Leadership skills in EIA project management

Ross Marshall, PhD, FIEMA

ross@leading-green.com
The impact of ESIA is plateauing off, it has become stuck as a junior or middle management grade activity. If we don’t step up in leadership we are doomed as a profession.
Project EIA Management skills

• A set of explicit tools and techniques
• Administrative aspects
• Functional planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of agreed actions
• Communication & Report
Leaders lead, Followers follow

EIA Project Managers focus on project targets and processes

EIA Leaders focus on project outcomes
At its core, by our ability to influence:

- The sustainability of the final design’s outcomes
- The residual cumulative impacts; and
- The project’s positive contribution to people and their environment
The need for Leadership in ESIA

- We live in a world with real limits for sustainable growth
- We possess no ‘Plan A’ for a sustainable industrial society
- Our resource demands & and infrastructure needs continue to rise
- Too many ecosystems (& their ESS), are threatened by further development,
- We still utilise short-term finance models in infrastructure investment planning
- We need to raise the bar for Public Funded project performance outcomes where public goods or ecosystem services are at risk

Professionally we need to define:
- Who we are?
- The value and benefits from IA management & practice
- How we as a professional discipline communicate with other project team managers, members, the client and society
Leadership: A Matter of Viewpoint

• Many theories of Leadership
• Majority revolve around traits & behaviours such as
  • Personal skills
  • Communication skills
  • Thinking skills
  • Delegation
  • Decision Making
  • Organisational dynamics

• Little research or application to:
  • Team or Project Leadership in EIA
  • Leading for Environmental & Social Outcomes

Note: The risks of analytical thinking and fragmentation of knowledge
A Story

I name this project Titanic

God bless all who work on her.
I know what you are thinking ............... 

- Scope creep 
- Over-design 
- Quality, cost, schedule, & liability exposure. 
- Deprived others of work 
- Need to re do Gantt charts 
- Timeline 
- New HSE risks 
- Intervention between the Project Manager & Client’s original agreed & and costed brief
What I look for leadership in Leadership skills in EIA project management
Leadership skills: ESIA Team management

• Team Calibre - Creates leadership within the ESIA.

• Room to Practice: Individuals given the confidence to maximise their professional skills

• Connects: The team has the opportunity to engage across the ESIA disciplines (internal) and ensures it is integrated within the wider project team (external)

• Actively leads the team through adaptive change

• Goal-orientated: The confidence to seek and propose wider ESIA & sustainability outcomes
EIA Leadership skills: Project Management Group

- Outcomes Focused (versus Deliverables Focused)
- Diplomacy
- Adds Value (versus Counts Value)
- Vision
- Focuses on Effectiveness (rather than Efficiency)
- Lets people know what the ESIA lead is thinking
EIA Leadership skills: The Client

80% of project managers don’t know how their projects align with the company’s business strategy!

Have you consulted with the Sustainability Manager, CSR or Environmental Director of the client organisation?

Have you sought out their input & influence into projects, sought to understand the dynamics within the client organisation’s CSR goals or SDG objectives?
The keys to Leadership in EIA

- General Attributes of ESIA professionals
- ‘Freedom to Operate’
Characteristics often observed often in ESIA professional examinations

- Vocational elements
- Altruism
- Situational Awareness:
  - An expanded worldview of ourselves and others
  - Post convetual worldview (capacity for change and innovation)
- Integrity
- Independence
- Curiosity
- Enhanced systems thinking
Characteristics often observed in Project Managers when dealing with ESIA professionals
EIA Leadership - The ‘Power to Operate’

Freedom to Operate Independently

Reputation & Status

Professional Knowledge

Access to Information

Possessing the power to change minds, to go beyond IA & Compliance
Leadership in EIA & the ability to exert influence over outcomes

High levels of skill and knowledge
- High degree of Freedom to Lead
  - EXPERT
  - REFERENT
- Low degree of Freedom to Lead
  - LOW

Formal right to make demands
- High degree of Freedom to Lead
  - LEGITIMATE
  - INFORMATION
- Low degree of Freedom to Lead
  - REWARD
  - CONNECTION

Employee dependence
- Low degree of Freedom to Lead
  - COERCIVE
  - Low dependence

Based on French & Raven’s 5 Forms of Power
Final Thoughts

• Leadership is not about learnt skills, systems or processes, it is about the attributes we bring to project outcomes.

• Leadership in ESIA project management is about being adaptable and making a difference by thinking differently.

• To assert what must remain open and transparent, even when the project team doesn’t want to hear or address it or give “bad news,” to the client.

• One of the key leadership challenges we face in our profession is the ability to be able to deal with the short-term pressures of today and to part of and create the vision of tomorrow.

• Be honest and independently minded about the gap between the risks inherent in short-term project management culture and the its long-term impact on society.

• Start considering what steps do you want to make in your own leadership journey and how you can influence the next generation of EIA professionals.
Conclusions

We have a positive future but we need to step upwards.

We possess valuable skills & attributes that will become increasing necessary for leadership in the future.

We need to start harnessing them into our profession to help project teams consider, discuss and deliver a clearer understanding of the project’s contribution to society.

We need to start linking EISA to the client’s objectives in CSR, sustainability & SDG.

Our leadership capability to influence the sustainability of the Project’s final design’s outcomes, its residual cumulative impacts; and its positive contribution to people and their environments is our key leadership role.
In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.

Wangari Maathai