

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CENTRE – STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP TO DELIVER BETTER RESULTS FOR NEW ZEALANDERS

by Cathy Henry, Communications Specialist, Leadership Development Centre, New Zealand

Focus on Experiential and Collective Learning

“Chief executives in New Zealand are really smart people,” said Rosemary Hannah-Parr, Chief Executive, Leadership Development Centre (LDC). “They own and govern a purpose built agency — the Leadership Development Centre — to partner with them on delivering the development for great leaders in the public service.”

“LDC’s leadership development approach focuses on experiential and collective learning and working on real-life big-system projects,” Rosemary added. “We want our leaders to broaden their perspective and experience across the public sector. For example, participants in our Leadership Development Programme (LDP) — designed to further develop senior leaders’ effectiveness — work together on actual system-projects that are relevant and will positively impact the delivery of public services.”

The Leadership Development Programme is just one of the many opportunities offered at the centre. This year, for example, LDC awarded three research and study Fellowships to four senior public sector leaders. These fellowships enable them to progress their personal leadership development goals through research, study, and experiential learning. The Fellows’ topics must be highly relevant and add value to their agencies and the public sector.

Fellowship awardee Evelyn Wareham, a senior manager at Statistics New Zealand, is exploring the strategies and initiatives for unlocking how data can help improve public service delivery, government transparency, and economic advantage. She aims to further develop in how to achieve effective innovation and change leadership for data-driven initiatives. With the emphasis on delivering public services with a strong customer focus we require leaders who think and work differently.

As part of her LDC fellowship, Evelyn participated in an intensive change leadership course at the MIT Sloan School of Management, in Cambridge, U.S.A., and met with a range of thought-leaders and private sector innovators in the Boston area and in the U.K. We talked to Evelyn about her LDC Fellowship.

“I was eager to use the Fellowship to see how we compare internationally,” Evelyn shared. “I particularly wanted to explore the connections between the private sector, academic institutions, and government — and how such connections make change possible. Highly experienced private sector executives are being recruited as change agents into both the U.S. and U.K. governments.

These people come from big digital companies as well as NGOs. In the U.S., a key recruitment message is that these private sector professionals can make a meaningful contribution to people’s lives by working for government and improving its data and technology,” observed Evelyn.

“The flow of top private-sector people from digital organisations into the U.K. public sector is making a big difference to the way government agencies drive change. Seeing how MIT operates and the influence it holds in driving entrepreneurial innovation in Boston and more widely was really valuable. There was a clear cross-over between research, business

innovation, and public sector transformation. I saw a lot of initiatives and development that New Zealand could learn from, especially in the innovation and start-up cultures.”

Evelyn will continue to embed her learning into her agency work, and begin putting her new insights into action as she helps establish the New Zealand Data Futures Partnership. This joint-initiative involves a range of private sector companies, Māori organisations, other non-government organisations, and citizen and consumer representatives —



Evelyn Wareham, 2015 Fellow

all working alongside sector leaders to help New Zealand harness the economic and social potential of data.

“This initiative is challenging me to use all that I’ve learnt about innovation, change leadership, and the enormous potential of data,” explained Evelyn. She advises emerging leaders to be adaptable, to seek opportunities, and to be open to accepting support when it is offered. “You need to have support from others to help you develop new skills and offer stretch opportunities.”

LDC’s other 2015 Fellows are researching public sector leadership in design thinking, innovation methods across the policy and implementation spectrum, and leadership models within the corporate legal sector. You can find out more about the [LDC 2015 Fellows](#), and follow their leadership journey on their [blogs](#).

LDC’s work is grounded in research. Our analysis of over 700 public sector leadership 360 degree assessments conducted between 2011 and 2014 suggests that currently leaders are being recognised and rewarded for their individual rather than their team leadership practices. “This has been an important contributor to LDC’s stronger focus on group-based collective learning on real and relevant topics,” reports Rosemary. “In addition, we are focusing more on development that will enable leaders to involve their teams in strategic conversation. Central to employee engagement is that all team members understand the value of their roles in achieving organisational objectives.”

LDC offers its member organisations information and resources in the form of quick-read creative summaries of leadership books, a leadership library, and numerous toolkits.

This year, LDC worked with the State Services Commission and agency representatives to develop a new talent management toolkit and revise the public sector Leadership Success Profile (LSP), which defines good leadership. The repositioned LSP proposes a new leadership model for the public sector that concentrates on New Zealanders as the customer rather than taking an agency-centric leadership focus. Organisations can use the toolkit to benchmark their maturity around talent management.

The vision of chief executives and the State Services Commissioner is to have a world-class leadership system across the public sector to help provide the best services for all New Zealanders. The emphasis is on shifting from individual agency leadership to system leaders. Chief executives need to think five to ten years ahead to ensure there are skilled people ready to step into leadership roles. They need to lead in a different way and adopt a collective and consistent approach to talent management and leadership development.

That’s where LDC comes to the fore. Co-owned and governed by public sector chief executives with the State Services Commissioner as our Board Chair, we are uniquely placed to provide an overview of leadership development practices across the public sector and connect and combine the many examples of good leadership development. This close partnership with chief executives provides us with a comprehensive understanding of the scope of leadership requirements for the public sector. It also enables us to work with and for chief executives to help them deliver on this core part of their role.

Find out more about LDC at www ldc.govt.nz.

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