

Advancing Leadership Capability Through Inclusive Coaching

A TOOLKIT FOR LEADERS





Prepared by:

Associate Professor Uma Jogulu
Dr Vish Ramakonar

Contributors:

Dr Rishelle Hume
Michelle Stephenson – FIFO Focus
Luke Salway – Coachology
Amber Anthony – Neurospicy

mars@ecu.edu.au
June 2026

Acknowledgement to the funder:

This research was conducted as part of the ECU MARS Centre's Digging Deeper Research Program. We would like to acknowledge The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) MARS Program for funding this research

Contents

1.0	Introduction	2
	What is Coaching-Informed Leadership?	2
	Who is This Toolkit For?	3
2.0	Core Leadership Micro-Skills	4
	Active Listening	4
	Applied Curiosity (Open versus Closed Questions)	5
	Powerful Questioning: Encouraging Thinking and Ownership	6
	Psychological Safety: Enabling Speaking Up, Inclusion, and Better Performance	7
3.0	Best-Practice Conversation Frameworks	8
	Framework A: The POW Model (Best for Fast, Operational Problem-Solving)	9
	Example using the POW Model	10
	Framework B: The GROWTH Model (Best for Planned Development Catch-Ups)	11
	Example using the GROWTH Model (Inclusive Perspective)	15
4.0	Applied Cultural Protocols for Inclusive Coaching	18
	A. Gender Diversity and Cross-Gender Dynamics	18
	B. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Team Members	20
	C. Culturally Diverse Team Members	21
	D. Neurodivergent Team Members (ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, etc.)	21
	E. LGBTQIA+ Team Members	22
	F. Age Diversity and Intergenerational Dynamics	23
	G. Intersectionality (Overlapping Identity Dynamics in Operational Environments)	24
5.0	Implementation Process: Putting the Toolkit into Practice	26
6.0	Conclusion	29
	Appendix	30
	What is Coaching?	30
	What is ICF	30



Find the document
online in the MARS
Centre's Resources
for Industry



The resources and mining sector operates under complex operational pressure, rigorous safety requirements, and demanding production timelines. Frontline leaders are expected to manage multiple demands, including shift schedules, regulatory compliance, performance outcomes, and operational continuity. At the same time, front-line leaders are responsible for building and maintaining teams in which people feel physically and psychologically safe, respected, and supported. In today's increasingly diverse workforce with varying cultures, generations, identities, and lived experiences, people management and leadership requires more than technical expertise or directive style. It requires practical, everyday leadership capability grounded in coaching-informed practice.

Most supervisors, superintendents, and managers (which we refer to as “leaders” in this toolkit) genuinely want to do the right thing. They want to support their people, create fair and positive team cultures, and lead with respect. However, many are uncertain about how to navigate conversations across a diverse workforce. Leaders may lack the confidence and practical tools to engage effectively in sensitive or complex conversations. This uncertainty and lack of confidence can lead to hesitation – particularly a fear of saying the wrong thing or causing unintended offence.

This toolkit was developed to address that gap. It supports leaders in the mining sector to move from uncertainty to confidence by integrating coaching-informed practices into everyday leadership conversations. Rather than positioning coaching as a formal discipline requiring specialist training, this toolkit translates core coaching principles into simple, accessible, and operationally relevant day-to-day skills.

What is Coaching-Informed Leadership?

Coaching-informed leadership shifts interactions from purely directive instruction (“do this as instructed”) to more collaborative problem-solving (“let’s look at how we can work through this together”). This shift does not reduce accountability, or lower operational or safety standards. Instead, it strengthens performance and builds relationships by improving clarity, ownership, engagement, and capability across teams.

A coaching-informed approach is effective in the mining and resources sector because it strengthens the core purpose of leadership itself. Leadership in this context is not only about directing tasks, maintaining compliance, and delivering production outcomes, it is also about enabling people to think clearly, communicate openly, and perform safely under pressure. Coaching and leadership are therefore not separate disciplines.

When leaders apply coaching principles, they are better able to balance operational demands with the human factors that underpin performance, safety, and engagement. This becomes particularly important in diverse teams, where differences in experience, background, and communication style require leaders to be more intentional in how they listen, question, and respond.

However, coaching-informed leadership is not about treating people differently based on identity or category and does not require additional leadership styles to be learnt. While the toolkit includes specific guidance for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, neurodivergent individuals, LGBTQIA+ colleagues, and people with diverse lived experiences, the intent is broader and more universal.

At its core, coaching-informed leadership is about recognising the humanity in every person. It is grounded in the understanding that each team member brings unique strengths, perspectives, challenges, values, and ways of engaging with the world. Effective leadership therefore requires moving beyond assumptions and adopting an approach rooted in curiosity, respect, empathy, cultural awareness, and active listening.

This toolkit supports leaders to create environments where everyone feels seen, heard, valued, and able to contribute fully. It helps leaders:

- Build trust and psychological safety.
- Improve communication and connection.
- Recognise unconscious bias and assumptions.
- Adapt coaching approaches to individual needs.
- Foster belonging, wellbeing, and engagement.
- Support performance while maintaining dignity and respect.

When leaders consistently apply a coaching-informed approach, they strengthen both people and performance. Teams become more engaged, more capable, and better equipped to operate safely, effectively, and collaboratively in complex environments.

Ultimately, this toolkit is designed to embed inclusion not as a standalone initiative or compliance requirement, but as a practical, everyday leadership capability reflected in how leaders listen, communicate, support, and develop their teams in the moments that matter most.

Who is This Toolkit For?

This Toolkit is designed for:

- Supervisors and superintendents who are managing people.
- HR and People and Culture professionals.
- Anyone working to build psychologically safe, inclusive, and respectful workplaces.

The following section introduces the core leadership micro-skills that underpin coaching-informed leadership and shows how effective communication is enacted in high-pressure operational environments.



Leadership and management are closely connected but serve different purposes. **Management** is primarily focused on maintaining stability, ensuring compliance, coordinating and following up on tasks, solving operational issues, and delivering outcomes efficiently.

Leadership by contrast, is about influencing, inspiring, coaching and developing people. It is also about creating the conditions for growth, inclusion, ownership, and change. Inclusive leaders create environments where people feel psychologically safe, valued, heard, and able to contribute their perspectives.

In practice, **effective leaders often need to wear both hats depending on the situation**. There are times when a management approach is required, such as responding to immediate safety risks, clarifying expectations, ensuring procedures are followed, or making timely operational decisions. At other times, a leadership approach is more effective, particularly when building trust, fostering inclusion, supporting development, navigating change, or helping others think through challenges.

This coaching toolkit is designed to support leaders predominantly when the leadership hat is on, helping guide meaningful and inclusive conversations that foster reflection, accountability, capability, psychological safety, and long-term behavioural change.

2.0

Core Leadership Micro-Skills

Before using the coaching-informed leadership approach, frontline leaders need a set of practical communication skills that make conversations more effective, inclusive, and productive. These micro-skills form the foundation of a coaching-informed leadership approach and can be applied immediately in day-to-day site interactions. These skills help leaders listen better, ask better questions, and create the conditions for safer, clearer, and more constructive conversations.

Active Listening

What is Active Listening?

Active listening means giving someone your full attention to genuinely understand what they are saying, rather than simply waiting for your turn to respond. In a leadership context, active listening means paying attention to what is being said as well as what may be left unsaid, asking clarifying questions, and checking understanding before jumping to solutions. This approach helps leaders build trust, identify risks early, and create an environment where team members feel safe to raise concerns, ideas, or challenges.

For frontline leaders, active listening is not about having long conversations or avoiding decisions. It is a practical leadership skill that improves communication, strengthens working relationships, and supports safer, more effective operations.

The Site Reality

Operational environments are busy, noisy, hot and full of distractions, and leaders are often managing multiple priorities at once. Trying to listen to a team member while checking a device, watching surrounding activity, or responding to interruptions can unintentionally signal to a worker that the conversation is not important. Over time, this can reduce trust and make people less likely to raise concerns, particularly around safety or performance issues.

While not every interaction is a coaching conversation, the ability to pay someone full attention – even briefly – plays a critical role in building trust, understanding issues early, and supporting both safety and performance outcomes.

What Good Looks Like

Where possible, move to a quieter space for important conversations. This could be a parked light-vehicle cabin with the windows up or an office away from operational noise. Put distractions aside by placing your phone face down and reducing radio interruptions if it is safe to do so. It's also good to maintain eye-contact during conversations. Small actions like these demonstrate attention and respect.



Practice: The 3-Second Pause

One practical technique leaders can use is the 3-Second Pause. When a team member finishes speaking, pause briefly before responding. This moment of silence gives the person time to continue sharing what may be the real issue, concern, or roadblock beneath their first response. In many cases, people will say the most important or meaningful information after a short pause.

How to do it:

- Silently count to three:** When the other person finishes talking, deliberately count “1, 2, 3” in your head. It will feel awkwardly long at first, but it allows the conversation to “cook”.
- Avoid the “But...”:** Catch yourself before starting your sentence with “Yes, but...” or “I understand, however...”.
- Focus on open-ended follow-up questions (see section on the next page):** Use the silence to frame a reflective question rather than providing an answer. Great follow-ups include:
 - “Tell me more about how that would work.”
 - “What do you think is the best next step?”
 - “How are you feeling about this approach?”

Applied Curiosity (Open versus Closed Questions)

What is Applied Curiosity?

Applied curiosity is the practice of asking questions that help leaders better understand a situation before moving to direction or problem-solving. In a coaching-informed leadership approach, curiosity encourages team members to think through challenges, explain their reasoning, and identify risks or solutions that may not be immediately visible. This strengthens communication, capability, and accountability.

When asking questions, leaders can ask either “open” or “closed” questions, and both types have a place on site. Closed questions are usually responded to with a “yes” or “no,” and are therefore useful when confirming facts, checking compliance, or responding to immediate safety issues. An example of a closed question may be “Did you follow the isolation procedure?” Open questions, however, are especially valuable

when leaders need to understand what is happening, uncover roadblocks, or support learning and problem-solving because they invite workers to explain something in their own words. An example of an open question in the same scenario could be “How did you carry out the isolation procedure?”

The Site Reality

In fast-paced operational environments, leaders can unintentionally rely on closed questions that lead to short responses and limited discussion. While efficient in the moment, this can mean important information about delays, safety concerns, or capability gaps remain unexplored. Open, coaching-informed questions help create a complete picture and encourage team members to actively think through challenges.



Instead of Asking (Closed / Directive)

- “Did you complete the pre-start check?”
- “Are we meeting the deadline?”
- “Do you understand the next steps?”
- “Have you followed the process?”

Consider Asking (Open / Coaching-Informed)

- “What did you notice or pick up in the pre-start check?”
- “What could stop us from meeting our deadline today?”
- “To make sure we are aligned, how do you see yourself approaching the next steps?”
- “What challenges have you encountered with this process?”

What Good Looks Like

A coaching-informed leader uses curiosity to understand before directing. Rather than immediately moving to answers, they ask questions that encourage team members to reflect, explain, and problem-solve. This does not replace accountability; it strengthens it by creating clearer understanding and shared ownership of outcomes.



Powerful Questioning: Encouraging Thinking and Ownership

What is Powerful Questioning?

Powerful questioning is the practice of asking purposeful questions that encourage team members to think more deeply, reflect on options, and take ownership of solutions. Rather than immediately providing answers or instructions, powerful questions help people clarify their thinking, identify barriers, and consider practical next steps. In a coaching-informed leadership approach, this supports capability development while still maintaining accountability and operational standards.

Powerful questioning is particularly useful when leaders want to move beyond simply solving today’s problem and instead help team members strengthen their judgement, confidence, and problem-solving skills over time.

The Site Reality

In high-pressure operational environments, leaders are often required to make quick decisions and provide clear direction. While this is essential in time-critical or safety situations, constantly stepping in with answers can unintentionally create dependency, where team members rely on leaders to solve every issue. Over time, this can limit problem-solving capability and reduce confidence in raising ideas or concerns.

Powerful questions help leaders slow the pace of a conversation just enough to understand the situation, involve team members in thinking through solutions, and build stronger ownership of outcomes.

→ Instead of Asking (Closed / Directive)	→ Consider Asking (Powerful Question)
“Here’s what you need to do to fix this.”	→ “What options do you think could help move this forward?”
“You need to manage your time better.”	→ “What do you think is getting in the way of staying on schedule?”
“Just follow the process.”	→ “Which part of the process feels unclear or difficult right now?”
“Next time, do it this way.”	→ “If a similar situation happened again, what would you do differently?”
“You need to sort this out.”	→ “What support or resources would help you work through this?”

What Good Looks Like

A coaching-informed leader uses powerful questions to guide thinking, not interrogate. Questions are asked with genuine curiosity and a focus on understanding, learning, and problem-solving. The goal is not to avoid giving direction when needed, but to create opportunities for team members to think critically, contribute ideas, and build confidence in their own capability.

→

Practical Tip: Ask, Then Pause

After asking a powerful question, allow space for the person to think before jumping in with another question or solution. Silence often gives people the time they need to reflect and arrive at more meaningful responses.



Psychological Safety: Enabling Speaking Up, Inclusion, and Better Performance

What is Psychological Safety?

Psychological safety is a shared belief within a team that it is safe to take interpersonal risks such as speaking up with questions, concerns, ideas, or mistakes without fear of embarrassment, rejection, or punishment¹. It is not about being “nice” or avoiding accountability. Rather, psychologically safe team environments are those where asking questions, challenging assumptions, and expressing doubts is enabled, accepted, and encouraged because it can uncover issues, problems, or risks that may hinder organisational learning and performance. In this way, it is about enabling honest communication so teams can learn, adapt, and perform effectively, especially in complex or high-risk environments.

This aligns with the importance of non-judgement, empathy, and active listening in creating conditions where people feel safe enough to express themselves authentically². In a leadership context, this translates into how leaders respond in everyday conversations.

Why It Matters on Site

In operational environments, pressure, pace, and hierarchy can make it difficult for people to speak up particularly if they are newer, less experienced, from different cultural backgrounds, or unsure how their input will be received. If people feel uncertain or excluded, they may hold back concerns, avoid asking questions, or stay silent about

mistakes or risks. When psychological safety is present, diverse perspectives are more likely to be heard. Team members feel more comfortable raising concerns early, pointing out risks, and asking for clarification.

Importantly, psychological safety does not reduce accountability. It strengthens it by ensuring issues are surfaced earlier and addressed in a constructive way, rather than being hidden or delayed.

What Good Looks Like

In psychologically safe and inclusive teams, leaders actively seek different perspectives, encourage questions and respectful debate, and respond to input with curiosity rather than judgement. These behaviours are especially important in diverse teams where cultural norms or past experiences may influence how comfortable someone feels speaking up.

Over time, psychological safety creates a culture where people from all backgrounds feel respected, included, and confident to contribute. The result is increased organisational learning, stronger communication flow, earlier identification of risks, and better collective decision-making.

Practical Leadership Principle: Inclusion Happens in the Response

Psychological safety and inclusion are built through everyday leadership behaviours. Every response from a leader signals whether different voices are valued or discouraged. When leaders respond with openness, curiosity, and respect (especially to different perspectives) they create the conditions for people to speak up, contribute, and fully participate in the work.

→	How Leaders Can Build Psychological Safety and Inclusion
Example of low psychological safety	Example of how to foster psychological safety
“Why did you do it like that?”	→ “Can you walk me through your thinking so I can understand your perspective?”
Dismissing or correcting quickly	→ “Thanks for raising that, let’s take a moment to understand it properly.”
Only hearing from the most confident voices	→ “I’d also like to hear from others who may see this differently.”
Assuming understanding based on silence	→ “Before we move on, what questions or concerns do people have?”

¹ Edmonson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behaviour in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.
² Krikorian, M. (2023). Carl Rogers: A person-centered approach. In: B.A. Geier (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of Educational Thinkers*. Palgrave Macmillan.

3.0 Best-Practice Conversation Frameworks

Active listening, applied curiosity, powerful questioning, and psychological safety are not standalone leadership concepts. They work together as the foundation of effective, coaching-informed conversations on site.

When leaders actively listen, they are better able to pick up not only what is being said, but also what is not being said. When they apply curiosity, they slow the conversation just enough to understand context before reacting. Through powerful questioning, they shift from providing immediate answers to supporting clearer thinking and shared problem-solving. And when psychological safety is present, people are more likely to speak openly, share accurate information, and engage in honest dialogue without fear of negative consequences.

In practice, these skills are what make conversations more effective, but they still need structure to be consistently applied in real operational conditions. Without structure, even strong leadership intent can be lost in time pressure, competing priorities, or complex site environments.

This section brings these skills together into two simple conversation frameworks:

- 1 The POW Model, and
- 2 The GROWTH Model.

These frameworks provide leaders with practical structures to apply coaching-informed leadership in both fast-moving operational situations and more planned development conversations. The frameworks aim to ensure clarity, consistency, and effectiveness regardless of context or time constraints.

Depending on the time available, the operational location, and the urgency of the issue, leaders may select one of these two conversation frameworks.



Framework A: The POW Model (Best for Fast, Operational Problem-Solving)

The POW (Problem, Outcome, Way Forward) Coaching Model provides a quick, structured framework to communicate and solve problems and challenges.

It is ideal for when time is short (under 15 minutes), the issue is immediate, and you need a fast, compliant, outcome or shift.

PHASE		GUIDANCE, PROMPTS & ACTIONS		
P Problem / Challenge	 Leader's Guide: This part of the model aims to guide a team member toward clearly identifying and explaining the problem. Be sure to focus on ONE problem or challenge at a time. If your team member mentions multiple issues (“I’m hearing problem A, B and C...”), ask which one is most important for today’s conversation.			
	 Opening Prompts: - What is on your mind? - What would you like to explore? - Tell me about the situation.	 Narrowing It Down: - Explain the most important point for me. - Tell me about it in one sentence.	 The Anchor: Get them to repeat the problem statement in one sentence.	
O Outcome	 Leader's Guide: This part of the model aims to shift the focus of the conversation from the problem to the solution. Help your team member to articulate the outcome as a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goal.			
	 Opening Prompts: - What is your preferred outcome? - What would you like instead? - If you had a magic wand, what outcome would you like?	 Structuring the Goal: - What is your specific outcome? - Tell me in one sentence. - By when?	 The Anchor: Get them to repeat their outcome as a one-sentence SMART goal.	
W Way Forward / Actions	 Leader's Guide: In this part of the model, you are supporting your team member with a mini brainstorm. Help them prioritise the top two actions, then dig deeper.			
	 Brainstorming Prompts: - What is the very next physical action? - What else, what else, anything else? - What is an action that you’ve not taken before, that you could take? - What would your role model suggest?	 Prioritization: - Out of all these actions, which are the two most important? - For priority No. 1, what specific actions do you need to take, by when?	 The Commitment: Action 1 - By when? Action 2 - By when?	

Example using the POW Model

Context: A shift supervisor notices a haul truck operator is consistently falling behind on haul cycle times during a stripping campaign. Time is limited before the mid-shift safety briefing.

P

Problem / Challenge

Leader's Guide:

The supervisor pulls the operator aside safely. Instead of leading with blame or making assumptions about performance, they approach with curiosity and an intent to explore and understand what has been happening.

Leader

"I noticed your cycle times are running a bit different on the ramp today. I want to make sure you've got what you need out there to feel safe and comfortable. What's been the main thing impacting your run today?"

Team Member

"Well, I'm doing my best to stay on time, but a bit of a soft patch has developed near the bench turn. First time round, I got wheelspin, so I've been going a lot slower through there so that I don't lose control."

O

Outcome

Leader's Guide:

Validate the team member's safety perspective immediately to reinforce trust. Actively collaborate to turn their concern into a clear, shared target.

Leader

"I completely support you backing off if it doesn't feel right; safety is the priority here. What does the ideal outcome look like for the rest of the shift, so you feel fully confident on that turn?"

Team Member

(SMART Goal):

"We need that specific corner graded and sheeted with dry material within the next half hour so that we eliminate the soft patch completely."

W

Way Forward / Actions

Leader's Guide:

Empower the team member by treating them as an equal partner in the solution, leveraging their on-the-ground expertise, and offering full leadership backing.

Team Member

Proposed Actions:

"I can radio the loader operator right now to hold back the next two trucks, so we don't cause a bottleneck".

Leader

Leader Commitment & Review:

"Brilliant teamwork. I'll get the grader over there immediately and back you up on holding the trucks. Let's check in together after your next three laps to make sure it feels safe and right to you."

Framework B: The GROWTH Model (Best for Planned Development Catch-Ups)

The GROWTH (Goal, Reason, Opportunities and Obstacles, Way Forward, Take Action, Help) Coaching Model is a simple, structured approach that supports effective conversations.

It is ideal for scheduled coaching sessions of 20-45 minutes, especially when discussing career pathways, development goals, or building long term capability in operational and technical roles.

In fast paced mining environments where clarity, safety, and performance matter, the GROWTH Coaching Model helps leaders guide team members to think independently, solve problems, and take ownership of their development.

- Core principles for effective GROWTH coaching include:
- Stay curious** – Ask probing, open questions. Avoid finishing the team member's sentences or jumping in with your own solutions.
 - Don't be defensive** – Listen without minimising or dismissing their experiences, even when the feedback is uncomfortable.
 - Observe shifts** – Notice changes in attitude, behaviour, or body language. These cues often reveal deeper issues or opportunities for growth.

Preparation:

Before the coaching session starts, ensure that both you and the team member are not distracted, and that you have established trust. Time may be structured or limited, requiring both your and the team member's attention and focus.

You could help ensure attention and focus by asking:

- "Before we start, is there anything you need to do to be fully engaged in our conversation today?"
- "Is there anything would you like to talk about before we get started today?"

PHASE

GUIDANCE, PROMPTS & ACTIONS

G

Goal (SMART)

Leader's Guide:

When you support a team member to create a **SMART goal**, you are helping them *define what progress looks like for this coaching session*.
Sometimes the team member isn't sure yet, or they only see one perspective. Brainstorming the goal means exploring possibilities *before* locking in the final SMART version.

Team Member



"I want to get better at leading toolbox meetings."

Leader



"Let's explore that. What does 'better' look like? More confidence? Fewer incidents? Stronger engagement from the crew?"

Team Member



"Actually, I want the crew to participate more instead of me doing all the talking."

Leader



"Great. That's something we can shape into a SMART goal."

This short exploration helps the team member clarify what they *really* want.

Leader Script:

To begin a coaching session, your role is to create a calm, focused space where the team member feels safe to think, reflect, and speak openly. A simple lead in helps signal that this is a different kind of conversation, one centred on their development, not task updates or operational issues.
Leader (context setting): "Let's take a moment to focus on you and what you want to get out of this meeting. This is your time, so I want to understand what's most important for us to explore together."
Then choose one of the opening questions below:

"What would you like to explore today?"

"What is the outcome you'd like from today's session?"

"What's on your mind?"

These questions help the team member take ownership of the session and begin shaping a clear direction for the conversation.

On-Going Session Review (Optional):

If goals or action plans were set in a previous GROWTH session, discuss what progress has been made, how, or why not.

"How did you go with the actions we set at our last session?"

"What did you achieve since our last coaching session?"

"What challenges did you face?"

The leader helps the team member learn from their experiences and reflections, which also will inform later action planning (see *Take Action*)

PHASE

GUIDANCE, PROMPTS & ACTIONS

R

Reason

Leader's Guide:

Ask the team member the reason that achieving their goal is important. What is their "Why"? Elicit as many "Whys" as possible. Encourage the team member to make their goals big, as this stimulates motivation.

Leader Script:

"What is the reason that you want to achieve this goal?"

"Why is achieving this goal important for you?"

"For what purpose do you wish to achieve this goal?"

O

Obstacles and Opportunities

Leader's Guide:

Support the team member to think through obstacles, resistances, challenges, underlying fears, and opportunities that relate to the goal. Build trust by listening to the team member and acknowledging and discussing the obstacles and opportunities that they perceive.

Leader Script (Obstacles):

"What obstacles could stop you reaching this goal?"

"What doubts or fears could hold you back from your goal?"

"What could derail your progress?"

Leader Script (Opportunities):

"What opportunities could help you reach this goal?"

"What approach would your role-model choose? What are the pros and cons of their approach?"

"What could make things easier?"

"Who could help you? Who do you need to talk with?"

Mid-Session Reflection (Optional):

"What did you learn about yourself, situations, and others so far?"

W

Way Forward

Leader's Guide:

Help the team member clarify their goal(s) and related obstacles and opportunities, and translate it into an action plan. Action plans should detail clear responsibilities, timelines, progress-indicators, and milestones. Empower the team member as an equal partner but challenge them if the plan is not effective, realistic, or ambitious enough.

Leader Script:

"Let's write this down as a plan, with some key actions, responsibilities, and milestones"

"What steps along the way need to be completed to achieve your goal?"

12 Advancing Leadership Capability Through Inclusive Coaching

Credit: Coachology

A TOOLKIT FOR MINING LEADERS 13

PHASE

GUIDANCE, PROMPTS & ACTIONS

T

Take Action

Leader's Guide:

The team member commits to and conducts the specific actions they have decided upon. Ensure that there are clear timeframes and accountability mechanisms.

Leader Script:

“What actions are you going to take before the next session?”

“When will you achieve these actions?”

“How will you keep yourself accountable?”

Example: Daily report, personal journal, sending emails

H

Help

Leader's Guide:

Identify what additional help, resources, or support the team member will need or can use to achieve their goal. Look at external guidance, mentorship, or learning opportunities. Reflect on your own leadership support.

Leader Script:

“What support do you need?”

“What training do you need to help you reach this goal?”

“What extra resources do you need to achieve those actions?”

“Who is your mentor? What would they do?”

“What could you learn/read? What additional education or learning could you obtain?”

Leader Commitment and Review:

“What actions are you going to take before the next session?”

“When will you achieve these actions?”

“How will you keep yourself accountable?”

Example: Daily report, personal journal, sending emails

Example using the GROWTH Model (Inclusive Perspective)

→

Context: The superintendent holds a scheduled development check-in with a capable female haul truck operator who has expressed interest in stepping into a relief supervisor role. She is technically strong but has hesitated to put herself forward because she does not feel confident speaking up in predominantly male crew meetings where interruptions or dismissive comments occasionally occur.

G

Goal (SMART)

Leader's Guide:

Approach the conversation with curiosity ensuring the focus is capability development rather than assumptions about confidence.

Leader

“Thanks for making the time to meet again today. Last time we met, you set a goal of taking on a relief supervisor role.

What’s the main milestone you’d like us to focus on today?”

Team Member

“I want to feel confident leading toolbox talks and speaking up during shift planning meetings without second-guessing myself.”

R

Reason

Leader's Guide:

Explore the motivation behind the goal without making assumptions. Encourage the team member to discuss career aspirations and workplace experiences that may be influencing their confidence or willingness to step forward.

Leader

“Why is this an important step for you right now?”

Team Member

“I know I can do the job technically, but if I want to move into leadership, I need people to actually hear me and take me seriously in meetings.”

O

Obstacles and Opportunities

Leader's Guide - Obstacles:

Together, identify any obstacles to meeting the goal. Avoid minimising the team member’s experiences of being female in a male-dominated environment and avoid becoming defensive. Explore operational realities and interpersonal dynamics.

Leader

“What gets in the way when you try to contribute or lead those conversations?”

Team Member

“Sometimes when I speak up, people talk over me or move on quickly. Then I start overthinking what I was going to say and hold back.”

14 Advancing Leadership Capability Through Inclusive Coaching

A TOOLKIT FOR MINING LEADERS 15

O

Obstacles and Opportunities

Leader's Guide – Opportunities:

Explore practical opportunities, strengths, and support that could improve the team member's participation and confidence in meetings. Focus on what is already working, what can be changed, and how other leaders in the workplace could better support contribution. In male-dominated environments, opportunities may include building speaking confidence, creating allyship, changing the ways meetings are run, or identifying moments where the team member already contributes well.

Leader

"What helps you feel more confident contributing in meetings?"

"Are there situations, people, or approaches that make it easier to speak up?"

"What opportunities do you see for building your confidence in those conversations?"

Team Member

"When I've prepared my points beforehand or spoken one-on-one with someone first, I feel more confident. There are also a couple of people who tend to listen and back me up. I think if I had more chances to lead smaller discussions, I'd probably feel more comfortable speaking in bigger ones."

W

Way Forward

Leader's Guide – Opportunities:

Co-design practical, realistic strategies that build the individual's capability while also addressing team dynamics and workplace systems and processes. Ensure that the responsibility for inclusion is not placed solely on the team member.

Brainstormed Options:

1. Practising the first five minutes of a toolbox talk with the superintendent beforehand.
2. Starting by leading one section of the pre-start meeting rather than the full briefing.
3. Agreeing team meeting ground rules around interruptions and respectful listening.
4. Pairing with an experienced supervisor mentor for observation and feedback.

Leader

"Which of these options would help you build confidence, while also setting you up for success in the room?"

T

Take Action

Leader's Guide:

Support the team member to commit to a realistic, observable action that stretch capability without creating unreasonable pressure. Make success measurable and achievable.

Leader

"What's one thing you're willing to actively test over the next fortnight?"

Team Member

"At next Wednesday's pre-start, I'll lead the safety share and operational update for my team instead of just listening in."

H

Help

Leader's Guide:

Clarify how leadership support can reinforce inclusion and authority in a way that empowers rather than rescues. The leader should actively create fair airtime and respectful meeting dynamics.

Leader

"How can I best support you while you're stepping into that?"

Team Member

"If people start interrupting, it would help if you redirected the conversation and made space for me to finish my point without taking over."



Applied Cultural Protocols for Inclusive Coaching

True inclusive leadership requires adopting a growth mindset. A growth mindset accepts that we can all develop our skills and abilities through learning, persistence, and effort. Adopting this mindset with respect to coaching-informed leadership means accepting that we all carry biases. It also means that we acknowledge we can develop our own skills to ensure every team member feels included and respected. We can do this by using the structured, compassionate, and deliberate actions outlined in this guidance.

A. Gender Diversity and Cross-Gender Dynamics



Core Protocol: In traditionally masculine, male-dominated workplaces, gender dynamics heavily influence how coaching, feedback, and authority are perceived. Inclusive coaching requires being transparent and empathetic when making and communicating decisions.

1

Male Leader Coaching a Female Team Member

The Site Reality:

Female workers frequently navigate a heightened sense of visibility pressure (feeling as though their mistakes are more easily noticed or judged by the broader crew). Because of this, an unexpected request to “come to the office” for a coaching session may be perceived by default as disciplinary or performance-related, rather than supportive.



What you can do:

- Be clear and transparent in your communication: Never initiate coaching conversations vaguely. State the positive parameters and exact context up front to make the intent clear.
- Focus on objective progress: Ensure that workers’ career development pathways are anchored in objective milestones, KPIs, and operational goals. This ensures that the workers’ capability and development is clearly mapped out.
- Avoid exclusionary and patronising language: Do not use terms that exclude some groups of workers (e.g., addressing a mixed team as “you men”) or that are patronising (e.g. addressing female workers as “the girls” or calling them “love,” or “darling”). Use professional, gender-neutral language. For example, you could refer to groups of workers as “the team,” or “the crew.”



Example:

You need to have a career progression conversation with a female fixed-plant operator.



Instead of:

“Be mindful of gender dynamics during team meetings.”



Do this:

Approach the worker at a natural transition point and clearly outline the purpose and intent of the session. “Hi Sarah, I want to block out 15 minutes tomorrow morning in the supervisor’s office to map out a development plan for you to get signed off on the primary crusher circuit. You’ve been achieving your current production targets consistently, and I want to make sure you have a clear pathway to step up when the acting role opens.”

2

Female Leader Coaching a Male Team Member

The Site Reality:

In heavy industrial settings, male workers can feel pressure to be self-reliant and physically capable, and also feel a need to “prove themselves” to their peers. When a female leader initiates a coaching conversation, male workers may feel hesitant, defensive, or overly analytical, often perceiving the request as an investigation into their performance or capability. However, these perceptions are rarely based in intentional disrespect. Rather, such reactions are typically learned stress responses driven by a perceived threat to their standing on site.



What you can do:

- Lead with empathy: Recognise that defensiveness often masks underlying anxiety about work performance or operational failures. Start the conversation by lowering the stakes and establishing a supportive environment.
- Validate and partner: Explicitly acknowledge the worker’s technical skills, hard work, and the intense operational pressures they face daily. Frame the conversation as a collaborative partnership (e.g. “How can we solve this together”) rather than a top-down critique.
- Active redirection: If they attempt to dominate the discussion or shift the topic, maintain a calm, empathetic, yet structured focus on the GROWTH Model.



Example:

You need to meet with a normally reliable male operator who has been rushing his tasks and bypassing key safety steps on a processing deck.



Instead of:

“Be understanding of the male perspective during feedback.”



Do this:

Use an approach that promotes psychological safety while addressing concerns appropriately. Approach the conversation with compassion: “Hi Chris, let’s grab a coffee in the office for a few minutes. I’ve noticed you’ve been pushing hard to hit your targets the last few swings, and I really appreciate how much you care about this team’s output. But I also noticed a couple of safety steps got bypassed on the deck today. I know how much pressure there is to keep the plant running, but your safety is my absolute priority. Talk me through what’s making things feel rushed out there at the moment let’s look at how I can help you ease that pressure so we can get this done safely.”



B. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Team Members

Core Protocol: For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island People, formal, sterile meeting rooms and direct, rapid-fire questioning from authority figures can reproduce intergenerational experiences of institutional abuse and racism. Building psychological safety may require replacing formal hierarchical meetings with informal, respectful, and story-based dialogue.

- What you can do:**
- Informal dialogue over Q&A: Shift from rigid question-and-answer format conversations to reciprocal storytelling. Allow team members to share insights and context in their own way and time.
 - Acknowledgement of Country: Open formal meetings or reviews by explicitly acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land to show respect and to uphold commitment to reconciliation.
 - Non-verbal awareness: Prolonged, direct eye contact can be interpreted as confrontational or aggressive across many regional and metro Aboriginal communities. Avoid forcing it.
 - The meaning of silence: Never interpret silence as disengagement, agreement, or a lack of understanding. Silence is a sign of respect, deep reflection, and processing the gravity of a topic. Do not interrupt or rush to fill quiet gaps.
 - Cultural introduction opportunity: Invite team members to introduce or position themselves in their own way- including language groups, Country, or kinship connections if they wish, validating identity.
 - Avoid assumptions: Do not assume identity traits, level of community connection, or depth of specific cultural knowledge.
 - Visual and language adaptation: Offer options to respond via visual plans, hands-on demonstrations, or written points alongside verbal storytelling. Use plain, jargon-free language.
 - Flexible timing: Maintain flexible timelines to comfortably accommodate unique cultural obligations, community leadership needs, or Sorry Business.
 - Absolute transparency: Establish the precise purpose and goal of the session in the first minute, making it clear what happens next and where any notes are stored.
- Example:**
- You need to conduct a check-in with an Aboriginal supervisor-in-training whose shift attendance has fluctuated.
- Instead of:**
- “Allow extra time for relationship building and respect cultural protocols.”
- Do this:**
- Do not sit opposite them with a laptop open, quoting policy sections. Get into a quiet, light-vehicle cabin, open the windows, and lead with relationship-building and transparency: *“Hi Greg, before we start, I just want to acknowledge we’re catching up on Whadjuk Noongar land today. I want to be completely transparent: the goal of this talk is purely to see how I can back you up so you can step into that relief supervisor role next swing. Anything we map out stays right here between us.”*

Use an open, story-driven conversation style: *“I’ve noticed you seem to have had a bit on your mind and your shift timing has been a bit up and down over the last fortnight. I know family and community obligations come first, tell me what’s happening back home, and let’s look at how we can structure your shift handovers or crew support to match.”*

If a long pause occurs, sit quietly, maintain a relaxed posture, and wait respectfully for them to finish their thought.
-
- C. Culturally Diverse Team Members
- Core Protocol:** Workers from cultures where workplaces are very hierarchical will often nod, smile, agree with, or say “yes” to a supervisor out of profound respect for organisational authority. This occurs even if they do not fully understand the technical instructions or agree with the logic being presented.
- What you can do:**

- Remove jargon: Try not to use Australian slang, idioms, or colloquial mining acronyms (e.g., swap out “give it a red-hot go” or “hit the ground running” for clear, plain language like “try your best” or “start efficiently”).
 - Check understanding: Never ask, “Do you understand?” Instead, ask them to describe the operational sequence or workflow back to you in their own words.

Example:

A plant operator from a culturally diverse background remains silent during an incident debrief.

Instead of:

“Use informal, respectful language and be mindful of cultural differences.”

Do this:

Do not mistake silence for disengagement or compliance.

“We’ve gone through this incident sequence quite fast. I highly value your perspective on this processing valve. Let’s take 10 minutes tomorrow morning so you can walk me through exactly where you see the bottleneck.”

D. Neurodivergent Team Members (ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, etc.)

Core Protocol: Shift your leadership mindset from trying to “fix an employee’s brain” to actively designing an environment that is adapted to their processing profile and needs. Replace jargon or buzzwords with direct, plain-language.

What you can do:

Performance meetings:

 - Sudden, unannounced schedule changes can trigger intense cognitive overload and anxiety. Provide the worker with core discussion bullet points or questions at least 24 hours prior via text or email to allow them adequate processing and preparation time.
 - Keep communication clear: Provide direct, instructions, clear operational context, visual aids, and written takeaways.
 - Avoid subtle hints, reference to “unspoken rules,” metaphors (e.g., “pull up your socks” or “read the room”), and jargon or buzzwords.
 - Keep to timings: Limit coaching sessions to 15-to-20-minute windows.

Manage the sensory environment:

 - A person who processes sensory inputs differently cannot absorb feedback if the surrounding environment is overwhelming in terms of light, movement, and noise. Coaching check-ins may be difficult for neurodivergent workers when they are held in crowded, noisy, or busy places, or in offices with harsh lighting. Consider using a quiet, isolated office or a parked light-vehicle cabin.

Adapting Coaching for Specific Neuro-Profiles:

 - ADHD / Fast-Processing Brains: Break long-range actions and objectives down into immediate or short-term milestones. Follow up verbal agreements with a brief text summary to act as a memory aid.
 - Autistic / Structured-Processing Brains: Be completely literal. If an operational routine or scheduling target changes, explain the concrete, logical “why” behind that shift immediately. Do not rely on subtle hints, “reading between the lines,” tone alterations, or body language.
 - Dyslexic / Visual-Processing Brains: Avoid handing over blocks of dense text, safety manuals, or data-heavy spreadsheets without interpretation or guidance. Use visual aids, simple flowcharts, or hands-on demonstrations.

20 Advancing Leadership Capability Through Inclusive Coaching

A TOOLKIT FOR MINING LEADERS 21

D. Neurodivergent Team Members (ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, etc.)

Example:

You are assigning a complex crusher maintenance sequence to an apprentice with ADHD and dyslexia.

Instead of:

“Be mindful of neurodivergent communication differences and support sensory needs.”

Do this:

Although there is a 20-page manual describing the sequence, it will likely be unhelpful in this instance.

Grab a 15-minute slot in a quiet office before the shift kicks off and provide the team member a physical checklist: “First, isolate the feed belt conveyor and confirm your personal isolation tags are locked out. Second, snap photos of the wear plate liner cracks. Third, upload those files into the maintenance tracker before lunch. Fourth, meet back here at 12:30 to look at the photos together.”

Follow up by sending them a quick 4-line text message summarising those exact steps so their phone acts as a memory aid during the shift.

E. LGBTIQ+ Team Members

Core Protocol: Ensure casual, everyday crew interactions do not enforce heteronormative assumptions. Heteronormative refers to the belief or assumption that being straight (heterosexual) and strictly identifying as a man or woman is the default, normal, or “correct” way to be. These types of assumptions could include assuming that every male supervisor has a “wife” or every female operator has a “husband”.

What you can do:

- Respect, affirm, and use the exact names, personal pronouns, and relationship terms that an individual uses to describe themselves. If they use the term “partner,” use the term “partner”.
- If you are not sure of a person’s preferred pronoun, address the team member as “they/them”.
- Maintain strict, absolute confidentiality regarding personal disclosures.

Example:

A haul truck driver informs you privately that they are undergoing a gender transition, and request their preferred name is used on the shift roster.

Instead of:

“Ensure identity safety and use inclusive language.”

Do this Say:

“Thank you for trusting me with this. My priority is making sure you are completely safe and respected on this team. Let me know exactly how you want me to update the roster sheet. If anyone on shift makes comments or makes you feel uncomfortable, come straight to me. I will address it immediately.”

F. Age Diversity and Intergenerational Dynamics

Core Protocol: In workplaces where workers span wide age ranges, age-related assumptions can unintentionally influence how competence, adaptability, and authority are perceived. Effective inclusive coaching requires consciously removing bias linked to age (both younger and older workers) and ensuring all personnel are engaged based on capability, not generational stereotypes.

This includes avoiding assumptions such as:

- Younger workers being “inexperienced” or “not ready”
- Older workers being “resistant to change” or “less adaptable”

Instead, focus on demonstrated competence, lived experience, and operational contribution.

What you can do:

- Treat capability as independent of age or tenure. Avoid language that frames performance through generational bias (e.g., “At your age,” “You young ones,” “Old school”).
- Actively recognise and integrate diverse forms of expertise:
 - Technical abilities (often newer workers)
 - Operational knowledge (often experienced workers)
 - Digital skills (often younger workers)
 - Deep safety and risk intuition (often experienced workers)
- Ensure that you adapt you feedback style to individual preference, not age-based expectation.

Instead of:

“Ensure all age groups are respected and treated equally.”

Do this:

Do not default to stereotypes about either worker.

Say:

“Thank-you, both, for raising these issues. I want to make sure we’re set up so everyone’s experience is used properly, and no one is left out of critical conversations. Both your operational knowledge is important in how we’re rolling this out, and I also want to make sure newer team members are included where they can contribute meaningfully.

Let’s look at how we can adjust the way we introduce and support the digital systems so everyone can operate confidently and ensure planning discussions include the right mix of experience and fresh perspective.”

Example:

A 58-year-old maintenance technician expresses frustration that new digital reporting systems are changing too quickly and that they feel “pushed aside,” while a 24-year-old operator is routinely excluded from planning discussions regarding the new systems because they are “still learning the ropes.”



G. Intersectionality (Overlapping Identity Dynamics in Operational Environments)

Core Protocol: Intersectionality refers to how multiple aspects of identity (e.g., gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, age, etc) interact and compound to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. At work, this means individuals do not experience “one dimension” of difference at a time. Rather, they navigate the experience of multiple, interacting dimensions, increasing social and operational pressures. Leaders must therefore move beyond category-based assumptions during coaching. Instead, they must develop situational awareness and adapt to the unique identity and situation of each worker.

1 The Site Reality: Layered Pressure, Not Single Identity Factors

Workers often experience interacting and compounding dynamics, such as:

- A young, female migrant operator, new to the mining industry in a male dominated environment. Addressing the challenges faced by young workers who are new to the mining industry may not fully account for the challenges this worker also faces as a woman, and as a migrant.
- A young, neurodivergent Indigenous apprentice who experiences sensory overload in noisy environments. Addressing this worker’s cultural identity would not fully address the inequities he may face as a younger, neurodivergent worker.
- A newly promoted, female superintendent. Simply addressing the challenges she faces as a person new to a position of seniority and authority may not fully account for her experience as a woman in such a role.

These overlaps mean that some workers experience multiple, compounding biases, intensifying negative experiences of discrimination and inequitable treatment at work. These overlaps can result in “intersectional overload,” an idea which describes how coping with such experiences entails a very high cognitive, emotional, and/or cultural load. The burden of this overload can impact workers’ behaviour and capacities at work, and misinterpreting these behaviours as disengagement or performance problems leads to incorrect or unhelpful management responses. The signs of intersectional overload in a worker can include, for example:

- Being silent, or making limited verbal contributions
- Being over compliant (For example, always agreeing, or giving a “yes” response without fully contributing or understanding)
- Experiencing heightened anxiety in formal or corrective conversations
- Withdrawal from feedback loops or development opportunities
- Excessive reliance on senior operators for validation
- Increased procedural errors despite prior competence
- Over-preparation or perfectionism in documentation tasks
- Reluctance to ask clarifying questions

2 Leadership Shift: From Category-Based Coaching to Context-Based Coaching

Leaders can acknowledge the complexity that we have outlined above by thinking about, acknowledging, and addressing, the unique challenges and barriers faced by workers with intersecting minority or marginalised identities. The following points offer some suggestions for ways to do this:

What you can do:

- Resist single-label thinking:**
Do not assume behaviour is driven only by one aspect of a person’s identity, for example, gender, culture, or neurotype. Avoid a “one-size-fits-all” coaching model when coaching team members.

- Focus on understanding the person’s unique experience:**
Think about, “What pressures might be compounding here?”
- Slow the interpretation of workers’ behaviours:**
Pause before attributing meaning to silence, compliance, hesitation, or resistance. Do not jump to interpret these behaviours without respectfully checking their meaning.
- Transparency:**
Always explain the intent and purpose of the coaching session and agree and check understandings of the outcomes and next steps.

- Check assumptions:**
Instead of assuming how a workplace policy or practice might impact a team member, check your assumptions by letting them explain their experience in their own words (e.g. “Talk me through how you’re seeing this step”). Always confirm understanding through demonstration or re-explanation, and do not assume that a person’s understanding of something equals their agreement with it.
- Psychological safety first:**
When you aren’t sure what’s driving a change in a worker’s performance, prioritise psychological safety. Establish a supportive, non-judgemental, environment before exploring openly and with curiosity what’s going on.
- Use an adaptive authority tone:**
An adaptive authority tone refers to a way of communicating where a person adapts their communication style to various situations and contexts. In general, it is steady, clear, and respectful, while also being confident and authoritative.

3 Example: A newly promoted female, neurodivergent, culturally diverse supervisor has begun hesitating during pre-start briefings and deferring decisions to senior male operators.

Instead of:

“Be mindful of cultural and gender differences when giving feedback.”

Do this:

Do NOT interpret this as lack of leadership capability or confidence alone.

Instead:

“Hi Laura, I want to check in on how things are going for you in these pre-starts. You’ve stepped into a high-pressure role with a lot of moving parts, and I can see you’re managing a lot of things at once. My focus here is making sure you’ve got clarity and space to lead in your own way, not to second-guess you. Can you walk me through what feels most complex or overloaded when you’re running the briefing?”

Then:

- Pause longer than usual
- Do not rush silence
- Let them structure their response without interruption

Follow with:

“Let’s simplify this together so you’re not carrying all of it at once. What’s one part we can make clearer or easier for next shift?”

4 Summary: Field Standard Behaviour (Non-Negotiables)

- Do not** escalate your tone of voice when clarity is needed - reduce complexity instead.
- Do not** interpret silence without respectfully checking what it means.
- Do not** rely on a “one-size-fits-all” approach when coaching mixed teams.
- Do not** assume comprehension equals agreement.
- Always** confirm understanding through demonstration or re-explanation.

Implementation Process: Putting the Toolkit into Practice

To help apply these concepts in real-time operations, leaders can use the following five-step process. This process can help ensure that inclusive coaching is embedded naturally into everyday team interactions.

STEP

1



Assess the Situation and the Individual

Take a brief moment to evaluate the operational context and who you are speaking with.



STEP

2



Establish the Right Environment

Set up the physical and psychological space to ensure the conversation is safe, respectful, and effective.



STEP

3



Select and Execute the Appropriate Conversation Framework

Choose one of the two best-practice conversation frameworks from **Section 3.0** based on your available time and the urgency of the issue.



STEP

4



Apply Core Micro-Skills and Cultural Protocols in Real-Time

As you guide the team member through your chosen framework, intentionally adjust your communication style using the toolkit's Core Leadership Micro-Skills (**Section 2.0**) and Applied Cultural Protocols (**Section 4.0**).



STEP

5



Confirm and Follow Up

Close the interaction by ensuring complete alignment and providing continuous, practical support.



Step 1: Assess the Situation and the Individual



Before engaging with a team member, take a brief moment to evaluate the operational context and who you are speaking with.



Identify potential compounding pressures:

Review 4.0 Applied Cultural Protocols for Inclusive Coaching and consider if the team member is navigating overlapping identity dynamics such as age, gender, culture, or neurodiversity alongside everyday role pressures.



Check your assumptions:

Pause your interpretation of workers' (non) responses, as outlined in the G. Intersectionality (Section 4.0) protocol.



Step 2: Establish the Right Environment



Set up the physical and psychological space to ensure the conversation is safe, respectful, and effective.



Manage sensory distractions:

For critical conversations, move away from loud operational noise. Follow the guidance in Active Listening (Section 2.0) and D. Neurodivergent Team Members (ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, etc.) (Section 4.0) by stepping into a quiet office or a parked light-vehicle cabin, putting your phone face down, and minimising radio interruptions.



Lead with transparency:

State the precise purpose, positive parameters, and exact context of the conversation within the first minute. This lowers anxiety and establishes that the coaching session is not disciplinary or punitive. This is detailed in the A. Gender Diversity and Cross-Gender Dynamics, B. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and G. Intersectionality (Overlapping Identity Dynamics in Operational Environments) protocols (Section 4.0).



Step 3: Select and Execute the Appropriate Conversation Framework



Choose one of the two best-practice conversation frameworks from **3.0 Best-Practice Conversation Frameworks** based on your available time and the urgency of the issue:



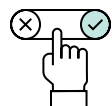
For fast, operational problem-solving (Under 15 Minutes):

Use the POW Model to help the team member unpack an immediate challenge, shift focus to a solution-oriented outcome, and lock in a committed way forward.



For planned development catch-ups (20-45 Minutes):

Use the GROWTH Model during scheduled sessions to explore career pathways, or build long-term capability. Explore goals, reasons, obstacles, opportunities, and required support.



Step 4: Apply Core Micro-Skills and Cultural Protocols



As you guide the team member through your chosen framework, intentionally adjust your communication style. Refer to the toolkit's **Core Leadership Micro-Skills (2.0 Core Leadership Micro-Skills)** and **Applied Cultural Protocols (4.0 Applied Cultural Protocols for Inclusive Coaching)**:



Practice active listening:

Apply the 3-Second Pause when a team member finishes speaking. Respect silence as a tool for deep reflection and processing rather than trying to rush or fill quiet gaps, especially when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members and neurodivergent colleagues.



Use applied and powerful questioning:

Swap out closed, directive statements for open-ended prompts that encourage critical thinking, reflection, and team ownership. Refer to the comparative tables in Section 2.0 for field examples.



Use inclusive, respectful language:

Try to avoid slang when speaking with culturally diverse team members. Explicitly validate, affirm, and mirror preferred names and relationship terms for LGBTQIA+ team members. For neurodivergent team members, keep instructions literal and avoid vague metaphors or social hints.



Step 5: Confirm and Follow Up



Close the interaction by ensuring that you both have the same understanding of the next steps, and that you have provided continuous, practical support.



Check understanding:

Never ask a simple "Do you understand?" Follow the C. Culturally Diverse Team Member and G. Intersectionality protocols in Section 4.0. Ask the team member to describe the sequence, behaviour, plan, or workflow back to you in their own words, or through a practical demonstration, to confirm that you both have the same understanding.



Provide a memory aid:

For complex actions or fast-processing brains (such as team members with ADHD), immediately follow up verbal agreements with a brief text summary or physical checklist. This acts as a memory aid, as recommended in the D. Neurodivergent Team Member protocol in Section 4.0.

6.0

Conclusion

Leadership requires more than technical expertise, compliance knowledge, and performance management. Leaders are increasingly expected to create workplaces where people feel safe, respected, valued, and able to contribute at their best- regardless of background, identity, experience, or circumstance.

This toolkit recognises that leadership capability is strengthened through direct and indirect coaching skills. At its core, coaching increases a leader's ability to listen deeply, remain curious, ask meaningful questions, and create psychologically safe conversations that support both performance and people outcomes.

In complex and high-pressure environments leaders need practical approaches that work. This toolkit has been designed with that reality in mind. Rather than adding complexity, it provides adaptable frameworks, coaching practices, and identity-specific guidance that leaders can apply during everyday interactions - whether addressing performance, supporting development, managing change, building confidence, or navigating difficult conversations.

Importantly, building leadership capability through coaching skills does not mean lowering standards, avoiding accountability, or treating everyone the same. It means leading with fairness, awareness, and intentionality.

Recognising that people may experience the workplace differently and that effective leadership requires adapting communication and support to help individuals succeed. Inclusion and performance are not competing priorities - they are mutually reinforcing concepts.

By applying the principles and practices in this toolkit, leaders can strengthen trust, improve engagement, enhance team cohesion, reduce unnecessary barriers to performance, and foster environments where diverse talent can thrive. Small shifts in how leaders listen, question, respond, and coach can create significant shifts in confidence, capability, belonging, and operational effectiveness over time.

Ultimately, advancing leadership capability through inclusive coaching is about developing leaders who can achieve strong operational outcomes while bringing people with them. The invitation for leaders is simple: **lead with curiosity, coach with intention, and create spaces where every team member has the opportunity to contribute, grow, and succeed.**



Appendix

What is Coaching?

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is the largest organisation in the world for certification of coach training programmes and for independent certification of professional coaches. According to the ICF, coaching is “**partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.**”

This toolkit follows this definition of coaching.

What is ICF

Founded in 1995, The International Coaching Federation (ICF) (<https://coachingfederation.org/>) is the leading global organisation for coaches and coaching. ICF is dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification and building a worldwide network of trained coaching professionals.

With 50,000-plus members located in more than 140 countries and territories, they work toward common goals of enhancing awareness of coaching and upholding the integrity of the profession through lifelong learning and upholding the highest ethical standards.

The coaching frameworks shared in this toolkit (POW and GROWTH frameworks) are accredited by ICF and are used extensively by accredited ICF coaches around the world. They have been shared by ICF Master Certified Coach (MCC) Luke Salway from Coachology.

To bridge the gap between global professional coaching principles and heavy industry supervision, the table below translates the eight global ICF Core Competencies directly into observable, practical frontline behaviours used on site.

Global Professional Principle (ICF Core Competency)	Meaning for Frontline Mining Leaders (Site Translation)	What “Good” Looks Like in the Field (Observable Behaviour)
1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice	Safety and Integrity Compliance: Adhering completely to safety codes, corporate values, and equal employment opportunity (EEO) guidelines.	Modelling non-negotiable safety standards yourself; maintaining strict team confidentiality regarding personal matters or mental health struggles.
2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset	Applied Curiosity Over Directives: Moving from default directive lecturing to open-minded support, acknowledging that team members often have front-line answers.	Pausing your first response when an operational error occurs; preparing intentionally for team check-ins rather than winging it.
3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements	Setting Clear Alignment (The Contract): Clearly defining the boundary, target, and intent of a development session so there are no surprises.	Stating the exact parameters early: “Sarah, the goal of this 15-minute chat is to map out your pathway to get signed off on the crusher circuit.”

Global Professional Principle (ICF Core Competency)	Meaning for Frontline Mining Leaders (Site Translation)	What “Good” Looks Like in the Field (Observable Behaviour)
4. Cultivates Trust and Safety	Building Psychological & Cultural Safety: Creating an environment where a diverse team member feels safe to report hazards, flag concerns, or admit knowledge gaps without judgment.	Using the 4.0 Applied Cultural Protocols for Inclusive Coaching; actively listening to personal backgrounds; validating cultural protocols and identity parameters up front.
5. Maintains Presence	Focused Situational Awareness: Staying completely present, focused, and adaptable during a conversation, free from distractions.	Putting your phone face down, turning down the two-way radio, stepping into a quiet light-vehicle cabin, and giving the worker your full attention.
6. Listens Actively	Deep, Unrushed Understanding: Hearing what is said and what is unsaid to understand the complete operational or personal context.	Applying the 3-Second Pause before answering; respecting cultural silence; focusing on the person’s underlying pressures rather than just raw figures.
7. Evokes Awareness	Prompting Critical Thinking: Using open questioning to help the team member discover solutions, roadblocks, and safety dynamics independently.	Replacing directive orders with targeted open prompts: “What specific constraints or scheduling delays are getting in your way on the deck today?”

Reference: <https://coachingfederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/icf-cs-core-competencies-2025.pdf>





Contact

 +61 8 6304 0000
(For calls outside Australia)

 ECU.EDU.AU

Find us at

 ecujourney

 edithcowanuni

 edithcowanuniversity

 edithcowanuniversity

 edithcowanuni

 school/edith-cowan-university

CRICOS Provider
No. 00279B
RTO Code 4756

TEQSA ID PRV12160,
Australian University