

Franklin Women Mentoring Program 2017 Evaluation

Summary

The 2017 Franklin Women Mentoring Program was the first cross-organisation structured mentoring program to be delivered in the health and medical research sector in Australia. Franklin Women engaged Serendis Leadership to design and facilitate the Program based on their expertise in inclusive leadership development and delivery of successful mentoring programs in other sectors. This report presents the findings of a participant impact evaluation conducted in November-December 2018, 12 months following the formal conclusion of the 2017 Franklin Women Mentoring Program. The results of this evaluation demonstrate that the Program is achieving its intended aims of supporting mid-career women in their career progression, while also supporting an inclusive culture in the sector as mentees and mentors bring their knowledge and skills back to their teams and organisations.

KEY FINDINGS – MENTEES

- The most substantial impact from the Franklin Women Mentoring Program was on mentees' beliefs about the value of mentoring (94%), their career plan (88%), their understanding of diversity and inclusion (82%), and their knowledge and skills to be more inclusive in the workplace (82%).
- Half of the survey respondents reported a career promotion or new collaboration in the last 12 months, which they attributed to participating in the Mentoring Program.
- Having dedicated time to reflect on their strengths and establish a career plan as part of the Program was highly valued by mentees.
- 100% of mentees would recommend the Franklin Women Mentoring Program to a friend or colleague and believe it is a worthwhile investment for their organisations.

KEY FINDINGS – MENTORS

- Participation in the Program had the most substantial positive impact on the mentors' knowledge and skills to be more inclusive in the workplace (93%), their beliefs about the value of mentoring (87%), and their understanding of diversity and inclusion (73%).
- 73% of mentors believe the Program had a positive impact on their approach to managing their team.
- Having dedicated time to reflect on their career and their behaviours in the workplace was highly valued by mentors.
- 100% of mentors would recommend the Franklin Women Mentoring Program to a friend or colleague and believe it is a worthwhile investment for their organisations.



Background

The 2017 Franklin Women Mentoring Program was the first cross-organisation structured mentoring program to be delivered in the health and medical research sector in Australia. It aimed to: grow the female leadership pipeline by supporting the career progression of mentees and developing their readiness for more senior roles; raise awareness for existing leaders around gender imbalances and diversity challenges; and develop an inclusive leadership culture in participating organisations and the health and medical research sector.

The inaugural year of the Program ran for 6 months, from June to November 2017, and had 54 participants from 14 organisations (Figure 1). Participation was pitched towards mid-career women for the mentee positions, as there is evidence of attrition at this stage of career progression. Mentees were matched with mentors, of any gender, from different organisations and research areas, who represented senior leaders holding diverse positions such as Professors, laboratory heads, and professional staff. Franklin Women engaged Serendis Leadership to facilitate the Program based on their expertise in inclusive leadership development and their successful delivery of mentoring programs in other sectors. Franklin Women worked with Serendis Leadership to tailor their Program to this sector by providing our knowledge and experience as health and medical research students and professionals. The Program is unique in that it comprises both formal group sessions (5 workshops and 2 networking events) and one-on-one meetings between mentees and mentors. A Program outline can be found at Appendix 1. The formal group sessions facilitated by Serendis Leadership provide tools and strategies for both mentees and mentors to get the most out of their one-on-one sessions as well as to identify and develop their leadership skills. Another unique attribute of the Program is the considered matching process for the mentees and mentor pairs carried out by Serendis Leadership in consultation with Franklin Women, which takes into account career level, what their aims are for the Program, consultation with their organisational representative, and their Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) assessment. More information on the Program features and format can be found at the Franklin Women website: <https://franklinwomen.com.au/mentoring/>.



Figure 1: Participating Organisations in the 2017 Franklin Women Mentoring Program



At the conclusion of each of the formal group workshops of the Mentoring Program, Serendis Leadership conducted surveys to evaluate the content. The results were collated and presented to all participating organisations. They have not been included in this report, which instead is a separate evaluation completed by Franklin Women which aims to assess the impact of the Program 12 months after participation concluded rather than the content of individual workshops. However, for context, overall the workshops were rated highly by both mentees and mentors.

Method

A 10-question questionnaire was developed to assess any benefit from participating in the Franklin Women Mentoring Program 12 months post Program conclusion. The questionnaire was sent to all 54 participants (27 mentees and 27 mentors) from the 2017 Program via post and email between the 10th October and 13th November 2018. Five participants could not be contacted because they had moved to new positions and/or organisations without a forwarding address, or were on maternity leave during the data collection period.

The questionnaire included closed and open-ended questions relating to the qualities that attracted participants to the Program, their relationship with their pair (i.e. their matched mentor or mentee) during and after the Program, their perceived overall value of the Program, the impact from their participation in the Program on career skills and outcomes, and feedback on any areas for improvement.

During the same period, key contacts from all 14 participating organisations of the 2017 Program were approached via phone and email to seek their feedback on the Program, and any recommendations moving forward. This was important as organisational contacts play a key role in the establishment of participation in the Program at the organisational level, recruitment of mentees and mentors, and ongoing administration of the Program. There were difficulties reaching 3 organisations due to key contacts moving on to other positions and/or organisations.

Results Section 1: Mentees

KEY FINDINGS – MENTEES

- The most substantial impact from the Franklin Women Mentoring Program was on mentees' beliefs about the value of mentoring (94%), their career plan (88%), their understanding of diversity and inclusion (82%), and their knowledge and skills to be more inclusive in the workplace (82%).
- Half of the survey respondents reported a career promotion or new collaboration in the last 12 months, which they attributed to participating in the Mentoring Program.
- Having dedicated time to reflect on their strengths and establish a career plan as part of the Program was highly valued by mentees.
- 100% of mentees would recommend the Franklin Women Mentoring Program to a friend or colleague and believe it is a worthwhile investment for their organisations.



17 mentees completed the questionnaire, with an overall response rate of 63% (17/27). The findings from the respondents is summarised below:

A) Attractive qualities of the Franklin Women Mentoring Program

The qualities of the Franklin Women Mentoring Program that attracted the mentees to participate were their personal desire for a mentor (71%) and the consideration that it was the right time for them to participate in a mentoring program (77%). Aspects of the Program such as its structured delivery (53%) and cross-organisational nature (47%) were also considered attractive by approximately half the respondents, as well as networking opportunities (47%). 35% of respondents cited the reputation of Franklin Women as a reason for participating in the Program, although we did not measure how many of the participants were aware of Franklin Women at the time of taking part.

B) Mentee-Mentor relationships

75% of mentees reported that they met with their mentor between 4-6 times during the Program, 13% met 7 or more times, and 13% only 1-3 times. In the 12 months since the formal conclusion of the Program, mentees reported different approaches to maintaining a relationship, with the majority of pairs (41%) staying in contact casually (Figure 2).

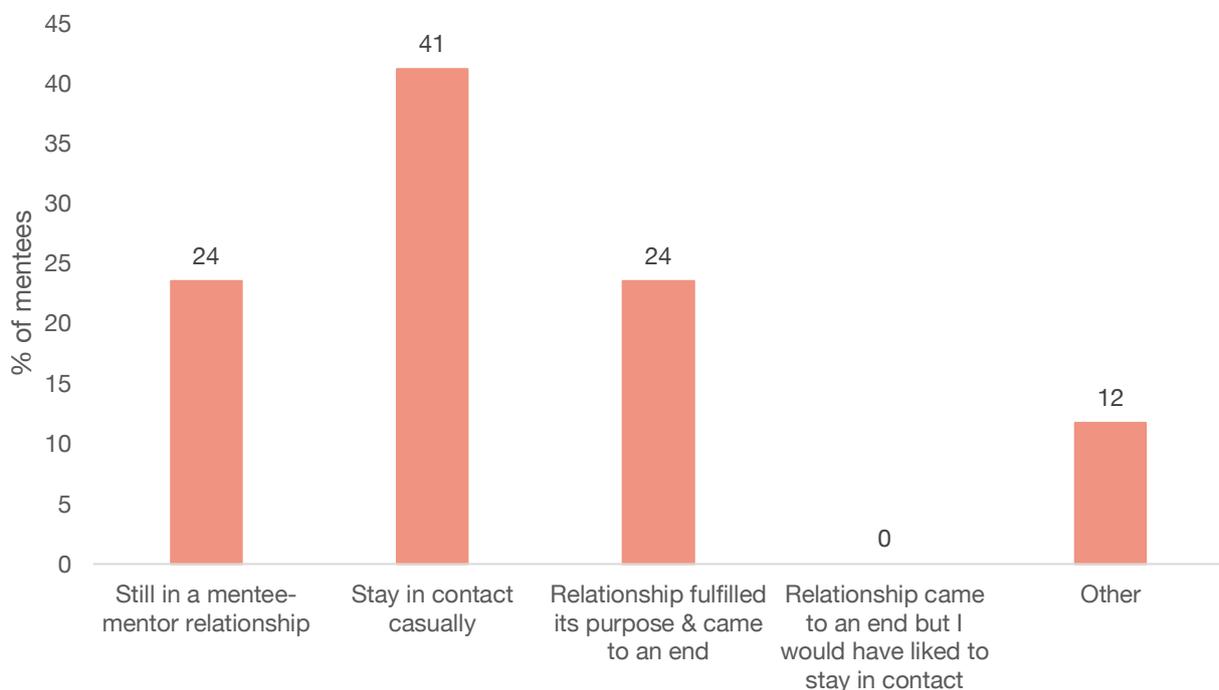


Figure 2: Nature of mentee/mentor relationship 12 months later – mentees’ perspective

In the free text questions relating to mentee-mentor relationships, many mentees highlighted that the matching process was key to the success of the Program. Two participants did also highlight that they felt their mentor was unengaged and unsure of their responsibilities as a mentor. Others felt

they needed more support to guide the content and discussion of the one-on-one sessions with their mentors. This feedback informed the design of the Program content for future years.

C) Benefits and outcomes of participation in the Program

Mentees were asked about any impacts on skills and tangible career outcomes experienced in the 12 months since completing the formal component of the Mentoring Program. With respects to impact on career-enabling skills (Table 1), over 75% of mentees reported a positive impact (a 4 or 5 out of a possible 5) that they directly attribute to their participation in the Program, on: understanding of diversity and inclusion (82%), knowledge and skills to be more inclusive (82%); career plans (88%); beliefs about the value of mentoring (94%); and their ability to have difficult conversations in the workplace (76%). Improvements in networks and collaborations were lower scoring elements.

“This Program is a great opportunity for any organisation to invest in their mid-career staff and gives participants many great tools to develop their leadership skills.”

Table 1: Percentage of mentees reporting that participation in the Program had an influence on the following career skills (5 being a lot, 1 being a little):

	% of mentees		
	1-2 (a little)	3	4-5 (a lot)
Awareness of under representation of women in the sector	12	24	65
Understanding of diversity and inclusion and why it's important	0	18	82
Knowledge and skills you can put in place in your professional capacity to be more inclusive	0	18	82
Your networks	0	29	71
Research and other professional collaborations	6	41	53
Career plan	0	12	88
Beliefs about the value of mentoring	0	6	94
Ability to have 'difficult conversations' in the workplace	0	42	76

Colour code: 70-100%

Mentees were also asked to identify tangible career outcomes that have occurred in the 12 months since completing the Program which they would attribute to their participation, in a 'tick all that apply' format (Figure 3). An improvement in communication style was highlighted as a particular benefit from the Program by the majority of mentees (71%). Half the respondents also experienced promotions or new collaborations which they believed were influenced by participation in the Program.





Figure 3: Career outcomes mentees attributed to participation in the Mentoring Program

“...gaining insight into myself, my leadership style, my strengths and building networks have really helped me over the last year and built my confidence as a leader.”

The structured and dedicated time to reflect on their career, and plan for the future, was also highlighted in follow up free text responses by many of the mentees. The development of leadership skills was particularly highlighted throughout their responses.

Mentees’ favourite elements of the Mentoring Program were one-on-one time with their mentor (47%) and the Signature Strengths workshop (30%).

All respondents agreed that the Franklin Women Mentoring Program was a worthwhile investment in staff development for their organisation, and **all agreed** that they would recommend participation in the Program to a friend or colleague at a similar career stage to them.

“(My institute will benefit) by investing in their workers and helping them realise their potential by identifying their strengths and helping them improve their communication, networking and leadership skills, and confidence overall.”

Results Section 2: Mentors

KEY FINDINGS – MENTORS

- Participation in the Program had the most substantial positive impact on the mentors' knowledge and skills to be more inclusive in the workplace (93%), their beliefs about the value of mentoring (87%), and their understanding of diversity and inclusion (73%).
- 73% of mentors believe the Program had a positive impact on their approach to managing their team.
- Having dedicated time to reflect on their career and their behaviours in the workplace was highly valued by mentors.
- 100% of mentors would recommend the Franklin Women Mentoring Program to a friend or colleague and believe it is a worthwhile investment for their organisations.

15 mentors completed the questionnaire, with an overall response rate of 55.6% (15/27). The findings from the respondents is summarised below:

A) Attractive qualities of the Franklin Women Mentoring Program

The qualities of the Franklin Women Mentoring Program that attracted the mentors to participate were that it was facilitated by experts (87%) and that it was a structured program (80%). The reputation of Franklin Women was cited by 67% of mentors. Though mentoring relationships were not new for many participants, as they were familiar with the concepts or had been actively involved in mentoring in the past, the opportunity for formal training and education in this area was also highlighted as an attractive quality.

B) Mentee-Mentor relationships

73% of mentors reported that they met with their mentees between 4-6 times during the Program, 20% met 7 or more times, and 7% met only 1-3 times. In the 12 months since the formal conclusion of the Program, mentors reported different approaches to maintaining a relationship, with the majority (40%) saying their relationship had fulfilled its purpose and naturally come to an end (Figure 4). It is worth noting that participants in the evaluation were not necessarily from matched pairs as not all Program participants were involved in this evaluation, hence the slightly different distribution of responses to what was reported by mentees above.



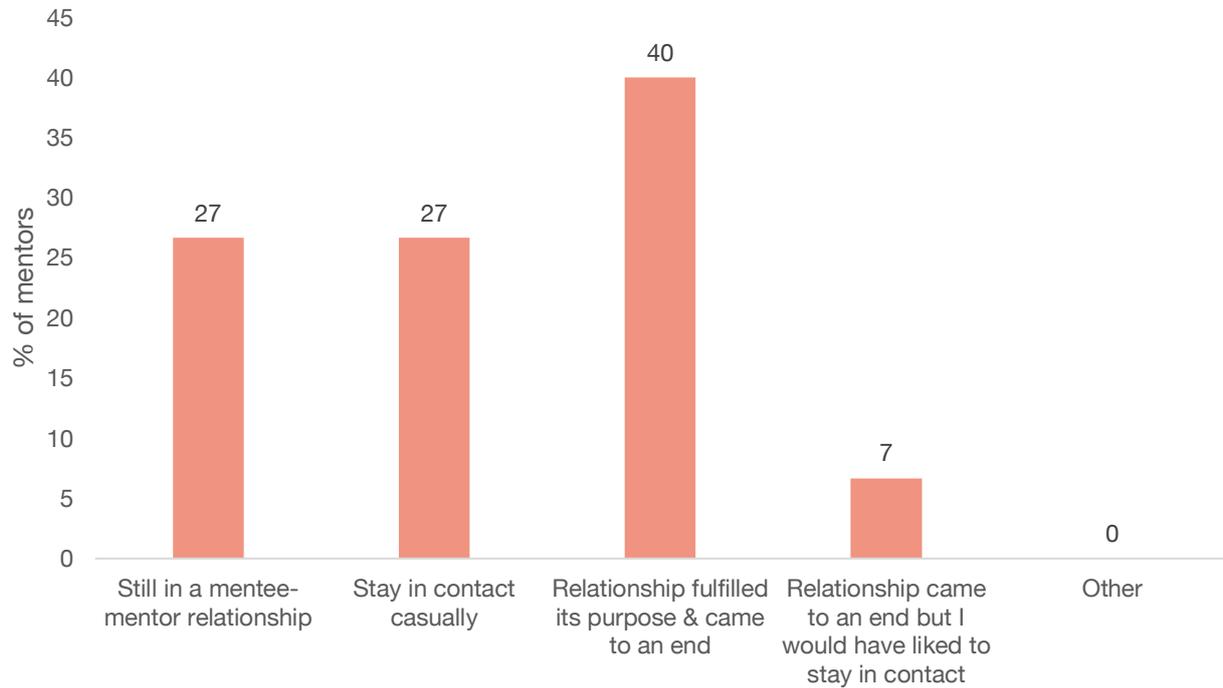


Figure 4: Nature of mentee/mentor relationship 12 months later – mentors’ perspective

As with the mentees, many mentors also highlighted that the considered matching process was a key element for the Program.

“I think the matched nature of mentor and mentee is the crucial element in the success of this relationship ...trust is easier to establish.”

C) Benefits and impacts of participation in the Program

Mentors were asked a similar series of questions regarding any impacts on skills and tangible career outcomes they have experienced since completing the formal Program. Mentors reported a 4 or 5 (out of a possible 5) impact level on the following career skills (Table 2), that they directly attribute to their participation in the Program: knowledge and skills that can be put in place in their professional capacity to be more inclusive (93%), and their beliefs about the value of mentoring (87%). Similar to the mentees’ responses, it was the leadership and inclusivity skills that were highlighted as most improved, with networks and career plans lower rated.

Table 2: Percentage of mentors reporting that participation in the Program had an influence on the following career enablers (5 being a lot, 1 being a little):

	% of mentees		
	1-2 (a little)	3	4-5 (a lot)
Awareness of under representation of women in the sector	13	20	67
Understanding of diversity and inclusion and why it's important	7	20	73
Knowledge and skills you can put in place in your professional capacity to be more inclusive	0	7	93
Your networks	20	60	20
Research and other professional collaborations	27	47	27
Career plan	27	47	27
Beliefs about the value of mentoring	0	13	87
Ability to have 'difficult conversations' in the workplace	7	60	33

Colour code: 70-100%

Given their different career stage, mentors were asked a different set of 'tick all that apply' tangible career outcomes that have occurred since the Program and that they would attribute to their participation (Figure 5). Particularly highlighted were improvements to their approach to team management (73%), and, similar to the mentees, communication style (53%).

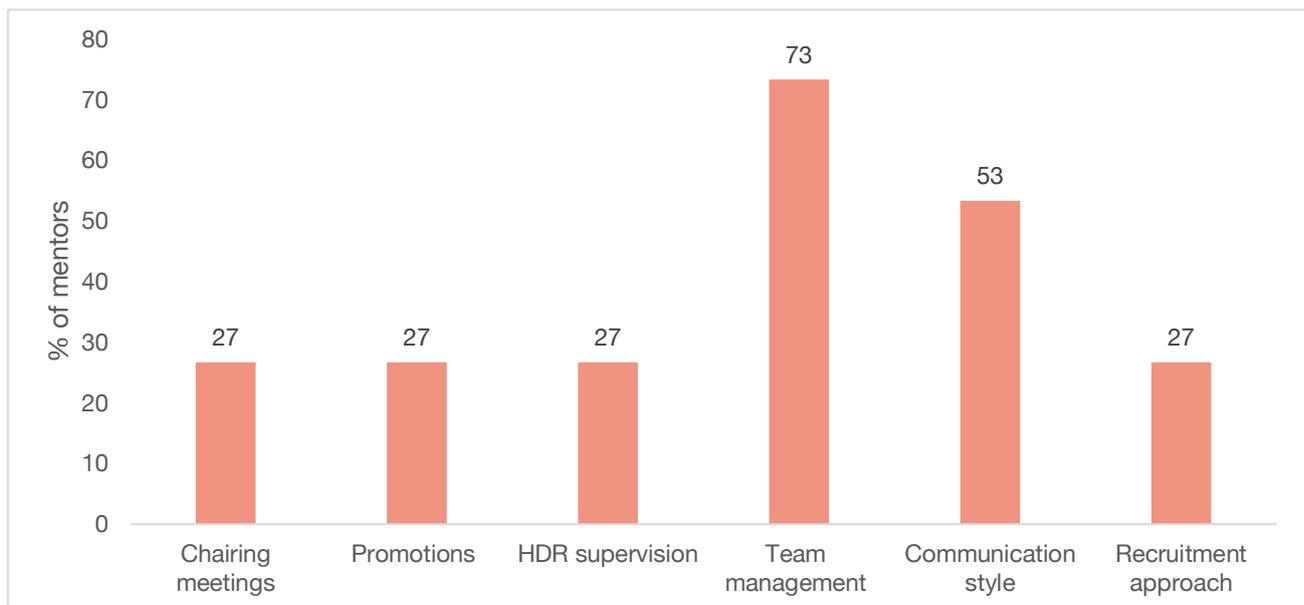


Figure 5: Career outcomes mentors attributed to participation in the Mentoring Program

Mentors particularly highlighted in the follow up free text responses that the opportunity to reflect on their career and their behaviour and leadership in the context of diversity and inclusion was a valuable experience. They also commented that the formal training in mentoring was another key benefit of the Program, as this is not something that has typically been made available in the sector before.

“Despite being a senior University academic, I had little previous formal instruction to mentoring techniques and strategy.”

Similar to the mentees, the mentors’ favourite sessions of the Mentoring Program were one-on-one time with their mentee (53.3%) and the Signature Strengths workshop (33.3%).

Again, **all mentors agreed** that the Franklin Women Mentoring Program was a worthwhile investment of their organisation for staff development, and that they **would all recommend** participation in the Program to a friend or colleague at a similar career stage to them.

“Great scheme and the only one I would recommend.”

Results Section 3: Organisational contacts

Four organisational contacts were in a position to provide feedback on their reasons for initial sign up to the Program, process for participant selection, processes for formal or informal feedback from participants, and examples of impact of the Program.

Internal advocates were the driving force behind participation in the Program for three of the organisations, with the other coming on board after a meeting with Franklin Women’s Founder about the Program. Only one organisation had a formal process for feedback for the participants. The other organisations indicated that they would like some further support with regards to this, and opportunities to learn from how other organisations are facilitating and achieving feedback.

Suggestions for strategic demonstration of the benefits of the Program, in order to elicit future buy-in, included linking the participation of research institutes or university faculties with their Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategies and Science in Australian Gender Equity (SAGE) deliverables. Other observed benefits for participants due to the program included:

- NHMRC fellowships
- Promotions
- Opportunity to move into a university leadership role
- Establishment of internal mentoring programs
- Increases in confidence
- Awareness of organisations like Serendis Leadership who can facilitate organisation-specific workshops and talks

Results Section 4: Where can we improve

In addition to the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from participants of the Mentoring Program, a number of opportunities were identified for improvement. Using the free text responses



from the mentees and mentors, key themes regarding elements for Program improvement have been summarised in Table 3, along with the numbers of mentees and mentors who referred to these elements.

Table 3: Elements for improvement of the Mentoring Program highlighted by mentees and mentors

Element	Mentees	Mentors
Rushed workshops	4	-
More guidance for one-on-one sessions	3	1
More opportunities for casual networking	2	1
More content on driving diversity and inclusion change, rather than overview of the issue (e.g. implementing difficult workplace conversations)	2	1
Unengaged mentor	2	-
Establish an alumni network (both for networking activities and longer term evaluations)	1	2
Facilitator's knowledge of the sector	1	-
More male mentors	1	-
Expand the Program (more participants and diverse organisations within the sector)	-	2

Actions for the Franklin Women Mentoring Program moving forward

Franklin Women strives to deliver the best possible Mentoring Program, one that meets the needs of women and their peers in the health and medical research sector. These evaluation findings were reviewed in detail by the Franklin Women team and discussed with Serendis Leadership to establish a plan to make improvements for future cohorts to maximise the Program's impact in this sector. Future planning took into account the aims of Program, other initiatives in the sector already offering relevant training or development to reduce duplication, and the magnitude of additional benefit gained relative to additional cost of the Program to maintain its accessibility.

Agreed actions included:

1. Progressing a formal 12-month impact evaluation with the 2018 cohort participants with the aim of disseminating the findings via academic literature and informal networks.
2. Developing a one-page summary for the 2018 Program to support organisations to recruit mentees and mentors and reduce their administrative burden.
3. Bringing forward the Signature Strengths workshop to take place earlier in the Program schedule and modifying content in the initial mentee and mentor workshops to better support the one-on-one mentoring sessions over the course of the Program.
4. Calling upon mentors who have previously participated in the Program where organisations require support for recruiting additional leaders in future cohorts.



5. Investigating extending the length of some of the workshops, taking into account that this was only requested by the mentees, and the mentors may find longer sessions a barrier to participation.
6. Extending room bookings for future workshops by an hour to provide informal networking opportunities.
7. Investigating how Franklin Women can support organisations with an internal feedback process for participants to share their learnings with their peers.
8. Investigating the appetite for an additional session in the formal Program for mentees to network as well as the creation of an alumni group for mentees to continue building this network of peers.

Conclusion

The Franklin Women Mentoring Program is the first cross-organisation facilitated mentoring program for the health and medical research sector. Mentee and mentor participants from the 2017 inaugural year were invited to participate in a Program evaluation 12 months following its conclusion to determine the self-reported, long term impact on their personal skills and career development. The evaluation found that knowledge and skills increased in a variety of areas for both mentees and mentors, extending from the value of mentoring to improved awareness of diversity and inclusion and how to apply inclusive skills in their workplace. The evaluation also highlighted that participation in the Program resulted in tangible career outcomes that were seen as early as the year following Program completion, including new research collaborations and career promotions. We believe this demonstrates that the Program is achieving its intended aims of supporting women in their career progression, while also supporting an inclusive culture in the sector as mentees and mentors bring their knowledge and skills back to their teams and organisations. All participants would recommend the Franklin Women Mentoring Program to a friend or colleague and believe it is a worthwhile investment.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all the participants of the 2017 Franklin Women Mentoring Program and evaluation, whose feedback has been critical to demonstrating the value and success of this initiative, supporting its ongoing delivery, and improving the Program for future cohorts.

Authorship and acknowledgements

This evaluation was conducted and reported by Dr Amy Vassallo and Dr Melina Georgousakis. This report was edited by Dr Sarah Frost.

January 2020

Recommended citation: Vassallo, A., Frost, S., Georgousakis, M. (Franklin Women). Franklin Women Mentoring Program 2017 Evaluation. Final report January 2020.



We would like to acknowledge the Franklin Women Peer Advisory Group for sector knowledge input; Serendis Leadership for Program delivery including all workshop content and facilitation; and all participants for contributing to this evaluation.



Appendix 1

SCHEDULE 2017

PHASE 1: 20 MARCH – 19 MAY APPLICATIONS OPEN & SELECTION PHASE

Program information and application forms will be made available online at www.franklinwomen.com.au

PHASE 2: 19 MAY – 19 JUNE MATCHING PROCESS

Application forms for all participants to be received by 19 May. Interviews and surveys will help determine optimal matching for each participant. Mentees and mentors will be paired very carefully based on their level of experience, area of expertise and personality style.

PHASE 3: 19 JUNE PROGRAM BEGINS: MENTEES INITIAL WORKSHOP

Half-day workshop to give mentees tools and strategies to gain the most from their mentoring relationship.

22 JUNE MENTORS INITIAL BRIEFING

Introduction to the program and forum for mentors to discuss strategies to support women in this industry.

22 JUNE MENTORING PROGRAM KICK-OFF

First introduction between mentees and mentors followed by panel discussion on successful mentoring.

7 AUGUST JOINT WORKSHOP

A session for both mentees and mentors designed to help mentees identify their individual signature strengths.

4 SEPTEMBER MENTEES ONLY SESSION

A workshop designed to help mentees build their personal resilience - share feedback and insights from their mentoring

6 SEPTEMBER MENTORS ONLY SESSION

A workshop for mentors to enhance their mentoring toolkit - shifting the conversation from tactical to strategic.

12 OCTOBER PANEL DISCUSSION

Panel of senior mentors to answer mentees' questions on career highlights, leadership development and gender diversity.

23 NOVEMBER GRAND FINALE

Close of the mentoring program. Cocktail event with keynote speaker.

For more program information, please contact:

Melina Georgousakis
Franklin Women
melina@franklinwomen.com.au

Bianca Havas
Serendis Leadership Consulting
bianca@serendis.com.au

