



Who we are

Women in Transport is an independent UK not-for-profit with a mission to advance women working in transport. Our network is open to everyone. Membership provides exclusive access to a varied events programme, networking and volunteering opportunities. Women members also benefit from access to mentoring and leadership development. We act as Secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group for women in transport and founded the Diversity and Inclusion Bus Group in 2019 to share best practice and promote greater collaboration and diversity and inclusion in the bus and coach sector.

Overview and objectives

Our 2021 research from the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Women in Transport asked women and men about their experiences and perceptions of working in transport. We found that 75% of women felt it was easier for men to progress than women. One recommendation from the report was for Women in Transport to develop a leadership programme.

Our Women in Transport leadership development programme is called "Lead". It is an 8-month virtual learning and development programme, designed to evolve and grow the leadership capability and confidence of women working in the transport sector.

Our objective is to support women to progress to senior positions; providing practical skills, a recognised qualification whilst building a high quality alumni network that will continue to support their career progression and empower other women through their visibility and role modelling.

This is a sector specific programme open to Women in Transport members (women only). The group size for each cohort is a maximum of 18. Completion of the programme includes the ILM Level 5 Certificate in Leadership, conducted by professional interview.

Approach

The inaugural Lead programme launched in April 2021 with 14 women from 8 different companies across the transport sector.

Lead is designed to engage women in a detailed exploration of their leadership and management style, focusing on their individual drivers and enablers. There are six modules and a team project. Each module includes an inspirational woman guest speaker from transport sharing their own leadership journey.

Modules follow a four week cycle. Designed to be achievable alongside undertaking a full time role, we recommend allowing 3 - 4 hours per week to complete the course elements.

The modules comprise a number of learning interventions including, pre-work, a group training workshop (delivered on Zoom using all of its facilities of group sessions, breakout rooms and chat), peer learning and a themed informal event.

The programme has been designed and is led by two professional coaches (members of Women in Transport). Both leadership facilitators are present at the workshops to ensure participants benefit from high levels of personal engagement and diverse perspective.

The first cohort completed the programme in November 2021 and have now received their ILM5 qualifications in Leadership.

Results

Our mid-point evaluation of the inaugural cohort provided the following insights:

- A 100% response rate, with the overwhelming majority providing a testimonial
- 100% of participants saying that the programme exceeded their expectations
- 100% of the participants saying that they will continue contact with this cohort after the programme, as part of the emerging alumni for Lead
- 100% of participants saying that they would recommend this programme to others

The impact of the programme is already positive and bearing fruit for the participants and their careers. Examples of new experiences mentioned in the evaluation and communicated by participants include:

- Reverse mentoring a senior director in the organisation
- Shadowing a COO from a different organisation to widen experience
- Leading a special project as the organisation restructures
- Being seconded to a different part of the organisation
- Joining a shadow leadership board and taking specific responsibility for projects
- Promotion to Director

These are all seen as critical steps towards improving the confidence and meeting the career aspirations of our Lead women.

Conclusion

Key learning points for the second half of cohort 1 and the onboarding process for cohort 2 included:

- The intensity of the 4-hour sessions needs to be communicated better and the need highlighted for some down time afterwards
- Ensuring that all of the tools are landed, and clarity given about next steps
- Some "induction" to coaching for those who have not been formally coached before
- More structure around the peer-to-peer sessions
- Being clearer around the expectations of the written work and the time commitment required
- Having a conversation with the participant's manager as part of the onboarding process

Recommendations were to:

- Complete a second evaluation at the end of the programme
- Review the feedback and make the appropriate improvements to the second half of cohort 1 and to the onboarding process for cohort 2

- Instigate a programme of tracking to collect data of “outcomes” across many cohorts

As of February 2022, we have run three cohorts of the Lead programme supporting 45 talented women from almost 20 different transport organisations. Cohort 1 has graduated, cohort 2 started in September 2021 and cohort 3 started in January 2022. Our next cohort launches in April 2022. The alumni network has been formed and will be owned/managed and run by the Lead women to ensure it is tailored to their needs.

The feedback from the women on the Lead programme is:

- Making time for your own professional development is important to progression and retention
- The practical tools and strategies gained from the programme have benefits to the individual, their team and their organisation
- Sharing and hearing from other women helps you feel heard, represented and supported

Our talented Lead women share their experience of the programme in these videos from our Find Out More sessions: <https://www.womenintransport.com/lead/#womenwholead>