



Typical Frontline Leader Tasks

Ability First Australia has partnered with the Department of Social Services to undertake a project that defines the role, competencies, and capabilities of the Frontline Leader. Spread over 4 stages, and scheduled for completion by June 2021, we anticipate this project will have a profound impact on the long-term viability of the NDIS: facilitating career pathways, informing recruitment practices, and increasing capacity for leaders to be successful in their roles.

FRONTLINE LEADERSHIP ROLE CLARITY PROJECT: A PATHWAY TO ATTRACTING, RETAINING AND GROWING A SKILLED NDIS WORKFORCE.

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has brought significant change to providers, workers and participants in the disability sector.

As part of these changes, the roles and responsibilities for the Frontline Leader and many other positions in provider organisations have changed considerably. Frontline Leaders are essentially staff in a provider organisation who directly manage/lead the delivery of services by Disability Support Workers (DSW's) and associated frontline staff.

Ability First Australia (Ability First) and its members believe that investment in frontline leadership is crucial to the long-term viability and success of the NDIS. In 2019, Ability First was funded through the Department of Social Services' NDIS Jobs and Market Fund to undertake a project to define the role, capacity and capabilities of the Frontline Leader to inform organisation and job design, recruitment practices and training methodology. The project has four stages and it will be completed by June 2021.

THE FIRST STAGE of the project documents the "Current State" role for the Frontline Leader. This document is one of six resources on the "Current State" published on the Ability First website:

- Project background
- Major changes since the NDIS was introduced
- Current daily, weekly and adhoc tasks of Frontline Leaders
- Participant and carer views on their interactions with Frontline Leaders
- Frontline Leaders views on how their role will change in the future
- Generic position description for the Frontline Leader

THE SECOND STAGE of the project will include developing a Position Description for the future Frontline Leader role as well as a Capability Framework. There will also be tools developed to help Frontline Leaders assess any skills and knowledge development that will be needed as their role evolves.

THE THIRD STAGE of this project will focus on developing a series of online tools as well as a career and training framework for Frontline Leaders. These tools will be tested by a number of providers before they are publicly released as part of stage four. A series of resources will be published on the [Ability First website](#) throughout the life of the project.



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The project team sought to identify the percentages and main activities currently undertaken by Frontline Leaders. The purpose of this exercise was to better understand how Frontline Leaders invest their time during a typical week or month and how this might change in the future.



How we collected the data

In order to collect this data a proforma was developed and distributed to Frontline Leaders. The instructions for completion of the proforma required that respondents indicate if the task was performed every day, weekly or less frequently (ad hoc). For the adhoc tasks they also were requested to list the number of times or days it was undertaken per year. The percentage of time was also collected but the completed responses did not always provide these details in the form requested.

As there were only a small number of responses received, this data can only provide indicators of typical activities. Having said this, there were a number of consistent responses that provide some confidence that our findings may represent a larger number of Frontline Leaders working in the Disability sector.

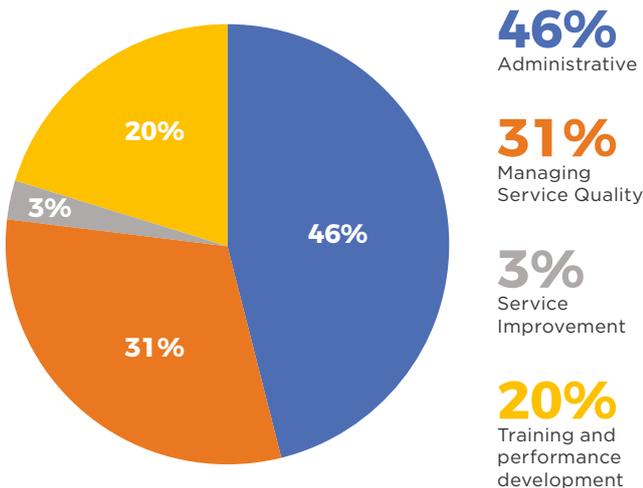
The project team has now developed an online survey so that a larger number of Frontline Leaders can contribute their daily, weekly and adhoc tasks. We would encourage Frontline Leaders to come back and enter their tasks every six months as this will help the team to identify more accurately the typical tasks of Frontline Leaders as well as how that changes over the coming year.



Image credit: Multicap

Most frequently reported Daily tasks

As was expected the top activities reflect the focus on operational tasks for Frontline Leaders. The results have been grouped into four categories and these are Administrative, Managing Service Quality, Service Improvement and Training and Performance Management.



The time reported for undertaking administrative tasks ranged from 35% to more than 60% of Frontline Leader hours.

The major administrative tasks include:

- General administrative tasks including answering emails, filing etc
- Routine reporting
- Rostering staff and responding to the changing needs of staff
- Approving timesheets, managing leave and absences
- Supporting volunteers and community members
- Resolving conflict and escalating issues to managers
- Assisting with organisational change
- Marketing services to participants

The major service quality tasks include:

- Ensuring service delivery meet or exceed service delivery standards
- Ensuring the team maintains accurate participant records
- Responding to participant and staff complaints
- Meeting with participants, carers and their family members
- Writing reports required by NDIS

The major training and development tasks include:

- Providing support to team members
- Sharing knowledge and information with staff
- Developing skills of team members
- Ensuring training and compliance requirements are met.
- Managing performance of team members.
- Attending training for individual skills development

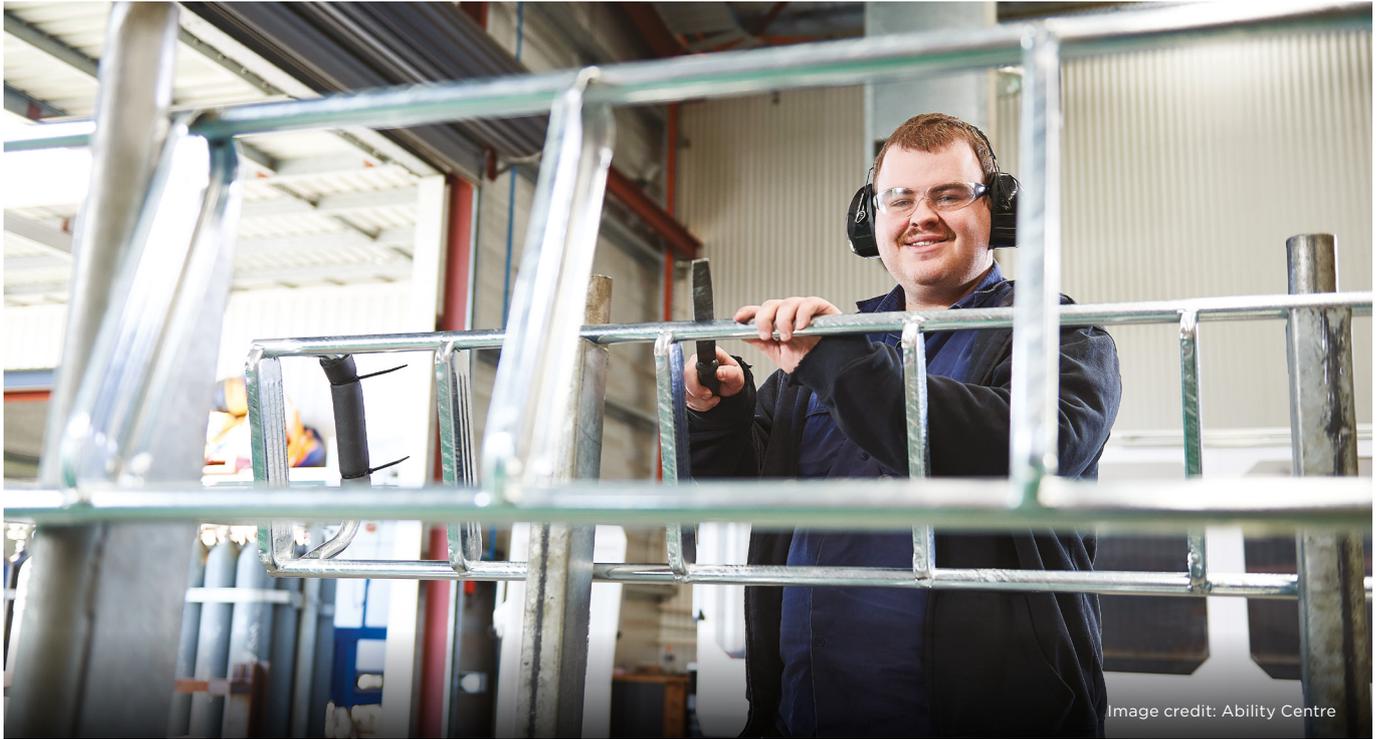
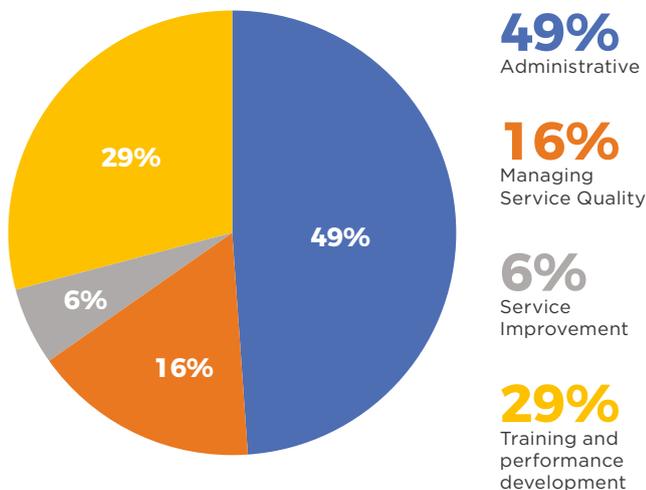


Image credit: Ability Centre

Most frequently reported Weekly tasks

The most frequently reported weekly tasks were again predominantly responding to and managing operational issues. These include approving timesheets and leave applications, responding to participant and staff complaints, and managing service continuity where staff are unavailable. The provision of support, developing skills of staff and management of performance is also a common task for Frontline Leaders.



The major weekly administrative tasks include:

- Responding to the changing needs of staff
- Managing team budgets
- Approving timesheets, managing leave and absences
- Resolving conflict and escalating issues to managers
- Assisting with organisational change
- Marketing services to participants

The major weekly service quality tasks include:

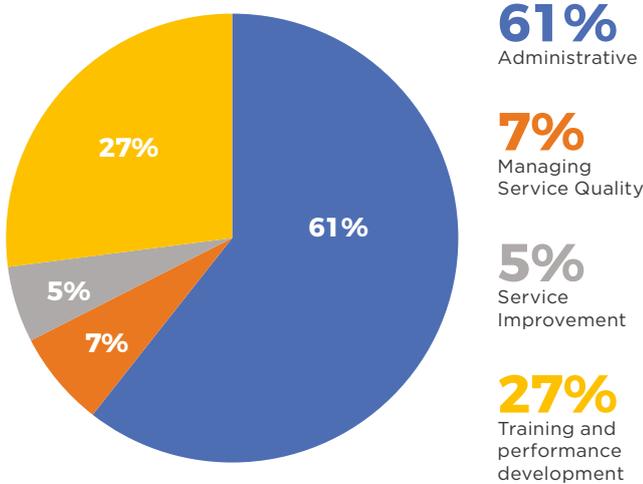
- Ensuring service delivery meet or exceed service delivery standards
- Ensuring the team maintains accurate participant records
- Responding to participant and staff complaints

The major weekly training and development tasks include:

- Providing support to team members
- Developing skills of team members
- Ensuring training and compliance requirements are met.
- Managing performance of team members.
- Attending training for individual skills development

Most frequently reported Adhoc tasks

Most of the frequently reported adhoc tasks were related to operational tasks, and this included recruitment of new staff, managing performance, resolving conflict in the workplace, marketing services to customers and ensuring that training and compliance standards are met. The non-operational tasks reported as adhoc included managing change with their team, assisting with the development of business strategy and identifying areas for improvement.



The major adhoc administrative tasks include:

- Assisting with recruitment
- Resolving conflict in the workplace
- Assisting with organisational change
- Marketing services to participants
- Assisting with the development of the business strategy

The major adhoc service quality tasks include:

- Ensuring the team maintains accurate participant records
- Responding to participant and staff complaints

The major adhoc training and development tasks include:

- Developing the skills of team members
- Ensuring that training and compliance requirements are met.
- Managing the performance of team members.
- Attending training for individual skills development

A comparison of tasks shows that a number of the weekly tasks have also been reported as adhoc tasks. This highlights the difference between the roles and responsibilities of current Frontline Leaders in different organisations. The tasks that appeared as weekly or adhoc by Frontline Leaders were:

- Identifying areas for improvement and implementing improvements
- Marketing services to customers
- Resolving conflict in the workplace
- Managing performance of team members



Image credit: Ability Centre



The last two weekly tasks suggest that not all Frontline Leaders have direct responsibility for workers in their workplace, and that organisations are likely to have quite different organisational structures. The first two weekly tasks most likely represents the evolution of Frontline Leader roles in different organisations, where Frontline Leaders who listed these as weekly have a greater accountability for the financial performance of their team and the quality of services being delivered.

It is interesting to note that managing budgets was listed by less than 30% of the Frontline Leaders as a weekly or adhoc task.

Image credit: Multicap



Comparison with an earlier study

The project team were fortunate to be able to review a recent time and motion study undertaken by an Ability First member organisation. The study included roles that included the Frontline Leader and was completed by 40 staff.

The study found that the main tasks were:

- **Customer Service coordination** - Includes activities related to life/transition planning, training in planning and plan management, direct management of client issues such as crisis management, medical/specialist appointments, discussions with HLO, housing, guardians, MASS, equipment issues etc;
- **Compliance activities** - Includes, but not limited to, updating of customer files, forms, PIFs, medication chart / care plan reviews, WH&S safety checks;
- **Rostering** - Includes roosting activities: talking with shift fill, shift fill, management of no shows to shift, requests for changes to shifts, entering requests into portal and updating of records;
- **Compliance activities (organisational requirements)** - Includes all miscellaneous administration such as audit, WHS, customer packages as well as following up, and conducting investigations;
- **Day-to-day staff recruitment management and development** - Includes staff enquiries, arranging mandatory training, performance appraisals, timesheet approval, change of contracts, performance management, recruitment, general staff issues.

The analysis of hours and percentage of total time per day spent on each activity was as follows:

- Their Frontline Leaders spent more than 50% of their total time per day on service coordination and staffing related tasks
- Rostering tasks varied between 5 - 25% of their total time per day depending on their role.
- Compliance tasks were undertaken by all Frontline Leaders but the percentage of time varied.
- The day to day staff tasks was typically 12 - 25% of their total time per day.

What this means for Providers

The task analysis has suggested that a substantial proportion of the Frontline Leaders working hours are currently associated with administrative and rostering tasks. In addition, there are a number of working hours required for compliance and reporting activities.

The future Frontline Leader role is likely to have substantially more engagement with participants, management of service quality, development and management of frontline staff, marketing and managing the financial performance of teams. These activities will require a substantial reduction in administrative and compliance tasks and therefore providers will need to review how many of these tasks can be reengineered or reallocated to free up the required time for the future activities.

In addition, the future Frontline Leader is likely to require a higher level of training and skill development so they will require additional time to undertake a higher level of personal development.

What this means for Participants

The likely shift in Frontline Leader tasks should enable greater contact between participants and Frontline Leaders. As their future role evolves, the Frontline Leader will enable participants to realise additional benefits such as improved service quality, access to more highly trained staff, as well as improved NDIS knowledge and a greater range of service options.

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How can a Frontline Leader contribute to this project?

The most valuable way to contribute to this project would be to invest some time to complete the Frontline Leader task survey. The survey and the instructions for completing the survey can be accessed at www.abilityfirstaustralia.org.au.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

please visit www.abilityfirstaustralia.org.au
or email: info@abilityfirstaustralia.org.au

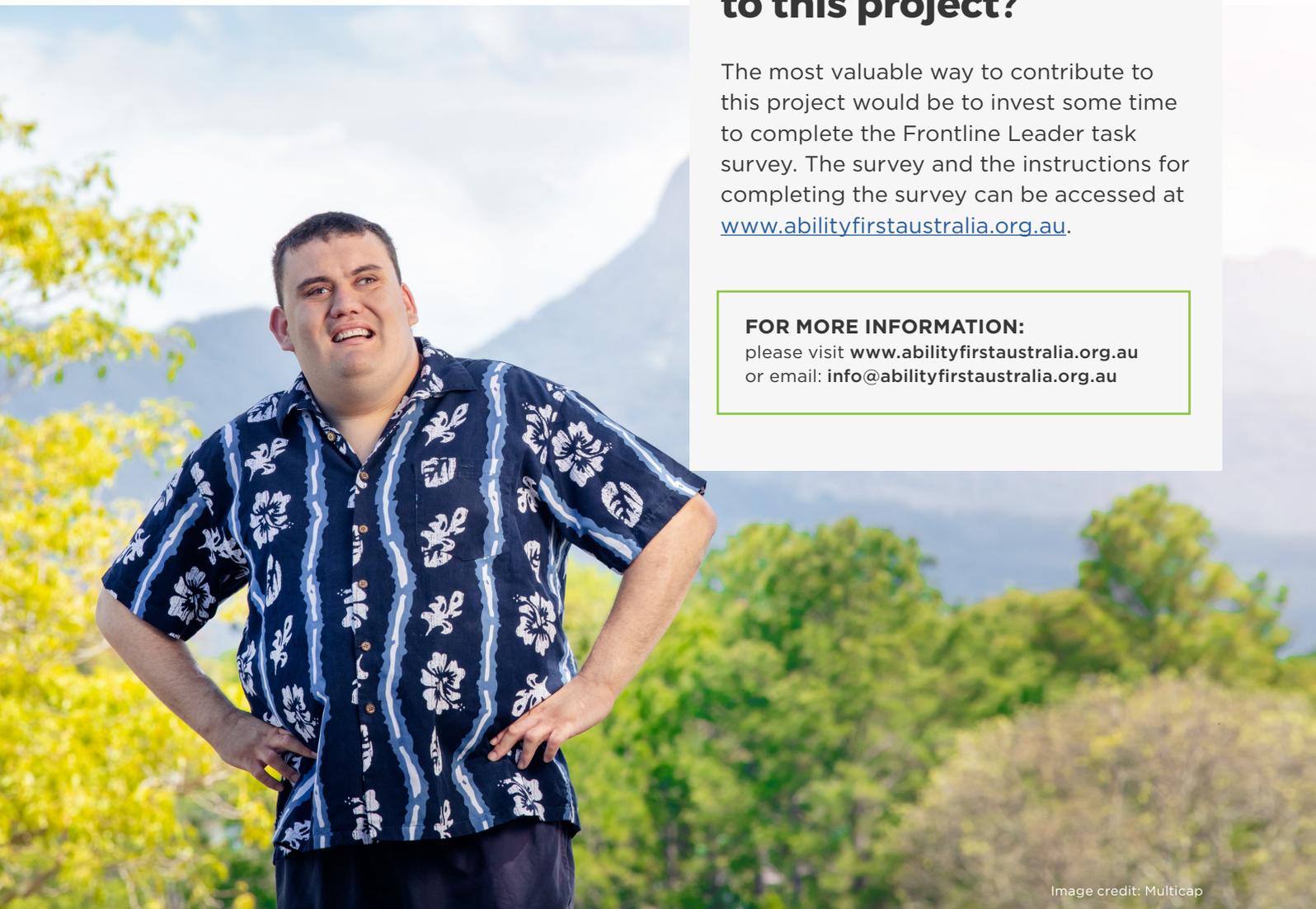


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