Evaluation within UK Trusts and Foundations

PRACTICE, USE AND CHALLENGES

IVAR Institute for Voluntary Action Research

Center for Evaluation Innovation

CCLA

Investment for UK trusts and
foundations supporting communities.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Introduction

94% awarded grants of more than £1m

This report presents the first ever picture of evaluation within primarily larger trusts and foundations in the UK.

It is based on the findings of an online survey completed by 34 trusts and foundations – 94% of whom awarded grants of more than £1m in 2013/14.

The survey was designed to address a need for information about the positioning, resourcing and uses of evaluation in trusts and foundations which was highlighted at the inaugural convening of the UK Evaluation Roundtable in March 2014.

Specifically, the survey aimed to:

Understand the range of evaluative activities that trusts and foundations are undertaking and how these activities are being organised and invested in.

Explore perceptions about how well trusts and foundations are making use of evaluative information to inform their work.

Explore the challenges that trusts and foundations are facing in relation to their evaluation practices.

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The Evaluation Roundtable

The need for the survey was identified at the inaugural convening of the UK Evaluation Roundtable – an informal network of foundation evaluation leaders seeking to improve how trusts and foundations assess their performance and learn so that they can improve their results.

It is a joint initiative between IVAR in the UK and the Center for Evaluation Innovation in the U.S.

The Roundtable aims to improve evaluation practice in trusts and foundations by infusing it with cutting-edge ideas, and by providing foundation evaluation leaders with an opportunity to refine and deepen their thinking and practice. It is a resource for sharing information on what other trusts and foundations are doing on evaluation, as well as for ideas about where and how trusts and foundations might develop their practice.

Evaluation in trusts and foundations encompasses a broad range of activities – performance management (e.g. reporting and monitoring), knowledge management, organisational learning, and strategic learning. Because the shape of the evaluation function in UK trusts and foundations has begun to expand in recent years, the Roundtable focuses broadly on the use of, and demand for, 'evaluative information' rather than solely on 'evaluation'.

For ease of reference, the term evaluation is used to represent the suite of trusts and foundations' evaluation-related activities.

Key findings
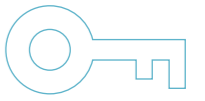
1

This survey highlights the extensive amount of evaluation that is taking place by trusts and foundations.

Over the last five years demand for different types of evaluative activity has either increased (in 48% of cases) or stayed the same (in 32% of cases).

During a two year period, over 100 evaluations have been commissioned, along with a range of other research, including needs assessments, mapping studies and evidence reviews.

2

Levels of investment in resourcing evaluation are increasing.

In 51% of cases, investment in evaluation has increased over the last five years (only 6% reported a decrease).

However, data on evaluation expenditure is patchy and incomplete. A number of respondents struggled to provide expenditure data related specifically to their evaluation activities either because it was not possible to segment their financial information in this way and/or because the costs associated with evaluation activities are often being subsumed into other organisational costs.

Questions therefore remain about what would be an appropriate balance between expenditure on grants compared to expenditure on evaluation and learning.

3

Evaluation within trusts and foundations is being driven primarily by seeking to improve or adapt practice.

The three reasons for evaluating grant-making rated 'very important' by most respondents were:

- To make our work better by feeding lessons back into programme design (65%)

- To be a more effective grant-maker (55%)

- To understand what works and what doesn't work (53%)

Secondary to this, but still important, is a need to be accountable by monitoring and demonstrating performance. To varying degrees, evaluative information is being used to influence and/or inform other areas, including programme development and long-term strategy.

4

There is a mixed picture in relation to the evaluation function within trusts and foundations.

15 out of 34 foundations that completed the survey have a dedicated post (or posts) related to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact. Of the remaining 19 foundations, 15 have staff with evaluation-related responsibilities, but those staff also focus on other activities.

However, almost half of survey respondents reported limited or low levels of support from trustees and senior management for the idea of funding evaluation posts.

Key findings
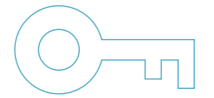
5
The extent to which evaluation is formalised is varied.

For example, a limited number of trusts and foundations have policies in place to guide spending on evaluation. Systems and procedures to capture internal knowledge/ learning, as well as organise and share knowledge, are also fairly low. However, the survey found no evidence to suggest that there is necessarily a correlation between formalisation and the strategic importance of evaluation to trusts and foundations.

6
Getting good data or getting the right mix of data is a challenge.

85% of survey respondents stated that getting good data and the right mix of data was a challenge. In addition, just under half feel that they do not have appropriate internal systems that enable data to be collected, and over a third feel they lack the skills and/ or capacity to analyse data. This is a particular challenge for those awarding under £5million a year in grants.

As demand goes up and more data is being collected, a number of respondents acknowledged the importance of having the right skills to undertake effective, robust evaluations and then to interpret data. While some of these skills can be purchased externally, some respondents were critical of the quality of external evaluators. Overall, why it is so hard to get good data, and what is needed to change that, are important questions for the field to grapple with.

7
Trusts and foundations are not content with how they are currently making use of evaluative information.

Respondents were very clear about what it means to be a 'learning organisation': actively creating spaces and opportunities for knowledge and intelligence to inform and shape day to day practices, as well as future direction, and embedding these within organisational culture.

However, while respondents reported a fairly high level of support for using evaluation for strategic learning, both from trustees and senior management, 45% said that they are not content with the way their organisation currently makes use of evaluative information.

Although 50% felt that their organisation's use of evaluation findings to fund various areas of their work was either 'good' or 'acceptable', only 18% agreed that they have effective mechanisms for disseminating learning across the organisation. The majority of respondents feel that too little is invested in knowledge management and formal learning functions (79% and 55% respectively).

Reasons for these mixed feelings about how trusts and foundations are currently making use of evaluative information include a lack of time and space to reflect on evaluation findings, as well as the absence of systems and procedures to capture and share knowledge. Other contributing factors are an organisation's culture and the extent of its desire to learn and improve.

Commentary

The demand for and interest in a variety of evaluative information is on the rise.

The majority of respondents are fairly satisfied with their investments and systems related to producing/ collecting evaluative information.

Almost all the problems or challenges identified in the survey are related to the use of evaluative information. People are experiencing challenges in obtaining information they can use for developing and adapting practice, and they want more investment in, and time for, activities that enable better use of evaluative information, for example; time for learning and reflection, knowledge management systems, and the organisation of knowledge.

This is the same pattern as in the U.S. where, as evaluation has caught on, trusts and foundations have taken on more and more evaluative work, collecting more and more information, without integrating it as well as they would like to into their decision making.

So, while trusts and foundations may be collecting and producing more data, further work is required on ways to make it more usable, then using and sharing it.

Implications
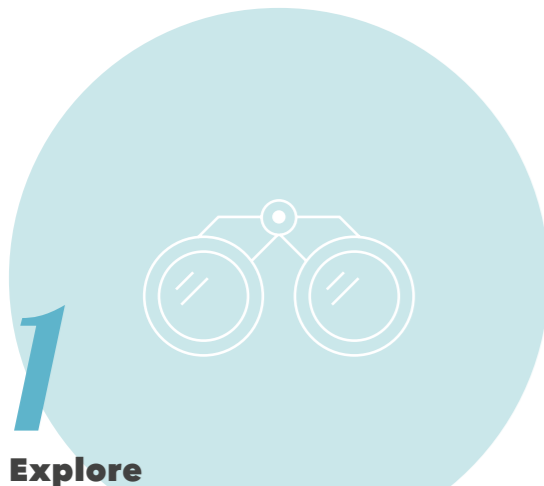
1 Explore

how and why evaluation-related information is or is not being used in your trust or foundation.

Create spaces and opportunities for the deliberate use of evaluation-related information to inform and shape both day-to-day practices and strategic direction.
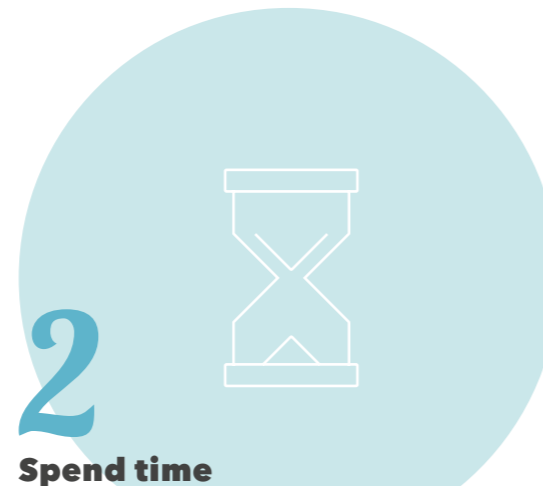
2 Spend time

ensuring your evaluation questions are right.

Make sure they are a good match with the primary evaluation users (trusts, foundations, grantees, or policymakers). Think about how the evaluation will be used (e.g. to prove impact or improve a programme), the developmental stage of what is being evaluated (brand new or mature), and the type of programme or strategy being evaluated (e.g. one with a fixed approach or one that is expected to adapt over time).

Prioritise and avoid the temptation to ask too many questions.

3 Prioritise

the evaluation activities that matter most to your trust or foundation, and focus on maximising and becoming really skilled at them.

Avoid the temptation to add more and more evaluation-related activities (e.g. evaluations at multiple levels, performance management systems and dashboards, grantee and stakeholder assessments) until you are satisfied that you are obtaining as much as you can from the activities you already have underway.

4 Balance

time and resource investments in producing and collecting new data with investments in making use of existing data.
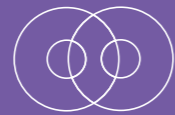
Methodology

Summary
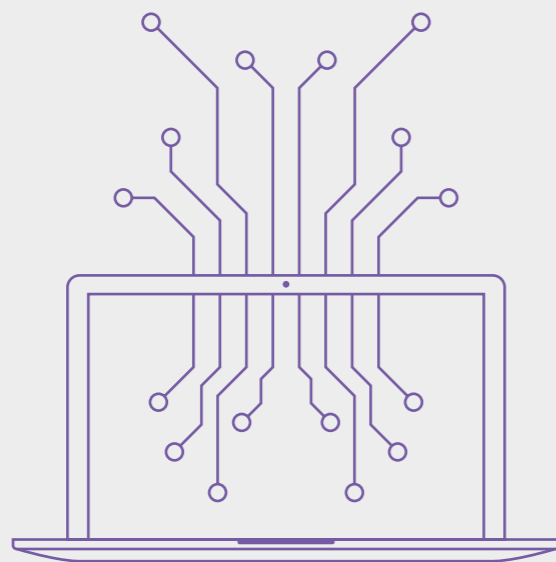
This research is based on the results of an online survey, which was administered by IVAR in June 2015. The survey was completed by 34 trusts and foundations, 94% of whom awarded grants of more than £1m in 2013/14.

As such, the sample represents the views and activities of primarily larger trusts and foundations who are funding organisations within the UK or beyond and, on average, have at least five priority funding areas, including children and young people, disadvantaged people and social welfare issues.

The survey

Aim

The online survey aimed to:

- Understand the range of evaluative activities that trusts and foundations are undertaking and how these activities are being organised, and invested in, by trusts and foundations
- Explore people's perceptions about how well trusts and foundations are making use of evaluative information to inform their work
- Explore the challenges that trusts and foundations are facing in relation to their evaluative practices

Survey Design

It was a comprehensive survey (39 questions in total) including a mixture of open and closed questions. Where possible, the survey was designed to provide comparable data to its international counterpart – the Evaluation Roundtable hosted by the Center for Evaluation Innovation in the U.S. – which published similar research in 2013[2]. The survey design also picked up some of the themes that had been discussed at the inaugural meeting of the UK Evaluation Roundtable in March 2014[3].

The survey was piloted by four trusts and foundations chosen to ensure that the survey design was appropriate to a range of trusts and foundations, irrespective of size, remit or evaluation practice.

Distribution

The online survey went 'live' for a period of three weeks (between 4th and 26th June

2015). It was circulated to all Evaluation Roundtable members, as well as to the wider ACF membership[4], and responses to the survey were confidential to the Evaluation Roundtable team based at IVAR.

Expenditure spreadsheets

In addition to the online survey, respondents were asked to supply ballpark figures (for both 2013 and 2014) about their expenditure on evaluation activities. In particular, respondents were asked about their organisation's expenditure in relation to:

- Evaluations funded through a grant
- Evaluations funded through other means
- Collecting data for indicators of foundation or programme performance
- Other related expenditure to gather data to inform knowledge of foundation effectiveness
- An estimate of the number of external evaluations commissioned by the foundation.

This data forms part of the analysis.

Analysis

The survey has been analysed by IVAR. Where appropriate, differences in respondents' answers based on a range of variables (most notably organisational size) were explored; however, these are only discussed in the report if there were any notable differences[5]. Relevant comparisons from the 2012 U.S. Roundtable survey are included at various points.

2 http://www.evaluationroundtable.org/documents/Benchmarking%20Evaluation%20in%20Foundations.pdf

3 Ibid 1.

4 Most of the Evaluation Roundtable members are also ACF members.

5 Given the size of the sample, the statistical significance of these differences cannot be determined.

The sample

About the respondents

The survey was completed by 34 respondents; this included 31 Evaluation Roundtable members and three other self-selecting trusts and foundations.

Respondents held fairly strategic roles within their organisations including Chief Executives and Directors (27%), Head of Programmes (17%) and Grant Managers (13%) (See Figure 1 below).

30% of respondents held roles related directly to research, learning, knowledge or evaluation.

FIGURE 1
Respondents' job roles

CHIEF EXECUTIVE / DIRECTOR — 27%

GRANT MANAGER — 13%

HEAD OF RESEARCH / LEARNING / KNOWLEDGE / EVALUATION / IMPACT — 30%

HEAD OF / MANAGER OF PROGRAMMES — 17%

OTHER — 13%
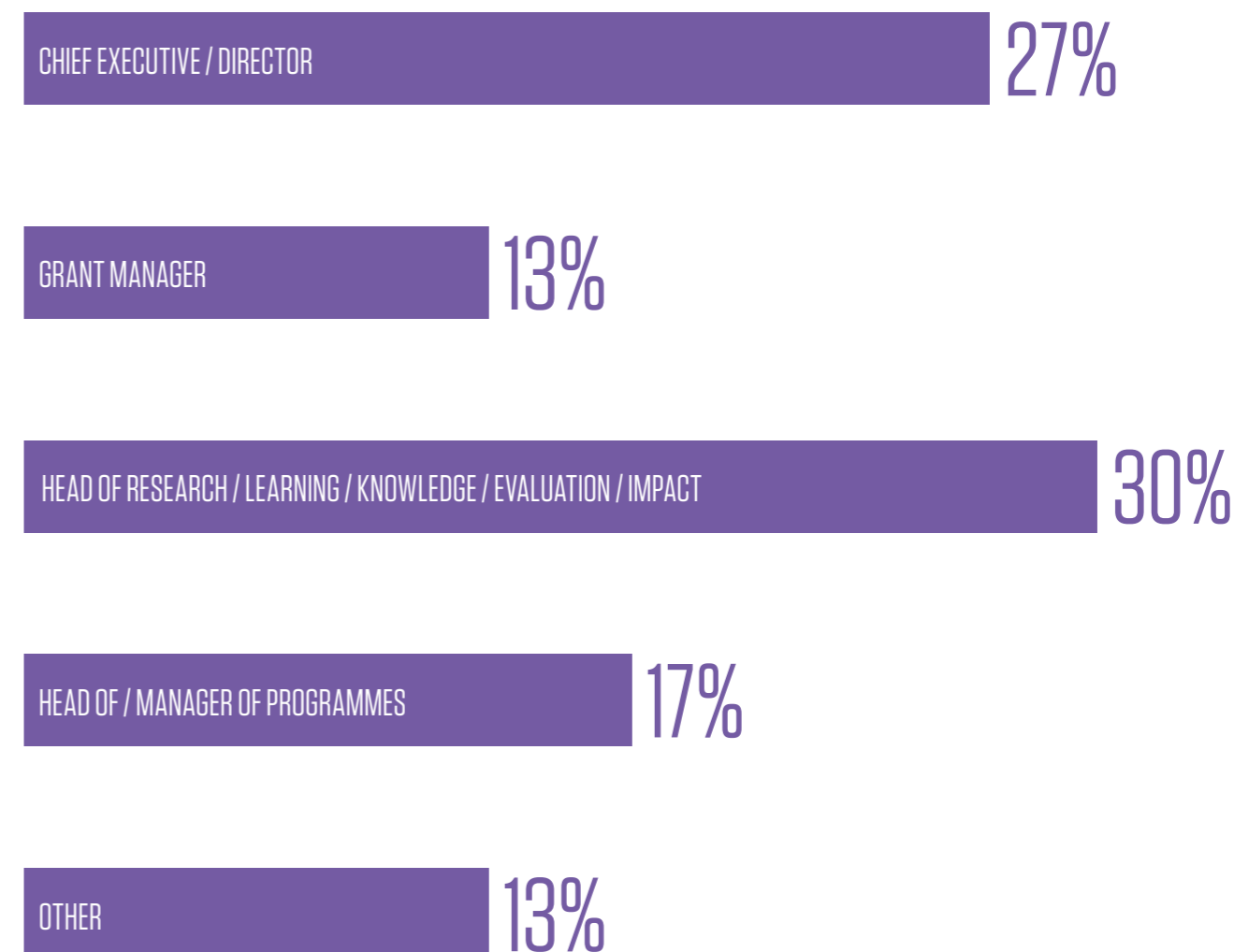
Organisational characteristics

The majority of the sample (67%) described their organisation as a General Independent Foundation. The remaining 43% were a mixture of family foundations, national lottery distributors, company or business foundations, and a benevolent fund. Only 6% said that they are intending to 'spend out'.

94% of respondents awarded grants of over £1million in 2013/2014; only 6% awarded between £250,000 and £1million (see Figure 2 below). The majority (62%) employ 11 or more full-time equivalent members of staff (see Figure 3). When compared with the wider ACF membership, the survey sample represents primarily larger trusts and foundations[6].

As such, the findings presented in this report do not claim to reflect the activity of all trusts and foundations operating in the UK (estimated to be approximately 12,000[7]).

6 Twenty nine percent of the ACF membership are awarding grants of more than £1million (compared with 94% of the survey sample), and the majority (63%) have less than 10 employees (compared with 38% of the survey sample).

7 Estimate provided by ACF, 2015

FIGURE 2

Value of grants awarded in 2013/2014 by the responding trusts and foundations

BELOW £250,000	£250,000 – £1m	£1 – £5m	ABOVE £5m
0%	6%	42%	52%
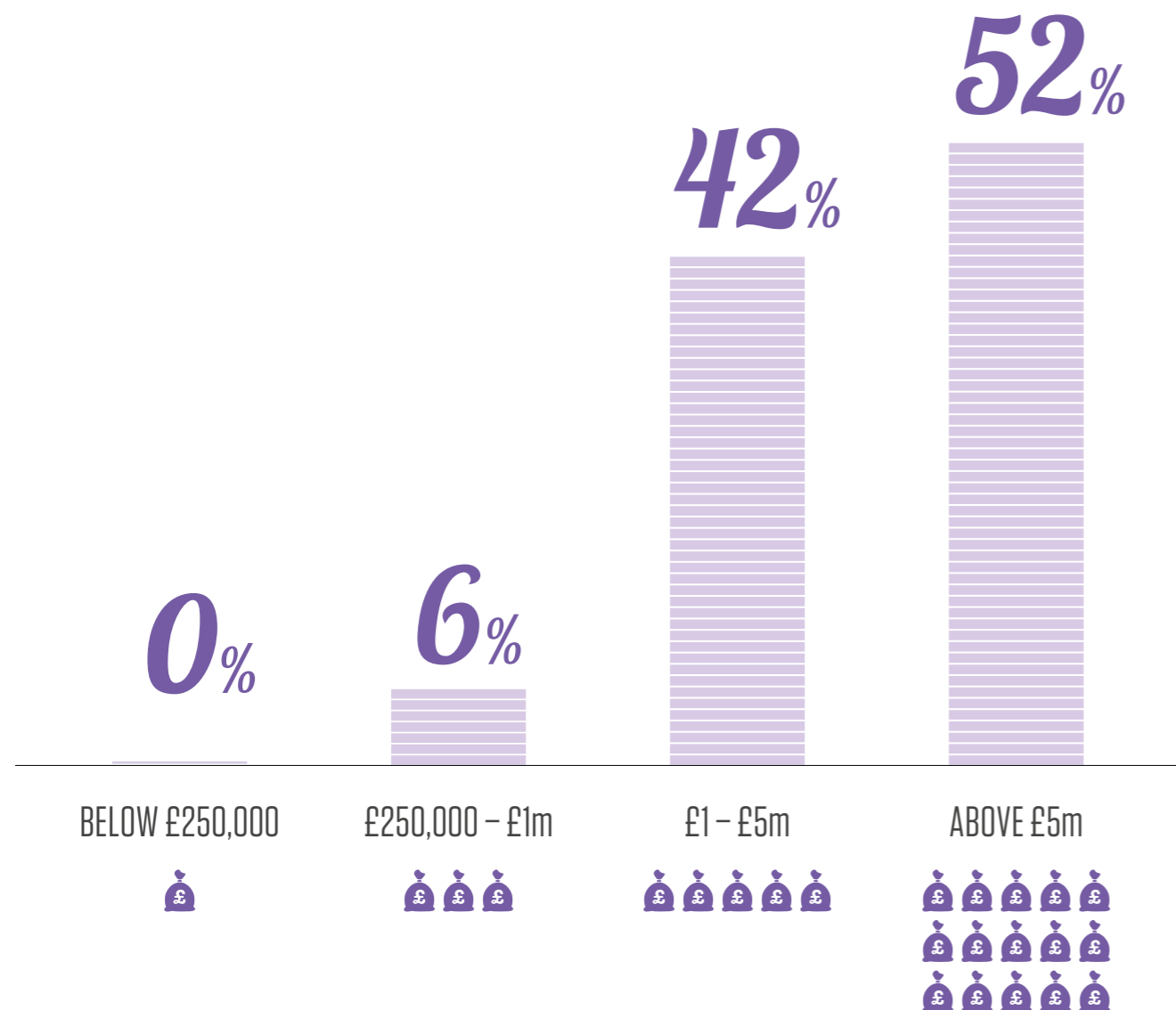
FIGURE 3

Number of full-time equivalent members of staff employed by the responding trusts and foundations

0%	WE DO NOT EMPLOY PAID STAFF
9%	TWO OR LESS
29%	3 – 10
32%	11 – 20
29%	20+
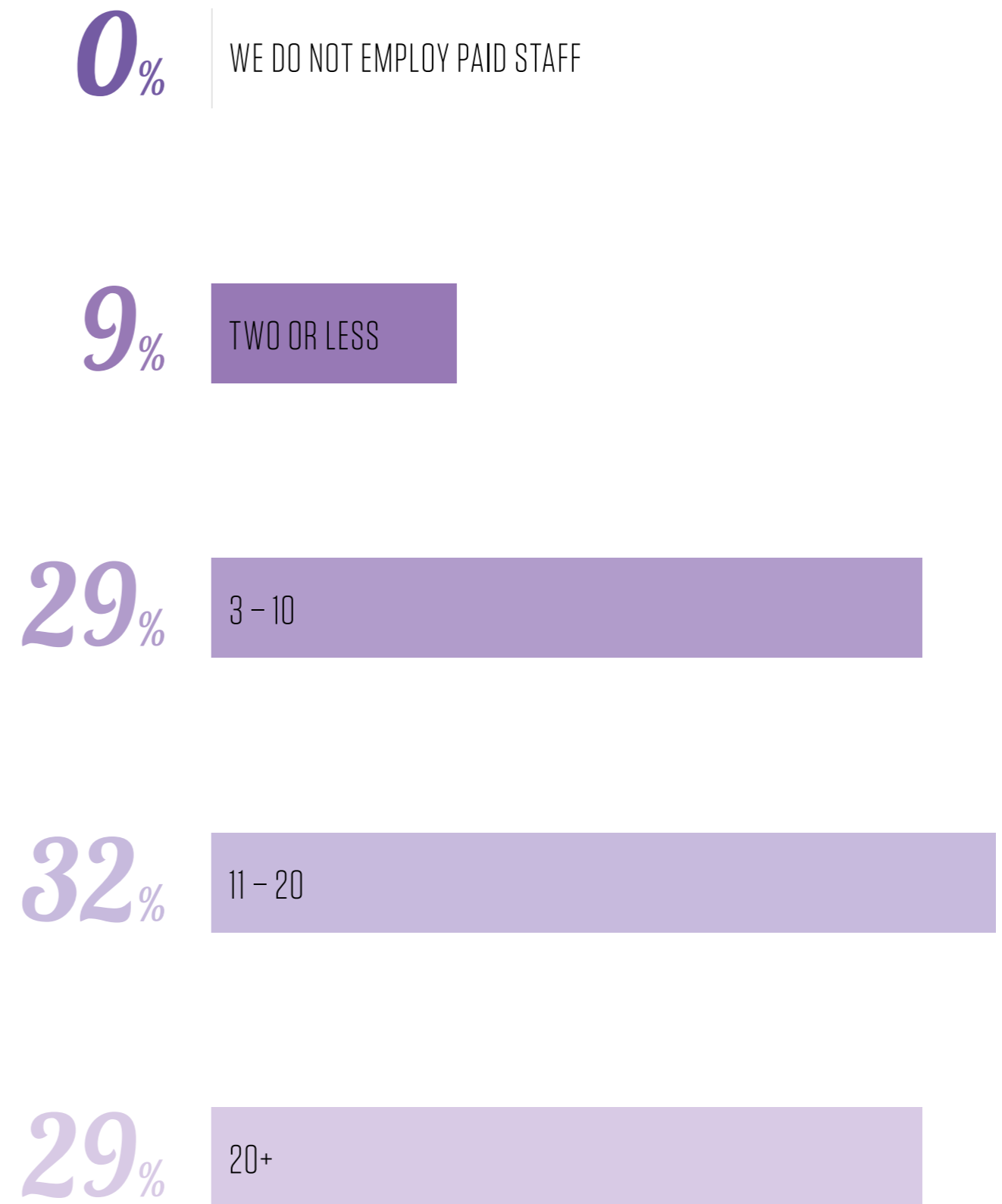
FIGURE 4

Respondents' current priority funding areas

- **68%** Children and young people
- **65%** Disadvantaged people
- **56%** Social welfare
- **38%** Older people
- **35%** Education and training
- **29%** Women
- **26%** Disability
- **24%** Rights, law and conflict
- **24%** Arts, culture, sport and recreation
- **21%** Voluntary sector management and development
- **21%** General charitable purposes
- **21%** Environment and animals
- **18%** Other
- **18%** Development, housing, and employment
- **12%** Medicine and health
- **9%** Social sciences, policy and research
- **9%** Illness
- **3%** Science and technology
- **3%** Religion

The respondents have a range of priority funding areas including children and young people, disadvantaged people and social welfare issues (see Figure 4). On average, each trust and foundation has at least five priority funding areas.

The majority of respondents' funding (66%) is restricted to a geographical or administrative region. However the areas that they cover are fairly broad (only four were restricted to a particular county or city; the remainder were funding organisations within the UK or beyond). The majority make grants to organisations (74%), while 24% make grants to both individuals and organisations and one organisation makes grants to individuals (see Figure 5 below). On average, the sample has a 60:40 split between project funding and core costs.

FIGURE 5

Percentage of respondents who fund solely organisations, and those that fund both individuals and organisations

ORGANISATIONS	INDIVIDUALS	BOTH
74%	**3%**	**24%**
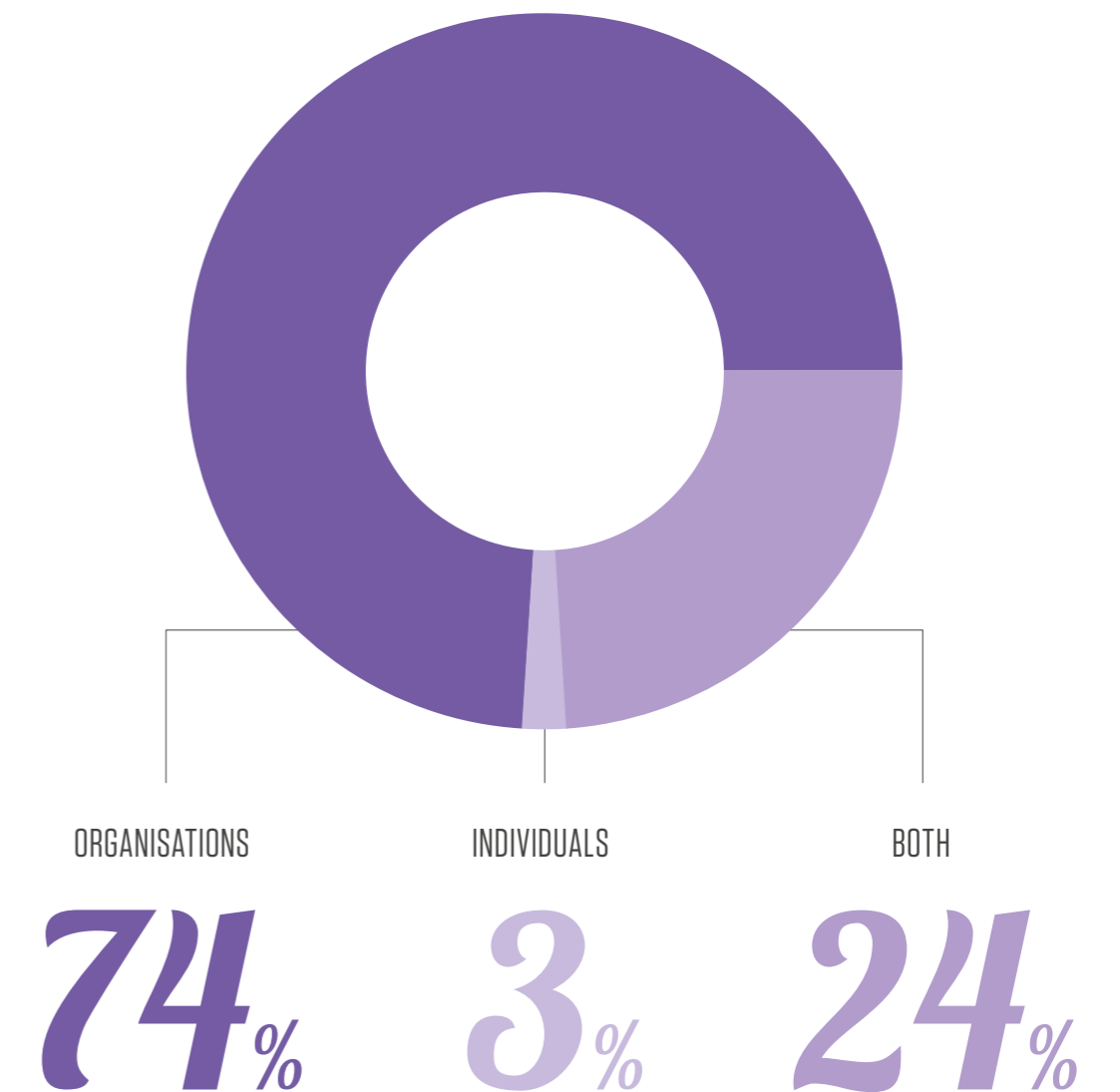
The findings

"

We regularly analyse how schemes are performing in terms of reaching different communities/ geographies. We track our grants spend. We review and discuss findings from monitoring reports.

All of this, and more, features as part of our regular discussions with trustees. However, very rarely do we refer to any of this as 'evaluation'.

"

Trust and Foundations' evaluation activities

Survey questions

What types of activities are trusts and foundations evaluating?
Has the demand for evaluating different types of activities changed over time?
For what purpose are trusts and foundations undertaking evaluations?
What other research activities are trusts and foundations commissioning?
What challenges do trusts and foundations face when planning, designing or conducting evaluation?

Summary

Trusts and foundations are evaluating a range of activities, from individual grants to foundation-wide strategy; over 100 evaluations were reported to have been commissioned over the past two years (2012/13 and 2013/14). In most cases, demand for these activities has either stayed the same or increased over the last five years.

The majority of the sample are confident about commissioning evaluations and, depending on the purpose, will commission them across the life-course of a grant or programme.

The findings suggest that seeking to improve or adapt practice are at the heart of trusts and foundations' reasons for undertaking evaluation activities. Secondary to this, but still important, are reasons related to demonstrating and monitoring performance.

85% of the sample are supplementing their evaluation activity with a range of other research, including needs assessments, viability studies and evidence reviews. This body of research helps to contribute to the information needed for setting strategic priorities and making decisions about funding.

'Getting good data, or the right mix of data', 'having appropriate internal systems that enable data to be collected and used', and 'having the skills and/or capacity to analyse data' are among the main challenges that respondents face when planning, designing and conducting evaluations. Finding good quality evaluators is also felt to be a problem by some respondents.

Trust and Foundations' evaluation activities

Types of activities being evaluated

The majority (79%) of respondents are evaluating individual grants and there is a substantial amount of activity being undertaken in relation to evaluating specific initiatives (79%) (see Figure 6). Evaluation of entire programme areas is being undertaken by 59% of the sample. There is less activity in relation to evaluating grantee/stakeholder satisfaction and foundation-wide strategy (53% and 50% respectively).

Trusts and foundations in the UK appear to be paying closer attention to how individual grants work than their counterparts in the U.S.. The 2012 U.S. benchmarking survey found that evaluation staff at larger foundations (>$50million in annual grant-making)
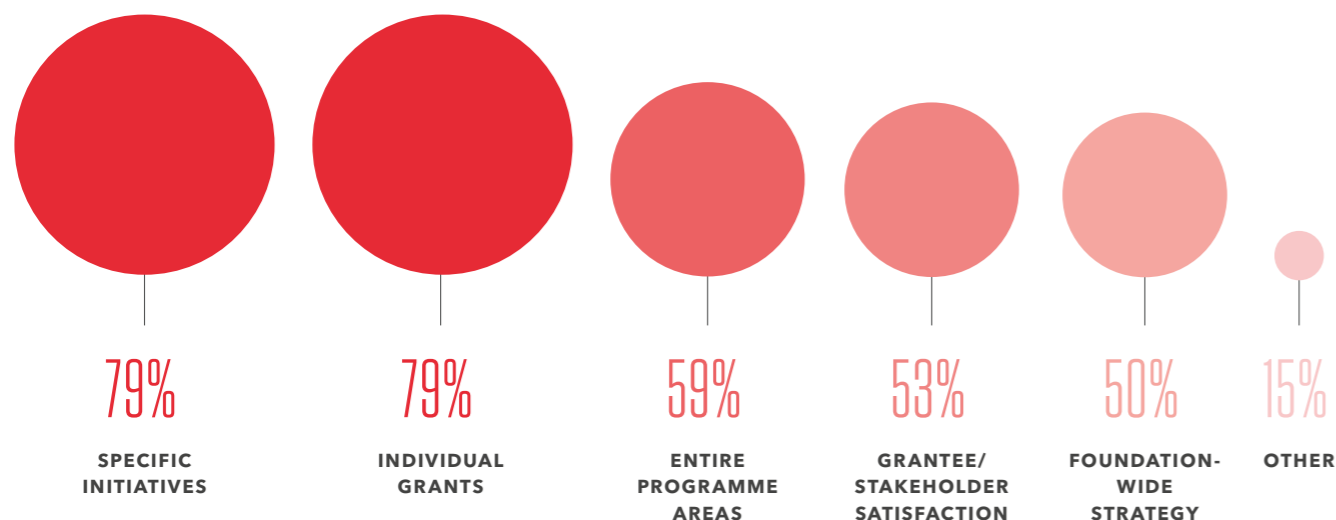
spent less than 10% of their time focusing on individual grants, and for smaller funders (<$50million) it was still only 20% of their time. Trusts and foundations in the U.S. spend more time on evaluations at the initiative or programme level, possibly driven, in part, by the relative size of trusts and foundations there.

In addition to undertaking evaluations that meet the needs of funders themselves, some respondents also mentioned the support that they give to grantees to support their own monitoring and evaluation activities.

This suggests that, for some respondents, monitoring and evaluation are seen as part of their 'funding plus' activities.

FIGURE 6

Types of activities trusts and foundations are evaluating

79%	79%	59%	53%	50%	15%
SPECIFIC INITIATIVES	INDIVIDUAL GRANTS	ENTIRE PROGRAMME AREAS	GRANTEE/ STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION	FOUNDATION-WIDE STRATEGY	OTHER

Demand for different types of evaluative activity

While demand has stayed the same or increased for evaluation of all kinds, at least half of the respondents are seeing an increase in demand for evaluation work at a more aggregate level than individual grants. This might be explained by the majority of trusts and foundations in the sample moving from responsive grant-making towards foundation-designed initiatives and strategies, with an associated desire to find out how they are working.

73% of trusts and foundations that have a dedicated post(s) for 'evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact' felt that there has been an increase in

demand for evaluation of foundation-wide strategy, compared with 37% of those with no dedicated post(s)[9].

This raises questions about whether organisational capacity is a determining factor for a trust or foundation to be able to evaluate its own foundation-wide strategy, as well as the possibility that, as trusts and foundations become more interested in evaluating across their organisations as a whole, they are more likely to invest in internal evaluation capacity.

9   This figure combines the results for the following two categories a) no dedicated post(s) b) no dedicated posts, however learnings and/ or assessing impact is an explicit part of some people's job roles.

FIGURE 7

Trends in demand for different types of evaluative activity over the last five years

	DEMAND HAS INCREASED	DEMAND HAS STAYED THE SAME	DEMAND HAS DECREASED	NO DEMAND	DON'T KNOW
INDIVIDUAL GRANT EVALUATIONS	38% (n = 13)	47% (n = 16)	3% (n = 1)	9% (n = 3)	3% (n = 1)
FOUNDATION-WIDE STRATEGY EVALUATION	53% (n = 18)	24% (n = 8)	0%	23% (n = 8)	0%
ENTIRE PROGRAMME AREA EVALUATIONS	50% (n = 17)	32% (n = 11)	6% (n = 2)	12% (n = 4)	0%
SPECIFIC INITIATIVE EVALUATIONS	58% (n = 19)	30% (n = 10)	3% (n = 1)	9% (n = 3)	0%
GRANTEE/STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION SURVEYS	43% (n = 14)	24% (n = 8)	0%	30% (n = 10)	3% (n = 1)
TOTALS	48% (n = 81)	32% (n = 53)	2% (n = 4)	17% (n = 28)	1% (n = 2)

Reasons for evaluating grant-making

During the survey, respondents were given a list of reasons why trusts or foundations may wish to evaluate their grant-making.

For each of the 13 different reasons listed, all but two[10] were selected by 67% or more of the respondents. This shows that trusts and foundations are using their grant-making evaluations for multiple reasons.

When asked to rate the importance of these reasons (i.e. very important/ important/not important at all), the three reasons that were rated 'very important' by the most respondents were:

• To make our work better by feeding lessons back into programme design (65%)
• To be a more effective grant-maker (55%)
• To understand what works and what doesn't work (53%)

This finding suggests that seeking to improve or adapt practice is at the heart of trusts and foundations' reasons for undertaking evaluations.

Secondary to this, but still important, are reasons related to demonstrating and monitoring performance.

• To provide information about programme/initiative implementation (67%)
• To provide periodic information on programme performance (67%)
• To monitor grantee outcomes (66%)
• To demonstrate what the foundation is achieving to trustees and other stakeholders (65%)
• To demonstrate the difference the foundation is making (58%)

However, one respondent challenged trusts and foundations to think about whether there should be more focus on supporting grantees to improve their own practice:

"
There remains a fundamental question as to who evaluation is for. We need to do much more to root evaluation in helping grantees help and improve themselves [rather than] evaluation remaining in the box for the funder.

REASONS FOR EVALUATING GRANT-MAKING

• To sharpen or operationalise goals/ strategy
• To provide periodic information on programme performance
• To provide information about programme/ initiative implementation
• To monitor grantee outcomes
• To assess value for money
• To understand what works and what doesn't work
• To make the work better by feeding

lessons back into programme design
• To be a more effective grant maker
• To keep up with other funders
• To demonstrate what the foundation is achieving to trustees and other stakeholders
• To demonstrate the difference that is being made
• To accumulate evidence in order to influence policy and practice
• To share knowledge and learning

This list takes into account previous learning documented by both the UK and U.S. Evaluation Roundtable.

Commissioning evaluations

Figure 8 below shows when evaluations are most likely to be commissioned by trusts and foundations.

The results show that evaluations are most likely to be commissioned either at the outset of a grant/programme/ project/initiative (42%), or that the timing depends on the purpose of the evaluation (39%).

"
If it's a new area, we are likely to commission research to help us understand an issue/context, whereas long-standing grants might be evaluated part way through.

"
In broad terms, we look to commission before/at outset where capturing baseline data will be essential. For some of our programme evaluations, we are content to commission these later on in the programme, so as to inform future

10 'To assess value for money' and 'to keep up with other funders' were selected by 27% and 0% of respondents respectively.

steps (including beyond the current programme).

"
Evaluative activity might be commissioned as a series of separate, iterative contracts, rather than one single, multi-year evaluation. In which case, it could be commissioned before, at the start of, during AND at the end of an initiative.

65% of respondents reported that they feel confident commissioning evaluations and the majority of respondents (76% or above) feel that there is 'high' or 'moderate' support from their board and senior management for 'hearing a third party perspective'. Over 100 external evaluations were reported to have been commissioned across a two year period by the respondents (2012/13 and 2013/14).

FIGURE 8

The point at which respondents are most likely to commission an internal or external evaluation of a grant, programme or project initiative

42% **FROM THE OUTSET**

39% **IT DEPENDS ON THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION**

9% **PARTWAY THROUGH**

6% **BEFORE**

3% **END**
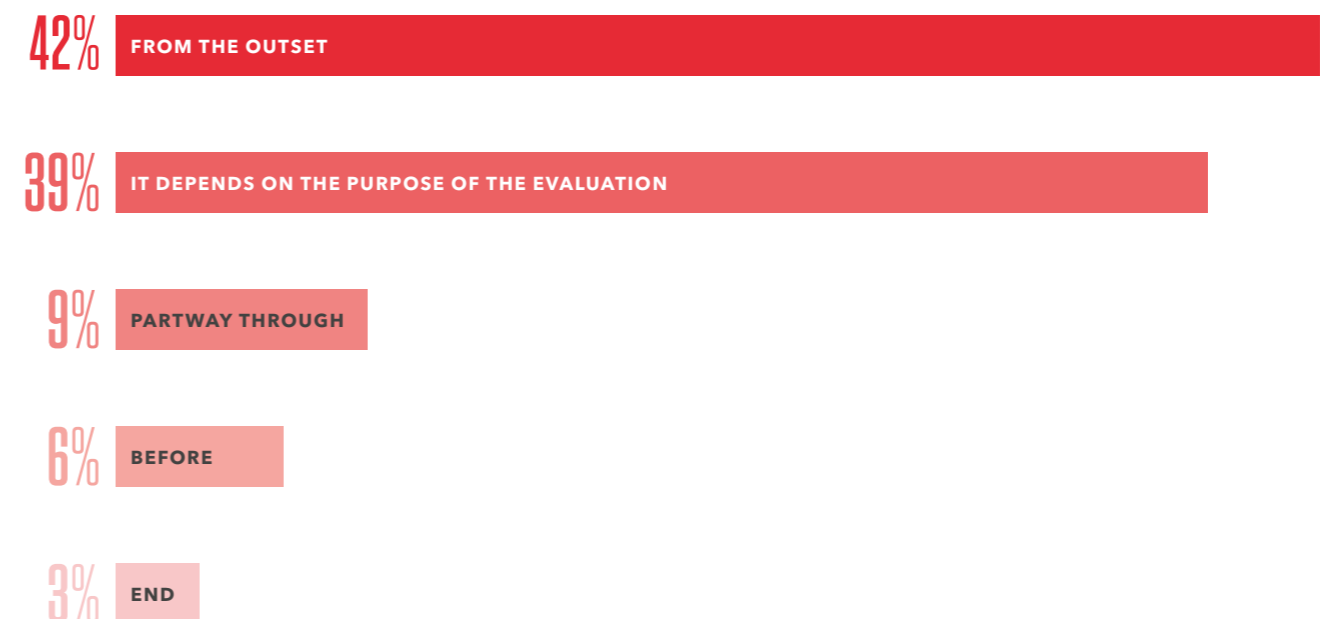
Commissioning other research

In addition to evaluation, respondents are commissioning a substantial amount of other research[11].

Examples include needs assessments, mapping studies, viability studies and evidence reviews on a range of issues (policy developments, insights into the lived experience of particular cohorts of people, comparative studies of international activity).

On the whole, respondents' comments suggest that such research provides knowledge and intelligence for trusts and foundations to make evidence-based investment decisions, as well as to inform their business planning and grant-making priorities.

Planning, designing or conducting evaluations: The challenges

66

We tend to get pulled between the desire to know and measure stuff, and the difficulty of doing so without generating bureaucracy, distorting incentives, or producing spurious statistics.

The findings show that data is at the heart of the challenges that respondents face when planning, designing or conducting evaluations. In particular, 'getting good data, or getting the right mix of data' is a challenge faced by 85% of the survey respondents (see Figure 9).

This is a really notable percentage compared with the others. It raises a question about whether trust and foundation staff have a good sense of which questions their evaluations should be designed to answer in order to obtain useful and usable data. Alternatively, it might suggest that there is an over-dependence on grantee-reported data, which turns out to be low quality or uninteresting because grantees don't have sufficient resources or capacity to collect good data. Why it is so hard to get good data, and what it would take to change that are important questions for the field to grapple with.

Just under half of the sample (44%) also feel that they do not have appropriate internal systems that enable data to be collected and used. This is a particular challenge faced by those organisations awarding under £5million a year in grants (60% compared with 29% of those awarding over £5million a year). Finally, over a third of respondents (35%) feel that they lack the skills and/or capacity to analyse data.

Again, this is a particular challenge for those awarding under £5million a year in grants (46% compared with 25% of those awarding over £5million a year). These trusts and foundations may have fewer staff-per-grant in general, or may be less likely to have in-house evaluation staff who bring this technical skill.

As demand goes up and more data is collected, but isn't ultimately analysed or used, there is a risk of much wasted effort by staff who may already feel stretched. The primary barrier to the use of evaluation by programme staff in the U.S. is staff time and workload (67% identified it as a problem.)

11 Eighty-five percent answered 'yes' when asked 'Does your organisation commission research other than evaluation?'

In the comment boxes, a number of respondents acknowledged the importance of having the appropriate skills to undertake effective, robust evaluations and to appropriately interpret data. While respondents noted that these skills can be purchased externally, some were critical of the quality of external evaluators:

66

We do not find it hard to commission external evaluators but external evaluations tend to be of a very poor quality.

66

We find it hard to find good evaluators particularly for developmental evaluations.

66

The market remains very varied with some poor evaluators out there.

FIGURE 9

Types of challenges respondents face when planning, designing or conducting evaluations

	YES, WE FACE THIS CHALLENGE	NO, WE DO NOT FACE THIS CHALLENGE	DON'T KNOW
WE FIND IT HARD TO COMMISSION/FIND EXTERNAL EVALUATORS INDIVIDUAL GRANT EVALUATIONS	35% (n = 12)	50% (n = 17)	15% (n = 5)
WE FIND THAT EVALUATIONS PLACE A SIGNIFICANT BURDEN ON OUR GRANTEES	35% (n = 12)	50% (n = 17)	15% (n = 5)
WE DO NOT HAVE APPROPRIATE INTERNAL SYSTEMS THAT ENABLE DATA TO BE COLLECTED AND USED	44% (n = 15)	56% (n = 19)	0%
GETTING GOOD DATA, OR GETTING THE RIGHT MIX OF DATA, CAN BE HARD	85% (n = 28)	6% (n = 2)	9% (n = 3)
WE LACK THE SKILLS AND/OR CAPACITY TO ANALYSE DATA	35% (n = 11)	55% (n = 17)	10% (n = 3)
WE FIND IT HARD TO CONVINCE TRUSTEES TO ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO EVALUATION	26% (n = 9)	62% (n = 21)	12% (n = 4)

> **"**
> Although we do not have a written policy about percentage of expenditure, we have an evaluation and learning strategy and spend considerable amounts on evaluation. However, we deal with this on a case by case basis.
> **"**

Resourcing evaluation activities

Survey questions

How is evaluation being resourced within trusts and foundations, in terms of both human and financial resources?

Are there policies in place to guide spending related to undertaking evaluation?

Has resourcing changed over time?

Is there support for resourcing evaluation activities by both board members and senior managers?

Summary

The evidence suggests that respondents are increasing their investment in evaluation. 88% have either a dedicated post(s), or pay explicit attention to 'evaluation, learning and/assessing impact' in job roles.

There is fairly strong support from both board members and senior managers regarding the need to spend on evaluation activities and 50% of respondents (the same figure as in the 2012 U.S. survey) noted an increase in the level of investment on evaluation relative to shifts in the size of overall grants budgets during the last five years.

The findings show that the majority of respondents are happy with the amount that their organisations are investing in evaluation and learning activities related to the development

of programme strategy and foundation-wide strategy. However, a large number of respondents feel that 'too little' is being invested in knowledge management and formal learning functions.

Limited numbers of respondents have policies guiding spending on evaluation and a number of respondents found it difficult to document their expenditure on evaluation activities. However, this was not felt to be indicative of a lack of support for evaluation activities.

Resourcing evaluation activities

Human resources

44% of trusts and foundations have a post(s) dedicated to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact (see Figure 10). A further 44% make explicit reference to these activities as a part of some job roles. These numbers compare favourably with the U.S. where 48% of respondents said that management 'rarely or never' assesses effective use of evaluative information as an important criterion for staff performance.

This finding shows that the majority (88%) of respondents are committing human resources to evaluation and learning activities.

SPECIFIC JOB ROLES MENTIONED:

- Director of Research and Learning
- Head of Learning and Dissemination (part-time)
- Research Manager
- Research and Evaluation Assistant (part-time)
- Senior Grants and Learning Officer (50% of time dedicated to learning)
- Data Manager
- Head of Grants (has oversight)
- Contract Relationship Managers (commission and manage evaluations)

JOB ROLES HAVING EVALUATION, LEARNING AND/OR ASSESSING IMPACT AS PART OF THE ROLE:

- Policy Officer
- Head of Development
- Grant Officer
- Programme Director
- Development Officer
- Grant Managers

88% are committing human resources to evaluation and learning

FIGURE 10
Percentage of respondents who do, or do not, have a post(s) dedicated to evaluation, learning and/or impact

44% NO, THERE IS NO SPECIFIC ATTENTION DRAWN TO IT IN ANY JOB ROLES

12% THERE ARE NO DEDICATED POSTS BUT IT IS AN EXPLICIT PART OF SOME JOB ROLES

44% YES, THE ORGANISATION HAS A DEDICATED POST
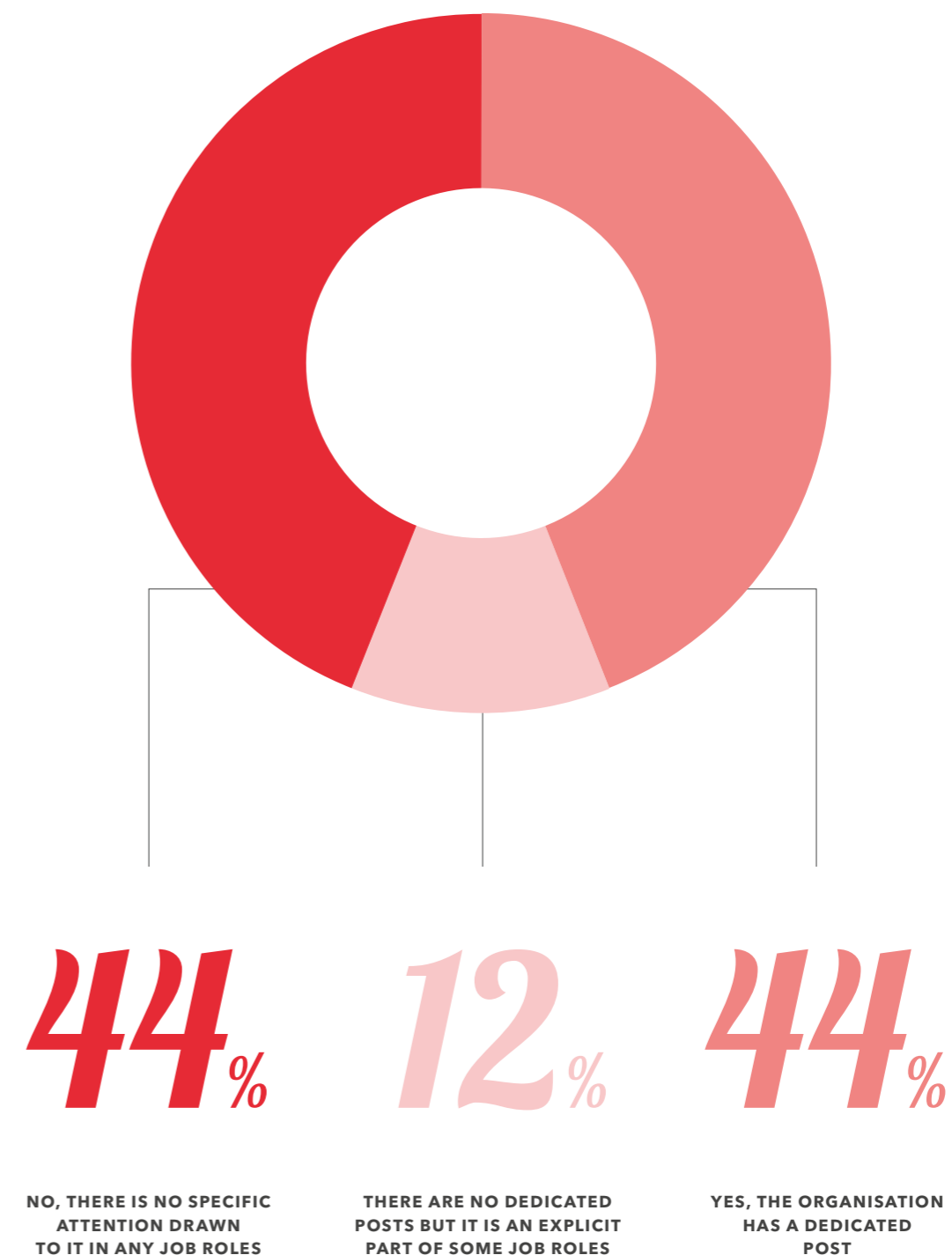
Organisational size and human resources

There is a correlation between organisational size and the likelihood that organisations will have a post(s) dedicated to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact (see Figures 11 and 12 below). In particular, 93% of foundations who employ a post(s) dedicated to these activities have 11 or more members of staff (full-time equivalent (FTE) and 71% awarded £5million or more in grants during 2013/14.

This compares with other categories (i.e. specific attention being made to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact in some job roles, and/or no specific attention drawn to these activities).

The findings suggest therefore that the larger the foundation[12] the more likely it is that they will have a post(s) dedicated to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact.

However, it should also be noted that 12 of 16 smaller foundations (under £5million awarded in grants) find a way to make evaluation or learning an official part of the work even though they give away relatively small amounts of money.

12 Larger organisations as based on both the number of FTE employees as well as the value of grants awarded in 2013/14.

FIGURE 11

Number of staff respondents have in relation to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact activities

	YES, WE HAVE A DEDICATED POST(S)	THERE ARE NO DEDICATED POSTS BUT IT IS AN EXPLICIT PART OF SOME JOB ROLES	NO, THERE IS NO SPECIFIC ATTENTION DRAWN TO IT IN JOB ROLES
11 OR MORE FTE	93% (n = 14)	47% (n = 7)	0%
5 TO 10 FTE	7% (n = 1)	27% (n = 4)	25% (n = 1)
3 - 5 FTE	0%	13% (n = 2)	50% (n = 2)
1 - 2 FTE	0%	13% (n = 2)	25% (n = 1)

FIGURE 12

Amount respondents awarded in grants in 2013/14 based on posts related to evaluation, learning and/or assessing impact activities

	YES, WE HAVE A DEDICATED POST(S)	THERE ARE NO DEDICATED POSTS BUT IT IS AN EXPLICIT PART OF SOME JOB ROLES	NO, THERE IS NO SPECIFIC ATTENTION DRAWN TO IT IN JOB ROLES
ABOVE £10m	57% (n = 8)	20% (n = 3)	25% (n = 1)
£5 - £10m	14% (n = 2)	20% (n = 3)	0%
£1m - £5m	29% (n = 4)	53% (n = 8)	50% (n = 2)
UNDER £1m	0%	7% (n = 1)	25% (n = 1)

Financial resources

Financial planning

The majority of respondents do not have policies in place to guide spending on either evaluations of individual grants or an overall evaluation budget (73% and 84% respectively) (see Figure 13 below).

However, respondents noted that the absence of policies does not equate to a lack of commitment to evaluation and learning at a strategic level:

❝

Although we do not have a written policy about percentage of expenditure, we have an evaluation and learning strategy and spend considerable amounts on evaluation. However, we deal with this on a case by case basis.

❝

No, but we have a stated willingness to fund learning, monitoring and evaluation on our website.

The policies that are in place are often based on the cost of an evaluation accounting for a certain percentage of, or not exceeding, the overall grant or project costs:

❝

We are able to spend up to 3% of the grant budget on learning activity.

❝

Our policy is that an evaluation should only cost up to 10% of the cost of the project.

❝

Our policy is that every programme or strand of work, and every significant initiative, should be evaluated and a portion of the budget will be dedicated to this but the amount is not set.

Some respondents also noted that they have policies in place to guide the amount of funding that can be allocated to support grantees' own evaluation and monitoring activities:

❝

Our grantees can earmark up to, and around, 10% of their grant budget on monitoring, evaluation and learning.

❝

Staff have discretion to offer up to 10% on top of a grant, during the lifetime of the grant, for relevant organisational development issues that come from the grantee, including evaluation and planning.

FIGURE 13

Percentage of respondents who do, or do not, have policies in place to guide spending on either evaluations of individual grants or an overall evaluation budget

	YES, WE HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE	NO, WE DO NOT HAVE POLICIES IN PLACE
INDIVIDUAL GRANT EVALUATIONS	27% (n = 9)	73% (n = 24)
OVERALL EVALUATION BUDGET	16% (n = 5)	84% (n = 26)

Expenditure

In addition to the online survey, respondents were asked to complete an expenditure spreadsheet relating to a variety of their evaluation activities during 2012/13 and 2013/14. In particular, respondents were asked about their organisation's expenditure in relation to:

- Evaluations funded through a grant
- Evaluations funded through other means
- Collecting data for indicators of foundation or programme performance
- Other related expenditure to gather data to inform knowledge of trust and foundation effectiveness.

24 respondents submitted an expenditure spreadsheet. Of those received:

- 17 (71%) could provide some information about their expenditure on evaluations funded through a grant

- 10 (42%) could give some indication of the spend on evaluations funded through other means

- 9 (38%) could provide data about expenditure for indicators of foundation or programme performance

- 12 (50%) could provide information about other related expenditure.

The results

During 2012/13 and 2013/14, over £3.2billion was awarded in grants across the 24 respondents. In the same two year period, £5.9million (0.17%) was known (declared) to be spent on the four types of evaluation activities outlined above; this ranged from £0 to £1.3million in the case of one organisation. As a percentage of an organisation's 'total grants awarded', in no case did the amount spent on any one of the individual evaluative activities rise above 4% in any one year.

When analysed on an individual basis, the percentage spend on all evaluation activities (compared with the total amount awarded in grants 2012/13 and 2013/14) ranged from 0% to 7.81%. The mean percentage spend was 1.61% of the total value of grants awarded. The last figures were collected in the U.S. (2009), the range was 0.3% to 17.8%, with a mean of 3.7%. 40% of the foundations in that survey invested less than 1% on evaluation activities.

Expenditure spreadsheets: Some caveats

A number of respondents attached caveats or explanations to the data that they supplied. For some, segmenting their expenditure in this way (see outline above) was simply not possible as it would have involved spending too much time searching for information in numerous grants and programme expenditure budgets, which could not be justified for the sole purpose of this research. Others noted that expenditure on evaluation will have been subsumed into other areas of expenditure, including staffing costs, or could only provide estimates.

The data presented above therefore does not claim to provide a comprehensive picture of foundations' expenditure on evaluation activities and it is possible that it underestimates the amount of financial resources supporting evaluation. However, it does show:

1. The difficulties of separating out evaluation activities from the bulk of trust and foundations' day-to-day activities.

2. That there are likely to be huge disparities between the amounts that trusts and foundations are explicitly investing in evaluation.

3. The difficulties of using levels of financial investment into evaluation activities as a useful measure on which to draw conclusions about the use, or strategic importance, of evaluation within trusts and foundations.

13 The two organisations who noted a decrease in funding both awarded grants of £5million or above in 2013/14. Of the four organisations who noted a dramatic increase, two awarded £10m or above in 2013/14 and two awarded between £2.5million and £5million.

Changing resources

The survey results show that there has been some increase in the amount of funding for evaluation over the last five years when compared with shifts in the size of the overall grants budget (51%) (see Figure 14 below).

A third of organisations feel that the level of funding has stayed the same, while only 6% noted a decrease[13].

These figures are consistent with the 2012 U.S. survey, where the breakdown was:

10% increased dramatically

40% increased somewhat

30% stayed about the same

14% decreased somewhat

3% decreased dramatically

3% don't know

FIGURE 14

Respondents' perceptions about how funding levels for evaluation have changed, or not, relative to shifts in the size of the overall grants budget

12% INCREASED DRAMATICALLY

35% INCREASED SOMEWHAT

32% STAYED ABOUT THE SAME

6% DECREASED SOMEWHAT

0% DECREASED DRAMATICALLY

15% DON'T KNOW
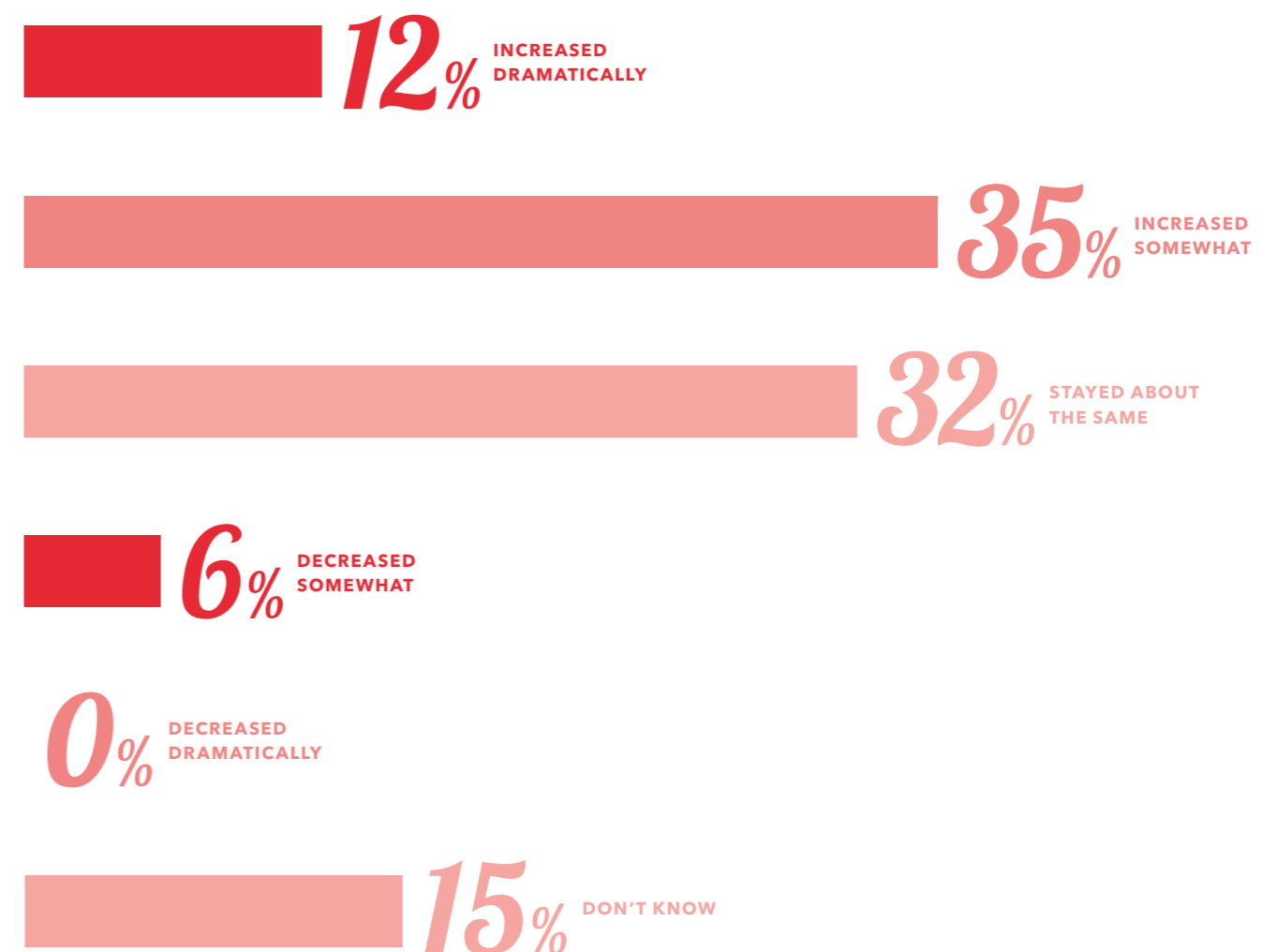
EXTENT TO WHICH FUNDING LEVELS HAVE CHANGED OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Too much or too little?

Respondents were also asked to assess whether the amount their organisation invests in activities relating to learning and evaluation is 'far too much', 'too much', 'an appropriate amount', 'too little' or 'far too little' (see Figure 15 below).

A high number of respondents (75% and 69%) feel that there is an appropriate level of investment in evaluation and learning activities relating to the development of programme strategy and the development of foundation-wide strategy. However, the majority of the sample feel that too little is invested in knowledge management and formal learning functions (79% and 55%

respectively). Formal learning functions were the worst rated activity in the 2012 U.S. survey, with 62% saying too little or far too little. (The survey did not ask about knowledge management).

It is notable that the two under-invested activities are those that would support real use of evaluative information. Building on discussions within the U.S. Roundtable, the high percentage for knowledge management might be a reflection of respondent's sense that learning/knowledge is too trapped in silos and that there is no good way to build on knowledge over time or across programme areas; this is supported by the findings below on 'use'.

There was a fairly mixed response across the sample as to whether or not trusts and foundations are investing an appropriate amount of resources into the evaluation of programmes/initiatives; 55% agree that the level of investment is appropriate, while 45% feel there is 'too little/far too little' investment. This finding does not differ significantly in relation to organisational size (as measured either in terms of dedicated evaluation posts or value of grants awarded in 2013/14).

Support for resourcing evaluations

Questions 21 and 22 of the survey asked respondents to rate their board and senior managers' support for resourcing evaluation activities.

On the whole, respondents reported high to moderate support for spending on evaluation, albeit slightly less support from the perspective of the board (see Figure 16 below). There was less support for funding a post(s), dedicated to evaluation.

If the demand for different kinds of evaluation continues to increase, but there is not enough willingness to create posts for people who have the technical expertise or experience in evaluation and learning, there is a risk that foundations are more likely to keep churning out more and more data that isn't effectively used.

FIGURE 15

Respondents assessment of the amount their organisation invests in a range of activities relating to learning and evaluation

	FAR TOO MUCH/ TOO MUCH	APPROPRIATE AMOUNT	TOO LITTLE/ FAR TOO LITTLE
EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUAL GRANTS	0%	64% (n = 21)	36% (n = 12)
EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES/ INITIATIVES	0%	53% (n = 17)	47% (n = 15)
DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE METRICS/INDICATORS	0%	55% (n = 18)	45% (n = 15)
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	0%	21% (n = 7)	79% (n = 26)
FORMAL LEARNING FUNCTIONS	0%	45% (n = 15)	55% (n = 18)
DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMME STRATEGY	0%	75% (n = 24)	25% (n = 8)
DEVELOPMENT OF FOUNDATION-WIDE STRATEGY	3% (n = 1)	69% (n = 22)	28% (n = 9)

79% said that too little was invested in knowledge management

FIGURE 16

Respondents' perceptions of their board and senior managers' support for resourcing evaluation activities

	BOARD SUPPORT OR SENIOR MANAGEMENT	HIGH/MODERATE SUPPORT	LIMITED/LOW SUPPORT	DON'T KNOW
SPENDING ON EVALUATION	Board	71% (n = 24)	29% (n = 10)	0%
	Senior management	85% (n = 29)	15% (n = 5)	0%
FUNDING A POST, OR POSTS, DEDICATED TO EVALUATION	Board	44% (n = 15)	47% (n = 16)	9% (n = 3)
	Senior management	56% (n = 19)	44% (n = 15)	0%

> "
> We don't do this on a formal basis, but more broadly through open dialogue within the team and exchange of ideas at management level.
> "

Using evaluative information

Survey questions

What are trusts and foundations using evaluative information to influence/inform?
Do trusts and foundations have systems or procedures in place to capture knowledge and learning?
What does it mean to be a learning organisation?
What factors or circumstances can impede the use of evaluation and learning?
What factors have facilitated, or could improve, the use of evaluation in organisations?
What challenges do trusts and foundations face in relation to using evaluative information?

Summary

Trusts and foundations are using evaluative information to influence/inform various areas of work including programme development and long-term strategy.

However, there is some discontent within the sample about the way they currently make use of evaluative information (45% are not content). While over half the sample have systems and procedures in place to capture knowledge and learning, only 18% agree that they have effective mechanisms in place to disseminate learning across the organisation.

The findings present a very clear picture of what it means to be a 'learning organisation', with evaluation practice being part of a much wider, reflective process. Respondents identified a range of issues that are felt to play a role in facilitating and/or improving the use of evaluation within organisations.

These include issues relating to: governance; organisational buy-in; grant-making culture; resources; and systems and processes. However, for 79% of respondents a significant challenge is having adequate space and time to reflect on evaluation findings.
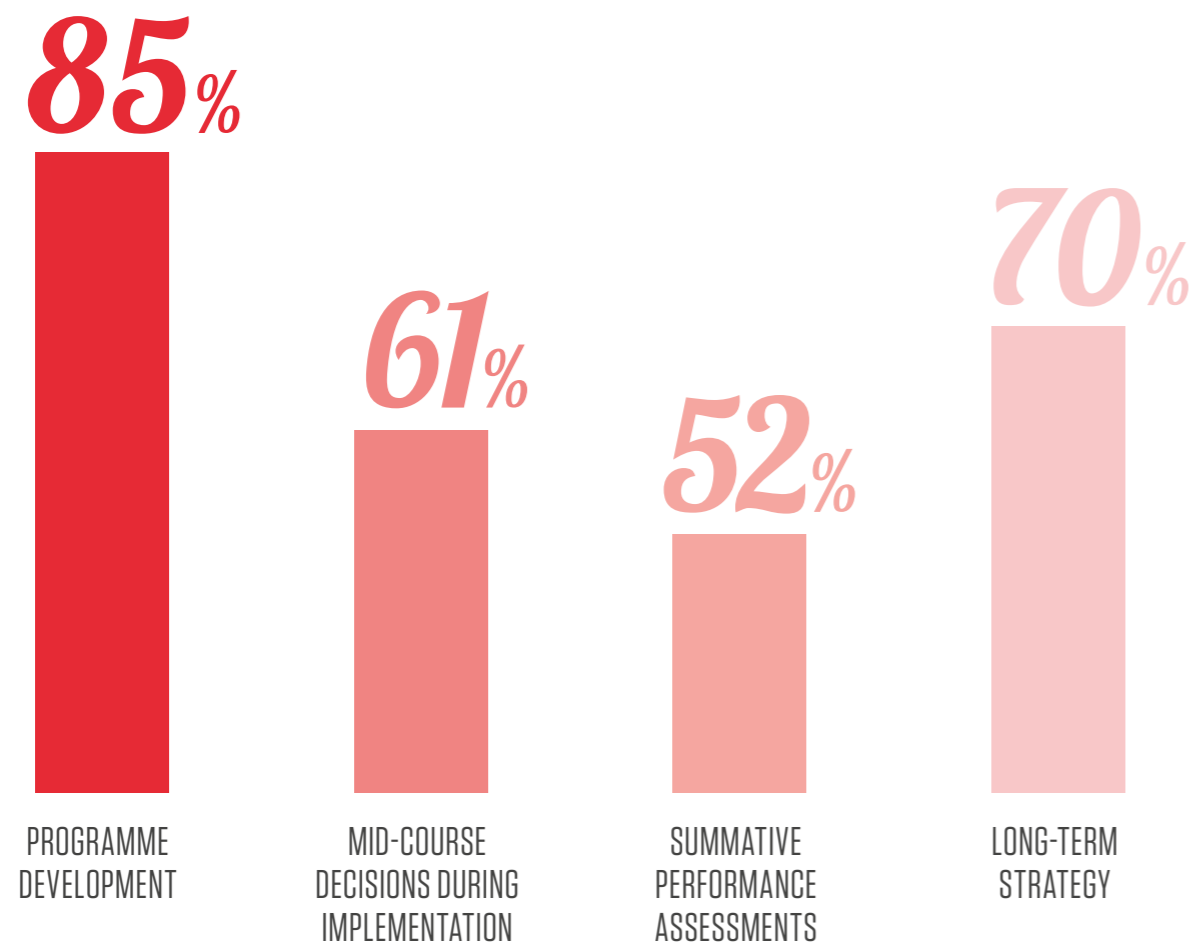
Using evaluative information

Using evaluative information

Evaluative information is being used to influence/inform various areas of work undertaken by trusts and foundations including programme development, long-term strategy and mid-course decisions during implementation of funding programmes (see Figure 17 below).

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: 'I am content with the way we currently make use of evaluative information'. One third of respondents said they are content, however just under half (45%) are not.

FIGURE 17

Types of activities/areas of work that respondents are using evaluative information to influence/inform

85% PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

61% MID-COURSE DECISIONS DURING IMPLEMENTATION

52% SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

70% LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Further into the survey, respondents were asked again about their use of evaluation. At least 50% or more of respondents rated their use of evaluation to influence/inform different areas of their work as either 'good' or 'acceptable' (see Figure 18 below). However, a few rated their use of evaluative information as 'poor' or simply 'not applicable'.

Overall, these results are slightly better than the U.S, where 26% rated use as 'poor' for summative assessments and 23% for 'mid-course' decision-making. However, one notable distinction is that U.S. respondents said they are best at using evaluation to inform summative performance assessments; in the UK, that is the lowest rated 'good' category.

Support for using evaluative information was also noted. In particular, 74% and 91% rated their board and senior management's support as 'high' or 'moderate' for 'using evaluation for

strategic learning[14]'. However, there was a perception in some of the comments that there is definite 'room for improvement' in relation to the use of evaluative information:

> *There is always room for improvement. We know we need to create more time to read and review evaluation reports and to discuss these with the team.*

> *I am ticking 'poor' in the next question, not so much because I think they're awful – we don't do too badly considering the size and complexity of our organisation – but because there is definitely room for lots of improvement. And we should always be looking to improve anyway.*

14 Strategic learning means using evaluation to help organisations or groups learn quickly from their work so that they can learn from and adapt their strategies. It means integrating evaluation and evaluative thinking into strategic decision-making and bringing timely data to the table for reflection and use. (Definition provided by the Center for Evaluation Innovation, http://www.evaluationinnovation.org/focus-areas/strategic-learning)

FIGURE 18

How respondents rate their organisations' use of evaluation information to influence/inform different areas of work

	GOOD	ACCEPTABLE	POOR	NOT APPLICABLE	DON'T KNOW
PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT	40% (n = 13)	33% (n = 11)	9% (n = 3)	12% (n = 4)	6% (n = 2)
MID-COURSE DECISIONS DURING IMPLEMENTATION	22% (n = 7)	34% (n = 11)	9% (n = 3)	19% (n = 6)	16% (n = 5)
SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS	18% (n = 5)	43% (n = 12)	11% (n = 3)	14% (n = 4)	14% (n = 4)
LONG-TERM STRATEGY	35% (n = 11)	26% (n = 8)	16% (n = 5)	16% (n = 5)	7% (n = 2)

Capturing knowledge and learning

The survey asked respondents whether or not they have systems or procedures in place to:

- Capture internal knowledge and learning
- Capture external knowledge and learning
- Organise knowledge
- Share knowledge throughout the organisation.

They were also asked to assess these systems and procedures in terms of whether they are 'good', 'acceptable' or 'poor' (see Figures 19 and 20).

Over half of the sample have systems and procedures in place for capturing knowledge and learning (both internal and external) as well as sharing knowledge.

Fewer organisations have systems and procedures in place to organise knowledge and 29% believe these systems and procedures are 'poor'.

Some respondents gave examples of the types of systems and procedures that are in place in order to capture internal and external knowledge, as well as organise and disseminate learning.

These include:

- Data management systems (Salesforce and NVivo were mentioned)
- Internal team meetings
- Internal email bulletins/alerts
- Evidence briefings
- Board papers, discussions and meetings
- Monthly internal learning sessions
- Learning lunches
- Annual reviews
- Communication plans (e.g. one organisation's communication plan includes a policy on sharing knowledge and learning).

Others noted that, while there are no formal systems or procedures in place, capturing and disseminating knowledge and learning occurs through constant communication among the staff team.

66

We don't do this on a formal basis, but more broadly through open dialogue within the team and exchange of ideas at management level.

Overall, only 18% agree that they have effective mechanisms for disseminating learning across the organisation (41% disagree and 43% neither agreed nor disagreed).

68% have systems and procedures in place to capture internal learning

FIGURE 19

Do respondents have systems and procedures in place to undertake a range of activities related to capturing and disseminating knowledge and learning

	YES	NO
CAPTURE INTERNAL KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	68% (n = 23)	32% (n = 11)
CAPTURE EXTERNAL KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	53% (n = 17)	47% (n = 15)
ORGANISE KNOWLEDGE	35% (n = 11)	65% (n = 20)
SHARE KNOWLEDGE THROUGHOUT THE ORGANISATION	50% (n = 16)	50% (n = 16)

FIGURE 20

How respondents rated their organisations' systems and procedures

	GOOD	ACCEPTABLE	POOR	NO SYSTEMATIC PROCESS	DON'T KNOW
CAPTURE INTERNAL KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	15% (n = 5)	47% (n = 16)	20% (n = 7)	18% (n = 6)	0%
CAPTURE EXTERNAL KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	12% (n = 4)	44% (n = 15)	12% (n = 4)	32% (n = 11)	0%
ORGANISE KNOWLEDGE	12% (n = 4)	18% (n = 6)	29% (n = 10)	41% (n = 14)	0%
SHARE KNOWLEDGE THROUGHOUT THE ORGANISATION	15% (n = 5)	38% (n = 13)	18% (n = 6)	29% (n = 10)	0%

3.3 Learning organisations

At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked an open question about what it means to be a learning organisation. Below are a selection of the comments that were made:

> *To routinely interpret evidence, consider the implications and reflect on our own practice and experience. To have a culture of openness about recognising that we could do things better.*

> *Continuously, at all levels and across all activities, the organisation enables analysis of past experience and external information in order to influence practice.*

> *A learning organisation has a culture of consistent analysis with the aim of improving its performance. This analysis drives its strategy and plans.*

> *To allocate appropriate time, thought and energy to reflection. To be comfortable with the concept of 'failure' and brave enough to alter course. To share information and learning generously.*

> *A culture of reflection on strategy and programmes, without being dogmatic about how evaluation is achieved.*

In the responses, the following words (listed by frequency of occurrence) were used, giving a flavour of what is meant by the term 'learning organisation':

- Reflect
- Strategy/strategic
- Evaluation/evaluating
- Culture
- Inform/adapt/change
- Share
- Continuous/continually
- Embed/commitment
- Regular/ongoing/routine
- Outcomes
- All levels
- Success
- Failure.

In relation to the main focus of this research – i.e. evaluation – the findings suggest that a learning organisation is one where evaluation, as an activity or practice, forms part of a much wider, reflective process.

A learning organisation actively creates spaces and opportunities for knowledge and intelligence to inform and shape its day-to-day practices, as well as its future direction, and embeds these within its culture.

3.4 Factors that can impede the use of evaluation and learning

Figure 21 shows the extent to which respondents feel a range of cultural factors impede good learning within their organisations.

The top three factors that respondents feel can impede learning in their organisations (to a moderate or great extent) are:

- Limited time to think and reflect with others (65%) – this is also the biggest challenge to U.S. foundations (64%)
- A lack of honesty from grantees about what isn't working as well as what is working (43%) – this relates to the ability to obtain useful or good data, which was a problem identified in section 1.6
- Lack of attention to implementation (40%) – historically, this has also been a problem in the U.S. and is directly related to the lack of time. Programme staff spend a great deal of time on the up-front work of designing a strategy and/or shepherding grant proposals through the approval process, and then their engagement drops off significantly.

Unwillingness to make small exploratory grants and/or pressure to make large grants do not feature as impediments to learning for the majority of the sample organisations (70% in both cases).

Other factors that respondents feel can impede learning include:

- 'Perceived risk of sharing what does not work to an external audience'
- 'General reluctance to change'
- 'Unrealistic expectations of what is possible to measure, count or be attributed.'

FIGURE 21

Extent to which respondents feel a range of cultural factors impede on good learning within their organisation

	NOT AN IMPEDIMENT	TO A SMALL EXTENT	TO A MODERATE/ GREAT EXTENT	DON'T KNOW
LIMITED CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK	41% (n = 14)	50% (n = 17)	3% (n = 1)	6% (n = 2)
UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE SMALL EXPLORATORY GRANTS	70% (n = 24)	12% (n = 4)	18% (n = 6)	0%
PRESSURE TO MAKE LARGE GRANTS	70% (n = 24)	18% (n = 6)	12% (n = 4)	0%
LIMITED TIME TO THINK AND REFLECT WITH OTHERS	9% (n = 3)	26% (n = 9)	65% (n = 22)	0%
LACK OF ATTENTION TO IMPLEMENTATION	24% (n = 8)	33% (n = 11)	40% (n = 13)	3% (n = 1)
ISOLATION FROM OTHERS IN THE FIELD	30% (n = 10)	33% (n = 11)	37% (n = 12)	0%
LACK OF TRUSTEE SUPPORT/ BUY-IN TO INVEST IN/ ENCOURAGE LEARNING	53% (n = 18)	18% (n = 6)	26% (n = 9)	3% (n = 1)
A LACK OF HONESTY FROM GRANTEES ABOUT WHAT ISN'T WORKING AS WELL AS WHAT IS WORKING	12% (n = 4)	39% (n = 13)	43% (n = 14)	6% (n = 2)

Factors that can facilitate the use of evaluation and learning

The survey asked respondents two open questions:

" *In your experience, what cultural factors or circumstances have facilitated the use of evaluative information in your organisation?*

" *What do you think could improve the use of evaluation in your organisation?*

Respondents identified a range of factors that have facilitated, or could improve, the use of evaluation and learning within their organisations. These have been categorised into five overarching factors:

• Governance
• Organisational buy-in
• The grant-making culture
• Appropriate resources
• Systems and procedures

Governance
It was noted that having a 'mission led board, interested in making a difference' can facilitate the use of evaluative information. There needs to be a willingness for trustees to hear about challenges and problems, and for them to ask 'penetrative questions' concerning their organisation's approach.

Organisational buy-in
A number of comments related to the importance of organisational buy-in and support for evaluation and learning activities. In particular, having a 'collective desire' to understand what has, or has not, worked is felt to be important, along with a commitment to maximise the impact of funding.

Finally, commitment, interest and 'demonstrable belief' in evaluation and learning from an organisation's senior leadership was felt to be particularly important by a number of respondents. This point was explored in detail by the U.S. Roundtable which found that, while 86% of respondents said their management communicates to staff that it values the use of evaluation and evaluative information, frequently or often, only 38% said that management actually models the use of it in their own decision-making 'frequently or often'. And less than half (48%) said their management frequently or often addresses organisational problems identified in evaluation.

The grant-making culture
Some respondents noted the importance of the grant-making culture in facilitating and improving the use of evaluative information. The observations below confirm the low ratings noted above about the use of evaluation for summative performance assessments:

" *A change in emphasis from spending money to understand what happens after it's spent.*

" *We know we need to create more time to read and review evaluation reports and to discuss these with the team. At present there is more time spent on pre-assessment than post-assessment, but we are working on shifting this by making fewer grants.*

" *A degree of flexibility is required, which allows programme heads to respond and change course through learning.*

Forming an open and honest relationship with grantees was also mentioned.

Appropriate resources
Some respondents felt that having a stronger focus on evaluation and learning within employee job descriptions would facilitate and improve the use of evaluative information. Involving the right staff from the outset of an evaluation, for example Programme Managers, was also mentioned, as was the idea of a standalone research budget and the ability to 'fund exploration and research'.

Finally, improving the supply of evaluators and improving staff's own skills in data collection and analysis were suggested.

Systems and procedures
Finally, some of the comments related to organisational systems and processes. In particular, including learning as an agenda item in internal meetings was suggested, as well as developing standard metrics across teams. Having better mechanisms for sifting through the wealth of knowledge available was mentioned, including the need for better software to facilitate data capture and information management.

Using evaluative information: The challenges

Collectively, the greatest challenge in using evaluative information is 'having adequate space and time to reflect on evaluation findings' (79%). Just under half (41%) face the challenge of persuading the trustee board to make use of evaluation findings; just under a third (29%) find it hard to talk about things that have failed or been unsuccessful; and just over a third (38%) find it hard to relate evaluation findings back to strategy (see Figure 22 below).

FIGURE 22

A table to show the challenges respondents face when using evaluative information

	YES, WE FACE THIS CHALLENGE	NO, WE DO NOT FACE THIS CHALLENGE	DON'T KNOW
WE DO NOT HAVE ADEQUATE SPACE OR TIME TO REFLECT ON EVALUATION FINDINGS	79% (n = 27)	18% (n = 6)	3% (n = 1)
IT IS HARD TO GET THE TRUSTEE BOARD TO MAKE USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS	41% (n = 14)	50% (n = 17)	9% (n = 3)
WE FIND IT HARD TO DEAL WITH/TALK ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE FAILED OR BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL	29% (n = 10)	59% (n = 20)	12% (n = 4)
WE FIND IT HARD TO RELATE EVALUATION FINDINGS BACK TO STRATEGY	38% (n =13)	44% (n = 15)	18% (n = 6)
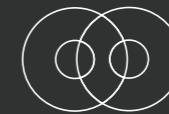
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