LEADS Impact Study – Preliminary Findings

The LEADS in a Caring Environment health leadership capabilities framework (LEADS) was developed in British Columbia (BC) in 2006 to address the challenges of leading health care organizations in the 21st Century. It has since been adopted by a number of health organizations across Canada.

The LEADS Impact Study (2014-16) reviewed the experience of five health organizations that were ‘early adopters’ of LEADS. The study set out to systematically document the answers to five strategic research questions:

● Why are you using the LEADS framework?
● How are you using the LEADS framework?
● What is helping or hindering the use of the LEADS framework?
● What difference is your use of the LEADS framework making?
● How do you know that your use of the LEADS framework is making a difference?

The study was designed as an exploratory, qualitative study and used a case study approach. Data was gathered via individual interviews and focus groups at each of the five participating organizations. Organizations were invited to participate in the study based on maximizing the diversity of organization size, geography, function and approach to LEADS implementation. All participating organizations had a minimum of four years experience using the framework.

Five Health Organizations

We were pleased to successfully recruit five organizations from across Canada:

● Island Health Authority (BC)
● Alberta Health Services
● Saskatoon Health Region
● Health PEI
● Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH).

Impact of using LEADS – First Impressions

Findings indicated that LEADS was being used in a range of applications and fostering varied outcomes for both individuals and organizations.

At the individual level, LEADS:

● Supports individuals to feel more engaged and effective as leaders.
● Provides a framework that legitimates individuals’ efforts to address challenges that they identify as priorities.
● Increases efficiency in communication, including the ability to address difficult conversations.
● Encourages the linking of individual tasks to strategic health priorities through reflection, personal professional planning, performance review, and reporting.
● Enables professional development and succession planning.
● Lead Self is foundational to using other domains.

At the organizational level, LEADS:

● Provides a common language that facilitates multidisciplinary collaboration across a wide range of practice areas.
● Offers a framework that teams can use to work together to address specific tasks and strategic goals.
● Builds trust by encouraging reflection and collaboration, rather than competitiveness and inflexible controls.
● Supports succession planning and talent development programs.
● Legitimates collaboration by providing a flexible framework that transcends accountability structures without discarding them.
● Enables innovation by providing a framework that teams can use to link ideas and actions to strategic objectives.
● Provides a language for the most senior leaders to connect to leaders at all levels in the organization.
● Facilitates the achievement of strategic goals by providing common language about leadership behaviours necessary to achieve the goals.
● In some cases is stimulating a shift in leadership culture across the organization.

Adopting LEADS
The process of adopting LEADS in the study organizations began with internal discussion and consultation, typically at the executive level, but often with input from individuals or teams in talent and development departments. At Alberta Health Services (AHS), for example, after amalgamation of the regional authorities, a year was spent surveying what leadership development programs existed and comparing assets of different models. AHS has subsequently adopted the LEADS framework and it is integrated within their development programs. Health PEI, began their adoption of LEADS with an exploration of leadership development models that was led by the CEO and individuals in strategic operations and talent management. Participating organizations emphasized the importance of executive championship of LEADS and leadership development, including demonstrating capabilities and using LEADS language in the successful adoption of the framework.

Implementing LEADS
The initial exploration of whether to adopt LEADS led directly to questions of how to generate and implement LEADS offerings. A variety of approaches were used by study organizations, depending on size and existing leadership development offerings. Some approaches include:
● Mapping existing leadership development programs and courses to LEADS.
● Designing new leadership development workshops and curricula based on LEADS, including face-to-face and virtual content and processes.
● Using both cohort based and individual development approaches.
● Starting with a broad introduction to large numbers of leaders or using a targeted introduction.
● Starting at the executive level and/or starting with front line leaders.
● Introducing LEADS with CCHL workshops: Bringing LEADS to Life and/or LEADS Learning Series.
● Using LEADS 360 Assessments as a starting point to determine individual and organizational needs.
● Using LEADS 360 Assessments before and/or after learning sessions.
● Using coaching to support the introduction and use of LEADS.
● Using LEADS based action learning projects specific to the organization’s goals.
● Securing external experts or consultants to assist with implementation.
● Deepening in-house leadership development expertise in LEADS.
● Integration of LEADS into management meetings, role descriptions, performance systems, learning management systems, orientation programs and succession planning.
● Integrating LEADS capabilities as means to achieve the strategic plans of the organization.
● Introduction of LEADS to Board members.
● Development of communities of practice based on LEADS.

Next Steps
The study project team aims to complete the final report by August, 2016. The results of the study will be used to support organizations at various stages of LEADS adoption and to improve their LEADS experience.