data sources such as minutes of meetings; informal feedback from partners and participants; and other documents, including media and reports.

Try to ensure that the evaluation methods and tools are appropriate to the aims of your project. Are your aims solely to capture expected change? Or do you aim to develop good news stories for public relations? For leadership projects, consider participatory forms of evaluation such as narrative/storytelling or Most Significant Change technique.

At the preparation and planning stage, process evaluation will be centred on the quality and suitability of resources and the approaches and processes being developed in meeting the set objectives. It is therefore important to ensure that program objectives are SMART, as these will inform the development of the leadership program, are the basis for monitoring program implementation and will guide the evaluation process.

SMART Objectives are:

- **Specific** (clear and well defined: what are we going to do and for whom?)

- **Measurable** (demonstrate that improvement has occurred: can it be measured and can we measure it?)

- **Achievable** (realistic: can we achieve this with currently available resources-human, financial, time?)

- **Relevant** (to the target group and related stakeholders: is it significant to the target group, your organisation and related stakeholders?)

- **Time specific** (timeframe indicating when the objective will be met and/or measured: when will we accomplish this objective?)

Ensure your objectives are SMART:

Specific

Measurable

Achieveable

Relevant

Time Specific

Table 2 Links between program planning components and evaluation categories.

A Goal	*Objectives*	*Interventions/strategies*
is measured by	are measured by	are measured by
Outcome evaluation	*Impact evaluation*	*Process evaluation*

COLLABORATION

- Consider partnering with other groups and organisations in order to build a foundation for ongoing work such as mentoring and peer support. For example, if your program intends to target younger women, seek out partnerships with youth services in the local area.

- Forming partnerships, for example with a larger agency, could also contribute to the sustainability of the program.

PROMOTION

- Carefully consider your target group. Are women more likely to be interested in a 'training program' (might convey the impression of going to school) or a 'workshop' (less formal)? Conversely, some women might be more interested in receiving 'training' if they want to enter the workforce.

- Target information so as not to contribute to women's 'information fatigue'/overload. Depending on their age and circumstances, women are more likely to respond to information that is relevant to their current needs and interests.

- For women with families, information should also be pitched to their families so as to gain family support. For example, the project will not only build the woman's skills, but also be beneficial to the whole family

- Use ethno specific media (print and radio), websites and newsletters, especially to reach women who are 'not the usual suspects'.

- Keep in mind that promoting the initiative is also about increasing the capacity of the broader community to recognise the contributions that immigrant and refugee women can make.

RECRUITMENT

- If possible, recruit the women first and tailor the program according to their learning needs.

- Recruit participants through established organisations and groups and/or where women already meet for other purposes, such as craft classes or parent groups.

- Depending on your selection criteria, engage organisations such as Australian Multicultural Education Services (AMES) and other organisations providing ESL classes, as women using their services will have already developed some basic English skills.

- If possible, try to ensure participation from women in most need, such as women living in regional and rural areas who are often under-represented.

- Interpreters or bilingual workers can assist with personally inviting women to participate.

PREPARATION AND PLANNING CHECKLIST

HAVE YOU:

- ✓ determined the leadership needs of the women?

- ✓ ensured that your program objectives are SMART?

- ✓ developed an evaluation plan which considers the needs of the project, your organisation, and the relevant stakeholders?

- ✓ developed appropriate evaluation tools for use throughout and at the end of the program?

- ✓ identified indicators to measure progress towards the program objectives?

- ✓ developed a plan for reporting and disseminating evaluation findings?

- ✓ formed partnerships e.g. with other relevant organisations (NGOs, government agencies, community groups, neighbourhood houses, local government, educational institutions)?

- ✓ considered the involvement of community peers and leaders (role models) that the women can relate to?

- ✓ taken into consideration the participation of women in regional and rural areas?

Aim for practicality,
flexibility and creativity

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Consult with women in order to ascertain what will work: what will be meaningful for them? Consider the ways in which the women can be encouraged to participate within the choices they have made and the particular circumstances they are in.

- Identify any language needs and make plans to address any needs during program delivery. See section on 'Addressing Language Issues' (page 24).

- In regard to rights and responsibilities, information should be provided in ways that will meet a need in women's everyday lives.

- Involve other organisations and service providers such as Victoria Police, Centrelink and local government in facilitating some of the sessions as a way of increasing communication between participants and the wider community.

- Be honest, upfront and straightforward in order to build trust. Do not overcomplicate the project or be overly sensitive to the point that women's resilience is undervalued.

- Skill development should focus on improving the level of skills women already have and presented in such a way that women are building and transferring skills into a different environment.

- General skills and knowledge development could include:

  - Qualities of a good leader

  - Information and communication technologies (ICT), which is useful for preparing to participate in the workforce

  - Communication skills (listening, persuasion techniques; use of appropriate language; public speaking). Also include body language especially as it relates to cross-cultural communication (e.g. avoiding eye contact while talking might be viewed as a lack of confidence)

  - Resume writing, attending an interview

  - Knowledge of Australian government structures, especially the right of appeal

  - Workplace rights and Consumer rights

  - The education system and adult learning pathways

  - Social connectedness – education on systems and services

  - Conflict resolution and management; teamwork/teambuilding

- - How to access resources for community groups

  - Project management and event planning

  - Resilience and adapting to different environments.

- Create opportunities for women to practically present their skills, for example, organise an event for the group and/or their community; encourage and assist women to deliver a speech at a community event.

- Prepare a session that mixes all women from different cultural backgrounds and/or generations as a way of brokering understanding and building trust across groups.

- Care should be taken when conveying issues such as 'identity' and 'self-esteem' in case some women perceive them to be too individualistic or a 'luxury'.

- Information on rights and responsibilities should be designed to also incorporate preventing domestic violence and ensuring child protection.

- Mentoring can be effective in terms of on-going skills building and problem solving and meeting individual needs, but keep in mind the process requires considerable time and planning.

- Pathways should be created for mentorship and regular group meetings to ensure sustainability.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

HAVE YOU:

✓ ensured that the program meets the needs of the women and their community?

✓ identified and contacted potential program participants?

✓ taken into account the women's knowledge and strengths (individually and as a group), including level of establishment and generational factors, to meet their identified leadership needs?

✓ Identified language issues and made plans to address the issues during program delivery?

✓ incorporated a variety of data/feedback collection methods to ensure a comprehensive process evaluation?

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM DELIVERY

- Timing of the session/s should accommodate women with school-age children–try to schedule sessions between school drop-off and pick-up times. If childcare cannot be provided, women might prefer to attend evening session so their partners can look after the children.

- the same time and the same facilitators need to be available to make women feel comfortable in their surroundings.

- Regular reminder or follow-up phone calls to participants before each session can benefit attendance rates.

- Use a range of learning modes to cater to a range of literacy levels and learning styles.

- Consider the better use of technology, especially in regard to regional and younger groups.

- Incorporate activities that allow women to explore outside their immediate community and home, as well as self-advocacy activities, such as role-plays.

- Small, interactive groups/workshops encourage learning from one another's experiences and the sharing of ideas.

- Allow women the time to reflect on their own experiences in order for them to tap into their strengths.

- Incorporate short statements for learning and review: there needs to be 'light bulb' moments so that what is being conveyed is made personally relevant.

- Have the women identify opportunities and goals so they can use the information they receive immediately: what is it they want to do now?

- Have childcare facilities available, to ensure women are less likely to drop out, especially if there are changes in the family. Childcare facilities also allow the family to indirectly participate and develop an appreciation of the importance of the activities their mother is involved in.

- Consider the dietary and/or cultural food requirements of the participants. For example, strict Muslims do not eat dairy products on Wednesdays or Fridays.

ADDRESSING LANGUAGE ISSUES

- A bilingual–or rather a bicultural (it is much more than a language issue)–facilitator is preferable to an interpreter, as an interpreter may limit women's participation in various ways: interpreters are more likely to misinterpret the interests of the woman; and/or women may feel less likely to contribute if another person is speaking on their behalf. Ultimately the use of either an interpreter or a bilingual facilitator will depend on the number of participants and the length of time of the session.

- Combine activities in the women's own language with activities in English, as ultimately English will be the language women will use in community and formal leadership roles.

- If presenting some aspects in English, use plain, simple language. For some women, it might be a case of understanding the Australian accent

- Care should be taken when communicating concepts such as 'democracy', 'civic' and 'participation' as some words/concepts may not have literal translations in other languages.

- Language-specific manuals, while a good reference, on their own may not be the most effective way of communicating and may need to be supplemented with other learning materials.

- Make use of relevant bilingual resources available online.

- Ensure that evaluation tools are not reliant on women's level of literacy.

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

HAVE YOU:

✓ used evaluation tools (for example, a workshop evaluation form) to assess the program activities?

✓ involved all the facilitators during the development of the program and briefed them about the specific needs of the group?

✓ checked that the timing of the sessions is appropriate and encourages maximum attendance?

✓ checked that the venue is easily accessible by public transport or made transport arrangements for participants?

✓ ensured that participants with a disability can access the venue?

✓ ensured availability of child care services during sessions?

✓ addressed participants' language needs?

✓ addressed the dietary requirements of the participants?

✓ allowed enough time during the program sessions for the final evaluation?

✓ consistently used process and outcome measures to evaluate the program?

PACE

This section presents examples of practices that can contribute to the effectiveness of leadership programs for immigrant and refugee women. These practices are suggested as guidelines with the objective of advancing the quality of leadership programs.

The practices illustrated below are based on the issues identified as affecting women's active participation in formal leadership. The application of these practices has had a positive and tangible impact on women's participation in leadership initiatives and can be adapted to enhance the outcomes of immigrant and refugee women's participation and leadership initiatives in different organisations and settings.

- **Link women through friendships and mutual interests:** forming multicultural play groups and other types of support groups such as weaving or sewing groups can break down isolation and build skills. 'Pampering Days' and 'Girls Night Out' activities have also proven to be popular with some women (although carefully consider the name of the activity to ensure participation). A 'buddy system'– linking established with newly arrived–can also allow for more natural connections to be made.

Wellsprings for Women runs a Live the Dream project with activities such as art, craft, knitting and sewing, as well as a community kitchen, that allow women to share skills and experiences in an environment and using languages in which they are comfortable. The project's activities are attended primarily by women from Sudanese and Afghan (friendship groups) backgrounds, but are open to all immigrant and refugee women. Live the Dream also provides English language, computer and job skills classes as a pathway/ stepping stone for women to access employment and training. In addition, Wellsprings for Women runs information and referral drop-in sessions for Sudanese women that involve building women's leadership skills and empowerment on a one-to-one basis.

Wellsprings for Women also has a Home Visitation Program targeting socially isolated women as referred by other service providers (e.g. hospitals, Centrelink, Foundation House (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture) and Hanover Welfare Services). This program seeks to build women's self-confidence and empower them to connect with and participate in their local community.

- **Link women** to other groups and committees to encourage learning and to other leadership initiatives so that they can further develop their own particular capabilities.

Lead on Again, Women's Health West. The 12-month program aimed to build young women's leadership skills and support their future participation in community and leadership activities. Following a five day workshop, the program presented participants with an opportunity to connect with women's leadership initiatives within the region. These included participation as a mentor in YWCA Victoria's Assist Program (mentoring and friendship program for young women) and participation in the Harmony Project through the Royal Women's Hospital. The Harmony Project gave young women the opportunity to engage in an awareness raising campaign through sharing their stories/experiences as women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds and to participate in the planning of a Harmony Day festival on National Harmony Day (March 21st).

- **Community celebration** of events such as International Women's Day, International Family Week can encourage more active participation.

Australia Greek Welfare Society (AGWS) has mobilised women to initiate and participate in the organisation of community celebrations for events such as International Women's Day and International Family Week. These activities have been instrumental in building women's leadership skills, including communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, conflict management and project management. These events were initially hosted by AGWS but and are now independently organised by women's groups within the community. In addition to building women's leadership skills, these community events have been a platform to engage their families and communities to support women's participation and leadership initiatives.

- Encourage participation and leadership by providing women the opportunity to **volunteer**.

Southern Ethnic Advisory and Advocacy Council (SEAAC) has given young women the opportunity to volunteer as youth leaders in training sessions, camps and organising community events. Sports events have also been run as youth-led initiatives. This has helped young women develop leadership skills through practical activities involving project management and event planning.

- Engage in **group activities and excursions** which allow women to interact with different service providers. For example, 'Treasure Hunt' activities can involve women purchasing goods and services (or obtaining information) in their local area. If resources allow, also organise 'men only' and family activities, so as to engender men's support of 'women only' activities. Community barbecues generally have a good attendance.

- **Seek opportunities to partner with local government** and/or other relevant bodies in order to broaden the reach of the program and foster learning experiences.

- '**Role-modelling**' as a strategy can allow women to share their experiences and impart practical advice about the ways in which they have managed life in a new country.

- **Peer education, peer mentoring**, train-the-trainer and outreach models have been demonstrated to be more appropriate for immigrant and refugee women.

- **Provide incentives**, reimbursements, or a small payment in addition to the provision of childcare and transport. This provides practical assistance and often meets a need, which increases women's ability to participate. In addition, recognition of participants' self-worth can help build their self-confidence.

- **Provide certificates** upon completion and/or a graduation ceremony at the completion of a program to instil a sense of pride and achievement.

- Encourage women to bring along a friend for support to encourage participation.

Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) Oakleigh hosts an annual multicultural women's camp that has workshops and activities geared towards building women's self-esteem. AMES also conducts group excursions that allow women to become more familiar with and build their confidence to interact with various service providers; such as Centrelink and other members of society outside their immediate community.

'Women Matter in Local Democracies' Project: eleven Victorian local governments partnered with the Victorian Centenary of Women's Suffrage, Community Support Fund and the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPILGC). The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter was the focus for building the capacity of women to participate in non-party political processes of local democracies. The Project involved events to celebrate the centenary of the Victorian Women's vote and reached out to women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, especially those more recently arrived. The local governments planned and undertook the events for women in their communities and were supported by the WPILGC consultant. The Project resulted in the participation of over 700 women across metropolitan, regional and rural municipalities.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND LINKS

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LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Australian Rural Leadership Program
  www.rural-leaders.com.au

- The Cranlana Programme
  www.cranlana.org.au/programme.html

- Leadership Victoria
  www.leadershipvictoria.org

- Our Community
  www.ourcommunity.com.au/leadership

- Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition
  www.virwc.org.au

- Victorian Local Governance Association
  www.vlga.org.au

- Victorian Multicultural Commission
  www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP REPORTS

- Women Matter in Local Democracies Project
  www.vlga.org.au

OTHER

- Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics
  www.capwip.org

MORE INFORMATION

- You can access information on leadership:
  www.mcwh.com.au

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
STAGES OF LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING

Process Evaluation

Assessment:
Identifying Women's Needs

Analysis:
How can women's needs be met in relation to the challenges?

Preparation and Planning
Evaluation, Promotion, Recruitment and Program

Implementation

Impact Evaluation

Outcome Evaluation

Participant & Stakeholder Input
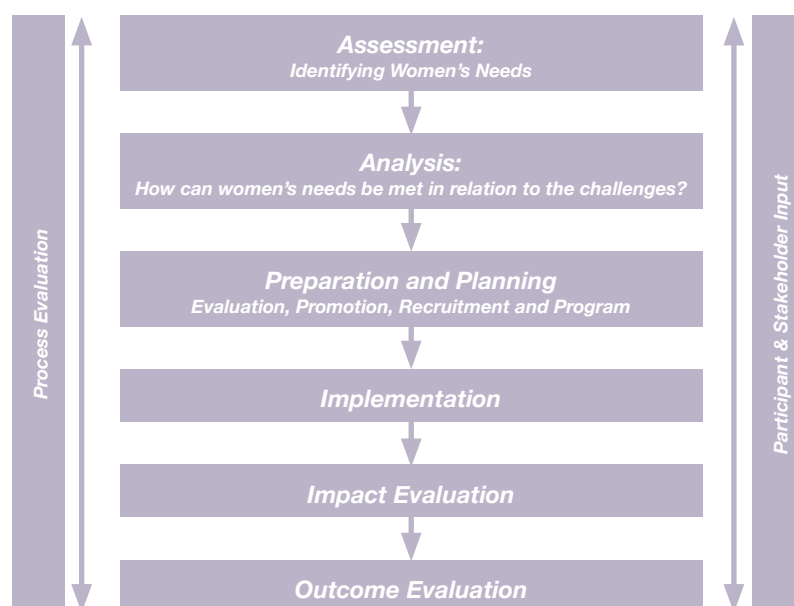
APPENDIX B:
LITERATURE REVIEW

A narrative review of national and international literature was conducted. The review aimed to explore the key methodologies and practices in leadership development for immigrant and refugee women; and the factors that encouraged participation. Sources included academic databases and the websites of key organisations and government departments. The search was limited to reports, articles, books, and training manuals published from 1999 to 2009. A citation search of key articles was also used to identify other potential sources of data contained in reference lists. The issues were identified as follows.

Conceptual issues:	How is leadership defined?
Theoretical debates:	How can 'empowerment', 'participation' and 'capacity-building' be understood and explained in relation to leadership?
Empirical evidence:	What evidence exists on current models and practices of leadership program delivery for immigrant and refugee women?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PARTICIPATE

COMMUNICATE

ADVOCATE

ENGAGE

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