IPAA LEARNING

# FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAM

## 2026 PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

### ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

The Future Leaders Program is for emerging and future leaders who are passionate, engaged in the public sector, and ready to step toward future senior leadership roles.

In 2026, we celebrate 10 years of this highly sought-after program, bringing together future leaders from across the system to build capability, expand networks, and learn directly from senior public sector experts.

*From complexity to strengths: leading with courage, clarity and foresight*

### DELIVERY

In 2026, the program will be offered 3 times.

March – Fully in-person,
May – Fully digital,
September – Fully in-person.

All in-person sessions are held in Canberra. Digital sessions are delivered via MS Teams.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

The Future Leaders Program is open to IPAA ACT corporate members only. Applicants should be at APS6 to EL1 or equivalent level for private sector or academia. Nominations are managed internally by government departments.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

capability@act.ipaa.org.au

## THE PROGRAM

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| **KICKSTARTER 1**<br>**STRATEGIC FORESIGHT** | *Thinking beyond the next budget cycle*<br>Explore strategic foresight as a practical leadership skill for public sector decision-making. You'll examine long-term trends, scenarios and backcasting, then apply simple tools to connect future thinking to today's policy, service and delivery choices. |
| **KICKSTARTER 2**<br>**NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY** | *Making sense of the mess: leading with clarity in complexity*<br>Complexity is now a normal feature of public sector work. Hear candid lessons from a senior leader and unpack what makes a challenge truly complex. You'll practise sensemaking tools that help you decide, act and learn with more confidence in uncertainty. |
| **KICKSTARTER 3**<br>**COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS** | *Influence and difficult conversations in hard times*<br>Leadership becomes visible in hard moments. This session explores the conversations leaders often postpone performance, behaviour, safety, integrity, and tough decisions. You'll plan a courageous conversation and practise techniques to balance clarity and care, manage repercussions, and protect your wellbeing. |
| **KICKSTARTER 4**<br>**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND AI LITERACY** | *Building digital confidence and AI fluency*<br>Digital tools and AI are reshaping public sector work. Examine what it takes to lead technology-enabled change at scale, build confidence asking the right questions, and make values-aligned decisions about data and technology so digital initiatives deliver real public value. |

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| **SESSION 1**<br>**THE FUTURE-FOCUSED LEADER** | *Leading with foresight and agility in a complex system*<br>A Department Secretary sets the scene with insights on leading through volatility and complexity, followed by Q&A. You'll explore systems thinking and strategic foresight, map the forces shaping your work, and identify what resilient, agile leadership looks like in practice. |
| **SESSION 2**<br>**INCLUSIVE AND CULTURALLY CAPABLE LEADERSHIP** | *Creating empowering, inclusive teams where diversity thrives*<br>Strengthen your inclusive leadership practice in increasingly diverse teams. You'll examine how power, privilege, bias and identity show up at work, learn practical strategies that lift psychological safety, voice and belonging, and identify everyday behaviours that create safer, stronger team culture. |
| **SESSION 3**<br>**LEADERSHIP WELLBEING AND WORKPLACE SAFETY** | *Leading for wellbeing and psychological safety*<br>Wellbeing and psychosocial safety are leadership responsibilities. With expert input, you'll identify key stressors in your context, explore practical strategies to manage energy and boundaries, and practise behaviours that support sustainable performance, psychological safety and safer ways of working. |
| **SESSION 4**<br>**ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND INTEGRITY IN ACTION** | *Voicing values and navigating ethical grey zones*<br>Integrity is rarely black-and-white. In this Cranlana-facilitated session, you'll work through real ethical "grey zone" scenarios, apply ethical frameworks and public sector values, identify common blind spots and risks, and practise how to speak up when something doesn't feel right. |
| **SESSION 5**<br>**LEADING DIGITAL CHANGE AND HYBRID TEAMS** | *Aligning technology, flexibility and performance*<br>Hybrid work and rapid digital change are now core leadership realities. You'll explore practical approaches to designing fair, sustainable ways of working; managing performance without presenteeism; and leading digital change in ways that strengthen inclusion, wellbeing, trust and outcomes. |
| **SESSION 6**<br>**COLLABORATION, INFLUENCE & DELIVERING OUTCOMES** | *Working across boundaries to get things done*<br>Most system priorities can't be delivered by one team or agency. This session builds the practical craft of cross-boundary collaboration—aligning stakeholders, shaping decisions and maintaining momentum. You'll strengthen influencing and briefing skills for complex work where authority is shared. |
| **SESSION 7**<br>**EVIDENCE-BASED AND COMMUNITY-INFORMED INNOVATION** | *Designing future-ready solutions with and for the community*<br>In a hands-on innovation lab, you'll work in cross-agency teams to tackle a future public sector challenge using human-centred design. Drawing on evidence, community insight and responsible use of technology, you'll prototype and pitch a solution you can take back to your agency. |
| **POST-PROGRAM REFLECTIONS (DIGITAL)** | **Reflection Workshop 1** – Regroup after the program to reflect on what you've applied and what's been challenging.<br><br>**Reflection Workshop 2** – Consolidate lessons, share progress, and identify next steps to sustain impact beyond the program. |

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