2025 Leadership Programme

Strategy & People Action Lab Report

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Introduction

The 2025 Resource Alliance Leadership Programme was co-designed with participants, based on an extensive consultation with and surveys of leaders across the sector, to ensure the content delivered on the ambition and priorities of the group.

The 2025 programme consisted of four Leadership Summits, six regional Peer Leadership Groups and four Action Labs addressing the topics our community of leaders told us mattered the most to them right now – Innovation, Strategy & People, and Climate.

The Action Lab covered in this report is Strategy & People. Over the course of the year, this group met four times online (2-hour meetings) and once in-person/hybrid during the IFC 2025 conference.

In the first Action Lab meeting, the participants used an online Miro board to share the areas of Strategy and People they would most like to tackle as a group, and then co-created an 'Action Framework' covering their Vision, Goals, Strategies & Measurements, which was then used to guide their work together for the rest of the year.

The next page of this document contains the full Action Framework co-designed by the Action Lab members in **Meeting 1**, then the remainder of the report details their progress in achieving the goals set at the start of the year.

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Leadership Programme 2025 Strategy & People Action Lab

VISION – What is our shared dream?

We envision leadership as a collective, inclusive practice that centres wellbeing and resilience as strategic priorities. In a time of uncertainty, polarisation, and shifting workplace dynamics, social impact organisations must evolve not just what they do, but how they operate. By equipping leaders to navigate complexity and foster healthy team cultures, we aim to inspire a sector-wide shift toward ethical, human-centred strategy. Through tangible tools and shared stories, we will highlight what inclusive leadership can look like in action.

GOALS
How do we make our vision concrete & measurable? How high do we set the bar?

- Develop a **Reflection Tool** to help leaders create inclusive environments, built on ethical decision-making, and designed to prevent burnout. This will include a **Conversation Guide** for leaders and teams to explore these themes together – including navigating sensitive cultural or generational tensions. The goal is to support organisations in fostering dialogue, and co-creating healthy and resilient teams.

- **Collect and publish 3–5 case studies** showcasing organisations that model inclusive leadership and have created high-performing and fulfilled teams. Potential format: a mini-publication highlighting "Workplaces that Thrive 2025."

- **Document and share best practices** on inclusive culture, safe environments, and intergenerational collaboration.

STRATEGIES
What important choices do we make to realise the vision?

Collaborative Practices & Comms
- Shared commitment to attend (or catch up on) Action Lab sessions
- Use of RA's Community Platform and/or WhatsApp for day-to-day engagement
- Clear, shared timelines and realistic planning (acknowledging the "planning fallacy")
- Shared Trello/Asana/GANTT chart to track activities, outputs, responsibilities, and timelines.

Learning & External Inspiration
- Invite sector and non-sector thought leaders to provoke fresh thinking
- Research and share best practices from within and beyond the cohort
- Conduct mid-year reflection to reprioritise or refine group goals
- Present at least one learning output at IFC 2025.

MEASUREMENTS
How do we measure progress once action areas are identified?

Progress Tracking & Reflections
- Pre/post surveys to track shifts in confidence, leadership readiness, and wellbeing
- Individual reflection logs: "what I tried, learned, or changed—and why it matters"

Impact Metrics
- Minimum 3 external experts engaged in Action Lab presentations
- Minimum 200 peers reached when sharing practical tools from Lab

Reporting Formats
- End-of-year detailed report
- Short, engaging video presentation or 1-page visual summary/infographic for external sharing
- Participation in end-of-year cross-Lab webinar.

ACTIONS
Meetings scheduled to pursue goals

Action Lab Meeting 1
Wed 26 March
12:00 - 14:00 GMT

Action Lab Meeting 2
Thu 12 June
13:00 - 15:00 BST

Action Lab Meeting 3
Wed 3 Sept
13:00 - 15:00 BST

IFC In-Person Meeting
14 - 17 October

Action Lab Meeting 4
Wed 5 Nov
12:00 - 14:00 GMT

Executive Summary

This report covers in detail how the members of this Action Lab achieved the goals they set themselves at the start of the year through their Action Framework.

On this page, we provide a quick summary of progress against each goal:

Goal 1: Develop a Reflection Tool to help leaders create inclusive environments, built on ethical decision-making, and designed to prevent burnout. This will include a Conversation Guide for leaders and teams to explore these themes together – including navigating sensitive cultural or generational tensions. The goal is to support organisations in fostering dialogue, and co-creating healthy and resilient teams.
The Action Lab fully completed this task and ended up developing two separate but interlinking modules – the Personal Reflection Tool and the Conversation Guide (for 1:1 *and* group conversations). The group decided that these tools should focus on one particular topic and the one of most urgent interest to the group was 'Wellbeing & Burnout' – so that is what they focused on when developing these resources. The tools can be viewed in full as accompanying documents to this report.

Goal 2: Collect and publish 3–5 case studies showcasing organisations that model inclusive leadership and have created high-performing and fulfilled teams. Potential format: a mini-publication highlighting "Workplaces that Thrive 2025."
This task was also a success. Over the course of the year, the Action Lab interviewed five inspiring female leaders from across the sector – based in UK, USA, Netherlands, India & Ghana. The mini-publication detailing the results of these conversations is another accompanying document to this report.

Goal 3: Document and share best practices on inclusive culture, safe environments, and intergenerational collaboration
This goal was achieved through the completion of the two other goals already addressed above. In particular: The reflection tool and conversation guide will help leaders create inclusive cultures and safe environments, and the case studies covered best practice on intergenerational collaboration.

Meeting 2 Agenda

Time	Focus
10 mins	Welcome, scene-setting, agenda overview
10 mins	Final review of Action Framework
60 mins	Interview with Amanda Seller, President US & VP Global Partnerships & Philanthropy, MSI Reproductive Choices "Leading for 2025"
30 mins	Group discussion on steps to achieve our goals outlined in the Action Framework, particularly the Reflection Tool and Conversation Guide
10 mins	Next steps / looking ahead

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Meeting 2 Outcomes

Amanda Seller Interview Notes
President US & VP Global Partnerships & Philanthropy, MSI Reproductive Choices

Amanda Seller is the President of MSI United States and Vice President of Global Partnerships & Philanthropy at MSI Reproductive Choices, a global organisation focused on providing sexual and reproductive health services in over 3O countries. Her global team includes over 25O people working across fundraising, advocacy, and partnerships. Amanda is based in Washington, DC, and has spent her career leading international teams in large NGOs.

Amanda's Leadership Philosophy and Practice

1. Leadership Mindset & Motivation
- Amanda sees herself as a "servant leader" — her goal is to empower others to do their best work.
- She emphasized the importance of "leading with values" and constantly interrogating whether her leadership is making people feel safe, supported, and effective.
- She also referenced her deep commitment to feminism and social justice, which underpins her leadership ethos.

2. Intentionality in Team Culture
- Amanda spoke about being extremely intentional about team culture.
- She described how she conducts onboarding sessions to explain not just the what of their work, but also the how — including how the team is expected to show up for each other.
- At the team level, she encourages a culture where everyone has a voice, practices empathy, and calls out behaviors that don't align with shared values.

3. Brave Conversations
- Amanda talked extensively about the importance of "brave conversations" — engaging in open, honest discussions around conflict, equity, power, and accountability.
- She has supported team-wide training on how to have difficult conversations and normalize feedback.

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- She gave an example of a team member who questioned a decision Amanda had made, and how that moment reinforced her belief in the value of transparency and vulnerability as a leader.

4. Flattening Hierarchies
- She's actively worked to flatten hierarchies and remove "ego-driven leadership."
- Amanda described steps they've taken at MSI to decentralize decision-making and increase the visibility of programmatic staff in strategic discussions.

Practices that Support Inclusive Leadership

5. Reflection and Feedback Loops
- Amanda leads regular "pulse checks" with her team to gauge how people are feeling and what needs to change.
- These are not formal evaluations, but rather open invitations to reflect — this directly aligns with the Strategy & People Lab's idea of a Reflection Tool.

6. Conversation Tools
- She shared that they use a "meeting agreements" framework, where norms are co-created for how people behave in meetings — this includes calling in vs. calling out, giving space for all voices, and using inclusive language.

7. Accountability Culture
- Amanda stressed that values-driven leadership is not about being "soft." It requires a strong commitment to accountability.
- She's implemented clear metrics around team culture, including surveys and facilitated spaces for team members to speak candidly about leadership.

Outcomes & Advice for Other Leaders

8. Advice for Leaders
- Be clear about your "why" — what motivates you and how that connects to your leadership.
- Prioritize people — especially in high-pressure, high-impact spaces like fundraising and advocacy.
- Build reflective space into leadership — constantly ask, "Is this still working?" and "Who is this serving?"

9. Inspiration for the Lab
- Amanda's entire approach provides rich material for the Lab's case study series on inclusive, values-driven leadership.

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- Her use of structured tools like meeting agreements and reflection surveys, along with her open style of communication, can directly inform the Lab's work on a Reflection Tool and Conversation Guide (Goal 1 in the Action Framework).
- Amanda's framing of "balancing ambition with care" could be used as a prompt or diagnostic in the tool.
- Her approach to psychological safety, decentralisation, and values integration can inspire self-assessment questions.

Working Groups Homework – Reflection Tool & Conversation Guide

Between now and our next full Lab meeting (Tuesday 3 September), we're going to meet in smaller sub-groups to explore this goal in more detail and begin shaping our approach. This guide offers a structure and questions to support your discussion.

The Goal:
"Develop a Reflection Tool to help leaders create inclusive environments, built on ethical decision-making, and designed to prevent burnout. This will include a Conversation Guide for leaders and teams to explore these themes together – including navigating sensitive cultural or generational tensions. The goal is to support organisations in fostering dialogue, and co-creating healthy and resilient teams."

1. What might the Reflection Tool actually look like?
- Should it be a **survey**, **quiz**, **prompt bank**, or something else entirely?
- Could it be **modular** — one part focused on personal reflection, another designed for team conversations?
- Who will use it: only **leaders**, or leaders **and** their teams?
- How do we ensure it's **adaptable** to different leadership levels and cultural contexts?

2. Where should we focus?
The current goal is broad — but should we **hone in** on specific leadership challenges to make the tool more impactful? For example:
- Leading **intergenerational** teams
- Managing **different work styles and personalities**
- Addressing **burnout and wellbeing**
- Leading through **change or crisis**
- Building skills in **difficult conversations and inclusive communication**
Could the Reflection Tool allow users to select which of these areas they want to focus on?

3. What tone and language should we use?
- We want to **invite reflection**, not assign judgement.
- Avoid jargon. Use **plain, inclusive, culturally neutral** language.
- Frame the work around **hope, growth, and values**, not just deficit or "fixing."

4. What should the Conversation Guide include?
- Suggestions for **when and how** to initiate team conversations
- Questions leaders can use in **different contexts** (e.g., check-ins, performance reviews, team meetings)

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- Ways to **build psychological safety** and hold space for different voices
- Advice on **navigating sensitive topics** or generational differences
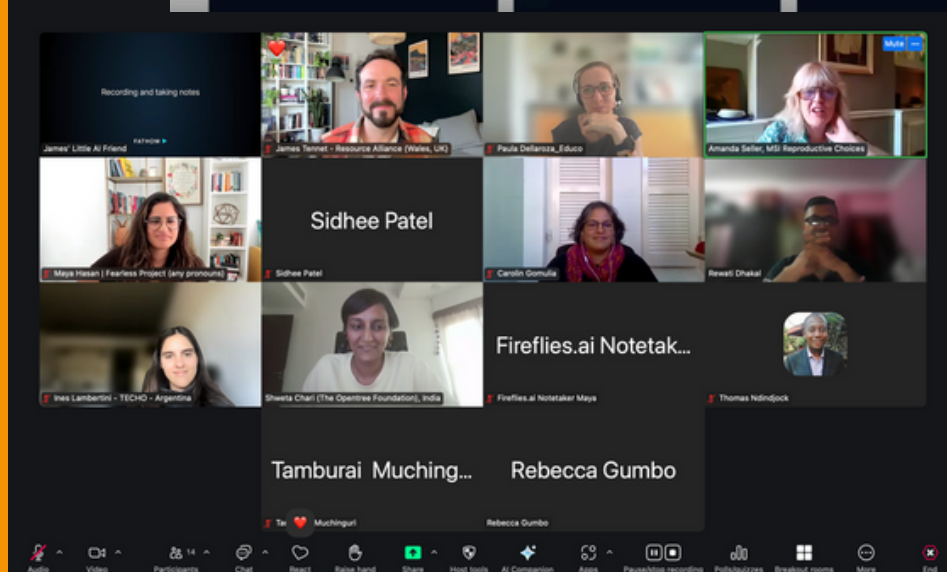
5. Who is it for?
- Should the tool be tailored to **senior leaders**, or **mid-level/emerging leaders**, or both?
- How can we make it **accessible across geographies and organisational types**?

Research: What Already Exists?
We don't want to reinvent the wheel — just build something that's **fit for purpose** and useful for our community. If you've used any similar tools or frameworks before, please share them so we can make sure we don't replicate, but also explore how we might be able to borrow and adapt certain elements.

You don't need to produce a final product from your meeting— this is a **thinking and shaping exercise**.

After your meeting, **please send 5–8 key takeaways or recommendations to James.** The Lab Leaders will review all group insights in early August and use them to co-design the agenda and approach for our next Lab meeting.

Meeting 2 Visuals

Meeting 3 Agenda

Time	Focus
5 mins	Scene-setting, agenda for today, recapping our main goal, confirming the desired outcomes from today
45 mins	Breakout group work developing the Reflection Tool and Conversation Guide
50 mins	Interview with Asha Curran, CEO at GivingTuesday "Leading for 2025"
15 mins	Wrap-up and next steps – IFC in October, final meeting in November

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Meeting 3 Outcomes

Asha Curran Interview Notes
CEO at GivingTuesday

<u>Snapshot: Career Path & Context</u>

- **Non-linear route into leadership.** Asha began in book publishing, later worked as a freelance publicist, became a doula/childbirth educator, then moved into cultural programming and debates/lectures before stepping into innovation at the 92nd Street Y—where she co-created GivingTuesday.
- **GivingTuesday's rapid, community-first birth.** Conceived and launched in roughly **six weeks**, catalysed by network energy (including a notable tweet from Bill Gates on the eve of launch).
- **From side project to global nonprofit.** Early on, **no full-time paid staff** worked solely on GivingTuesday; volunteers and partners "made it their own." Five years in, a funder-mandated **strategic plan** led to a spin-out from 92Y into an **independent nonprofit**. Today, the organization is ~**70 people**, with **about half the work focused on data**.

<u>Asha's Leadership Philosophy & Practice</u>

1. F**ollow the energy; keep structure light.**
GivingTuesday grew because people could adapt it locally. Asha underscored **co-creation** and **user-generated participation** over heavy brand control: "the less branding you have all over something, the more likely someone is going to engage with it."

2. Skeptical of rigid strategy—pragmatic when needed.
She's "anti–strategic plan" by instinct, preferring emergent, responsive building—but acknowledged times when a plan is necessary (e.g., to unlock funder support and formalize a spin-out).

3. Model the behaviour you want (especially around work).
Asha spoke candidly about being Gen-X and rejecting overwork as a model—wanting to be the kind of leader whose team doesn't copy poor work habits.

4. **Learn from past leaders—replicate the good, refuse the bad.**
She intentionally **copies "what worked"** from previous bosses and **consciously avoids** behaviours she experienced as "awful… or misguided"—noting that **"not doing the things"** can be as important as doing the right things.

5. Trust multi-generational intelligence.
Early growth thrived when **social media interns** led the charge. Today, she relies on **younger employees** to read tech/social shifts; senior leaders should listen and enable, not gatekeep.

<u>Movement Design & Communications</u>
- **Keep it porous and participatory.**

From day one, GivingTuesday's success rode on **people making it their own** with minimal centralized rules or branding. That stance invites broader ownership and scale.

- **Evolve past legacy fundraising playbooks.**

She contrasted **inauthentic, top-down appeals** with the immediacy of **crowdfunding, peer-to-peer, mutual aid, and giving circles** that meet people where they are now.

- **Data as a core capability.**

Roughly **half of GivingTuesday's work is data**, reflecting a commitment to understand real behaviour and iterate accordingly.

<u>Wellbeing & Burnout (For Leaders & Teams)</u>
- **The root problem isn't perks; it's meaning and momentum.**

Asha cautioned that burnout isn't solved by benefits alone. The real signals are loss of momentum, optimism, energy, excitement, and enthusiasm—and leaders owe people work they can feel good about.

- **Boundary-setting by example.**

She aims not to normalize "always-on" patterns. Leaders must demonstrate healthy boundaries to make them safe for everyone else.

<u>Governance & Fundraising: Where Leadership Must Step Up</u>
- **Boards & CEOs own a lot of what's "broken."**

When fundraising underperforms, Asha places significant responsibility on CEOs and boards for poor direction, lack of investment, and failure to grasp current engagement dynamics—not on frontline fundraisers.

- **Close the representational gap.**

A recurring sector disconnect: boards often don't resemble the communities served, weakening feedback loops and decision quality. Leaders should diversify boards and invite real constituency input into governance.

Practical Practices Noted

- **Let go so others can lead.** In the early years, **decentralized initiative** (even led by interns) outperformed tightly-controlled campaigns—and drew senior attention only after visible success.
- **Codify only what helps.** She resists bureaucracy for its own sake; planning and process are tools, not talismans.
- **Invest in insight.** Treat **data** as an engine for learning, not a compliance exercise.

Advice to Leaders (for 2025 and beyond)

- **Design for co-creation.** Lower the brand "walls," invite participation, and empower local adaptation.
- **Modernize your asks**. Retire 1980s fundraising instincts; align with **how people actually give today.**
- **Model wellbeing**. Don't valorize overwork; **set and show boundaries.**
- **Diversify governance.** Bring boards closer to the **communities you serve.**
- **Listen down the hierarchy.** Your **younger staff** likely have the sharpest read on fast-moving platforms and norms.

Why this matters to the Strategy & People Lab

Asha's story offers a live model of **inclusive**, **distributed leadership** that centres **trust**, **participation**, and **wellbeing**, while challenging outdated governance and fundraising assumptions—directly reinforcing our Lab's aims to document **practical tools and case studies for inclusive leadership and healthy, high-performing teams.**

**Collated Breakout Group Notes
Personal Reflection Tool & Conversation Guide**

RIORITY FOCUS AREA: Burnout & Wellbeing

Other areas we could expand to cover if time allows:

- Leading Through Change or Crisis
- Intergenerational Conflict & Engagement

Our work to include:

- **1–2–page intro explainer on the topic**
- (definition, why this matters for leaders, real-world case studies)
- **Personal Reflection tool**
- **Conversation Guides**

Optional extras

- *Suggested rituals or activities*
- *Optional tools (games, feedback forms, checklists)*

FORMAT & STRUCTURE – TWO KEY INTERLINKED MODULES

1. Personal Reflection Module

- Self-guided reflection prompts on burnout and wellbeing
- Reflective questions/journalling at regular intervals or post difficult scenarios

2. Team Conversation Module

- Playbook for structured dialogues in difficult conversations on the content area(s)
- Use-case templates (e.g., 1:1s, team check-ins, performance reviews)

TONE & LANGUAGE

- Plain, inclusive, **growth-oriented**
- Avoid "fix-it" language or jargon
- Use **values-led framing**: curiosity, accountability, hope, compassion

WHO IS IT FOR?

- **Primary audience**: Mid–level and emerging leaders
- Designed to be **relevant and usable by senior leaders,** too
- Consider different **leadership levels, cultural contexts, and organisational types** – cultural context universality is impossible, so encourage users to adapt to their own.

Starter Ideas – Personal Reflection Module

General self-reflection prompts – these are just starter ideas and will need tweaking anyway to fit the specific content area(s)

- What is working and what could be done better?
- How can I better support the team to deliver on their objectives?
- What assumptions might I be making about people's abilities, motivations, or cultural backgrounds?
- How do I ensure transparency and fairness in decisions that impact others?
- When did I last pause to consider who might be affected by a choice I'm making?
- Do I create space for conversations about workload, energy, and wellbeing?
- How do I stay open to perspectives from different age groups or cultural backgrounds?
- How do I communicate during times of uncertainty? What helps me stay grounded when leading through change?
- How do I support my team and others in managing uncertainty or disruption?
- When did I last pause to consider who might be affected by a decision I'm making?
- What values shape how I lead?
- When did I last change my approach because of someone else's perspective?
- Have I made a decision recently that felt misaligned with my values?
- What did I do about it?

Psychological safety – 'Do I invite questions and admit what I don't know?' Is the team empowered to speak up about mistakes or hard feedback?

Scenario-based journal prompts: Suggest a set of 10–15 short open-ended prompts for detailed reflective journaling after scenarios related to the specific content area(s)

Starter Ideas – Conversation Guide Module

Should function like a **"Leader's Dialogue Playbook"** offering:

- **Use-case templates** (e.g., project debriefs, performance reviews)
- **Sample prompts** (individual and team)
- **Pacing/rhythm tips** (e.g., when to check in, how often, how long)
- **Tips on building psychological safety** – adapted from Amy Edmondson's work?
- **Navigation guides** for tough or cross-cultural conversations
- **Tips for when to initiate conversations** (e.g., after a challenge, project completion, or when sensing tension)

For 1:1 check in – Regular touchpoints, after a challenge, when noticing stress
Do we want these to be general, or relate these specifically to the content area(s)?

- Starting with curiosity "I wanted to check in on how you're feeling about things lately, how are you feeling about everything that is happening?"
- Make space for both professional and wellbeing reflections "Is there anything that's been taking extra energy lately?" "What's been energizing or draining lately?"
- Invite feedback on your leadership or support "What can I do to support you better?"

For Group/team reflection – End/start of projects, post-challenges, regular reflection
Do we want these to be general, or relate these specifically to the content area(s)?

- Use open ended prompts like "What is working well for us as a team and what could we improve?"
- Invite everyone's voice "Let's each share one insight or observation from the last month." How do we make space for all voices in this discussion?"
- Normalize talking about wellbeing alongside performance "How are we doing, not just with work, but with how we're working together?"

For performance review – During formal reviews, career discussions
Do we want these to be general, or relate these specifically to the content area(s)?

- Integrate reflection questions before focusing on goals or performance "What are you most proud of this period/year and what challenged you?"
- Reflect on values, inclusion, and wellbeing alongside outcomes "How have you seen yourself contributing to team culture and inclusion?"

For sensitive/difficult convos – After noticing tension, conflict, or misunderstanding
Do we want these to be general, or relate these specifically to the content area(s)?

- Openness, listen first, affirm focus "I want to check in on something I noticed — can I hear your perspective?"
- "I care about our team and want us to be able to talk about this openly."

Additional Insights & Good Ideas to Integrate

- **Playful or ritual elements** to foster engagement (e.g., "two-minute openers" at team meetings) – create a "daily culture" that looks after the whole team
- **Guiding principles** that accompany the toolkit (e.g., "Lead with humility," "Reflect, then talk")
- Include **resource lists**: curated podcasts, articles, templates — with global contributors
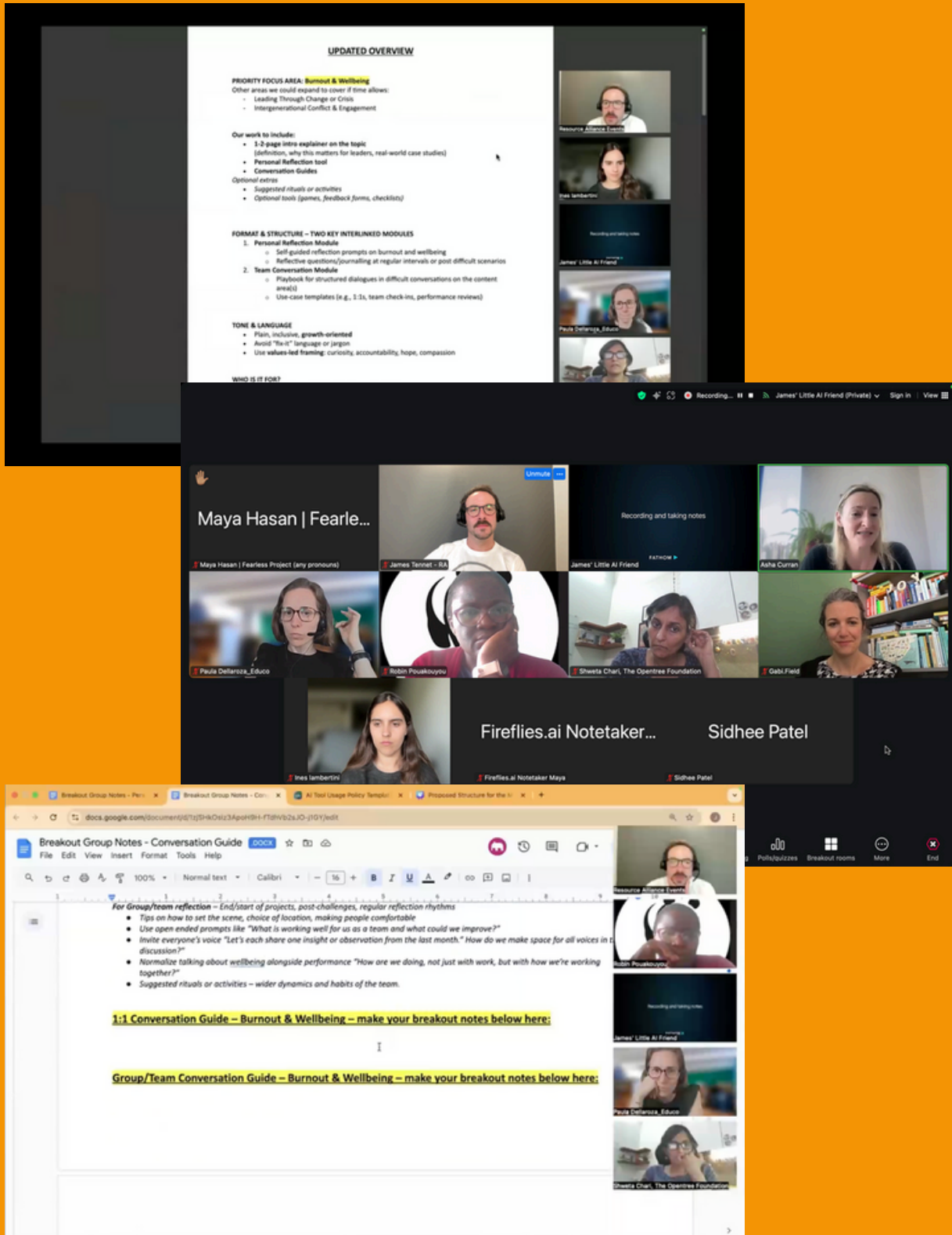- Consider piloting a version with a few organisations before IFC2025

Longer term
- Make changes based on user/community **feedback**
- Look to make it accessible in **multiple languages**

What already exists?
- Belbin Team Roles
- Kantor's Four-Player Model
- Ladder of Inference
- Manual of Me and Team Charters
- Fresh Air Leadership models (Psychological Safety stages, Drama Triangle)
- Salveo Partners tools on inclusion and wellbeing
- 360° Feedback tools for leadership development
- Team check-in templates (Trello, Excel)
- Personality profiling tools (e.g., introvert/extrovert assessments)
- Visual prompts and icebreakers for engagement (e.g., image selection, seasonal preferences)
- 360° self-assessment templates that include reflection on organisational values.
- Workplan-linked team feedback tools (e.g., shared Excel sheets).
- Case-based reflections around differing regional work norms (e.g., Friday prayer accommodations).

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Meeting 3 Visuals

Meeting 4 Agenda

Time	Focus
5 mins	Introduction and scene-setting
50 mins	Interview with <u>Julie Verhaar</u>, Executive Director Strategic Partnerships at European Climate Foundation "Leading for 2025"
10 mins	Presenting final versions of "Personal Reflection Tool" and "Conversation Guide"
20 mins	Group conversation for any final changes or developments needed for the tools
10 mins	Round-up final thoughts, thank yous, next steps

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Meeting 4 Outcomes

Julie Verhaar Interview Notes
Executive Director Strategic Partnerships at European Climate Foundation

Snapshot: Role & Context
Julie joined the session from The Hague, fresh into a new role after a brief break between positions. Her leadership career has spanned multiple organisations and leadership contexts. Her reflections focus on practical leadership in a world of constant change, the realities of hybrid/remote teams, and the day-to-day behaviours that build inclusive, healthy performance.

How Leadership Is Changing
- **Hybrid reality is hard—especially for early-career staff.** Julie worries about what younger colleagues miss when work is mostly online: the informal learning at "the coffee machine" after a meeting, the ability to quietly ask, "what did they mean?" It's much harder to read a room, inspire through a screen, or pick up cues you'd catch in person. Leaders need new "nuances" to compensate.
- **Change is the constant—so decide and move.** She avoids crisis-language and emphasises forward motion: when a decision is needed, take the best decision **for this moment in time** based on what you know, then move.

Inclusive Leadership in Practice
- **Make space for every voice.** Not everyone is comfortable speaking up in real time; offer multiple ways to contribute (e.g., chat) and actively invite responses.
- **Enable informed participation.** Send agendas and pre-reads—ideally a week ahead for critical topics—because people process information differently and may have additional access needs.
- **Name differences without blame.** On sensitive topics (e.g., identity and lived experience), encourage honest description over "name, blame, and shame"; you can "agree to disagree" while keeping dialogue open.

Managing Multi-Generational & Distributed Teams
- **Acknowledge the entry ramp.** It's a "really difficult" time to enter the workforce remotely; informal apprenticeship is thinner, so leaders must be more intentional about context, expectations, and check-ins.
- **Use rhythm to build trust.** Weekly 1:1s aren't a time drain—they're a **time saver**. They surface issues early and deepen mutual understanding before "the s**t hits the fan."

Wellbeing, Burnout, and Boundaries

- **Model personal guardrails.** Know your triggers and be transparent about them. Julie, for instance, avoids most social platforms because they "freak me out"; she's on LinkedIn only. Normalising boundaries signals safety for others to do the same.
- **Re-anchor in purpose—and stop doing.** Leaders must keep bringing people back to **why** we're here, and have the discipline to deprioritise or stop work that doesn't serve the mission; otherwise momentum and morale suffer.

Culture, Communication, and Context

- **Read culture before you speak.** Julie recommends _The Culture Map_ (Erin Meyer) to navigate national and organisational norms. What's normal candour with your boss in the Netherlands, for example, can be inappropriate in Japan or China; structure comms and escalation paths accordingly.

Careers, Roles, and Growth

- **Progress isn't only "up."** After serving as a CEO, Julie stresses that moving to a role reporting to a CEO isn't "going down." We should ditch the notion that the only growth is managerial.
- **Don't force people into management.** Not everyone loves people management— and putting non-managers into managing roles is a "nightmare." Organisations should create ways to grow expertise (and pay) without requiring a move into management.

What Inspires Her

- **Dolly Parton—seriously.** Julie cites Dolly Parton as a leadership inspiration (she once delivered a full IFC session on Dolly) and also references René Redzepi's lessons from high-performance kitchens. She reads widely and listens to podcasts to keep learning.

Practical Takeaways for Leaders

1. **Decide, then iterate.** Don't let uncertainty stall momentum; make the best call you can now and move.
2. **Design for inclusion.** Multiple participation modes + early pre-reads = better thinking from more people.
3. **Institutionalise 1:1s.** Weekly check-ins are preventive maintenance for teams.
4. **Model boundaries.** Share your own triggers and limits to legitimise healthy habits.
5. **Context matters.** Calibrate communication to cultural norms; one size doesn't fit all.
6. **Offer non-managerial growth.** Reward craft expertise without forcing people into people-management.

Final Review & Next Steps for Personal Reflection Tool & Conversation Guide

Overall design & purpose
The two tools were co-developed across the year alongside the leadership interviews, and that both are intended for leaders to use around **wellbeing and burnout**. They've been deliberately formatted to "look and feel" like a **matched pair** with consistent headings, a short purpose note, and clear sections.

Personal Reflection Tool (PRT).
Creative self-check options (choose what suits your style/time):
- **Blob Tree** exercise — choose figures that represent how you feel now/hope to feel, then reflect on *why*.
- **Wheel of Life** — segment a circle and score satisfaction (1–5) to spot areas of neglect/over-investment.
- **Fight–Flight–Freeze–Fawn** — recognise nervous-system states; ask if you're "in the right state" for a hard conversation and what might help you shift.

Prompt-based reflection in two depths:
- **Quick self-check scale (1–5)** with short prompts.
- **Deeper journaling** with open questions (including leadership-focused prompts).

Use philosophy. It's a **mirror**, *not* a checklist. There's **no "right rhythm"**; pick/choose elements weekly, monthly, or "whenever you feel off-balance."

Conversation Guide (CG).
- Two clearly separated flows: **1:1** and **Team** conversations on burnout/wellbeing.
- Each flow covers: **purpose**, **when to use**, **setting the scene** and environment, **tone & language**, **curiosity-based openers**, **deeper prompts**, **psychological safety tips**, **co-creating solutions**, **follow-up & accountability**.
- Team version adds **"reading the room"** and ideas for **ritualising** team wellbeing check-ins; links back to PRT (e.g., doing a **team Wheel of Life**) where appropriate.
- Both tools cross-reference each other before/after difficult conversations to encourage a **reflect–converse–reflect** loop.

Discussion: How to use, improve, and share
Format for the review
Answer two questions:
1. *What would make these tools most useful for you (or more likely to be used)?*
2. *Any other changes/tweaks you'd suggest?*

Initial reactions.
- Strong endorsement that the tools feel "ready" and practically useful. One member plans to start using them in **team meetings and catch-ups**.

Dissemination & discoverability (sector-wide).
Question: *How will these be socialised beyond the Lab?*
- Current approach: an **RA-wide email** early next year to ~**30,000 contacts**, linking to the final PDFs; last year's AI framework had **hundreds of downloads** from this route.
- Improvement needed: **better discoverability** beyond email (people miss emails). Plan to lean more on the **RA Global Community platform** in 2026 as a **go-to library** for knowledge, tools, and peer learning (not just event videos).

Translation, cultural context & adaptation.
Strong request to **support non-English use** and **contextual adaptation** (especially for grassroots and younger leaders):
- Aim to **pilot** dissemination across a **culturally diverse** set of orgs, then tweak.
- **Consider a volunteer translation drive** via RA's community/IFC volunteer base, or provide a permission note for local adaptation/translation (balanced with RA policy).

"We're not therapists" & safeguarding.
Concern: leaders may "open up" something they can't safely hold; how to "close the loop"? Agreed mitigation:
- Include **clear caveats/disclaimers** that leaders are **not therapists**; know limits and **signpost** when specialist support is needed.
- **Expert review pass** before public release: send tools to sector **wellbeing/burnout specialists** for feedback, *especially on psychological safety sections*.
- Add **region-specific help resources** (where possible) or a template **"Where to get help"** box that local users can customise.

Usability: modular & context-sensitive.
- Emphasise tools as a **"jigsaw"**: pick relevant sections to suit culture, capacity, and readiness; not every conversation goes to the same depth.

Evidence & feedback loop.
In addition to the mass email/public release, proposed a **structured pilot**:
- Recruit **volunteers** to use the tools in-house and complete a **short survey** (what worked, what didn't, what to change).
- Use findings to produce a **light "v1.1" update** and a short **learning note** for the sector.

Agreed edits & packaging (final polish)
1. **Add disclaimers/caveats** prominently (leader ≠ therapist; boundaries; signposting).

2. **Include a "Where to get help" panel** (with placeholders for **region-specific helplines/professional bodies** that users can localise).
3. **State modular use** clearly up front ("use what serves your context; pick & choose").
4. **Tighten cross-links** between PRT ↔ CG to reinforce the reflect–converse–reflect loop.
5. **Prep a short "How to roll this out internally" tip-sheet** (e.g., start with 1:1s; set norms; schedule a retrospective; gather feedback). *(Discussed implicitly via how teams intend to use the tools; converting that into a one-pager will aid adoption.)*

Testing & dissemination plan

Pilot (Nov–Dec):
- Identify **5–10 volunteer organisations** (diverse regions/org sizes) to **trial** the tools over 4–6 weeks.
- Provide a **brief survey** and optional **30-minute debrief** call for richer insights.

Expert review (Nov):
- Send PRT & CG to **sector specialists** in wellbeing/psych safety for a rapid **red-pen** review (language, boundaries, safeguarding, trauma-aware phrasing).

Localisation & access (Dec–Jan):
- **Call for volunteer translators** via the RA platform/IFC network; publish guidance for **light local adaptation** (examples: replace resource panels; adjust prompts/examples).

Public launch (Q1):
- **RA-wide email** (30k list) with direct download links;
- **Pinned post/library entry** on the RA Global Community platform (becoming the long-term "home" for the tools);
- **Follow-up post** sharing early pilot findings and inviting further feedback.

Final thoughts
The group validated that the tools are **practical, humane, and ready for real-world use**. The most valuable final touches are about **safety (disclaimers, signposting)**, **access (translation/localisation)**, and **evidence (pilot + survey)** so you can iterate confidently. With a clear dissemination plan through RA's platform and mailing list— plus targeted pilots—the tools are well-placed to make a **measurable difference** for leaders and teams navigating burnout and wellbeing.

Meeting 4 Visuals

Personal Reflection Tool
&
Conversation Guide

Please see accompanying documents to this report for the full Personal Reflection Tool and Conversation Guide resources.

Workplaces That Thrive 2025

Please see accompanying documents to this report for the full Workplaces that Thrive 2025 publication.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The 2025 Strategy & People Action Lab has fully delivered on the goals set at the beginning of the year, producing a set of practical, accessible resources designed to support inclusive leadership and healthier organisational cultures across the sector.

Through collaborative working sessions, extensive reading, structured exercises, and thoughtful discussion, the group created two interlinked tools – the Personal Reflection Tool and the Conversation Guide – each focused on helping leaders and teams recognise, prevent, and respond to burnout and wellbeing challenges.

These tools reflect the Lab members' shared commitment to ethical decision-making, psychological safety, and values-led leadership. Their modular design makes them easy to adapt for different organisational contexts, leadership levels, and cultural environments.

Alongside this, the Workplaces That Thrive 2025 mini-publication was built through in-depth interviews with five inspirational sector leaders whose practice demonstrates what inclusive, people-centred leadership looks like in action.

Together, these outputs will equip leaders with both the reflective space and the practical guidance needed to build stronger, more resilient teams.

Across all four meetings – captured in the visuals on pages 12, 21, and 28 – the Action Lab members worked with intention, curiosity, and generosity, ensuring the final outputs genuinely delivered on the goals co-created in the Action Framework at the start of the year.

The tools and case studies developed this year will now move into a broader phase of sharing and use across the Resource Alliance community. A small number of organisations will pilot the materials to gather useful feedback, and the tools will receive a light expert review to ensure clarity and safeguarding. Following this, they will be made publicly available through the Resource Alliance's global channels so leaders and teams across the sector can begin integrating them into their own practice.

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Acknowledgements

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