Not-for-Profit People Management & Analytics

Changing the Nature and Narrative of Capacity Building

Highlights From the Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study

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Welcome

Capacity building is important for the sustainability and success of the Australian not-for-profit (NFP) sector. Probably everyone agrees with that statement. And then, views quickly diverge: what should we invest in, who should benefit, and what is capacity building anyhow? Those are not mere academic questions but they directly or indirectly matter a great deal to NFP leaders, funders, and policymakers.

Accordingly, when those stakeholders of the NFP sector talk or think about building capacity, they might be understanding, measuring and doing different things. Or, they may agree and act on the basis of some engrained orientation that is characterised by what everyone has been doing all the time. This dilemma should profoundly trouble all of us. We might miss something important.

To illustrate, trainings, leadership development, and operational support can all be critical building blocks. Often they are funded through external grants or scholarships. And thus, in the grand scheme of the NFP sector, it will always be a mere selected few organisations and people that can benefit from such.

So whilst we need to applaud and continue those typical types of capacity building, our lens should widen. If we are serious about efficiencies and impact at scale, we need to address how all NFP employees, volunteers, and organisations can reach their full potential.

The time has come to change the nature and narrative of capacity building, with a much greater emphasis on organisational systems, people management and evidence-based practice.

Adopting this perspective means also showing respect for the broader NFP workforce. It's not a joke when more than one million employees and volunteers come together every day to work for something bigger. In fact, most people reading these very lines are probably in a job because of them.

More generally, since most NFP people are focused on making an impact, few focus on those very people. Likewise, research on the NFP workforce is scarce.

However, there is evidence for both: the majority of all NFP financial resources are associated with the workforce, and the performance of those people substantially shapes the economic and social impact of the sector.

Accordingly, the theory of change is that enhancing the leadership, management, and governance of NFP operations will better convert limited resources and lead to a better society. This is not new or news. The dilemma is, such views are neither always shared nor sufficiently embraced, albeit their potential to improve impact and our lives is profound.

The people and partners behind the Learning for Purpose initiative are humbled and motivated by what the Australian NFP organisations and their people seek to achieve. The purpose of this report is to stimulate a more balanced and evidence-based approach to how the sector should think and go about building its capacity.

Last year, 3884 NFP people participated in our latest research study. Your input has directly enabled evidence-based insights. We think that matters now more than ever. Thank you! This also suggests that many share and support the philosophy to research and realise an even better NFP sector. As this endeavour continues, please consider participating in future research to aid more insights.

In that spirit, for now, we appreciate the opportunity to share some theoretical, empirical and practical insights. So how should this report be used? Read it and consider the arguments and evidence and how they relate to your own working life and organisational mandate. Initiate conversations, collaborations and change. Share your thoughts and questions with us. This report is only a beginning. It's effect will be determined by what others and you choose to do.

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Executive Summary

The Australian Not-for-Profit (NFP) sector is driven by people, and our reliance on them continues to deepen.

1.3 million employees and 2.9 million volunteers work via 52,817 charities for a better Australia.

They make an economic contribution of about $129 billion or roughly 8% of the Australian GDP.

Charities designate about 56.8% ($75.4 billion) of their total expenditures toward employee expenses.

This NFP workforce is among the largest nationally, and continuous to grow.

Lifting its productivity by even just a little, will better convert funding and realise more positive impact.

The most potent lever for building this capacity is to improve the total work experience, for all.

This requires NFP leadership, management and governance to use evidence-based practice.

People analytics and science must aid evidence-based strategy and tactics.

The 2017 Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study assembled the most comprehensive NFP people data set.

It is designed to render the total work experience transparent: What works for whom, when, and how?

Analyses here highlight determinants, processes, and outcomes of performance and impact:

Worker engagement predicts organisational performance and impact, and staff attrition.

Experiences of learning, wellbeing, leadership, work design, and people systems predict the above.

For starters, the high levels of psychological distress and imbalanced opportunities for growth are alarming.

The NFP sector shows great variability toward realising and optimising this total work experience.

A new capability framework has been developed to aid NFP operations and professional development.

Relative importance and rank order of NFP capabilities can inform future capacity building.

Suggestions for the NFP sector are shared on how to cultivate high impact organisations.

A broader vision to research and realise capacity building is provided.

It requires you.

The Learning for Purpose is an independent, non-partisan, national initiative to research and realise capacity building in the Australian not-for-profit sector. It connects the science on work, organisations and people with advanced data analytics for the vision of a thriving not-for-profit sector that attracts, develops, retains and motivates the best talent to achieve great things. Central to this are researching the managerial and organisational levers that strategically facilitate performance and impact. We freely share what works, in what way and for whom. Designed as a systems-change approach, we help not-for-profit leaders, funders, and policymakers understand how to best invest money, time, and energy. The initiative is led by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia in collaboration with the not-for-profit sector, social enterprises, universities, government partners, industry and philanthropists. Got an idea or challenge? Talk to us for collaboration or partnership.

The Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia (CSI UWA) is a catalyst for change in our world, creating and delivering education that transforms, research that informs best practice, and public engagement that inspires and mobilises change makers. CSI UWA is part of a national collaboration with UNSW Australia and Swinburne University of Technology. Together, the three universities form the Centre for Social Impact, which takes a systems approach to developing innovative solutions to the biggest social challenges today, with a vision for a better Australia tomorrow. At the University of Western Australia (UWA) world-leading researchers tackle global, national and regional issues to make the world a better place. It is a member of the internationally recognised Australian Group of Eight. Since 1911 UWA has helped shape the careers of over 100,000 graduates and in 2017 was ranked 91st in the Top 100 of universities around the world (ARWU 2017).

The Australian Research Council – ARC – is a Commonwealth entity and advises the Australian Government on research matters, administers the National Competitive Grants Program, a significant component of Australia's investment in research and development, and has responsibility for Excellence in Research for Australia. The ARC's purpose is to grow knowledge and innovation for the benefit of the Australian community through funding the highest quality research, assessing the quality, engagement and impact of research and providing advice on research matters. The outcomes of ARC-funded research deliver cultural, economic, social and environmental benefits to all Australians. This research was supported through Linkage grant 140100245.

The Australian Scholarships Foundation – ASF – is the only Australian organisation solely focused on funding and facilitating scholarships for Australian not-for-profit directors and staff to undertake education, training and mentoring programs that improve their ability to lead and manage their organisations. Not-for-profit organisations control significant assets, have a large workforce and are growing in size and importance. Yet, they typically do not have access to sufficient funding for staff training that would make them more efficient and effective. ASF works with a number of education partners and supporters to access and make scholarships available in a growing range of leadership and management training programs.

Australian Executor Trustees – AET – has been helping Australians engage with philanthropy for more than 130 years. The company establishes and manages charitable trusts, including a portfolio of discretionary charitable trusts. AET's similar named Learning for Impact is a special initiative of its discretionary funding program. Launched in 2015, this funding program supports not-for-profit organisations that recognise and value the role talented staff play in delivering outcomes for their organisation and the communities they serve. AET is part of IOOF Holdings Limited a leading provider of wealth management products and services in Australia. IOOF is listed in the top 100 on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX:IFL).

Sponsor Perspective

At EY, we are truly committed to building a better working world and by this we mean, increased trust and confidence in business, sustainable growth, development of talent in all its forms, and greater collaboration. This is our purpose and the reason we exist as an organisation.

We strive to build a better working world through our collective and individual actions and by engaging with like-minded organisations and individuals such as the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia.

Running through the fabric of our business is a strong sense of obligation to serve a number of different stakeholders who count on us to deliver quality and excellence in everything we do. We are keen to use our global reach and scale to convene conversations about the challenges facing us all.

We applaud the vital function that the Not-for-Profit sector delivers across Australian society, making a positive difference to the lives of people and communities they serve. The business of running a Not-for-Profit has never been more challenging and we know that when the Not-for-Profit sector works better, our communities are more likely to thrive.

As a business we have made substantial investment in our Human Services capability and have made a deep and personal commitment to deliver solutions and outcomes that make a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable people.

The Learning for Purpose initiative is closely aligned with our Human Services mandate of "empowering our communities to achieve better life outcomes". This important research uniquely connects the science on work, organisations and people, coupled with the value that data analytics can unlock to help Not-for-Profit leaders, funders, and policy makers better understand how best to invest limited money, time, and energy.

As the world continues to be impacted by globalisation, demographics, technology, innovation and regulation, organisations are under pressure to adapt quickly and build agile people cultures that respond to these disruptive forces. Important for Not-for-Profits is the need to harness their people agenda – which means having the right people, with the right capabilities, in the right place, for the right cost, doing the right things.

This research shows that if Not-for-Profit organisations give attention to the growth, wellbeing and overall work experience of their people, they are more motivated, stay, and perform better.

Data has already been gaining traction in the business world for some time, with organisations becoming highly data driven in every aspect of their operations from market research, changes to business services, targeting new customers and critically sensing trends. As these trends are further intensifying and affecting everyone, Not-for-Profit organisations and leaders too must embrace more evidence-driven perspectives to better manage their people and programs for positive change.

The free workforce analytics offered by the Learning for Purpose initiative to all Australian Not-for-Profit entities is an amazing step change and unique opportunity for the sector.

At EY, we believe the better the question, the better the answer, the better the world works. This research by the Centre for Social Impact UWA has first changed the lens on capacity building to ask better questions, and then offers intelligent insights to assist the Not-for-Profit sector to maintain and increase its impact.

Michael Rundus | Partner, EY
Assurance | Tax | Transactions | Advisory

A report can be an excellent way to reach out to a broad audience of interested readers. Often, scientific work is more or less willingly conducted and published in an ivory tower. This report aspires to be different, it is designed to give all of us the opportunity to facilitate discussion on supporting the Australian not-for-profit workforce and its impact.

This report is presented in three parts.

Part I integrates facts and trends on the Australian not-for-profit sector and its workforce vis-a-vis empirical evidence to advocate that capacity is to be build via high impact organisations, the total work experience and people analytics.

Part II explains the rationale and makeup of the Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study, its inaugural data wave 2017, and highlights insights and examples across a broad range of themes.

Part III summarises findings, considers a range of discussion points to facilitate conversations and collaborations, and proposes a future vision to research and realise capacity building.

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Not-for-Profit People Management & Analytics

The leadership and management of not-for-profit employees and volunteers, using evidence-based practice and people analytics, must be acknowledged as the key to maximising impact and positive change. Some thoughts.

People are the primary driver of organisational viability and success. Time and again, research highlights that organisations with more motivated, capable, and healthy staff outperform others through increased client satisfaction, innovation, and revenue, among other factors[1-3]. This is especially true in the not-for-profit (NFP) sector, where organisations do not seek to monetise intellectual property or innovations safeguarded by patents.

Instead, NFP organisations rely on their employees and volunteers to not only fuel their economic sustenance, but to fulfil their central mandate of promoting positive change in the world[4]. Thus, the imperative for more impact thus becomes that leading and managing NFP employees and volunteers must be acknowledged as *the* central mandate to maximize positive change for a better world.

Of course, this process of affirming and improving personnel goes beyond the human resource department, should it even exist. Instead, this notion can be likened to a symphony orchestra and its component parts: Within the symphony, there is an important place, time, and sequence for each of the instruments and groups.Lifting the total work experience and creating high-impact organisations requires the coordination of executives, line managers, HR professionals, policymakers and philanthropists. In short, it's our collective responsibility to build the organisational and leadership capacity in the NFP sector.

How can we more effectively execute our mission through our people? What can we do to increase the commitment and productivity of the workforce? What investment targets should be chosen for more impact? These are but a few of the many critical questions being asked in the NFP context.

Maximizing impact requires an overall philosophy toward how the sector views and leads its people. Granted, there is no shortage of practices, processes, and policies related to maximizing workers' contributions. Still, humans and their institutions are complex, interacting through webs of influence that do not always conform to economic perspectives and political agendas that emphasize rational action and simple rules [5].

Nonetheless, the most powerful driver of greater impact hides in plain sight: More than a million NFP people work every day to improve lives and communities throughout Australia. So whilst they give out blankets, teach the youth, and bring us the arts, they also seek growth, meaning, and control over their future.

One of the most challenging and rewarding parts of most NFP employees' and volunteers' lives is arguably the work they do. We need to consider how they can become the most engaged, developed, healthy – and thus productive – workforce.

Regrettably, research on the nexus of these phenomena within the NFP context has failed to keep pace, leaving leaders, funders and policymakers with outdated, disparate or unfounded insights, if any. In response, we seek to facilitate more awareness about substantiated managerial mechanisms vis-à-vis the current state and experiences of the NFP workforce.

The broad purpose of the Learning for Purpose initiative is to research and realise NFP capacity building. Capacity building or capacity development refer to whatever is needed to bring a NFP entity or sector to the next level of operational, programmatic, or financial maturity, so it can more effectively and efficiently advance its mission[124]. As such, capacity building is about continuous improvement (not some one-time effort) toward more sustainable organisations with more impact.

The goal of this strategic report is to encourage leaders, funders, and policymakers to address capacity building and thus impact from a well-founded position. Due to a number of converging issues, trends and findings, the next pages juxtapose topics that usually take place within different communities and schools of thought. The hope is that the logical and analytical integration of these subjects will illuminate opportunities for all stakeholders of the NFP sector.

The Australian Not-for-Profit Sector & Workforce

The not-for-profit (NFP) sector is one of the most fundamental pillars of the Australian economy and social fabric. There are few areas of life, society, and government that do not benefit from NFP endeavours, which address social disadvantage, well-being, civic awareness, education, community cohesion, employment, emergency relief, spiritual orientations, legal support, cultural heritage, biodiversity, artistic creation, sports, research, and more.

The majority of this work is carried out by charitable organisations, which seek to benefit the public in direct and indirect ways. Other NFP forms include, for instance, associations, informal organisations, mutuals and cooperatives; however, systematic data on these forms is scarce, inhibiting detailed analyses. NFP organisations are institutionally separate from government—self-governing and non-compulsory.

This research follows the most commonly adopted definition of a NFP: a legal organisation that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people. Importantly, a NFP organisation can make a 'profit', though such profits are not distributed to a set of directors, stockholders, or managers, but ought to be applied towards the organisation's purpose.

For the most part, this report will focus its analyses and discussion on Australian charities. However, the organisational mechanisms researched herein, along with their managerial implications, are likely applicable elsewhere.

In 2016, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) recorded 52,817 charities, covering about 1.3 million employees and 2.9 million volunteers. Their economic contribution was estimated at about $129 billion or roughly 8% of the Australian GDP. Those figures do not include the value of volunteering, estimated to contribute a further $12.8 billion through 328 million unpaid hours[6,7] earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation.

Paid NFP staff represent about 10.6% of Australia's total workforce or about every tenth worker[8]. Collectively, charities employ nearly as many people as the retail industry, which is considered the largest industry in Australia[9].

Importantly, NFP missions are fairly labour intensive. On average, charities designate about 56.8% of their total expenditures toward employee expenses. Roughly $75.4 billion per year are used to pay salaries, leave, and superannuation[8]. This does not account for any costs tied to, for instance, recruiting or training employees or volunteers.

The majority of this workforce (~90 %) is employed by a small fraction of all NFP organisations (~20 %). This power law distribution suggests that there is a number of very large NFP organisations where small changes in people strategy and operations can produce very large effects[10]. On the flip side, there is a very long tail of fairly small and lean NFP endeavours, which seek and benefit from any support they can get.

It is also worth highlighting that, between 2014 to 2016, the number of charities decreased by about 5%[11], presumably due to revoked registrations, mergers, and market consolidation. This may suggest that, while some NFP organisations clearly do well, others may not be sufficiently equipped to meet current and future challenges. At the same time, more charities grew than decreased in size, added about 4.4% to their overall employed workforce[11]. Nationally, there has been a decrease in volunteer participation[12], and coupled with an increase in demand for services, there appears to be a shift from volunteer to paid work. This accords with the several years of above-average job growth seen in the nationwide community-services sector[13].

Taken together, the Australian NFP sector is driven by people—and our reliance on this growing population only continues to deepen.

Imagine if one could lift the productivity of this workforce by even 1%. Consider the business case of better converting those private, public and philanthropic dollars. Now let's imagine what this could actually do for our communities, lives, and society.

EMPLOYEE DISTRIBUTION ACROSS ALL AUSTRALIAN CHARITIES

52,817 AUSTRALIAN CHARITIES
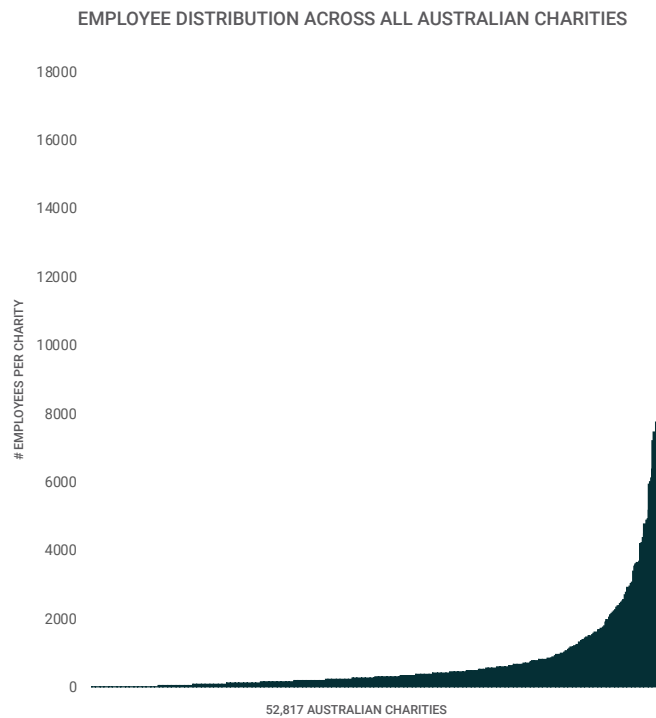
90% OF NFP PEOPLE ARE EMPLOYED BY 20% OF THE NFP ORGANISATIONS

RELATIVE CHARITY SECTOR SIZE BY EMPLOYEE #

AVERAGE EMPLOYEE EXPENSES IN %

TOTAL GROSS INCOME CLASS (UP TO)

Class	Value
XXL $100,000,000+	55%
XL $100,000,000	52%
L $10,000,000	49%
M $1,000,000	44%
S $250,000	20%
XS $50,000	5%

PROPORTION OF TOTAL GROSS INCOME DEDICATED TO EMPLOYEE EXPENSES

AVERAGE EMPLOYEE EXPENSES PER CHARITY SECTOR

Civic and advocacy activities, 57%
Social services, 59%
Employment and training, 61%
Aged Care Activities, 61%
Mental health and crisis intervention, 55%
Other Education, 55%
Other health service delivery, 55%
Law and legal services, 49%
Primary and secondary education, 56%
Other recreation and social club activity, 45%
Animal Protection, 40%
Research, 41%
Environmental activities, 39%
Culture and arts, 37%
Religious activities, 36%
Income support and maintenance, 30%
Economic, social and community development, 28%
Sports, 25%
Emergency Relief, 29%
Housing activities, 22%
International activities, 17%

Challenges & Trends

Australian NFP organisations and their people are increasingly challenged by more demand, competition and scrutiny—all of which can inhibit their ability to advocate and act.

To illustrate, there is a greater requirement for social services, due partly to a growing yet aging population, alongside increasing income inequality[14]. Fundamental shifts in how services will have to be delivered are also affecting providers and the market as a whole (e.g., NDIS)[15].

Consequently, there is both more pressure on budgets and more rivalry for grant funding. Federal and state governments are facing budget deficits, while limited economic growth is reducing private sector support. There are also signs that Australians may be giving less in donations[16].

Thus, it is no longer feasible for everyone to chase the hamster wheel of scattered donor appeals and external grants. With the dwindling reliability of these sources, there is an increasing shift from fundraising to financing.

To compound matters, legislation reviews and the changed leadership at the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission have resulted in uncertainty and concern about losing independence and taking on extra regulatory burden[17-20].

Amidst these changes, NFP organisations must increasingly navigate global labour markets that feature transient and diverse workforces, skills shortages, and accelerations in labour costs and rates of organisational change[21]. Additionally, many skilled people are about to retire and the newer generations seem to be more 'sector-agnostic'.

As a result, NFP organisations have to progressively compete with the public and private sector, hybrid social enterprises, B-corps, and start-ups to resource the talent and competencies needed for organizational success[22].

The matter is further complicated by evolutions in the concept of work itself. The past decade or so has brought a dramatically heightened need for more collaboration, reduced supervision, and dispersed locality, not to mention highly diffused and cognitively demanding responsibilities[21,23-25]. This does not even begin to consider the effects that further automation and artificial intelligence will have on work as we know it.

These tectonic shifts to organisational management are no longer the preserve of the commercial community seeking to make a profit; they dramatically affect NFP operations. For this reason, stakeholders frequently demand that NFP organisations improve their efficiency, even as others argue that the sector is already in a starvation cycle obsessed with 'overhead' ratios[26-28].

In many ways, these issues are interrelated. They highlight the increasing complexity and dynamism that characterise the current environment for NFP organisations, and they underscore the role people play. After all, the employees and volunteers must execute the various strategies for economic and social impact and generate sustainable organisational performance levels across the NFP sector.

Against this background, the limited amount of research specifically on NFP organisations suggests that those that adopt certain ways of managing and organising people demonstrate higher employee satisfaction, performance, and impact[29,30].

This is further explored in turn.

High-Impact Organisations

Organisations are best understood as systems comprising interrelated and interdependent parts, such as their employees and volunteers, and the practices, policies, and activities associated with managing them. The responsibility for this system is often intuitively assigned to either the human resource function, which is concerned with staff systems and formal processes, or to 'leaders' who shall influence others towards collective goals. Often those paradigms operate in isolation from each other, sometimes even with mutually exclusive agendas, and thus to suboptimal ends.

For example, many traditional staff processes are derived from the organisation's needs and goals (e.g., efficiency, impact) and thus seek to control workers so they meet those goals irrespective of their own needs and goals (e.g., family, career). Some of those dilemmas stem from the view that organisations are machines with transactional human resources (i.e., someone to do the job): The organisation manages benefits, compensation, and compliance from a distance, while dictating that there is one right way to achieve efficiency, control, and productivity. Practitioners and scholars have learned that such approaches are seldom successful or sustainable[31,32].

Instead, people are most conducive to organisational viability when they are viewed as the transformational product of their multiple psychological attributes, such as abilities, personality, values, and interests[33,34]. Granted, not all the benefits of this approach can be immediately captured in pure dollar terms. However, when synthesizing the findings of more than 200 studies with upward of 60,000 total participants, the literature indicates this philosophy has some very transformational and desirable effects on operations, staff retention, productivity, growth, and market returns[35–38].

In the same vein, there has been a turn toward synergistic perspectives that acknowledge the complexity of organisations and the various ways of approaching institutional goals. Thus, there is a growing belief that there may not be one best way to organise. However, the evidence also clearly shows that not all ways of organising and managing are equally effective.

For instance, some of the most potent organisational systems influence the performance of their people by enhancing skills, motivation, and opportunities[39]. In other words, when people sense a growth in their abilities, enjoy what they are asked to do, and are allowed some scope of responsibility, they will generally be highly engaged and contribute more fully to the mission.

Importantly, evidence also demonstrates that organisational features mutually reinforce each other to send stronger signals together than they do separately[40]. When such complementary features are understood and modelled by executives, the human resource function, *and* the line management, that is when staff compliance morphs into commitment. Indeed, workplace practices that are genuinely aligned are seldom about control and more about involvement[41]. The staff's willingness to assume more responsibilities thereby enables dramatic leaps in impact.

Importantly, meta-analytic research demonstrates those mechanisms operate similarly across different types of organizations and industries[42]. This contests those claims about the management of NFP organisations being an entirely different beast. At the same time, NFP operations do show some idiosyncratic features, such as a multiplicity of stakeholders, much dependence on external funding, and the use of volunteers. Research and practice ought to acknowledge these characteristics where they matter, but not assume them as excuses to put a cap on what the NFP sector may or may not do or achieve.

Taken together, high-impact organisations consider people and their management as a strategic territory[43] that spans all levels. Focusing on the total work experience is the key to restoring credibility to the adage that people are indeed an organisation's greatest asset.

The Total Work Experience

People often consider work to be an integral part of life. It is thus useful to reframe employment and volunteering as a life journey with many interactions[44]. In this vein, the total work experience can be understood as a system of influences and processes that affect the state and behaviour of the worker.

Analogous to principles of 'design thinking', this view situates workers' needs and goals at the centre of all organisational considerations. Put differently, the worker is not always right, but s/he is always here. Good design is therefore deliberate, determining what the touchpoints are and how workers interact with them. From this perspective, high-impact organisations cannot be satisfied by simply achieving administrative efficiency, compliance and cost-cutting. The remit is to craft a holistic work experience that is compelling, empowering and engaging, while spanning all organisational levels, members, and dimensions.

Scholarly reviews from the last six decades of theorising and testing suggest, no one phenomenon or process dominates the total work experience. No writing, tool, or intervention can exhaust or fully integrate this enormous and pluralistic territory. That said, scholars have found an array of mechanisms that organisations can use to provide reasonable guidance and close major gaps in strategy execution.

In the spirit of simplicity, this work discusses distinct key concepts as broader themes: performance, engagement, learning, wellbeing, leadership, work design, and strategic people systems. All are discussed in more detail in Part II in relation to the Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study. In brief, they form an architecture of subsystems, each with inputs, outputs, and processes of transformation or decisions. The heuristic model indicates how the dominant forces act toward enabling and engaging the worker to perform, and thus determine how well NFP people can serve the organisational purpose.

The design of the Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study parses robust theory and meta-analytic findings in order to decompose the total work experience into concepts that demonstrate robust relationships with relevant outcomes such as performance and impact. A key criterion has been that those factors are generally open to change. Taken together, everything measured and discussed subsequently is a valid and reliable characteristic of the work experience, and may be addressed through pragmatic decisions, policies, or interventions.

One inherent risk involves especially the upper organisational leadership to believe respective people practices and processes are already sufficiently embraced, only to find they are implemented very differently by line managers and interpreted yet in other ways by the employees and volunteers. Another risk is for NFP leaders and funders to dismiss those factors as somewhat unexciting and instead rather lean toward some novel managerial recipe. Fads are intriguing, but their contributions are ultimately short-lived. Decades of research suggest that a consistent regimen of small and perhaps seemingly mundane changes can produce big results. Robust evidence can address these risks, and this is discussed next.

The Case for Evidence

The contemporary debates over 'fake news' actually speak to an ancient human impulse: namely, to believe wrong information. Common sense once told us that the sun moves across the sky and that being out in the cold produced colds. However, the scientific mind recognised that these intuitions were only hypotheses that had to be tested[45].

The realm of organisational management is hardly different in this regard. It is ripe with traditions and myths that survive beyond a lack of evidence because the popular stories told about them feel true and confirm what we already believe[46–48].

For instance, organisations still use Myers-Briggs personality types for staff selection and coaching, even though research has shown they are not predictive of much, if anything[49,50]. That is, those measures and classifications do not reliably explain work performance or other important behaviours or outcomes.

Similarly, a popular approach termed the "70:20:10 model" argues that individual learning is a result of 70% informal on-the-job learning, 20% coaching and mentoring, and 10% formal learning interventions. Though intuitively appealing, such general claims have not been substantiated by peer-reviewed research[51].

Likewise, some people swear by the effects of power posing: a tactic by which one assumes a certain body language in order to lower cortisol, increase testosterone, and ultimately become more confident. Nonetheless, numerous rigorous studies could not replicate the effect[52,53].

Clearly, much of our world remains unknown, and some of what is "known" through science may be contradictory or turn out to be incorrect or ineffective[54]. What makes science so powerful is that it self-corrects as part of a long-term commitment to reducing uncertainty and stabilizing our understanding of "truth"[55,56].

For instance, meta-analyses have become a very useful vehicle for making trustworthy conclusions that inform practice. A meta-analysis is a systematic synthesis of all the available evidence pertaining to a certain topic or phenomenon. These studies analyse quantitative findings from dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of research studies, which may represent hundreds of thousands of participants. Such state-of-the-art research can mitigate biases and sampling errors to derive robust and general estimates and trends, and thereby greatly increase the efficacy of a certain claim or decision.

Admittedly, the processes of science may feel unnatural and counterintuitive compared to more natural ways of thinking. People have an instinct toward that which is novel or aligns with their existing beliefs[57]. There is also an inclination to adopt unfounded or invalidated managerial frames based on their popularity alone (e.g., via bestsellers or TED talks). These blind spots in human thinking can ultimately hamper the allocation and effectiveness of limited organisational and leadership resources.

In order to optimally convert private, public, and philanthropic funding into positive change, we need independent and robust research that can debunk myths, reveal important truths, or give further strength to established knowledge. In short, we have to see science as a commitment to a systematic way of reasoning and building knowledge through factual observation–the results of which can better inform practice and foster greater impact.

Evidence-based Practice

Scientific evidence can provide a powerful platform for meaningful discussions, inform a broader audience, and shape managerial practice–and in these ways, affect organisational impact[58]. However, research shows that despite the available theoretical and empirical advice, most organisations do not utilize the most effective approaches to people management[59].

Research makes clear that a managerial decision based on scientific methods, hard data, or at least triangulated information yields better outcomes than a decision solely based on a single source of evidence, individual experience, the opinions of experts, or so-called best practices[60]. Put differently, the most senior, dominant or paid person's opinion may not be best. Surprisingly, there seems to be large discrepancies between what human resource practitioners think is effective and what the current scientific research shows[61].

In fairness, this critique cuts two ways: Much academic output fails to effectively translate its findings to relevant and practical guidance. For decades, there have been ongoing discussions about the causes of this dilemma and ways to reduce it[62]. That said, a great deal of scholarly management theory and research is fairly reliable and useful, and ever more is disseminated via appropriate channels, but much of it remains ignored[57,63].

By way of example, in applied medicine, it is now considered unethical not to base decisions on the latest cumulative evidence, or not to monitor effects post-intervention. But for centuries it was common for ill people to be made sicker by 'treatments' based on intuition. The scientific revolution brought about randomised controlled trials, reliable measurement and statistical advances, and with that millions of saved and improved lives.

Notably, many NFP organisations already use some sort of scientific method (e.g., A/B testing, pre-post comparison) to improve their marketing, fundraising and procurement. It is thus remarkable that most do not apply the same means to guide their people practice and investments–despite spending more on the latter than everything else combined. These decisions, however, are pivotal: how one organises and manages NFP employees and volunteers has an immense impact on the quality of their work, and thus on the purpose and people they serve.

So are all managerial decisions and organisational practices wrong? Of course not. But does that training program, wellbeing initiative, or pay rise have the intended effects? Often, decision-makers simply do not know because their intuitions are untested hypotheses. A large part of the challenge is not managerial aptitudes, but rather preferences, habits, and myths.

Accordingly, those tasked to lead NFP people and organisations - whether by mandate or circumstances - ought to make their decisions through the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available evidence. This involves asking an answerable question, acquiring research evidence, appraising the quality of the evidence, aggregating the evidence, applying the evidence to decision-making, and assessing the outcomes[64–67].

In sum, evidence-based practice ought to become standard practice. While this will not happen overnight, it can start today.

A FRAMEWORK FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE TO INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF FAVOURABLE OUTCOMES [64]

Asking	**Translating a real issue or challenge into an answerable question**
Acquiring	**Systematically searching for and retrieving the evidence**
Appraising	**Critically judging the trustworthiness and relevance of the evidence**
Aggregating	**Weighing and integrating the evidence**
Applying	**Incorporating the evidence into the decision-making process**
Assessing	**Evaluating the outcome of the decision taken**

People Analytics

If you can't measure it, you can't improve it, because you'll never know how and where things are going, or if you've arrived. The goal of people analytics is to integrate sometimes disparate data to derive actionable insights for organisational tactics and strategy[68-73]. People analytics may source and link data from surveys, human resource systems, client feedback, sensors, IT systems, and/or many other organisational or public records. In principle, good theory and technology can quantify anything that has a material or conceptual reality (e.g., motivation, movement, management). In this sense, people analytics should typically complement existing research and its more universal findings.

Any organisation can benefit from this, whatever its size, structure or purpose. Practitioners can convert their local, organisational experiences into diagnostic information, assessing the circumstances in which they and their peers operate. People analytics can then protect against 'solutioneering': the act of working up a solution prior to really understanding the problem that solution is set to solve. Instead, leaders can shift from borrowing or following normative practices to instead standing on evidentiary grounds. For instance, people analytics can map performance drivers (e.g., engagement, leadership, pay) against performance indicators (e.g., impact, efficiency, absenteeism) and systematically identify what matters most, when, and to whom[74].

Of course, people analytics are no panacea and they need to be combined with solid conceptual understanding. The best analytics are worth nothing with bad data. However, when done well, they do remove much guesswork when deciding how to direct attention, time and money[75,76]. Individuals who use people analytics have been found to generate new insights, make better decisions, and have greater influence[77]. Research demonstrates that organisations that measure, track and act on meaningful metrics gain a distinct competitive advantage[78,79] with positive flow-on effects to financial performance[80]. It is no surprise, then, that more organisations are adopting data-driven approaches to configure and manage the total work experience, and thereby realise their economic and social outcomes[81].

It is worth adding that people analytics are distinct to workforce records, background checks, or demand forecasts, all which are to be applauded but not sufficient to lift impact. Equally, case studies are a very popular form of research in the NFP sector, they can offer thorough and vivid insights about a program or organisation. However, as findings from case studies reflect only a single unit, they cannot be generalized. People analytics, based on the right sampling and signals, can permit much stronger deductions about a workforce, industry, or intervention.

Analytics may summarise, explore, benchmark, validate or predict—and this process typically involves two complementary types of statistical reasoning. In brief, descriptive statistics portray the state or patterns of a certain phenomenon. It may summarise, for instance, how many people are satisfied with their job, or what proportion or type of the workforce considers leaving. Inferential statistics can help explain why certain phenomena are happening and how important they are. One can test for the systematic association between variables, and establish their relative importance toward some outcome of interest. For instance, does pay rate matter for job satisfaction, and if it does, is a raise more or less effective than increasing workers' autonomy?

In addition, cognitive simplification via visualization can make proportions and patterns more transparent and meaningful[82]. And advanced machine learning approaches can compute ever more accurate estimates for parameters of interest. For instance, what is the likelihood of John resigning in the next six months? How many staff will call ill this week? Instead of treating the workforce as one entity, predictive analytics can model each of its members within the system. Such predictive analytics are already possible and they increasingly outperform human hunches[83].

As a whole, people analytics has substantial power to validate claims, prioritise objectives, and enhance mission success.

FREE Analytics Dashboard

No app, no download, no install. Just start.

FREE for Australian Not-for-Profit organisations.

Start today: **learningforpurpose.org/analytics**

We believe everybody should have access to reliable people analytics to make data-driven decisions. We reimagined how analytics can be done for an entire sector.

The Workforce Analytics Dashboard functions for your organisation regardless if it employs hundreds or comprises a few volunteers. When completing the Not-for-Profit Workforce Study, your staff simply designate your organisation as their workplace.

All responses are automatically anonymised, aggregated, and analysed. We use state-of-the-art cloud technology to store, secure and process the data. The Workforce Analytics Dashboard is immediately in sync with all complete responses from your staff.

Get to the next level. Assess how well your organisation and people are doing. Understand 30+ key metrics important to your workforce and impact. Offer your employees and volunteers an individual report. Compare your position relative to other Australian Not-for-Profit organisations.

It might feel like you need a statistics degree to use and understand people analytics. But the truth is, you don't. You just need to know what to look for and how to turn that into meaningful conclusions.

The Learning for Purpose initiative provides all Australian not-for-profit organisations with a free Workforce Analytics dashboard alongside free evidence-based resources on people management.

powered by

LEARNING FOR PURPOSE

SCREENSHOT OF WORKFORCE ANALYTICS DASHBOARD

The Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study

The most basic and practical way to understand what drives high-impact organisations is to render the total work experience transparent in terms of its determinants, processes, and outcomes. Let's begin.

About

The Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study is as a large-scale data collection effort to help understand the total work experience in the Australian not-for-profit (NFP) sector. Its purpose is to inform the evidence-based leadership, management and governance of the sector's organisations and their people. The most basic and practical way to understand what drives high-impact organisations is to render the total work experience transparent in terms of its determinants, processes, and outcomes.

To this end, the following sections introduce distinct concepts as part of a broader theme: performance, engagement, learning, wellbeing, leadership, work design, and some traditional HR duties. Each section highlights the concepts' purpose and analyses them within the broader structure.

In 2017, the study opened to all Australian NFP organisations, including all levels of employees and volunteers, and continues with annual survey waves. It builds upon and extends prior work in the domain of the organisational and managerial sciences. The study purposefully leverages a very broad range of scholarly validated measures and psychometric constructs. The responses are additionally enriched by linking them with publicly available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

This undertaking is considered necessary due to the lack of systematic, context-specific data on the NFP workforce and their work experiences. Australia has a history of comprehensive organisational or labour force studies, including the Karpin Report 1995; Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Surveys – AWIRS 1995, AWRS 2015; The High Performing Workplaces Index 2011, among others. There is also a range of applied survey reports on the NFP sector (e.g., State of the Not for Profit Sector Survey 2014, Australian Community Sector Survey 2014). However, none of these sources provide sufficient utility for addressing the challenges and potential discussed above. Any research that is available is limited by factors such as outdated data, small sample sizes, total neglect of or inability to stratify to the NFP context, poor research design, and/or commercial bias, just to name a few.

The inaugural 2017 wave of the Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study assembled about two million data points—becoming the most comprehensive data set ever realised for the purpose of understanding and facilitating a more healthy and productive NFP workforce.

The analyses and findings reported here are only the beginning to bring awareness to the broader subject. Instead of working in silence, the Learning for Purpose initiative opted to involve the NFP sector and share certain research highlights as they become available. This is also to signal the tremendous potential for further examinations and collaborations for more insights, interventions, and impact.

Approach

In the interest of practicality and readability, the following reporting focuses on the central aspects of the research and its findings. Some specific details about the findings may be discussed in the text of this report, but are not presented in an accompanying figure or table. Any queries may be directed to the authors.

For the most part, this report is based on conventional statistical methods to analyse the data, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, variance-based correlation and regression analysis. For theoretical testing, the report employs sophisticated structural equation modelling to identify whether observed relationships between certain phenomena occur by chance or are systematic – referred to as statistical significance. Only the results that are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) are included, unless otherwise noted.

Correlation and regression analyses return a value that describes the relationship between two variables of interest (e.g., pay level and job performance). This value is always between 0 and 1, with absolute 0 suggesting no association and 1 suggesting an immensely strong relationship. However, we must be mindful of real effect sizes: the median correlation effect size computed from 147,328 social science studies was 0.16[85]. Given humans and organisations are complex and vary in almost every imaginable way, one factor seldom explains everything. As such, typical effect sizes are between 0.09–0.26[86].

Furthermore, the direction of this relationship can be positive (e.g., pay is increased, and so performance also increases) or negative (e.g., pay is increased and performance decreases). A + or – denotes this direction, though neither direction is inherently good or bad. For instance, a correlation of +0.05 between pay and performance may suggest that we need to look for better levers to increase the latter. A correlation of -0.5 between pay and intention to leave may suggest higher salaries can make people stay. It all depends on the logic of the relationship.

3884 respondents from

2040 NFPs

represent

All sizes

All sectors

All states

Sample & Data

The Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study provides a broad array of information on charitable organisations and their people.

Between July and December 2017, 3,884 NFP employees and volunteers participated in an online survey, representing and providing information on 2040 Australian NFP entities. Each respondent selected his or her organisation from the Australian Business Register and the underlying Australian Business Number (ABN) served as the matching identifier for multiple responses. A sub-sample of 258 organisations provided 3 or more responses each, enabling nested data analyses for stronger inferences.

The total number of responses to each item may vary due to research design or non-response. About 70% completed all assigned questionnaire items. Adequate steps were taken to account for missing signals or correct for errors. Various checks suggest no systematic response biases affect the data.

Analyses also indicate that this data is reasonably representative with respect to organisational sizes, purposes, and jurisdictions. The mean correlation of distributions was 0.83 between the parameters describing the sample's charities and those describing the total Australian charity population.

The scarcity of true population scores, makes it difficult to estimate individual-level representativeness. While there is a decent understanding of the charity workforce in its totality, there is not much factual knowledge on the actual makeup of this population, nor on the workforces associated with NFP entities beyond registered charities. A comparison of sensible sub-samples, combined with census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Workplace Relations Study, suggests that the Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study fairly represents the means and distributions of the Australian NFP workforce with respect to age, gender, and employment status.

The present data somewhat deviates from the assumed bottom-heavy NFP workforce population, in that responses from the upper and middle organisational levels are roughly on balance with those of the frontline, and more employees than volunteers participated. The sample indicates a skew toward organisations with larger workforces. There is also an underrepresentation of responses from religious and educational charities, mainly due to promotional efforts not being directed toward these more idiosyncratic sub-sectors. Descriptive statistics and inferences account for or annotate these leanings where appropriate.

A comparison of work engagement levels also suggests that there was no motivational bias substantially encouraging or discouraging survey participation. Mean scores in the present study (5.46) are comparable to those of a general weighted Australian population sample from a wide-ranging employment demographic (5.64)[84].

Performance

Performance and impact are contested terms and thus subject to a range of definitions, especially in the NFP context. In the interest of clarity, it is useful to start with the sector's ultimate goal in mind: typically, engendering some positive economic and/or social change. As such, impact may be best understood as the net effect of an activity on some relevant phenomenon (e.g., more educated children, fewer homeless people, a healthier environment)[87,88].

This research focuses on how NFP organisations can increase their impact through their workforce. As such, the report distinguishes between indicators of organisational and individual performance.

Many sectors struggle with reliably conceptualising and operationalising organisational-level variables, as they tend to be heterogeneous. There is no agreed-upon yardstick for defining organisational success, not even for those sectors that, by nature of the business, are linked to more transparent metrics (e.g., manufacturing, sales).

Thus, in order to accommodate the diversity of NFP entities, purposes and models, this research understands organisational performance in two distinct yet related ways.

Organisational Impact describes an entity's overall effectiveness in achieving its mission by positively affecting the state of some defined lives and communities. Making a difference is the most important reason for NFPs' organisational existence.

Operational Excellence describes an entity's effectiveness and efficiency in handling the fiscal, strategic, human capital, and technological processes that affect revenue, cost, and risk. These efforts keep the organisation sustainable and determine the extent of its success.

Organisational Impact and Operational Excellence are the result of a system of influences by multiple stakeholders and processes, involving politics, legislation, economies, and social trends. For the most part, though, an NFP's performance derives from the aggregate performance of its employees and volunteers. They are the ones who must understand, address, and operate under those diverse environmental conditions and changes.

Employees and volunteers directly affect what an organisation does and achieves through multiple ways. Individuals' contributions to organisational success take many forms, including:

Work Role Performance describes highly desirable actions that individuals need to undertake in order to address the challenges inherent in modern jobs. These features include task proficiency (i.e., how s/he fulfils prescribed role requirements),

adaptivity (i.e., how s/he copes with and supports change), and proactivity (e.g., how s/he initiates change)[89].

Work Self-Efficacy describes an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute the behaviours necessary to realise specific work-related goals. That belief informs and affects a worker's goal-setting and goal-pursuit, and thus what s/he will attempt to achieve at work[90].

Innovative Behaviours describe an individual's salient actions of creating or engaging with novel ideas, or her/his means of maintaining or improving operations or outcomes. S/he may develop new ideas, adapt new technologies or techniques, and advocate for and implement changes to increase impact[91].

Highlighted Response Distributions

	Disagree	Neither	Agree
Clear, planned goals and objectives exist for my job.	14%	20%	66%
I initiate better ways of doing my core tasks.		14%	84%
I implement innovative changes at work that improve our impact.	6%	25%	69%
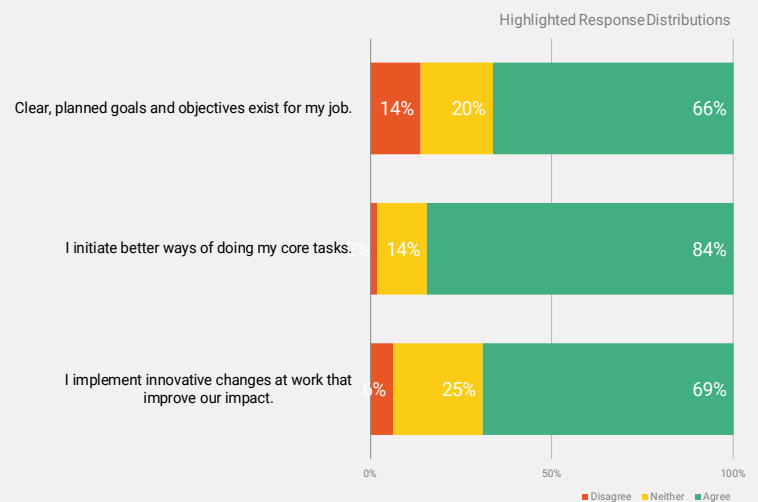
Insight: Our findings support a medium to strong relationship between individual and organisational performance. More specifically, higher levels of Work Role Performance explain higher levels of Operational Excellence and Organisational Impact. The latter also being explained, albeit to a lesser extent, by workers' Innovative Behaviours. Importantly, both innovative and more typical work role behaviours are greatly supported by the worker's Self-Efficacy beliefs.

SELF-EFFICACY

+.75

+.33

WORK ROLE PERFORMANCE

INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOUR

+.28

+.25

+.05

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT
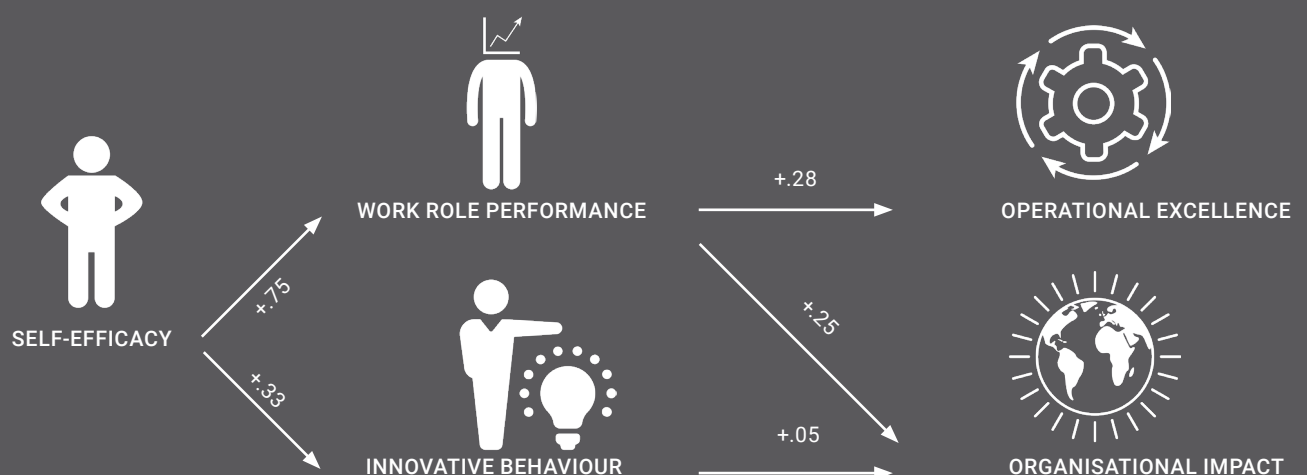
Engagement

Workers' psychological connection with their work has gained critical importance and attention. There is robust evidence linking workers' engagement with individual, group and organisational performance.

However, understanding the exact meaning of engagement in the context of work has proven to be a vexing issue[92]. While there is no shortage of engagement surveys and interventions, there is a lot of obscurity about what exactly is measured and which mechanisms are at play.

Engagement might be best understood as an umbrella term for dynamic worker states, which in turn can trigger very relevant behaviours and outcomes[93]. For instance, mediating mechanisms may involve workers' attitudes and affect, which then determine their levels of absence, turnover, proactivity, and productivity, among others.

In the interest of adding interpretive and practical value, this research has curated engagement concepts, focusing on the notion of motivating workers to maximally devote themselves to the organisational mission.

Two complementary indicators reflect more stable types of engagement. Work Satisfaction describes a worker's evaluative judgment about his or her job, organisation, and work conditions[94]. Organisational Commitment describes a worker's strong belief in, and acceptance of, organisational goals and values[95].

Other reflectors of engagement are, for instance, Absenteeism (as a pattern of unscheduled absence) and Intention To Stay (as the desire to maintain membership in the organisation)[96;] both of which are linked to deleterious effects regarding service delivery and direct and indirect costs.

The concept Work Engagement specifically describes workers' motivational state toward their work by levels of vigour (i.e., how stimulating and energetic the work is), dedication (i.e., how significant and meaningful the pursuit is), and absorption (i.e., how engrossing the work is) [97]. This more dynamic type of engagement encompasses passion, commitment, and involvement, and so the willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation may fluctuate within people from day to day.

Because no one gets out of this life alive, most people carry the inherent need to do and be part of something worthwhile. More generally, these factors involve perceptions about the formative effect of work on not only the worker (e.g.,

remuneration, growth), but also the target of the work (e.g., a beneficiary, the world)[98].

Work Meaningfulness describes an individual's judgemental alignment between his or her ideals or values and the work to be done[99]. Perceived Social Impact describes the worker's judgments that his or her actions are having a positive impact. Perceived Social Worth describes the worker's perceptions that others value these contributions[100].

Insight: Our findings suggest no striking differences between population groups of the NFP workforce and levels of engagement. For instance, women and men exhibit similar patterns. If anything, older workers and those with more power display higher engagement levels. Yet, these effects diminish when statistically accounting for workers' job autonomy and related job characteristics that are often associated with higher age and seniority. Also, NFP engagement levels are comparable to those of the wider Australian working population. Engagement thus may be considered a malleable state that is best explained and addressed through other mechanisms.

Highlighted Response Distributions

Statement	Disagree	Neither	Agree
I feel that I can have a positive impact on others through my work.	%		95%
I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.	37%	26%	37%
My job inspires me.	8%	20%	72%

0%　　　　　　50%　　　　　　100

■ Disagree ■ Neither ■ Agree
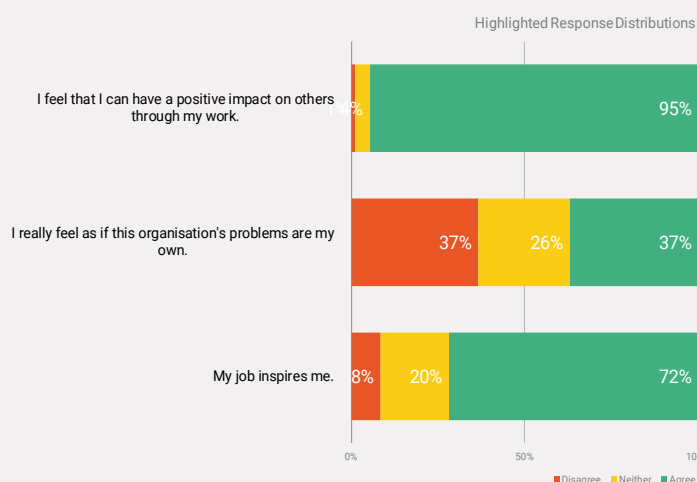
Insight: Our findings support a medium to strong relationship between levels of Work Engagement and levels of Work Role Performance and Innovative Behaviour. Also, the more satisfied people are with their job, organisation, and work conditions, the less inclined they are to leave the organisation.

WORK ENGAGEMENT

+.21 → WORK ROLE PERFORMANCE

+.22 → INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOUR

-.16 →

WORK SATISFACTION

-.40 → INTENTION TO LEAVE
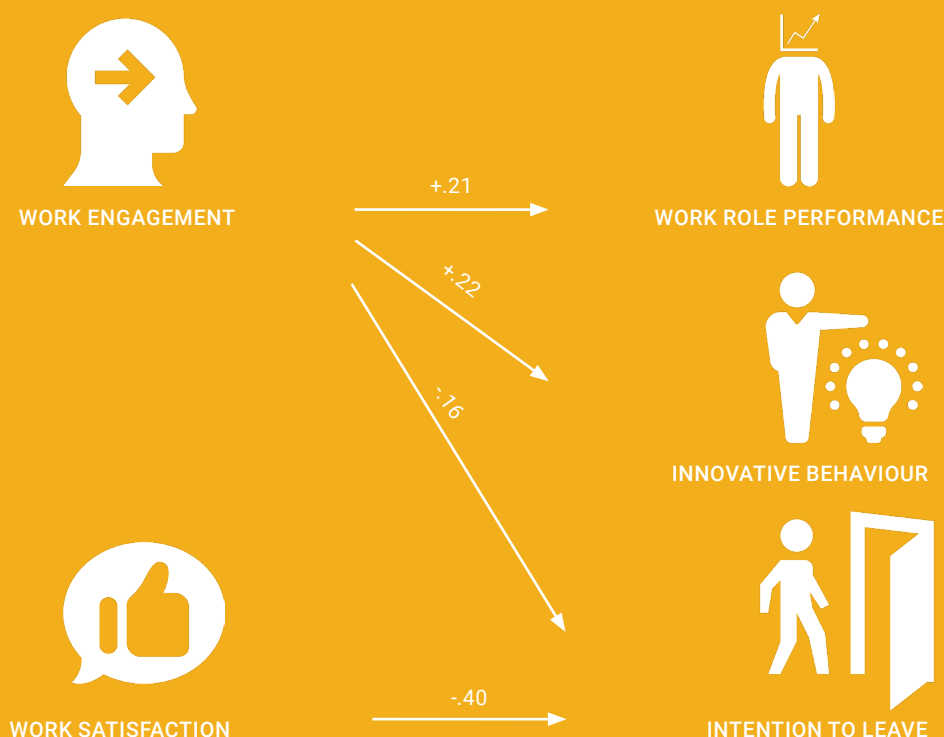
Learning

Learning from, at, and for work is one of the most central and enduring tenets of professionalism and performance. Changing how workers think, feel or act enables them to better meet current and future technical, social and leadership demands[101]. In practice, on-the-job learning may involve altering workers' factual or procedural knowledge, behaviours, action routines, metacognitions, values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and emotions[102,103]. In aggregate, learning can transform people into organisational resources who bolster impact.

Workers may engage in various learning experiences to increase their competence [33]. Traditional thinking posits a dichotomy of formal and informal learning, although much suggests this is too simplistic for how learning-to-perform should be conceptualised and addressed. In fact, there are significant elements of formal learning in informal situations, and vice versa; the two are inextricably linked.

It is more useful to consider the qualitatively distinct manifestations of learning experiences, such as Experimenting, eLearning, Knowledge Sharing, Peer Learning, Traditional Training, Personal Development Plans, Reflection, Professional Guidance, Expert Content, and Feedback. These learning experiences differentially affect performance-related outcomes.

A key goal of learning experiences involves enhanced Capabilities resulting from new knowlegde, skills and an integrated understanding of how it all fits with the work role and organisational purpose.

In addition, how the organisational environment situates and values learning is fundamental to the emergence and effect of opportunities for growth and development.

Learning Climate describes workers' perceptions of the organisational values, beliefs, and structures toward learning and development. Workers who are encouraged to, provided with resources for, and receive recognition for learning will develop and update the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are mission-critical.

Structural Support describes the deliberation of policies and resources that organise and finance work learning experiences, such as designated staff member or budgets allocated to realise staff development[104,105].

Error Management Culture describes workers' perception of how their organisation typically deals with errors. At some point, every entity and everyone will be confronted with errors,

and how organisations and people respond has important implications. Sharing errors and subsequent practices can minimise negative consequences and maximise positive consequences such as innovation[106].

Psychological Safety describes workers' feelings about being able to display themselves without fear of negative consequences to self-esteem, status or career. If workers feel safe and respected, they share ideas and engage in healthy debate, which supports learning processes and performance[107].

Insight: We note substantial variability by which NFP workers engage in learning experiences. When compared to the organisational upper echelon, those in professional and mid-level managerial roles indicate significantly less support for their professional development. Some of this can be attributed to the lack of designated financial resources. Indicators of a growth-oriented organisation, such as Psychological Safety, Error Management Culture and Learning Climate, systematically explain why some NFP workers embrace more learning opportunities than others.

Highlighted Response Distributions

	Disagree	Neither	Agree
I participate in professional development or training courses when I need.	43%	36%	22%
I plan my career path.	57%	26%	17%
I regularly have conversations about my work peformance.	42%	37%	21%

0%   50%   100%

■ Disagree ■ Neither ■ Agree

Insight: Our findings support a medium to strong relationship between engaging in a broad range of learning experiences and workers' Self-Efficacy as well as their Capabilities, which together in turn drive desirable Work Role Performance and Innovative Behaviours.

TRAINING

ELEARNING

EXPERIMENTING

EXPERT CONTENT

CHALLENGES

FEEDBACK

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

PEER LEARNING

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

PROFESSIONAL EXPOSURE

REFLECTION

SELF-EFFICACY

CAPABILITY

+.34

+.22

+.42

+.22

+.34

+.43

WORK ROLE PERFORMANCE

INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOUR
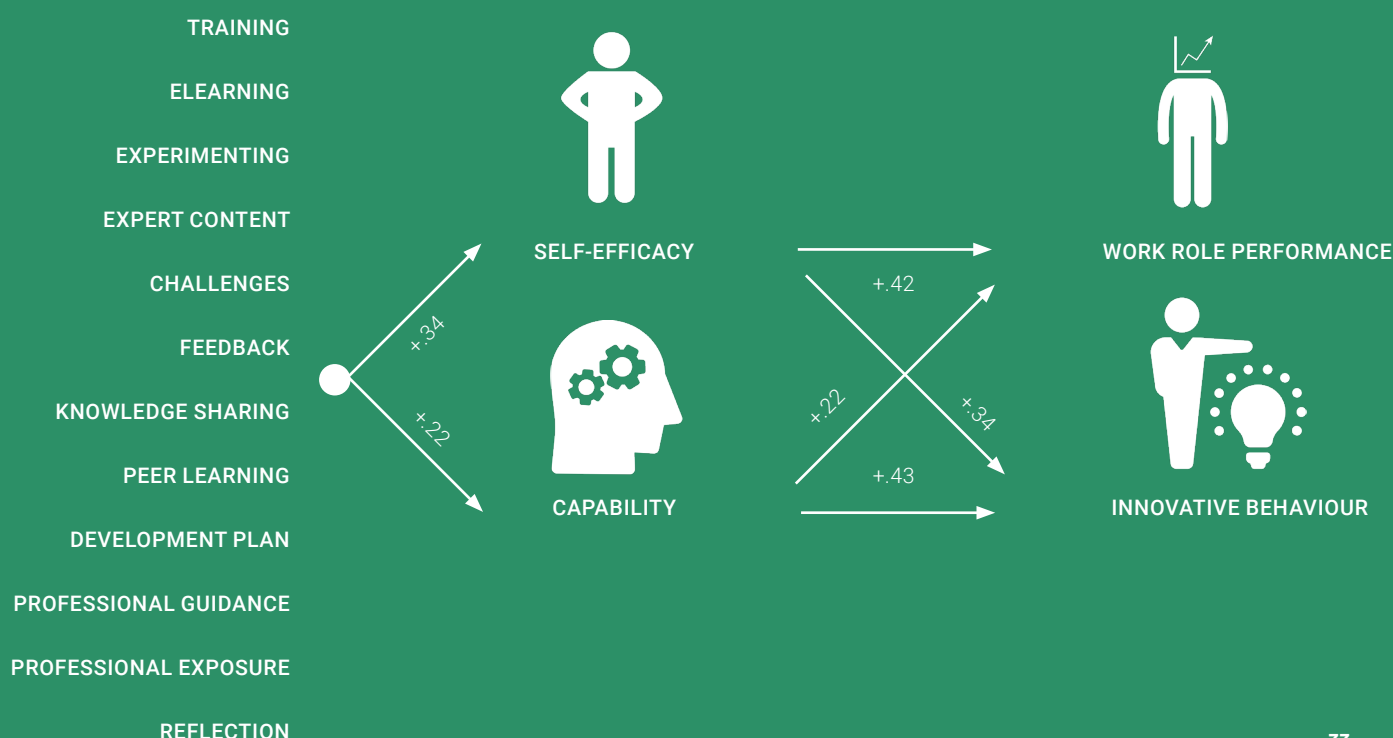
Wellbeing

Workforce wellbeing is not an end unto itself. Instead, research strongly supports the mutual-gains perspective in which the 'happy-productive worker' has multiple positive consequences for the individual, the organisation and its clients[108].

Indeed, certain affective, cognitive, and physical states are not merely challenging for the worker, but cause ramifications for all parties. Research has established robust associations between the lack of worker wellbeing and job performance, organisational commitment, safety issues, turnover intentions, among other outcomes[109–112].

Importantly, workplaces can play an important and active role in the wellbeing of their workers. While there is increasing acknowledgement of the phenomenon and importance of workplace wellbeing, the interpretations and interventions related to this concept vary drastically. To illustrate: Depression awareness trainings, yoga classes, and staff support against substance misuse are all important, but they may suffer from solutioneering: the act of working up a solution prior to fully understanding the problem that the solution is set to solve.

Fortunately, the literature has already established a broad range of concepts that address an individual's wellbeing. This research stream focuses on dimensions of wellbeing that, at least to some extent, reside within the organisation's control over the work experience. A useful diagnostic approach involves looking for markers of highly undesirable worker states and experiences. The absence or minimal levels of the following may reflect a minimum desirable condition of any workforce.

Psychological Distress describes the level of workers' non-specific anxiety and depressive symptoms in the past. Work affects individuals' psychological states and emotional experiences, which in turn impact workers' health, error rates, creativity, and this has flow-on effects on clients and productivity.

Work Fatigue describes workers' level of tiredness and reduced functional capacity at the end of the workday. Workers who are physically, mentally, and/or emotionally fatigued may be at risk of substance abuse or burnout, empathise less with clients or co-workers, and be prone to errors or missing scheduled work .

Work-to-Family Conflict describes the extent to which workers perceive their organisational involvement as interfering with family life. Incompatible time and psychological demands can make workers severely stressed, distracted, or depressed, with flow-on effects on both their family and work environment[113].

Insight: We identify significant, negative relationships between age and Psychological Distress, Work Fatigue, and Work-to-Family Conflict respectively. Younger NFP workers (18-34 years) experience notably lower levels of wellbeing when compared to older peers. Critically, the proportion in our sample that signals *high* to *very-high* levels of Psychological Distress is substantially larger than the Australian population average. This may be a function of skewed sampling or a disconcerting trend that characterises younger NFP workers, both requiring future research. We also note these effects are particularly pronounced for women.

Highlighted Response Distributions

	Disagree	Neither	Agree
I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities.	49%	22%	29%
I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family.	48%	25%	27%
I feel mentally worn out at the end of the workday.	21%	30%	48%

0%   50%   100%

■Disagree ■Neither ■Agree
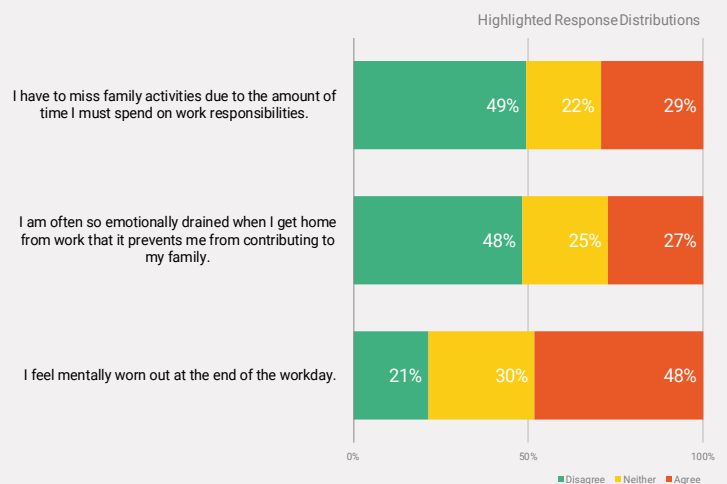
Insight: Our findings support a medium to strong relationship between workers' wellbeing and distinct forms of engagement. More specifically, Psychological Distress and Work-to-Family Conflict negatively affect Work Engagement and Work Satisfaction (and thus subsequently Work Role Performance and Intention to Leave, see above).

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS → WORK ENGAGAMENT

-.55

-.11

-.49

WORK-TO-FAMILY CONFLICT → WORK SATISFACTION

-.23

Leadership

Leadership is a central element of any work system although it is not limited to formally appointed leaders, supervisors, managers, and so on. Many workers must assume some role as a leader of other organisational members. So leadership is an ongoing practice exercised at all levels.

There are various schools on leadership and no camp can claim the winning formula or style. However, not all ways of leading others are equally effective at all times; indeed, certain situations call for certain types of leadership.

In today's complex and often unpredictable work environment, workers can ever less rely on clear means or precise ends for the work to be completed. Meanwhile, their superiors or peers may lack the substantive expertise required to fully guide others to success. To compensate, they can share power, information, resources, and opportunities.

Empowering Leadership is a relational approach to influencing others towards shared goals. As such, an empowering leader leads others so that they can lead themselves - the focus is on enabling followers to maximally contribute to the organisation and mission.

This perspective reaches beyond the heroic leadership archetypes. Instead, a leader intentionally encourages in others initiative, self-responsibility, self-confidence, self-goal setting, positive opportunity thinking, and self-problem solving[114].

Research demonstrates that Empowering Leadership is strongly associated with workers' performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, and creativity[115].

Insight: We note that empowering leadership is not particularly pronounced in a specific sector. However, organisations that pursue a largely reactive strategy are characterised by significantly lower levels of information sharing and participative decision making. Although cause and effect directionality requires further research, it is notable that organisations which adopt change only when required to by external factors provide their NFP workers with the least empowering experience to serve the purpose.

Highlighted Response Distributions

My boss sets high standards for performance by his/her own behavior.
9% | 14% | 77%

My supervisor teaches our team members how to solve problems on our own.
14% | 23% | 64%

My leader explains organisational goals to team members.
11% | 17% | 72%

0%   50%   100%

■ Disagree   ■ Neither   ■ Agree

Insight: Our findings support medium to very strong relationships between experiences of Empowering Leadership and workers' Self-Efficacy, Work Satisfaction and Work Engagement. The motivating mechanism also involves leaders shaping a sense of Meaningfulness, which in turn affects Work Engagement (and performance indicators, see above).

EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

+.15 → SELF-EFFICACY

+.61 →

+.22 →

+.25 ↓

MEANINGFULNESS

+.56 → WORK ENGAGEMENT

WORK SATISFACTION
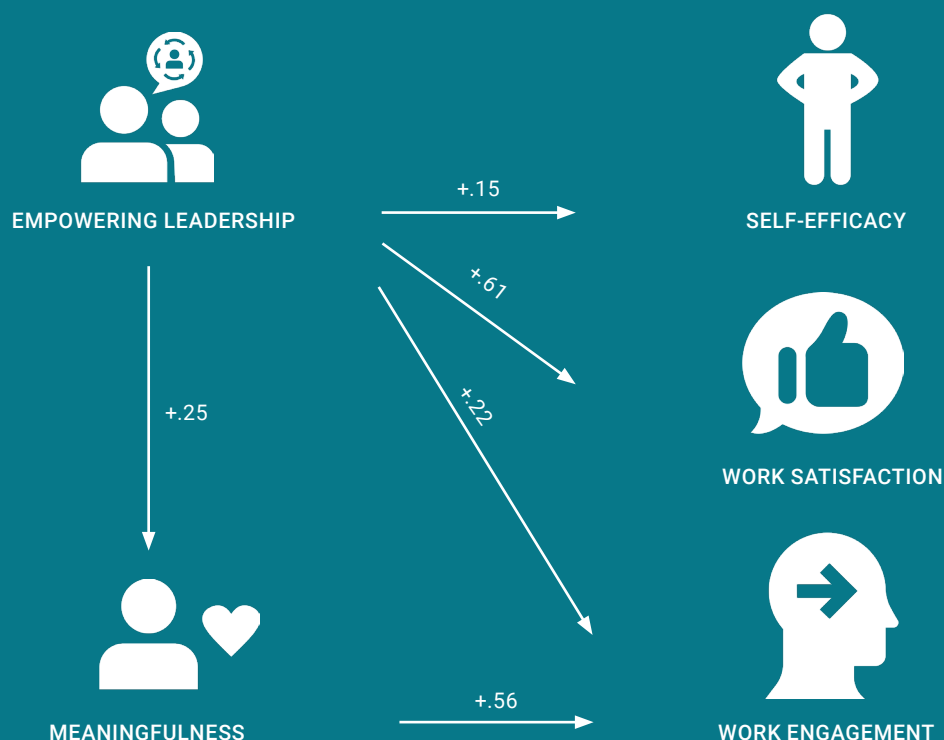
Work Design

The design of one's work may be the least recognised, yet markedly powerful managerial levers for realising individual, and thus organisational, success. Work design is about the content and organisation of one's work tasks, activities, relationships, and responsibilities[116]

Indeed, the makeup of the typical work experience affects workers' health, development, performance, and sense of meaning. It matters to almost every organisationally relevant goal, including safety, innovation, and impact[117].

For instance, job enlargement expands the content of jobs to include additional tasks, while job enrichment is about increasing workers' autonomy over the planning and execution of their own work. Both mechanisms act through distinct motivational pathways that together affect workers' motivational states and behaviours.

The gamut of work design dimensions is significant. Thus, it is prudent to introduce them as groupings oriented around an overarching characteristic[118]:

Task Characteristics are concerned with how the work itself is accomplished, as well as the range and nature of tasks associated with a particular job (e.g., job variety, job autonomy, job feedback, job significance).

Knowledge Characteristics reflect the kinds of knowledge, skill, and ability demands that are placed on the worker (e.g., job complexity, information processing, problem solving, skill variety).

Social Characteristics describe the relational elements that are part of the job (e.g., social support, interdependence, interaction outside the organization, feedback from others).

Several other features describe and design work. One potent mechanism involves Beneficiary Contact, or how often and much workers can observe the tangible, meaningful consequences of their actions for a living, breathing being.

Work design characteristics subsequently determine various cognitive, emotional and behavioral outcomes.

Insight: Work Design varies greatly across the NFP sector. Overall, jobs in Professional Associations and Unions exhibit the least motivating and intellectual stimulating design. The data also suggests potential to improve the task characteristics of jobs in organisations that address Culture as well as in Development and Housing. Jobs in Recreation exhibit below average levels regarding knowledge characteristics, albeit future research need to examine if this presents a problem.

Highlighted Response Distributions

The job is arranged so that I can do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.
| 24% | 23% | 53% |

The work activities themselves provide direct and clear information about the effectiveness (e.g., quality and quantity) of my job performance.
| 15% | 28% | 57% |

My job gives me the opportunity to meet the people who benefit from my work.
| 18% | 21% | 61% |

0%   50%   100%

■ Disagree ■ Neither ■ Agree
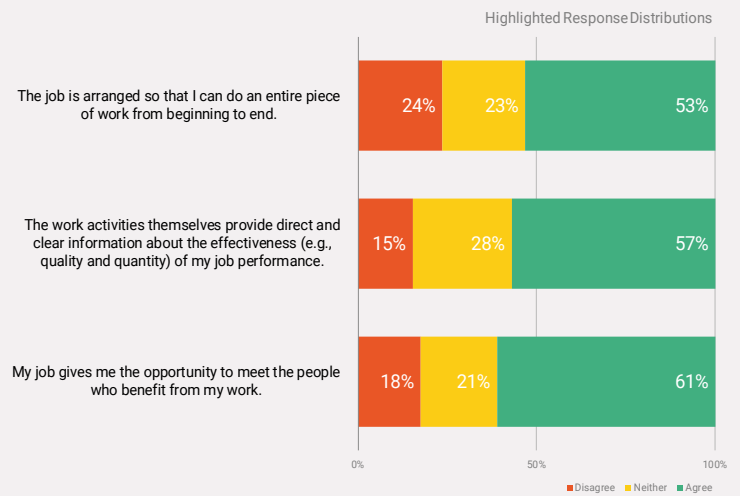
Insight: Our findings support medium to strong relationships between workers contact with the ultimate beneficiaries and Psychological Distress as well as Work Satisfaction and Work Engagement. The underlying mechanism involves perceptions of Social Impact & Worth that in turn affect the sense of doing something meaningful.

SOCIAL IMPACT & WORTH

−.28 → PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

+.39

BENEFICIARY CONTACT

+.25

−.25

WORK SATISFACTION

+.25

MEANINGFULNESS

+.05

WORK ENGAGEMENT

+.25
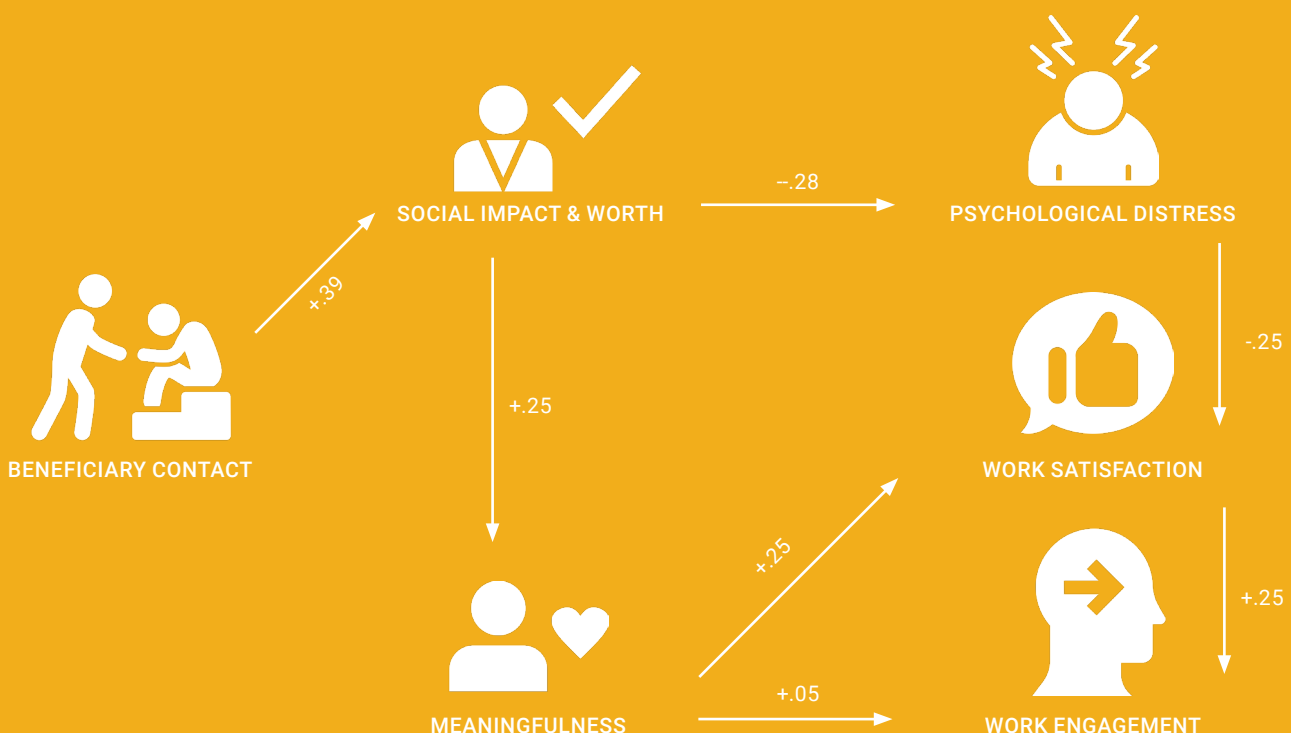
People Systems

Organisations require systems and processes, however formal, to recruit, manage and retain their people. These people systems signal to workers what is valued and welcomed. Workers in turn might interpret these systems by attributing feelings, beliefs, and intentions to them. All this in turn can affect workers psychological connection with the organisation.

Modern people systems thus place the worker at the heart of their practices and policies and are most effective when those are visible, relevant, understandable, and consistent. It is crucial to develop and implement those practices not in isolation, as they may not have much or even detrimental effects.

For instance, regular performance reviews can be counterproductive if there is little incentive for high achievers such as lack of career paths or promotions. Or when those same performance indicators are not considered when recruiting the next peers.

Indeed, workers consider people systems most useful when they meet their needs, provide clear answers, help them do their work well, and encourage and reward the same things across the organisation.

The wide range of influences in this study include:

Recruiting and selection involves perceptions about the search and decision processes being effective in adding the right talent

Performance management and compensation involves perceptions about appraisal systems being effective, fair, and comprehensive.

Promotions involves perceptions about the provision of clear career paths and the advancement of high-performing workers.

Communication involves perceptions about having a common vision, knowing what co-workers deal with, and respecting one another at work.

Employee relations involves perceptions about being provided with job security alongside adequate annual, parental, and carers leave.

Retention involves perceptions of having schemes and practices in place that retain good staff and minimise attrition through voluntary turnover.

Insight: There appears to be some broader trends across the NFP sector. Most workers consider a common vision and respect as strong traits in their organisation. On the other hand, the data suggests much upward potential for strategic systems that should recruit and select the best talent, manage and promote people adequately, and retain the best employees and volunteers. Organisations operating for environmental and cultural purposes seem to be the least developed.

Highlighted Response Distribution

Statement	Disagree	Neither	Agree
New people are selected by triangulating multiple selection tools.	26%	34%	40%
Staff are provided clear career paths.	33%	39%	28%
High-performing staff are promoted.	23%	42%	35%
Staff here know what tasks their co-workers deal with.	18%	21%	61%
Staff are provided with job security.	22%	29%	48%
A comprehensive retention scheme is in place to keep valuable staff.	40%	37%	23%

0%   50%   100%

■ Disagree   ■ Neither   ■ Agree

Insight: Our findings support medium to strong relationships between the signals of people systems and worker engagement. Perceptions about having a common vision, career opportunities, and job security emerge as especially important predictors of Work Satisfaction and Work Engagement.

WORK SATISFACTION

WORK ENGAGEMENT

	WORK SATISFACTION	WORK ENGAGEMENT
RECRUITING & SELECTION	+.06	+.07
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	+.06	
PROMOTIONS	+.19	+.11
COMMUNICATION	+.38	+.19
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS	+.16	+.07
RETENTION	+.14	

Capabilities & Gaps

Capabilities are understood as the prerequisites to fulfil the demands of a particular professional role[119]. It is an aggregate label for any combination of interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacities including factual and procedural knowledge, mental models, self-regulation, metacognitions, action routines, and personal qualities such as values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and emotions[102,120]. These components are mobilised for effective cognitive, functional, and social action in a particular work context[121]. Capabilities, as a holistic abstraction, are useful for a broader discussion about what individuals in the NFP sector are expected to achieve as a result, in an event, or in a way of behaving at work.

The focus here is addressing the lack of an overarching capability framework for what may be broadly described as the leadership, management, and governance of NFP organisations and their people. There is no intention to be exhaustive about all jobs and roles in the NFP context, excluding those specialists operating at the various frontlines, and/or which may already be highly regulated (e.g., nursing, teaching).

Developing a capability framework for the NFP sector is crucial so that founders, executives, funders, policy makers, human resource managers, training providers, scholars, among others, can better align their activities with what NFP people and entities need. The section on Learning addresses how NFP people might achieve the necessary learning outcomes. This section is about what might be the goal of such learning activities.

An NFP capability framework could be used to determine workforce needs and to assess how the current and anticipated future workforce compares to these requirements. This in turn enables evidence-based strategies for establishing human capital, including recruitment plans, specific training activities, performance management, tertiary curricula, and broader capacity development schemes. It will also assist those currently working in the sector seeking to enhance their capability and progress their careers, as well as aid individuals seeking to enter the social sector to become aware of the key competence requirements.

What is needed are standardized and NFP sector-specific knowledge and skill descriptors that promote systematic NFP workforce planning, recruitment, and development. It is not argued to overregulate the NFP context by introducing even more legislated occupations that restrict access to and the exercise of a work role on the basis of some professional qualifications. Instead, practitioners and researchers should agree on common means for identifying, describing, and presenting valid, reliable information about NFP capabilities.

We believe this is useful to understand what responsibilities might be strategically meaningful, to describe what must be accomplished by the incumbents, to define the *ideal* and to measure *what is*, and then to design respective human capital interventions that address the identified gaps. The focus should be on those capabilities that have greatest potential to generate significant returns through increasing impact and revenue or reducing errors and costs, thus representing an upside potential[122,123].

To begin, we built a meaningful "lexicon" with which stakeholders can inform the debate and measurement on a given capability. As part of the 2017 Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study we asked each respondent to nominate and rank order his or her five most important capabilities needed to excel in their current role. This exercise was assisted by existing capability typologies from the scholarly literature alongside manual coding to derive a broad yet consitent and parsimonious capability scheme.

Later in the survey, with some cognitive separation, we asked each respondent to rate his or her proficiency on each of their nominated capabilities.

We analysed the resulting 12,332 rankings and proficiency scores, and present findings only for the most frequently nominated capabilities for which there is sufficiently stable data.

The bubble chart maps each capability's relative position on two dimensions: its effect on impact and its need for professional development. The bar chart combines these two scores into a single dimension we call Impact Potential to describe the prospects of making a positive difference when building this capability. The size of the bubble and Market Potential both describe the (response) distribution of capabilities within our sample to indicate the likely demand for building a given capability.

It is important to note that at this stage there should be no claim about these findings fully representing the entire Australian NFP sector. The findings should be understood as a first snapshot of trends. The analyses also demonstrate a strong proof of concept with enormous future potential to regularly inform capacity building decisions in the NFP sector at large.

Namely, this approach scales to identifying capability needs for any given NFP industry, jurisdiction, role type, organisation, and so on. In other words, NFP organisations, peak body associations, foundations and training providers may consider using our gap analysis approach to identify what knowledge and skills might be most mission critical. Please contact us.

HIGH NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT

HIGH IMPACT

Bubble size describes the response distribution and likely demand for building the capability

Fundraising and Enlisting Resources

Human Resource Policy and Industrial Relations

Managing Marketing, PR, and Communication

Leading and Supervising

Governance of Organisations

Planning and Implementing Strategy

Formulating Strategies and Concepts

Leading and Managing Change

Presenting and Communicating Information

Working with People

Emotional Intelligence & Empathy

Developing Programs and Services

Building and Leading Teams

Advocacy and Public Policy

Managing Finances and Accounting

Community and Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

Relating and Networking

Planning and Organizing

Delivering Results and Meeting Client Expectations

Organising, Planning, and Prioritising Work

Managing Risk

Developing and Training Others

Analysing Data or Information

Managing Projects

Learning and Researching

Problem Solving

Self-regulation and Self-leadership

Adapting and Responding to Change

Time Management

Writing and Reporting

Performing Administrative Activities

Managing Finances and Accounting
Governance of Organisations
Presenting and Communicating Information
Fundraising and Enlisting Resources
Working with People
Human Resource Policy and Industrial Relations
Leading and Supervising
Planning and Implementing Strategy
Community and Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach
Managing Risk
Formulating Strategies and Concepts
Managing Marketing, PR, and Communication
Leading and Managing Change
Relating and Networking
Building and Leading Teams
Volunteer Management
Time Management
Industry-specific Expertise
Financial Modelling
Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating Impact
Using Technology
Organising, Planning, and Prioritising Work
Advocacy and Public Policy
Analysing Data or Information
Delivering Results and Meeting Client Expectations
Attracting, Recruiting and Selecting Staff
Self-regulation and Self-leadership
Entrepreneurial and Commercial Thinking
HR and Talent Analytics
Managing Technology
Negotiating and Selling
Persuading and Influencing
Mentoring and Coaching others
Managing Projects
Developing Programs and Services
Performing Administrative Activities
Regulatory Compliance
Deciding and Initiating Action
Active Listening
Writing Proposals (e.g., Grants, Tenders)
Managing Collaborations and Collective Impact
Creating and Innovating
Adapting and Responding to Change
Developing and Training Others
Emotional Intelligence & Empathy
Applying Expertise and Technology
General Management
Online Marketing and Social Media
Writing and Reporting
Developing Business Plans
Planning and Organizing
Capacity Building of Others
Dealing with Business Risks and Opportunities
Health and Safety
Analysing Policy
Understanding Procedures, Systems, Resources
Learning and Researching
Legislative and Judicial Expertise
Chairing the Governance Board
Problem Solving
Developing Communities
Quality Management
Managing Legal Issues
Adhering to Principles and Values
Technical Skills and Knowledge

■ Impact Potential describes the general prospects of making a positive difference when building this capability

■ Market Potential describes the response distribution and likely demand for building this capability

45

So What?

Where does this leave us and what should we do next?

The future of the Australian NFP sector is not predetermined. If leaders, funders, policymakers make a conscious effort to build capacity in better ways, it is entirely possible over the next decade or so that we are going to have more efficiencies and impact than we have ever seen before.

The key to realising such lasting change is commitment to an evidence-based agenda for optimal people management by the collective involved in the Australian NFP sector.

Let's start with you. You should not just sit back and leave it to the others. The nature of systems is that everyone can play a big role. One thing you can do is think about how the arguments and findings in this report matter to you and your work, as well as your broader organisational mandate and purpose.

Then, go to lunch or dinner the next couple of days and meet a colleague or partner in crime to brainstorm three things that you together could potentially do. And then circle the best of those ideas and work on that. Also, don't throw away the other two ideas but give them to somebody else to work on.

Please share your thoughts and plans with us, and let us know about any queries. Next, some considerations to facilitate those conversations and collaborations.

Putting it All Together

The Not-for-Profit sector is a fundamental building block for the Australian economy and society. Its contributions are fuelled by the ever growing amount of employees and volunteers. One of their most challenging and rewarding parts in life is arguably the work they do. So whilst they give out blankets, teach the youth, and bring us the arts, they also seek growth, health, meaning, and control of career.

It turns out that exactly those elements are deeply linked with indicators of performance and impact. While the NFP sector as a whole sustains an attractive national fabric, there are clear signs that the system may not fully embrace the potential of its workforce. This suggests enormous upward potential.

Until recent, there was a profound absence of systematic information on the NFP workforce and associated work experiences. The Australian Not-for-Profit Workforce Study started to change this: exploring, describing and testing some fundamental concepts and their relationships. It already is one of the most comprehensive data sets designed specifically to understand, inform and enhance NFP organisations, people, and their impact.

The Learning for Purpose initiative just got started, and will continue to analyse the data and share findings freely. As the survey waves continue in future years, more robust and detailed insights will emerge. You can support this, please consider participation, promotion and partnership.

Also, evidence can be easily dismissed if it did not transpire in the context it shall be applied to. The empirical findings presented in this report relate directly to individuals and organisations that constitute the NFP sector in Australia. The extensive literature referenced may also be used as a gateway to investigate some aspects further.

Using robust evidence to shape managerial and organisational decisions cannot remain neglected territory. Instead, seeking out and interpreting research findings from scientific studies should become default professional behaviour. Certainty and knowledge may also be increased through carefully executed research that meets the standards of both reliability and validity. People analytics based on more proximal organisational data can and should complement such insights. All will increase the likelihood of favourable outcomes.

In summary, there is no single concept or intervention to NFP greatness. There is, however, a considerable leverage in embracing the total work experience. If leadership, learning, wellbeing and work design matter for impact, then addressing these topics should not be seen as something accidental or that can be postponed. Instead, that type of capacity building has to be considered as a strategic and central element that every Australian NFP organisation must realise to achieve efficiencies and positive change. It is thus hoped that the findings in this report and future publications provide an impetus.

Where to Next?

The goal must be to cultivate high impact organisations that are intentional and professional about the total work experience. Building this type of capacity in the Australian NFP sector requires a multipronged approach. It's like a symphony orchestra. Support and solutions must come from cooperative efforts that involve organisational leaders, human resource functions, governance boards, intermediaries and peak body associations, private and public funders, training providers, businesses, and scholars, among others. It's only the collective that can change the nature and narrative of capacity building. Some suggestions.

Organisational Leaders should focus more on the conditions that enable high performance and impact. And they should be guided by the best evidence that is available or can be generated, all else leads to dead ends and suboptimal decision making. It's essentially about confronting reality, getting data and making decisions based on facts. What are the desired states and outcomes, time frames, and metrics? Define it, measure it, hold people accountable to it. Importantly, one magic metric or index alone doesn't tell you what's happening. It also starts by becoming specific about language. For instance, engagement, culture, and performance are distinct concepts; and so are motivation and satisfaction; or coaching and mentoring. Using clear metrics established by a global community gives clarity as to what needs attention and drives desired outcomes. Organisational leaders should engage in genuine, substantive and regular conversations on the total work experience as a driver of impact. And they should also afford the time and resources to design better work experiences, build opportunities for growth and careers, and share more information and control.

Human Resources as a function, or by means of assuming respective responsibilities, should be more focused on addressing holistically the systemic people mechanisms that impede and enable impact. This involves considerations about what the organisational impact should be, and deliver against this outcome from a people perspective. Such strategic workforce management might mean to rebalance some items of the existing budget, however small, and to do things differently. It might mean building long term a culture that openly shares knowledge and errors in addition to or as opposed to sending workers to the traditional training program. It might mean to regularly expose every worker to a living beneficiary to enhance workers' sense of purpose and reduce attrition. Any such practices are most effective when they are visible, understandable, and consistent so they help workers do their work well.

Governance Boards role is to act in the best interests of their organisation, and they thus should actively put the workforce and its management on to the agenda. Importantly, this is not merely about underwriting a culture value statement or reviewing staffing numbers. Instead, the total work experience should not be left to chance, and directors should take an active role in managing the associated risks and opportunities. To begin, boards hold a key to establishing evidence-based practice throughout the organisation; similar to how they

pushed for and oversaw the implementation of ethical conduct in recent decades. Hence, people analytics should become an important reference in the director's toolkit. Moreover, the board configuration should account for the gamut of organisational strategic levers. NFP organisations ought to appoint directors with expertise and backgrounds in, for instance, human resource management, industrial-organisational psychology, and people analytics.

Intermediaries, such as peak body associations, should focus on establishing an overt culture of people management and analytics among their member base. This may involve emphasizing evidence-based practice, the sharing of evidence-based information, hosting educational workshops, and using evidence to advocate for desirable work experiences alongside resources that enable them. Intermediaries often have a strong voice, in relation to the workforce this can go beyond industrial relations but shift to building the strongest and best talent. Intermediaries may also commission or collaborate on the collection and analyses of data that specifically reflects their member base, thereby generating useful intelligence on the state and potential of the workforce they represent. Such evidence-base can then help prioritize the competencies specifically needed in a particular domain or jurisdiction, further helping to build capacity for the focal purpose.

Funders, public or philanthropic, should understand the NFP workforce as integral to impact, and invest in better organisational systems and their management. Put differently, don't just try to fix leaders but build a system of professionals. Funders should take a proactive workforce focus as they carry a power advantage over their grantees. When the funding entity changes its expectations and communication, NFP organisations will be more open to voice their actual needs. Funders may establish scholarship priorities by drawing on our capability framework. Those offers should be agnostic about organisational rank and seniority and rather focus on strategic roles and peole that are likely to have a disproportionate effect on operational excellence and organisational impact. Grant portfolios then may explicitly support the professional development of middle management and highly specialized or technical capabilities, fund educational workshops on evidence-based people management and analytics, and consider the provision of professional coaching and consulting expertise to support the workforce element of the services or programs funded.

Policymakers and governmental think tanks can contribute by soliciting the further mapping of strengths and gaps of the NFP workforce in the wider system. It is critical to go beyond staffing forecasts, and stimulate intellectual discourse and strategic plans that bring about new generations of highly skilled NFP workers. Serious consideration ought to be given to forms of impact investing, whereby financial resources are directed toward capacity building schemes that generate an economic and/or social benefit linked to a financial return. Moreover, governments may need to recognise that most existing funding models and grant schemes do not permit full cost recovery. Full cost recovery means that NFP organisations are able to recuperate the total costs of realising a given program or project, including the relevant proportion of what is typically considered 'overhead' costs, and of which building capacity is a part.

Training Providers should consider the emerging evidence on NFP capabilities: what knowledge and skills make the biggest difference and are needed most, and by whom. They may design learning experiences specifically for the NFP context, and solicit genuine feedback about its subsequent effect on impact. Training providers can play a significant role in shifting organisational and people management to become a more evidence-based discipline. For some, this might require a departure from promoting courses based on fads for higher sales, toward most robust practices that actually make a difference. This might break with the efficiencies of using established learning material or career consultants, as those may not optimally reflect the state of the science, and what works. However, the long term prospects for all are substantial.

Businesses may engage in cross-sector partnering with NFP entities. Whilst there should be no assumption about businesses being inherently better organisations that are better managed, many commercial endeavours are characterised by more resource discretion. In turn, businesses often employ more professionals of which some may volunteer their expertise, and this can include highly paid specialists, that most NFP organisations cannot afford but who make themselves available pro bono. Such transformational partnerships may engage in joint problem solving, decision making, management, learning, and co-creation of benefits in relation to people and analytics.

Scholars should embrace more the specific needs and opportunities abound in the NFP context. Although academic activity on NFP matters in Australia has somewhat increased in recent years, there are only few successful alliances that appear long-term and for dual benefit. To begin, nationally only few options exist to learn about idiosyncratic NFP topics and capabilities. Arguably there is demand for new, designated courses that teach, for instance, volunteer psychology, mechanisms of crowdfunding, and the sociology of campaigning. Moreover, organisational and managerial research specifically for the NFP context is valuable but remains scarce. Scholars should actively promote and deploy their methodological expertise to support, for instance, the review and translation of extant research, the exploration and betterment of some organisational challenge, or

A Bigger Vision

This final section presents a vision of a future, in which the NFP sector has transformed itself into an industry that attracts, develops, motivates, and retains the best talent. In that future, NFP organisations do not just appeal to the passionate and purpose seeking but compete successfully for the best educated and most capable.

This vision is based on the belief that NFP entities can become a default employment and career option for most; one that is on par with commercial and public operations. This does include but is not exhausted by an inherent advantage of working toward some larger purpose.

To fuel that vision, NFP organisations and related stakeholders are required to review and shape the necessary type of talent, organisations and labour market conditions. First and foremost, the incentives and culture around this vision relate to the provision of a superb work experience, one that many fail to live up to. This report yields some directions.

If nothing is done, the NFP sector will remain in its place and on the same path, at best. At worst, it will churn through ever more money, talent, and opportunity, with perhaps less impact. Clearly, achieving these highest aspirations is no trivial pursuit.

You are invited on the journey toward some substantive rethinking. We invite broad participation in this conversation, and for collaboration to craft a different NFP ecosystem. For starters, some observations and proposals.

A substantial proportion of the broad society does not seem to understand the full force of the NFP sector, and what would happen if respective endeavours simply disappear. Yet, debates about efficiencies and overhead dominate the popular channels. That need to change. *Proposal:* An educational campaign about the true value of the Australian NFP sector, organisations and people. Forge key relationships to change the narrative. Be in it for the long term.

Altruistic values and key life events often underpin the motivation to join the NFP workforce. That is great, but not sufficient. To further professionalise NFP operations, pathways must exist for those motivated primarily by the excellence of their craft. *Proposal:* Positioning NFP work and careers as viable alternatives to the public and private sectors. Use HR branding to attract agnostic but top talent. Craft interesting work and opportunities beyond the status quo.

The idiosyncratic knowledge and skills required to lead and manage NFP operations are poorly understood and hard to acquire systematically. *Proposal:* Invest in tertiary undergraduate programs that educate and motivate the next generations to become excellent in the leadership and management of NFP organisations. Also invest in independent research that usefully informs related debates and decisions.

Successful organisations use ever more data and analytics to better understand and lead their people. The NFP sector can opt to be at the forefront. This may involve 360 degree evaluations with automated feedback, taking a pulse on staff by analysing their sentiments, using machine learning to predict volunteer attrition by person and direct limited resources. *Proposal:* Craft long-term collaborations with researchers and external funding partners.

These are but a few ideas. We invite for further discussion on the prospect of realising a bright NFP future.
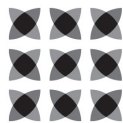
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