



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

2026 Cohort

Executive Leadership in Major Projects

Program Prospectus



Invest in Project Excellence

The ELMP advantage

The John Grill Institute for Project Leadership at the University of Sydney offers an immersive and experiential Executive Leadership in Major Projects (ELMP) program. Tailored for senior project professionals, this program has transformed major projects and advanced careers.

The ELMP simplifies the challenge of leading major projects, with an emphasis on 'learning by doing'. Designed with industry and government partners and grounded in global evidence of what drives effective leadership, the program blends major project best-practice with world-class leadership excellence.

What participants gain

- Direct insights from industry and government experts who share project successes, failures, and career-defining challenges.
- Deep connections with peers engaged in major project leadership.
- Cross-sectoral expertise of how different industries conduct major projects, spanning infrastructure, transport, finance, construction, technology, mining and energy.
- Strategic mindsets that guide clarity, productivity, risk mitigation, and execution agility.
- Relational leadership skillsets that architect healthy collaboration and guide productive meaning-making across project ecosystems.
- Exploration of AI as a project resource, team member, and performance enhancer.
- Experiential practice on themes such as project success factors, stewardship of project lifecycles, explicit and implicit organisational systems, navigating human bias and risk, overcoming delivery challenges, ethical and strategic decision-making, dealing with conflict, and leading system change.
- Translation of learning into practice via coaching, mentoring, case-work, fireside chats, and an action learning project on a live project challenge.

Commencing June 2026, the ELMP is a 10-month learning journey comprising three intensive five-day residential modules, held in Sydney, interwoven with online sessions.

Our ELMP expands leadership capacity, transforms project outcomes, and positions participants to better navigate their organisations toward enduring success.

What our alumni say about the ELMP

"Returned immediate benefits to myself, my team, and my company"

"Elevated the sophistication of how I approach projects"

"Transformed my leadership"

"No other program quite like the ELMP"

"Shifted my ideas on how to harness teams and tackle issues"

"Major cost savings for my organisation"

"A unique offering in the field of complex project leadership"

"Gave me a heightened sense of self-assurance"



How the ELMP has advanced careers

How participants report improved relationships

89%

Direct Reports ↑

93%

Peers ↑

100%

Wider Stakeholders ↑

How the ELMP has impacted participants

"The program offered a thought provoking and innovative approach to contemporary leadership styles, strategic thinking and team dynamics through both a theoretical and practical learning approach. The program has undoubtedly equipped me with capabilities necessary to further my professional development with both immediate and long-term impact."

John Anderson
Regional Director
NSW Public Works

"These learnings helped shift my ideas on how to harness teams and tackle issues more innovatively, which has led to major cost savings for our organisation."

Oil and gas industry participant

"This program gave me the confidence and permission to question and challenge how I approached problems, assessed risk and prioritised my efforts to maximise impact."

Bruno Zinghini
Head of Projects
Infrastructure NSW

"There is no other program that links leadership and major projects like the ELMP. It allows you to work through project issues with peers and leaders, to come to solutions for your own projects."

Amanda Castro
Vice President of Engineering & Capital Projects
Ascend Performance Materials

"It transformed my leadership and shifted me from a transactional manager to become a more self-aware, flexible leader."

Fiona Mahoney
Senior Technology Leader



How the ELMP has transformed projects

The ELMP has achieved compelling outcomes for organisations. According to the sponsors of prior cohorts, this program helped participants become more aware, deliberate, and strategic in how they lead teams and stakeholders.

Additionally, the action learning project is designed for participants to translate their learnings into solutions and deliver substantial benefits for both the project and organisation. Some organisations report that this project has reshaped how they approached their major projects.

Past participating organisations

- ANZ
- AEC
- Ausenco
- BHP
- Infrastructure NSW
- Laing O'Rourke
- Lendlease
- Macquarie
- Microsoft
- Mirvac
- NAB
- NSW Health
- Telstra
- Transport for NSW
- Transurban
- TSA Management
- Westpac
- Woodside Energy
- Worley

Examples of project impact

PROJECT	HOW THE ELMP HELPED	PROJECT IMPACT
Reduce refurbishment costs across an organisation.	The ELMP helped establish a highly innovative approach to reduce maintenance costs.	Estimated \$200 million of savings directly attributed to the ELMP.
Strategic plan for cost effective fulfilment of organisational commitments.	The ELMP helped enable an innovative focus on collaborative engagement and transparency.	Cost avoidance of \$75 million.
Governance for a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure project.	The ELMP helped: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the development of a robust governance structure. • Apply stakeholder management tools for union negotiations. 	Project governance was significantly improved, meaning that issues arising on the project were dealt with effectively. Overall, this project came together much more seamlessly than previous examples.
Project assurance and governance process across multiple government projects.	The ELMP helped align the gating process across 120 projects. This strategic approach aligned multiple government departments with clarity and purpose.	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant reduction in governance cost. • Much better ability to monitor high risk projects and instigate early corrective action. • Saved millions.

What to expect

ELMP helps you unlearn outdated leadership models, craft an authentic leadership identity, expand your wisdom through lived experience, and apply your learning to create lasting impact on the complex projects you lead



Rethink leadership

To lead major projects today, you must let go of yesterday's playbook and unlearn to learn.

As complexity increases, so does our understanding of how to lead effectively within it. Tick-box lists of skills, behaviours, and capabilities are no longer enough. Instead, leadership needs to go 'under the hood' to explore the strategic mindsets that guide meaning-making and action. Working at this deeper level opens new ways to grasp opportunity and steer project success.

This program will elevate how you think, how you lead, and the impact you create.



Experiential practice

You will learn alongside peers engaged in major projects across multiple sectors, as well as seasoned industry figureheads who have truly 'been there, done that'.

Through immersion in insights from global major projects you will expand knowledge of themes such as AI in projects, effective governance, project lifecycle navigation, overcoming delivery challenges, ethical leadership, creating social value, dealing with conflict, and leading system change.

These dialogues will help you build a richer repertoire of solutions and sharpen your judgment of what drives success.



Leadership, your way

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' for leadership development. Instead, effective leaders craft a unique leadership identity that is authentic, credible and impactful.

In this program, you'll look inward to anchor your thinking and self-awareness, to then better lead outward with presence, authenticity, and power.

Data will guide your journey, including a pre- and post-mindset assessment, plus a deep dive into your relational skillsets.

Throughout, you will be supported by an executive coach and a mentor who have extensive executive and major project experience.



Amplify your impact

Learning and change are synonymous. Guided by our action learning philosophy, you will apply program learnings to the complex project, wicked problem, or adaptive challenge you face.

Previous participants have reported that these action learning projects not only transformed the initiatives they worked on but also reshaped how their organisations approached major projects.

Project teams will showcase the organisational impact of their work at a program close-out forum, presenting to senior industry and government figureheads.

Evidence-based and project-focused design

Grounded in the science of what works in major projects

Major project challenges

Major projects shape the future of our economy and society, yet many fail to deliver. According to the Standish Group, only 35% of projects are considered to be successful, with the remainder either wasteful with resourcing or falling short of intended benefits (Standish Group, 2024). Much time, money, and social capital is lost on poorly performing projects.

This challenge is magnified as the world shifts from classically structured organisations to a more project-based economy. By 2027, project work is expected to reach \$20 trillion in value and employ 88 million people worldwide (PMI, 2017). For major project leadership, the stakes could not be higher.

To create a better future, we must raise the performance of our major projects and project portfolios. That means better equipping leaders to prepare and respond to the unexpected, shape meaning that sustains motivation and commitment, and bring diverse stakeholders together for the journey to success.

Modern leadership thinking

Traditional leadership models, built on the belief that the future can be planned, predicted, and controlled, consistently fail in the face of modern project complexity (Whyte et al., 2022). Unfortunately, 95% of Executive Education programs follow this traditional approach (Shantz et al., 2023).

The new leadership frontier

The ELMP draws from modern science that considers leadership development as multi-dimensional (Wallace et al., 2021), with three developmental dimensions:

- **Vertical development**

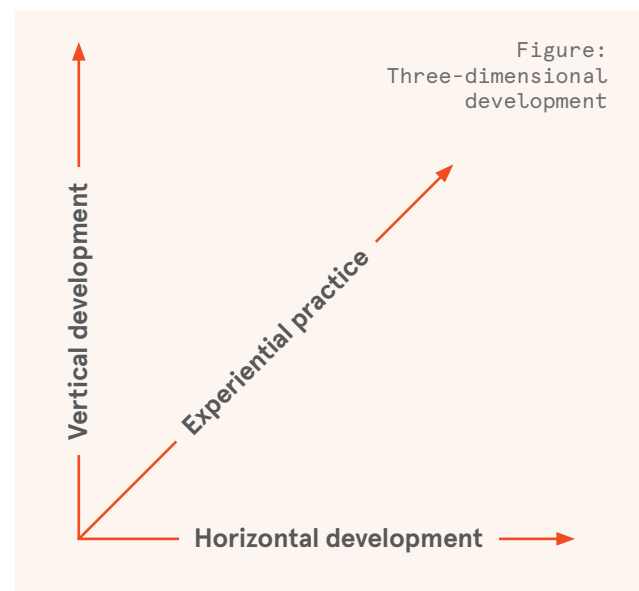
The growth of thinking beyond technical skills and toward a strategic mindset and deeper meaning-making that brings clarity to complexity.

- **Horizontal development**

Broadening the relational skills that align purpose and action across diverse teams, units, organisations, and ecosystems.

- **Experiential practice**

Learning that is directly framed on real-world challenges.



References:

Hastings, B., Gary, S., Criado-Perez, C., & Jackson, C. (2025) Relational Leadership: an approach to public service capability development. ANZSOG Leadership Series
 Project Management Institute (2017) Job Growth and Talent Gap 2017-2027
 Project Management Institute (2023) Power skills redefining project success
 Shantz A, Sayer M, Byrne J, et al. (2023) Grand Challenges and the MBA. Journal of Management Education 47(3): 292-323.
 Standish Group (2024) Chaos Report
 Wallace DM, Torres EM and Zaccaro SJ (2021) Just what do we think we are doing? Learning outcomes of leader and leadership development. The Leadership Quarterly 32(5): 101494.
 Whyte, J., Naderpajouh, N., Clegg, S., Matous, P., Pollack, J., & Crawford, L. (2022). Project leadership: A research agenda for a changing world. Project Leadership and Society, 3, 100044.

Evidence shows that leaders who develop along these three dimensions lead vastly more effective outcomes (Hastings et al., 2025; PMI, 2023). The ELMP follows this science, resulting in future-focused project leaders who deliver lasting impact.

Program aims and outcomes

Aims for participants

This program is designed to create a step-change in leadership mindset and skillset, whilst broadening your view of what drives major project success.

The aims of the ELMP program are to:

- Expand thinking by growing the strategic mindsets that bring clarity to complexity, guide delivery excellence, and promote execution agility.
- Master the art of relational leadership and learn how to mobilise collective action across teams, units, organisations, and ecosystems.
- Broaden and deepen connection with senior project practitioners across industry and government.
- Unlock progress and productivity in the projects you lead.

Outcomes for organisations

- Uplift in leadership mindset, relational skillsets, and lived-experience of participants.
- Improved leadership culture within project teams and the broader organisation.
- Benefits realisation through action learning projects, where participants work on live challenges.
- Enriched long-term stakeholder relationships with other sponsoring organisations.
- Retention of professionals with the highest growth potential and signal the importance of leadership to all project professionals in your organisation.

“The coaching element of the program has helped me understand myself better, so I can be a more effective leader and drive better project outcomes.”

Tarun Shewaram
Program Director
Westpac Group



Program modules and learning outcomes

The ELMP is a three-module learning journey that is designed as a progressive build, with each stage deepening prior insights. We begin by anchoring ourselves – developing personal awareness and resilience as a foundation of leading others. From there, we turn to the power of narrative and meaning-making to better connect and align teams, organisations, and project ecosystems. Finally, we cultivate and socialise the strategic mindsets that help amplify influence and drive change within major project systems.

	ANCHOR	ALIGN	AMPLIFY
	Explore, clarify, and regulate the inner self to better project outward presence, authenticity, influence, and power.	Unlock the mindsets that underpin human meaning-making, with the view to excel at inspiring quality collaboration across ecosystems.	Master the strategic thinking that stewards systems into the future, including innovation and change.
VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering self-awareness as a core leadership capability • Exploring your mindset development through stages and see how it shapes interactions and impact • Leveraging strengths and discomfort in leadership interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing stories and putting them to work • Attention and perspective as leadership capacities • Learning to master time • Frameworks for learning and thinking in complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex thinking and strategic meaning-making • How power works and how to work power • Working with dilemmas, polarities, and paradox • Influencing skills
HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication and presence • Going 'under the hood' of dialogue to expand influence • Practicing self-differentiated leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective wisdom through the art of dialogue • Surface and work with conflict • Leading different mindsets • 'Holding space' versus 'taking up space' in group interactions • System-wide collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting generative conversations • Unleashing emergence and innovation • Leading system change • Leading 'up and out' • Working with diverse perspectives
EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution successes and failures • Projects as a system: how structural places interact • Situating projects in broader business and political systems • Ethical view of strategy and strategic view of ethics • AI as a project resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-bias and project risk • Project culture: what's at stake? • How ethics and values help navigate complexity • Project lifecycles: staying the course • AI as a team member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nudging project ecosystems • Strategy and strategic thinking • Innovation within and between projects • Navigating project outputs and social outcomes • AI as a performance enhancer

The developmental journey

01

Pework

Vertical development assessment plus debrief
Preparation content (reading plus videos)

Online platform released

Residential (Jun)

ANCHOR

02

Explore, clarify, and regulate the inner self to better project outward presence, authenticity, influence, and power.

Weekly learning prompts throughout the program + optional coaching

03

Online (Jul – Sep)

Pod meetings
Cohort check-in + Experiential practice
Progressing leadership experiments
Coaching and mentoring

Residential (Oct)

ALIGN

04

Unlock the mindsets that underpin human meaning-making, with the view to excel at inspiring quality collaboration.

Learning prompts continue, participants work on Action Learning Projects

05

Online (Nov – Feb)

Pod meetings
Cohort check-in + Experiential practice
Progressing leadership experiments
Coaching and mentoring

Residential (Mar)

AMPLIFY

06

Master the strategic thinking that stewards systems into the future, including innovation and change.

Post program: evaluation, iteration

Learning modes

Our five modes of learning draw from pedagogical best-practice. Each mode has been co-designed by listening to industry needs, collaboration with our previous alumni and refined by an advisory committee of senior project executives from across industry and government. The result is a high-quality and relevant program that reflects current challenges and innovative practice.



Meet our team

**Bradley Hastings**

Director of Executive Education
John Grill Institute for
Project Leadership

*Decoding and teaching
leadership for 25 years*

**Nader Naderpajouh**

Head of School
School of Project Management

*Researching future horizons
of major projects*

**Alis Anagnostakis**

Founder, Facilitator & Coach
Vertical Development Institute

*Transformative growth towards
later stage consciousness*

**Juliano Denicol**

Professor
University College London

*Globally recognised expert in
megaproject excellence*

**Shawn Callahan**

Founder
Anecdote

Putting stories to work

**Katie O'Keeffe**

Co-Founder
Structured Creative

*Triathlete turned team-
performance expert*

**Mike Rollo**

Practitioner and Researcher
WatermanBurns

*Deliverer and researcher of
mega and giga projects*

**Nicole Scurrah**

Founder
Create advisory

*30 years designing and
delivering complex projects*

**Kevin Lowe**

Professor of Leadership
University of Sydney

*Senior leadership researcher
and facilitator*

**Kevin McCann**

Chairman of the Board
Telix Pharmaceuticals Limited

*Seasoned board member and
transformative leader*

**Graeme Newton**

Chief Executive Officer
Cross River Rail

*Large, complex, and high profile
infrastructure projects*

**Camilla Drover**

Deputy Secretary
Transport for NSW

*Public sector enabler of livable,
vibrant places*



John Grill Institute for Project Leadership advantage

John Grill, Founder and former CEO of resources and energy services firm, Worley, is the patron of the John Grill Institute for Project Leadership.

Our Institute is shaping the next century of major projects by advancing breakthrough research into project leadership across the areas of governance, methodology, social processes, sustainability, and artificial intelligence.

Our diverse field of research aims to explore the reasons behind these phenomena, many of which can largely be attributed to increasing project complexity, and a limited human capacity to make decisions under uncertainty.

Strong collaboration with industry, the Faculty of Engineering, and other University bodies creates a powerful, experienced team to deliver the ELMP.

“Collaboration with industry, government and academia to support the success of major projects and solutions for society is imperative.”

John Grill

Chair

John Grill Institute for Project Leadership



Who should apply

About you

- A major project practitioner with at least 10 years' relevant experience.
- Supported by an organisation sponsor.
- Curious to expand your ability to navigate the systems that you operate, through a deeper understanding of the complex technical, cultural, power, and political dynamics of human interaction.
- Willing to step out of traditional leadership paradigms and explore cutting edge thinking.

The investment

- Time commitment:
 - 3 x 5-day residential modules
 - 1-hour per week online learning
 - Pre-reading and project work
- Program fee: \$45,000 AUD plus GST, includes accommodation and meals (travel not included).

How to apply

Applications


Interested candidates are encouraged to complete an application form, including a short leadership statement.


Candidates will be invited to an interview.

As places are limited, we recommend applying early.

Apply here:



 short-courses.sydney.edu.au/course/ELMP

 For questions or a 1-1 chat:
john-grill.institute@sydney.edu.au



Why the University of Sydney?

The University of Sydney is consistently ranked in the top 50 universities globally and one of the best universities in Australia. It has been challenging traditions for 175 years as well as producing leaders who serve our communities and advance society at every level.

We are a leading, comprehensive research and teaching community. Through critical analysis, the latest thinking and active contribution to public debate, the University helps shape Australia's national and international agenda.

Alumni

The University of Sydney has more than 400,000 alumni in Australia and around the world.

Applicants for this program will automatically join the John Grill Institute for Project Leadership alumni, together with globally leading project professionals from infrastructure, energy, mining, health, telecommunications, construction, and finance.

World Rankings

No. 25

IN THE WORLD ON
THE 2026 QS WORLD
UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

No. 01

IN AUSTRALIA ON THE
2025 -2026 US NEWS BEST
GLOBAL UNIVERSITIES

Other World Rankings That Matter

No. 29

IN THE WORLD ON THE
2025 - 2026 US NEWS BEST
GLOBAL UNIVERSITIES

No. 61

IN THE WORLD ON THE
WORLD UNIVERSITY
RANKINGS





THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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