

COMPETENCIES, CAPABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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In leading and managing health, aged and social care organisations and systems professionals need to be able to rely on ongoing effective learning and knowledge attainment. Irrespective of the role, function, experience or practice of individual leaders and managers, such a commitment is about growth and development personally and professionally. The competencies – capabilities – development capacity continuum requires an ongoing commitment.

Competencies form foundational elements of knowledge, behaviours and attitudes that enable leaders and managers to perform effectively and with impact [1]. Leadership and management capabilities relate to doing in the context of value-based leadership [2]. Competence is an opportunistic focus on what leaders do while capabilities articulate or emphasise how leaders respond and evolve in the dynamic environments of healthcare. Individuals develop unique, appropriate and proportionate learning and development pathways and use approaches. These can be aligned with their organisations goals; leadership framework; and is the necessity to evolve capabilities with emerging work and policy challenges; as well as demand for renovation in dynamic health environments.

Opportunities are available and can be created for health leaders and managers to develop and sustain their individual professional development capacity through initiatives like reflective practice and formal evaluation; action learning and work-based strategic projects and initiatives; formal tertiary and professional learning; structured executive coaching and leadership development programs; as well as participating in peer learning networks and forums. Various strategies relate to personal interest, time availability and also opportunities and work-life balance.

In 2024 the Australasian College of Health Service Management (ACHSM) undertook a review of College members and colleagues experience, thoughts and requirements around professional growth and development. Respondents identified a series of professional challenges (Table 1) that highlighted significant operational, strategic and sustainability issues that have an impact on consumers, workforces, organisations and themselves personally. These involved resources and funding; high administrative procedural burdens; workload and time management; workforce recruitment and retention; adapting to communications; and the necessity for high quality consistent care delivery.

A useful approach, either individually or collectively, to complex challenging issues is the application of *Sandbox* learning and development. *Sandbox* is relatively safe, low risk approach enabling experimentation, the testing of ideas and the application of new knowledge in the context of real-world outcomes and impact. The methods foster agility and creativity enabling confidence. Such pressures are useful in terms of adaptive leadership and systems thinking in complex organisations. *Sandbox* has been used in health environments and complex problems [3]. *Sandbox* differs from Action Learning and Learning Sets in that it is about developing behavioural agility and adaptive leadership through deliberate prototyping and iteration - focusing on new leadership behaviours. Such an approach might be useful in dealing with complex and challenging professional issues and responsibilities as it affords the opportunity to engage in experimental leadership development initiatives and to test new strategies.

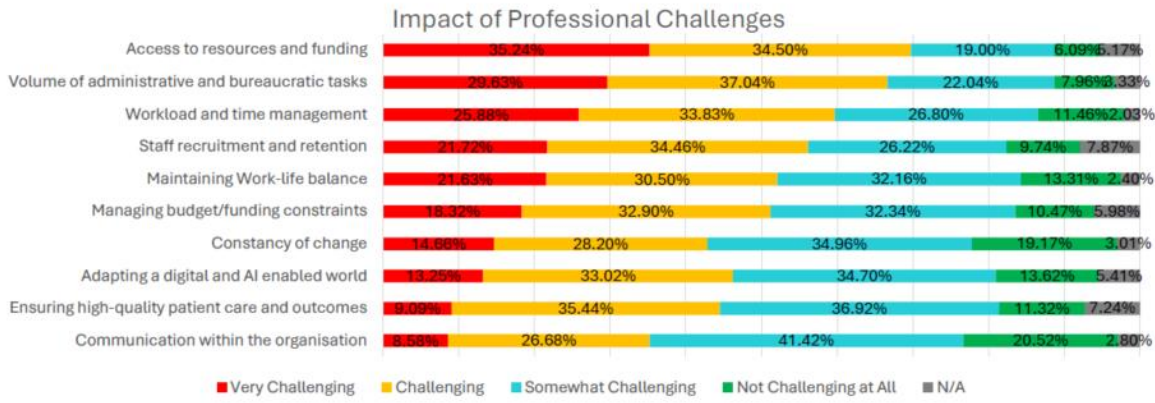


Table 1: ACHSM Top 10 Impact of Professional Challenges to Members and Colleagues Respondents - Stakeholder Research Report by Belinda Moore October, 2024

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