THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

2027 Cohort

Executive Leadership in Major Projects

Program Prospectus



John Grill Institute for Project Leadership

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The ELMP advantage

The John Grill Institute for Project Leadership offers a program built for the particular demands of executive leadership in major projects. This is a program with proven impact. Over 90% of alumni have been promoted or expanded their role, and participants have applied their learning inside live projects to bring multi-billion-dollar work back on track and deliver several hundred million dollars of benefit.

The ELMP is designed with industry and government partners and grounded in global evidence of what drives effective leadership. It simplified the challenge of executive leadership of major projects, with an emphasis on `learning by doing'.

Running from May 2027 to March 2028, the ELMP is an 11-month learning journey comprising three intensive five-day residential modules, held in Sydney, interwoven with online sessions.

Designed with industry

We asked chief executives and board members of major project organisations what leadership their projects most need. These insights frame the ELMP:

> *"Better decision-making in uncertainty."*
> **CEO, major project organisation**

> *"How to lead with AI."*
> **CEO, global energy project company**

> *"Leaders who take an active role in shaping the environment that they operate in."*
> **Board member, delivery organisation**

> *"Rapidly make sense of the everyday, while horizon scanning for the longer term."*
> **CEO, infrastructure organisation**

What participants gain

- Direct insights from industry and government experts who share project successes, failures, and career-defining challenges.
- Deep connection and cross-sectoral expertise of how different industries conduct major projects, spanning infrastructure, transport, finance, construction, technology, mining and energy.
- Strategic mindsets to better navigate political and commercial decision-making, generating clarity, productivity and execution agility.
- Relational leadership skillsets that architect healthy collaboration and guide productive meaning-making across project ecosystems.
- Experience AI as a project resource, team member, and performance enhancer.
- Translation of learning into practice via coaching, mentoring, case-work, fireside chats, and an action learning project on a live project challenge.

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

90% of alumni have been promoted or expanded their role



How the ELMP has impacted participants

"The energy of the group is so exciting. This program differentiates itself from other traditional executive programs by exploring the leadership that's essential in today's environment and the pressures of major capital projects."

Project Director, Mining

"It's been insanely rewarding, interacting with a really diverse group of peers from around the world and from very different industries."

Executive Project Director

"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

"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

"The experience was truly magnificent, filled with rich discussions, challenging conversations, and endless opportunities to deepen our understanding of systems leadership, project ecosystems, and transformational change."

Edmore Hamandishe
Head of Capital Projects (Mining)

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 project 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. Organisations report that this project has reshaped how they approached their major projects.

Past participating organisations

- ANZ
- AEC
- BHP
- Infrastructure NSW
- Laing O'Rourke
- Lendlease
- Macquarie
- Martinus Rail
- Microsoft
- Mirvac
- NAB
- NSW Health
- PNG Ports
- Telstra
- Transport for NSW
- Transurban
- Westpac
- Woodside Energy
- Valterra Platinum
- 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: • 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: • Significant reduction in governance cost. • Much better ability to monitor high risk projects and instigate early corrective action. • Saved millions.

What is unique about the ELMP

The ELMP stands out from traditional leadership development.

The unique combination of complexity, political decision-making and stakeholder alignment means that leadership of major projects is a capacity challenge, rather than a skills challenge. We upgrade the leader — expanding mindset, enhancing capacity, and growing resilience — rather than teaching a bunch of skills or frameworks that sit on the shelf.



Capacity, not frameworks

The ELMP grows leadership capacity. We work on your inner game, so that you can lead outward with clarity and purpose — engaging complexity, systems sense-making, system stewardship, collective action, and building political and relational intelligence.

Participants leave with a fresh leadership identity and the capacity to lead the complex challenges of modern major projects.



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.



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.

Evidence-based and project-focused design

Grounded in the science of what works in major projects

The project challenge

Major projects shape the future of our economy and society, yet very few deliver what they set out to do. Across a database of more than 16,000 projects spanning 20-plus project types and 136 countries, 8.5% came in on time and on budget. Just 0.5% came in on time, on budget, and on benefits (Flyvbjerg & Gardner, 2023). Much time, money, and social capital rides on the difference.

The leadership challenge

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).

This points to three directions of leadership:

- **Leading up** — navigating complex and uncertain political and commercial decision-making.
- **Leading out** — aligning complex project ecosystems and stakeholders, including communities.

Most project leadership programs concentrate on leading down, the direction least associated with major project failure. Evidence shows that the common failure modes are leading up and out - which receive far less attention. The ELMP is built for that gap. We assume participants know the mechanics of project delivery, and focus almost exclusively on how to lead up and out.

How ELMP participants report improved relationships

89%	93%	100%
Leading down Direct Reports ↑	Leading out Peers ↑	Leading up Wider Stakeholders ↑

The developmental solution

The ELMP adds vertical development: an approach that builds the strategic mindset and leadership capacity to navigate decision-making and align broad ecosystems.

The program 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.

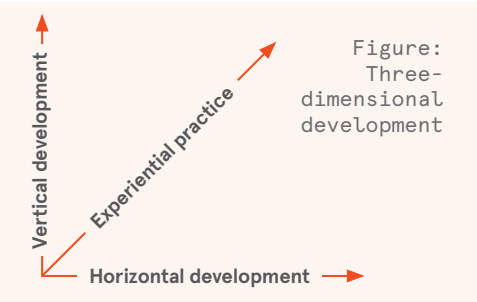

Figure: Three-dimensional development

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.

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Shantz A, Sayer M, Byrne J, et al. (2023) Grand Challenges and the MBA. Journal of Management Education 47(3): 292-323.
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.

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 designed as a progressive build, with each stage deepening prior insights. We begin by anchoring ourselves, developing personal awareness and resilience as the foundation of leading others. From there we amplify, unlocking the mindsets that shift systems and align teams, organisations and project ecosystems. Finally we architect, cultivating the strategic mindsets that shape culture, grow innovation, and steward major project systems into the future.

	ANCHOR	AMPLIFY	ARCHITECT
	Explore, clarify, and regulate the inner self to better project outward presence, authenticity, influence, and power.	Unlock the mindsets that shift the system, creating productive change that advances positive outcomes for all.	Craft the culture, innovation and change that major projects depend on, and steward project systems into the future.
VERTICAL DEVELOPMENT	· 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 · Working with dilemmas, polarities, and paradox	· Enhancing stories and putting them to work · Attention and perspective as leadership capacities · Frameworks for learning and thinking in complexity	· Complex thinking and strategic meaning-making · How power works and how to work power · Learning to master time · Influencing skills
HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT	· Clear communication and presence · Going 'under the hood' of dialogue to expand influence · Practicing self-differentiated leadership	· Hosting generative conversations · Unleashing emergence and innovation · Leading system change · Leading 'out' · Working with diverse perspectives	· Growing strategic leadership mindsets · System-wide collaboration · Nudging project ecosystems · Leading 'up'
EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICE	· 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 · AI as a performance enhancer	· Collective wisdom through the art of dialogue · Surface and work with conflict · Leading different mindsets · 'Holding space' versus 'taking up space' in group interactions · AI as a system transformation enabler	· 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 · Strategy and strategic thinking · Innovation within and between projects · Navigating project outputs and social outcomes

The developmental journey



project-leadership-eng.sydney.edu.au

Learning modes

Our six 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



Alis Anagnostakis
Founder, Facilitator & Coach
Vertical Development Insitute

Transformative growth towards later stage conciousness



Josephine O'Reilly
Facilitator
University of Sydney

Communication, presence and improvisation



Joan Lurie
Founder
Orgonomics

Breaking free from stuck patterns



Shawn Callahan
Founder
Anecdote

Putting stories to work



Hannah Clement
Executive Director

How the ELMP helped my career



Camilla Drover
Chief Executive
Sydney Metro

Public sector enabler of livable, vibrant places



Peter Meurs
Retired project steward

Disrupting project systems and assumptions



Graeme Newton
Chief Executive Officer
Cross River Rail

Large, complex, and high profile infrastructure projects



Mary Lou Maher
Professor
University of Sydney

AI literacy and human-AI interaction






SYDNEY







John Grill Institute for Project Leadership advantage

John Grill AO, founder and former CEO of Worley, the resources and energy services firm, is the chair of the John Grill Institute for Project Leadership.

Our Institute is shaping the future of major project leadership by advancing research and translating best practice across governance, methodology, social processes, sustainability, and artificial intelligence.

Our diverse field of research aims to explore the reasons behind project success and failure, 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.



Who should apply

About you

- A major project practitioner with at least 20 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: $46,500 AUD, includes accommodation and meals (travel not included).

How to apply

Applications

The 2026 cohort was filled.
We recommend applying early for 2027.

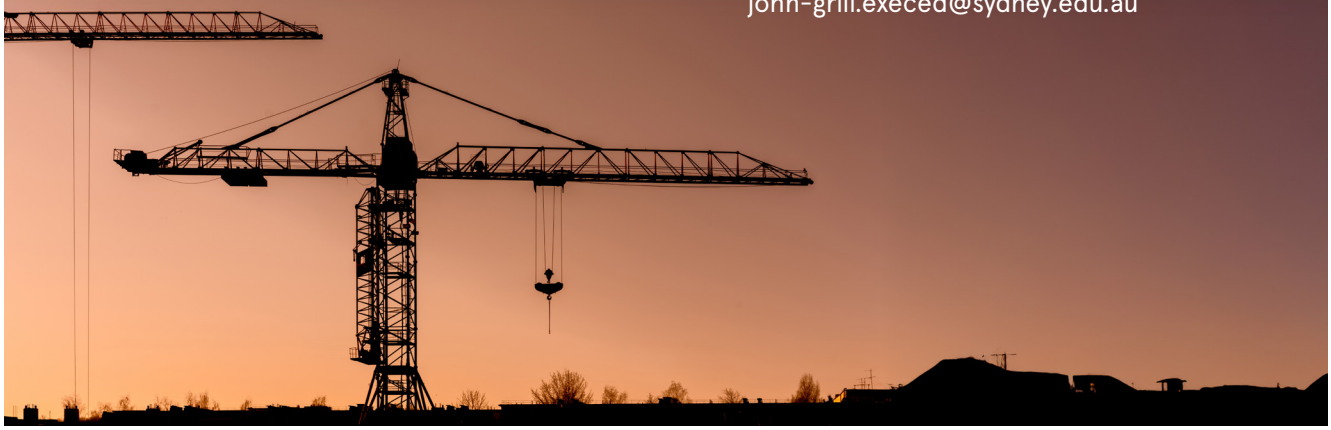
Interested candidates are encouraged to complete an application form, including a short leadership statement.

Candidates will be invited to an interview.

Apply here:

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

For questions or a 1-1 chat:
john-grill.execed@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 176 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 450,000 alumni in Australia and around the world.

Participants of 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. 28

IN THE WORLD ON THE 2027 QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

No. 02

IN AUSTRALIA, US NEWS BEST GLOBAL UNIVERSITIES 2026-2027



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