

AOD Sector Leaders and Managers  
on Identity, Skills, and Development.



## The AOD Sector Workforce in VIC: on Engagement, Learning and Wellbeing.

a research report for the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA)  
by Ramon Wenzel, PhD | Curtin University, 2022



## AOD Sector Leaders and Managers in NSW: on Identity, Skills, and Development.

a research report for The Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA)  
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**Curtin University**





# WHY WE DID THIS RESEARCH

AOD sector services rely on their employees to bring about positive change to clients, families and communities.

Organisational leaders – by formal appointment or otherwise – have a substantial influence on employee satisfaction, professional growth, and performance. And thus on how work is enacted and serves others.

Becoming and being a leader who successfully manages people at work is not a trivial endeavour.

This research was undertaken to better understand these issues and illustrate which challenges and opportunities relate to the experience of leading and managing across AOD sector operations.



# HOW WE DID THIS RESEARCH

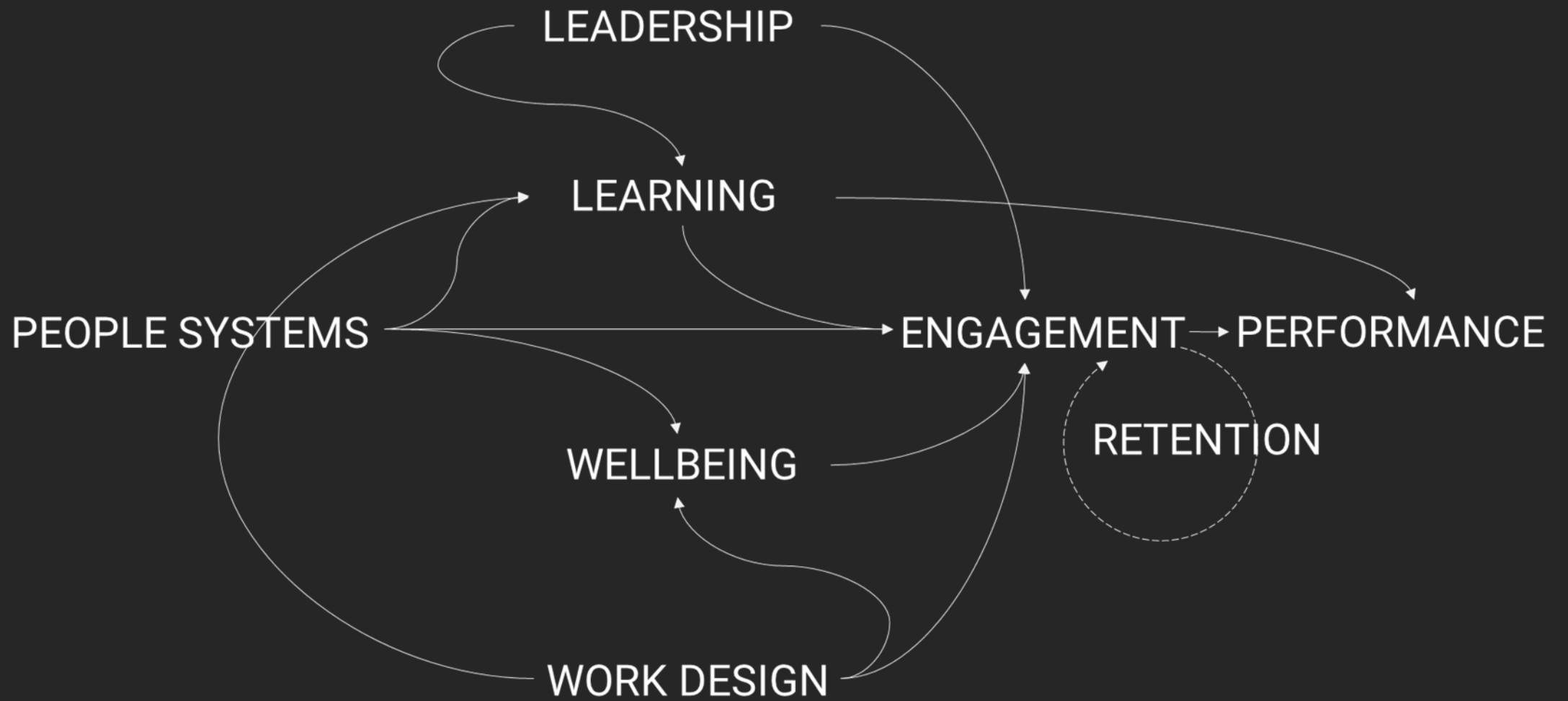
#1 Completed a review of scholarly and grey literature as it concerns leader and manager emergence, development and experiences in the AOD context.

#2 completed 41 semi-structured interviews of about 1h duration with leaders and managers from non-government AOD organisations in VIC and NSW.

#3 use 664 valid responses from comprehensive online survey | Jul - Oct 2021

NSW: 247 workers, 86 organisations | VIC: 285 workers, 90 organisations

Measures focused on people strategy, psychological states, and productivity.



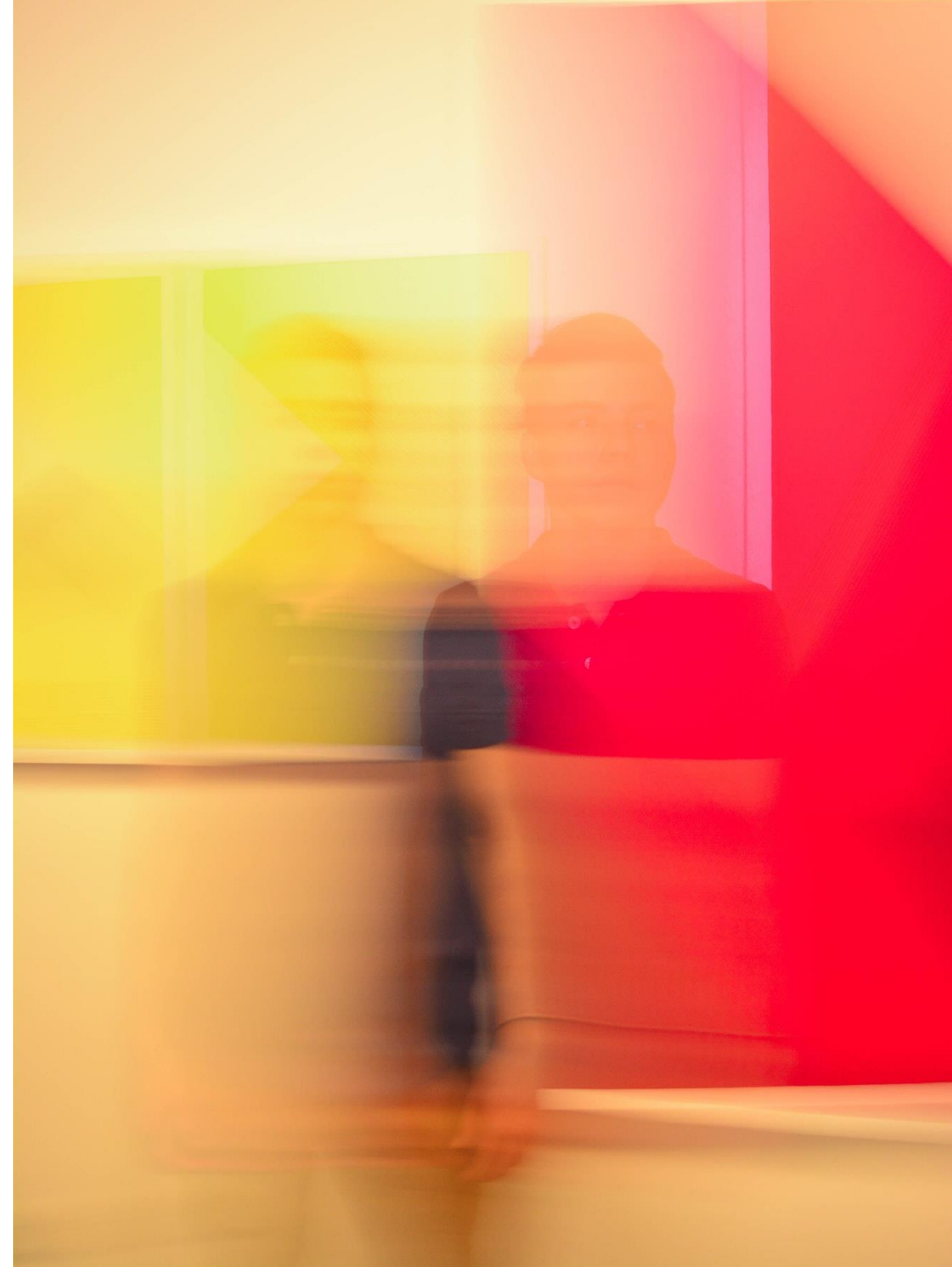
# MANAGERS WHO LEAD AND LEADERS WHO MANAGE

Concerned with the overall success of the business by enabling, empowering and engaging the workforce.

Leaders and managers are entrusted to not only lead people and activities on a daily basis, but also implement HR and other organisational policies and support the professional growth of their teams.

**Leadership tasks** tend to involve processes of social influence to maximise the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal.

**Management tasks** tend to involve the application of specific knowledge, skills, and abilities.



# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY

VERTICAL  
ALIGNMENT

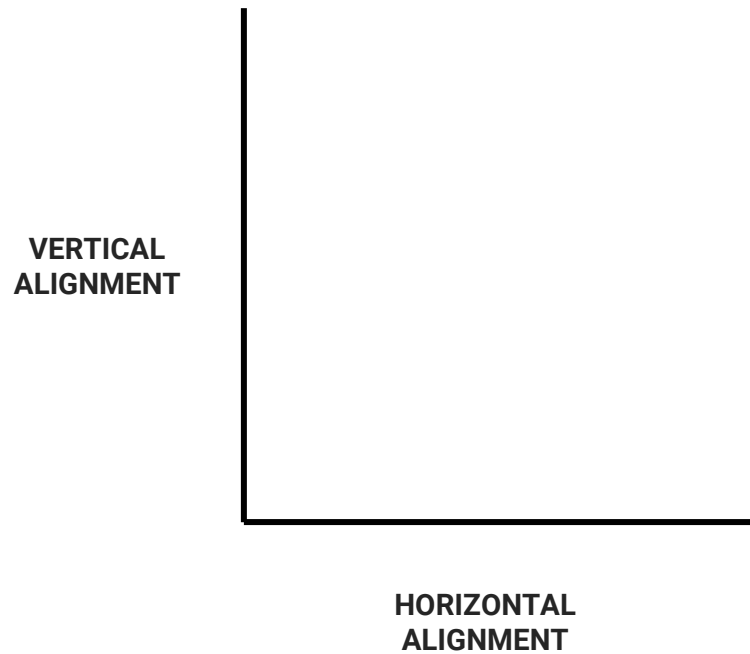
## VERTICAL ALIGNMENT

the link between business-strategy as a whole and people management-strategy

e.g., *“My organisation has a clear human resource strategy that supports organisational goals.”*



# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY

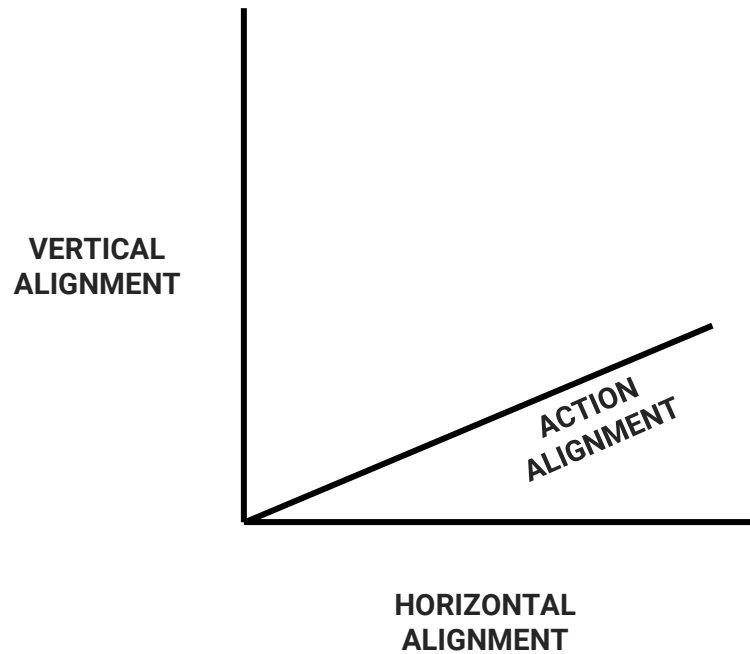


## HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT

the coherent and consistent approach at the level of individual HR policy areas

*e.g., "Useful policies exist for each human resource area. For instance, how we recruit, develop, promote staff."*

# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY

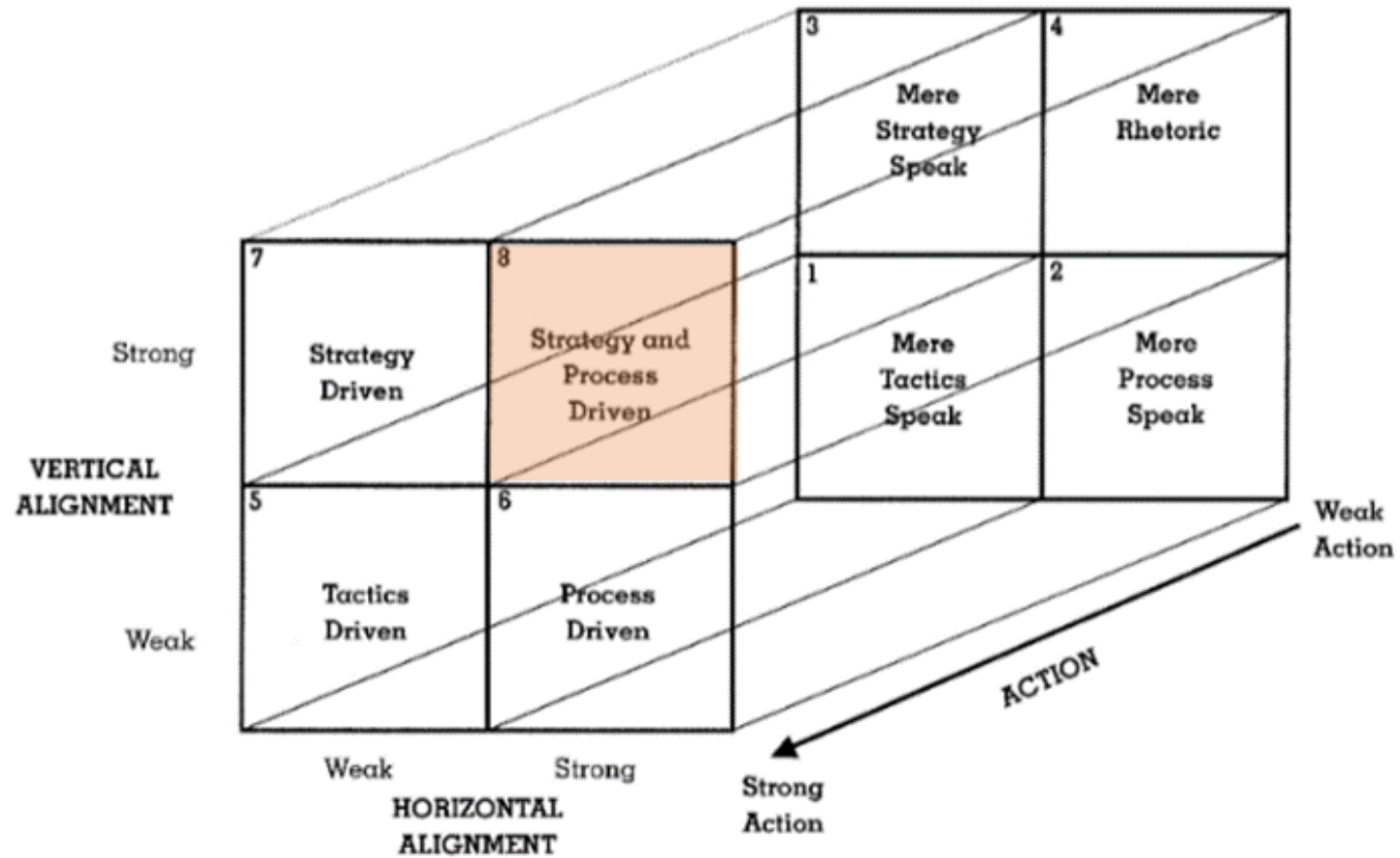


## ACTION ALIGNMENT

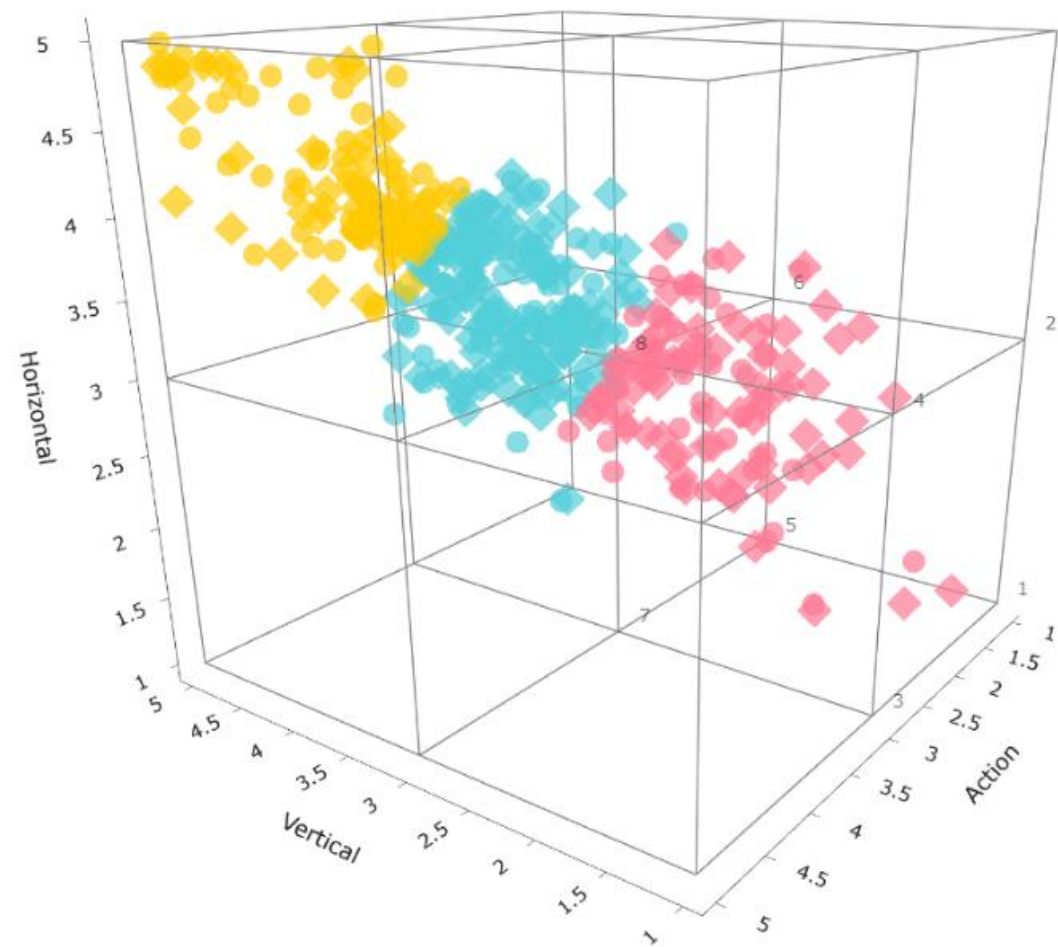
the actual implementation during day-to-day operations

*e.g., "Line managers in my organisation are assessed against targets relating to the implementation of people strategy and policies."*

# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY



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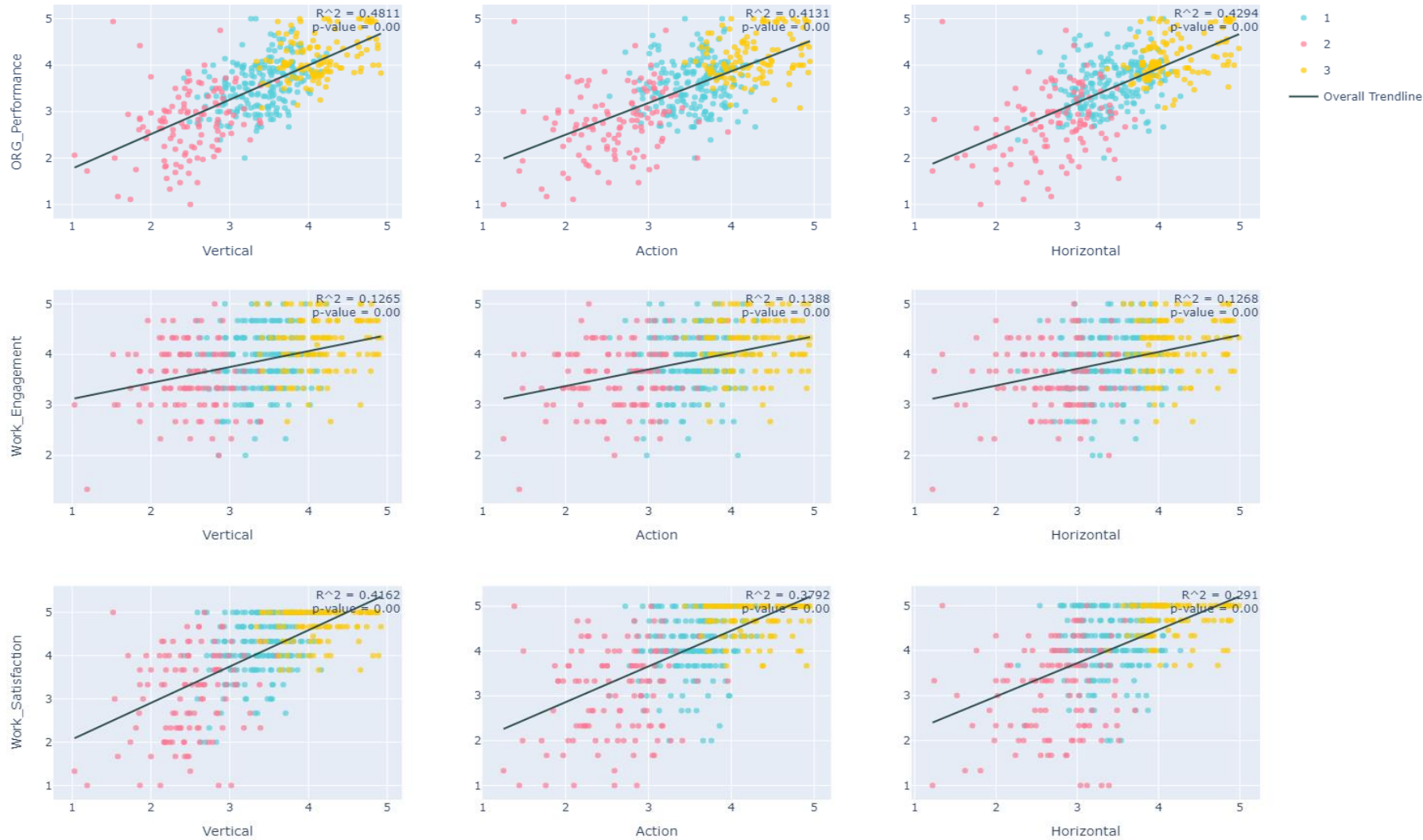


Cluster	3D People Strategy				Outcomes			
	Vertical	Horizontal	Action	3D Total	Work-Satisfaction	Work Engagement	Work Performance	Organisational Performance
#2 29%	2.48	2.72	2.60	2.60 <i>deficient</i>		3.09	3.53	4.00
#1 26%	3.40	3.41	3.55	3.45 <i>ordinary</i>		4.20	3.86	3.98
#3 45%	4.14	4.21	4.25	4.20 <i>strong</i>		4.73	4.19	4.15

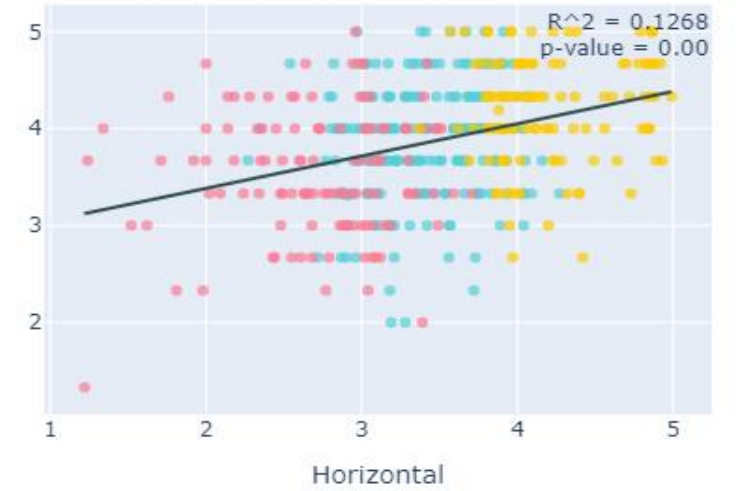
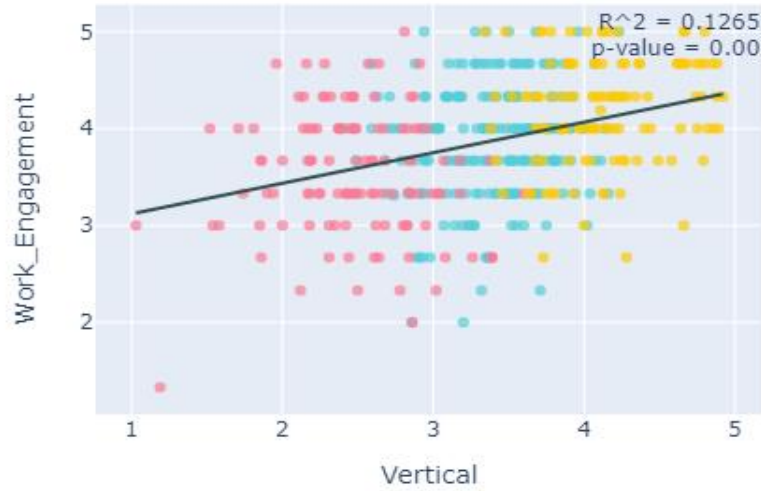
\*averages per cluster, measured on scales from min=1 to max=5

# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY

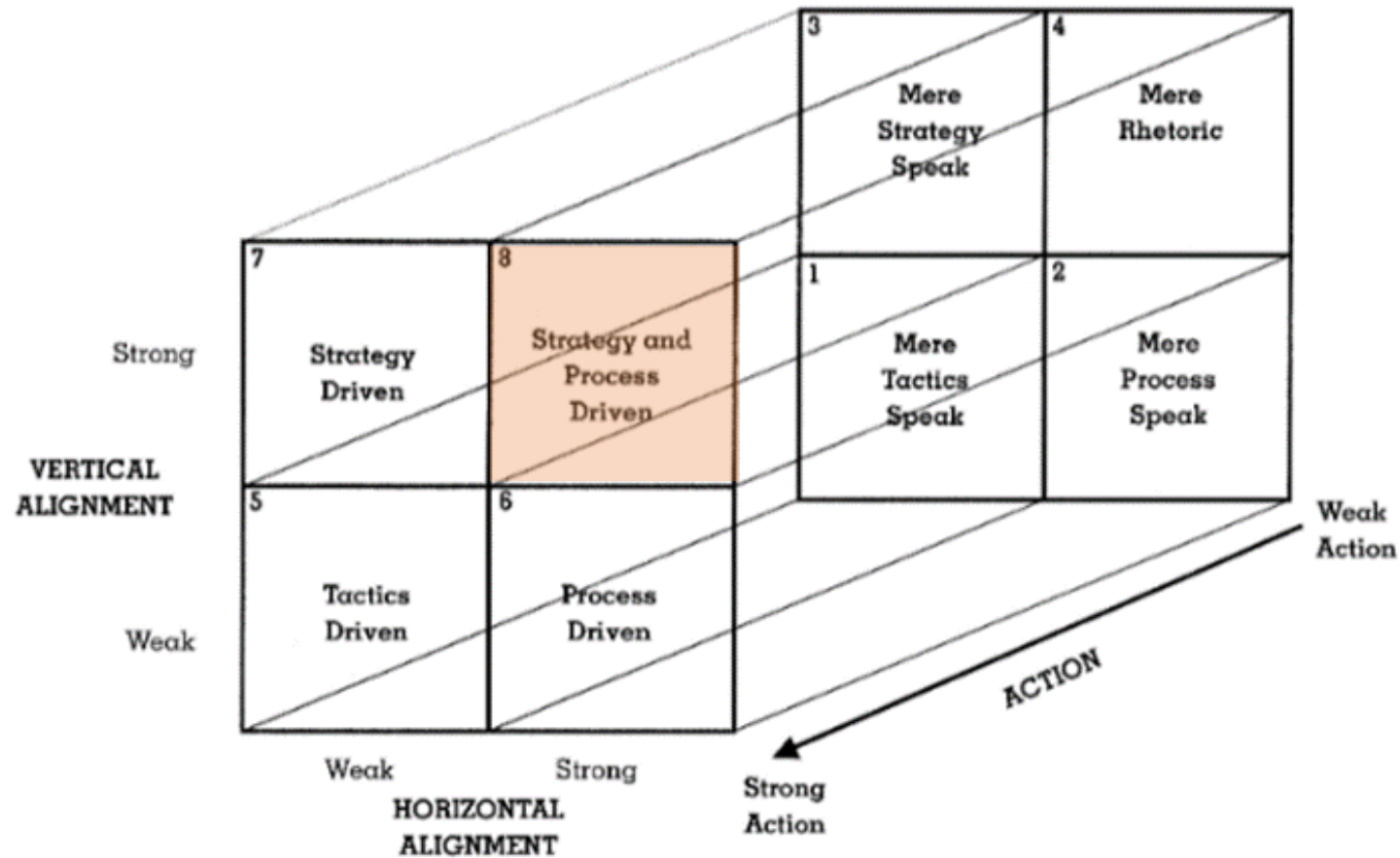
Outcome Analysis Regressions



# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY



# A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE STRATEGY THAT ..



supports the business strategy  
(vertical alignment)

implements useful policies across  
all people-related operations  
(horizontal alignment)

realises a culture that has leaders  
and managers embrace the above  
(action alignment)



# LEADER IDENTITY



For AOD workers to become effective leaders, they need to psychologically identify as *leaders*.

This does not come naturally to everyone.



# LEADER IDENTITY



*"I don't know, it's just probably because I've been around for so long, I guess. And I've made myself because I've got a passion for it, I'm always putting my hand up to do stuff." (P21)*

*"I think of myself as a leader, because I think I have the responsibility both in my role and in my position but also who I am with my experience in whatever, to provide direction, support and encouragement." (P23)*

# LEADER IDENTITY



To help psychologically shift workers' into adopting meaningful leader identities:

- re/design recruiting, careers and work itself to offer leadership opportunities
- create social opportunities that signal to individuals that they are indeed 'a leader'
- develop personalised goals, plans and timelines
- provide pointed feedback and mentoring to help emerging leaders expand their psychological boundaries
- facilitate sense-making and learning experiences

# LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

*"The ability to build networks and work in partnerships with people, because you can't do it alone. And the ability to manage a crisis, drug and alcohol I think more than anything else, you know you're challenged by very complex needs, thoughts of suicide, yeah so you need to be able to manage a crisis." (P32)*

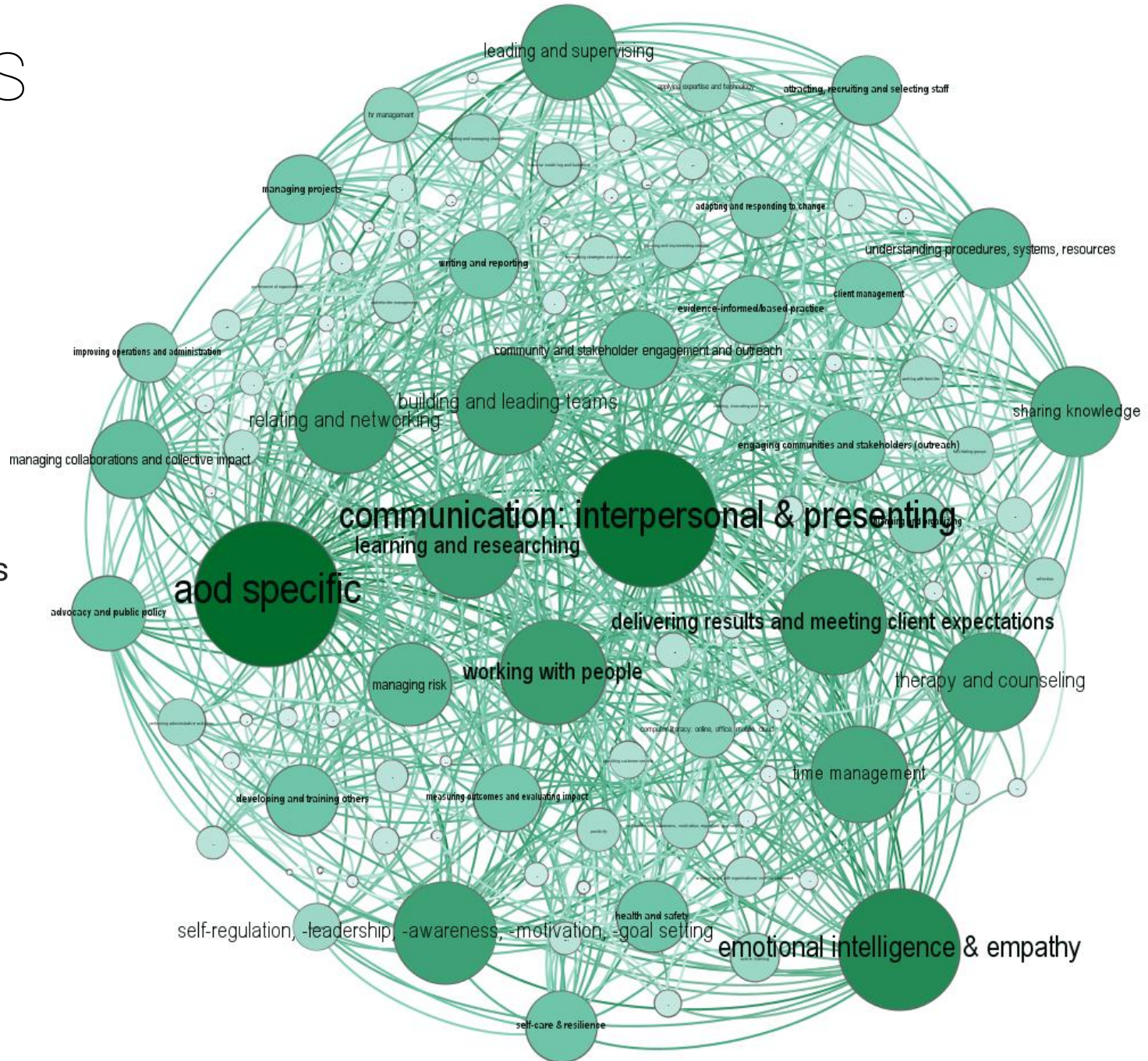
*"I think people skills are absolutely essential. Building relationships and rapport and being able to engage with people and have open, honest communication are the key skills. I think you also need that working knowledge and evidence-based practice and framework." (P63)*



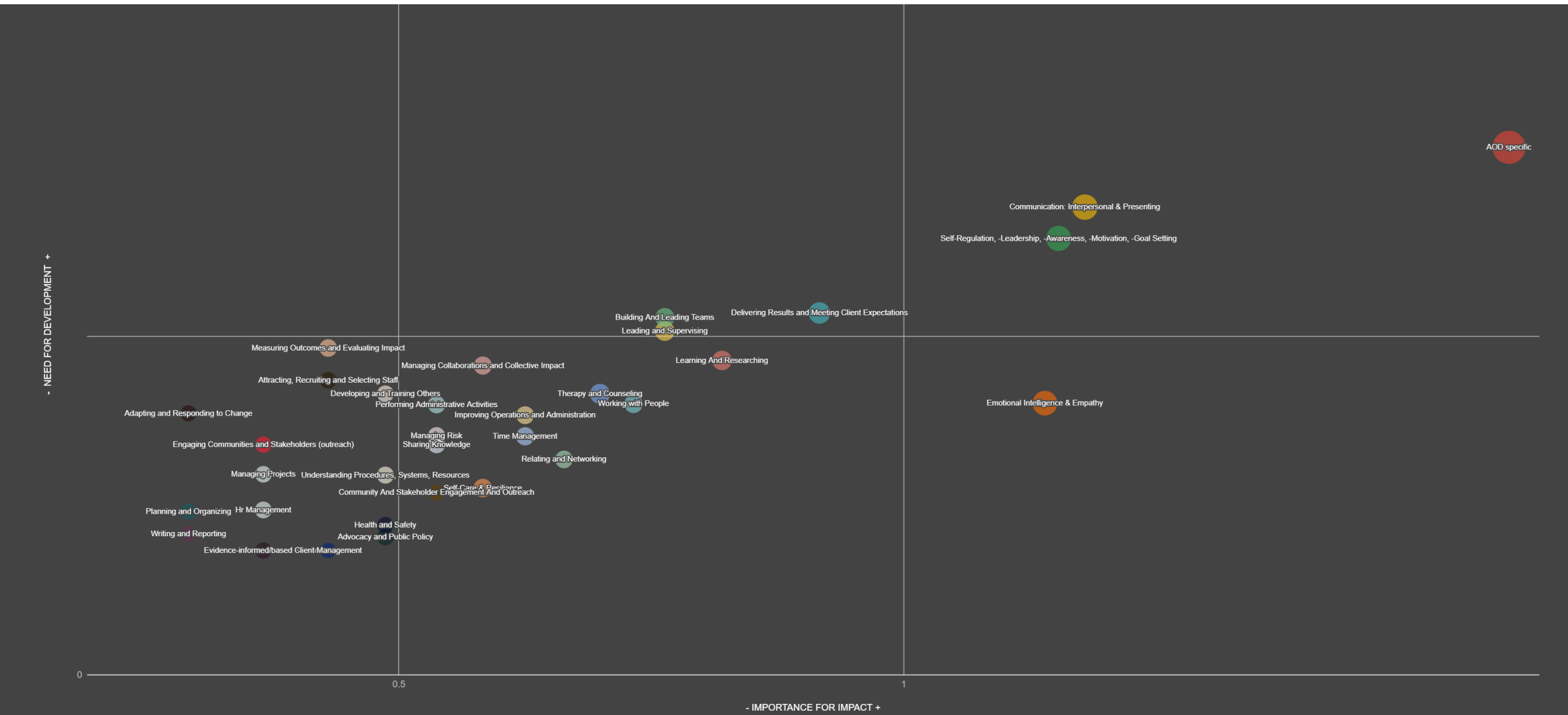


# LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

1. AOD specific\*
2. communication: interpersonal & presenting
3. emotional intelligence & empathy
4. relating and networking
5. working with people
6. leading and supervising
7. self-regulation, -leadership, -awareness, -motivation, -goal setting
8. sharing knowledge
9. building and leading teams
10. delivering results and meeting client expectations
11. therapy and counselling
12. time management
13. community and stakeholder engagement and outreach
14. learning and researching
15. managing projects
16. understanding procedures, systems, resources
17. managing risk
18. improving operations and administration
19. client management
20. advocacy and public policy



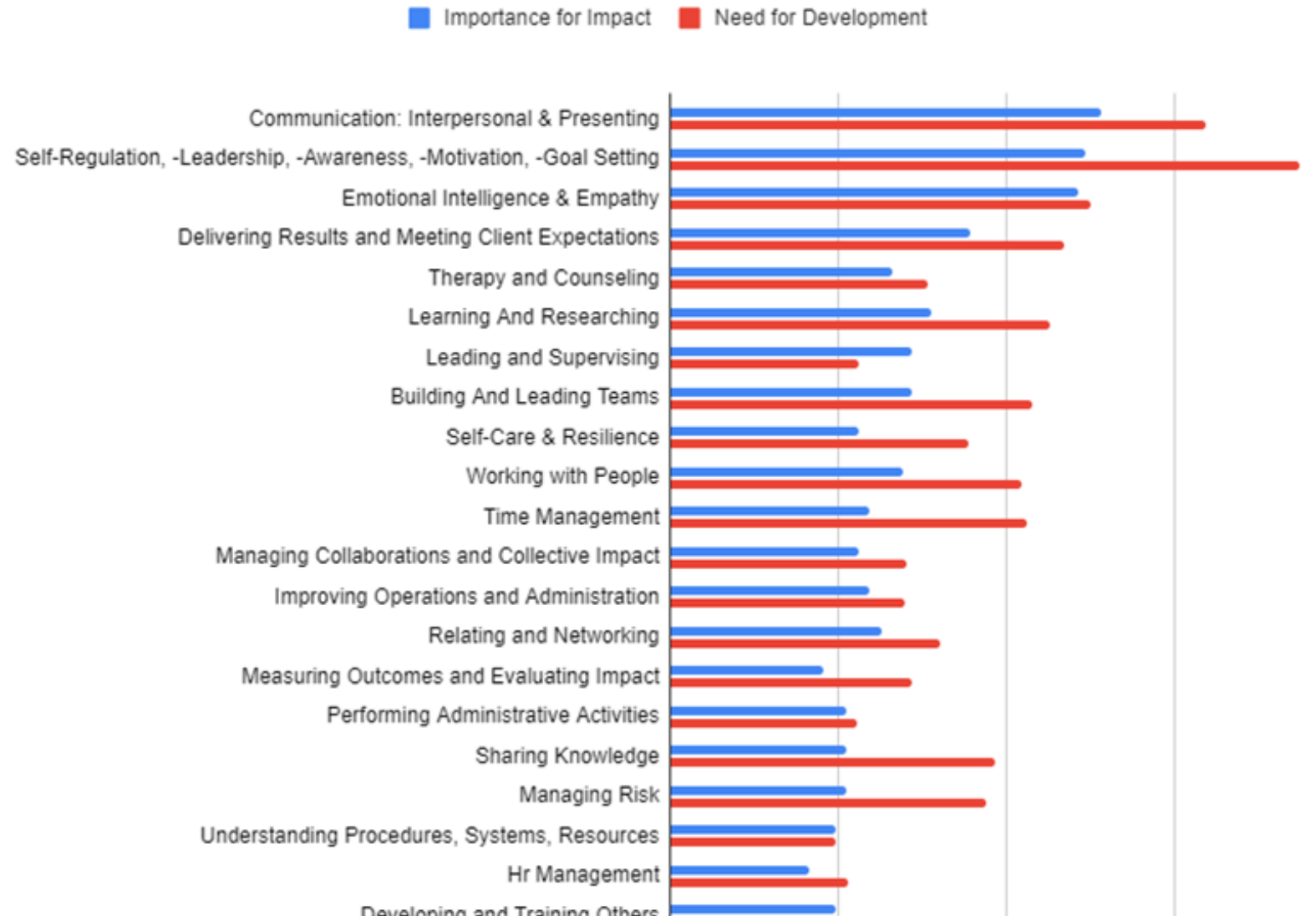
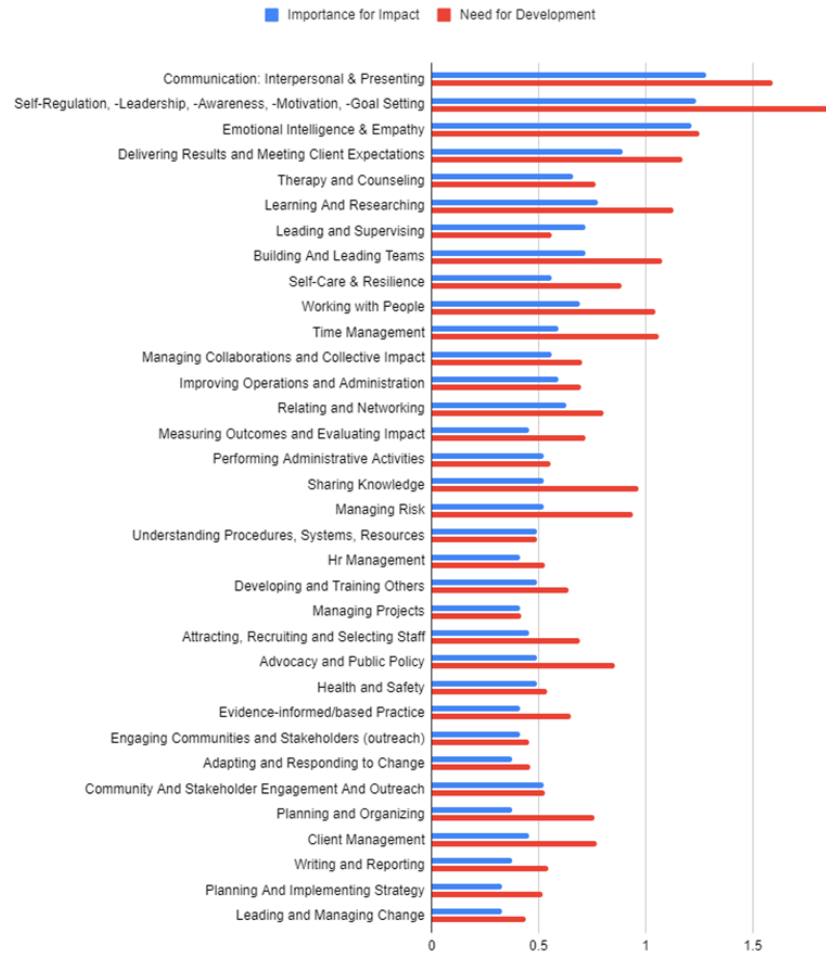
# LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES : GAP ANALYSIS



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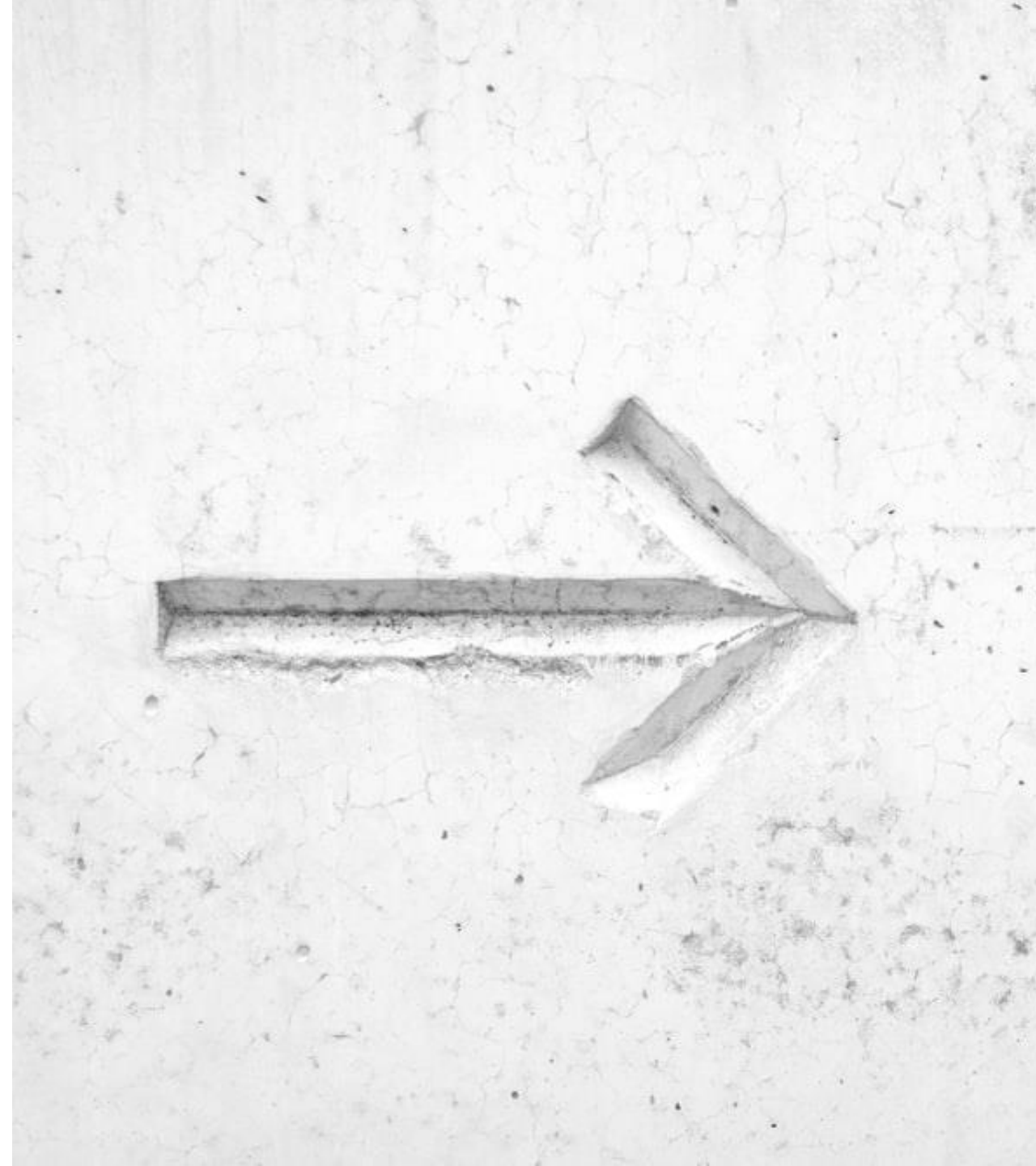


# DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES

*"There appears to be a lack of quality leadership development and training that is a good fit to the sector. A long term vision may be to develop a bespoke fit-for-purpose development initiative." (P54)*

*"I think you need to learn how to reflect and reflect on your practices." (P87)*

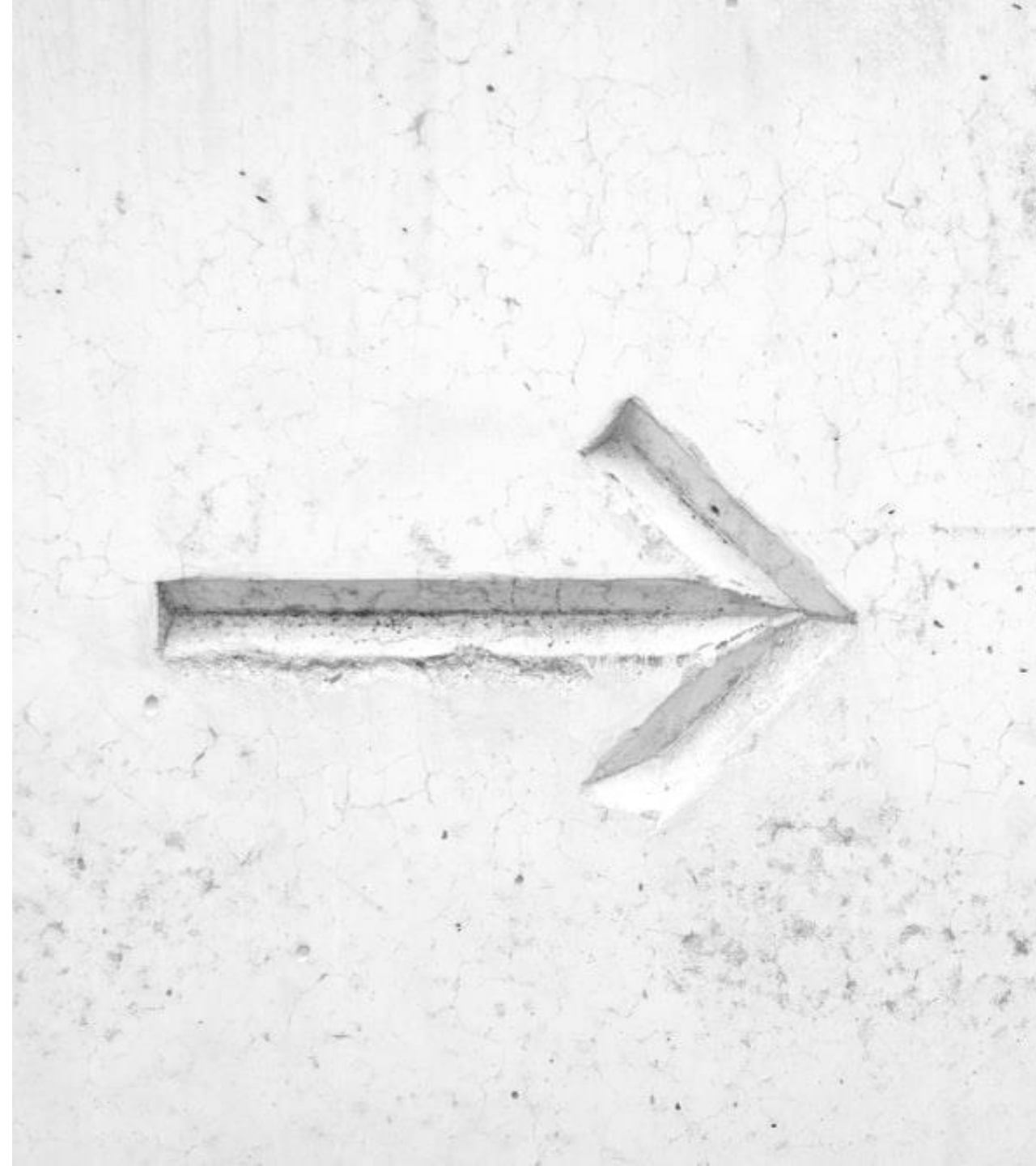
*"...Having multiple mentors, people you can pick up the phone to and say hey, I've got this issue. What did you think when this has ever happened to you, and not, not being afraid to be, and I use this word because I've started to use it differently so they talk about vulnerability and leadership". (P28)*





# DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES

- GROWING : lifelong journey, learning from errors, observing others, mentors, feedback, ..
- OPPORTUNITIES : in/formal learning experiences, opportunities to apply, learning by doing, deliberate practice, ..
- NETWORKS : connect to peers, more experienced, support, ..
- BARRIERS : “lack of”: funds, bespoke training, roles, will, certainty, access (remote), ..



# WHERE TO NEXT

re/conceptualise the role of leaders and managers to help shape, translate, and implement business-strategy and human resource policies during day-to-day operations

re/design recruiting, careers and work itself to offer leadership opportunities which help psychologically shift workers' into adopting meaningful leader identities

support future leaders more systematically and consistently via mentoring and feedback across an organisational climate that tolerates and constructively manages errors

re/shape and resource education and training so that formal learning experiences indeed serve actual needs as well as signal what knowledge and skills are to be prioritised for becoming an effective leader and manager





QUESTIONS  
FEEDBACK  
IDEAS