

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications
and the Arts

**The Women in the Aviation
Industry Initiative: Mid-program
evaluation report**

EY Sweeney Ref No. 31748
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Executive summary

Introduction

The Women in the Aviation Industry Initiative (the Initiative) was launched in March 2019 with \$4 million of funding to encourage more women to pursue a career in the aviation industry. The funding was allocated to increase knowledge and awareness of the aviation sector, as well as provide guidance, resources, support, and opportunities to attract, retain and help women to successfully follow a career in aviation.

The objectives of the Initiative were to:

- ▶ Increase the representation of women across the aviation workforce;
- ▶ Attract and retain more women in technical / operational careers;
- ▶ Provide resources and strategies to help women build their careers in the industry; and
- ▶ To leverage the pool of potential talent and skills in order to direct them to where they are needed within the industry.

The Initiative has been extended for a further four years from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026, with an additional \$4 million of funding.

Evaluation context

In early 2022, the Department commissioned EY Sweeney to conduct a mid-program evaluation of the Initiative. The purpose of the evaluation was:

- ▶ To assess the success of the Initiative's first phase;
- ▶ To understand the extent to which the Initiative had been implemented as intended; and
- ▶ To establish key lessons learnt.

The three key evaluation questions (KEQ) used to guide the evaluation were:

KEQ 1	Was the content and delivery model used for each of the different components of the Women in the Aviation Industry Initiative relevant? (Fidelity)
KEQ 2	How suitable was the content and structure of the different components of the Initiative for each of the target audiences? (Relevance, appropriateness, accessibility, dose, quality and satisfaction)
KEQ 3	What was the experience of the target audiences and stakeholders with the different components of the Initiative? (Experience, insights, dose and quality)

A retrospective Program Logic Model based on the insights of workshop and interview participants was also developed to guide the evaluation (see Appendix).

Evaluation methodology

A mixed methods approach incorporating qualitative methodologies (consultations and observations) and secondary data analysis was used to gain a comprehensive insight into the impact of the Initiative, as well as to identify opportunities for improvement.

Given the diverse nature of the sector, a range of stakeholders were consulted to ensure a range of perspectives on the Initiative were captured. Stakeholders invited to be part of the evaluation included:

- ▶ Suppliers procured under the Initiative;
- ▶ Representatives from organisations that attended the Roundtable held at Avalon Airshow in March 2019. Attendees included representatives from airlines, education providers, not-for-profit organisations and aviation societies; and
- ▶ Government departments.





Data provided by the Department for the secondary data analysis include the following Supplier documents:

- ▶ Proposals;
- ▶ Contracts;
- ▶ Survey / market research; and
- ▶ Data - including participant feedback, final deliverable reports.

Evaluation findings




The insights gained through the consultations and secondary data analysis were used to assess the achievement of the Initiative's activities against the three key evaluation questions. The rubric criteria outlined below was used to help interpret and "grade" the extent to which the Initiative had achieved its objectives, while three contextual questions were used to help better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the delivery of activities under the Initiative.

Table 1: Rubric criteria used to assess the KEQ of the Initiative.

Level of Achievement		Definition
Achieved		Evidence indicates that the evaluation question has been satisfactorily achieved
Partially achieved		Evidence indicates that the evaluation question has only been partially achieved
Not achieved		Evidence indicates that the evaluation question has not been achieved
Limited evidence		There is insufficient information to determine whether the evaluation question had or had not been achieved

As summarised in Table 2 below, the outcome of the evaluation indicated that one of the key evaluation questions, KEQ1, had been partially achieved, while there was insufficient evidence to determine whether KEQ2 or KEQ3 had been achieved. The high-level findings against each of the three key evaluation questions is outlined in the table below.

Table 2: Achievement of key evaluation questions

KEQ	Extent to which KEQ achieved			
	Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved	Limited evidence
KEQ1: Was the content of, and delivery model used for, each of the different components of the Women in the Aviation Industry Initiative relevant? (Fidelity)				
KEQ2: How suitable was the content and structure of the different components of the Initiative for each of the target audiences? (Relevance, appropriateness, accessibility, dose, quality and satisfaction)				
KEQ3: What was the experience of the different target audiences and stakeholders with the different components of the Initiative? (Experience, insights, dose and quality)				

It was evident from the consultations that:

- ▶ There is a high level of commitment, passion, and drive among Suppliers;
- ▶ The Initiative has been positively received in the sector; and
- ▶ Anecdotally it is thought that the Initiative has achieved a great deal in terms of improving awareness and understanding of the aviation sector.

Despite this, however, it was not possible to conclusively determine whether the Initiative had delivered on its intended objectives, with the secondary data provided by the Department only able to show that some of the funded events had been received well by participants.

Lessons learnt

A key objective of the mid-program evaluation was to understand the lessons learnt from the first phase of the Initiative in order to guide the development of both a strategic action plan and a monitoring strategy for the next four years of the Initiative.

A number of tactical opportunities to improve the Initiative's reach and influence over the next four years were identified through the consultations and review of secondary data, including:

- ▶ The establishment of a clear strategic direction and intent for the Initiative;
- ▶ The strong articulation of the goals and objectives of the Initiative;
- ▶ Improved collaboration and transparency; and
- ▶ Clarification as to the role of both the Initiative and the Department.

Two other key messages were also prominent through the consultations, and it is recommended that careful consideration be given to these when determining the focus of the Initiative over the coming years. These include:

1. Reframing the "problem" to be strengths based, rather than deficit based. That is, move away from the concept of helping women to get into the aviation industry, towards the notion of women being a critical largely untapped resource in our community that could help support the aviation industry.

2. The need to focus on the retention of women in the industry, not just attracting them to the industry. That is, consideration needs to be given to both the overarching culture of the industry, as well as the culture in different pockets of the industry. This is identified as a critical concern that needs to be conceptualised as a shared problem and addressed by the industry as a whole. The question is, how can the Initiative help?

When considering the activities funded through the Initiative and the evidence available for each of them, it is difficult for EY to make clear recommendations as to what types of activities should be funded by the Initiative over the next four years. What can be recommended though, is that in order to improve efficiency, effectiveness and value for money, that opportunities to collaborate are proactively sought in an effort to reduce duplication, improve reach, and increase impact.

What is also recommended, is the development and implementation of a clear forward-looking monitoring strategy and Program Logic Model. By developing these tools, the Department and the Supplier(s) will be better positioned to determine which activities are and are not working in terms of meeting and / or contributing to the objectives of the Initiative, as well as what changes could be made to ensure the activity better contributes to the Initiative's goals. Importantly, both of these documents should be considered living documents that are regularly reviewed and amended as more lessons are learnt.

The current state does not support the notion of ongoing monitoring or the continuous improvement of activities, with the reliance on annual reporting allowing Suppliers to illustrate what they have done but providing very little insight or opportunity to report on how things could be done differently. The current reporting requirements also make it difficult for either the Suppliers or the Department to determine the extent to which activities are contributing to the overarching goals of the Initiative.

The good will and commitment of Suppliers during the first phase of the Initiative has been fortuitous, especially given the global pandemic, the challenging and continuously changing environmental conditions, and the need for the majority of activities to flex in some way. Harnessing this dedication and loyalty to the industry, as well as to supporting women in the industry, will be crucial over the next four years if the Department is to be able to demonstrate the influence of the Women in the Aviation Industry Initiative both during and at the conclusion of the next funding period.