

# **Review of SRDC Travel and Learning Opportunity Projects**

Prepared for



**Australian Government**

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**Sugar Research and Development Corporation**

April 2006

Prepared by



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## Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 THE TRAVEL AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM.....	4
1.2 FIT OF TLOPS WITH SRDC .....	4
<b>2 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK &amp; METHODS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3 PROGRAM INPUTS AND PERFORMANCE.....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 INVESTMENT .....	8
3.2 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT.....	9
3.2.1 Promotion and awareness .....	11
<b>4 PROGRAM OUTPUTS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 FUNDED PROJECTS.....	12
4.1.1 Regional distribution.....	12
4.1.2 TLOP recipients, participants and other beneficiaries .....	13
4.1.3 Types of projects .....	17
4.1.4 Intended outcomes .....	19
4.1.5 Issues addressed by projects.....	19
4.1.6 Who benefits?.....	22
4.2 PROJECT PERFORMANCE .....	22
<b>5 KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND NETWORKS GAINED .....</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS.....	29
<b>6 ACTIONS RESULTING AFTER THE TLOPS.....</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 KNOWLEDGE SHARING .....	31
6.2 INFORMATION SEEKING, TRIALS AND ACTIVITIES .....	31
6.3 NETWORKS ENACTED .....	32
<b>7 ENDURING CHANGE.....</b>	<b>34</b>
7.1 CHANGE IN PRACTICE .....	34
7.2 CAPACITY BUILDING.....	35
<b>8 CONTRIBUTION OF TLOPS TO SRDC'S INTENDED OUTCOMES.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>9 PERCEPTIONS OF THE TLOP PROGRAM.....</b>	<b>40</b>
9.1 PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE PROGRAM .....	40
9.2 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION .....	42
9.3 IDENTIFIED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.....	45
9.4 SUPPORT FOR ONGOING INVESTMENT IN TLOPS.....	47
9.4.1 Targeting TLOP funds .....	48
<b>10 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>11 WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING?.....</b>	<b>52</b>

11.1	INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES .....	52
11.2	OTHER AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIES.....	53
11.3	TARGETED TRAVEL .....	54
<b>12</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>56</b>
12.1	INVESTMENT .....	56
12.2	CLEAR OBJECTIVES .....	56
12.3	PROJECT MANAGEMENT .....	57
12.4	PROJECT LEADERSHIP .....	58
12.5	COMMUNICATION .....	58
12.6	OTHER OPPORTUNITIES .....	59
<b>13</b>	<b>APPENDIX 1 - BENEFITS OF PROJECTS.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>APPENDIX 2 – REASONS PEOPLE WILL APPLY FOR A TLOP AGAIN.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>APPENDIX 3 CASE STUDIES.....</b>	<b>67</b>

## FIGURES

Figure 1	Framework for the evaluation of SRDC's TLOP program.....	6
Figure 2	Distribution of SRDC funding and other contributions to TLOPs over time .....	9
Figure 3	Means by which project leaders became aware of the travel and learning opportunity program.....	11
Figure 4	Regional distribution of TLOPs .....	13
Figure 5	Number of projects that involve participant types.....	14
Figure 6	Types of learning opportunities undertaken in TLOPs .....	17
Figure 7	Travel destinations* .....	19
Figure 8	Number of TLOPs that address each type of issue.....	20
Figure 9	Broad classes of issues addressed by TLOPs.....	21
Figure 10	Further break down of issues addressed by TLOPs from each region .....	21
Figure 11	Scope of benefits from TLOPs .....	22
Figure 12	Project leaders' views of the most significant impacts of TLOPs.....	26
Figure 13	Proportionate benefits from each type of project .....	26
Figure 14	Increase and relevance of learnings as a result of a TLOP .....	27
Figure 15	Details of the responses about increase in, and relevance of, learnings.....	28
Figure 16	Influence of undertaking TLOPs on the leader's project management skills .....	30
Figure 17	Contributions of TLOPs towards SRDC outcomes (average of estimates made by project leaders).....	38
Figure 18	Project leaders' overall perceptions of the TLOP program .....	41

## TABLES

Table 1 Distribution of TLOP funding over time .....	8
Table 2 Recipients of TLOPs .....	16
Table 3 Proportion of SRDC TLOP funds allocated to travel .....	18
Table 4 Number of projects that have submitted final reports .....	23
Table 5 Changes made as a result of each travel and learning opportunity.....	36
Table 6 Industry stakeholders' perceptions of the benefits of TLOPs .....	42
Table 7 Identified areas for improvement .....	45
Table 8 Perspectives about who TLOPs should be targeted towards .....	49
Table 9 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the TLOP program .....	51

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**Acronyms Used**

BSES	BSES Ltd (formerly the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
SRDC	Sugar Research and Development Corporation
TLOP	Travel and Learning Opportunity Project
R&D	Research and Development

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**HASSALL & ASSOCIATES PTY LTD (Inc in NSW)**  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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<b>Review of TLOP</b>	<p>The Sugar Research and Development Corporation (SRDC) engaged Hassall &amp; Associates to undertake a review of the travel and learning opportunity projects (TLOP) funded by SRDC since 2002/03. This program provides the opportunity for industry members to apply for funds (up to \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for a group) to undertake a targeted activity or travel, in order to build their capacity for leadership, learning and/or change.</p> <p>The review was undertaken over the period November 2006 to April 2007 by means of a desktop review of proposals and reports, a survey and interviews of project recipients, case studies with other participants, and interviews and focus groups with a range of other industry stakeholders.</p>
<b>Investment of \$703,544 in 108 projects over 5 years</b>	<p>SRDC has invested \$703,544 in 108 TLOPs in the five years from 2002/03 to 2006/07. This review has looked at the 91 projects that were funded up until the first round of the 2006/07 projects; the remaining projects had not been confirmed at the time of analysis.</p>
<b>44% of projects involve growers</b>	<p>44% of projects involved growers or grower groups. Most of these projects also involved, or were led by, extension staff. Almost a third of the projects involved researchers. Some projects have been specifically for millers and harvesters, but generally these groups have not been major participants in the program.</p>
<b>Tours dominate the activities</b>	<p>The most popular form of travel and learning opportunity has been tours within Australia to visit another canegrowing region or another industry. Conference attendance and provision of training has also been popular. Hosting conferences or invited specialists has been less common.</p>
<b>New thinking and networks are major outcomes</b>	<p>TLOPs are successful in expanding participants' horizons, by exposing them to new ideas or ways of thinking. They are valued as a way of providing a first hand experience. They have also helped to build networks – often amongst the participants in the TLOP as well as with others outside of the region or industry. Some have led to changes in farming practice, while others have led to changes in the way people think, interact or plan.</p>
<b>Limited communication</b>	<p>Communication of the program and of the funded projects has been a major weakness of the program. Although some projects are active in communicating within their region, after most TLOPs there is relatively little sharing of the knowledge gained, particularly across regions.</p>
<b>Perceptions</b>	<p>Almost all people who have been involved in a TLOP think they are a great initiative. Others are generally supportive of the concept but sceptical as to whether real value is being gained.</p>
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>The strengths of the existing program lie in that it builds networks and confidence, broadens minds, brings new thinking, provides participants with a first hand experience and stimulates a willingness to change. Projects can increase the rate of change. The program's flexibility allows people and groups to investigate issues that are important to them in a timely manner. SRDC's input and assistance (in particular from former SRDC program manager Tracy Henderson) has been appreciated by many applicants.</p>

- Weaknesses** The major weaknesses of the program are the poor communication about projects, the risk of duplication (as there is little linkage across regions), and the lack of clarity about the process for prioritisation in the selection of projects.
- Opportunities** Opportunities for the future may be for SRDC to partner with other programs and providers of travel and learning opportunities. SRDC may move towards investing in the 'infrastructure' for learning opportunities, such as supporting the arrangements that can simplify and promote travel and learning, rather than funding the travel and learning activity itself.
- SRDC could play a facilitative role in linking people and regions with similar interests. There is also opportunity to clarify the role of extension staff in TLOPs, as they have arranged many of the projects with growers. Research TLOPs may be integrated into broader research projects, with the opportunity for SRDC to target specific areas or people to undertake TLOPs, to optimise the effectiveness of the research.
- Threats** Threats facing the program are the risk that people develop an expectation and dependence on SRDC to fund these activities in the long term and that, instead of creating a culture of travel and learning, this may act as a disincentive for people to travel and learn without TLOP funds. The negative perceptions of some poorly communicated projects or projects seen as 'junkets' may impact adversely on the program. Perhaps the greatest threat to the future of the program is that SRDC may be unable to fund the growing level of interest in TLOPs. If this occurs, without clear explanation of the reasons that projects applications are unsuccessful, this may lead to disempowerment.
- Recommended actions** Having reviewed the program, the projects and the perceptions, of people that have been involved, it can be concluded that TLOPs are a worthwhile investment for SRDC for the next 3-5 years. However, after this time there is a need to reconsider whether to continue funding or to change the program. As set of recommendations are made to help improve the program, as summarised below.
- Investment** 1. Continue to invest in travel and learning opportunities at a similar rate to the current of \$200,000 per year for the next 3-5 years.
- Clear objectives** 2. Clearly redefine the objectives of the program and determine its future directions.
3. Target projects with clear intended purpose and outcomes.
- Project management** 4. Consider using two modes of investment in travel and learning – open call and targeted activity for specific issues of relevance across the industry.
5. For SRDC funded research projects, incorporate researcher travel to conferences or study tours into their project funding rather than through TLOPs.
- Project leadership** 6. Carefully consider the role of the project leader/facilitator and have strategic discussion with current and potential providers of this role.
7. Encourage more linkages between groups/sectors/regions with similar interests.

**Communicate**

8. Significantly increase the communication effort associated with TLOPs.
9. Compile an annual or biannual booklet of travel and learning project reports and case studies that is targeted to all industry members.
10. Collate recommendations and work together with others to review these and plan actions.

**Other opportunities**

11. Consider other ways to encourage industry members to travel.
12. Consider longer term placements.
13. Encourage industry members to apply for travel and learning opportunities that are funded through sources other than SRDC.

# 1 BACKGROUND

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SRDC contracted Hassall & Associates to undertake an independent evaluation of its travel and learning opportunity projects (TLOPs) program in order to:

- evaluate the inputs, outputs and outcomes of TLOPs
- develop communication materials to build understanding and knowledge of the value of SRDC investments in TLOPs
- provide a synthesis of lessons and recommendations for future investment and management of TLOPs.

## 1.1 The Travel and Learning Opportunity Program

### Purpose of TLOPs

Travel and learning opportunity projects are described by SRDC as:

*“an initiative aimed at helping sugar industry people and organisations to build their capacity for leadership, learning and/or change by conducting a targeted activity, or through travel”<sup>1</sup>.*

### Intended outcomes

Through discussions with SRDC, the intended outcomes for TLOPs were identified to be an increase in:

- willingness to collaborate
- ability to ask questions and think critically
- bridging of capital between industry and research
- linkage between innovative people across regions – to build a critical mass of innovators and groups
- technical capacity and knowledge
- making of decisions to change practice
- ability to manage a project.

SRDC are hoping the TLOP program will achieve both attitudinal change and the gaining of knowledge.

Initially, the program was more focussed on individual capacity. This has now shifted towards a preference for projects that build group capacity.

## 1.2 Fit of TLOPs with SRDC

### Contribution to all SRDC outcomes

The TLOPs are primarily focussed on building human capacity within the sugar industry. The TLOPs are also expected to lead to changes that will contribute towards at least one of the six key outcomes of the SRDC R&D Plan 2003-2008.

### SRDC R&D Plan 2003-2008

These key outcomes are:

- An **increasing and more reliable cane supply**, primarily through the implementation of robust farming systems that enhance economic and environmental performance, and are less vulnerable to the impacts of adverse factors such as disease and climate variability

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<sup>1</sup> TLOP Application Kit, SRDC

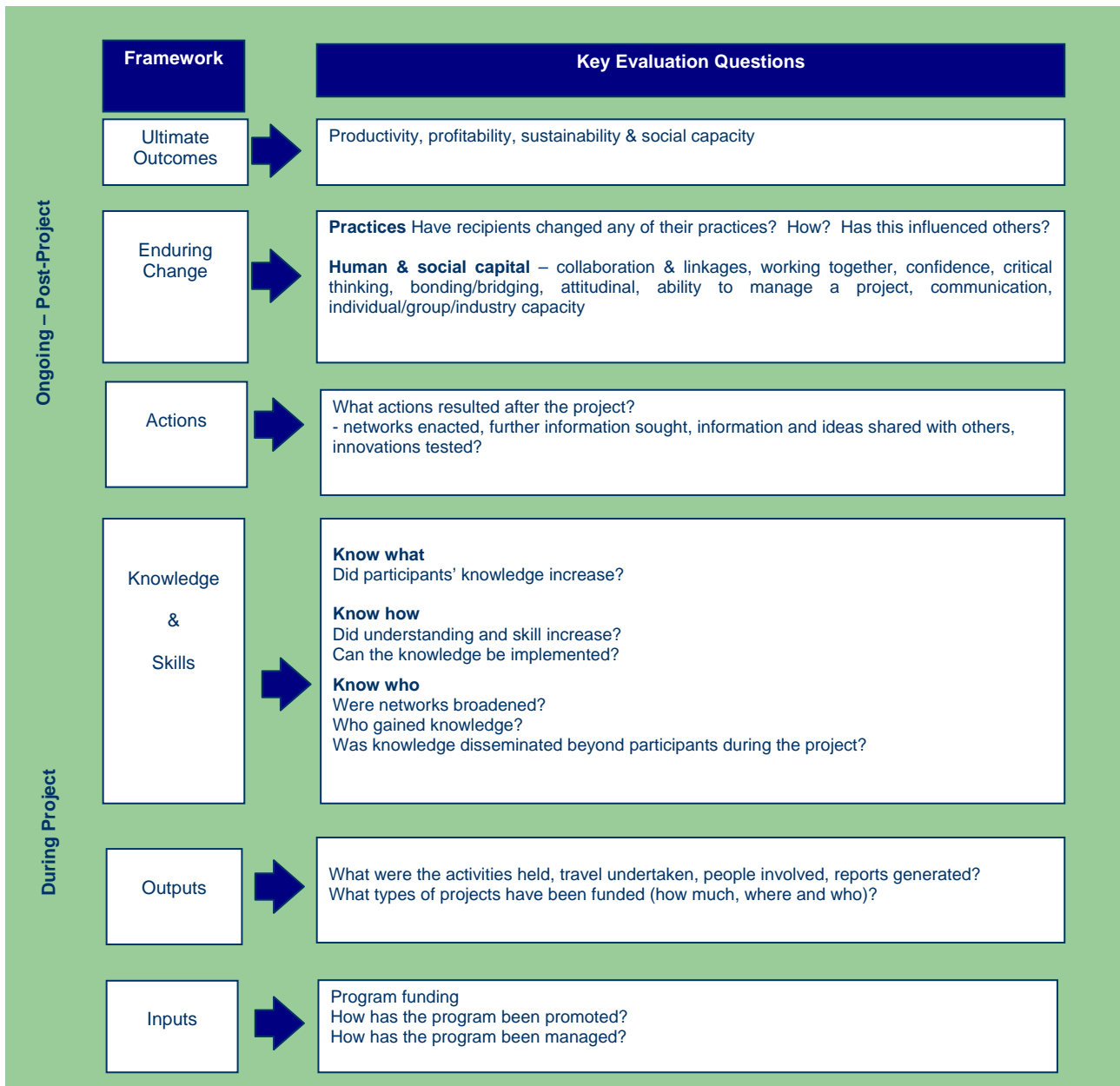


- **Facilitation of change** which promotes adoption of whole-of-system solutions to **enhance revenue and cost efficiency across the value chain** at mill area and regional levels
- **Demonstration of environmental sustainability** to the satisfaction of all stakeholders
- **Diversification of the income stream** from products derived from sugarcane
- **Enhancement of human capacity and partnerships** between industry, research and regional communities to underpin change, learning and innovation
- **An effective R&D capability** underpinning industry futures.

## 2 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK & METHODS

**Framework** Hassall & Associates developed an evaluation framework to guide the evaluation of the TLOP program (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Framework for the evaluation of SRDC’s TLOP program



#### Methods used

This review was undertaken through desktop review, consultation and analysis including the following methods:

- 1) **Desktop review** of proposals and final reports (where available) for approved projects, to identify the characteristics of the projects that have been funded.
- 2) A **short survey** and follow up **interviews**, primarily by telephone, with 53 of the 65 project leaders (85% of projects<sup>2</sup>), to identify their perceptions of the program and the outcomes of their projects.
- 3) **Interviews** with other industry stakeholders.
- 4) **Interviews** with a sample of non-participants to identify their perspectives of the program.
- 5) **Case studies** with selected project participants to gain greater insight into the project outcomes. These are provided as Appendix 3.
- 6) **Two focus group** interviews; one with a group of young farmers who were attending Generation Next, and another with industry advisers and representatives in Mackay.
- 7) **Informal discussions** with other industry participants.
- 8) **Presentation** to SRDC to review the findings and draft recommendations.
- 9) This **final report** to SRDC.

#### Review looks at 91 projects

For practical reasons, this review refers to the 91 projects that had been funded up until the first round of 2006/07. The projects funded in the latter half of 2006/07 had not been confirmed or commenced at the time of the review.

#### Terminology

There are different ways by which people may benefit from a TLOP. For the purpose of this analysis we have used the terms:

- **Recipient** – project leader (person or organisation), they may have submitted the proposal on behalf of others, they are usually also involved in the project.
- **Participant** – people directly involved in the TLOP.
- **Other beneficiaries** – people who gain knowledge from the TLOP without directly participating in the TLOP. This knowledge may be gained from direct communication with participants or indirectly such as by reading media publications or industry journals that report a TLOP.

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<sup>2</sup> The remaining 14 projects were led by 12 people who could not be interviewed - 5 of these had changed jobs and were no longer in the industry, 2 had completed the survey but could not be contacted for interview and 5 did not respond to phone or email communications.

### 3 PROGRAM INPUTS AND PERFORMANCE

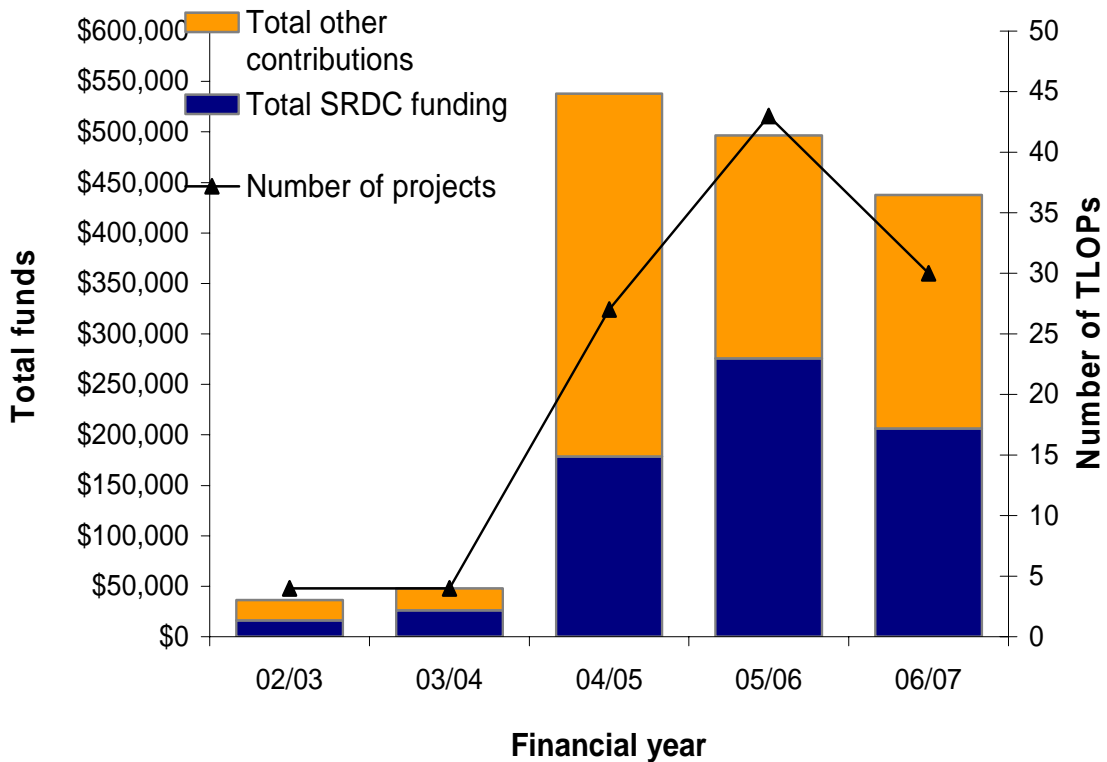
#### 3.1 Investment

<b>\$703,544 from SRDC over 5 years</b>	Over the five year period from 2002/03 to 2006/07, SRDC invested \$703,544 in 108 travel and learning opportunity projects.
<b>Increasing number of projects</b>	The SRDC funding commitment in each year has increased in line with the number of approved projects (Table 1, Figure 2).
<b>Average SRDC contribution to each project</b>	The average SRDC contribution to each TLOP project has remained relatively constant. This is partly determined by the maximum available project funding for individual and group projects of \$5,000 and \$10,000 respectively.
<b>Increasing proportion of group projects</b>	The increase in average SRDC funding from 2003/04 onwards is due to an increase in the proportion of group rather than individual projects. Seven of the eight TLOPs held in 2003/04 were individual projects for conference attendance. The first group project was a tour held in 2003/04 for 14 growers.
<b>Other contributions</b>	Contributions to the projects from other parties increased in the 2004/05 and 2005/06 years. In the 2004/05 year, these contributions were more than twice those from SRDC. In other years, the projects leverage other funds at a ratio of between 1.2 and 0.8. The peak in 2004/05 can be attributed to two large projects. The average leveraging ratio for other projects in that year was 1.3.  The two large projects with a significant external contribution were led by BSES. One of these was a cross industry tour where farmer participants from NSW travelled to look at controlled traffic farming. The other project was to bring a training provider to the far north Queensland region.

Table 1 Distribution of TLOP funding over time

	Financial year					TOTAL
	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	
Number of TLOPs	4	4	27	43	30	108
Total SRDC funding	\$16,285	\$26,410	\$178,735	\$275,771	\$206,343	\$703,544
Average SRDC funding	\$4,071	\$6,603	\$6,620	\$6,413	\$6,878	\$6,514
Total other contributions	\$20,000	\$21,560	\$359,488	\$220,646	\$231,300	\$852,994
Average other contributions	\$5,000	\$5,390	\$13,314	\$5,131	\$7,710	\$7,898

Figure 2 Distribution of SRDC funding and other contributions to TLOPs over time



### 3.2 Program Management

#### Competitive proposals

Like most SRDC research programs, TLOPs are selected from project proposals submitted in response to an advertised call. There is no planned targeting of people, sectors or groups, or specific types of TLOPs that SRDC may consider important.

#### Project application process

The TLOP application form is a Microsoft Word document available from the SRDC website, together with an application kit which also states that SRDC's Investment Managers are able to "discuss ideas for new proposals, or to provide feedback on a draft application" to assist people in preparing a TLOP proposal.

The application form has been simplified over time.

#### Project selection criteria

Project proposals are evaluated by SRDC using two criteria:

- **Attractiveness** is assessed by considering potential benefits and likely adoption of any innovations. An attractive proposal is highly likely to result in benefits to the sugar industry and/or to the community in general.
- **Feasibility** considers the chance that the project will be successful (has a low risk of failure). It concerns how realistic it is to expect that the applicant/s will be able to do what they say they will do. Feasibility is assessed by considering risk and quality.

Further details of the issues considered by each of these criteria are provided in the application kit.

**Eligible applicants**

The TLOPs are open to any Australian sugar industry stakeholder, provided that the applicant has an ABN, nominates a contact person to take responsibility for communicating with SRDC, and is willing to report the results to SRDC and the industry.

The applicant/s must have prior agreement with any other participants and/or collaborating organisations, if conducting the TLOP activity together.

**Eligible activities**

SRDC are willing to receive proposals for any type of travel and learning activity that helps to build capacity or skills. For example, this may involve travel to tour another region in Australia or internationally, holding a workshop, conference attendance, or inviting guest specialists.

The SRDC contribution to TLOP funds can be spent on "cash costs involved in conducting an event such as a workshop, seminar, field day, including:

- travel for participants and speakers
- payments for speakers
- venue and catering costs
- bus hire for visits to other regions or industries
- travel to conferences, workshops etc including fares, accommodation and other living costs, and registration fees
- capital items would not normally be part of TLOP funding, although they will be considered by SRDC if they are essential to conduct the travel or learning activity.

TLOP funds cannot be spent on salaries or attendance fees for researchers or industry participants, or on organisational overheads.<sup>3</sup>"

**Up to \$5,000 or \$10,000 per project**

Projects may be up to \$5,000 for an individual or up to \$10,000 for a group. There is a stated preference for proposals that have additional funding or sponsorship from other organisations.

**Project management**

Milestone reporting is the main mechanism for managing TLOPs and most have only the two milestones:

- signing of the project agreement
- submission of a final report to SRDC.

If the total SRDC funding is \$5,000 or less, the total funding is usually allocated to Milestone 1. If it is more than \$5,000, SRDC aims to allocate approximately 20% of the funding to the final report milestone.

Milestone 1 usually falls on 1 July for proposals submitted in the April round, and 1 January for proposals submitted in the September round. This can be varied if required. An intermediate milestone may be included where a progress report to SRDC is needed before the project is completed.

A concern of SRDC is the high level of SRDC management required for this suite of relatively small projects.

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<sup>3</sup> SRDC's TLOP Application Kit

### 3.2.1 Promotion and awareness

#### Promotion

A call for proposals is usually made twice a year – in April and September. In one year, there were three calls made. The call for proposals is advertised using the same mechanisms used for other SRDC programs:

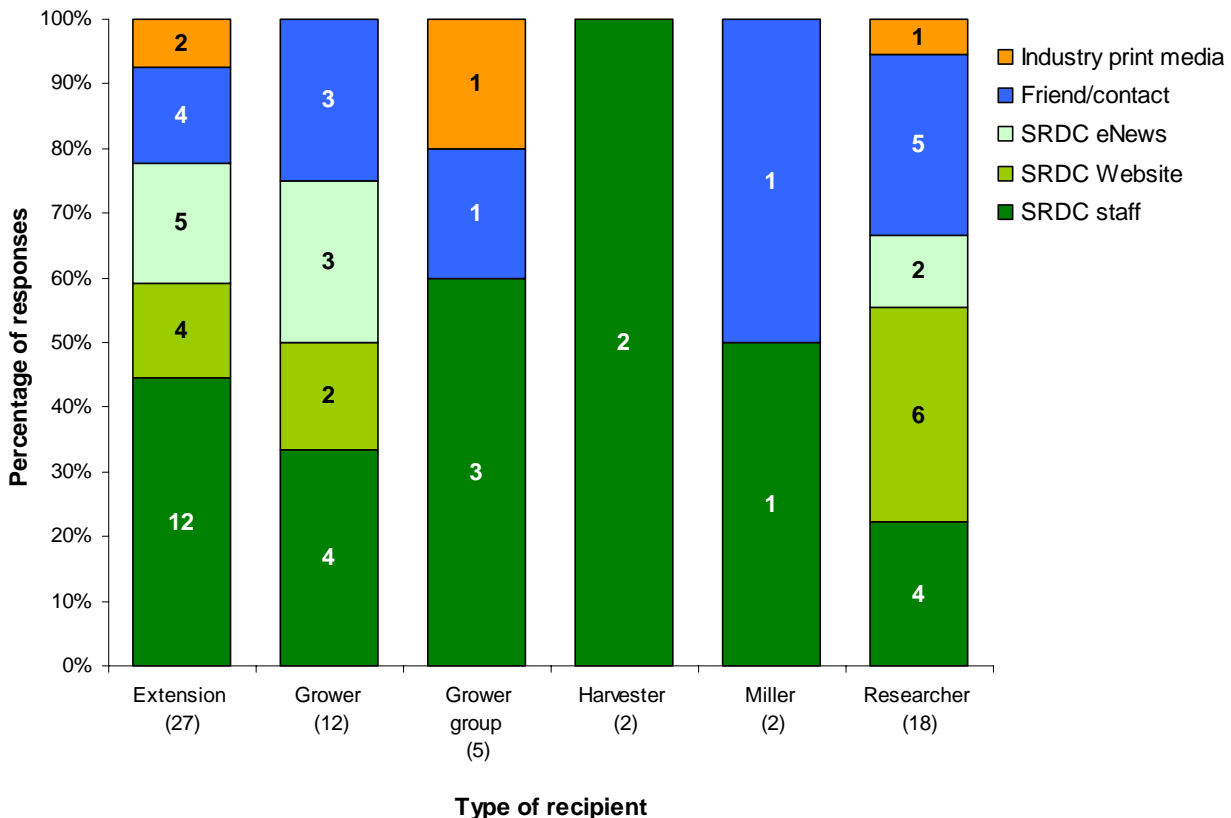
- SRDC's eNews (emailed to 1,000 recipients)
- SRDC website
- Australian Canegrower and Australian Cane Farmers Association magazines
- industry networks
- advertisements in the Weekend Australian
- promotion at SRDC's annual regional workshops
- word of mouth
- discussions between SRDC staff and industry members.

There are also regular good news stories arising from TLOP projects which are published and promoted.

#### Awareness through SRDC staff

Figure 3 indicates that most project leaders became aware of the travel and learning opportunity program through direct contact with SRDC staff. Many people commented that they had also heard of it through friends, colleagues or other contacts. The website and eNews is mainly used by extension staff and growers, along with a small number of researchers.

Figure 3 Means by which project leaders became aware of the travel and learning opportunity program



## 4 PROGRAM OUTPUTS

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### 4.1 Funded projects

Drawing from the SRDC project database, TLOP proposals, reports and interviews, it is possible to further identify the types of projects that have been funded in terms of:

- the region/s where participants are based
- the type of travel and learning activity
- the type of issue/s addressed
- project recipients and participants
- intended outcomes
- individual, group, industry capacity focus
- project performance.

#### 91 projects considered in the review

Of the 108 projects approved for funding over the past five years, 17 have not been considered in this evaluation as they are from the second round in 2006/07 and, while they had been approved, contracts had not yet been signed. Only basic data on the amount of SRDC and co-contribution funds has been included for these projects.

#### 4.1.1 Regional distribution

**Wide distribution** Since 2004/05 there has been a good spread of projects from the different sugarcane growing regions on the east coast (Figure 4).

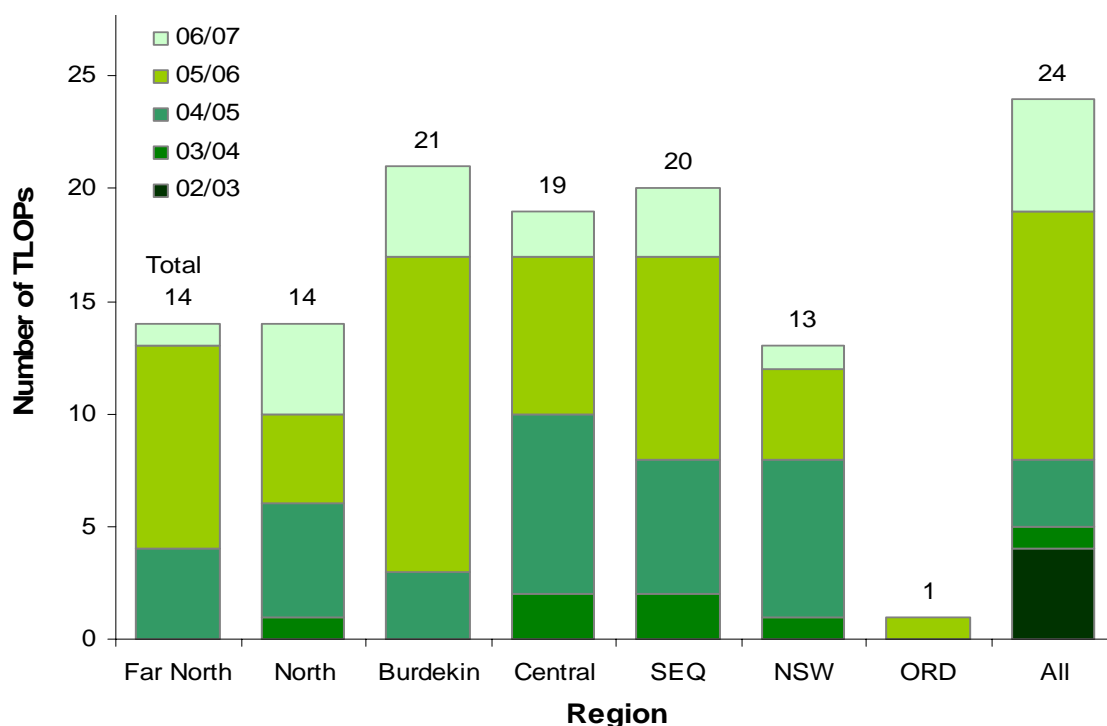
One TLOP has been funded in the Ord region. Several projects apply across the industry as a whole (those marked in Figure 4 as 'all'). 22% of projects involve two or more regions (excluding those classed in the SRDC database as 'All') - these are depicted in each region that they relate to.

The central region has a preference for tours, with very few training workshops, while the Burdekin has had a higher proportion of training workshops than other regions.

There have been no TLOPs from the Proserpine area.



Figure 4 Regional distribution of TLOPs



#### 4.1.2 TLOP recipients, participants and other beneficiaries

##### Estimated numbers of participants

In identifying who benefits from the TLOP projects, it is important to understand that there are generally several people involved either directly or indirectly in any TLOP.

Several people have led more than one project with a total of 51 recipients for the 91 projects. These project leaders were asked to estimate how many people had been involved in their project. Cumulatively, project leaders' estimates imply that the total number of people reached by all projects are:

- Approximately 1,000 direct participants
- Direct communication to around 10,000
- Indirect communication to approximately 50,000.

However, there is a large degree of double counting with many projects reaching the same audiences. For example, 45% of surveyed recipients have been involved in more than one project (as either a recipient or participant). There are no readily available (and analysable) listings of each individual participant in each TLOP.

Additionally, the number of others who have been directly communicated to is estimated from recipients' recollection of attendance at events such as presentations and shed talks. Indirect communications is estimated from recipients' expectation of the number of people reading publications or accessing other forms of indirect communication.

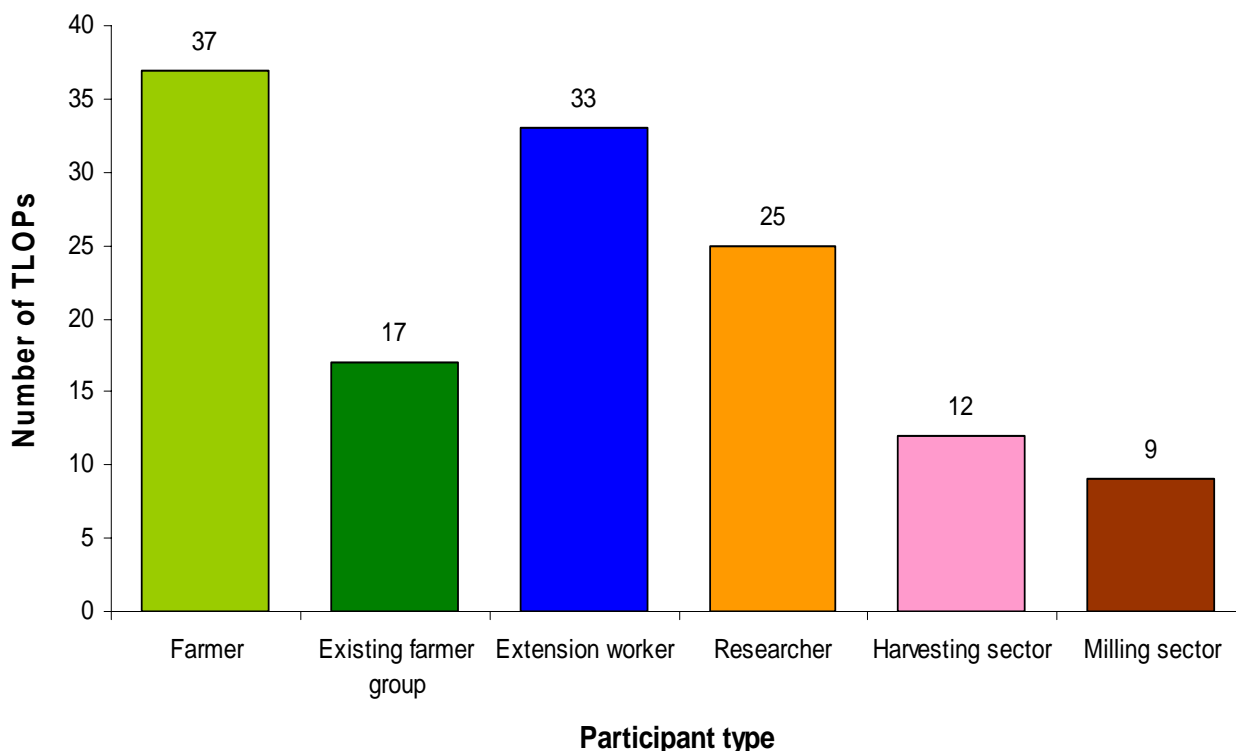
It is therefore not possible to exactly determine the total number of people who have directly participated in a TLOP or how many people to whom TLOP learnings have been communicated.

**Collaborative participation**

Figure 5 illustrates that the large majority of projects involve cane growers and/or extension workers. 44% of the projects involved growers individually, or through existing grower groups.

29% of TLOPs involve more than one sector of the industry as direct participants in the project.

**Figure 5 Number of projects that involve participant types**

**Farmers are main participants**

Farmers are the dominant participants in the TLOPs. They may have been involved as individuals or new groups of individuals (depicted as 'farmers' in the graph) or as existing farmer groups. Existing farmer groups refers to groups of farmers that have been formed previously and have regular meetings or dialogue, such as Generation Next regional groups or other SRDC grower groups.

The next largest group are extension workers, often because they are organising a TLOP for farmers. Researchers are also a significant group of participants in TLOPs.

**Little gender mix**

Six projects have been specifically for women in the sugar industry. Excluding professional staff, the majority of other projects have primarily involved men. There have been few projects targeted towards both men and women; an exception being the Mackay Young Farmers group whose two projects have involved both partners in the farming enterprises.

**TLOPs funded through organisations**

The major direct recipients of TLOPs are industry organisations, accounting for 91% of all projects. 2 of the 91 projects have been funded directly to individual farmers, 4 to existing farmer groups and 2 to harvesting groups.

BSES has been the largest recipient of TLOPs (23 projects), followed by CANEGROWERS (a total of 11 projects to state and regional organisations), CSIRO (9) and CSR (8).

Almost half of the projects led by BSES, CANEGROWERS or CSR have direct farmer participants. These projects are primarily tours, but also include training and conference attendance.

Conversely, CSIRO's projects involve researchers only and are for conference attendance or, in one case, to sponsor a visiting guest.

Table 2 Recipients of TLOPs<sup>4</sup>

Recipients	Number of projects
<b>Research and Extension Organisations</b>	
BSES <sup>^</sup>	22
CSIRO <sup>#</sup>	9
Queensland University of Technology / SRI	6
QDPI&F	3
School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, JCU	1
The University of Queensland	1
University of Adelaide	1
<b>Industry Organisations and Mills</b>	
CANEGROWERS*	11
CSR Sugar	8
NSW Cane Growers Council	2
NSW Sugar Milling Co-operative Limited	3
Ord River Canegrowers Association Pricing Committee	1
Mackay Sugar Cooperative Association Ltd	1
<b>Agricultural / Productivity Services</b>	
Mossman Agricultural Services	2
Innisfail Babinda Cane Productivity Services	2
Mackay Area Productivity Services	1
Tully Cane Productivity Services Ltd	1
Mackay Area Productivity Services	1
Plane Creek Productivity Services Ltd	1
<b>Growers and Harvesters</b>	
Advance Burdekin Collective Research Inc	4
Cane farmers (individuals)	2
DEFOS	1
Herbert Young Farmers	1
Other farmer groups	2
Clarence Harvesting Cooperative Ltd	1
Redtrail Pty Ltd	1
<b>Other</b>	
Burdekin Regional Advisory Group	1
National Farmers Federation	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>

\* The CANEGROWERS projects comprise 3 projects with CANEGROWERS Brisbane, 2 with CANEGROWERS Bundaberg, 2 with CANEGROWERS Isis, 1 with CANEGROWERS Maryborough, 1 with CANEGROWERS Isis & Maryborough combined, 1 with Babinda District Canegrowers Organisation Ltd and 1 with CANEGROWERS Mackay.

<sup>^</sup> One BSES project undertaken together with Mackay Area Productivity Services.

<sup>#</sup> 7 to CSIRO Plant Industry and 2 to CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems.

<sup>4</sup> Refers to the 91 projects funded up until the first round of 2006/07

### 4.1.3 Types of projects

#### Types of project activities

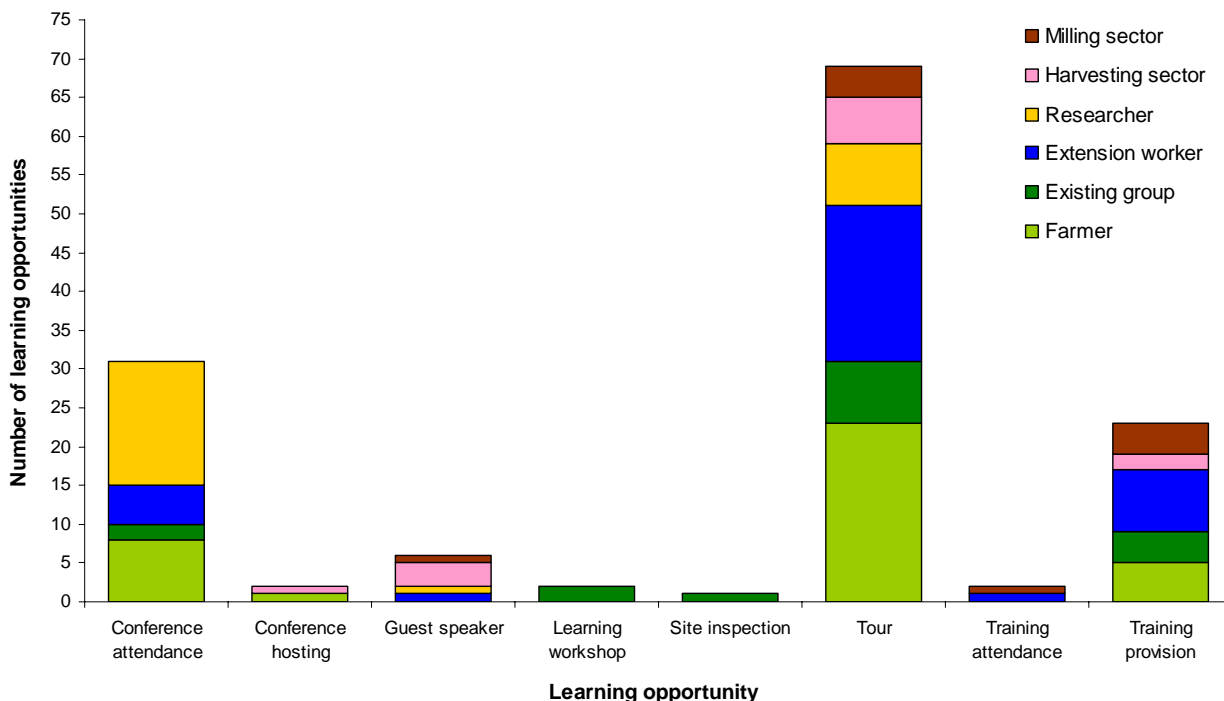
A variety of different types of travel and learning activities have been funded, including:

- travel
- conference attendance
- conference organisation or hosting
- training attendance (where the participant receives TLOP funds to attend a course, usually delivered away from their own region)
- training provision (where the project funds a trainer to deliver a course to the project participants, usually in their own region)
- learning workshop (participatory workshop, no trainer)
- tours
- site inspections
- hosting a guest specialist.

#### Tours and conferences dominate

Tours and conferences are the most popular forms of learning opportunity, together accounting for 75% of the TLOPs (Figure 6). Only 3% of projects have intended to involve more than one type of learning activity. One of these was a conference attendance and tour, and the others involved training.

Figure 6 Types of learning opportunities undertaken in TLOPs



**Learning activity and participant type**

Figure 6 also illustrates the different TLOP activities undertaken by different participant types. To explore this further:

- 67% of tours are undertaken within Australia and of these, 51% have farmer or existing group participants and 24% have extension worker participants.
- 7 out of the 17 TLOPs that involved existing farmer groups undertaking travel were to attend national tours, 6 were either to attend or provide a training event, 2 were for attending conferences in Australia, 1 was for a site visit and 1 was for an international tour.
- 34% of TLOPs involving extension workers were tours within Australia and 32% were international tours. The remaining TLOPs involving extension workers were national training provision events that brought in the expert from another location.
- 60% of TLOPs with researchers involved travel overseas to attend conferences.

**Travel**

Travel is the most common learning opportunity undertaken. Of the 91 projects, 54 involve travel within Australia, 31 involve international travel and the remaining 6 do not involve any travel. 79% of the funds sought from SRDC for TLOPs directed to travel expenses (Table 3).

**Table 3 Proportion of SRDC TLOP funds allocated to travel<sup>5</sup>**

	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	Total
Average SRDC funding	\$4,071	\$6,603	\$6,620	\$6,413	\$6,878	\$6,514
Average travel funding	\$4,071	\$6,190	\$5,430	\$4,477	\$5,017	\$4,913
<b>Total SRDC funding</b>	<b>\$16,285</b>	<b>\$26,410</b>	<b>\$178,735</b>	<b>\$275,771</b>	<b>\$206,343</b>	<b>\$703,544</b>
<b>Total travel funding</b>	<b>\$16,285</b>	<b>\$24,760</b>	<b>\$146,610</b>	<b>\$192,506</b>	<b>\$145,491</b>	<b>\$525,652</b>
(travel as a % of SRDC funds)	(100%)	(91%)	(85%)	(75%)	(76%)	(79%)

**Travel to bring visitors to a region**

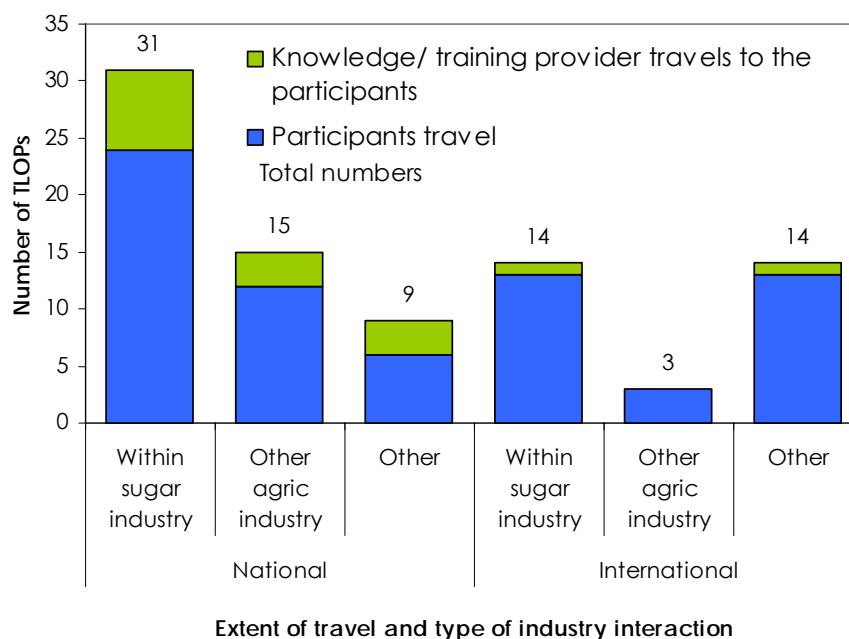
Figure 7 indicates that the majority of TLOP projects (77%) involve recipients travelling themselves. A small proportion of the projects involve bringing other people in to visit the TLOP recipient region (16%).

**Industries in focus**

TLOP travel is predominantly to visit other sugarcane growing regions (Figure 7). Visits to other agricultural industries in Australia, or other sectors or specialists, are also popular. Interestingly, only 3 projects have travelled internationally to visit industries other than sugar.

<sup>5</sup> Includes those projects funded in the second round of 2006/07

Figure 7 Travel destinations\*



\* One project involved travel both within the sugar industry and across other industries.

#### 4.1.4 Intended outcomes

##### Range of intended outcomes

TLOPs have a wide range of intended outcomes. Proposals have been classified into productivity, profitability, sustainability and social capital outcomes. All 91 TLOPs have intended outcomes under two or more of the following classes:

- Productivity – 32 projects
- Profitability – 37 projects
- Sustainability – 48 projects and
- Social Capital – 91 projects.

In some proposals the intended outcomes were clear; however a higher degree of interpretation has been used in others, to classify the types of outcomes.

#### 4.1.5 Issues addressed by projects

It is also worthwhile looking at the types of issues that the TLOPs investigate. While all TLOPs intend to have social outcomes, some of these aim to do this by directly focussing on social issues (eg leadership, collaboration). Others try to build social capital through investigating more technical issues relating to sugar cane production and processing.

**Cane production issues most popular**

Figure 8 illustrates how many projects address each type of issue. Note that many projects address several issues. Cane production issues, followed by capacity development, have been the main areas of focus for TLOPs.

With the growing focus on water management it may be interesting to note that only 6 projects investigated water issues as a specific focus. However, it should be recognised that other funding sources (eg Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative) have encouraged travel and learning opportunities relating to water management.

**Variation across regions in issues addressed**

Figure 9 illustrates the number of TLOPs within each region that have focussed on the broad classes of issues. Figure 10 has broken this information down, into the issues within each broad class.

Issues relating to business management, finances and marketing have been a focus of some TLOPs from southern, central, north and far north Queensland (where it was a popular topic), and in the current year, one industry-wide project.

Value chain integration has been a small area of focus, with one project in central and three at a whole of industry level.

**Figure 8 Number of TLOPs that address each type of issue**

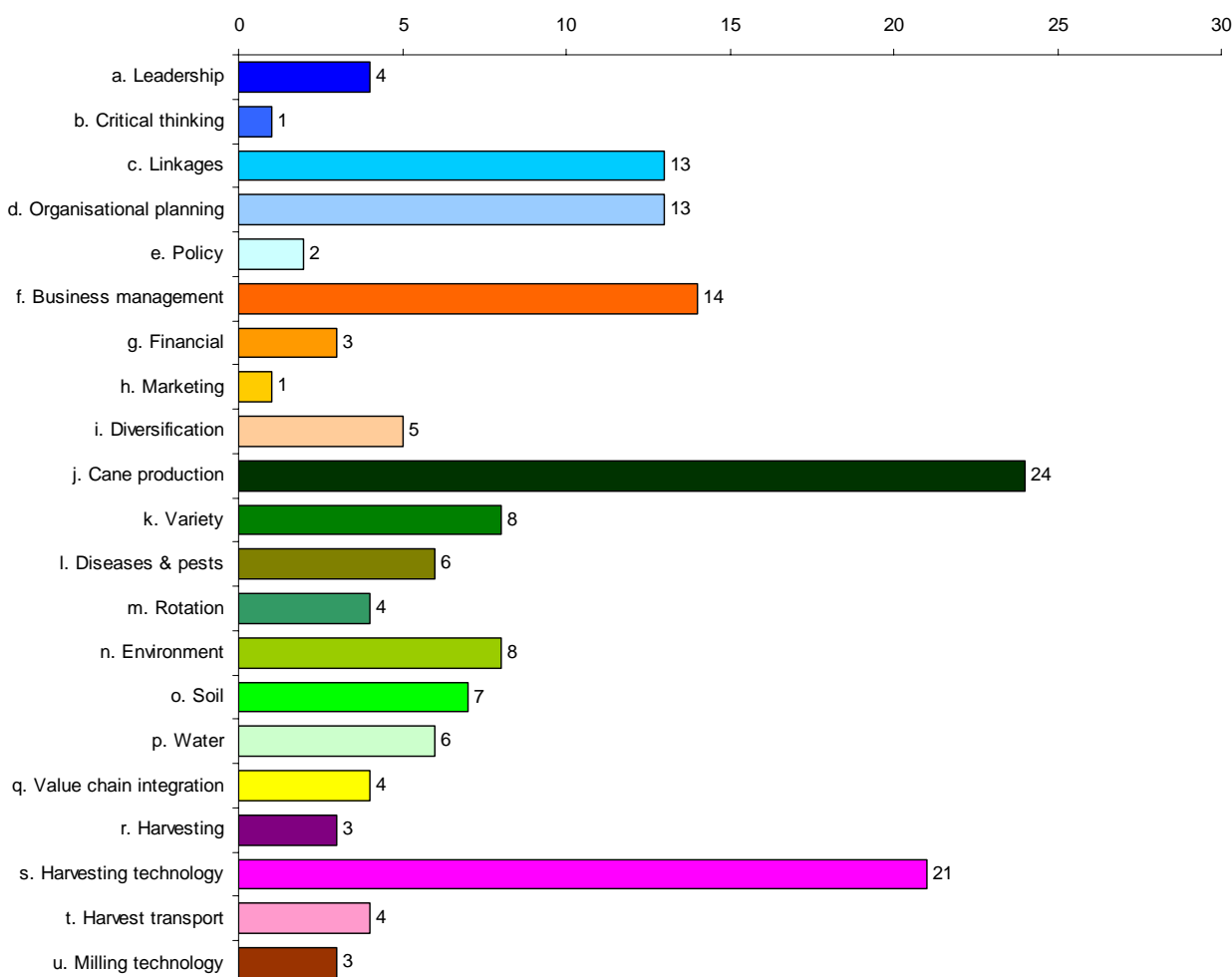




Figure 9 Broad classes of issues addressed by TLOPs

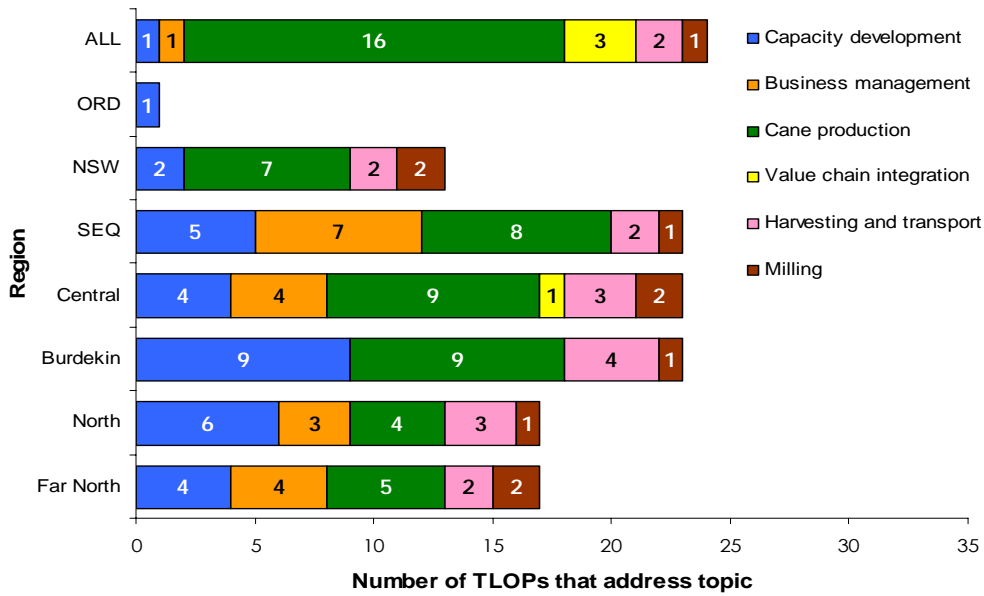
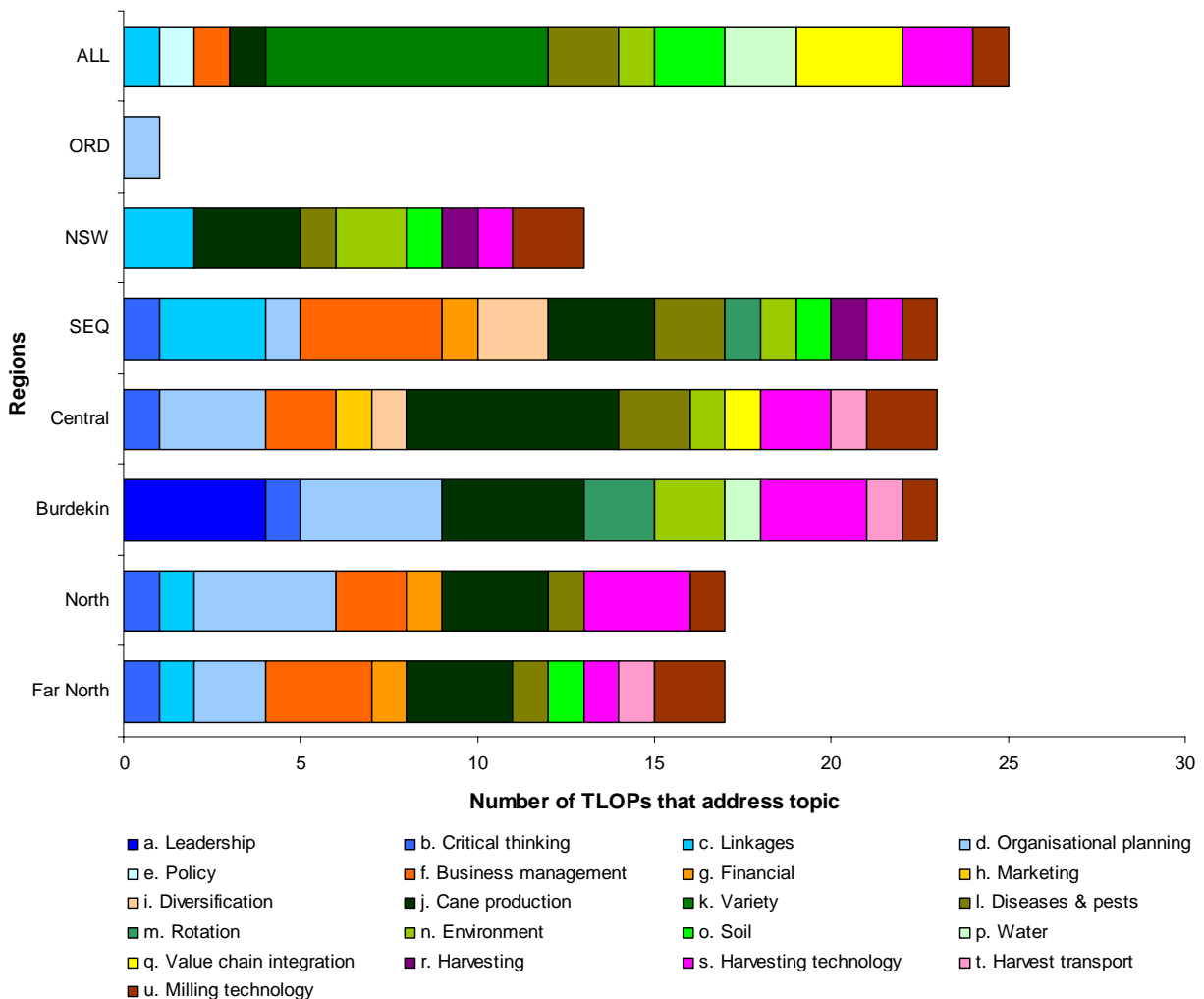


Figure 10 Further break down of issues addressed by TLOPs from each region

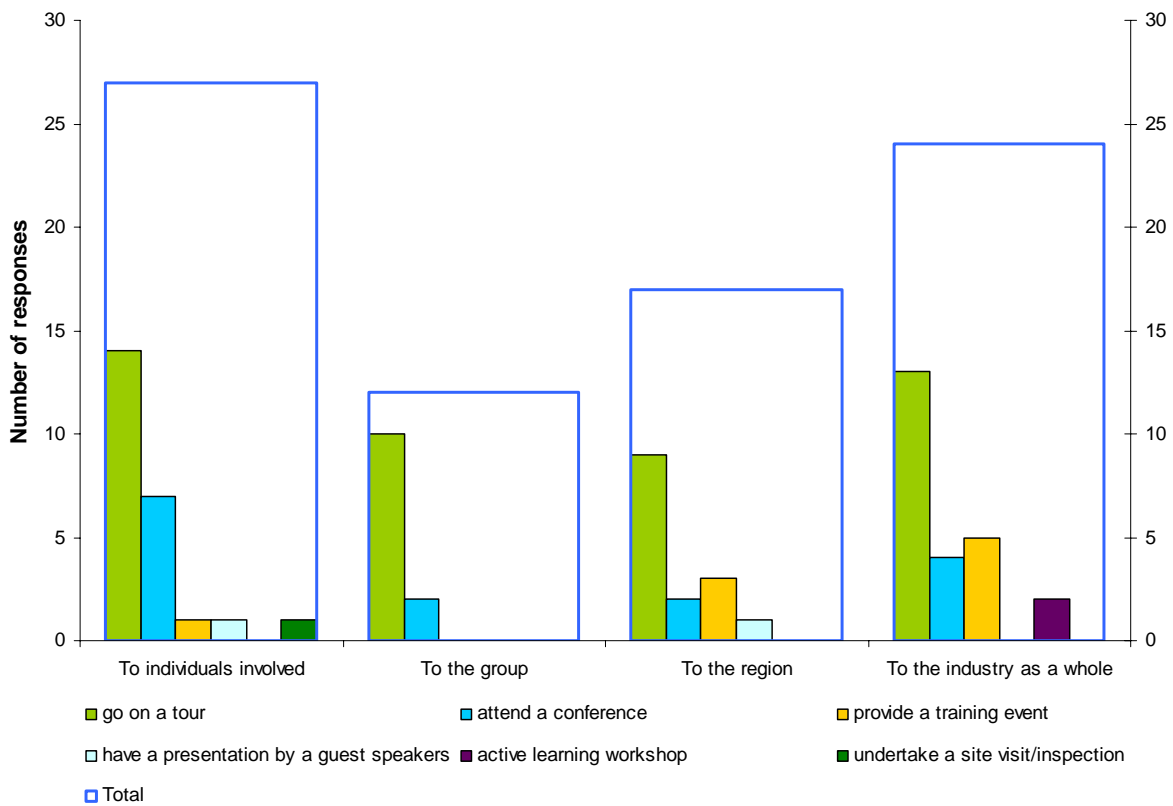


#### 4.1.6 Who benefits?

There is a clear question as to whether the benefit of the TLOP accrues solely to those involved or whether it applies more widely. This varies depending on the nature of the project. Figure 11 illustrates this based on the perspective of the project leaders. The majority of projects are expected to have some benefit more widely.

Projects where a group formed to specifically investigate an issue and develop strategies for the region, will have clearer industry or regional benefits. Others may have less direct benefits.

Figure 11 Scope of benefits from TLOPs



#### 4.2 Project Performance

**76% of final reports received**

As at November 2006, final reports had been submitted for 76% of the TLOPs.

Table 4 indicates that most of the reports not yet submitted are recent projects, as those from the 2006/07 years are not yet due for completion and final reporting.

The 2005/06 project reports that were not submitted by the time of the desktop review in late 2006 were mostly due for completion in early to mid 2006.

Table 4 Number of projects that have submitted final reports

	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	Total
Final report not submitted			1	8	13	22
Final report submitted	4	4	26	35		69
Total TLOPs	4	4	27	43	13	91

**Project variations** Almost all projects were largely completed as outlined in the proposal. Variations from the proposal tended to be for logistical reasons and related to the participants involved or to the places or people visited. For example, where a hurricane affected a place to be visited, this site was dropped from the itinerary.

One project had a major variation from the proposal. In this case, a tour to investigate harvesting issues had been planned. However, a harvester forum was subsequently held in that region and therefore the travel was no longer considered necessary. Instead, the funds were contributed towards assisting with that forum.

## 5 KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND NETWORKS GAINED

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### Three key types of knowledge

Some schools of thought in knowledge management consider there to be three key forms of knowledge:

- Know-what is the knowledge about something, the facts and details that can be gained. This type of knowledge can be most readily transferred.
- Know-how is about having the understanding or aptitude to use the knowledge. This is much harder to transfer as the person needs to develop their own comprehension. It is more readily developed through experience.
- Know-who is about knowing who holds the knowledge and understanding, and who you can ask questions. This may be a directory of contacts or it may be personal networks.

TLOPs aim to build capacity in relation to all of these types of knowledge.

### Know-what

TLOP participants gained knowledge about a variety of different things. This varied from specific knowledge about a technology, to a broader understanding of a system. For some it was a technical issue relating to cane production, harvesting and milling, while for others it was an understanding of social processes such as how to run a meeting.

The level of knowledge gained depends on how advanced people were with the issue. For some, the TLOP exposed them to completely new ideas. For others, the TLOP was an opportunity for participants to seek more detailed information about a change that they were thinking of making. For many, the learnings were somewhere in between these scales.

Projects focussed on a specific issue tended to work best.

*“Look at something in particular and then ask questions about absolutely everything that you see.”*

Some of these unexpected learnings are very valuable.

Gaining first hand knowledge has helped people to be more confident. For research or advisory staff, the experience was also thought to provide more credibility to their knowledge about the issue.

*“I can now comment with confidence about water quality issues”*

### Know-how

The main benefit of TLOPs lies in gaining a first hand experience, either by traveling or by having a learning opportunity at home. This experience includes the opportunity to see and hear things, to question what is heard and then to discuss and develop these ideas further with other participants. By gaining an experience rather than just information, TLOPs help develop participants' know-how.

A key benefit lies in:

- Building confidence - to change practices or implement new technology, in their own abilities and processes as individuals or as a group, in their own advisory or scientific role.
- Broadening minds and thinking - seeing different things helps to stretch boundaries.

Some of the comments include:

*"It's like a professional shot in the arm"*

*"It's about having a first hand experience"*

*"It really broadened the minds of some relatively conservative people by getting them out of their own areas, exposed to different things"*

*"It was about confidence as well as knowledge. Particularly for the people who were added to the tour group at the last minute."*

#### Know-who

Many networks have been formed with the people who are visited or are brought into the region and also within the study groups themselves. Many people consider these to be the key value of the TLOPs.

For tours, a lot of work goes in to the proposal stage to identify who to visit and to make arrangements. In this way, know-who is gained even during the application stage. The project then allows this list of contacts to be expanded further.

Scientific travel/conferences helped the researchers to build networks with other researchers.

*"The networking is a key benefit – I've kept in contact with people we met to discuss other issues that have arisen since the TLOP."*

#### Significant benefits

Figure 12 illustrates that the project leaders considered the most significant impacts of the TLOPs to be the increased knowledge, skills and understanding, the networks and thinking about things differently. This graph is based on a survey question which asked project leaders to identify the two most significant outcomes from this list.

It is interesting to note that changes in productivity, profitability and sustainability are considered secondary outcomes to the social attributes.

Based on this same data, Figure 13 indicates which types of projects are thought to lead to each of these outcomes.

Figure 12 Project leaders' views of the most significant impacts of TLOPs

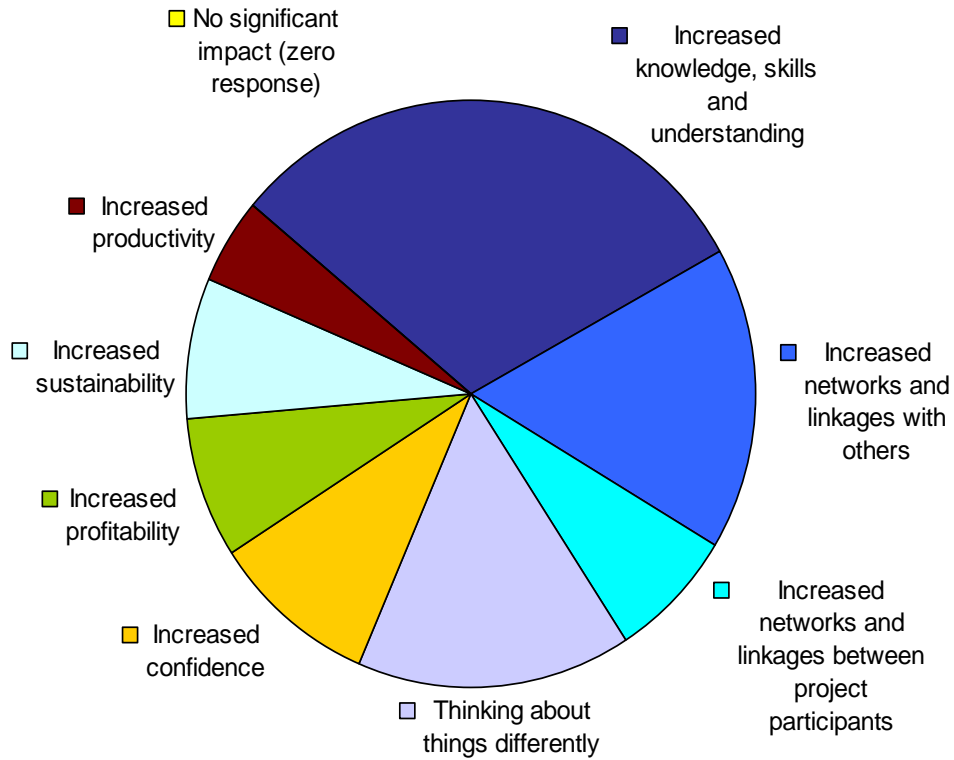
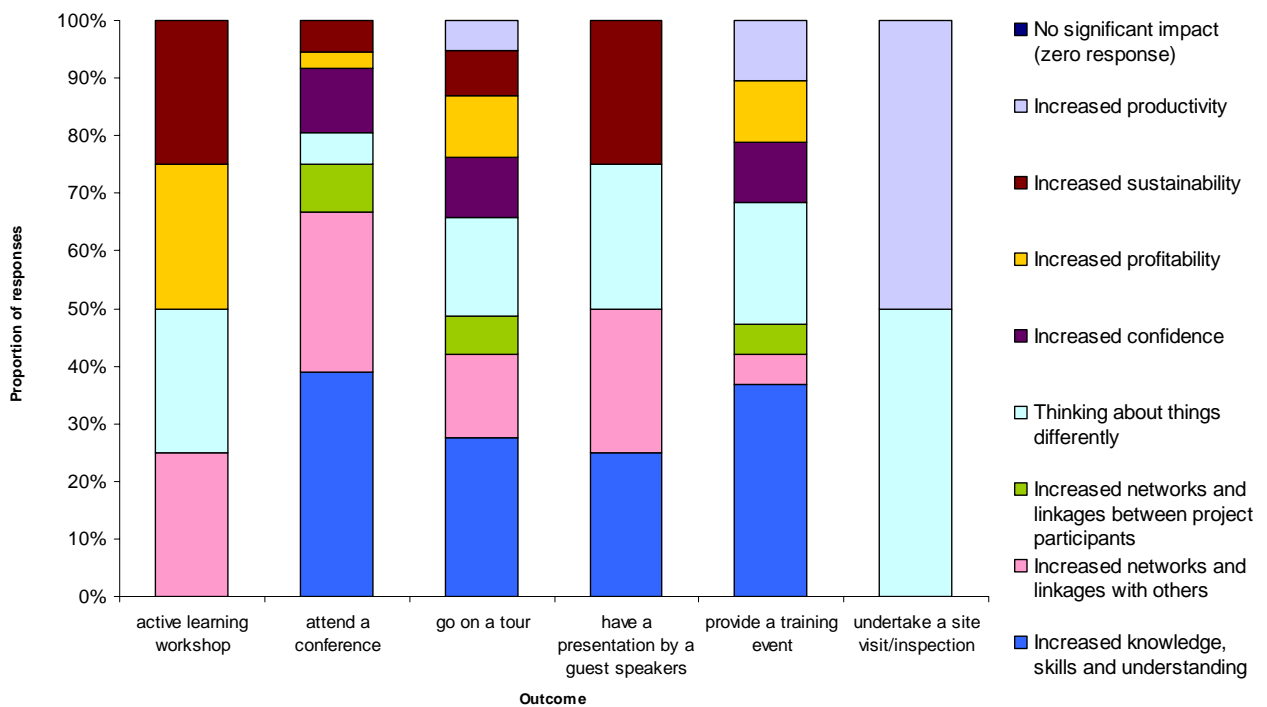


Figure 13 Proportionate benefits from each type of project



Project leaders were asked to identify to what degree participants had increased awareness, knowledge, skills, understanding, confidence, thinking and networks as a result of the TLOP. They were also asked how relevant these were. This is illustrated in Figure 14. More detail is provided in Figure 15, which illustrates that people mainly gained in the areas that were relevant to them.

*“All learnings were very relevant but the amount of increase depended on the position that the women held on the farm. Some women are very involved in the running of the farm while others don’t have much say.”*

*“the South African sugar industry is about 20 years ahead of Australia so there was a lot to learn.” [Milling research respondent]*

Figure 14 Increase and relevance of learnings as a result of a TLOP

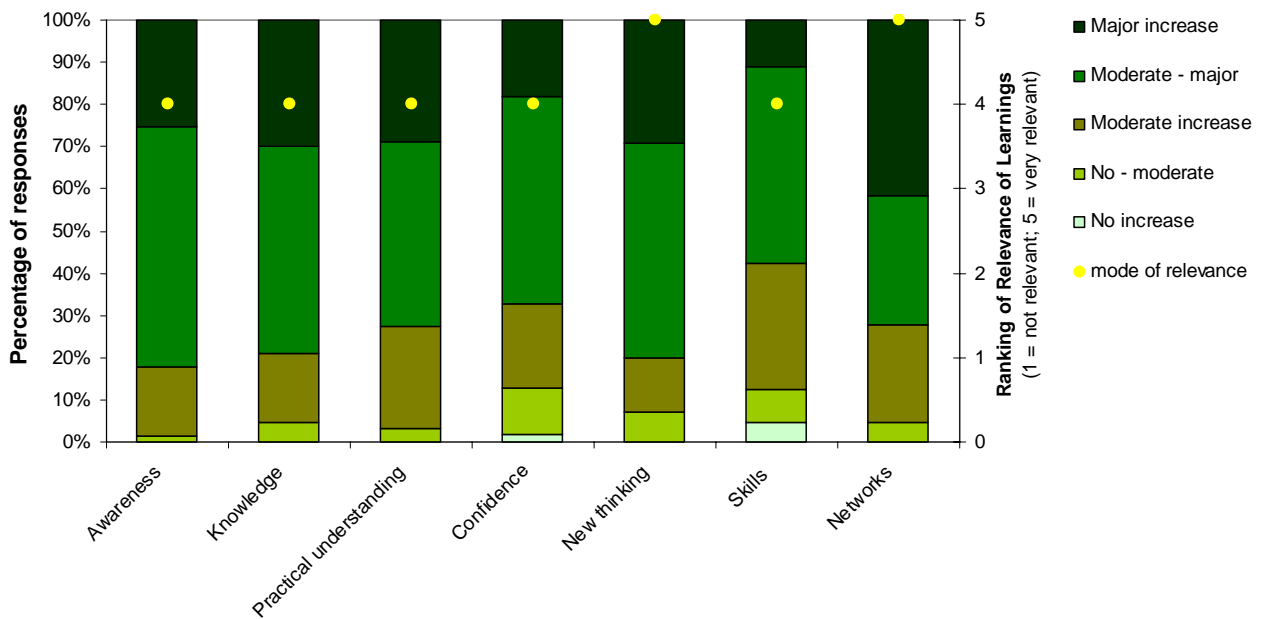
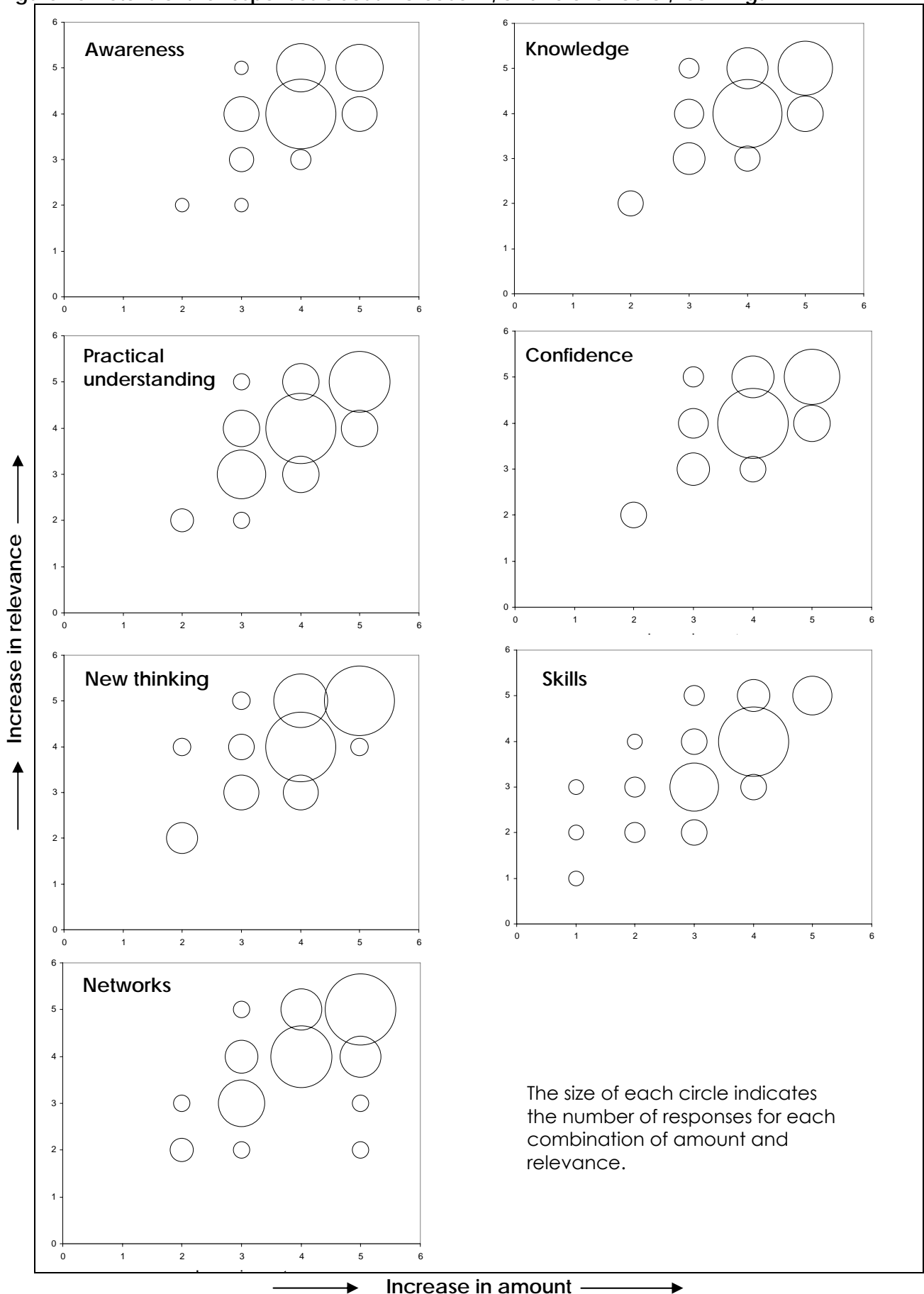


Figure 15 Details of the responses about increase in, and relevance of, learnings





## 5.1 Project management skills

### Increase in project management skills

Figure 16 indicates that leading a TLOP has also helped to build the project management skills of some recipients.

Experienced staff found the projects simple to manage, with little influence on their project management skills. However, for those not previously involved in managing SRDC projects, the TLOP improved their understanding of how to manage a project.

*“I’d never completed a project like this. I’m now more confident to undertake the process for funding from other providers.”*

More comments are provided in Appendix 1.

### Most projects led by a professional

To identify the potential for TLOPs to build project management skills in the industry it is important to note that the majority of projects are coordinated by a professional. Several of these are already well experienced in project management. The TLOPs helped to build project management knowledge and skills of some new staff members.

Some growers have gained skills in managing a project by leading a TLOP, but this is not common. Most people feel that there are few growers who would apply for a project on their own, mainly because of the paperwork associated with the application and reporting. It is also thought that many people simply are not aware of the TLOP or do not think they would qualify.

Some people who had participated in a project said they would now be confident to apply for, and lead, a project on their own. Conversely, others said they would always seek help from a staff member within the industry.

### Only some people willing to do the application process

While some growers and harvesters will readily apply for a project (often seeking assistance to prepare the application), there are many others who would benefit from a TLOP but are unlikely to ever apply.

*“Most people in the group leave it to others to organise, it takes a lot of time - it would be made easier by recognising and paying the coordinator”*

*“I hate paperwork – you’ve got to be cut out for it – I’m more a shed person than an office person.”*

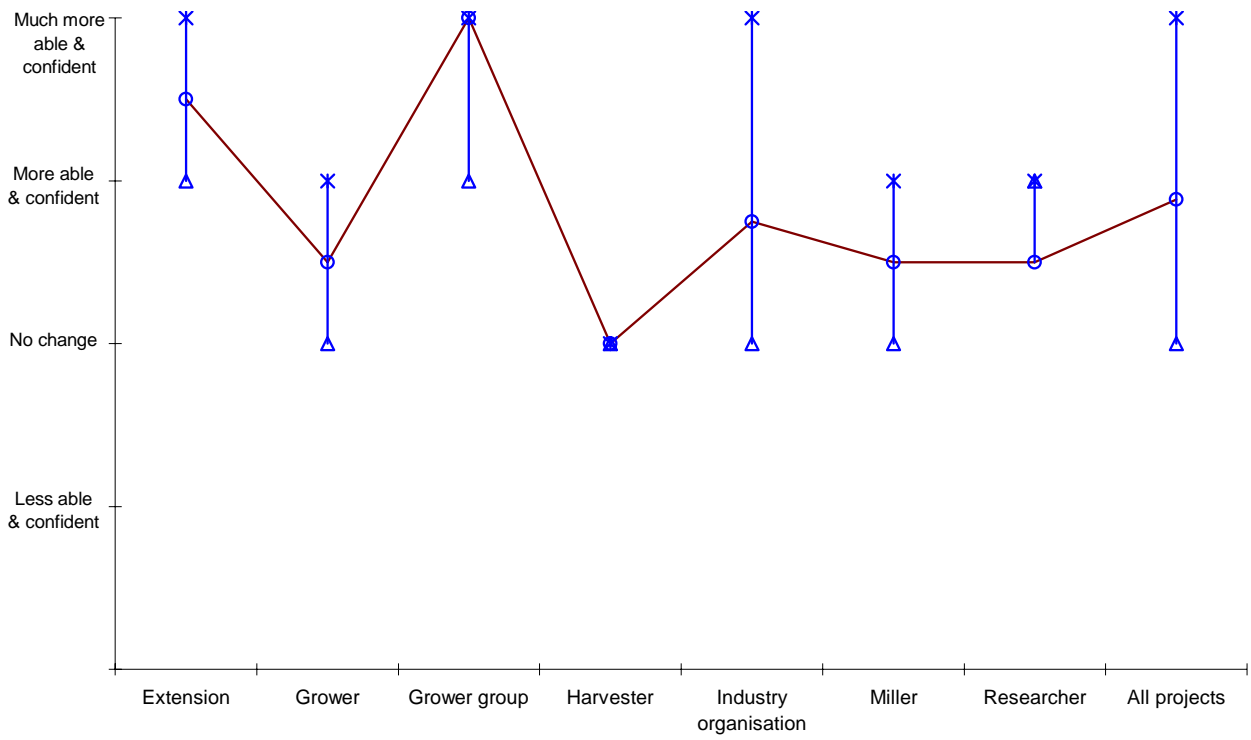
*“It’s pretty easy, other growers just need to have a go.”*

### Leadership important

Good leadership is important to projects and it is best to have someone who has the drive, enthusiasm, time and contacts to lead the project.

With these factors in mind, it is clear that a range of different project leadership models are most suitable. Building project management skills may be an added bonus of the TLOPs, but should not be regarded as a primary goal.

Figure 16 Influence of undertaking TLOPs on the leader's project management skills



## 6 ACTIONS RESULTING AFTER THE TLOPS

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### 6.1 Knowledge Sharing

#### Projects believe they share knowledge widely

Most projects feel they have done a lot of knowledge sharing. As indicated previously, the number of people involved in TLOPs and to whom the findings have been communicated directly or indirectly is large. Each project has had between 1 and 92 people (on average, 14 people) as direct participants in the TLOP. Findings have been communicated to many more people.

Some projects have placed a high importance on communicating their findings back to their local region through presentations, articles, personal discussion and subsequent trials. Farmers do talk, mainly locally, so TLOPs involving farmers tend to be discussed quite a bit, particularly if addressing a technical issue. Many TLOP participants noted that they often have discussions with people about their learnings, well after the TLOP has been completed.

#### Wider knowledge sharing is limited

Despite this, wider communication about TLOPs is poor. Communication across regions about the findings of TLOPs is relatively low and few people are aware of many of the projects that have been funded. They are even less likely to be aware of the findings. Even project recipients have a limited knowledge of what other projects have been funded and what the findings are.

#### Scepticism from limited knowledge sharing

People do talk about projects that they have received little feedback on or if the feedback was very slow to come. This appears to have contributed to some scepticism about the TLOP initiative.

#### Reports

There is a lot of information contained within the project reports and these are available on the SRDC website. However, they are not easy to search and the required structure of the report makes them somewhat repetitive. A few growers indicated that they read these reports but overall it appears that very few people do.

Although rich in information, the reports are not an effective communication tool in their current format and publication method.

### 6.2 Information seeking, trials and activities

#### Most seek more information

Many TLOPs have stimulated new thinking. In most projects, participants have continued to seek further information such as about the issues of interest or to assist them in different roles they have taken on. In other cases the TLOP has come at a time when they were asking many questions about a change they wanted to make. In these cases, the TLOP provided them with the opportunity to answer many of those questions.

*“Some people have sought more information but mostly they’re satisfied by the TLOP – these were farmers who are at the ‘front of the pack.’”*

*“Yes as the participants have taken on key roles they have needed further information to move further ahead.”*

*“Yes, I’ve visited one of the mills again for further information on a specific issue.”*

**Further investigations, trials and planning**

In a number of cases people have undertaken further investigations, assessment or trials to test the feasibility of their learnings in their situation.

For example, the Herbert growers involved in the regional group who visited South Africa are now working further with Lawrence di Bella (BSES, TLOP leader) to undertake trials with ripeners. One of these, Alan Robino is also trying to grow longer ratoons and has shifted his focus from tonnes of cane to tonnes sugar per hectare.

The Ord cane growers group worked together to plan a new pricing strategy. For various reasons they did not then follow their own recommendations.

The Maryborough industry after visiting feedlots on the Darling Downs had identified the potential to harvest cane tops to sell as a feed supply. They did further economic investigations. At this stage, the transport cost is too high for the bulky material so they have not pursued it further. The TLOP gave them an opportunity to identify and fully investigate the idea.

**Training prompts more questions**

In some cases where TLOPs have delivered training programs, the key contacts or presenters have found they subsequently receive more queries and questions from participants.

*“We [the mill] get a lot more phone calls/queries now. The women are more confident to call and follow up with queries about understanding cane payment.”*

**SRDC research proposals**

Several people have developed research proposals to further investigate or develop their ideas. These have been submitted to SRDC, with varying levels of success.

*“Visiting Louisiana spurred my interest in share farming arrangements (an unexpected learning) and I’ve developed a spreadsheet for growers to use. I’m now following this up with another TLOP to look at share farming arrangements and pull together some examples.”*

**Project leader**

The project leader sometimes continues to be a key link point into the next stage. For some, such as Bill Horsford, the TLOP has triggered interest amongst growers in a new area of farming systems work that he has since led. Others serve as an information conduit or ‘bouncing of ideas’. This is not necessarily always through the projects leaders, as some participants do this amongst themselves.

**6.3 Networks enacted**

**Networks within the group are strengthened**

The networks built within the study group themselves can be very valuable and often lead to ongoing communication. The shared experience and subsequent trialling of similar things helps to strengthen this.

*“It got the ball rolling with people who’d met on tour.”*

For example, the ABC grower group was formed from a subset of people who had been on a TLOP bus trip together.

*“People asked us why we drove from the Burdekin to NSW rather than fly. But the bus trip was one of the best parts of it as we had all that time together with other growers in our region.”*

A tour from the Maryborough region was helpful in introducing and building relationships between new growers and existing growers. Since then, the new growers more readily call other growers to discuss ideas or questions.

Bringing together a good cross section of people to investigate an issue helps to build networks and some shared understanding across the sectors. An example of this is the Herbert tour investigating season length, which involved growers (large grower, small grower, young grower, industry leader, grower/harvester), millers and researchers.

*“We didn’t always agree but came to better understand each other’s side of the situation.”*

In this way, the TLOPs are contributing to building social capital by creating or strengthening the linkages within the industry / region.

**Networks help to continue to learn from others**

Contact with others outside the industry is sometimes maintained and followed up. For example, some of the NSW group who visited Birchip have continued to regularly talk with a grower they met there, and others have maintained similar contacts.

*“The farmers we met in NSW are organising a reciprocal trip to look at sugar.”*

Some networks are very specific and help with a particular need. For example, the NSW milling group have revisited mill staff, who they met on a TLOP, to hold detailed discussions. This has aided them in making major changes to their milling infrastructure. This type of learning cannot be gained through trial and error, so it is more efficient and lower risk to learn from others who have already gone through a similar decision.

**Building networks a key purpose of research TLOPs**

For researchers, the networks created with researchers outside of the Australian sugar industry are considered particularly important. These help to build scientific rigour. Some, particularly the networks with international sugar industry research groups, provide the necessary contacts should the Australian industry be faced with a new challenge such as a pest incursion.

One research group is now doing joint research projects with people in France following on from contact made during a TLOP. Another TLOP has led to a researcher visiting the group in Australia.

*“As a part of engaging networks, further information and opportunities have been progressed. Overseas researchers are regarded as experts and cutting edge and so use these networks to find specialist skills or techniques. We used the networks to set up collaborations and follow up meetings. It’s a foot in the door for us to tap into and use specific skills.”*

## 7 ENDURING CHANGE

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The outcomes of the program can be considered in broad classes:

- Change in practice
- Human and social capital
- Leadership capacity
- Scientific capacity
- Capacity for change
- Cultural change
- Networks and linkages
- Testing of a new process / workshop.

### Type of change linked to type of activity and participant

Table 5 lists the changes made as a result of the travel and learning opportunity projects. From this it can be clearly seen that different types of activities, and therefore also different types of participants, lead to different types of change.

- Conference attendance and international tours, which are most commonly undertaken by researchers or representative groups, generally lead to capacity building outcomes.
- Conversely the tours and training, which most commonly involve growers, are more likely to lead to change in farming practice, or changes in the harvesting or milling sectors or farm diversification.
- Workshops and training events, which involve a range of different participant types, mainly lead to capacity building outcomes, as well as some specific changes.

### 7.1 Change in Practice

#### Tour most effective in achieving short term changes in farming practice

Grower tours to other regions in Australia seem to most often result in change in farming practice. The tours play a role in exposing people to new ideas and allowing them to experience or view something first hand. In this way it provides the ideas and the confidence to change.

It appears that change in practice is more likely and quicker to occur, when the TLOP is addressing an issue already being considered.

For example, a group of NSW growers did a bus tour to Mackay to look at controlled traffic farming and dual row planting. This was an issue that had been a focus of attention within the NSW industry. Some growers had previously visited other industries to explore these issues and some had made changes.

*“Some adopted new farming systems with more vigour. Many had thought about it previously and for some the trip was the trigger for them to do something.”*

International travel that has a focussed purpose has led to further trials and some change in practice.

TLOPs have stimulated changes by harvesting sectors that have been involved, as they provide an opportunity to view new technology in action.

**Preparing for change**

The change may not necessarily be immediate or defined but the TLOP may prepare people for changes that occur. For example, the Mackay young farmers undertook a tour to investigate different marketing options being used. This tour helped to prepare them for the new marketing scenario. Following this study tour and the presentations they made to the local industry, this group often have other growers asking them questions about what they learnt.

## 7.2 Capacity Building

The TLOPs have fostered human capacity by:

- Building confidence;
- Providing motivation and encouragement;
- Broadening thinking;
- Building a preparedness for change.

They have also strengthened linkages between people; within the industry and externally.

**Significant contribution to building human capital**

Appendix 1 illustrates that the projects have contributed significantly to building both human capital (the capacity of individual people) and social capital (the linkages, networks and communication channels), as evidenced from the comments from project leaders.

The mere action of having people look outside their regular 'bubble' is believed to be a key value of the program, as this is a significant cultural change for some people.

**Some projects focus on human capacity building – all contribute to it**

Some training courses have focussed specifically on building social skills. For example, the ABC group's 'Seachange' project was to provide a capacity building training program for the group. This has strengthened the way they operate as a group.

Many other projects have contributed to these skills less overtly but nonetheless to a high degree.



Table 5 Changes made as a result of each travel and learning opportunity

	Capacity building and further development	Cane Farming Change	Value chain change
Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some grower group projects have resulted.</li> <li>'It got the ball rolling' with people working together because they went on the trip together (eg to buy a base station) and then applying for future projects.</li> <li>A number of trials have been completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone on that tour is now doing controlled traffic farming – some already were, some were likely to – it did get some 'over the line' to make the change. Some probably wouldn't have changed without the tour, some others would have but probably changed quicker because of the tour.</li> <li>250 acres planted with the new row spacing.</li> <li>Soybean bed and formation practices and crop rotations have been adopted on farm.</li> <li>Controlled traffic has been implemented more widely. The mill has purchased GPS equipment to help this.</li> <li>Water quality monitoring.</li> <li>Farming system changes. Trying controlled traffic principles during adverse harvesting conditions. Confident to push on with changing to a 2 metre farming system. Using urea to help digest old cane trash. Others are reluctant to copy the ideas - they need to look at it elsewhere themselves.</li> <li>5 of the 14 growers on the tour have made a change in farming practice or tried something different.</li> <li>Some adopted new farming systems with more vigour - many had thought about it previously and for some the trip was the trigger for them to do something.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigated options for sale of silage made from cane tops – the activity stalled because not economically viable for transport.</li> <li>A few people tried growing peanuts.</li> <li>Some people have changed the type of cattle they run with their sugarcane and consider cattle condition more carefully so as to be better suited to supply feedlots. Consideration of establishing a local feedlot.</li> <li>A harvesting group has purchased a Corradini 2 in 1 since the TLOP. 8 other harvesting interests have signed an EOI in purchasing the conversion technology.</li> <li>Implemented changes in production and analysis within the mill.</li> <li>Harvesting groups rationalised into 1 group.</li> <li>Made recommendations to change price &amp; currency strategies for Ord industry – “but we didn't actually follow our own recommendations”.</li> </ul>
International tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working on preparing a guide for share farming arrangements</li> <li>BSES website updated with incursion pest management plans.</li> <li>The importance and value of quarantine is clear to more people in the sugar industry</li> <li>A large scale crop ripener project underway. Looking at opportunities for maximising sugar and harvesting technology.</li> <li>ISSCT might come on board now.</li> <li>Taking a different angle with long range forecasting that will be of greater benefit to the industry. The relationship with other researchers has been built, helped by the face to face communications. We are doing further research together and I think the findings will be the highlight of my career.</li> <li>Not sure of any changes.</li> <li>Developed incursion pest management plans.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expect that 30 harvesters will be fitted with the new technology this year.</li> <li>Better understand the problems in pulp and paper production and gas storage and how to handle them.</li> </ul>



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Conference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased confidence in extension role; willingness to suggest things that are 'outside the square'.</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for further research work have been taken up.</li> <li>▪ No immediate change as the entomology is not directly applicable but it does mean that we are prepared and have the contacts to follow up if borers do arrive in Australia.</li> <li>▪ Joint projects with a French research team. Some change in research techniques. Trialing new things.</li> <li>▪ It led to follow on work such as organising a conference and networks with Sweden and Canada.</li> <li>▪ Writing a number of papers that have been influenced by the information gained on the TLOP.</li> <li>▪ Submitted a proposal to SRDC (unsuccessful) to continue on with extension techniques.</li> <li>▪ One participant joined the local Generation Next group.</li> <li>▪ No changes made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Other people are starting to shift their farming practices and some have followed up with the FutureCane contact to get more information on their changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funds (\$7.4 million) have been gained to plan and build the first refinery (pilot) plant in the southern hemisphere for value adding to cane. Gained work with another company for the commercialisation of research.</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Deliver workshop/training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lost job within a year, suspect little change</li> <li>▪ The group members can now stand up and talk in front of people.</li> <li>▪ Developed a proposal for next part of the project to follow on from the TLOP.</li> <li>▪ Everyone thought the community engagement training was really good but nothing changed in people's daily work. However, it is important for industry leaders to have some understanding of the media.</li> <li>▪ A new SRDC research project is underway on mill-harvester communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some farms have adopted some new technologies.</li> <li>▪ Growers using or thinking about changing to different varieties of sugarcane.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The pricing structure for harvesting has been looked at in more depth.</li> <li>▪ Hopefully someone will invest in the new harvesting technology and take the project forward. Growers will hopefully get charged according to the cost of the harvest now.</li> <li>▪ Communication between harvesters and millers is slowly getting better. Information is being collected and going on the web.</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Site visit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No changes as yet but there is hope this will occur in the future when some research is undertaken.</li> </ul>		
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Women's TLOPs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More ladies are attending industry meetings.</li> <li>▪ 3 of the women from one TLOP have been employed by the Productivity Board to check for smut.</li> <li>▪ The women are more confident to contribute to their local community and within their family business.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One farm has introduced GPS on their tractors, others are trying new things.</li> <li>▪ Changed row spacing on farm.</li> <li>▪ Growers are checking their crops for insects now.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changes on farm have been occurring as a result of the new information, for example people are looking at Macadamia nut farming after the trip.</li> <li>▪ The mill receives more phone queries from growers about cane payment.</li> </ul>

## 8 CONTRIBUTION OF TLOPs TO SRDC'S INTENDED OUTCOMES

### Contribution to social outcomes

SRDC has articulated six core intended outcomes for their research and development investment. Travel and learning opportunities have a key objective of developing people in the industry. In this way they clearly contribute towards SRDC's two social outcomes:

- Enhancement of human capacity and partnerships between industry, research and regional communities to underpin change, learning and innovation
- An effective R&D capability underpinning industry futures.

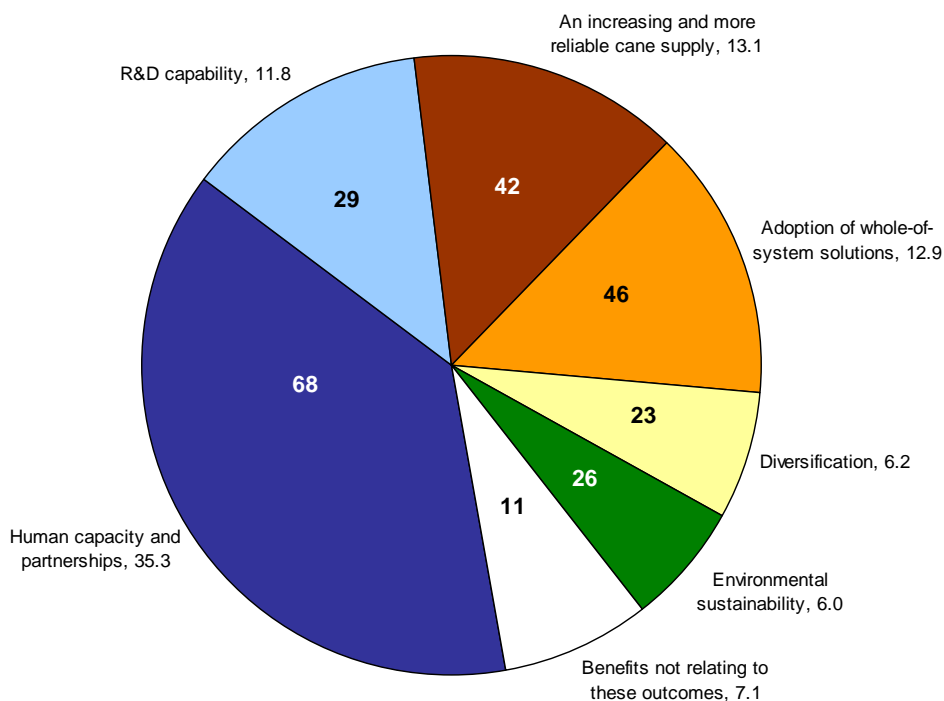
A few projects have focussed specifically on developing human, social and R&D capability. For example, the ABC group's 'Seachange' project which was for the specific purpose of developing participants' skills in working as a group.

### Productivity a key focus

For a large number of projects, the focus and outcomes is not only social, as evidenced in Table 5. Many projects focus on a specific technical area and seek to make a change in relation to that issue, as well as building the capacity of people to make the change. For some, the social outcomes are somewhat secondary, while others see the development of people's knowledge, thinking, experience, networks and/or skills as a key step towards achieving the productivity and sustainability outcomes.

Figure 17 depicts the estimated contribution, averaged across all projects, towards each of the SRDC outcomes. This is based on an indication from project leaders of the proportion of the benefits from their project to each of the outcome areas.

**Figure 17 Contributions of TLOPs towards SRDC outcomes (average of estimates made by project leaders)**



*Numbers after labels denote average % contribution to each outcome indicated by project leaders (from total 100% per project)  
Numbers on chart indicate % of projects that indicated some contribution to this outcome*

Of these responses, 15 projects attributed 100% of their outcomes towards one category, being:

- 9 projects entirely to human capacity and partnerships;
- 2 for R&D capability;
- 1 to whole of system solutions;
- 1 to environmental sustainability; and
- 2 to benefits not relating to these outcomes.

All other projects attributed outcomes to two or more of the SRDC core outcomes.

It is clear that on average across all projects, a high proportion of the benefits accrue to building human capacity and partnerships. The 'benefits not relating to these outcomes' were described as:

- "Increasing profitability and sustainability of the farm and district through acceptance and adoption of large harvest groups."
- "The knowledge and confidence gained from this project has been demonstrated through three of the participants from the trip being employed as Inspectors under the guidance of the Isis Production Ltd supervisor. These participants are able to use their knowledge gained from this project to help detect pests and diseases in the area (such as the incursion of sugarcane smut)."
- "Develop business opportunities."
- "Built relationships to achieve adoption of new systems."
- "Communication of each of the aspects [SRDC outcomes] through use of appropriate photographs - a picture tells a thousand words."

## 9 PERCEPTIONS OF THE TLOP PROGRAM

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### 9.1 Perceived value of the program

*“Good if you can get it”*

This quote highlights some of the broader thinking about travel and learning opportunities. It is widely supported by those who are recipients, while many others are less convinced of the value. One stakeholder described the sentiment as:

*“People who’ve been involved think it’s great. Those who’ve missed out think it’s a conspiracy.”*

**99% of recipients think TLOPs are great**

Almost all of those who have undertaken a TLOP think it is a great program (Figure 18). In particular, it is seen to be effective to broaden people's thinking, see different things, and pick up new ideas and skills. Projects leaders identified many and varied benefits gained from the TLOP program and their projects (Appendix 1).

There was only one recipient who did not consider TLOPs to be a worthy investment. Their TLOP was funded to present an ASSCT paper at SRDC's request. They did not see a need for TLOPs for most travel as they felt growers can take their own initiative to go and see other things of interest.

**Industry leaders**

Industry leaders support the TLOPs in principal for the range of benefits it gives, in particular to expose people to different ideas (Table 6). However, they do have concerns about which projects are selected and how the program is managed. They were generally supportive of the need to develop people in the industry, but held varied views of the TLOP program. In general, the TLOP initiative is supported in concept but there are concerns about how projects are selected, who is 'sent' on tours, what real outcomes are achieved, and the limited communication about the program and projects. There are perceived to be benefits to the individuals involved, but less benefit to the industry more broadly. Given the way the program is currently operating (Table 6). There is seen to be some potential to link the program with other initiatives in the industry.

The strengths of the program they identified to be:

- Value in providing extra information to people who can act as agents for change.
- Taking people out of their backyards and seeing things differently.
- The written objectives as described in the application kit.
- Empowering growers.
- Flexibility and diversity as it can be as big as your imagination.

The weaknesses they identified related primarily to the limited reach of the learnings beyond participants:

- No capacity, commitment or accountability of recipients to disseminate learnings to industry.
- Agents for change generally are not the target audience for the TLOP program.
- “TLOPs are a bunch of isolated activities, there is little cross-

pollination."

- Possibly lack of effective targeting.
- Uptake from reporting and ongoing outcomes for non-participants, this could leverage the value many fold.
- Needs to be more than the learning just for those who are there.

**Non participants**

Many of those not involved are sceptical about the value of the program. Some people have not participated because of the paperwork involved. Other non-participants are interested in gaining a TLOP, for example, so they can go to see Brazil.

**Perceived junkets**

Perceptions exist that at least some TLOPs are 'junkets' – a trip with little value. Even people who have been involved with TLOPs consider some other projects to be junkets. This perception appears to relate mainly to overseas tours where there is little communication of the findings.

**Lack of awareness**

*"TLOPs? Are they those tours for women?"*

Aside from those who have been involved with TLOPs and other industry staff, there appears to be very limited awareness of the travel and learning opportunity program. Several people are aware of some of the projects and may link this to SRDC.

It is interesting to note how frequently people commented on the tours for women's groups that have been funded by the program. Yet these comprise only a small proportion of the total suite of TLOPs.

**Figure 18 Project leaders' overall perceptions of the TLOP program**

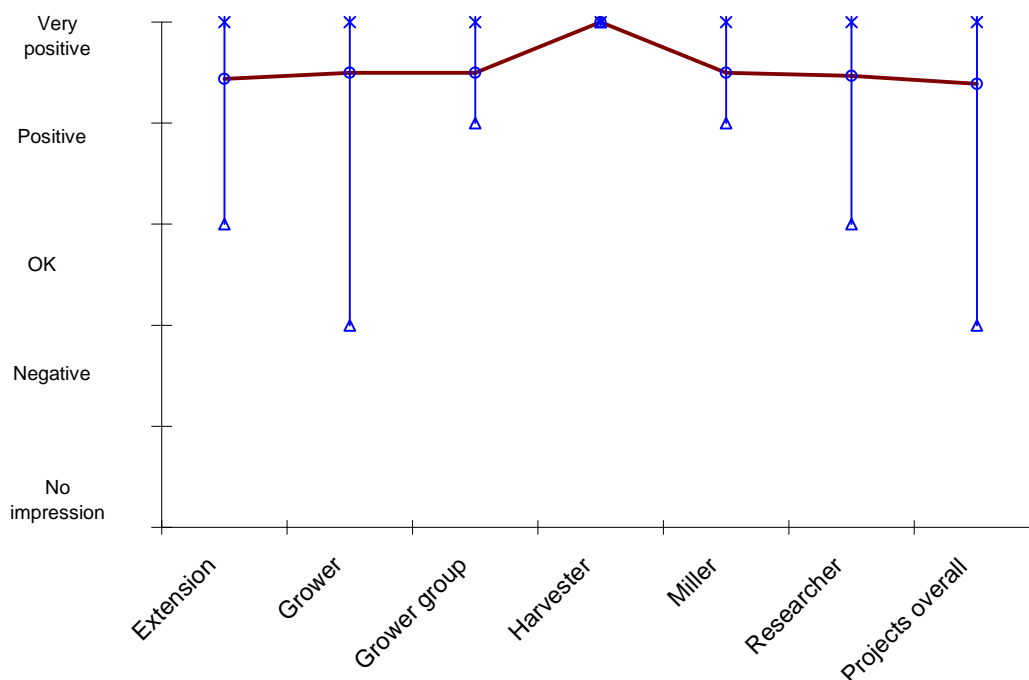


Table 6 Industry stakeholders' perceptions of the benefits of TLOPs

<b>Benefits to participants</b>	<p>Exposure to new trends, practices, developments and networking opportunities</p> <p>Exposing individual growers, miller, harvesters to different opportunities 'takes the blinkers off'</p> <p>Meeting face to face with others to share ideas</p> <p>'Seeing dirt, kicking tyres' is important to learning</p> <p>Forms lasting relationships</p> <p>Change in efficiency and productivity for those involved</p> <p>Empowers growers as they can access funds at a level they couldn't before</p> <p>The blue sky learning is of phenomenal benefit for researchers</p>
<b>Benefits to the industry</b>	<p>Potential dissemination of information, experiences, change management - but this is generally not realised</p> <p>Try to take the industry from a regulated environment to empowering people, not directing people what to do.</p> <p>Not well broadcasted to the industry</p> <p>Low communication</p> <p>Helps networking</p> <p>Communication during and before the TLOPs could be better</p>

## 9.2 Program management and administration

Overall, participants were happy with the program management by SRDC, though many felt that the process could be simplified.

*"Overall management is excellent. Generally responses were quick – quick decisions with less lead time. It's nice to know so planning can start. We were given the opportunity to submit a rough draft. Tracey read this and gave feedback to make our application better (in line with industry talk)." (Researcher)*

### SRDC support

Frequent comment was made about the support provided by SRDC staff, in particular Tracy Henderson, in preparing the proposal and the report.

*"SRDC have been very supportive. Tracey was a wonderful project manager, gave good feedback on the drafts. Clare has been recently helping out and is also very supportive." (Researcher)*

However, while there was good support for proposals, not all felt that they were receiving feedback on the final reports.

*"No feedback was given on the final report – I would have appreciated feedback. I don't know of anyone getting any feedback."*

### Application and reporting

Many people were frustrated by the program reporting and proposal process. This does not mean that people do not appreciate the need for reporting. Most recognise, and in many cases advocate, the need for reporting for communication and accountability purposes.

*"SRDC needs to ensure that the reporting of the TLOP is undertaken after the activity. They also need to ensure that the learnings are communicated to the whole sugar industry." (Grower)*

### Style and

While there is no doubt that many find the reporting onerous and difficult,

## language

much of the concern relates more to the style of reporting, particularly the language used. One grower was particularly frustrated that his report had been returned three times for what he thought were 'pedantic changes for academics'.

*"The final report and what is required in it is a painful process, they were very particular and sent it back 3 times before it was accepted. Is this necessary when not many people actually read the reports?"*

It is not only growers who found the process time consuming and difficult. Some researchers complained that the amount of time required to apply for, and report on, the project was inappropriate given the size of the grant (\$5-\$10,000). One researcher commented that it took longer to apply for the TLOP than it did for his PhD project.

This concern is not uniform as some people (generally experienced project managers) feel that SRDC has made the process very easy. The newer, simplified process is thought to be much better than the initial format.

*"SRDC have gone as far as they can to simplify the process, it's pretty straightforward"* (Extension)

A suggestion was made for SRDC to provide a few examples of 'good' reports so people could see what SRDC is looking for.

Some people felt that the proposal was simple while others found it very difficult. There was much comment about the need to use "SRDC speak" and that the language of the proposal form is not grower-friendly.

*"Preparing the proposal was not easy and quite stressful. The result was worth it."*  
(New extension officer)

Having the opportunity to apply for funding twice a year was considered important.

## Readership of the reports

There appears to be little readership of the reports. This is a cause of frustration for many project leaders, who question why they do the reporting and why it is not communicated in a more easily accessible format.

Others feel the reports are valuable sources of information.

*"It is easy to find reports online and it is a good way for the industry to look at it but I am cynical if anyone actually looks at it."* (Researcher)

It was suggested that an annual booklet of reports from TLOPs could be prepared, perhaps also incorporating grower group findings into this report.

## Unclear objectives

The flexibility and openness of the program was considered to be a positive feature to create ownership. It also enables people to investigate an issue/s that is important to them at the right time for them.

However, there was also uncertainty about what SRDC is looking for and what will be funded. Some people were perplexed to understand why other projects they had applied for were not funded. This has created some uncertainty about whether it is worth applying for a TLOP.

*"I really don't know what SRDC is looking for"*



There is real concern that some projects will not be funded because a similar project has been undertaken by another region. This is exacerbated by the limited communication between regions of the learnings of TLOPs.

*“It isn’t right that our region misses out on a project just because another region has done it. We haven’t done it ourselves and it’s about seeing it first hand and having the experience”*

Non-participants and industry leaders were particularly concerned about whether the right people were going to the right places for the right reasons.

**Recommended actions**

Some recipients had followed up on the recommendations presented in their final reports. There was not an understanding of what SRDC does with the reports, other than place them on the website.

*“What does SRDC do with the recommendations?”*

Other industry stakeholders were unaware of the recommendations. They understood that they could read them on the website but this is not time efficient. They would like SRDC to provide them with the recommendations.

**Communication**

As noted several times, the broader communication of TLOPs is an ideal opportunity for SRDC to promote good news stories and foster the sharing of ideas. However, this is currently a weakness of the program. While some individual projects are reported (not necessarily well recognised as SRDC TLOPs), there is a need for program level reporting that details what TLOPs have been funded and the key learnings from each.

There was suggestion to make the communication very simple but wider reaching. Each project could be required to report using two or three mechanisms (eg report, presentation, field day) and that this focus on:

- What I/we did
- My/our key learnings
- What this means, what we’ll do differently.

**Project selection**

There was a widely held view amongst project participants and industry leaders that it is important that TLOPs are provided to people who can have an ability to influence. This is a wide scope, but it highlights an expectation that the people who are provided with industry funds to travel and learn will return some benefit to the industry and will be the most suitable people to do this.

**Focussed projects**

There is also a feeling that projects need to have a purpose. Projects are thought to be most successful when they focus on an issue/s while still giving participants the opportunity to observe many other things.

**Co-contribution**

Growers, in particular, feel it is important that the participants make some contribution to the cost of the travel. SRDC funding to cover half to a third of the cost is considered reasonable. The split may vary depending on the expected level of personal benefit versus regional/industry benefit.

**Demand on SRDC**

SRDC have noted that with many small projects, this program demands a lot of program management time for a relatively small investment.



### 9.3 Identified areas for improvement

Both project recipients and other industry stakeholders identified a number of ways in which the program could be improved (Table 7). These primarily relate to the need for greater communication of projects and for a simplified application process.

It was also noted that some of the challenges people face in undertaking a TLOP are outside SRDC's influence. In particular, the time involved in getting away from the farm or other workplace.

*"The main difficulties with the program are largely outside SRDC control, namely (i) the time required for participants in the program to be absent from the work situation; and (ii) required company support for staff member to travel. The incumbent's TLOP grant was undertaken in vacation leave with limited support from employer."*

Table 7 Identified areas for improvement

Application, selection and planning process
<p><i>Recipients' comments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Application process needs to be made a bit easier for farmers to complete. When selecting proposals to fund, need to compare farmers with farmers and not farmers with researchers or extension staff.</li> <li>▪ Look at value for money. Maybe the maximum funds should be \$5,000 not \$10,000.</li> <li>▪ 2 calls for proposals a year is a good thing.</li> <li>▪ Lengthen the closing date for applications. Reporting needs to include stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Open to all growers and keep up the promotion.</li> <li>▪ Couldn't be any easier</li> <li>▪ An answer soon rather than later would be good, if we could submit a tick and flick thing to SRDC to see if it is going to be funded before the need to complete the whole application process. They are very particular about the little things, make sure to look at the big picture stuff.</li> <li>▪ Need to pull the industry together and find out what they need. The industry doesn't seem to be listened to. Draw up some KPIs with industry. This would make the industry more accountable.</li> <li>▪ It doesn't occur to people what projects might be possible – need ideas, examples.</li> <li>▪ Provide more prompting of the types of things that would be funded more broadly in the industry</li> <li>▪ The projects need to be appropriate to the needs of the people in the industry.</li> <li>▪ The need to justify what they are spending the money on but the whole process needs to be made simpler.</li> <li>▪ Provide funding to the project coordinator to organise everything and take responsibility for the project.</li> <li>▪ The promotion of the program needs to be broadened to the farmers, but you are always going to get people who say they have never heard of it or that will put in applications late.</li> <li>▪ The amount of reporting that is required for the amount of funding. The application process is ok for extension staff but not for growers.</li> <li>▪ A better budget to facilitate the travel to overseas countries. There is a greater appreciation for knowledge transfer and creating change by people experiencing new technology.</li> <li>▪ It can be difficult when the timing of TLOP activities is in the near future. If there is something that arises in the very near future that can be applied for and confirmation provided close to eg, the actual conference date, then researchers would be better able to make the most out of opportunities as they arise. The opportunity for last minute applications would be great rather than one year in advance (which may be before the conference date and agenda are announced).</li> <li>▪ Growers within each region need to do things themselves. Don't knock back a project just because it's been done by another region ie outcomes are regional not industry so need to allow regions the opportunity to do a tour that someone else may already have done</li> <li>▪ The paperwork needs to be tighter. It looks to outsiders that it is easy to obtain industry funds. The TLOPs need to be focussed on an industry benefit.</li> <li>▪ Different types of application forms so that a simple travel project has a simple travel application.</li> <li>▪ Streamline the application process would help so that it takes less time. There is still a need to argue your case so it's a fine line. Want the right people to get the funds.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Other stakeholders' comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Involvement by government and industry stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ More precise guidelines in the application process.</li> <li>▪ Have some high level planning but also allow flexibility. eg SRDC identify the key priority areas for each year.</li> <li>▪ Make sure people look at things that are useful.</li> <li>▪ Project application should show how change could be evaluated in time; but can't build this into the projects as it is too big.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TLOP process</b></p> <p><b>Recipients' comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project was managed well, but they need to keep in mind that not everyone that applies for a TLOP has the support of the organisation that they work for. This can make it very difficult.</li> <li>▪ Focus on something and have enough time at each place.</li> <li>▪ Having BSES or an equivalent organisation involved is useful – as can take the messages wider and have the contacts &amp; skills to organise. BSES will be considering the benefits and costs of staff involvement more carefully – need strategic alignment.</li> <li>▪ You need to be committed to get the paperwork done - but the level of paperwork is fair enough for what you get</li> <li>▪ People need to be made aware that they need to do some sort of evaluation during the TLOP so that they can demonstrate how they meet their outcomes.</li> <li>▪ There seems to be an unrealistic expectation about what the SRDC can get for their funding. What they tell that you need to do for the funding is not what you have to do in reality. There is also a need for another step after the completion of the project so that the enthusiasm continues on after the project and changes can be implemented.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other stakeholders' comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have an action planning session at the end of each TLOP - empower change</li> <li>▪ Cluster groups together to make more efficient use of limited funds and to avoid excessive demands on those visited</li> <li>▪ Have two parts of funding - one to go and look at something, the next to present it to others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p><b>Recipients comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SRDC needs to ensure that the reporting of the TLOP is undertaken after the activity and that the learnings are communicated to the whole sugar industry.</li> <li>▪ The program needs to be promoted in the local newspaper, photos of farmers on the TLOP. The other powerful communication tool is the ABC radio rural report in the morning. The other place for promotion should be at the productivity shed meetings.</li> <li>▪ Less reporting after the completion of the TLOP.</li> <li>▪ Feedback on the final reports that are submitted.</li> <li>▪ Much more communication of projects and outcomes</li> <li>▪ There needs to be some follow-up after the final report is written to see there are any changes being undertaken or developed as a result of the TLOP. There is also a lack of communication to the industry after the TLOP has been completed. Splitting out the research and extension capacity projects from grower capacity projects would probably give more farmers the confidence to apply for funding.</li> <li>▪ There needs to be more awareness of the projects undertaken, maybe that can be incorporated into the application guidelines that some research has been undertaken into if the type of project has already been completed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other stakeholders' comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A new marketing campaign for TLOP</li> <li>▪ Communication to get a bigger bang for the buck.</li> <li>▪ Deliver success stories to the industry</li> <li>▪ Make sure the good ideas circulate as efficiently as possible and to as many people as possible</li> <li>▪ Improve the reporting and on a continuing basis look at what they did after the TLOP</li> <li>▪ Do an annual report of articles from each project - a glossy publication with grablines and snippets. Produce a booklet with outcomes of the TLOPs from each year</li> <li>▪ Hold a workshop on an issue and get people who've had a related TLOP to give a presentation. Eg post-ASSCT. The GIVE day is an example</li> <li>▪ Hold a forum or have an opportunity for participants to present learnings</li> <li>▪ SRDC facilitate ongoing updates and happenings.</li> </ul>

Other comments, models and investments	
<b>Recipients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That there is some on the ground support for the growers applying for the funds. A number of growers have criticised the TLOP program as it has been perceived as a junket.</li> </ul>
<b>Other stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some SRDC investment in setting up things that people can participate in, then SRDC could part fund. eg AgTours could organise something</li> <li>Commercial sponsorship is possible for some things</li> <li>Need something to come out with the key learnings presented</li> <li>Have some focussed activity - key groups to identify key needs for the next 2-3 years.</li> <li>Commission some key TLOPs to be organised to address the key issues; but don't stifle individual initiative</li> </ul>

#### 9.4 Support for ongoing investment in TLOPs

##### Participants and other stakeholders conditionally support investment

Both participants and other stakeholders supported continued investment in TLOPs by SRDC.

*"It enables groups that are not self funded the opportunity to participate."*

*"A great cost effective vehicle to share information, available to all involved in the sugar industry."*

*"There's always room for the sugar industry to be more innovative. It is a conservative industry by nature."*

*"The TLOP is a sensible way to promote personal and professional development in the research community for the benefit of the sugar industry."*

Many made their endorsement of ongoing investment conditional on some improvements to the program.

*"Yes, if tighter results - oriented criteria are initiated."*

*"Yes, but it may not go forever."*

##### Keep total funding pool at a similar level

A selection of industry leaders and advisers were asked to identify a suitable level of investment. None of those people interviewed were aware of what the current level of investment is. They generally felt an investment of \$200,000 is suitable and there is no need to increase this.

##### Participants provided detailed comments

All but one project leader believed that it was worthwhile for SRDC to continue to invest in TLOPs. Many of the comments and caveats provided with this endorsement relate to areas for improvement of the program management. These comments include:

- Yes, if the program was changed to incorporate an ongoing education program to enable participants to manage the fear of change.
- Include practices already available but too expensive for the average farmer to do e.g. laser levelling.
- More accountable, outcome focussed and directly linked to research or development performance indicators.
- Perhaps better targeted outcomes, as there has been criticism of TLOP's by some people.
- Change the SRDC's key outcome criteria.
- Recognition of the costs of getting a grant and the salary commitment of the company involved would be beneficial.

- Allow applications to be lodged at any time.
- Reduce the application and reporting requirements, especially for small projects.
- I think all participants should be required to report.
- Reduce the pressure on the big final reporting.
- Streamline and reduce paperwork involved.

**80% have or will apply for a TLOP again**

Project leaders were also asked to indicate whether they would apply for a TLOP again.

- 23% have already applied again.
- 57% will in the future.
- 18% may apply again.
- 2% won't apply again.

The reasons people gave as to why they will apply for another TLOP are provided as Appendix 2.

The reasons people gave as to why they would not apply, or are uncertain were:

- It can be a lot of work with applications and milestone reports.
- It depends on whether we still have a sugar industry in the Ord.
- I prefer to have one on one. My time is valuable and I only target particular items of interest.

#### 9.4.1 Targeting TLOP funds

Considering there were many comments about the need to fund the 'right' TLOPs or the 'right' people to undertake TLOPs, it is interesting to note that both participants and stakeholders felt there was no need to focus on specific types of activities.

Most recipients considered that TLOPs should be left very open in terms of both the type of activity and who could be involved. There is also a strong feeling from both recipients and other stakeholders that there is a need to fund those people who can have a broader influence in the industry, either through communication and/or other avenues (Table 8).

Table 8 Perspectives about who TLOPs should be targeted towards

Recipients	Other stakeholders
<p>Over half of the recipients felt that TLOPs should be open to anyone who is interested. Others suggested to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growers</li> <li>▪ Grower groups</li> <li>▪ Millers</li> <li>▪ Upper level growers and those 'coming through the ranks'</li> <li>▪ Decision makers</li> <li>▪ Researchers</li> </ul> <p>Additional comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It needs to influence or benefit the sugar industry rather than an individual within the industry</li> <li>▪ Ability to disseminate information</li> <li>▪ Based at the grass roots.</li> <li>▪ Open it up more for the milling sector to fully participate.</li> <li>▪ Remain farmer focussed rather than researchers, so farmers can see what they are getting for their funding.</li> <li>▪ Problem is that innovators tend to be those who go – but perhaps this does then flow down the chain much quicker.</li> <li>▪ Especially those where you take farmers away on a trip.</li> <li>▪ It's good to have at least 2 people travel so can share ideas.</li> <li>▪ Avoid being prescriptive.</li> <li>▪ Keep it quite broad.</li> <li>▪ Open the eyes of the sugar industry decision makers to what is going on in other countries.</li> <li>▪ Focus on the personal development of young people.</li> <li>▪ Different types – growers groups; researcher; industry leadership</li> <li>▪ Selection should be based on people's capacity and ability.</li> <li>▪ Encourage more extension staff to be enthusiastic about putting in applications on behalf of grower groups.</li> <li>▪ The benefits need to be for the industry and the projects need to be relevant for the individual or group.</li> <li>▪ Leave it up to the individual requirements and interests.</li> <li>▪ Focus on individual travel rather than group.</li> <li>▪ Some skills development for industry members (eg facilitation)</li> <li>▪ Researchers and conferences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focus on those who can benefit more for the industry. Industry representatives and future leaders - those who have capacity to disseminate and influence through networks and bring about change. Graduates of the future leaders programs who participate in industry organisations.</li> <li>▪ Research professionals - individually or with growers in a mixed group.</li> <li>▪ Have two or three groups aiming at similar outcomes and integrating.</li> <li>▪ More selective targeting of individuals, less scattergun.</li> <li>▪ People who can make a difference and deliver a message.</li> <li>▪ Some leadership is needed in identifying opportunities.</li> <li>▪ More grass roots involvement.</li> <li>▪ Younger to middle aged farmers.</li> <li>▪ Farm employees and owners, harvester owners and operators.</li> <li>▪ Research capacity - do they have enough funds to do this themselves? A lesser priority than growers.</li> <li>▪ There are always those who are keen and interested, they are at the forefront and others look to them.</li> <li>▪ Use a free market approach - the less shackles the better.</li> <li>▪ Target those who wouldn't do the activity without the funds.</li> <li>▪ Aim for some immediate change and some blue sky - with the same balance as SRDC has in other investments.</li> <li>▪ Low uptake by millers (there are a lot of misconceptions).</li> <li>▪ Lots of researchers use it - shouldn't this be the role of the research provider?</li> <li>▪ People with the ability to learn and apply and also to disseminate and influence (change agent).</li> </ul>

## 10 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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### In principal support

Travel and learning opportunities are supported in principal as a valuable way to nurture people in the industry and to achieve change. Generally they are considered good value for money. The investment of around \$200, 000 per year was considered to be about right.

### Features of success

The key features of successful projects include:

- Focus on a specific issue or theme, while also being open to additional learnings;
- Leadership and facilitation;
- Debriefing of findings and what this means for the group, region and/or industry;
- A suitable mixture of participants, tailored to best suit the issue and the required change;
- Readiness – timely targeting to a need and interest, which is enabled by the openness and flexibility of the program;
- Communication internally and to others;
- Co-contribution from participants;
- Hearing from respected people and seeing or experiencing things first hand.

### Room for improvement

There are concerns about whether all projects are a worthwhile investment and how the selection is made. There are considerable concerns about the lack of communication of projects and the program as a whole.

Key suggestions that have been made include:

- Target people who can have an influence
- Mix the groups involved in each TLOP so that a cross-section of industry members is involved (eg grower-researcher; cross regional)
- Much more communication of findings
- Sharing of recommendations so industry can work together to action these where appropriate
- Simplify the language of the proposals/reporting
- Keep it flexible but also be clearer about expectations.

The strengths and weaknesses of the TLOP program, and the opportunities and threats for its future directions, are presented in Table 9.

### Future directions

A key decision for SRDC will be to determine its longer term role in supporting travel and learning opportunities. SRDC staff have noted that the current program has been in part about changing the culture in the industry, in particular the willingness to travel. If this can be fully successful then SRDC will be able to step away from funding the activities.

A key decision for the longer term is for SRDC to determine whether it wants to continue to fund the actual travel and learning activities. Alternatively, SRDC may choose to invest in the 'infrastructure' that readily enables effective travel and learning while requiring individuals to fund their own participation in the activities.

For example, this 'learning infrastructure' may include logistics, planning,

agenda development and facilitation for tours and workshops, the development of training courses and the fostering of linkages between learners.

**Table 9 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the TLOP program**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Confidence building</li> <li>▪ Broaden minds</li> <li>▪ Bring new thinking and willingness to change</li> <li>▪ Can increase the rate of adoption of changes</li> <li>▪ Flexible</li> <li>▪ Encourage initiative</li> <li>▪ Networks</li> <li>▪ SRDC's input and assistance (in particular from Tracy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poorly communicated</li> <li>▪ Risk of duplication of projects</li> <li>▪ Little linkage across regions</li> <li>▪ Unclear prioritisation / selection of projects</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partner with other programs/providers</li> <li>▪ Create linkages</li> <li>▪ Invest in the 'infrastructure' that enables easy access to learning (eg arrangements, linkages, courses) rather than necessarily funding each learning activity</li> <li>▪ Clarify the role of extension staff in preparing proposal and leading projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'Welfare dependency' – the risk that people will learn not to travel without a grant</li> <li>▪ Disincentive to travel and learn without TLOP funds</li> <li>▪ Perceptions of poorly communicated projects / 'junkets'</li> <li>▪ Unable to fund the level of interest may lead to disempowerment</li> </ul>



## 11 WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING?

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### 11.1 International examples

#### Most programs have similar activities

A brief review was undertaken to investigate what other activities are being undertaken internationally. It is evident that most people development programs operating internationally and across a range of disciplines involve similar types of activities as those funded under the TLOP program.

#### International capacity development programs

As an example, a China / Australia health and HIV/AIDS facility will provide funding opportunities to develop people's capacity. The list of suggested activities involves:

- Advisers for technical or policy assistance
- Joint or independent research
- Planning and scoping missions
- Capacity assessment and development within agencies
- Customised, on-the-job training courses
- Attending short or long term training programs
- Train the trainer
- Establishing communication systems between agencies
- Study tours (subject to careful scrutiny)
- Exchange programs
- Workshops, seminars, conferences
- Scholarships
- Organisational twinning (eg partner Australian and Chinese agencies)
- Infrastructure and equipment
- Development of guidelines, manuals.

These projects are larger than the TLOPs, being between \$20,000 - \$500,000 in size. People interested in undertaking a project will approach the facility who will then fund a third party to help the applicant to prepare the proposal. This third party role is, in some ways, similar to the role currently played (less explicitly) by extension staff in the TLOP program, though a key difference is that the extension staff are usually then involved in the project.

Similar activities form part of other international development programs, including a current agricultural research and extension program in Vietnam.

#### Travel awarded as a prize

The Zimbabwe cotton industry had offered a study tour as the prize for the cotton grower of the year. For example, one grower used her prize to travel with a colleague to visit the Australian cotton industry and research facilities. She was then required to provide a report back to a subsequent meeting of the cotton growers association.

This concept may have particular relevance to SRDC. For example, the SRDC innovator awards could be provided as a travel opportunity.

Other industries have funded a competitive, annual scholarship for a young achiever to travel overseas and undertake a key training course relating to their industry.



**Structured programs**

The Canadian Agricultural Skills Service (CASS) funds a personally tailored program of skills development.

“Financial support, such as tuition fees for courses, textbooks and travel while attending training away from home, is provided for eligible participants with an approved Individual Learning Plan, who are pursuing new skills to capture new opportunities.” The program will work with eligible participants to develop their individual learning plan. Eligibility requires that farmers and spouses have a net income less than \$45,000 or that they are beginning as farmers.

**Sabbaticals**

Sabbaticals are commonplace by staff of university-based extension services in the USA. This generally involves an extension specialist working at another research agency for a period of 4-8 weeks. Often they work on a specific issue while they are on their placement. The Australian sugar industry has previously hosted some of these placements.

Multi-disciplinary groups from US extension teams undertake study tours to visit a similar industry in another country for 1-3 weeks.

## 11.2 Other Australian industries

A range of different people and leadership development activities are undertaken within the rural sector by research and development corporations, industry bodies, state farmer organisations, research and development agencies, governments and others. Examples of these are provided below.

**Structured, industry specific training**

In a more structured learning program, the cotton and grains industries, in partnership with The University of New England, have developed a tailored graduate diploma (also available as a diploma) to strengthen industry advisory capacity.

**GRDC**

Grains R&D Corporation have various initiatives that aim to develop growers, students and researchers. They provide travel and training awards and opportunity to obtain funding to attend conferences or undertake study tours.

Additionally, they support the Australian Rural Leadership program, Nuffield scholarships and their own 'Research Horizons' course. Developed together with BRI Australia, this Research Horizons course aims to develop leadership skills in potential future leaders. The course 'widens the focus of participants beyond their own business on regional, national and global issues facing the industry.' Selection is competitive for the 16 positions on each course. It is structured into two stages of three days each (usually in July/August) over two years, in order to allow sufficient time to provide adequate coverage of the material and to allow the participants time between the two stages in which to develop their own ideas and network with other participants. <http://www.grdc.com.au/growers/skills.htm#industry>

### 11.3 Targeted travel

It was interesting to note that the majority of participants only consider SRDC as a potential source of funding assistance. There are many other opportunities that SRDC could actively promote or link with. There are also several commercial travel opportunities.

#### Commercial travel providers

Where travel is simply to broaden people's experience, commercial travel providers who offer targeted tours may be suitable.

Greenmount Travel and Quadrant Australia (previously AgTour Australia and ANF-Agritours) offer international tours for the agricultural sectors. Quadrant traditionally has greater participation of cane growers, though participation has declined with the financial situation of the industry. For many, these tours are largely viewed as a tax deductible holiday while also providing an organised tour with some agricultural interest.

Both operators claim that a key value lies in the interaction of people from different agricultural sectors and from across Australia, some of whom follow up on these networks after they return home.

Quadrant offer a place on a tour as a prize for a young competitor in the Royal Easter show.

Both agencies are interested in talking further with SRDC about opportunities to organise the logistics of targeted travel or for sponsored places on tours.

#### Elderhostel

Elderhostel is a US not-for-profit agency that provides travel opportunities worldwide – “adventures in lifelong learning”. They create linkages with groups within Australia. For example, in Tasmania they utilise university facilities during semester holidays.

#### Volunteering

Volunteer work in developing nations is an opportunity for people to broaden their experience while also sharing and developing their skills.

The Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development “places skilled young Australian volunteers, aged 18-30, on short-term assignments in developing countries throughout Asia and the Pacific.” These placements of 3-12 months are usually linked to a specific project, several of which are in the agricultural sector. <http://www.usaid.gov.au/youtham/>

Australian Business Volunteers draw on the skills of people with experience in a range of businesses for short term placements on specific projects in the Pacific and South East Asia.

#### Exchange

or

#### seasonal work

Agricultural exchange programs provide an opportunity for young people to travel to another country and work in agriculture. Hosting someone on exchange is also a means to widen horizons. For example: <http://www.agriculturalexchange.com/>.

In some sectors it is common for young people to travel and work overseas. For example, taking time out from work in Australia to work a grain harvesting season in the USA is quite a popular activity.

**Other funding opportunities**

Several other grant and scholarship programs are regularly being offered. For example, Nuffield scholars, Churchill Fellowships, Rotary exchanges and various programs through DAFF.

Agribusinesses have often sponsored travel or workshops.

**Private activity**

Private activity and travel remains a key mechanism for travel and learning. With careful management, the SRDC program may contribute to creating a culture that embraces travel and learning. A risk that needs to be managed is that people do not come to expect SRDC funds as an essential requisite before they will undertake travel.

## 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

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These recommendations are provided by drawing from the breadth of report findings and considering other initiatives and the future considerations for SRDC.

### 12.1 Investment

#### 1. Continue to invest in travel and learning opportunities at a similar rate

A continued investment, in the order of \$200, 000 per year, in people development through travel and learning opportunities is supported.

Many of the projects have been good value for money and are contributing to developing people and also changing practices and culture. However, SRDC's role has been to foster some change in culture while also encouraging the adoption of R&D. This has been a seed role and it should not become an expectation that SRDC will continue to fund several trips for the same people simply to expand their thinking.

Therefore, it is not considered to be necessary to increase the funding allocated to the program.

### 12.2 Clear objectives

#### 2. Clearly redefine the objectives of the travel and learning opportunity program and determine its future

The flexibility of the program is valued and as a result there are varied outcomes that can be obtained. However, it is important for SRDC to clearly articulate what they are seeking to achieve through TLOPs or an equivalent program in the future. Competition for funds will likely increase with the growing awareness of the program and it is therefore necessary to clearly articulate what features will make projects more favourable.

These objectives, to be linked to the new SRDC strategic plan, may be articulated in terms of the intended outcomes in the areas of:

- People development
  - Leadership capacity
  - Scientific capacity
  - Capacity for change
  - Cultural change
  - Networks and linkages
- Change in practice at farm, harvest, mill or whole-of-system scale.

Each project may be expected to achieve two or more of these objectives.

### 3. Target projects with clear intended outcomes and purpose

Projects that have a focus have been more successful than the general 'look-see' tours. It would be worthwhile for SRDC to select projects that have a specific purpose that will contribute towards SRDC outcomes.

This is particularly relevant for overseas tours; if they do not have a specific purpose and are not well led, there is a high risk that they will be perceived as 'junkets'.

Make note in the project application process that this clear purpose is expected and that international tours will be subject to particularly close scrutiny to identify the value to industry.

## 12.3 Project management

### 4. Consider using two modes of investment in travel and learning – open call and targeted activity

The open call would be similar to the existing process and would comprise the majority of the program. This is important as it enables ownership, innovation and timeliness.

The targeted activity would focus on one or two high priority issues each year that are likely to arise across regions and which would benefit from cross-regional participation. An example could have been controlled traffic farming which most regions have, or are wanting to, investigate.

It may also be that a targeted activity is arranged as a research planning tool with a small group sent to investigate a new, emerging issue and identify what this means for the industry and the research needs. Such a group would involve a suitable cross section of industry sectors.

SRDC may call for a list of ideas, or may consult with industry representatives to draw up a list. This list would then be reviewed to identify which issues would benefit from a cross-regional, targeted travel and learning opportunity. SRDC could contract a third party to arrange the logistics of the tour and then make an open or targeted invitation for participants.

In this way, SRDC can pre-empt some emerging issues and provide the linkages for interested industry members to investigate a common issue together.

### 5. For SRDC funded research projects, incorporate researcher travel to conferences or study tours into their project funding rather than through TLOPs

This will reduce administration and reporting and also allows the investment to be more strategically linked towards enhancing the quality of research. This is also an opportunity for SRDC to encourage research or extension staff, who have not previously undertaken travel or learning for their own professional development. Some people would appreciate this as a reward or recognition for their work. It also allows SRDC to encourage researchers to network more broadly, even if they do not themselves see the need to.

**6. Simplify the language of the application process and focus thinking around benefits to industry, benefits to individuals and intended communication of the learnings**

If the aim is to have industry members apply for funds, the language needs to be simplified. The application process should encourage people to clearly articulate their idea and the need for it. Language, eloquency and familiarity with the SRDC process should not be a major criteria for selection.

## **12.4 Project leadership**

**7. Carefully consider the role of the leader/facilitator and have strategic discussion with providers**

Regardless of what SRDC does to simplify the application and reporting process, not everyone has the interest, skills, time or inclination to lead a project. To get the best people involved in a TLOP it will often be advantageous to have a staff member who can facilitate the process. These leadership skills are important to the project's success and future directions after the project.

It would be worthwhile for SRDC to have strategic discussions with agencies such as BSES and CSR (and perhaps others currently external to the process), about what this role entails, where it is appropriate and how it is resourced.

**8. Encourage more linkage between groups/sectors/regions with similar interests**

TLOPs have been successful in creating linkages and networks. This has been particularly worthwhile where the group has involved a cross section of relevant sectors (eg growers, researchers, millers, harvesters). Greater cross-regional involvement would be valuable for some issues.

For example, researchers may be encouraged to link with key industry members to investigate the emerging issues in their field of work and identify how this relates at an industry level. This may be more easily managed as an additional part of the research project.

## **12.5 Communication**

**9. Significantly increase the communication effort linked with TLOP**

There are two levels of communication required:

- a. communication of the program as a whole and of what projects have been funded;
- b. communication of key learnings from each project.

The first needs to be undertaken by SRDC. The second is undertaken by the projects but needs assistance from SRDC, to ensure that the communication occurs more widely and in a manner that enables the project to be recognised as a TLOP. Projects cannot be expected to provide a much greater level of written reporting considering they are small in total.

There may be scope for the reporting to be replaced with the writing of an article, with only slight appendices to be added for the SRDC report.

An improved coding and web presence could be prepared to enable people to select the reports/articles that are of most interest. For example, to select all project reports that relate to wide swath harvesting technology.

Presentations to groups of peers (eg local industry or research colleagues) should be a required form of reporting from all projects.

**10. Compile an annual or biannual booklet of travel and learning project reports and case studies that is targeted to all industry members**

This booklet would include details from all TLOPs in that period. The focus would be on the key learnings of the projects, what it means for the participant, and their recommendations. Case studies would further explore what people have done after the completion of older projects.

This may be published as a separate booklet or SRDC may investigate ways to incorporate the sorties into other industry publications.

**11. Collate recommendations and work together with others to review these and plan actions**

Several recommendations require action by different sectors of the industry. SRDC could collate the recommendations from each project report on a yearly or twice-yearly basis and provide these to other industry bodies for further discussion and development of actions.

## **12.6 Other opportunities**

**12. Consider other ways to encourage industry members to travel**

SRDC needs to take care that there is not an expectation that it will fund all travel that may be beneficial. Through clear guidelines, and promotion and encouragement of alternative options, SRDC can encourage people to make the most of alternate avenues to travel.

An example may be for the SRDC innovation prize to be offered as a travel opportunity where the recipient is then requested to provide a presentation of their findings. To encourage the younger generation, a competitive scholarship may be established for a young achiever to travel to attend a conference or training course. Commercial sponsorship may be sought to cover the costs of this.

**13. Consider also longer term placements**

In order to build research and development capability, there may be benefit in longer term placements such as sabbaticals or exchange programs where people can work through a research issue in a different environment and in partnership with other researchers. SRDC may contribute a portion of the funding towards this. If the sabbatical is the most effective way for the industry to achieve the research outcome, then SRDC may choose to contribute a larger portion.

**14. Encourage industry members to apply for other travel and learning opportunities**

Many other opportunities exist; SRDC can be active in promoting these and in encouraging (and even assisting) people to apply for them.

### 13 APPENDIX 1 - BENEFITS OF PROJECTS

Participants' perceptions about the benefits of the TLOP program and the projects – from the perspective of growers, harvesters and millers who have led TLOPs, and from the leaders of the women's projects

	Growers / grower groups	Women's projects	Harvesters	Millers
<b>Overall</b>	It is an opportunity to do what I want to do. The opportunity to do something that wouldn't have happened without SRDC funding.	It has opened up opportunities and contact that wouldn't normally be available.	It's basically free money to go do things you'd like to do. The funds give extra impetus to go and do something to broaden your horizon.	
<b>Information delivery</b>	To get information in front of people so that they can see what is going on. Insights into innovation.			
<b>Capacity</b>	Growth in people by training people to learn.	Capacity building		
<b>Social capital:</b>	The contacts formed during the travel. The contacts that were made overseas on the TLOP.	The networks gained. Meeting other people working in agriculture. The conversation between the women on the bus about their learnings – these networks have developed further.		
<b>Culture and Thinking:</b>	Getting out and looking around and not so insulated. To become more aware of what is going on outside the area. The TLOP is available for the innovator to take the invention from the inventor to the fence sitter. It is about breaking down the insular environment and attitude that growers live in.	To think about new things. Learning about other industries in agriculture.	Cultural change	Introducing new concepts and research to the industry. People development is needed to bring about change. Projects are valuable where they build people's skills & knowledge, confidence and networks. See what other people do in other areas.
<b>Providing an experience:</b>	Seeing is believing. Opportunity to get out and look at different things. Helps people who are low on cash to look around. You are able to experience first hand how other forms of agriculture or sugar operate. It is great for gaining experiences. "14 growers went on the tour and we all got something different from participating. For me it was how they monitor their business, their approach to farming, the farming system trials, the proactive self regulating industry and cross interests in the whole industry sectors".	To get out and see what other people in agriculture are doing. Access to an experience that wouldn't otherwise wouldn't happen due to the cost. Getting out of the area and looking at the way other people do things.		



<b>Knowledge:</b>	Knowledge gained about EMS and that it doesn't have to be difficult to implement on farm. The in paddock trial proved that the idea was successful and that it could be undertaken on a commercial scale with a bit more research.	Going out into the fields and learning how to identify different bugs. knowledge of other industries within agriculture.	Gaining knowledge that has worked in NSW.	Understanding the Brazilian ethanol industry better.
<b>Learning from other's experience:</b>	Go and see what other people are doing in other areas or industries. Sometimes growers get more out of visiting a farmer's shed in another district because they see something innovative and new to them. Because growers don't have a history with the grower we visit the communication channels are fully open. Learning from other people's experience. Gives the chance to link with other people and learn from their experience.	Meeting the sugar ladies from NSW and learning about how they do things down there.	See how others do things; Saves money rather than chop and change all the time – if you see what someone else does it might save a few steps. Learn how others do things.	Ability to become more productive and to learn from other people. The application of lessons learnt from other mills that were visited on the TLOP.
<b>Confidence:</b>	Confidence in public speaking. Able to give a presentation to the industry.			
<b>Communicate</b>	The reports from the TLOPs have a lot of knowledge and learnings in them. Sharing their situation and ideas with other farmers. Ability to pass on information gained from the TLOP. "It can also be good when people/groups visit my farm, it depends on who comes, some are genuinely interested."	The industry is gaining knowledge by the ladies bring the knowledge back to their local areas and travelling to share their learnings.	Highlighted better communication they needed between mills and harvesters. Led to a full project on mill-harvester communication.	Information returned to growers through the cooperative. Participants were also able to ask questions of the presenters. Sharing of ideas between the mills at the workshops.
<b>Project Management:</b>	The project management skills	Confidence and learning on how to organise a group.		
<b>Industry bodies</b>		Gained more knowledge about what the leaders are doing for the industry and have increased confidence in how their levies are being spent. Gained knowledge and experience into sugar research that is underway.		
<b>Impact</b>	A new idea, perhaps slightly modified to suit their conditions, will make growers more profitable or viable when applied back home.			Maintain efficiency and enhance sustainability of farmers. Impetus for further work and farming system change. A series of projects have emerged from it to further develop CTF, strategic tillage, legumes, etc. Gave the impetus for farming systems work by those motivated enough.
<b>Other comments</b>	I've been on quite a few trips over the years. They're good but you don't really learn a lot. I've learnt more from looking outside the sugar industry than within – looking at other farms, not cane farms			

Participants' perceptions about the benefits of the TLOP program and the projects - from the perspective of extension, research and other industry bodies who have led TLOPs

	Extension	Researchers	Other industry bodies
<b>Overall:</b>	A great opportunity. Great value for money for SRDC.	Opportunities that wouldn't be there otherwise as BSES have limited funds. Ability to attend international conferences that wouldn't otherwise be possible as CSIRO requires industry funding.	Excellent way to help out all different sectors of the sugar industry.
<b>Information delivery:</b>	The adoption of new innovations and to fast track new technology. Delivery of new technology. Conveying scientific knowledge and new technology to growers within the industry. It is a cost effective method of relaying information to growers. Helps us do what we do in extension/advisory roles.	Gain information to share with farmers in their cooperatives. They can see things that are going on outside the industry. Improved direction for the training supervisor package for the mills. It was also about keeping the mills informed about the latest research.	
<b>Capacity:</b>	Capacity building for individuals.	Increased knowledge and capacity in my field of research with an ongoing benefit to the industry (provided research is successful).	
<b>Social capital:</b>	Networking and meeting different people. Interaction with different agricultural sectors. Growers from 4 different areas interacting with each other for 4 days. Develop networks within both extension and sugar. Contacts and communication	A key benefit is the research contacts. New connections with quarantine organisations. The personal networks. Building new networks both in Australia and internationally and building onto existing relationships. Realised the importance of networking. Developed contacts and has access to more information. I have developed a highly relevant linkage with a researcher in Sweden working on making paper from bagasse. Meet other people and network around the world.	Relationship building - breaking down the adversarial nature of miller-grower relationships 'collaborate to compete'
<b>Culture:</b>	Region is better prepared to try new ideas and staff are also better prepared and open. Not as many 'knockers' of new ideas. More growers are now more open to different ideas. "It really broadened the minds of some relatively conservative people by getting them out of their own area, exposed to different things."	It is expanding the variety of knowledge within the growers. It is helping them to grow as an industry. Industry as a whole has increased knowledge, skills, networks.	
<b>New thinking:</b>	Exposure to new ideas, coming face to face with another way of thinking or solving a problem. It challenges the thought process and the way that I do things. I can look at new technologies. Confidence – getting farmers out of their zone of familiarity. Thinking in a slightly different way about things they take for granted. To look outside the square. Broaden horizon, open minds.	It was an eye opener. Good to have people aware of things outside their own backyard. Extension people should get out more. Maintain / catch up with rest of the world. Opinions changed, eye openers. Learning and information gained. Ways in needs assessment not used before. New thinking. To individuals involved: increased networks and linkages.	Bringing in expertise that doesn't currently exist in the area is major benefit to the industry. The program allows people to get out of there area and to think about things differently.

<p><b>Knowledge:</b></p>	<p>Industry members can learn about new technologies and techniques that are available and being used elsewhere. Getting the growers out of their region to look at new farming systems and new technology. Seeing how others are doing it. Getting to talk to other farmers. Being able to compare different broad acre practices and grower groups. Knowledge – broaden understanding of what goes on and that other industries are also dealing with a need for change. The increased knowledge of different varieties of sugarcane in Australia. Gain knowledge about what happens internationally.</p>	<p>A quick way to gain a lot of information, an efficient way of learning. Gaining biosecurity experience from another country. The scientific knowledge. It gave a greater insight into the issue, by speaking one on one with individuals. Also gave access to websites and grey literature that would have taken time to find. Found out where Australia sits compared to other countries. Learnt about the attitudes to quality and safety. Provided new information, useful skills that I would otherwise not been aware of and have been able to implement in our project here. From talking with peers I have realised that we have something to offer and aren't far behind the global scene. Background information and direction for research.</p>	<p>Knowing that the growers have learnt something and will hopefully put it into practice. Learning controlled traffic and minimum tillage. Diversification of the industry.</p>
<p><b>Providing an experience:</b></p>	<p>Going and seeing it rather than just reading about it. The opportunity to go away and have a positive experience without the financial strain. Best way to learn is to see it and be amongst it. Eye opener to go to Brazil and see how they operate. It enables lots of people to be exposed to a number of different things.</p>	<p>Learnt more about what other countries are doing. It was more about experiencing something rather than learning new skills. Exposure to science and a broad spectrum of the work that is out there. Experience what other people are doing elsewhere. Experience different things outside the industry.</p>	
<p><b>Learn from others' experience:</b></p>	<p>Get to go and see the dos and don'ts that other people have already done. You can learn from their experience. To see the new technology in operation and talk to the owners of the technology about the reliability of the machinery.</p>	<p>Getting to know another, similar organisation and see how it works, the procedures in place. Corporate governance right through to detail – compare with BSES systems and adapt. Experiencing something different and learning from other people's mistakes. Travel to conferences provides a broader perspective so we can stay at the forefront of research, realise what others are doing, take learnings from elsewhere and apply to current research. The Australian industry is insular and can benefit from attending high flyer conferences. We are isolated from Europe and the USA where the forefront of research seems to be. By attending conferences and gaining networks we can catch up on the lag between research and the literature available. Saw the problems in other countries and how they got over them.</p>	
<p><b>Confidence:</b></p>	<p>Really gave farmers a boost in confidence in doing new things</p>	<p>Judging the work done against a benchmark and gaining feedback. Gaining the confidence and knowledge that I am on the right track. Has helped sharpen the next step in our research. I am more confident of our research path. Confidence in how to do things.</p>	<p>The confidence to talk to growers about the knowledge gained.</p>
<p><b>Addressing issues:</b></p>	<p>To explore different avenues for dealing with a specific issue or problem - eg season length. It allowed specific funding for an important issue for the industry. Looking at diversification and the possibility of other market opportunities – eg to supply cane tops to feedlots.</p>	<p>An understanding of where his work fits in with the water quality regulations.</p>	

<b>Communication:</b>	The knowledge gained from the trip is brought back and shared with the industry.	The feedback from the trip was given to the industry They can then compare the industry with other countries. TLOP enables the writing of the report - for \$5,000 the whole industry can know what happened at workshop. Provide information to a lot of people and coverage.	An industry library of photographs that can be accessed by everyone.
<b>Professional development:</b>	To broaden mind, experience and confidence. Improved credibility with growers as having a first hand experience of a situation elsewhere carries more weight when talking with farmers. Present at a conference. To expose a young staff member to APEN networks.	It was helpful to put thesis in context, Gained more writing skills by undertaking the TLOP process. We presented a paper and poster at the conference - this gained interest and brought out useful suggestions that have contributed to the project.	
<b>Motivation:</b>	A professional 'shot in the arm' – a boost. Without opportunities like this I'm not sure I would have stayed working with the industry for so long. It gives you a boost, come back fired up and enthusiastic. It's also a reward that keeps you motivated at work.	Maintain enthusiasm in doing the research. I'm not sure I'd be as keen to work here without having opportunities like this.	
<b>Project Management:</b>	By undertaking a TLOP as a first major project it gave confidence and knowledge to do other projects. Not a lot of increase in project management skills for experienced staff.		
<b>Industry bodies:</b>	TLOPs have exposed more people to who SRDC are	Learn idea to make BSES a better functioning organisation, make better use of funds. Make suggestions also to other industry organisations so they can also adapt.	
<b>Impact:</b>	It is about improving the sustainability and profitability of the sugar industry. The industry can gain from the economic and environmental benefits of growing soybeans. New technologies adopted in the region in the following year.	Preparedness for a pest invasion. The research end of the industry is kept up to the mark. Make sure we are working on relevant topics. Impacts of the TLOPs are longer term but they are keeping our research on the right path to get there. The international perspective has highlighted knowledge gaps. Sharpened focus of research so that research is prioritised – meaning better spending. Impact- increased knowledge, skills, understanding.	The industry benefits from the knowledge gained by the growers and extension staff.
<b>Other comments:</b>		It is a reflective process. Farmers are able to directly participate in TLOPs rather than research projects.	There is a wide criteria for projects - it is very open.

## 14 APPENDIX 2 – REASONS PEOPLE WILL APPLY FOR A TLOP AGAIN

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Project recipients provided the following reasons why they will, or might, apply for a TLOP again.

- Certainly excellent value for money, increasing knowledge and skills, as well as networking benefits.
- TLOPs are a great way to learn and to broaden your experience and your mind
- Because a similar opportunity arose.
- It is a good means of increasing your knowledge and skills without the financial burden that normally limits such activities.
- Excellent program and high participation from growers.
- Suits relatively small individual exercises.
- Provide opportunities. The experience and knowledge gained was beneficial to the industry, individuals involved in the TLOP. Made participants think more laterally.
- They are a tremendous opportunity for industry personnel to gather knowledge first hand.
- We were declined on a second proposal we had prepared, but may consider one again in the future if circumstances warrant.
- The best way to learn is to go and see how other people are doing things.
- Brilliant way to take growers to other regions/ bring 'experts' to our region to share knowledge.
- It takes a lot of commitment to bring these things together and it has been my experience that TLOP itself is great. However to bring about meaningful results and to achieve value the momentum generated from TLOPs is very difficult to capitalize on.
- Believe that the trip away, people will get benefits from it. More benefits from travelling in the future.
- Very good value to fund good ideas that we couldn't afford to do in the past. But it is getting hard to come up with new farming practices when a lot of the old ones are working so well.
- OK in the past.
- It is a great program to allow those not funded by their employees.
- Great opportunity to undertake project that build capacity without the research requirements.
- Further learning for family.
- It is a relatively easily accessible source of funds to see how others do things.
- Helps to further the knowledge of the women in sugar group in their industry and to gain knowledge of other industries with application to their farming business.
- A great opportunity to see & learn what others are doing. The funding offsets the costs, which ensures a higher participation rate of industry stakeholders.
- It would be a good opportunity for me to learn more about the industry in which I wish to take a more prominent role in the coming years.
- Have been successful in the past, application quite easy, provides opportunities for visits/visitors that would be unavailable otherwise.
- I find TLOP very helpful in building up experience, skills, confidence and knowledge on how other do things, similarly or differently. When it comes to my area (Biosecurity), it is very important to learn about exotic pests and diseases and their management overseas so that we are prepared in case of sudden pest incursion.

- The TLOP program is an innovative way of broadening the experience of researchers in the sugar industry and helping them stay connected with the world leading research.
- The experience was valuable to my research and professional development. Maintaining contact with the international research community is very important, but is often difficult to find funding.
- As I have finished my PhD, I don't know how much longer I'll be involved in the sugar industry. However, if I do stay in sugar, I'll certainly apply again if the opportunity arises.
- I get pretty good opportunities to travel. I would only apply if I wanted to go on a trip that had aims consistent with the TLOP scheme, and funding was an impediment.
- Yes, if I was employed in sugar industry work in the future.
- It is an excellent program that has substantially broadened both my knowledge and personal contacts in the field of co-products, especially given the relative lack of commercial experience regarding value adding processes in Australia. I look forward to future visits if appropriate that can build on this knowledge base.
- Gives opportunity to undertake work, discussions, attend conferences that could not otherwise be funded.
- There are advantages in the University environment to gaining grant income. The biggest concern is the lack of any salary support. The salary costs associated with the administration of the grant (applying and report writing) are almost as greater as the value of the grant.

## **15 APPENDIX 3 CASE STUDIES**

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As agreed with Claire Power, the case study are being prepared as stories suitable for publication and will be provided once they have been checked by participants.