



final report

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A Leg Up – Mentor Support For New Entrants to the Red Meat RD&A Profession

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Executive Summary

The 'A Leg Up' program was designed to provide mentor support for new professional red meat Research Development and Adoption (RD&A) entrants in the work force by pairing them with an experienced industry professional. This project focused on facilitating effective communication, enabling skill transfer, and building professional networks to assist RD&A entrants to set goals and achieve them.

The reduction in career opportunities in traditional training grounds such as Research and Development Corporations (RDC's) and state government departments has resulted in a gap for on-ground RD&A professionals to be supported, trained and mentored by a broad team surrounding them. The 'A Leg Up' project provided the benefits of mentoring with networking with established red meat professionals. New entrants were paired with established professionals to encourage, nurture and give them 'a leg up' in their chosen career through the development of professional relationships. With the ability to be applied to all Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) RD&A activities each participant was paired with a mentor who acted as a coach and powerful advocate.

The program structure focused on matching new industry entrants (NE) with established industry professionals (EP), then developing a mentoring relationship to achieve goals set by the new entrant over a 12 month period.

The matching process occurred through analysing the application forms and established knowledge of both NEs and EPs to understand the desired goals of NEs and potential assistance the EPs could provide through the mentoring process.

Both the NE and EPs attended a workshop to establish four main aims.

1. Build the relationship between the NE and their mentor EP, as well as with other EPs and NEs.
2. For NEs to establish career goals via a workshop
3. For the EPs to develop knowledge and understand how to mentor while also assisting NEs with an action plan to achieve the established goals.
4. For NEs and EPs to establish and agree on guidelines for the 12 month mentoring relationship.

After the workshop, the nature and success of the relationship was entrusted to the NEs and EPs to develop and maintain, yet the program provided agreed points over the course of the program to ensure momentum and accountability was maintained. These action points included four webinars, as well as access to the program managers via phone and email.

The webinars were held at dates and times where attendance could be maximised. They were however poorly attended due to either work commitments or other reasons not understood or communicated.

The topics for the webinars were:

1. A follow up and summary of content provide at the face to face workshop, for those who either could not make the workshop or wanted a refresher of the content.

2. An update from each participant on each mentoring relationship to understand how they were going and what support they needed.
3. A presentation on the topic “The Neuroscience of Conversations”.
4. A wrap up of the program, review of achievements, and analysis of what worked and what did not.

All webinars were recorded and placed on YouTube with a private link so those who could not attend the session would be able to view. The ability to access in their own time may have impacted on a poor attendance generally across the webinars.

In addition to poor webinar attendance was the mixed levels of success with the mentoring relationships themselves. Many pairings did not succeed many due to the failure to make regular and disciplined time to interact. Others, due to the inability of EPs or NEs to make contact their paired partner at all. These outcome was not surprising but instead the program managers had hoped the successful pairings and regular webinars would have aided in maintaining momentum and drive.

However, there were successful relationships that will progress beyond the program in both formal and informal manners. Many NEs reported that they were able to meet and exceed their personal goals through the formal mentoring program. It was apparent that intentional face to face time was an important factor in achieving these goals.

Several recommendations are made as a result of reviewing this program.

- Industry to continue funding and promotion of mentoring as an industry norm.
- Ensure greater rigour is placed on the selection of committed and disciplined mentees (NEs)
- Learn from programs such as “A Leg Up” implementing design enhancements including abundant face to face time, emergency mentor replacements, and the possibility of working alongside each other on an industry program/project.
- Introduce activities that ensure accountability is held by the mentee (NE).
- Increase the knowledge of and capacity of mentoring skills across the red meat industry.

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1 Background

The 'A Leg Up' program was designed to provide mentor support for new professional red meat Research Development and Adoption (RD&A) entrants in the work force by pairing them with an experienced industry professional. This project focused on facilitating effective communication, enabling skill transfer, and building professional networks to assist RD&A entrants to set goals and achieve them.

The knowledge and experience required to understand likely avenues of production research, advise farmer clients and manage projects is a mixture of science, economics, best business practice, intermeshed with a measure of gut feel and intuition which comes from experience.

The reduction in career opportunities in traditional training grounds such as Research and Development Corporations (RDC's) and state government departments has resulted in a gap for on-ground RD&A professionals to be supported, trained and mentored by a broad team surrounding them. More than coaching, the 'A Leg Up' project provided the benefits of mentoring with networking with established red meat professionals. New entrants were paired with established professionals to encourage, nurture and give them 'a leg up' in their chosen career through the development of professional relationships. With the ability to be applied to all Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) RD&A activities each participant was paired with a mentor who acted as a coach and powerful advocate.

The benefits of this program to sheepmeat and grassfed beef producers include:

- Ensuring there is continuation of the RD&A capacity in the industry.
- Ensuring that 'Industry Corporate Memory' is retained.
- Increasing the transfer of knowledge and experience between generations of scientists, producers, consultants and extension services.
- Cultural change (creating an industry of open communication and collaboration) based on a structured approach to increase information/knowledge sharing and setting a standard for programs into the future to increase the stability of succession in the industry.
- Ensuring producers will have access to independent quality advice from within a sound network of existing and new professionals.
- Ensuring industry research and development continues and that it is supported by practical application and people to carry it out and independently assess and manage it.

2 Project Objectives

The Leg Up program establishes a relevant framework for providing new entrants into all sectors of the sheep meat and grassfed beef industries and their RD&A workforce.

The program provides new entrants (NEs) with the opportunity to learn from respected, established professionals (EPs) in each sector, and for these EPs to pass on their knowledge to the next generation to assist in developing an organic 'succession plan' for both themselves and others in the

sector, to improve the replacement rates of exiting/retiring professionals. The core objectives of ‘A Leg Up’ are

1. To fill the gap that has arisen through the drastic reduction in the number of positions available for RD&A professionals. The gap has occurred due to job cuts in government agencies and across industry. The widening gap has reduced the career mentoring opportunities for new and aspiring industry entrants who either enter formal or organic mentoring relationships within such organisations.
2. To provide a supportive and structured program for the engagement and support of young and new entrants, who are tertiary qualified, and working in the sheep meat and grassfed beef industries and the RD&A network.
3. To engage a minimum of twenty new industry entrants and partner them with twenty established industry participants for a twelve month period. During this time, the facilitation of knowledge transfer and skill development through an agreed program of activities, discussions and support of program managers will be carried out.
4. To deliver a structured program to foster, manage and ensure a professional network functions between established industry participants and new entrants.
5. To encourage and support new and aspiring entrants, (or are in the workforce already) to enter and remain in the sheepmeat, grassfed beef and RD&A industries.
6. To develop an adaptable framework that can be applied in many businesses, across various sectors on the industry as well as geographic locations, to facilitate continual mentoring of new entrants in their specific fields.

3 Methodology

This project identified and addressed the needs of new entrants who were in the work force or who were workforce ready. These included students, newly employed people in the industry, or people who were working in other industries who wanted to enter or re-enter the red meat industry, in the sheepmeat, beef and RD&A framework. The aim was to ensure that Australia has a strong, smart, well-networked, successful and transparent industry into the future.

This project was inspired by the Dairy Sage Mentoring program run by Dairy Australia and various successful mentoring programs run by the Ag Institute and Melbourne University. In the A Leg Up project, mentoring was a supportive and private relationship between two people providing the individuals involved with an opportunity to share and develop their knowledge, experience and skills.

EPs facilitated constructive reflection of actions, behaviours and learning journeys. In this program the expectation was that both the EP and the NEs maintained regular contact as shown in the individual mentor/mentee agreements. Contact was maintained for a minimum period of one year unless it is mutually agreed by the mentor and mentee to terminate the contact after a shorter period. In that event Meridian Agriculture, as the program manager, had to be notified. NEs were

encouraged to identify personal goals and work with the mentor to implement a personal development plan. EPs were asked to provide confidential advice, support and guidance to the NEs. An agreed action plan provided a blueprint for the mentoring partnership.

Meridian Agriculture monitored the progress of the mentor/mentee relationship to ensure the agreements between EPs and NEs were upheld.

The A Leg Up project ran for 18 months, including 12 months of regular contact (the frequency was agreed by pairs of mentor/mentees) and three months allocated at the beginning for environmental analysis, recruitment and selection, and three months allocated at the end for final administration and project evaluation.

The project involved the following steps:

1. It was envisaged at the outset that this project would include an Environmental Analysis which would have:
 - Conducted a scan or cultural inventory within MLA. This was on the assumption that the inventory as recommended in project B STU 0267 had been completed. However, as no such inventory had been undertaken by MLA it was agreed that no scan would be conducted.
 - Completed a desk top analysis of other industries' successful approaches to engaging, training and retaining young people in their industries – mainly: wool; dairy; grain; cotton and horticulture.
 - Surveyed people who have been through a mentor style program (such as the Australian Pacific Extension Network (APEN) and private cadetships/ traineeships) in their early career and those who have not, to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each pathway. The respondents were identified through contacts with APEN, Ag Institute, University of Sydney and Melbourne University.
 - Evaluated previous support programs for new entrants into the industry, including MLA and broader industry initiatives.
2. The development of an Industry Steering Committee which assisted in the coordination of the program and provided feedback and direction. The Steering Committee provided input into the following:
 - Overall structure of project;
 - Sourcing of NEs and EPs (use of personal and professional relationships);
 - Feedback on delivery;
 - Industry awareness and informal feedback.
3. The Project Manager called for expressions of interest (EOIs) from aspiring industry participants (NEs) and established industry participants (EPs):
 - Places were limited to twenty NEs, to be paired with twenty EPs;
 - Selection criteria were to have been established through the Cultural Inventory but as no such inventory had been collated the project manager established the criteria.

- Industry needs were to have been established for each sector, addressing the gaps currently seen, such as:
 - Career path direction;
 - Training gaps;
 - Professional development support;
 - On the ground experience attainment;
 - Opportunity reality (e.g. how long will aspiring people wait to get into the role they want? Is it achievable? Can they wait around for it?).
- Partnerships that were used in this recruitment/EOI phase included
 - Universities and Agricultural Colleges;
 - Future Farmers Network;
 - State Farming Organisations;
 - Professional networks of the management team;
 - MLA Producer Networks.
- In the recruitment of the EPs, there was an open call for people who were interested and appropriate to work with an NE. An extensive network of personal and professional relationships that the project team maintains across all sectors was utilised to identify and engage appropriate EPs. This approach ensured that the 'net was cast' as broadly as possible to ensure the capture the highest level of skills in all EPs willing to participate.

3.1 Matching of New Entrants (NEs) and Existing Participants (EPs)

The project managers (Meridian Agriculture) used industry experience, networks and skills utilised in recruiting for Red Meat industry positions to match NEs (mentees) and EPs (mentors). A complete list of matched NEs and EPs is found in **Appendix 1**.

The mentor and mentee matching process was carried out based on the following factors:

- Common areas of interest;
- Mentee career aspirations linked with mentor career path and journey;
- Assessment of both mentees and mentors experiences: Where does the experience/ skill/ knowledge of one complement that of the other, and what subjects, technical matters, areas of common interest will be stimulating for both parties to work through;
- Industry and support networks for both parties bring outside support and contact into the relationship to fill any gaps that may arise in their own skills or to address any new issues that may arise over the twelve-month period and beyond.

Dan Korff and Mike Stephens developed the initial pairings which were reviewed by the Steering Committee, after which some changes were made based on information and feedback provided.

All pairings commenced the mentoring relationship at the face to face meeting, although not all were able to attend the event. Telephone/ email meetings/ introductions were arranged for those who could not attend.

It was emphasised and appreciated by all participants that the project was much larger than their individual relationships. The creation of a much broader network was being established between all 36 participants in the project.

3.2 Face to Face Meeting

The face to face meeting was held in Sydney in June 2017 with all mentors and mentees invited to participate. A consultant was engaged to facilitate the two day meeting.

All mentors and mentees were encouraged to network at the event to build relationships not only with their agreed partner but with all other mentors and mentees. The mentor partnership agreement template was utilised by all mentees and mentors. This can be found in **Appendix 3**.

A goal setting action plan was also undertaken by all mentees with support of their mentors. This was to further define what the desired outcomes of the relationship would be. Many of these plans were finalised at the face to face workshop or agreed to be finalised between the mentees and mentors in the weeks following. The goal setting action plan can be found in **Appendix 4**.

In preparation for individual mentoring sessions, two further forms were used by mentees and mentors. They are the mentor preparation form to be completed by mentees, found in **Appendix 5**.

This concluded the formal face to face activity with the group as a whole. Significant reliance was placed on both mentors and mentees to make relationships work post this event. For those unable to attend the Sydney workshop, this was made all the more difficult as the group experience, expectations and most importantly the relationship itself were not formed or normed.

3.3 Webinars

Four webinars were held over the course of the program on the follow dates:

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 27 July 17 | 24 August 17 | 8 March 18 | 24 July 18 |
|------------|--------------|------------|------------|

All EPs and NEs were given multiple options for suitable webinar times and topics. The date and time chosen for each webinar represented the best option for maximum attendance.

3.3.1 Webinar one

Contact following the Sydney workshop was made by project managers with both mentees and mentors to ensure that their relationship had started on a positive note. At the same time, the first of a series of four webinars was planned and held a consultant facilitating the discussion. It was agreed due to the change Meridian Agriculture's project manager (Dan Korff to Ben Reeve), that for consistency continued input from the consultant for the length of the program would be very valuable. The relationships with both mentees and mentors had been created through her facilitation and her continued involvement was seen, by Meridian Agriculture as vital to ensure the project's success. Mentees and Mentors on the first webinar shared their experience at the Face to Face meeting with those who couldn't attend, as well as update all on the progress of their mentoring relationship. All EPs and NEs were requested to present mentoring agreements.

NEs and EPs were encouraged to maintain the momentum gained within their mentoring relationship. Acknowledging that the time immediately following the face to face meeting, with fresh plans in place, was the time where extra effort and discipline was required in order to succeed.

Before a second webinar was held, contact was made with each NE/EP partnership to seek both their mentoring agreement and to ensure that they had the appropriate contact details of the new project manager should they need to seek support.

3.3.2 Webinar two

The second webinar was planned and held three months after the first, but was held earlier due to the agreed topic. This webinar focus was initially on getting updates from participants on their mentoring relationships and discussing topics they would like to explore together as a group in other webinars or intention training opportunities. However, due to several participants missing the face to face meeting and first webinar and the program managers receiving several questions regarding the mentoring process and the mentoring agreement, it was decided that a webinar focused on the core content of the face to face meeting was required for both NEs and EPs. In addition, a session was held for EPs only.

This webinar was poorly attended by both NEs and EPs. However, those who participated were comfortable that they were achieving goals and heading towards a positive outcome with their mentoring agreement. All program participants however were encouraged to utilise program managers for support and to address any issues with the mentoring process.

3.3.3 Webinar three

A third webinar was held in March 2018, with the consultant delivering a presentation on the topic “The Neuroscience of Conversations”. This webinar was reasonably well attended, with 12 participants. The positive attendance was due to the topic’s relevance and it was well received by those in attendance. The content was relevant to creating open communication within a mentoring relationship and understanding the processes within the brain for managing conversations.

3.3.4 Webinar four

In addition to those planned at the beginning of the program the fourth and final webinar was held in July 2018 to formally conclude the program. During the webinar participants were separated into different webinar ‘rooms’ (NEs and EPs), and were encouraged to discuss their mentoring experience, what they learnt about themselves, how the mentoring process had occurred for their partnership as well as what they had achieved during the year.

Although a great effort was put into finding a date which was suitable and sending several reminders this webinar was again poorly attended with five mentors and three mentees participating. Yet the content from the both groups provided excellent feedback and insight into their experience. Those who participated in this final webinar were those who had managed to maintain a mentoring relationship for the entire length of the program.

All webinars were recorded and placed on YouTube with a private link so those who could not attend the session would be able to view.

3.4 Project Manager Support

From the commencement of the program through to the completion both EPs and NEs, were encouraged to contact the project managers should they need any support within their mentoring relationship or clarity on what they were to achieve or issues associated with the relationship. Contact was made by very few partnerships for support services. This is deemed a result of a positive interaction and initial engagement in the mentoring relationships with the support of the consultant. Those successful mentoring relationships were equipped with the experience and skills in order to be self-sufficient. The mentoring relationships that were not as successful were those where any contact proved impossible. As a result and potentially coincidentally, engagement in the program was minimal. The following section elaborates on this outcome.

Throughout the program, participants were encouraged to share any questions, concerns or struggles they had with the content, process or relationship. Although very few did, the program managers fielded questions mainly regarding the mentor agreement and where participants were struggling to maintain contact with their partner.

Due to the nature of the large group, the program managers mainly utilised email to communicate program activities and encourage all in their mentoring relationships.

4 Results

The outcomes of delivering a mentoring program are measurable in terms of participation and engagement, yet the outcomes of each mentoring relationship must be accepted as subjective. The following relates to the delivery of the A Leg Up program.

4.1 Matching Process

The mentor and mentee matching process was carried out based on the following factors:

- Common areas of interest;
- Mentee career aspirations linked with mentor career path and journey;
- Assessment of experiences of both mentees and mentors, where does the experience/skill/ knowledge of one complement that of the other, and what subjects, technical matters, areas of common interest will be stimulating for both parties to work through;
- Industry and support networks for both parties bring outside support and contact into the relationship to fill any gaps that may arise in their own skills or to address any new issues that may arise over the twelve-month period and beyond.

Dan Korff and Mike Stephens developed the initial pairings that were reviewed by the Steering Committee, after which some changes were made based on information and feedback provided.

It has also been emphasised and appreciated by all participants that the project is much larger than their individual relationships and that there is a much broader network being established between all 36 participants in the project.

4.2 Face to Face meeting

The face to face meeting was held on 19 and 20 June 2017 at the Mercure Sydney Airport. This location was chosen for ease of access, accommodation and facilities to host approximately 40 people for the workshop.

The agenda and program for the face to face meeting was agreed upon and finalised with the facilitating consultant who delivered the technical content of the workshop for both mentees and mentors.

The agenda for the two day workshop for both mentees and mentors can be found in **Appendix 6**.

Travel and accommodation was arranged by project managers.

35 (of 38) attended at the workshop.

4.3 Mentoring agreements

Mentoring partnership agreements were developed, to work through at the face to face meeting.

The Mentor Partnership Agreement template was described, discussed and all partnerships were requested to present a copy to the program managers. A Goal Setting Action Plan was also completed by all mentees in conjunction with their mentors to further define the outcomes of the relationship.

Ten finalised mentoring agreements were received by program managers.

4.4 Webinar participation

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Webinar one | 27 July 17 | 16 participants |
| Webinar two | 24 August 17 | 3 participants |
| Webinar three | 8 March 18 | 14 participants |
| Webinar four | 24 July 18 | 8 participants |

Due to difficulties in holding webinars at times suitable for all participants; webinar two, three and four were recorded and made available via private YouTube links supplied to the participants. The option of watching the recorded webinars at a later date may have impacted on active participation in the webinars.

4.5 Program participation

Beyond the face to face meeting, the rate of participation in formal activities by both NEs and EPs was constantly below 50%.

Several participants withdrew from the program within the first six months due to two main factors.

1. An understanding that their ability to be available for the program's entirety and required commitment to the relationship would be limited due to work or personal commitments, including international travel.
2. The ability to make contact or regularly connect with their mentoring partner was either limited or non-existent.

At both withdrawal points, program managers assisted in creating suitable arrangements or negotiation between the partnerships. This was attempted through communication with all parties by phone and email. The limited or negative response from the non-commutative partner received/ignored resulted in the communicative partner withdrawing from the program.

4.6 Participant Feedback

4.6.1 Evaluation Survey

All participants, both NEs and EPs were requested to complete an evaluation survey, post the final webinar. The summary of results is found in **Appendix 7**. 19 respondents in total completed the survey (9 NEs and 10 EPs) and the key findings are as follows:

Of the respondents:

- The majority were able to maintain the full contact agreement in their partnership, which all stated was a monthly arrangement, either by phone/skype with a few face to face meetings.
- Advanced planning and calendar appointments confirmed in advance were the main reasons for driving this success.
- A failure to "make time" was the main reason given when the mentoring agreement hadn't been met. Results of the survey suggest this failure was mainly on part of the NE.
- No correlation for a successful mentoring relationship was found relating to location, age, industry role or communication type.
- While over a half (62.5%) of responding mentees have made positive changes to their professional life, 75% of respondents claim to have made changes to their personal life as a result of mentoring.
- All mentees came to the mentoring relationship with specific skills or expectations of the experience. All stated they had achieved or somewhat achieved these aims and subsequent desired outcomes.
- Over half (55%) of the EPs introduced their NE to other networks across the industry to assist where they could not.
- While only 50% of EPs will maintain contact with their NE in a formal mentoring capacity, 100% stated they will maintain informal contact with their mentoring partner.
- Although just over half (55%) of EPs felt they been able to share what they wanted during year, 45% felt they had not. The expected skills and experience they had hoped to share focused on life and larger industry experience.
- Yet, NEs expressed generally that their expectations life and larger industry experience were generally met.

4.6.2 Facilitator Feedback

The facilitator of the workshop and webinars shared the following objective feedback as part of her debriefing with the mentors during the fourth webinar:

- Mentors valued the professional development workshop and drew on the skills during the program and in other areas of their life
- There was a mind shift by some Mentors now understanding what Mentoring is: i.e. NOT training, therefore it is not of value to feed the Mentee answers and understanding the need to develop the skill of listening, to truly hear what the Mentee is saying and letting go of the noise in the head which is created by being consumed by what you wanted to say next.
- The skill of questioning was also important to draw out what the Mentee meant, rather than assuming.
- An important reflection that maybe as a Mentor what could have been done differently is tough love. i.e. Ensuring the Mentees were accountable for their actions and if things had not been completed, the reason for this was explored.
- Some Mentors felt their value wasn't fully tapped by the Mentee, some challenged by distance and time constraints and some wondering if the mapping was as effective as it could have been
- It is hard to match mentoring partnerships and then the Mentee changes focus, as sometimes you don't know what you don't know!
- 12 months is a long time to maintain the momentum of the mentoring relationship. Perhaps a six month period would have been easier to keep the energy up.

In summary, the facilitator highlighted the value of the workshop, the challenge of distance on mentoring relationships and you can't make people buy in, they have to want to.

5 Discussion

5.1 The importance of face to face meetings

It is evident that the attendance at the face to face meeting initially led to a significant increase of success with the mentoring relationships. There were some relationships that were unable to form at the face to face event and resulted in disjointed relationships. However, this was not uniform as one relationship in particular used significant discipline and were also very successful. With significant effort, the pair were able to connect face to face beyond the workshop.

As a result of the face to face workshop activity, many participants expressed a desire to meet face to face again as part of this program. Although it was not designed in the agreed program, several options were discussed with MLA in attempt to make face to face activity occur. Several possibilities were presented to participants who would need to commit both time and finances to several options.

1. Self-fund their own transport/time to a gathering in Sydney.
2. Meet in regional centres with smaller groups as appropriate with options provided to meet in MLA funded venues in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

3. A webinar.
4. A fully funded face to face meeting in Sydney.

The webinar was the second most popular option behind the fully funded face to face meeting. The funds were not available for a fully funded face to face meeting so the webinar was arranged.

The design of the program had placed significant expectation and reliance on the EPs and NEs driving the mentoring partnerships. More face to face activities facilitated by the program managers may have driven the success of mentoring relationships by creating more points of accountability. It may have also assisted in enabling the EPs to further develop or refine mentoring skills.

5.2 The value of accountability

The program relied on the self-discipline of the mentee. It could be argued that with greater accountability to the program, by the employer or supervisor the participation rate may have been greater.

The ease of avoiding or ignoring emails, missing webinars or not returning calls is a constant challenge, particularly when maintaining long distance relationships while either working or studying full time. This could have also hindered the mentoring relationships and program participation rates.

It was the younger NEs who struggled to maintain communication with the older EPs so the lack of discipline and accountability could be related to a lack of independent but interrelated support, encouraging connection to the process.

Although the following is speculation, the personal nature of mentoring could and should be a challenging process, often as a result of understanding more about self or reflecting on personal circumstances. The responses to such personal reflections differ from person to person. As a result, accountability to an industry colleague may have proved to be too vulnerable for some NEs.

With accountability based on a workshop and an agreement with a mentor alone, the relationship could be subject to easy breakdown. Immediate support mechanisms through relationship with NEs would provide the constant encouragement required for commit to webinars, mentoring sessions and personal activity to following through.

5.3 The challenge of maintaining long term mentoring relationships

Many industry mentoring programs have been formulated around shorter timeframes of either three months or six months. It is rare when a mentoring relationship lasts long term and 12 months is a significant period of time to maintain a formalised yet volunteer mentoring relationship. This difficulty has been demonstrated with a number of the partnerships not maintaining their agreed level of commitment. While those who have managed to maintain strong ridged and regular contact have been able to succeed, those who had irregular sporadic and often text based discussion rather than verbal were less likely to succeed in maintaining and sustaining a year long relationship.

Although challenging, the length of the mentoring relationship can be maintained, sustained and developed even further with the right program structure.

Part of the learnings are that face to face contact and working with networks socially is important to building both trust and relationship across the industry. A formal mentoring relationship where mentees share openly about their growth and their desired achievements within their career requires some vulnerability that is only built through trust. Those relationships that were further apart also struggled with building that level of trust required in order to develop an ongoing stable mentoring relationship. More contact, to build that trust is important.

5.4 Skill and consistency of project management

A further lesson for future programs of this nature is to ensure, as much as is possible that the program manager (the face of the program) remains the same throughout the program. Further, in addition to the constant point of contact, it is easy to underestimate the level of skill and empathy required to manage programs of this nature, supporting participants as required throughout a journey.

6 Conclusions/Recommendations

6.1 Continue to fund and promote mentoring as an industry norm

It is evident from conversations with mentors that the red meat industry has an excellent knowledge base and a desire to share of that knowledge with others. Such good faith should be capitalised on. Most of the mentors in this program had been involved in mentoring previously, but had not undertaken any training. They learned a lot from this process and communicated a desire to continue with opportunities to share in the future.

Alongside this knowledge base sits a group of new entrants to the industry needing support, encouragement and (at large) are willing to accept the transition of knowledge from others who have gone before them.

It is fair to state that red meat producers, other sectors of the agricultural industry and society at large will also expect that the future leaders of the red meat industry will also

6.2 Put greater rigour into selection of mentees

The provision of mentoring programs are expensive and the lack of commitment shown by participants is potentially due to a lack of either ownership of their own growth or miscommunication as to the purpose of mentoring. Regardless, a greater and deeper rigour to the selection of mentees would result in a greater commitment and engagement in the process through clear expectations. There are a number of processes that can assist in communicating these expectations:

- Consider asking mentees to pay a refundable bond
- Ensure that maintenance of the relationship for the period of the program is seen as important by the mentees employer, acting as an accountability point for the mentee.
- Ensure expectations are clearly communicated, including time, energy and potential commitment.
- More publicity to attract a greater range of participants.

- A more open selection process based on selection criteria including a judgement on the person as ability to commit, participate and engage.

6.3 Plan future mentoring programs with the following design attributes

- More face to face activity – maybe three times a year (start, middle and end)
- More networking opportunities
- Intention change of mentor partnerships mid-year, through shorter mentoring partnerships
- Have a group of recognised mentors waiting in the wings for when a mentor reaches the end of their skill set or knowledge base, proving the mentee with an opportunity to develop their goals further with another individual mentor
- Utilise participants in red meat industry projects, demonstrating value for their industry participation.

6.4 Mentee accountability

As the major concern for the mentoring relationships was the mentee accountability, processes to ensure mentees are accountable should be considered, communicated and mentees held accountable for their involvement. Such activities may include:

- Consider asking mentees to pay a refundable bond
- Ensure each mentee has external accountability from an employer, industry supervisor, teacher, etc in order to account for their involvement in the program activities as well as provide third party support should it be required.
- Intentional points of contact through the minutes of mentoring sessions, monthly updates on goals achieved
- Intentional on site visit by their mentor, to see their workplace, view work and understand greater the environment of the mentee.

6.5 Further training and support for mentors

As mentors stated throughout the workshops and in the final webinar, they had little knowledge as to the intention of mentoring before any training, with most admitting to wanting to teach or show somebody. The refined skills of mentoring are highly specialised and set up a mentee to think for themselves, make decisions for themselves and take ownership of the outcomes. The mentoring experience is one that is rewarding for mentors as well. However, they cannot stand still in their mentoring skill set. Continual training for industry leaders and influencers in mentoring will provide the industry with a greater network of individuals who are well trained and equipped to assist each other. This may occur through formal mentoring programs, organic workplace environments or industry events/projects.

6.6 Industry support to get them there

As capacity building is acknowledged as an industry priority, the continued investment towards mentoring will demonstrate value for persons involved with the red meat industry while also ensuring the red meat industry is recognised as a supportive, encouraging, progressive and well networked industry. Some key priorities to be considered are:

- Funding future mentoring programs
- Identifying and recommending individuals for mentoring opportunities
- Prioritising opportunities for those who have undertaken mentoring activity with MLA events, speaking engagement and/or RD&E projects.

7 Appendices

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Appendix one – | Complete list matched of EPs and NEs |
| Appendix two – | Mentor partnership agreement |
| Appendix three– | Goal Setting action plan |
| Appendix four – | Mentor preparation form |
| Appendix five – | Face to face workshop agenda |
| Appendix six – | Evaluation survey results |
| Appendix seven – | A LEG UP QUESTION SUMMARIES – Mentees |
| Appendix eight – | A LEG UP QUESTION SUMMARIES – Mentors |

7.1 Appendix 1 – Complete list matched of EPs and NEs

*Note: the list of Eps and NEs has been removed for confidentiality purposes

7.2 Appendix 2 – Mentoring Partnership Agreement

MENTORING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Please review and adjust as necessary, sign where indicated then return to your mentor. Putting this in writing strengthens your dedication and allows your Mentor to understand and support you in your progress.

PROGRAM

MLA – A Leg Up Mentoring Program

MENTOR

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Name | |
| Email | |
| Phone | |

MENTEE

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Name | |
| Email | |
| Phone | |

TERM

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Months | |
| From | |
| To | |
| Agreed to on | |



Communication strategy

Exit strategy

How do you like to receive feedback?

Environmental considerations

Focus of work?

Ground Rules e.g. Who will call at the scheduled time?

Other terms:

7.3 Appendix 3 – Goal Setting Action Plan

GOAL SETTING ACTION PLAN FORM

PROGRAM

MLA – A Leg Up Mentoring Program

MENTEE

| | |
|------|--|
| Name | |
|------|--|

The Goal: SMART outcome

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Reality: Where are you now in relation to this goal?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Motivation: What makes this goal important?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|



Barriers**Solutions**

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Action**Date started****Date completed**

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Learning: Review, conclude, apply

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

7.4 Appendix 4 – Mentor Preparation Form

MENTOR PREPARATION FORM

Before the next mentoring session, use this self-assessment to focus on your personal development priorities and measure progress.

PROGRAM

MLA – A Leg Up Mentoring Program

MENTEE

| | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| Name | | |
| Date | | |

What have you achieved since our last session? (What are your “Wins”?)

What didn't get done but you intended to?



Priority goals: thinking about the challenges you are facing right now, please describe up to three :

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |

The opportunities which are available to you now:

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

You would like to use this mentoring session to?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Anything else?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

7.5 Appendix 5 – Face to Face Workshop Agenda

MLA – A Leg Up – Mentee Workshop Agenda

| DAY ONE | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|---|
| Time | Topic | Activity | Who |
| 9.30am | Arrive | Morning Tea | |
| 10.00am | Welcome | Introduction to the day, program and outline for the two days Group introduce themselves ie name and if Mentee or Mentor | Mike Stephens, Dan Korff & Jim Rothwell |
| 10.30 | Activity | Mentees to visit MLA | Dan until afternoon tea |
| 3.30 | Afternoon Tea | Mentees join Mentors at the Mercure | |
| 4.00pm | DISC | Complete questionnaire and break into the different types after writing up on butchers paper | Sharon for remainder of the day |
| 4.30pm | Activity | Feedback to the group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> As your type how do you like to communicate? <input type="checkbox"/> What frustrates you? <input type="checkbox"/> What will motivate you? | |
| 5.00pm | Definitions | What is the difference between: Coach/Mentor/Consultant/Counsellor – break into 4 groups and write them up | |
| 5.30pm | | Close | |

MLA – A Leg Up – Mentee Workshop Agenda

| | | DAY TWO | |
|---------|-------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Time | Topic | Activity | Who |
| 9.00am | Roles and Responsibilities | What are the roles and responsibilities and qualities. | Sharon |
| 9.30am | Mentor Presentations | 5 mins x 11 Set it up as panels of 4 at a time | |
| 10.30am | Morning tea | | |
| 11.00am | Presentation on Project | | Guest Presenters |
| 11.45am | Mentor Presentations | 5 min x 8 Set it up as panels of 4 at a time | |
| 12.30pm | Lunch | | |
| 1.15pm | Speed Dating | Set up 5 tables of 3 mentors plus one of 4 – group of mentors spend 9 mins at each table asking questions 1 minute to move tables | |
| 2.15pm | Mentor and Mentees Agreements | Break into pairs to work through their agreements | |
| 2.45pm | Wrap Up | Reflect on what they wanted to get from the 2 days, how did they go? | |
| 3.00pm | Close | Where to from here | Dan |

7.6 Appendix 6 – Mentor Agenda

MLA – A Leg Up - Mentors Workshop

| DAY ONE | | | |
|---------|----------------------------|--|--|
| Time | Topic | Activity | Who |
| 9.30am | Arrive | Morning Tea | |
| 10.00am | Welcome | Introduction to the day, program and outline for the two days Group introduce themselves ie name and if Mentee or Mentor | Mike Stephens , Dan Korff & Jim Rothwell |
| 10.15am | Introductions | Picture Card to define Mentoring Challenge Write up on butchers paper Outcomes and how we will work together | Sharon for rest of the day |
| 10.45am | Definitions | What is the difference between Coach/Mentor/Counsellor/Consultant Flesh out Form and informal Mentoring | |
| 11.15am | Roles and Responsibilities | What are the roles and responsibilities and qualities In two groups define the R R of mentors and mentees Report back and discuss their comments | |
| 11.30am | Perception | Importance of understanding our own view of the world and learning to listen and respect the mentees view of the world | |
| 11.55am | Overview Model | Coach U Coaching Conversation | |
| 12.15pm | Demo | To allow the group to observe how a pure coaching conversation works | |
| 12.30pm | Lunch | | |
| 1.15pm | Debrief/ practice | Describe and practice about having a structured conversation with each other Practice – 5 mins each? | |
| 1.30pm | Questioning | What makes a powerful question | |
| 2.00pm | Listening | Incorporate listening exercise – groups of 3 listening for content vs emotion, values, strengths etc 10 mins for exercise | |
| 2.30pm | Environment | Where to meet, commitment, quiet etc | |
| 2.50pm | Model Overview | Go back and build in questioning, listening and the environment | |

MLA – A Leg Up - Mentors Workshop

| | | | |
|--------|---------------|--|--|
| 3.30 | Afternoon Tea | Mentees arrive and join group | |
| 4.00pm | DISC | Complete questionnaire and break into the different types after writing up on butchers paper | |
| 4.30pm | Activity | Feedback to the group: <input type="checkbox"/> As your type how do you like to communicate? <input type="checkbox"/> What frustrates you? <input type="checkbox"/> What will motivate you? | |
| 5.00pm | Wrap Up | What are you going to do differently as a consequence of today? | |

| | | DAY TWO | |
|---------|-------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Time | Topic | Activity | Who |
| 9.30am | Mentor Presentations | 5 mins x 11 Set it up as panels of 4 at a time | Sharon |
| 10.30am | Morning tea | | |
| 11.00am | Presentation on Project | | Guest Presenters |
| 11.45am | Mentor Presentations | 5 min x 8 Set it up as panels of 4 at a time | |
| 12.30pm | Lunch | | |
| 1.15pm | Speed Dating | Set up 5 tables of 3 mentors plus one of 4 – group of mentors spend 9 mins at each table asking questions 1 minute to move tables | |
| 2.15pm | Mentor and Leaders Agreements | Break into pairs to work through their agreements | |
| 2.45pm | Wrap Up | Reflect on what they wanted to get from the 2 days, how did they go? | |
| 3.00pm | Close | Where to from here | Dan |

7.7 Appendix 7 – A LEG UP QUESTION SUMMARIES – Mentees

Question 1: How old are you?

21-35 – 33.03% (3/9)

26-30 – 44.44% (4/9)

31-40 – 22.22% (2/9)

Question 2: Which of the following best describes your role in the agricultural industry?

Production based – 11.11% (1/9)

Service provider – 44.44% (4/9)

Consultant – 22.22% (2/9)

Other – 33.33% (3/9)

Livestock/Logistics Clerk in Live Export – PhD student - Government

Question 3: In what state are you located?

VIC – 11.11% (1/9)

NSW – 44.44% (4/9)

QLD – 33.33% (3/9)

NT – 11.11% (1/9)

Question 4: In what state is your Mentor based?

VIC – 22.22% (2/9)

NSW – 44.44% (4/9)

QLD – 11.11% (1/9)

NT – 11.11% (1/9)

TAS – 11.11% (1/9)

Question 5: How old is your Mentor?

31-40 – 22.22% (2/9)

41-50 – 44.44% (4/9)

50+ – 33.33% (3/9)

Question 6: Which of the following best outlines the plan made with your mentor for contact?

Phone/Skype – 62.50% (5/8)

Phone/Face-to-face/email – 37.50% (3/8)

Question 7: How regularly did you plan to make contact throughout the program?

Monthly – 100% (8/8)

Question 8: Have you been able to maintain the contact agreement in full?

Yes – 62.5 (5/8)

No – 37.5 (3/8)

Question 9: Who or what was the catalyst you being able to maintain the contact agreement in full? (Advanced calendar based planning, mentee driven to contact, mentor driven to contact, etc.)?

- Monthly catch up's scheduled in advance. E.g. same date every month. Contact in between depending on events/needs to basis
- Having set time to call fortnightly that suits both parties calling alternative weeks
- Mentee and Mentor both driven to contact
- Repeating calendar invite. I also don't want to be thought of as not committed

Question 10: What has been the biggest challenge in maintaining contact with your mentor?

Personally making time for discussions – 33.33% (1/3)

Other – 66.66% (2/3)

(1- Both of us were quite busy. We touch base frequently however in depth face to face meetings were strung out further than we would have liked

(2- Goal achieved earlier than expected)

Question 11: Did your mentor utilise or introduce you to other contacts to assist you in areas they couldn't themselves?

Yes – 62.5% (5/8)

No – 37.5% (3/8)

Question 12: Have you made any intentional contact with other mentors at all?

No – 62.5% (5/8)

Was not aware of the possibility – 37.5% (3/8)

Question 13: Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements? *8 people answered this question.*

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| I have been well matched with a mentor | 50.00% | 37.50% | 0.00% | 12.50% |
| I can relate to my mentor | 62.50% | 25.00% | 12.50% | 0.00% |
| I have made changes to my professional life as a result of the mentoring relationships | 37.50% | 25.00% | 37.50% | 0.00% |
| I have made changes to my personal life as a result of the mentoring relationship | 12.50% | 62.50% | 12.50% | 12.50% |
| I will make an intentional effort to maintain contact with my mentor in a formal capacity | 12.50% | 37.50% | 50.00% | 0.00% |
| I will make an intentional effort to maintain | 62.50% | 25.00% | 12.50% | 0.00% |

| | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| contact with my mentor in an informal capacity | | | | |
| I will make intentional effort to maintain contact with other mentees | 12.50% | 50.00% | 37.50% | 0.00% |
| I have been able to gain what I need from the mentoring relationship | 37.50% | 50.00% | 0.00% | 12.50% |
| It has been a positive experience having a mentor | 37.50% | 50.00% | 12.50% | 0.00% |
| I would like to utilise mentoring relationships in the future | 37.50% | 62.50% | 0.00% | 0.00% |

Question 14: What are the main three skills, experiences or networks you had hoped to gain through this mentoring relationship?

Skill/Experience/Network 1

- Further Meat Processors/Live Export contacts base
- Improve book keeping
- Networking with individuals within the beef sector
- Pasture management skills and knowledge
- Finish PhD
- Networks

- More contacts in the Western division of NSW
- Network with both early and later career professionals within the livestock industry

Skill/Experience/Network 2

- Commitment to sharing personal/professional challenges with an individual outside of my direct family/friends circle for guidance.
- Improve family relationship
- Increased knowledge
- farm business/ financial skills
- Research in Australian meat science
- Advice on personal development opportunities
- more contacts in the sheep industry
- better direct my career and professional development

Skill/Experience/Network 3

- improve knowledge in agriculture
- greater communication abilities
- improved industry networks
- goal setting
- advice on better workplace skills
- confidence and mentoring to help me find a more advanced path of employment
- gain insight into industry opportunities and pathways

Question 15: Now consider these top three skills, networks or experiences you desired to gain or achieve as a result of the mentoring relationship. Rate how effective the mentoring was at achieving these goals. *8 people answered this question.*

| | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| Skill / Experience / Network 1 | 50.00% | 50.00% | 0.00% |
| Skill / Experience / Network 2 | 50.00% | 50.00% | 0.00% |
| Skill / Experience / Network 3 | 62.50% | 25.00% | 12.50% |

7.8 Appendix 8 – A LEG UP QUESTION SUMMARIES – Mentors

Question 1: What is your age?

21-25 – 10% (1/10)

31-40 – 40% (4/10)

50+ – 50% (5/10)

Question 2: Which of the following best describes your role in the agricultural industry?

Production Based – 30% (3/10)

Service Provider – 10% (1/10)

Educator – 10% (1/10)

Consultant – 60% (6/10)

Other – 10% (1/10)

PhD Student

Question 3: In what state are you located?

VIC – 20% (2/10)

NSW – 60% (6/10)

QLD – 10% (1/10)

TAS – 10% (1/10)

Question 4: In what state is your Mentee based?

VIC – 11.11% (1/9)

NSW – 55.56% (5/9)

QLD – 22.22% (2/9)

NT – 11.11% (1/9)

Question 5: How old is your Mentee?

21-25 – 44% (4/9)

26-30 – 56% (5/9)

Question 6: Which of the following best outlines the plan made with your mentee for contact?

Phone/Skype – 44.44% (4/9)

Face-to-Face – 11.11% (1/9)

Mixed Communication – 33.33% (3/9)

Other: Phone/Email – 11.11% (1/9)

Question 7: How regularly did you plan to make contact throughout the program?

Monthly – 66.67% (6/9)

Every 3 Months – 11.11% (1/9)

As need be – 11.11% (1/9)

Other / *ad hoc-attempted monthly but mostly every 2-3 months* – 11.11% (1/9)

Question 8: Have you been able to maintain the contact agreement in full?

Yes – 55.56% (5/9)

No – 44.44% (4/9)

Question 9: Who or what was the catalyst you being able to maintain the contact agreement in full? (Advanced calendar based planning, mentee driven to contact, mentor driven to contact, etc.)

- Advanced calendar based planning.
- Mentee agreement on calendar based planning.
- Advanced calendar planning.
- Calendar, mentee rang if needed, met for most monthly calls.
- Agreed calendar first Thursday month, 8 am. Changes by mutual agreement. Both driven.

Question 10: What has been the biggest challenge in maintaining contact with your mentee?

My mentee making time for discussions – 75% (3/4)

Other – 25% (1/4)

(Overseas time difference made it difficult plus mentee had not attended initial meeting so no plan and no concept that mentee had to drive contact)

Question 11: Did you utilise or introduce your mentee to other contacts, assisting in areas that you couldn't?

Yes – 55.56% (5/9)

No – 33.33% (3/9)

Was not aware of the possibility – 11.11% (1/9)

Question 12: Have you made any intentional contact with other mentees at all?

No – 100%

Question 13: Have any other mentees made contact with you for advice, input, etc.?

No – 100%

Question 14: Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. **9**
people answered this question.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| I have been well matched with a mentee | 33.33% | 55.56% | 11.11% | 0.00% |
| I can relate to my mentee | 33.33% | 66.67% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| I have made changes to my professional life as a result of the mentoring relationships | 0.00% | 44.44% | 55.56% | 0.00% |
| I have made changes to my personal life as a result of the mentoring relationship | 0.00% | 22.22% | 66.67% | 11.11% |
| I will make an intentional effort to maintain contact with my mentee in a formal capacity | 12.50% | 37.50% | 50.00% | 0.00% |
| I will make an intentional effort to maintain contact with my mentee in an informal capacity | 11.11% | 89.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% |

| | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| I will make intentional effort to maintain contact with other mentors | 0.00% | 22.22% | 44.44% | 33.33% |
| I have been able to give what I wanted to because of the mentoring relationship | 0.00% | 55.56% | 33.33% | 11.11% |
| It has been a positive experience having a mentee | 33.33% | 44.44% | 22.22% | 0.00% |
| I would like to utilise mentoring relationships in the future | 33.33% | 66.67% | 0.00% | 0.00% |

Question 15: List the skills and experience you assumed you would give or had a desire to share with your mentee?

- Recent experience exploring career path and opportunities in the industry mapping a desired career path networks of value.
- Succession, family business, work life balance, business and economics.
- Skills in the meat industry utilising contacts in the industry working through building a career in the industry.
- Problem solving. Experience, sounding board.
- Networking, stakeholder engagement, presentation.
- Broad perspective of industry contacts mentoring re decisions
- Extension. Consultancy.
- Life experience, professional experience.
- Life knowledge and wisdom. Hopefully the importance of "the person" to a career. Personal self-awareness. Being a sounding board/ time, care, thought and effort. Life planning skill. Farming and cattle/stock experience/knowledge. Feedback. Links, contacts