

Women in Agriculture: Leadership programme development research



AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE

Women in Agriculture: Leadership programme development research



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List of acronyms

BYBS	Be Your Best Self
CV	Curriculum Vitae
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
NFUS	National Farmers Union Scotland
RESAS	Rural & Environmental Science and Analytical Services
SAYFC	Scottish Association of Young Farmers
SG	Scottish Government
WIA	Women in Agriculture
WiADP	Women in Agriculture Development Programme
WFA	Women in Food and Agriculture

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Table 1. Suggested content for a Women in Agriculture leadership programme

Table 2: Leadership programmes in Scotland

Highlights

What is this report about?

This research was carried out to inform the development of a leadership programme with the aim to enable more women to take up leadership positions within Scottish agriculture, as recommended in the [Women in Agriculture Taskforce's final report](#) (2019). This will support the Scottish Government's wider vision for Scottish agriculture to become a fairer, more inclusive industry, where farm succession is not determined by gender, training is accessible to everyone, and more women take on senior roles in organisations.

What did we do?

We carried out an evidence review of leadership programmes and models suitable for women in Scottish agriculture, and conducted a total of 6 in-depth interviews with women in mid-level and leadership roles in agriculture and other relevant sectors to gather their views and experiences.

What did we find out?

Women face challenges in terms of gaining respect and proving themselves both as women in agriculture and women in leadership roles. Research has found that women who are given opportunities to connect with other women, speak about their careers and learn practical leadership skills are more likely to aspire for these roles.

Leadership programmes, and other personal development initiatives, can act as a stepping stone to board or leadership roles. Women-only leadership programmes have a range of benefits, including providing a safe environment for openness, self-reflection and learning. They can be key to building women's confidence and support networks within the industry and more widely. However, women-only leadership programmes can present limitations in terms of women-only networks.

A leadership programme for women in agriculture should focus on both practical and business skills, to develop women's confidence, their resilience and industry knowledge, and encourage self-awareness and reflexivity through sessions exploring attendees' career goals and approach to leadership. The course should be over a longer time period (for example one year) with different types of sessions, from seminars and networking to one-to-one coaching. This will enable attendees to learn new skills, find leadership role models, meet other women in the industry and build their personal support networks. Women who are offered a place on the programme should have their own leadership goal.

Executive summary

This research comprised an evidence review and qualitative research to review current practice and inform recommendations for the development of a leadership programme for women in Scottish agriculture.

Introduction

The Women in Agriculture Taskforce aims to ensure that women are better represented in Scottish agriculture and progress to more senior roles in sector bodies. This research was carried out to inform the development of a leadership programme for women in agriculture, as recommended in the [Women in Agriculture Taskforce's final report](#) (2019). This programme will be delivered through the Women in Agriculture Development Programme (WiADP), and will lead to a cohort of women ready to take up leadership roles in Scottish agriculture.

Methods

This study included an evidence review and qualitative research. The evidence review focused on leadership programmes, current practice and wider literature on women's leadership and theory. This also produced a list of case studies of leadership courses in the UK, including in Scotland, and international examples from Ghana, Honduras, Nepal, New Zealand and the US. The qualitative research involved a total of 6 interviews with women in mid-level and leadership positions in agriculture or relevant sectors such as construction and transport. The interviews focused on their career journeys, their views on leadership, and the training or support that has helped them in their careers.

Overall findings

- Leadership programmes, and other personal development initiatives, can act as a stepping stone to board or leadership roles within agricultural organisations.
- Programmes like this can be key to building women's confidence, practical skills and support networks within the industry and more widely.
- Women in leadership roles are more likely to take a collaborative approach, and participants saw confidence, listening and resilience as key skills.
- Participants spoke about the challenges of gaining respect and proving themselves both as women in agriculture and women in leadership roles.
- Support from other men and women in farming, in addition to family, friends and organisation members, can be key to women's career success.

- A leadership programme for women in agriculture should include sessions focusing on practical and business skills to develop women’s confidence, help them to explore their goals and leadership approach, and build their support networks.

The findings in this report will inform the training programmes and how best to promote leadership amidst other sessions focusing on practical and business skills for women in Scottish agriculture as part of the Women in Agriculture programme.

A summary of the evidence-based recommendations for the content of a Women in Agriculture leadership programme is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Recommended content for a Women in Agriculture leadership programme

Type of content	Examples
Leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership styles • Motivations and approach • Career planning • Future goals
Business skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry knowledge • Board roles and purpose • Chairing meetings • Negotiation skills
Practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening skills • Time management • Business/project planning and risk management • Ability to learn
Personal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence and self-awareness • Strengths and weaknesses • Resilience, e.g. dealing with challenges • Leadership identity
Other content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership role models • Networking opportunities • Connections with other women in agriculture • Mentoring relationships • Certificate • Coaching

1. Introduction

This introduction sets out the context for this research, including recommendations made by the Women in Agriculture Taskforce on developing women's leadership skills following initial research into the barriers faced by women in the industry.

The Women in Agriculture Taskforce was established in 2017, following research commissioned by the Scottish Government which showed that women face cultural barriers in the industry ([Women in farming and the agriculture sector: research report](#)). Through its work, the Taskforce aims to ensure that women are better represented in agriculture and progress to more senior roles in sector bodies.

The 2017 research found that there is a lack of women in leadership positions in Scottish agriculture, and women are under-represented in leadership roles within national-level farming organisations in the industry. It also identified cultural barriers and significant unconscious gender bias where women are not expected to be in leadership positions. Women who took part in the research reported experiencing forms of exclusion and feeling intimidated in all male environments. They also identified barriers to leadership, including a lack of confidence, time and childcare.

The [Women in Agriculture Taskforce's final report](#) (2019) set out a recommendation that the Scottish Government develop a Women in Agriculture Development Programme (WiADP) to deliver training and mentoring to support women in agriculture to build their confidence, enhance their business skills, and develop their leadership abilities. This would lead to the creation of a cohort of women ready to further develop their businesses or take up leadership roles in Scottish agriculture.

Recent research into [The Changing Role of Women in Farming, Crofting, and the Agricultural Industry: 2016-2021](#) by the James Hutton Institute suggests that there has been a 'change in the right direction' regarding the level of recruitment and the role of women in agricultural leadership. Participants felt that organisations are making efforts towards greater gender equality, for example by recruiting female board members. They also felt that it is important to have a diversity of people in leadership roles, including those from non-farming backgrounds. Male participants recognised the importance of normalising women's leadership within agriculture.

The research presented in this report was carried out in 2020-21 to inform the development of a leadership programme for women in agriculture. It comprised an evidence review and 6 interviews with women in mid-level and leadership roles in agriculture or relevant sectors such as construction and transport.

3. Evidence review findings

The evidence review identified a number of key findings, including:

1. Women have different experiences to men at work, and this has an impact on their career progression, ideas of success and leadership style.
2. When they reach leadership positions, women face a range of challenges including a lack of confidence, concerns around their suitability and resistance within organisations, particularly in male-dominated contexts.
3. A range of studies point to the need for tailored women's leadership development programmes to allow women to share their experiences and develop their own approach to leadership.

This chapter starts with a summary of the main findings of the evidence review, then sets out the wider context of women's leadership programmes, and presents key findings from the literature on the topics of leadership theory and women in leadership; current programmes and best practice; the role of organisations; and the evaluation of leadership courses.

Annex 2 contains a case-study summary of examples of women's leadership programmes from agriculture and other sectors in the UK and elsewhere, with reference to their design and outcomes.

3.1 Main findings

The main findings of the evidence review are as follows:

- Women and men in various sectors have different experiences in the workplace, and this has an impact on women's career progression and approach to leadership, which in turn has implications for the development of women's leadership programmes.
- Leadership has traditionally been equated with 'masculine' behaviours and practices, and women can face a number of challenges when they reach leadership roles. Their approaches to leadership will be shaped by multiple aspects of their identity.
- A range of studies point to the need for tailored women's leadership development programmes, as traditional programmes have failed to meet the distinct needs of women.

- Research has found that women who are given opportunities to connect with other women and gain leadership knowledge are more likely to aspire for leadership roles.
- Women-only leadership programmes have a range of benefits, including providing a safe environment for openness, self-reflection and learning.
- Participants on women’s leadership programmes should be given the opportunity to construct a leadership identity and practise using new skills.
- Leadership programmes should take participants’ diverse needs and perspectives into account, including different identity categories such as class, race or disability, alongside specific challenges that women face in particular organisations or sectors.
- Research highlights the importance of providing participants with diverse role models of women in leadership, and giving them opportunities to hear other women speak about their careers.
- Women’s leadership programmes should teach both practical skills and leadership theory, and lead to tangible outputs, such as mentoring relationships and networks.
- Women’s leadership development programmes often use collaborative learning practices, and can be structured in different ways.
- Widely used techniques within women’s leadership programmes include mentoring, self-assessment tools, peer-to-peer feedback, role models and speakers, action learning, networking, career planning exercises and leadership plans.
- Wider literature highlights the role that organisations can play in ensuring that women’s leadership development programmes are successful and sustainable in the long-term, and the need for wider systematic change in addition to targeted programmes.

3.2 Women in leadership

Women and men have different experiences at work, and this has an impact on women’s career progression, ideas of success and leadership styles. Leadership is also shaped by intersections of gender, race, class and other identity categories. This has implications for the development of women’s leadership programmes.

Women’s career development

Research indicates that women and men have different experiences in the workplace, and that despite progress, in many sectors there is still a gender gap at more senior levels (Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2013). Whilst changes within organisations, alongside developments such as equal opportunities legislation,

have benefited women, the number of women in senior roles in the UK remains relatively small (Priola and Brannan, 2009). This suggests that barriers to women's advancement are more complex than direct forms of discrimination (Sturm, 2001). As O'Neil et al. (2008) state, organisations, particularly male-dominated ones, are 'gendered': they reflect environments where women's performance and success are evaluated differently from men's. In addition, organisational structures and practices can reflect men's lives and behaviours (Debebe, 2011; Ely et al., 2011).

For example, women's career progression is impacted by workplace practices such as competitive environments, long hours, a lack of training, mentoring and career guidance, and a perceived lack of commitment to their careers (Priola and Brannan, 2009). As Priola and Brannan (2009) found in their study of women managers in the UK, frustrations experienced by women lead some to leave their organisations and change careers, or become self-employed.

Those developing women's leadership programmes should take this context into account (Hopkins et al., 2008), as differences at work impact women's career and leadership development, for example:

- Men are more likely to have 'linear careers', whilst women's are not as linear, and can be 'in any stage at any time' (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).
- Women's careers are constructed through a 'balance between private and professional roles', resulting in diverse career trajectories (O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2008).
- Women are more likely to experience competing priorities for their time and attention across life and career stages than men (Hopkins et al., 2008).
- Women report receiving less support at work, and having limited access to networks (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Athanasopoulou et al., 2017).

Women therefore develop different ways of learning and ideas of success, for example valuing personal achievements and self-development instead of material measures of success such as high salaries (Hopkins et al., 2008; Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003). They may also approach their leadership style differently, placing more emphasis on emotional or interpersonal aspects than material measures of achievement (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Ruderman and Ohlott, 2005).

Women and men in leadership

Leadership is still often equated with 'masculine' behaviours and practices, such as assertiveness and competitiveness (Priola and Brannan, 2009; Ely et al., 2011). Research shows that assessments of leadership have reflected gender stereotypes

(Hopkins et al., 2008), with male leaders tending to be seen as more effective than women leaders, particularly in male-dominated settings (Priola and Brannan, 2009). More recently, stereotypically white, male and privileged representations of leadership have been contested, taking into account the diverse perspectives of women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds (Kezar and Lester, 2010; Showunmi et al., 2016). For example, a range of studies point to differences between men and women's leadership approaches, from language and communication to how they are viewed by others (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Brue and Brue, 2016). There has also been a more recent shift from analysing gendered differences to an emphasis on gender and other categories as social constructions that shape organisations (Priola and Brannan, 2009).

Women's leadership styles

Leadership can be viewed as 'a process of influence' (Cleveland and Cleveland, 2018) and in their review of leadership research, Kezar and Lester (2010) found that women's leadership tends to be associated with a more participatory, relational, and interpersonal style (see Textbox 1), and with types of power that emphasise reciprocity. They argue that many women in leadership conceptualise it as 'collective' rather than individualistic, and aim to empower others within the organisation, moving away from hierarchical relationships. In summary:

- Women have diverse leadership styles, which benefits organisations. For example, relational and collaborative strategies are widely used by women leaders (Berry and Franks, 2010; Boatwright and Egidio, 2003).
- Women are considered more likely to use communication in stressful situations, respond quicker to positive feedback, work collaboratively, and initiate personal and group improvements (Ruderman and Ohlott, 2005).
- In one study, women framed leadership in terms of the 'development and support of others' rather than 'decision-making' (Priola and Brannan, 2009).
- Research suggests that more collective and relational organisational models enable both men and women to succeed (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).
- Women can contribute to a new type of leadership focusing on 'emotional intelligence, inclusiveness, and connectedness' (Hopkins et al., 2008).

However, when in the minority, research suggests that women leaders often put their values and preferences aside to behave like their male peers, drawing on masculine leadership practices (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003). As Priola and Brannan (2009) argue, this points to a lack of alternative models of management and leadership. Further, Kezar and Lester (2010) argue that we should move away from 'static' or essentialist understandings of women's leadership, and toward more 'pluralistic' representations, whilst acknowledging women's shared experiences. In

line with this, Showunmi et al. (2016) advocate a move toward more inclusive theories of leadership that acknowledge a diversity of approaches and views.

Collaborative and relational leadership

Women have been found to adopt more relational and collaborative leadership styles (Hopkins et al., 2008). This type of leadership is non-hierarchical and moves away from a directed approach to a more 'collaborative and team-based approach' that focuses on communication, openness, and a diversity of viewpoints (Kezar and Lester, 2010). As Kramer and Crespy (2011) outline, collaborative leadership, which has been linked to increased productivity and effectiveness, frames leadership as a 'shared process' in which employees collaborate in decision making. Leaders ask questions, listen to feedback and encourage innovation (ibid).

Collaborative leadership

A collaborative leadership approach has become prevalent in the literature, with a move away from 'top-down' approaches, and an emphasis on the agency that people can have in shaping their work places (Kezar and Lester, 2010). However in reality, 'vertical and collaborative leadership are frequently combined' (Kramer and Crespy, 2011). Collaborative leadership: motivates group members to take action and make decisions through collective problem solving (Kramer and Crespy, 2011); creates a setting in which team members feel safe to be creative, collaborate, and take collective responsibility for achieving outcomes (ibid); is effective because it draws on the diverse expertise of team members and can address leadership weaknesses (Friedrich et al., 2006; Kramer, 2006).

Relational leadership

Relational views of leadership expand the focus beyond individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities to include the networks of social relationships that shape leadership development (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). This type of leadership emphasises 'relationships between individuals': relational leaders aim to guide, support and create meaningful dialogue, whilst focusing largely on 'employees and their development' (Cleveland and Cleveland, 2020; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011).

Other related theories of leadership include: distributed leadership, which positions leadership across, rather than at the top of the organisation and transformational leadership, which emphasises vision and direction (Showunmi et al. 2016).

Women's motivation

As Priola and Brannan (2009) found in their study, women's determination to succeed is key to their career progression, despite any obstacles they face. They are motivated by a determination to 'achieve a position of leadership, status and influence'. Further, many women leaders may aspire to leadership in order to make organisations more 'relational' and 'inclusive', and to prove that there are different ways to manage (Priola and Brannan 2009, referencing Whitehead 2001).

Intersectional approaches to leadership

Recent studies outline how a range of factors can affect leadership, including class, gender and race. As Kezar and Lester (2010) discuss, 'leadership beliefs are shaped by identity, context, and power', and this affects how people understand leadership and how 'they act as leaders.' They argue that a focus on just one aspect of a person's identity leads to only a partial understanding of leadership: identities are complex and fluid, shaped by intersections of gender, race, class, sexual orientation and religion.

Kezar and Lester take an intersectional approach, exploring how different identity categories shape individual perspectives on leadership (ibid). Their work builds on positionality theory and extends the focus from identity markers such as gender to consider a range of factors, from social class to family circumstances, professional status or educational level, and how these impact leadership style. Further, as particular aspects may be more important at specific times, people's leadership beliefs can also change over time (Fassinger et al. 2010).

As Kezar and Lester argue, leadership is shaped by many aspects of a person's life, including their experiences at home, at work and in their community. Those planning leadership programmes should consider participants' local context, the shared rituals and meanings of organisations and communities (ibid). As Ospina and Foldy (2009) argue in their review of race, ethnicity and leadership, without addressing context it is 'more difficult to offer practical guidelines' for leadership.

Cleveland and Cleveland (2020) have also drawn on positionality theory to argue that organisations should encourage culturally agile leadership. Culturally agile leaders, they suggest, are more open to promoting inclusive hiring practices and diversity. This can be achieved through a relational leadership approach (see Textbox 1) and by going beyond traditional leadership competencies to focus on 'networks and relationships'. In being self-aware and recognising their own biases, culturally agile leaders are better able to promote inclusion and diversity (ibid).

Similarly, Ospina and Foldy (2009) suggest that a move 'toward less bureaucratic, more loosely associated' organisational structures reinforces the need for employers to both value difference and articulate a 'common purpose' amongst their diverse workforce.

Challenges faced by women in leadership

Wider literature points to the challenges faced by women in leadership:

- When women reach leadership roles, they have to deal with conflicting expectations, concerns around their suitability, and organisational resistance to their leadership, particularly in male-dominated contexts (Debebe, 2011).
- Studies highlight a lack of confidence and 'impostor syndrome' in women leaders, who underestimate their skills (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Debebe, 2011).
- As women leaders are less common, they are more visible and subject to greater scrutiny, and so can become risk-averse (Ely et al., 2011).
- Women are less likely to seek feedback on their leadership from colleagues (Hopkins et al., 2008) and when taking on senior roles, can opt to behave in a more 'gender-neutral' way (Priola and Brannan 2009; Ely et al., 2011).

These issues, including a lack of representation at senior levels and wider confidence in their leadership, are exacerbated for specific groups including black and minority ethnic women, disabled women, those from working class or low socio-economic backgrounds and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) women (see Ospina and Foldy 2009; Priola and Brannan, 2009; Ely et al. 2011).

As Showunmi et al. (2016) outline in their study of black, Asian and white women in leadership roles in the UK, gender, ethnicity, religion and class shape majority and minority ethnic women's 'leadership constructions, self-definitions and enactment'. For example, minority ethnic women in the study were more comfortable discussing how their socio-cultural identities informed their definitions of leadership and were more likely to emphasise relational behaviours. The categories of ethnicity and religion were more prevalent in their discussions of enacting leadership, whilst gender and class were more prevalent for white women. Further, minority ethnic women in the study tended to describe social or structural rather than personal or psychological barriers to enacting their leadership identities, and several referred to instances of others questioning minority ethnic women's leadership capacity based on stereotypical assumptions (Showunmi et al., 2016).

The 2021 report [Navigating the labyrinth: Socio-economic background and career progression within the Civil Service](#) by The Social Mobility Commission reported

that only 18% of senior civil servants are from working-class or low socio-economic backgrounds, and that people from this background face a 'progression gap' due to barriers including 'unwritten rules' and behavioural codes. Intersections between race, gender, class and sexuality lead to multiple forms of discrimination, but there is a lack of research into its impact on leadership (Ospina and Foldy 2009; Fassinger et al., 2010). For example as Fassinger et al. (2010) state, people who identify as LGBT face specific challenges at work, including stigma, marginalisation and identity disclosure.

The need for women's leadership programmes

A range of research points to the need for women's leadership programmes, as traditional leadership development programmes have failed to meet the distinctive needs of women (Brue and Brue, 2016; Ely et al., 2011; Hopkins et al., 2008; Priola and Brannan 2009). Societal and organisational gender norms can shape training settings, and women may not be able to learn or form relationships in mixed settings (Debebe, 2011). In line with this, research commissioned by the Scottish Government found that women in agriculture often viewed training programmes as being for men, and felt unwelcome or conspicuous (Shortall et al., 2017).

Research has found that women who are given opportunities to connect with other women, gain leadership knowledge and self-esteem are more likely to aspire for leadership opportunities (Boatwright and Egidio, 2003). As these programmes place women in a 'majority position', they can 'provoke powerful insights', and go beyond a focus on traditionally male leadership behaviours (Ely et al., 2011).

Specific initiatives can also be designed in response to the barriers and challenges that certain groups face, to change organisational cultures and build leadership capacity amongst under-represented groups, including employees who are disabled, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, those from black and ethnic minority groups, and those low socio-economic backgrounds. Examples of this type of activity include mentoring schemes, webinars and the promotion of positive role models (Fassinger et al. 2010; Duncan et al. 2015).

Critiques of women's leadership programmes

Wider literature highlights several critiques of women's leadership programmes, including their limitations in terms of women-only networks and short time-frames:

- Shortall et al. (2017) have highlighted issues with women-only training and rural organisations, which can reinforce gendered forms of separation.

- As Ely et al. (2011) state, women-only programmes may prevent women from being able to add male peers to their networks for advice and collaboration.
- In several studies, women showed resistance to taking part, or toward the idea of a separate programme; however, they changed their minds following the course (Debebe, 2011; Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).
- Ely et al. (2011) suggest that the demand for women's leadership programmes has 'outstripped the pace of research', and practitioners lack a coherent, theoretically based, and useful framework for delivering these programmes.
- Debebe (2007) has highlighted the limits of formal training, and the fact that strengthening women's leadership capacity alone may not be sufficient, as training programmes cannot address external factors such as recruitment practices or the structure and culture of organisations.
- Debebe (2011) also suggests that the **short time-frame of courses** can make it difficult to build relationships and a supportive environment and highlights the challenge of leaving a supportive environment to return to an 'unreceptive' workplace, which can limit the positive impact of the training.

3.3 Women's leadership programmes

Research shows that women's leadership programmes can have a range of benefits, including providing a safe environment for women to learn from each other, build on their skills, and construct a leadership identity. Wider literature outlines a range of benefits of women's leadership programmes, including providing a safe environment for self-reflection and learning:

- Women-only training programmes enable women to recognise their leadership ambitions and strengths, and clarify their feelings about themselves in relation to their different work and personal roles (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).
- They enhance leadership development through a gender distinctive framework involving personal assessment, formal training, feedback, experiential learning, coaching, mentorship and networks (Debebe, 2011; Hopkins et al., 2008).
- They offer participants a sense of acceptance and belonging, in a space where they can learn from and affirm each other's experiences and are freed from having to navigate gender (Debebe, 2011; Ely et al., 2011).
- Participants can express themselves openly, share gender-related concerns, form relationships, learn strategies for success and how to be more proactive in managing their careers (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003) whilst developing and mapping their leadership philosophy (Brue and Brue, 2016).

Constructing a leadership identity

Ely et al. (2011) argue that the construction of a leadership identity is central to the process of becoming a leader. However, women's ability to do this is affected by a lack of **role models**, and gender bias within organisations. Leadership programmes should:

- Explore how gender dynamics affect identity development in work settings;
- Assist women in internalising a leadership identity and purpose that is in line with their values, and communicating this to others;
- Offer women the recognition they need to strengthen their leadership identity, which in turn encourages growth and a search for new opportunities;
- Include sessions on networking, negotiations and career transitions.

For example on one undergraduate leadership course, students were asked to identify and clarify their values and beliefs, consider the impact of these on their day-to-day lives, and develop their own leadership principles (Eriksen, 2009). The course was designed around the **principles of reflexivity and self-awareness**, skills seen as key to becoming an effective and authentic leader. It aimed to teach leadership theory through a focus on participants' own narratives and daily lives (ibid). Elsewhere, Kezar and Lester (2010) argue that 'in-depth narratives' are key to understanding the complexity of different aspects of an individual's identity.

Designing women's leadership programmes

Women's leadership programmes should have a personal impact on participants, teach practical skills and lead to tangible outputs, such as mentoring relationships and networks. A key focus within literature on women's development programmes is on collaborative learning or 'relational practice' (Debebe, 2011).

Leadership development is an ongoing process. It involves changing behaviour, risks, mistakes, and continual learning (Debebe, 2011). Facilitators should consider participants' expectations, learning and development needs, and show an understanding of the issues women face in particular organisations or industries (Hopkins et al., 2008; Ely et al., 2011). Programmes should:

- Take a comprehensive approach, covering both tools and resources, and addressing leadership thinking, feeling, and acting, enabling women to see leadership as not just a role but a mind-set (Brue and Brue, 2016);
- Enable participants to learn from others' experiences in a safe environment where they can ask questions (Debebe, 2011);

- Help women to establish leadership networks and mentoring connections (Brue and Brue, 2016);
- Incorporate a variety of assessments, challenges, and support (McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004);
- Enable women to develop a broad repertoire of leadership behaviours and styles, for example, instrumental and relational (Hopkins et al., 2008);
- Take a holistic approach to leadership development for women by using work-life integration and career-phase-specific insights (Hopkins et al., 2008).

Who should take part

Women's leadership programmes can be aimed at both those already in leadership roles, who want to improve their skills and be more effective, or those who are interested in gaining leadership roles (Case Study 9). Recruiting participants at similar life-stages means they can more easily form connections, offer feedback and comparison (Ely et al., 2011). Adequate time should be set aside for identifying participants: they may not always be the most vocal ones, or see themselves as leaders even though they are practicing aspects of leadership. For example, participants can be interviewed in order to assess their suitability.

Teaching practices

Relational, interactive and collaborative teaching practices have been found to enhance women's leadership learning (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Debebe, 2011). For example, Brue and Brue (2016) recommend learning activities such as behavioural modelling and action learning techniques, whilst Debebe (2011) argues that a focus on self-awareness can foster women's leadership growth. Similarly, Le Feuvre (2009) argues that leadership development activities should enable individuals to '**understand themselves**', **their values, strengths, and motivations**, and the context they work in so that they can focus on the specific issues they face.

Teachers on women's leadership programmes should be knowledgeable about gender bias and related issues, and comfortable with difficult discussions, for example on organisational politics (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Ely et al., 2011). As Debebe (2011) explains, participants should think about what would or would not work within their organisations: whilst practising new leadership skills during training can be helpful, this context does not reflect the 'complexity' of real life.

The meaning of leadership

Ely et al. (2011) argue that sessions on the meaning, values and purpose of leadership are particularly helpful for women, and that programmes should:

- Situate topics and tools within an analysis of gender bias, providing women with a framework for understanding how this manifests in organisations.
- Create a safe space for learning, peer support and identity work, helping participants to find a sense of agency and purpose in their leadership journey, and to construct narratives about who they are and wish to become.
- Help participants to articulate their leadership purpose, and remind them of wider shared goals when faced with challenges.

As outlined above, Eriksen (2009) argues that leadership principles should be developed in relation to participants' lived experience. Similarly, Debebe (2011) suggests that theoretical content on women's leadership courses should be reinterpreted through the lens of their actual gendered experiences, to make it meaningful and useful. Drawing on her study of a women-only training programme in the US, Debebe argues that learning is more likely to take place in a safe and affirming environment, and to achieve this, two things are key: women-only cohorts and gender-sensitive teaching and learning practices. Women's leadership programmes should aim to be open, supportive and challenging (ibid), in order to encourage recognition of shared experiences, habits or patterns of behaviour; **sharing and openness without fear of rejection; a sense of belonging and acceptance**; and discussion of gender-related concerns.

Those running the programme should create a space where women feel acceptance, belonging and respect, and can explore new ideas and skills in both a challenging and supportive environment. The teaching methods, learning content and values should all 'affirm and reflect women's experiences and values' (Debebe, 2011). Women should be encouraged to discuss issues relevant to their own situation, for example achieving a work-life balance, and course leaders should give attention to exploring how the gendered structures of organisations affect women's work experience and leadership (Hopkins et al., 2008; Debebe 2011).

3.4 Leadership programmes and current practice

Key learning techniques used within women's leadership programmes include leadership knowledge and skills development, mentoring, speakers and role models, feedback, networking and career exercises.

Leadership role models

Participants of women's leadership programmes have emphasised the value of role models, which allow them to 'normalise' and value women's leadership styles and approaches (Brue and Brue, 2016). In line with this:

- Ely et al. (2011) recommend using case studies of women leaders, to expose participants to a range of effective leadership styles, and enable them to recognise their own stereotypes about women leaders.
- The positive promotion of a diverse range of role models, in terms of gender, race, class, disability and sexuality is important in terms of representation, and countering stereotypes (Atewologun et al., 2015; Duncan et al., 2015).
- On one course, participants were asked to interview women in senior leadership positions about their lives and to reflect on their own situations whilst doing so. One interviewee spoke to a participant about the issues she faced as one of the only female board chairs in a predominately male workplace. The use of role models can be affirming and build confidence (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).
- Women in leadership can be invited to speak about their careers, and to offer advice to participants, for example around being willing to take risks.

Mentoring

Research highlights the importance of relationships in women's career development, and the benefits of mentoring in shaping their success as leaders (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003; Priola and Brannan, 2009). In one study, interviewees saw **informal relationships** and **mentoring** as key to their development (Brue and Brue, 2016).

However, due to a lack of women at higher levels in organisations, women are more likely to have male mentors: although this can still provide career benefits, it can be complicated by gender roles (Hopkins et al., 2008). Additionally, a lack of senior staff from similar backgrounds can limit the career progression of those from working-class or low socio-economic backgrounds (The Social Mobility Commission, 2021). This indicates the value of matching participants with mentors from similar backgrounds:

- Women may require different kinds of mentoring at different phases of their careers e.g. on confidence, work-life balance (O’Neil and Bilimoria, 2005).
- Mentors are beneficial as they can assist women in their developmental journeys in a more holistic way (Hopkins et al., 2006).
- Early career guidance has been reported as a tool that can help women achieve a greater career focus (Priola and Brannan, 2009).
- Mentoring can ensure the long-term sustainability of women’s leadership programmes (see case studies in Annex 2).

Training and education

Women’s leadership programmes should also include practical training and education, for example on business management, leadership and team-building skills. This can include both wider leadership skills and sector-specific training:

- In one study, increasing knowledge, skills, and education through access to training courses was one of the most frequently cited strategies for building leadership skills (Hopkins et al., 2006).
- In a second study, participants valued learning how to manage conflict, lead personnel, and share their leadership vision (Brue and Brue, 2016).
- On one rural programme, site-visits enabled farmers from different places to meet and learn from each other, and share best practice (Case study 9).

Peer-to-peer feedback

As discussed above, **self-reflection is key** to women’s leadership programmes (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003), and **peer-to-peer feedback helps** to facilitate this.

- Eriksen (2009) suggests that the relationships participants form are key to creating an effective learning environment. On his course, students listen to each other talk about their beliefs, and this has a positive impact on their learning as it makes them aware of each-others’ perspectives.
- The sharing of stories on a leadership programme allows a reflective dialogue to take place (Eriksen, 2009; referencing Mirvis and Ayas, 2003).
- Peer-to-peer feedback builds participants’ self-awareness and helps them to identify areas for development. They can process feedback with help from other participants; respond constructively, identifying any gender stereotypes; and draw on this feedback once back at work (Ely et al., 2011).
- Women’s leadership programmes should aim to help participants understand their preferences and personalities (e.g. Insight psychometric personality profile) and leadership strengths and weaknesses (Case study 1).

Experiential learning

Many women's leadership programmes place an emphasis on experiential learning, with methods such as role-plays, scenario based discussions using "real life" issues and small group discussions (Brue and Brue, 2016).

- According to Koopmans et al. (2006), the majority of learning that occurs in organisations takes place through informal growth opportunities, including challenging, high-profile work assignments and new responsibilities.
- An additional source of learning and transferable skills for women is through volunteer and community leadership roles (Hopkins et al., 2008).
- Ely et al. (2011) recommend helping participants to identify the informal roles they have taken up in organisations, and to consider how these roles have either benefited them or limited their leadership development opportunities.
- They outline the need to recognise the skills women acquire through everyday negotiations, and allow them to practice using these skills during the course to develop their sense of agency, and equip them with new ways to push back against discriminatory policies or practices (Ely et al., 2011).
- In one study, participants indicated the impact of context-specific scenarios and hearing about others' experiences, which helped facilitate their learning, personal growth and internalisation of their leadership identity (Brue and Brue, 2016).

Career planning exercises

As research suggests, women should be supported to think strategically about how to advance in their careers and organisations, and share their career plans with others (Hopkins et al., 2008). Structured career exercises (e.g. "career maps") can help participants to see the themes in their careers (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).

- In one study, interviewees were asked to complete biographical 'career maps', prompted by a set of questions on what had helped or hindered their careers (e.g. 'What were the 'tools' you used...' 'Looking back, what/who would have/could have made a difference?') (Priola and Brannon 2009).
- As Ely et al. (2011) write, participants can discuss personal and career transitions, mapping their careers to explore 'who they might become as leaders'. They can work through any concerns they may have about a new role, and share strategies with other participants, whilst also learning from course speakers.

Networking

Networks are a key part of women's leadership programmes, as women have cited exclusion from informal networks and the inability to hear others reflect on their careers as a barrier to leadership growth (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003).

- Networks are integral to leadership development (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017) and participants in women's leadership programmes often develop a strong network, supporting each other to initiate change at work (Ely et al., 2011).
- Women's networks offer social support, skill and confidence-building; access to job opportunities; coaching; information and expertise; and understanding of organisational politics (Brass et al., 2004).
- Traditional structures and gender roles can limit networking opportunities for women (Hopkins et al., 2008) and men's networks can be more effective than women's, for example in helping men gain promotion (Ibarra et al., 2010).
- Participants can assess their current networks, and whether they are beneficial, how they can add to or improve them (Ely et al., 2011).
- Networking builds women's confidence and generates ideas (Case study 6).
- Women's networks should connect female professionals who share common experiences within organisations and industries, and can be the source of opportunities such as interviews for new positions (Hopkins et al., 2008).

Ely et al. (2011) note that women may be reluctant to engage in networking activity because they do not want to appear 'inauthentic'. When networking is tied to a larger purpose, such as organisational goals, they become less reluctant. It is useful to go beyond giving women generic advice about how to build networks and equip them with useful strategies; for example integrating networking into daily activities by using projects as opportunities to develop new relationships (ibid).

Women's leadership programmes should focus on: skills and knowledge; openness and support; collaborative learning and sustained relationships; providing participants with diverse role models. Learning techniques can include:

- Training and education
- Mentoring, peer-to-peer feedback and networking
- Self-assessment tools
- Commitments, e.g. to support other women in the workplace
- Leadership role models and speakers
- Experiential learning (e.g. action learning projects)
- Career planning exercises

3.5 The role of organisations

This section outlines key points from wider literature on the role that organisations can play in supporting women's leadership development programmes and wider points, including the need for dialogue around diverse leadership perspectives.

Hopkins et al. (2008) argue that to be sustainable, leadership development must take place at both an individual and organisational level, as women face challenges at both levels. A range of studies indicate the importance of viewing women's leadership development as something which positively affects both the organisation and individual (Boatwright and Egidio 2003; Kim and Thompson, 2012). As Dunne et al. (2020) argue, 'it is in the interest of industry to encourage female participation in farming organisations', as evidence suggests that women and men have 'different skills, experiences and attributes to bring to leadership in the rural sector'.

Wider literature highlights the role that organisations can play in ensuring that women's leadership development programmes are successful, for example when the programme:

- Does **not stand alone** but is closely aligned and integrated with the strategic objectives of the organisation (Cohn et al., 2005);
- Is initiated or championed at a senior-level, signalling a commitment to ongoing training and development of talented women (Adler et al., 2001);
- Is perceived as a 'reward' and regarded positively by staff (Debebe, 2011);
- Is part of a consistent and integrated leadership strategy, which holds leaders and the organisation accountable (Fulmer and Bleak, 2008);
- Enables women to feel connected to the organisation, and to see themselves as an integral part of its goals and objectives (Hopkins et al., 2008).

This indicates the importance of organisational support for initiatives. However, as Priola and Brannan (2009) argue, many organisations 'lack openness' to alternative models of development and leadership. In certain cases, women's leadership programme organisers require businesses to demonstrate commitment to improving management capability for their applicants to be eligible (Case study 8).

Recommendations for organisations

Hopkins et al. (2008) suggest that effective leadership programmes lead to stronger commitment to the organisation, and recommend that organisations:

- Provide training to reduce bias in existing practices; examine processes of awarding developmental opportunities, and work to deconstruct gender stereotypes around leadership to encourage a variety of styles;
- Support mentoring relationships at all levels in the organisation;
- Support women in gaining further education and qualifications;
- Work to increase women's access to networking opportunities, and support women's networks through resources and senior leadership advocacy;
- Support and encourage career planning and leadership development for women and hold managers accountable for women's career development;
- Integrate leadership development assessments within a comprehensive leadership development and succession planning process for women;
- Create women-only leadership development programmes championed by senior leadership and focused on knowledge and behavioural outcomes.

Mattis (2001) provides a list of actions that managers can take, including ensuring that candidate lists for vacancies always include two or more women, assigning proportional representation of women to projects and committees, and encouraging training for "plateaued" women. As Ely et al. (2011) discuss, research shows that people fail to recognise women's leadership potential even as they acknowledge their competencies, so there is a need to review assessments of women's suitability for leadership roles in light of their skills. Similarly, Kolb et al. (2010) have called for a change in assumptions about the kinds of experiences needed for leadership. This research provides evidence of the need for progressive approaches to recruitment, and to look at women's experience and skill sets more broadly.

Organisations and leadership

As Kezar and Lester (2010) state, it should not be assumed that 'people share a similar perspective of leadership', as views can vary within an organisation, and there can be conflict between individual and organisational definitions. These different perspectives should be recognised, as narrow definitions of leadership can impact employees. One way that organisations can address this is to facilitate dialogue around how 'people's experiences and background impact their views on leadership' to help people to understand why others see leadership differently.

Leaders can facilitate group dialogue across the organisation, staff can be surveyed about their views of leadership, and work-evaluation criteria can be re-considered. Wider definitions of leadership, Kezar and Lester suggest, 'allow for more open promotional practices that place value on multiple leadership values and qualities'. They also acknowledge the difficulty of turning research into specific actions for organisations, beyond raising awareness. Organisations also need to focus on addressing forms of discrimination and look at changing existing power relations.

3.6 Evaluating women's leadership programmes

Women's leadership development programmes should lead to a variety of outcomes and this can be measured in different ways. However, there is a wider lack of research into their long-term impact (Debebe, 2007; Brue and Brue, 2016).

Evaluations of women's leadership programmes should take both individual and organisational impacts into account. Widely used methods include qualitative interviews, surveys and longitudinal studies (Creswell, 2012; Brue and Brue, 2016). Specific outcomes of leadership programmes that can be measured are:

- The extent to which participants stay connected with each other and the programme activities, such as volunteering to mentor others (Debebe, 2011).
- Participants gaining leadership roles, feeling better prepared for leadership or finding leadership potential in their current roles, in addition to other benefits such as increased confidence and self-awareness (Brue and Brue, 2016).
- The number of participants who set up a new business, gain confidence in decision making or who take on a leadership role (Case study 1).

Debebe (2007) has outlined six key impacts of leadership training: knowledge acquisition, self-awareness, perspective change, skill development, self-confidence and behaviour change. Drawing on her study of a course in the US, she identifies three types of leadership transformation that took place: those who were "hidden leaders" became "visible leaders"; "constrained leaders" became "enabled leaders" and "intuitive leaders" became "strategic leaders".

Elsewhere, Brue and Brue (2016) have evaluated the impact of a women's-only leadership development programme in the US. The programme focused on: vision development, communication and listening, problem solving, critical conversations, managing anxiety and conflict, and taking action. These competencies were taught in a practical way, through speakers, role-playing and group work. The researchers saw leadership development as a social learning process, and identified benefits for participants including: self-awareness, confidence and validation of their leadership goals and potential, and recognition of their strengths and own leadership style.

In terms of success factors, during one rural women's leadership programme it was found that the most effective women were those who were already practicing some form of leadership in their community and had the motivation and resilience to take on leadership positions and associated challenges (Case study 9). Finally, as outlined above, creating a safe space for learning, peer support and self-reflection has also been key to the success of programmes (Ely et al. 2011).

3.7 Recommendations

Those developing a leadership programme for women in agriculture should consider a number of aspects, including: who the programme is aimed at, its intended aims and outcomes, and how its impact will be monitored and evaluated.

Drawing on the findings above, the following recommendations can be made for the development of a Women in Agriculture leadership programme:

- Those developing the programme should consider who it is aimed at, from new entrants in farming to women who are already in mid-level or leadership roles. A 'theory of change' should be established, setting out what the programme aims to achieve and the outcomes to be measured.
- The need for a women's leadership programme in Scottish agriculture should be clearly outlined. A shared understanding of 'leadership' should be reached, focusing on either senior positions or wider forms of leadership.
- As organisations play a key role in ensuring the success of women's leadership programmes, consideration should be given to asking women's employers to signal their ongoing support.
- The programme organisers should take participants' diverse needs and experiences into account both in planning the programme and during monitoring and evaluation, collecting equalities data in order to do this.
- Those facilitating the programme should demonstrate an awareness of the barriers and challenges experienced by women in Scottish agriculture, and how this may impact their career progression and leadership approach.
- Women on the programme should be given opportunities to connect with each other, share their experiences and hear about other women's careers.
- Women in leadership positions in Scottish agriculture should be invited to speak about their leadership journeys and how they have overcome any challenges, and the programme should introduce participants to a diverse range of role models of women in leadership.
- The course should provide a safe environment for openness, self-reflection and learning. Participants should be given the opportunity to construct a leadership identity and practice using new skills.
- Participants should be presented with a range of leadership strategies, including relational and collaborative approaches, and encouraged to think about their relevance in an agricultural context.
- The programme should teach both practical skills and theories of leadership, through a range of appropriate learning techniques, including self-assessment and feedback, and lead to tangible outputs, such as mentoring relationships, support networks and career plans.

- The course should be over a longer time period, for example one year, with different types of sessions – from seminars and networking to one-to-one coaching– each month to enable attendees to learn new skills, form relationships and build a support network.
- Lastly, a monitoring and evaluation plan should be put in place, which could include surveys, follow-up interviews with participants to examine long-term impact, or developing case studies of women’s leadership journeys to ensure ongoing support and engagement from agricultural organisations.

The next chapter sets out the interview findings.

4. Interview findings

During interviews, we found that women's routes to leadership can be varied, and unexpected; once in a leadership role, women can face challenges including a lack of confidence and difficulty gaining respect. Overall, participants valued collaborative ways of working and spoke about the importance of both formal and informal support in helping them to see themselves as capable of taking on a leadership role, for example on the board of an agricultural organisation.

4.1 Main interview findings

The main interview findings can be summarised as follows:

Paths to leadership

Most participants did not have a clear career plan, but have taken opportunities when they were offered or tried different roles. Whilst many had held ambitions to reach a leadership position, most had not expected to gain the specific roles they now have. Their motivations included being able to shape wider decision-making and in several cases, the future of the agricultural industry. Career development initiatives, including leadership programmes, can act as a stepping stone to board roles within agricultural organisations.

Approaches to leadership

Participants all felt that they had seen different styles of leadership, and most stated that this came down to personality type. The majority felt that women in leadership roles are more likely to take a collaborative approach. In line with this, participants described their own leadership styles as adaptable and collaborative, and emphasised the importance of taking others' views into account. Confidence and resilience, alongside an ability to listen and work collaboratively were highlighted as key skills for leadership.

Gaining a board role

Several participants have roles at board level within agricultural organisations. Most had doubts before taking on the role about whether they were the right person to do it, or had the right skills. In several cases this was described as 'imposter syndrome'. Several younger participants aim to gain board roles in the future, whilst participants further on in their careers spoke about issues recruiting board members, particularly women.

The agricultural industry

Participants had both positive and negative experiences as women working in the agricultural industry, or in other male-dominated contexts. Several described humour as a way of dealing with sexism, but most felt that persistent forms of gender bias have an impact on women working for agricultural organisations. Participants spoke about the importance of gaining respect as a woman in leadership, and having to prove yourself. Most were unsure about the role men could play in supporting women to reach leadership roles in agriculture, and many were critical of more direct forms of positive action.

Support

Participants have received different kinds of support throughout their careers, including from family and friends. They also value the support they have received from other women and men in farming, and the boards of the organisations they sit on – ‘people that recognise you as somebody that can do it’. Whilst most have had positive experiences, one participant felt that there is a lack of support for female employees in the agricultural industry in terms of training and skills development.

Leadership programmes

For participants who have taken part in leadership programmes, one of the most useful parts of the course was the chance to meet other people in a similar position and gain a support network. Others have valued the chance to improve their skills, gain experience at a more strategic level, refocus their goals or decide which career direction to focus on.

Designing a leadership programme for women in agriculture

Participants made a number of suggestions about what could be included as part of a leadership programme for women in agriculture, including: boardroom and meeting skills, an introduction to different leadership styles, business knowledge, mentoring and personal skills such as resilience and self-understanding. They felt that the programme should aim to develop women’s confidence and encourage them to apply for board and leadership roles. They emphasised the importance of self-understanding, being willing to learn, and to practice things that are more challenging.

Participants suggested that the programme could include practical sessions, from site visits to other farms to learn about other parts of the industry, to negotiation role-playing, filling out applications forms in a more confident way or vocalising leadership goals.

Connecting women on the leadership programme

Participants spoke about the importance of creating a network of women on the leadership programme, and the value in finding **informal mentors** in the industry for advice and support. They highlighted coaching as an ‘empowering’ way of helping participants to work through problems and find the answers themselves.

Participants had a range of views about who the programme could be for, from women at a ‘crossroads in their career’ to those with the right skills but lacking in confidence. Several felt that women who have completed the Scottish Government’s Women in Agriculture funded [‘Be Your Best Self’ course](#) would be the right group to offer places on the leadership programme, as the next step in their personal development. They felt that women taking part should have a clear goal, and that the programme should be delivered to smaller groups of women (around 10-15) to enable them to build close relationships.

Participants thought that ‘word of mouth’ would be important in promoting the programme, alongside a clear explanation of its benefits for applicants. One further suggestion was that programme attendees should receive a certificate, to show they have been ‘recognised as someone with potential’ in the industry.

These findings are outlined in more detail in the following section.



4.2 Paths to leadership

Participants did not have clearly defined career plans and several did not have ambitions to reach a leadership role. They have encountered a range of different leadership styles, and many valued taking a more consensual approach.

Participants of different ages said that they did not have a clear career plan, and have instead taken opportunities when they were offered. They emphasised the value of gaining experience in different roles, and thinking about career progression in a less linear way. This reflects wider research, which suggests that women are less likely than men to have linear careers (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003). One participant, when asked how she had reached her current leadership role, said:

Accident really [...] none of my career has been thought-out. It's things that have come along and opportunities that I've grabbed because they were there.

She noted the importance of 'being open to things that come along', as detours can be 'fulfilling'. 'I like to feel like I'm moving forward, I don't really like to [...] stand still', another participant stated. She felt that she is at a 'crossroads' in her career, with a choice of directions to progress into:

My career's kind of evolved organically, I don't think I actually set out with really firm aspirations [...] It wasn't easy to get to the position that I'm in, I had to scrap to get there [...] there aren't traditionally a lot of female role models in the industry.

When her current role became available, the company wanted to promote a male employee with less experience, and she had to 'make that case' for herself.

Leadership ambitions

Participants were asked if reaching a leadership role had always been an ambition of theirs. Whilst a number said it had been, this was not the case for everyone:

It definitely wasn't an ambition of mine to be honest [...] it wasn't until the people started saying to me, you know, would you think about it.

'I can't say I wasn't interested in leadership, but it never occurred to me that I would want to pursue [this kind of role]', another said. She had thought the role 'would be boring', 'but having tried it, I discovered I liked it [...] being able to offer opinions and shape how things go'. She took a wider perspective: 'every role has the possibility of being a leadership role.'

Several of the younger participants aspired to reach leadership positions in the future. 'I want to be at the table', one said, stating that she would love to be an 'example' to other women in her industry.

Approaches to leadership

Participants all felt that they had seen different styles of leadership, and most stated that this came down to personality type: whether 'you're a doer, [or] a thinker'.

There are as many different styles of leadership as there are people – everybody does it differently [...] There are times where humour and light-hearted comments get the job done far better than saying this is what to do.

As one participant argued, different styles can be appropriate in different contexts:

Some people can naturally take people with them, some [...] dictate more, some people work very much on consensus, and they all have their place [...]

Participants were asked if they felt men and women differ in their approaches to leadership. Whilst some were unsure, the majority felt there are differences. For example, one felt they had seen women 'putting more detail and more time into things', whilst others felt women are more 'consensual' leaders:

I don't have that much experience of seeing other women in leadership roles [...] but my general perception is that women are more likely to be collaborative, and try and be a bit softer and persuade and take people with them.

This emphasis on collaboration and personal relationships was reflected in how participants described their own leadership styles:

I do think women tend to have a more collaborative style of leadership, and try to get everybody's opinion. I certainly do, I don't lay down the law, ever. I like to hear what everybody's saying and then come to a consensus [...]

Similarly, another participant stated that she prefers to 'ask questions', and to allow people to 'challenge [her] conclusions'. However, she did emphasise the value in adapting your leadership style for different situations and groups of people. Another described herself as 'people-oriented' but focused on action, once she knows everybody is on board: 'I'm very much a let's get going [...] let's get it done'. As one participant noted, leadership itself has changed. Whereas previously, leaders were 'very directing', now it's 'more about getting the best from people, and being an enabler rather than dictating to them and leading from the front'.

Several participants contrasted their own approaches to leadership with those of other people, including men. For example, one stated that men can take an 'assertive' approach: 'this is what I think, and this is what we will do'. She talked about the difficulties of speaking up in certain settings, such as meetings:

There was two or three males who are quite forceful, and gave their opinion, and you could see that – not just the women round the table, but other men, were quite hesitant to contradict anything they said [...] so many people just don't feel able to speak up against those sort of loud, assertive voices [...] it's probably something that society has almost trained us against as women.

Similarly, another participant commented that she has been to 'quite a few meetings' at which the Chair or others were 'steering the decisions'. She found this frustrating, as it undermined the role of the committee in reaching a shared decision that she would then 'take forward'. Another described a similar experience:

I've been in meetings where I noticed [...] a generational gap, with some men, where I might ask a question, and they won't hear it, but then when my male colleague will ask it, they'll answer the question.

In contrast, one participant in a leadership role said she finds men 'a lot easier to deal with': 'If they have an issue, they will just come and say it to you [...] the direct way that men work suits me'.

Key leadership skills

Several participants highlighted an ability to listen and work collaboratively as key skills for leadership, whilst retaining your role as a leader:

You've got to be able to listen and take on board other people's ideas, but you've got to be confident enough within yourself that you can then make a decision.

Listening was key to several participants' decision-making process. As one stated, you should aim to properly 'hear what the other person is saying, what the problem is', so that you can respond in a way that addresses their concerns. Another participant described how after initial shyness, she now says it 'as it is':

You should take everybody's opinions on board and if people don't like mine, well tough [...] that's how I feel really. It maybe makes me a little bit more resilient.

Similarly, another participant spoke about having the confidence to respond to questions she is unsure about, and to use the 'knowledge I do have': 'I'll say, I think it's this [...] but I'll double check [...] sometimes it's just blagging it.'

Handling difficult conversations

These leadership skills enabled participants to feel more confident when dealing with challenges. As one stated, this is a part of the role that she enjoys:

There are always people who disagree [...] and usually [...] I would prefer to have the discussion [...] to talk about what the concerns are and to reach a consensus [...] That's not to say there aren't times that I will [...] say no, we're doing it this way, but when I do that I'm confident that I've listened to all the arguments against it and at that point I'm making a decision because that's what I'm paid to do.

In addition, she described experiencing 'personal challenges around confidence and abilities', but said these could be addressed with the right 'attitude'. Several participants felt that confidence and resilience are key to being an effective leader:

I think it comes down to being confident and knowing yourself, and what you can handle [...] everything can't always go to plan [...] it's a matter of being that person that can stand up and say, that was a mistake that was made, it won't happen again [...] and dealing with everything that comes with the role. Having those difficult conversations and not just sweeping things under the carpet.

Another felt that women can be less resilient, and their confidence is 'easier to dent'. It's important they are able to 'separate' the two, and not take criticism of their decisions as leaders 'personally'. In terms of dealing with people, as one said:

To start with I found it quite intimidating, because I wasn't [very confident]. The irony is, that [...] if someone had been on the farm buying a sheep [...] I would have been quite happy doing that deal, that's not a problem. But anything out-with that [...] and I thought oh, I don't like doing this, but [...] I do it no problem now.

4.3 Board roles

Several participants sit on the boards of agricultural organisations. Two gained their current roles after taking part in personal development programmes.

One stated that she applied for a role on the board with no 'expectation of getting anywhere with it'. Another applied for the chair's job as a 'practice run' and was surprised to get it. Previously, she hadn't 'done anything at that sort of level', but was able to build on her experience of local committees. Her role involves chairing board meetings throughout the year, working with senior management to decide strategy, and acting as a 'bridge' both between the board and the executive team, and between farmers and the organisation, for example by speaking to the media

or at NFUS meetings. Another participant had been a committee member for several years before she was asked if she would like to stand as chair:

I said I would [...] one of those things, you don't say no [...] the members of the committee who wanted me to stand and proposed me [...] they did have to work on me for a wee while, to convince me to do it – just because of the time element attached to it [...] it wasn't really a plan that I'd ever had.

Both participants had doubts before taking on these roles, and several referred to 'imposter syndrome'. 'I think women are more prone to it', as one stated:

I thought you know – am I really gonna be [...] the right person to do this. Because I don't consider myself to be a very polished professional type of person [...] I am just a farmer [...] is anyone actually gonna take me seriously when I walk into meetings [...] I think the advantage of just being a farmer and being very forward speaking, you know [...] they just get it as it is.

One participant had doubts because of her background:

I did have doubts before I took on this role if I was even the right person to do it [...] I didn't have that agriculture background or that knowledge, but I was kind of told that look [...] you don't have to know everything - it is working with these people and knowing the right person to put forward for each thing.

This reflects wider research, which has highlighted the barriers that men and women from non-farming backgrounds face within agricultural organisations (see Chapter 1). However, this participant emphasised that she has had 'positive' experiences speaking to members and other people in the role. She has 'picked things up along the way', and being on the board has given her the chance to develop her leadership skills: 'I will put as much into it as I can'.

Other participants were aiming to gain a board role in the future. One participant, who has applied for voluntary roles in the charity sector, said: 'I'm not put off by the fact I've [...] not been successful because I know that I'll get there in the end'.

Recruiting women onto boards

Several participants spoke about wider issues recruiting board members, particularly women. One had recently been involved in a board recruitment process. All of the roles had been given to men, as the organisation received a low number of applications from women despite holding online information events: 'if you don't get the women applying in the first place, how can you pick them?'

Another participant who has been involved in interviewing people for board posts suggested that ‘the biggest problem with women is lacking confidence’:

There are lots of women out there who could do a fantastic job, but don't put themselves forwards [...] it's been quite difficult to recruit the number of women that we would like to [...] I would love to encourage women generally of all ages and stages in their careers to apply.

To some extent, participants have been able to shape their board roles. For example, one has led changes to improve attendance at meetings. She hopes this will ‘have a positive impact’, and make it ‘easier for anybody who comes after’.

4.4 Male-dominated sectors

Participants were asked about their experiences as women working in the agricultural industry and other sectors, from attending meetings to taking on board or leadership roles. This has involved working in male-dominated contexts.

Those who sit on the boards of agricultural organisations had largely had positive experiences, with one participant describing her committee as ‘inclusive and encouraging’. However, whilst noting that she has not had ‘any sort of issues’ during meetings, one stated:

There's one or two times when we were staying overnight or something, and you ended up as the last woman in the bar with a group of men, and [...] it felt slightly uncomfortable [...] you just thought, oh right okay, is this how you speak when all the women have gone.

Experiences of sexism

Other participants shared this view, and had experienced sexist behaviour in different environments. In describing the ‘underlying sexism’ she has experienced in the industry, one said: ‘it's not malicious, it's often quite unintended, but it's quite corrosive.’ Gender stereotyping still takes place, as this quote indicates:

There is a perception that oh, she's female [...] she's going to go off on maternity leave [...] I've heard that articulated in a boardroom situation [...]

I feel like there's still a bit of a perception about women and what they should be doing [...] I think that then translates for women in industry like myself. I'm dealing with men who think that women should have a very traditional role [...] that can be a bit of a barrier as well.

Similarly, another participant commented: 'It's often thoughtlessness, so they just don't think that women really want to be involved'. She added:

I was on a meeting yesterday, and they were talking about farmers, and it was 'when you go onto his farm, or when he does this', and it's just the default is always 'he', and people don't realise they're doing it and they don't do it on purpose, but it's still there - that assumption that farmers are men.

Some participants felt that this type of gender bias has led to a lack of flexible working options, and a poor work life balance in the industry. There was a shared perception that this can be a 'barrier' for women in various roles, including those in leadership. In terms of dealing with the types of situations described above, several participants described humour as a strategy for coping with sexism:

I've always been sort of the token woman. I'm usually the only woman that sits at the table on a Monday morning at the market for a coffee, I'm usually the only woman that's at our branch NFU meetings [...] it doesn't really bother me, and I think I've sort of been indoctrinated into the male mindset at times [...] they forget that I'm there [...] and they will maybe come out with the odd sexist remark [...] and I'll just laugh [...] in some ways it is a part of life, but there is a line.

Gaining respect

For women in male-dominated sectors, another barrier can be their perceived lack of experience. Several participants spoke about the importance of gaining respect as a woman in a leadership role, and having to prove yourself:

I think throughout society, but particularly in agriculture [...] if you go into any position as a man, it's assumed that you can do it until you prove otherwise, and I think when you go in as a woman, it's assumed that you probably can't do it, until you prove otherwise [...] In agriculture, you've got to be respected [...] but that isn't immediate, you've got to develop that.

The majority also spoke about the need to speak confidently, and to 'prove to the people that you're in a room with [...] that you know what you're talking about'. As this participant added, 'then the mutual respect does tend to appear'.

4.5 Support

During interviews, participants were asked about what kinds of support they have received throughout their career. They spoke about support from their partners, family, and the different kinds of choices that women have to make, particularly in terms of having children and then returning to focus on their careers:

Probably more for women than men, your partner makes a huge difference [...] also, I couldn't have [...] done this whole process ten years earlier, because of what age my kids were [...] no matter how much support I had.

As another stated, things are changing, and whilst 'there are sacrifices to be made', 'it's not either or, it's [about] how you develop to get to where you want to be'. For example, several participants felt that women who do have children may reach a leadership position at a later stage. Others had been able to take on their current roles due to family members picking up additional work on their farm.

Participants also valued the support they receive from other women and men in farming, and the boards of the organisations they sit on:

I think the support of your peers makes a huge difference, so other farmers [...] I occasionally get a message saying you're doing a really good job [...] it makes such a huge difference [...] people that recognise you as somebody that can do it.

Participants across different sectors felt well supported by the organisations they work for, in addition to other groups such as their local NFUS branch: women should aim to 'take support from wherever you can get it'. However, one participant felt she had not received a lot of support working in the agricultural industry:

I feel like the direction that I've gone in, and the things that I've done, actually have come from me, and me driving it [...] I can't really say that I've had a lot of support [...] there's not really a culture of upskilling and improvement [in the industry].

Lastly, one participant highlighted that having a board role also involves supporting others. In some cases, this includes people facing significant challenges. She has gone on a mental health first aid course to improve her skills, and thinks others should do this, because 'it is a really isolating industry'. This participant talked about the need to set boundaries, and the challenge of managing both her 'business at home and the role': 'It's taken up a lot more time that I thought it would'.

Financial support

Several participants mentioned training budgets as a form of financial support for women. One said that the organisation she works for has a small training budget, and whilst this is starting to change, she had previously felt that there 'wouldn't be that money available'. In contrast, others felt their organisations had provided a range of training and skills development opportunities, including budget for attending events and courses, or helped them progress through voluntary roles.

Another participant highlighted the Scottish Government's Women in Agriculture programme as an important source of support, both as a network and because of the availability of funding toward training courses, a form of 'tangible support'. This participant felt that financial barriers were an important factor in women's career development. She had recently completed training, and said that whilst the cost was fairly low in comparison with other types of courses, it takes a certain amount of confidence for a woman in the industry to invest money in themselves.

The role that men can play

Participants were also asked about the role they felt that men could play in supporting more women to reach leadership roles in agriculture. They felt this was important, but would take time. One said there is 'work to be done on both sides'.

Whilst participants spoke about the role men could play in being 'open to change', and building women's confidence, most were critical of more direct forms of **positive action** such as targets on boards. As one stated, women need to 'do the work themselves, not rely on others'. This reflects wider research in other sectors (Williams et al, 2014). As their comments show, this is a complex issue:

I think men need to be open to change and to recognise that women might not do things in exactly the same way, but that doesn't mean it's not as good [...] I'm not a great fan of saying there must be 50% women or there are targets [...] I think we all want to be appointed because we're the right person for that role at that time, but men need to give us the opportunity to demonstrate that and to get the experience.

One participant was aware that some members of her organisation held the view that she may have been given her role due to being a woman:

I think we will get to a place eventually where it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman and nobody will take any notice of it, but to get there is going to take a bit of effort [...] you'll see conversations [...] about quotas on boards and things like that, and as a woman on a board, you do sometimes think, have I just been put on to tick that box [...] that all undermines you [...] nobody ever says that about a man.

As she added, it needs to be 'normal' to see women doing that role. This reflects wider research, in which participants held mixed views on the role of positive action in supporting women in agricultural leadership, due to potential uncertainty as to whether they have been appointed due to their gender (see Chapter 1).

4.6 Career development

Leadership programmes

Several participants had taken part in leadership programmes run by agricultural or rural organisations. For many, these programmes were key to **building their confidence**, developing their **support network** and gaining **leadership roles**:

I thought, oh I'll just apply, not thinking that I would ever be chosen [...] the delivery sessions [were] a mixture of everything, from personal development to media training, [to] technical farm information [...] the idea was that we would be more used to the [sector], and better prepared to run our own businesses, and I was then asked to join the [committee] and then it just went from there really.

One participant had recently been involved in setting up a new programme for members of her organisation. This included sessions on leadership and communication skills, encouraging attendees to think about what they 'wanted to get out of [their] year', and to put a plan together. Another had completed a programme which included leadership sessions and one-to-one support.

For several participants, one of the most useful parts of the programmes they have done was the chance to meet others and gain a support network. One participant has stayed in touch with her group, and they continue to support each other. For another participant, meeting a group of people from 'different areas' who also 'felt passionate about the industry' has contributed to her 'personal development', and led to 'lasting relationships'. This improved her confidence: 'knowing that there were other people out there who felt the same way that I did, and that were willing to say what they wanted from the industry as well.'

One participant is completing a career development programme in her sector that aims to address issues in getting employees, particularly women, into mid-level management roles. She has a mentor and yearly objectives, and keeps a record of the skills she gains on placements. She likes that the programme is 'self-led', and sees it as an 'investment' in herself, but also appreciates being able to understand the decisions taken in her industry at a more 'strategic level'.

For participants further on in their careers, other courses have helped them to refine their leadership approach in other ways. For example, one had attended a training course on authentic leadership:

I don't mind getting it wrong, as long as I know that I've thought through what I'm doing [...] for me that's what authenticity is about. Don't ask somebody else to do something that you don't believe in or you don't think is right.

4.7 Designing a leadership programme

Participants felt that a leadership programme for women in agriculture should include practical sessions on boardroom and meeting skills, in addition to focusing on personal skills such as confidence, resilience and self-understanding.

Participants were asked for their views on what could be included in a leadership programme for women in agriculture, taking into account their experiences as women in leadership roles and their participation on programmes like this.

They made a range of suggestions, from practical knowledge such as boardroom and meeting skills, to leadership approaches, mentoring and workshops on personal skills such as confidence, resilience and self-understanding.

Confidence, public speaking and boardroom skills

Many participants felt that it would be useful if the programme equipped women with practical skills, to develop their **confidence** and encourage them to apply for board roles, for example ‘how to run meetings’, and ‘make sure your voice is heard’. The programme could also include practical guidance on specific activities such as media training, **public speaking** or job applications:

I’ve never had any practical training in running meetings or boardroom skills [...] and it’s something that it’s taken me a long time to pick up [...] they’ll always improve and develop [...] but to have the baseline skills I think is vitally important, because it will engender confidence as much as anything else.

As one participant put it, this could range from ‘chairing a good meeting’, or ‘how to articulate yourself in a confident and constructive way’ to a practical understanding of boards, the role of a director and trustees, how businesses work, and so on:

I don’t think there are many agricultural organisations that actually equip their leaders with the formal skills and understandings in a lot of the basics.

One younger participant said she would be attracted to a programme that aimed to build her confidence, for example when she is the ‘only woman in a room’: ‘how you carry yourself, what body language you use’.

In reference to the difficulties of recruiting women onto agricultural boards, one participant suggested that the programme could provide help with applications, and encourage women to feel more confident about their ability to meet the criteria.

Several felt that women could be more confident when applying for jobs, for example in setting out their achievements.

One participant felt that preparation for taking on a board role could be useful, as she had felt unclear about what would be expected of her, and would have appreciated 'more transparency' about what the organisation expected. The programme could help women who want to apply for a board role to find out about what it involves. As she noted, hers is a voluntary role with no contracted hours, and whilst some chairs 'throw themselves in', others can't put as much time into it:

I find that quite difficult, that there's no actual set parameters as to what is expected from you, and I think that maybe puts other people off [...] if there was defined parameters, it would probably be easier [...] [to] encourage people.

Business and negotiation skills, and handling difficult conversations

As discussed above, many participants spoke about the importance of being able to handle more difficult conversations in a leadership role. Several had taken part in role-play sessions during training courses and found this helpful. In one session attended by a participant, an actor had played the role of a relative who didn't want to make changes on the farm, so attendees could practice negotiating with them:

That really helped as well, so putting yourself in that situation and being forced to come up with things, and then, what he did after the five minutes was, right [...] go back, what should [participant] have said at that point, what would have been the way to de-escalate that confrontation [...] that was really good.

Several participants felt that business skills would be a useful part of the programme, including accountancy, record-keeping and time-management. As one stated, 'farming is a business', and you need to be able to plan the business and 'file your taxes'. One participant had learnt time-management skills on a course she attended which she still uses now. Attendees learnt how to manage their time and run the business more efficiently, for example the increasing amount of paperwork. This skill applies to both farm work and taking on a board role, she added, including learning how to 'plan and prioritise'.

Personal skills and self-awareness

Participants also felt that the programme should focus on the **personal skills** needed to take on a leadership role. They emphasised the importance of 'understanding yourself', and your strengths and weaknesses, in order to think about how to 'fit them into a leadership style'.

I think it comes down to knowing yourself [...] and what you're capable of and what you can or can't do [...] know what you can do well, and use it to your advantage [...] I definitely in the past year or two have learnt a lot about myself.

As a range of wider research shows, leadership is shaped by different aspects of people's identity. A leadership programme for women in agriculture should give participants an opportunity to explore this, as part of wider self-reflection.

Being willing to learn

Building on the comments above, participants spoke about the importance of being willing to learn and gain experience over time:

You don't have to be an expert in everything [...] if you're willing to learn, and speak to somebody who's in a completely different scenario from you, [and say] I don't know much about this, can you tell me what it's like to be a dairy farmer [...] that's a way of connecting with people [...] and having the confidence to do that, because it's not an easy thing to do, admitting you don't know something.

Another part of building confidence in your abilities, as several participants said, is a willingness to make mistakes, and to see this as an 'opportunity to learn':

I think every time you take on a new role, you learn something new [...] you can always look back and say, ah, my leadership skills weren't up to scratch there, I should have done this. But it's all in-part learning.

As this participant added, if you're less confident about something like public speaking, a course can only help so much - you also need to practise to improve.

Leadership approaches

Participants also felt that the programme should look at different approaches to leadership. One suggested that 'a conversation around leadership style' would be helpful, as 'a lot of people haven't thought about it, and they just go intuitively':

What is leadership, and an understanding of leadership styles, and how different things are appropriate in different situations – and sometimes you might have to be dictatorial and say no, I'm really sorry, I've heard everything you've said, but actually this is the reason that we need to go down this route.

One participant had been on a course which covered 'different styles of leadership', to 'work out what style you were', 'what sort of personality you were, and how that interacted with other people's personalities [...] that was all really useful'. Similarly,

another said that completing a personality test during a leadership course helped her to think about what kind of leader she is, and how to work with others.

Leadership goals

One participant described the leadership programme she had been on as 'life-changing'. The programme included one-to-one coaching, during which participants had to explore what they wanted and the barriers they faced. In the final session, participants were asked to stand up and share their goal with the group. The group have supported each other since this, encouraging each other to keep aiming for those goals. For this participant, vocalising her leadership goals had an impact:

When it's in your head, you just don't know if you can do it, but actually saying it out-loud [...] this is what I'm going to do [...] it definitely made a difference.

Mentoring, coaching and support networks

Participants spoke about the importance of networking, both between attendees on the programme and more widely. One spoke about the importance of 'creating a community' amongst course attendees, so that 'they can speak to each other', and share knowledge. Another said:

I think networking [...] is so important, because the more people that know you, and know what you can do, the more respect you'll gain [...] Academic things, like learning your leadership style [...] are all brilliant and very necessary, but I think for me the networking and the connections and the mentoring would be the biggest part of what a programme should contain.

Participants had all had positive experiences of mentoring, both informally and through more formal arrangements. Their mentors have helped them to build their networks, provided career advice and reassurance. Several participants spoke about the importance of finding someone you can trust:

When I got this job I did ask [...] somebody else in the industry in a leadership position if she would kind of help mentor me, and she has [...] it's more like friends having a chat every two months [...] It doesn't feel like it's anything structured, but it has helped. [It's important] that it is somebody that knows the industry and knows the people you're talking about, but that you can totally trust.

Another participant said it can be helpful to have 'somebody working in a different area' to talk things through with. One participant who doesn't have an informal mentor said she would find it useful to speak to someone in a similar role. However, she did feel that she has been mentored by members of the organisation where she now holds a board role:

They obviously thought [it was] worth giving me that opportunity, and they [have] encouraged me ever since [...] it was them that said we think you should consider [it] [...] I find it quite humbling in a way, that people have that sort of confidence in you, that they think you can do these roles, and that you can represent the sector.

Another said that she was lucky to have had help and support from people 'in front of her, and 'different mentors along the way'. It is 'brilliant', she added, to speak to someone who has 'been through what you're doing':

It's easy for you to see something one way, and all it takes is a conversation with the right person, to say [...] hold on, you need to see it from this side of things [...] It's somebody to sit down with you and say, right, what is your plan for the future.

One participant has a mentor as part of a training programme she is on, which she has found useful. Her mentor helps if she is 'struggling with motivation', reassures her that she is 'doing the right thing', and has offered career advice. As another participant suggested, whilst women may not find the right mentor straight away, a leadership programme could match them with potential mentors who 'fit' their goals.

For example, one participant had recently been involved in setting up a mentoring programme within her organisation. They asked past and current members to volunteer, and attend training sessions on 'how to be a mentor'. Those taking part in the programme are approaching it differently, she noted, with some meeting their mentor regularly, others less often or when they have something to discuss.

Whilst most participants felt that mentoring would be a valuable part of a leadership programme, one felt that a coaching approach would be helpful, as it encourages you to find the answers yourself, which is 'empowering'. In contrast, mentoring can be 'quite rigid':

'This is how I've done it', and it can be a bit difficult if you go away and you think, well that's what they've done in their organisation, but that wouldn't work in mine.

Another participant had been coached by a colleague, and found it to be a helpful way of thinking through 'specific problems' she was having at the time, and to think about things 'in a different way'. 'It's about making it something that's useful for you', she added. The arrangement should be 'flexible', 'so that both sides can pick up the phone and say, I think it would be a good idea to have a meeting'.

One participant felt that a coaching session at the start of a leadership programme would be a helpful way of choosing women to take part, as it would help them explore what they 'would like to get out of [the] course', whether it is the 'right time'

for them to be doing it, and what their 'end goal' is. One coaching session won't be a 'lightbulb for everyone', she added, but 'whilst it's not given me the answers it's made me go forward and it's given me options'.

Site visits and placements

Several participants felt that site-visits to other farms could be a beneficial part of the programme, as a way of helping participants to share practical skills, learn about new technologies or agri-environmental activities, or discuss how to improve their work life balance. For example, one participant commented that it is beneficial to see how other farms, and 'the rest of the industry works'.

Placements were also discussed. Whilst one participant thought that placements were a 'good idea', she felt that this might be difficult in terms of the time commitment and participants' working hours, and that speaking to a mentor may be just as useful. One participant in another sector has done a number of placements as part of a training programme she is on. Her mentor has arranged placements for her, to gain experience or skills in specific areas such as health and safety. Other companies are 'receptive', she said: 'they see the benefit of engaging with a government body and strengthening their relationships.' This can involve arrangements to host other organisations' trainees. She will work on a specific project during each placement, and they can vary in length.

Smaller groups

Several participants felt that the leadership programme should be delivered to smaller groups of around 10-15 women, to develop a 'cohort approach'. This was based on their own experiences of taking part in similar programmes.

For example, one participant felt that it was the 'smaller groups' on a leadership course she had done who 'really bonded'. She felt it was important to 'meet in person', and that doing a course over several days had enabled them to get to know each other and build their relationships. As another participant put it, these programmes are about throwing participants 'in a room with each other', and encouraging them to 'get on with it'. As a third suggested, these smaller groups could then be widened out to create a 'leadership network', which could have a positive impact in future within the agricultural industry.

Who is the programme for

Participants had a range of views about who the programme could be for, from women at a 'crossroads in their career' to those with the right skills but lacking in confidence, or those who feel 'stuck' or frustrated in their current roles:

These women who will be very capable, who will be very intelligent [...] whether they're running the business themselves or whether they're part of a partnership [...] the ones who would never have the confidence to come forward on their own, because I was one of those people – and I think I'm doing a good enough job [...] and there's bound to be other women out there who are exactly the same.

In terms of timing, many participants had reached leadership positions after taking part in career development programmes or leadership courses. Their experiences suggest that development programmes can be a stepping stone to leadership roles. As one participant stated however, courses can benefit people at various points in their careers, as 'you get different things out of it at different stages'.

Several felt that women who have completed the Women in Agriculture programme funded 'Be Your Best Self' course would be the right group to be offered a place on a leadership programme, as the next step in their development. Some of the women interviewed as part of the ['Be Your Best Self' training pilot evaluation](#) were interested in applying for a leadership programme to gain further practical skills and develop their careers. When asked what they felt they would gain from a leadership course, their answers included: confidence in expressing their views, dealing with difficult conversations and staff management.

In terms of advertising a programme, participants felt that 'word of mouth' is important, and seeing its impact on other women. 'It's about pitching it right, and the benefits, and what it can get you', one participant said:

If you're developing a new programme, if there's something exciting and new that the agricultural industry's into that – if you join this programme, we'll give you exposure to be part of this exciting project.

Finally, one participant felt that programme attendees should receive a certificate stating they have completed the course, and that this would help them apply for positions including board roles:

You've had to apply for it, you've been accepted, so you've been recognised as someone with potential, and you've shown that you're serious about developing yourself.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the research findings demonstrate the potential of a leadership programme for women in agriculture, from the personal impact this could have on individual women as they progress in their careers, to the wider contribution this could make toward shaping a fairer, more inclusive industry. It also provides evidence of the challenges that women in leadership roles face and the range of practical skills they need to succeed in these positions.

Based on the evidence review of wider literature on women's leadership programmes, and interviews with women in mid-level and leadership positions in agriculture and other relevant sectors, the key conclusions are:

Leadership programmes are beneficial in helping women to progress in their careers - for several participants, these programmes have been key to gaining board or leadership roles within agricultural organisations. This is due to both the personal and practical impact these programmes can have: firstly, in building women's confidence and re-focusing their goals, and secondly, in connecting them with others and equipping them with practical skills for leadership.

Participants' experiences suggest that women are more likely to take a collaborative approach to leadership – women have their own leadership styles, which are shaped by multiple aspects of their identity. Participants saw listening as a key skill, alongside being adaptable and willing to learn from mistakes.

A leadership programme for women in agriculture should recognise and develop women's professional skills and build their support networks - the findings in this report demonstrate that support from organisations is key to women's personal development. Participants also highlighted the importance of support from their families, friends and trusted mentors in the industry.

A leadership programme will support long-term change - by encouraging women with leadership potential to be more ambitious about their own roles in farming and agriculture, the leadership programme should have a wider impact on women's representation within the industry. The evidence review shows the wider benefits of women's progression for organisations, their boards and members. This should be a key consideration in the programme's design and evaluation.

Women in leadership roles in agriculture and other sectors face challenges including overcoming sexism - the research in this report provides an insight into

the challenges faced by women both early on in their careers and in leadership, in agriculture and male-dominated sectors such as transport or construction. This includes encountering and overcoming sexism, speaking up at meetings, handling difficult conversations and having to work harder to gain people's respect.

Most participants have had positive experiences in taking on leadership or board roles within Scottish agriculture - feeling supported and encouraged by other members of the organisation. However, the research also points to the difficulties of navigating meetings in male-dominated contexts, dealing with more 'assertive' styles of leadership and the impacts of gender bias.

A leadership programme for women in agriculture should acknowledge these challenges whilst aiming to equip women with new practical skills - from chairing meetings to negotiation - and personal ones, such as self-awareness and resilience. As many of the interviewees explained, these skills are key to developing women's leadership abilities, preparing them and giving them the confidence to take up new roles.

The findings outlined in this report will inform the development of a leadership programme for women in Scottish agriculture, as part of the Women in Agriculture programme. The [2021-22 Programme for Government](#) set out a commitment to



ensure that women living or working in Scottish agriculture are empowered to develop their skills, access opportunities and realise their potential. The leadership programme will be key to delivering this, and will benefit women in the industry by ensuring that they are better represented and play a greater role in the leadership of Scottish agriculture.

A summary of evidence-based recommendations for the content of a Women in Agriculture leadership programme is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Recommended content for a Women in Agriculture leadership programme

Type of content	Examples
Leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership styles • Motivations and approach • Career planning • Future goals
Business skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry knowledge • Board roles and purpose • Chairing meetings • Negotiation skills
Practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening skills • Time management • Business/project planning and risk management • Ability to learn
Personal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence and self-awareness • Strengths and weaknesses • Resilience, e.g. dealing with challenges • Leadership identity
Other content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership role models • Networking opportunities • Connections with other women in agriculture • Mentoring relationships • Certificate • Coaching

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Annex 1. Topic guide and participant information sheet

Interview topic guide

- Information sheet – any questions
- The interview should take around 30-40 mins.

About you and your career

Q. Can you tell me about you and your career so far?

- Current job. How long have you held this role?

Q. Have you faced any barriers or challenges in your organisation or sector?

- If so, what kinds of challenges?
- What changes would you like to see made to address this?

Career development

Q. Thinking about your career so far, what kind of support have you received?

- e.g. family support, studies, support from manager or organisation
- What type of working patterns have you used? e.g. full or part time, job sharing

If relevant:

Q. Can we talk about the career development scheme you've taken part in?

- What attracted you to the scheme?
- How was it structured, e.g. time commitment, ways to measure progress
- Do you think the experience helped you progress in your career?

Q. Which aspects of the programme did you find most useful?

- e.g. placements, mentoring - how this worked, has it been beneficial?
- What kind of relationship do you have with others on the scheme?
- What kinds of support were available afterwards?

Q. What else might help you, in terms of your own personal development or the organisation in which you work, progress in your career?

Your leadership goals

Q. What do you think are the key skills you need to develop in order to progress in your career and achieve your goals?

- What type of training or support would benefit you?

Q. Thinking about your career so far, have you encountered different leadership styles?

- Do you think women lead differently to men?
- If so, in what ways? What impact does this have?

Q. What do you think are the key skills or abilities required to achieve a leadership role?

Women in Agriculture leadership programme

As you know, we're developing a leadership development programme for women in agriculture. We currently expect the programme to last between 6-12 months, with group sessions and one-to-one mentoring.

Q. Thinking about your own experience on a comparable programme, what do you think this programme should include?

Q. What types of skills, training or support do you think are key for women who want to progress in their careers or gain leadership positions?

Q. What do you think can be done to encourage more women in Scottish agriculture to put themselves forward and progress in their careers?

- What role do you think men in these sectors can play in helping them?

Final questions

Q. Is there anything else you think we should take into account, as part of our work on a new Women in Agriculture leadership programme?

Q. Would you like to receive a summary of the research findings?

Thank you for your time.

WIA Leadership programme research

Information sheet for participants

The Scottish Government is carrying out research into leadership programmes and models suitable for women in Scottish agriculture. This involves doing interviews with women in mid-level and leadership positions in Scottish agriculture about their own careers and their views on what a leadership programme could include.

Why is this research being done?

This research will help us to plan a leadership programme for women in agriculture, following a recommendation by the Women in Agriculture Taskforce (2019).

The Women in Agriculture programme aims to ensure that women are better represented in agriculture and progress to more senior roles in sector bodies. The leadership course will be part of the Women in Agriculture Development Programme, which delivers training and mentoring to support women in agriculture to build their confidence, enhance their business skills, and develop their leadership abilities.

This research will help us to ensure that any new programme is well designed and successful in leading more women to take up leadership roles in Scottish agriculture.

What does taking part involve?

Taking part in this stage of the research will involve a short interview.

- The interview can be arranged at a convenient time and date
- It will be done by phone or Microsoft Teams, and will last 30-40 minutes
- It will be recorded and participants will receive a copy of the transcript

You will be asked at the end of the interview whether you would like to receive a summary of the research findings. After the interview, you will be sent a copy of the transcript to review, and can respond with any changes.

What will the interview focus on?

The interview will focus on the following topics:

- your career journey, and any barriers or challenges you have faced
- your experience of taking part in a leadership programme or other career development initiatives, and their benefits
- the skills, training and support networks that you think have enabled you to gain your current role or leadership position
- your experiences as a women in a leadership role in Scottish agriculture
- attitudes towards women's career progression and leadership
- the culture and behaviour of agricultural boards and organisations
- your views on how a leadership programme for women in Scottish agriculture could be designed.

What will be done with the results?

This project is being carried out by Scottish Government researchers and the key findings will be summarised in a report. Findings from this research (e.g. quotes) may also be included in other Women in Agriculture reports and publications.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to participate and have the option to not answer a question. We can stop the interview at any point.

We will not report any identifying information (e.g. name, organisation) and any contact information we obtain will be stored securely and deleted once the research is finished. Any quotes from interviews included in the final report will be attributed anonymously.

Contact information

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Emily.Harris2@gov.scot

Please digitally sign and return this form by email:

Name:

Date:

Annex 2. Case studies of women's development programmes

This section presents summaries of case studies of women's development programmes, particularly within the agricultural sector and in rural contexts. These programmes draw on many of the teaching methods outlined in Chapter 4, and support participants through a combination of group workshops, leadership exercises, individual learning and coaching. They focus on key leadership skills, particularly those key for women in a rural context.

Case study 1: The SE Rural Leadership programme

The [SE Rural Leadership Programme](#) is co-delivered by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The programme is aimed at business owners or managers based in rural locations and across various sectors, who want to develop their leadership skills and grow their business. Participants are organised into four regional groups, each with 10 members. The programme includes workshops, group discussion and coaching over six months. The content includes: leadership, communication and influencing workshops; one-to-one coaching sessions; rural innovation team projects and a networking forum, building connections and sharing programme materials. It aims to give participants a clearer focus, desire to make a change, self-understanding, networking opportunities and the confidence to act on their ambitions, whilst giving them tools to understand different personality types.

Leadership sessions focus on topics such as identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, responding in uncertain times, goal setting, stakeholder management, impact, leadership in action, resilience and wellbeing, communication and influence. The programme includes sessions on lobbying politicians, with presentations from key figures from rural Scottish organisations. Participants gain a supportive peer-group, policy and business connections and alumni network.

Case study 2: Landscape Leadership programme

The [Landscape Leadership](#) programme is run in partnership by Soil Association Scotland and Scottish Land & Estates. It aims to enable ambitious and forward-looking individuals to take action against the challenges of wildlife collapse and climate change. The programme brings together a network of leaders who want to work collaboratively towards a sustainable land management movement in Scotland. Participants develop the strategic and leadership skills needed to make transformative environmental change at a landscape scale. The pilot programme was delivered over the course of two residential sessions and a series of online webinars between January and October 2020. Leadership coaching between sessions helped participants turn their aspirations into tailored project plans.

Case study 3: Cultivating Leaders, Scottish Association of Young Farmers

[Cultivating Leaders](#) is a leadership programme run by the Scottish Association of Young Farmers. It is open to their own members, with 16 places per programme. The programme takes place over six days, with accommodation and meals provided. The programme covers topics including: leadership qualities, visions and goals; succession and difficult conversations; business issues, including cash flows, accounts, budgets; practical activities including filling out a farm business tenancy application and writing a business plan and a farm or industry visit.

Case study 4: Women in Transport Lead programme

The [Women in Transport Lead](#) programme is a leadership development programme tailored to women in the transport sector. It is a paid programme that is funded by participants or their organisation, to help them progress in their career. Participants join a cohort from a range of transport and infrastructure organisations to expand their networks through shared learning experiences and a collaborative project. The course is delivered by leadership coaches and Women in Transport members. The programme is designed to grow the leadership capability and confidence of women who are already in, or are aspiring to, leadership roles in the transport sector. It includes six modules and a project over 8 months with a break half-way, and is designed to fit alongside a full time role. The organisers recommend allowing 3-4 hours per week to complete the course work.

The course includes: Individual learning readiness call; Initial group engagement event; pre-work and questionnaires; group learning; peer study groups; three executive coaching sessions; Industry guest speakers; themed informal sessions; Group action based research project; final moving forward workshop; Institute of Leadership and Management Level 5 Leadership qualification; and a Certificate on completion. The inaugural Lead programme launched in April 2021 with a group of women from eight different companies across the transport sector. The feedback from the first cohort was positive, with participants noting the impact of the programme on their confidence, capability and ambition in their current roles.

Case study 5: Empowering Women to Lead Digital Transformation, UK

A [leadership programme](#) for women in digital transformation roles, delivered by Empowering You in association with the Scottish Digital Academy, Scottish Government and ScotlandIS. The programme is designed to enable those in early to mid-career roles to become confident, capable and motivated leaders, and aims to build a community of 'emerging' women leaders across digital industry sectors.

The programme is delivered over 3 months, and combines four workshop modules and a team project. Participants work individually and collaboratively to: accelerate their leadership potential and embrace a 'leader as learner' mindset; explore strategies to understand and engage more effectively with team members and stakeholders; understand and develop their own personal and authentic leadership skills; identify and respond to challenges within the team and organisation; leverage the combined expertise of peers to progress individual and collective growth and collaborate to deliver a team challenge project for the women in digital community.

The programme is described as following a 'multi-layered development journey'. It is delivered face-to-face, with group activities and action learning. It includes: an initial group call with the Programme Leader; self-assessment, two 2-day workshops with around a 6 week gap for coaching, smaller group work and putting learning into action. Guest industry speakers share personal leadership stories, alongside self-directed learning modules between workshops, a coaching workbook and questionnaire, and three individual coaching sessions at different stages of the programme. It also includes a team collaboration challenge for the Scotland digital community, a presentation and on completion all participants receive a certificate.

Case study 6: Principally Women programme, Scottish Enterprise, UK

The [Principally Women](#) leadership programme focuses on women in senior positions and middle management in established businesses. The programme is aimed at senior women business leaders in growth companies - including social enterprises - based in Ayrshire, Glasgow and Clyde, and the north east of Scotland. This programme 'recognises that at different life stages, individuals face different social, business, and domestic issues', which 'can limit their ability to influence and lead'. The programme aims to support 'these women at a point in their career where life stage, opportunity and ambition are aligned, but specific skills, knowledge or support may be lacking'. The programme involves: six half-day workshops, one-to-one coaching and conversations with inspiring female leaders.

The Principally Women programme aims to bring together a group of 'like-minded women from different sectors with different skills', and to provide 'an opportunity to share experiences and provide support in a safe environment'. It is described as an opportunity to 'talk openly and freely, to learn about yourself and make new friends and contacts'. The programme is currently being delivered online.

Case study 7: National Sheep Association Next Generation Ambassadors

The [Ambassador Group](#) is part of the National Sheep Association's Next Generation programme. Each year, a group of up to 12 people is selected to take

part in technical and personal development. Successful applicants are invited to five delivery sessions, and subsequently develop a longstanding relationship with the National Sheep Association (NSA). Ambassadors are selected from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, so the initiative provides networking opportunities including the chance to meet key people within the sheep sector. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences with others, for example by joining an NSA regional committee, speaking at farmer meetings, taking on a role within the farming community or getting involved in organising an event.

The programme includes a mix of classroom activities, practical sessions, farm walks and site visits. They challenge the group to think objectively about their own businesses and the wider farming industry. Each session is 2-3 days long and is provided at no charge. Previous topics have included: grassland management and sheep nutrition; on-farm efficiency and profitability; accounts/financial management; sheep handling; ATV driving and maintenance; branding and promotion; time management, negotiation skills and leadership skills and media training.

Case study 8: Agri-Women's Development Trust, New Zealand

[Next Level](#) is a six-month leadership and governance development programme run by the Agri-Women's Development Trust in New Zealand, which supports women who are aspiring leaders across the sector, from farmers and growers, to women in support and service industries, community-builders and executives. The course combines facilitated group-work and self-directed learning, and each programme is limited to a cohort of 15 woman. The programme takes place in different regions, in-person and online. Participants are encouraged to: build their confidence; develop a leadership mind-set; find motivation to lead; develop their communication skills and ability to positively influence others; connect with their cohort and create a personalised plan of action, including a governance CV.

The Agri-Women's Development Trust designed Next Level after a review of its research, existing programmes and international best practice – focusing on the creation of a strong support structure to address the challenges women face when taking their skills to the next level. Participants learn the theory and psychology of leadership and communication, and how to turn that knowledge into real-world impact in their areas of interest. Taught modules cover core development areas, including leadership, communication and governance from a personal growth perspective ('Understanding your leadership "WHY"' and 'Your story'); cohorts have several opportunities to meet industry leaders and professionals and build their networks, and receive six months of support from a coach who helps to identify barriers and opportunities. Modules also cover topics such as self-awareness, confidence and assertiveness, personal impact, and networking.

Case study 9: Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP), Nepal

The [Rural Women's Leadership Programme](#) is an initiative developed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development to strengthen the role and voice of women leaders in rural organisations, and to recognise the potential of rural women farmers. The programme was implemented in Nepal between 2010-2013 and linked leadership objectives to opportunities, including access to local funding.

The programme was innovative as it targeted women leaders at the grass-roots level. Capacity-building and training were provided, alongside coaching, mentoring and exposure visits, and women recruited through rural organisations were trained to deliver the training to others. Men identified by women as potential advocates were also included in training activities. The content was practical and included: negotiation skills; confidence-building; technical knowledge on agricultural issues; self-development and organisational change. The programme worked with existing women's organisations at multiple scales (e.g. farmer and producer associations), and linked grassroots women leaders to Women's Leadership Circles.

The programme facilitated change in women's attitudes, confidence and capacities, their rural organisations and communities. Women gained respect, developed income-generating activities, reported feeling an increased sense of solidarity, and created support groups. The programme has encouraged women to take more interest in their communities and to engage in rural policy dialogue. Access to local funds and resources provided a strong incentive for participants, who reported that it was easier for them to access funds following the programme, which therefore brought concrete and financial benefits to the women. Challenges included the limited duration of the programme to support sustained behavioural change; weak organisational capacity in gender mainstreaming, and; women's lack of time due to domestic work which limited their participation. An informal network of men was established through the programme to build understanding and advocate for gender equality. The programme demonstrated that training methods need to be adapted according to women's needs and the broader context; programmes should cover leadership skills as well as technical knowledge, and provide women with opportunities to practice their new skills, for instance at events.

Case study 10: Women In Food And Agricultural Leadership Training Forum & Expo, Ghana

The [Women In Food And Agricultural Leadership Training Forum and Expo](#) aims to empower women in the agricultural industry in Ghana, where smallholder farmers generate about 80% of total agricultural production. The majority are women, who face challenges including insufficient agricultural training and access to credit

facilities, and limited access to markets. An Agrihouse Foundation initiative which is organized in partnership with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and The Women in Agricultural Development Directorate, the event moves to a new region each year, and aims to train and build the capacity of women in agriculture through: mentoring and coaching; focus groups, motivational talks and presentations; knowledge transfer, skills development and training sessions. The events have been highly attended and had a range of positive impacts, including women starting up their own agri-projects, after receiving training, and beginning the process of exporting their produce after receiving guidance.

Case study 11: Gender in Agriculture from Policy to Practice, Honduras

The [Gender in Agriculture from Policy to Practice](#) project (2013-2016) was a collaboration between Lutheran World Relief and The Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales in Honduras. The project piloted a new methodology that integrates a women's leadership approach with masculinity approaches to advocate for policies that increase women's access to resources for agricultural production.

Whilst at the national level in Honduras there are public policies to support gender equality in agriculture, at a more local level these policies are not implemented effectively, which prevents women from accessing resources that would help them to achieve food security. The project aimed to change this situation by supporting the development of women's leadership skills and changing men's attitudes. Its goal was to enable women and men to advocate for policy changes to address women's needs in the agriculture sector. To achieve this, it built the capacity of nine women's networks representing different communities, to lead and advocate for change. At the same time, the project worked with men in target areas to improve their understanding of and support for gender equality. The project sought to strengthen women's capabilities, through workshops to develop the qualities, skills, and traits of leadership and to build their knowledge and skills. Its theory of change proposed that by building women's leadership and changing men's attitudes, this would improve men's and women's ability to advocate for policies and work with institutions that can improve gender equality and women's economic position.

Case study 12: The Women in Agriculture Leadership Conference

The [Women in Agriculture Leadership](#) conference is a long-running bi-annual conference New Mexico, US which brings together women in farming and ranching, with speakers, breakout sessions, tours, and local meals that educate women on agricultural business practices. It is attended by women producers and agribusiness professionals from around the state.

Table 2: Leadership programmes in Scotland

Programme name	Programme structure	Dates	Suitability / relevance of programme
The Rural Leadership programme, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme aimed at business owners or managers (e.g. farmers, rural business owners or employees in small to medium-sized businesses) • Organised into four regional groups of 10 participants alongside large group sessions. • Includes 4 days of meetings (in person or online), team tasks, group discussions and one-to-one coaching over six months. 	Oct-March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme is relevant as it is aimed at potential leaders based across rural Scotland and covers a range of suitable topics • As it is aimed at those working across various sectors, it may not cover issues relevant to those working in the agricultural sector • This is a mixed programme so may not have the right impact for women
Landscape Leadership programme, Soil Association Scotland and Scottish Land & Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted at land owners, land managers and leaders • Pilot programme was delivered through two residential sessions and online webinars between Jan-Oct 2020. • Leadership coaching between sessions • Participants worked towards a Landscape Management Plan. 	Pilot delivered Jan-Oct 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme will be relevant to some women in agriculture as it covers issues relating to sustainable land management, but would not be suitable for those in other types of roles in a range of businesses • This is a mixed programme so may have less impact for women
Cultivating Leaders, Scottish Association of Young Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to Scottish Association of Young Farmers members, with 16 places available per programme. • The programme takes place over six days, and covers topics such as: leadership qualities; vision and goals; succession; business and marketing skills; practical skills and a farm/Industry Visit. 	Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme would meet the needs of young women in agriculture who aim to progress to a leadership role, but would not be suitable for participants over the age-range of SAYFC membership. • This is a mixed programme so may have less impact for women

Principally Women programme, Scottish Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for women in senior positions and middle management in established businesses based in Ayrshire, Glasgow and Clyde, and the north east of Scotland. • The programme involves: six half-day workshops; one-to-one coaching; chats with female leaders 	Sept-March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme is targeted at women in specific areas of Scotland, and would not be suitable for women in other regions • Programme structure and design offers potential model for new programmes, particularly as it is a women's development programme
Empowering Women to Lead Digital Transformation, the Scottish Digital Academy, Scottish Government and ScotlandIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme combines four workshop modules and a team project. • Two 2-day workshops with approx. 6 week gap for coaching and group work • The course includes: self-assessment; guest speakers; self-directed learning modules; a team challenge; presentation; three individual coaching sessions, a coaching workbook and questionnaire. • Attendees receive a certificate 	Sept-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This programme is designed for those in the digital sector, and its content will not be entirely relevant or suitable for women in agriculture • Programme structure and design offers potential model for new programmes, particularly as it is a women's development programme
National Sheep Association Next Generation Ambassadors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ambassador Group is part of the National Sheep Association's Next Generation programme. • The group includes up to 12 people. • The programme includes technical and personal development, with five sessions of 2-3 days • It provides networking opportunities and technical skills, for example in sheep management and farming, business planning and leadership. 	Applications open in late autumn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme would be relevant for women working in the sheep sector • Programme structure and design offers potential model, particularly as it is in an agricultural context • This is a mixed programme so may have less impact for women



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