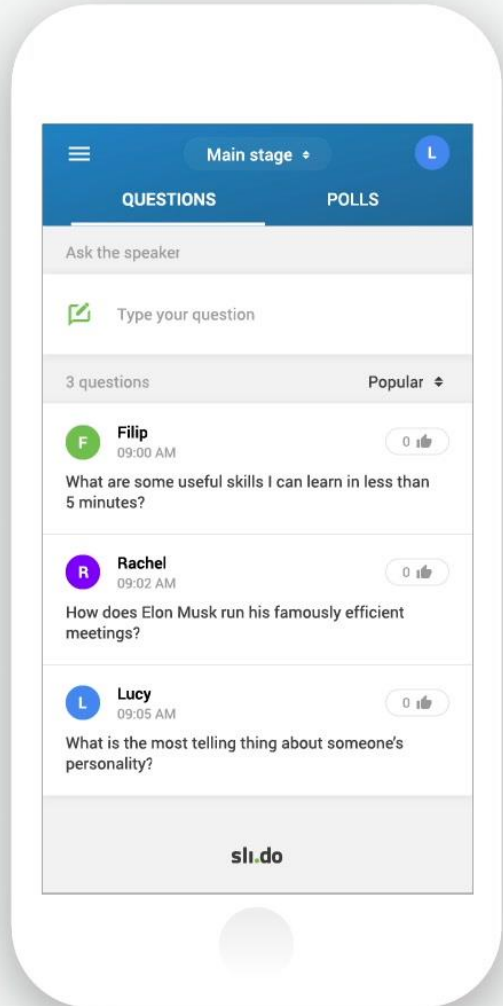


The Challenges of Establishing and Growing an Internal Evaluation Unit:

Experiences from three large government departments

September 2019

Using sli.do



- We will be using sli.do today to get your ideas, opinions and questions
- You can ask a question at anytime and others can ‘up-vote’
- Join at **slido.com**
- Enter the code **#3686**

Firstly, where are you from?

Commonwealth Government

State Government

Local Government

Non-Government Organisation

Large Consultancy

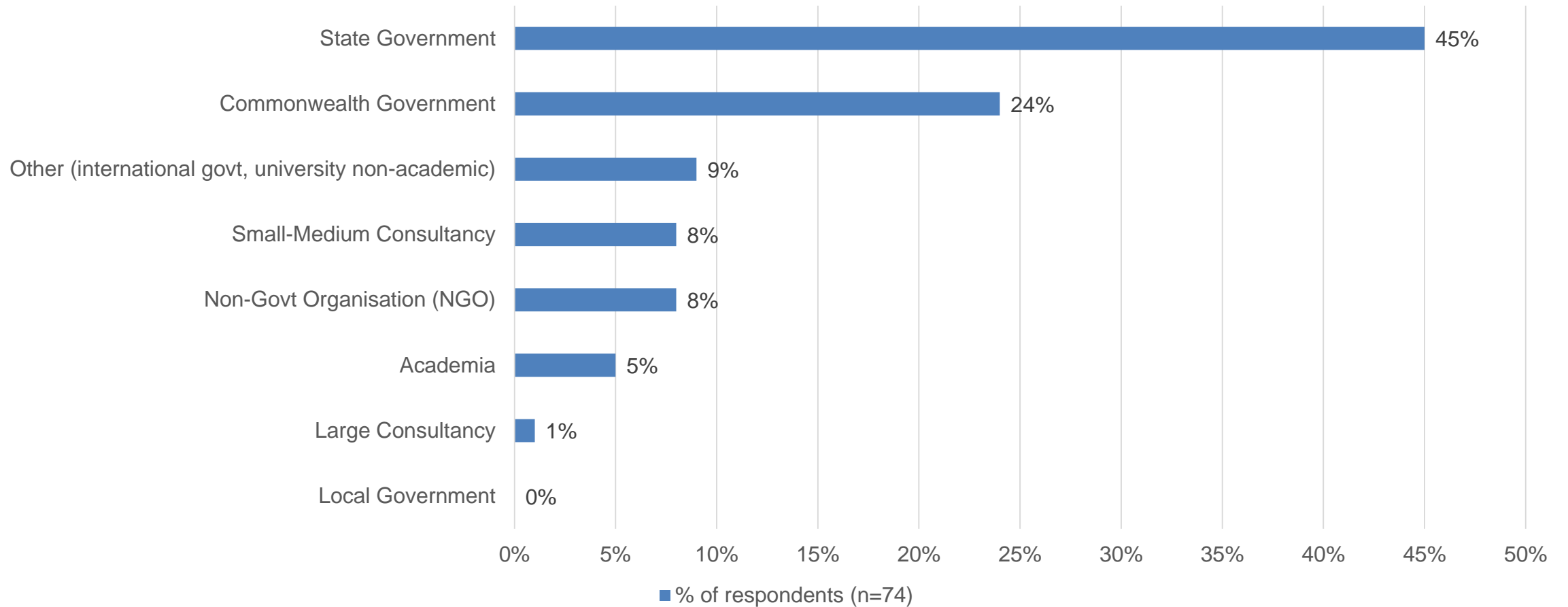
Small Consultancy

Academia

Other

Firstly, where are you from? (results)

Proportion of session attendees from each sector



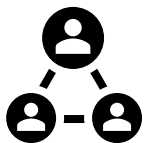
The broad elements required to establish and maintain an internal evaluation function...



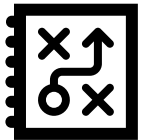
A clear value proposition



A team with the right skills and competencies



Senior stakeholder buy-in/ champions



Fit-for-purpose products and services

Other elements identified (summarised):

- Relationships and networks
- Appropriate funding and resources
- Clear scope and priorities
- Clear authorising/governance and stakeholder environment
- Strategic understanding of organisation
- Integration into business planning and policy cycle
- Transparency
- Strategy for growth
- Baseline measures of evaluation capability and needs
- Communication strategy
- Good leadership and organisational culture

...and there are four overarching ways in which internal evaluation units can add value and help to build an evaluation culture

Advisory services



- Scoping support
- Guidance materials
- Designing request for quote documentation
- Theory of change and program logic mapping
- Advice on data collection frameworks

Evaluation delivery



- Data collection – surveys, focus groups, interviews, literature reviews
- Data analysis and synthesis across methods
- Reporting
- Contract management

Evaluation Culture

Capacity Building



- Training and workshops including online products
- Oversight and validation

Knowledge translation



- Development of bespoke evaluation products – summaries and data visualisation
- Online repositories
- Seminars, conferences and roundtables

Pop quiz

At a guess - how many people would it take to resource an internal evaluation unit for a government department with 10,000 staff members?

Assume that the unit needs to undertake all advisory, delivery, capacity building and knowledge translation activities

0 - 10

11 - 20

21 - 30

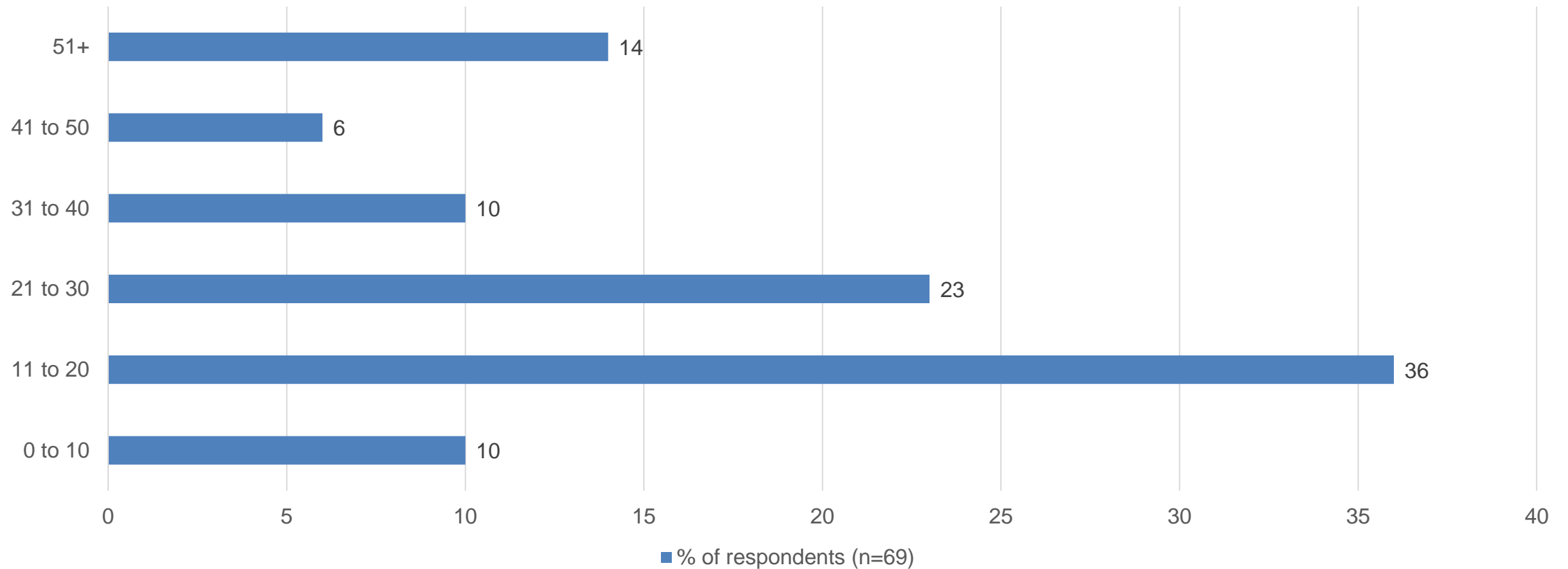
31 - 40

41 - 50

51 +

Pop quiz - results

How many people would it take to resource an internal evaluation unit for a government department with 10,000 staff members?



Our case studies



Department of Health and Human Services – Centre for Evaluation and Research

- **Value proposition:** full internal service offering across advisory, delivery, capacity building and knowledge translation services
- **Size of team:** 20 FTE
- **Skills and competencies required:** mixed methods research, stakeholder engagement, customer service, communications
- **Stakeholder expectations:** High appetite for responsive evaluation delivery and advisory support
- **Products and services:**
 - advisory support,
 - guidance materials, tools and templates,
 - full suite of evaluation delivery services,
 - training and events,
 - secretariat for the Victorian public sector evaluation network.



Department of Education and Training – Performance and Evaluation Division

- **Value proposition:** internal advisory service, capacity building and knowledge translation alongside external evaluation delivery. Support executives through regular evidence syntheses and reporting to inform decision-making.
- **Size of team:** 4FTE
- **Skills and competencies required:** evaluation knowledge and experience, stakeholder engagement, communication
- **Stakeholder expectations:** responsive and high quality evaluation advice and training products. Central point of knowledge on all DET evaluation evidence.
- **Products and services:**
 - advisory support and training
 - evaluation policy, guidance materials, tools and templates
 - access to evaluation procurement panel
 - evaluation database and monitoring
 - evidence synthesis reports.



Department of Premier and Cabinet – Policy Impact Centre (under construction)

- **Value proposition:** rapid evidence synthesis to respond to emerging, cross-portfolio policy issues, and public sector-wide evaluation guidance
- **Size of team:** TBD (originally proposed to be 12 + departmental secondments)
- **Skills and competencies required:** Rapid review methodologies, senior stakeholder engagement, ability to form agile/short-term project teams
- **Stakeholder expectations:** high quality, highly responsive evidence products, consistent advice
- **Products:** Tailored evidence reports, coordination of public-sector wide evaluation guidance



Some questions for you:

From your experience and from what you have heard through these case studies, which of these functions appears most likely to add most value if provided internally (select as many as you like):



Advisory



Delivery

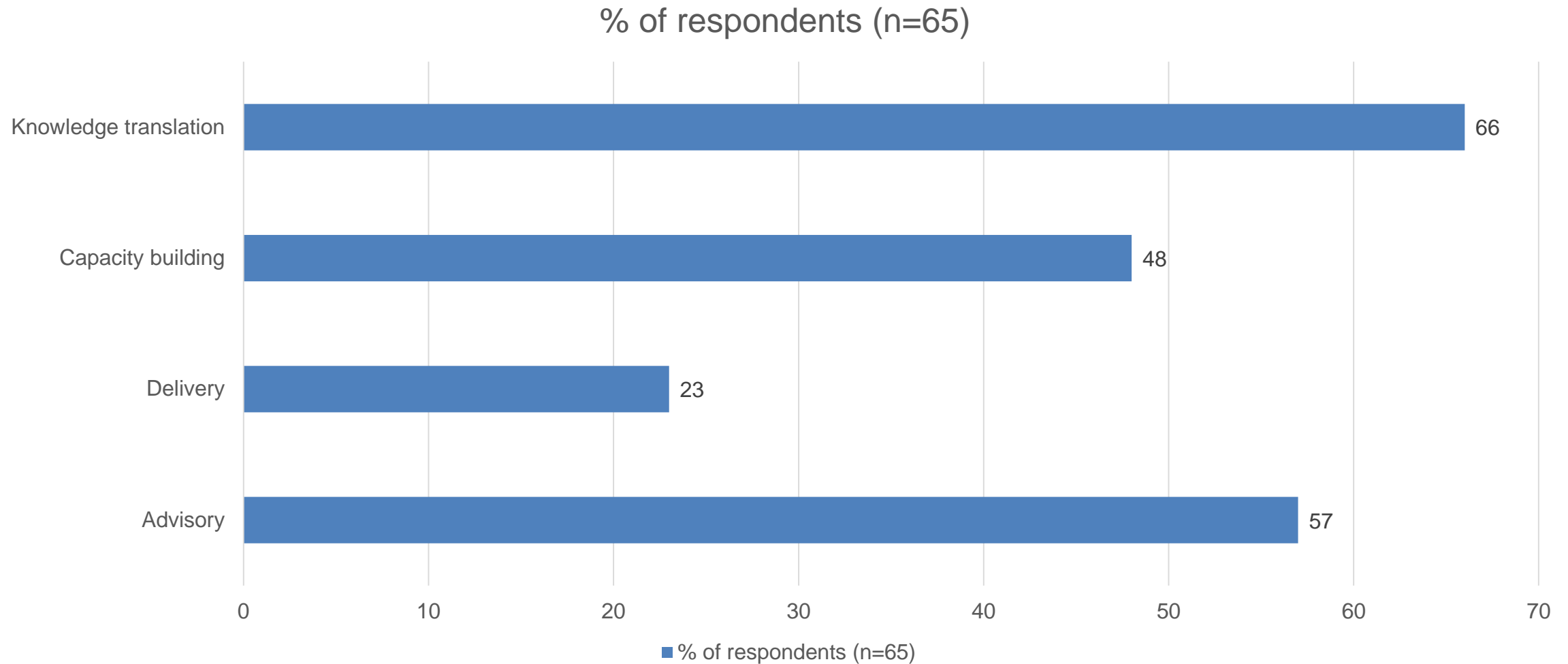


Capacity building



Knowledge translation

Which of these functions appears most likely to add most value if provided internally? (participants could select more than one option)



Tell us about your experience. What do we know about how to deliver the four key functions of evaluation units effectively?



Think about **evaluation advice** – what are some examples of effective tools, materials and approaches that you have used in the past or would like to trial?



Think about **evaluation delivery** – what are some of your tips and tricks on how to meet the needs of your clients and stakeholders?



Think about **capacity building** – what are some of the features of effective training materials and activities?



Think about **knowledge translation** – what are some ways to make sure evaluation findings get to the right people and don't end up on the shelf?

Evaluation advice – examples of effective tools, materials and approaches (summary of 32 responses)



- Built in policy structures and mandates around evaluation
- Evaluation planning workshops with program staff
- Evaluability assessment/readiness tools and checklists
- Assistance for staff to define measurable objectives
- Theory of change and program logic as standard with good examples available
- Systems approach with a uniform monitoring and evaluation system
- Monitoring and evaluation plans aligned to theories of change
- Coaching (internal and external support)
- Ethics advice
- Support to form good evaluation questions
- Ask 'big dumb questions'

Evaluation delivery – tips and tricks to meet the needs of clients and stakeholders (summary of 35 responses)



- Define the sponsor, key stakeholders and audience and seek early buy-in
- Undertake an inception meeting
- Seek upfront agreement on level of service/expectations/needs – evaluation for use
- Spend plenty of time scoping and planning
- Ensure robust project management
- Focus on a narrow and practical range of questions
- Determine measurable objectives and clear outcomes
- Stakeholder mapping (high interest and high power vs low interest and low power)
- Create product standards and examples of good practice
- Have clear governance arrangements with terms of reference
- Develop a communications strategy
- Involve stakeholders early – work in tandem with program areas and evaluation units including co-facilitation and co-data collection
- Design, plan and deliver evaluation as early as possible – don't leave it to the end
- Report back frequently on progress and identify/address changing priorities, tailor communications to different audiences
- Actually deliver what the client asks you deliver not what you think they want
- Ensure no surprises – bring people along
- Check your bias

Capacity building – features of effective training materials and activities (summary of 31 responses)



- Use a variety of training modes (webinars/workshops/one to one) and bespoke materials (articles/videos) – have a rolling program
- Target senior and junior staff
- Set tailored objectives – not everyone needs to become a fully fledged evaluator, some will need project management, report writing and data presentation support
- Use co-design
- Recognise the time limitations of your audience
- Learn from others in similar roles – share tangible and applied experiences
- Consider a staged approach (start with centralised general training then move to specialised training in ‘hot topics’)
- Provide mentoring and coaching, and build champions
- Build capacity through co-delivery of evaluations, learn by doing
- Run training in creative spaces
- Use adult learning approaches
- Evaluate effectiveness of capacity building efforts

Knowledge translation – how to make sure evaluation findings are used (summary of 31 responses)



- Know your audience, what they want and why, use their language
- Create short/tailored/summarised products and tailor for different audiences (1, 3 and 25 page products)
- Use dynamic, online reporting, visual approaches, infographics, and interactive workshops
- Socialise indicative findings early, nothing should be a surprise to the stakeholders
- Have a multidisciplinary team that can share findings with their respective audiences or collocate evaluation and project delivery teams
- Use a 'knowledge to action' framework
- Use trusted external evaluators to provide validation
- Host findings on an internal portal/online platform or develop evaluation compendium
- Present project findings to leadership, develop a compulsory response
- Ensure leaders have ownership of evaluation and take responsibility for impact
- Make a plan or system for considering and implementing recommendations, and disseminating findings
- Use findings as a continual learning tool
- Build communities of practice and champions for monitoring and evaluation
- Publish as much as possible (don't 'bury the bodies')

Questions?

So how could we keep this conversation going?

Should we establish a national network of government evaluation units?

- What need and function would it best fulfil?
- How could it add value to the units themselves and government more broadly?
- How could we share good practice?

If you are from a government department (or are a critical friend to government) and would be interested in joining an initial discussion, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au