State of Evaluation in the Australian Government 2025

February 2025

Contents

Foreword

The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) was established with an ambitious agenda to improve the volume, quality, and use of evaluation evidence to support better policies and programs that improve the lives of Australians.

To deliver on the ACE's mission, this State of Evaluation report seeks to establish baseline information about the current state of evaluation practices, capabilities, and culture across the Australian Public Service (APS).

This inaugural report reflects a whole-of-government approach to assess how evaluation is being used to understand what works, for whom, and why. Beyond quantifying the number and nature of evaluations across government, it aims to understand the organisational supports, systems and processes that help to ensure evaluations are robust, ethical, and culturally appropriate.

The findings from the State of Evaluation survey and stocktake show that while there are promising signs of increasing evaluation effort across the APS, there is still work to do to achieve consistent and high-quality evaluation practice and a genuine culture of evaluation. We also need to work together to ensure all departments and agencies are able to deliver fit-for-purpose, rigorous and culturally appropriate evaluations.

There continues to be a high level of demand for ongoing central enabling support for evaluation planning, delivery and use. To meet this demand, ACE is promoting high-quality impact evaluation across the APS, while supporting entities to use evaluation approaches suited to their purpose and operating context. This is consistent with the principles-based Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, and reflects the breadth, scale, and diversity of programs and services delivered across government.

Cross-agency collaboration, knowledge sharing, and professional development are central to system-wide evaluation capability uplift. In-house evaluation units are playing a critical role in strengthening evaluation practices, and ACE is working with these units to design and deliver more centralised supports. These supports include enhanced guidance, new training resources, online platforms to support collaboration and professional development, a new Commonwealth evaluation maturity assessment tool, and targeted support and advice for conducting rigorous impact evaluations.

The ACE team are grateful to all agencies who contributed to the State of Evaluation survey and stocktake and look forward to the next stage of our journey together to embed a culture of evaluation and learning across the APS.

Eleanor Williams

Managing Director, Australian Centre for Evaluation

Executive summary

Embedding a culture of evaluation across the APS is critical to ensuring that policies and programs are consistently informed by robust evidence. Evaluating at all stages of the policy cycle supports the proper use of public money by enabling evidence-based resource decisions. It allows the APS to use robust evaluation evidence to reflect on and learn from experience to inform its operations, advice, and decisions.[1]

Staged reforms to strengthen evaluation capabilities, practices and culture across the Australian Government have been implemented progressively since the publication of the Independent Review of the APS in 2019.[2] These reforms have included establishing the Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) in Treasury to put evaluation evidence at the heart of government decision making and to embed a strong culture of continual learning across the APS.

As part of its leadership role, ACE has committed to regular reporting to Secretaries Board on the State of Evaluation in the Australian Government. The purpose of this regular reporting is to:

- understand and monitor the current state of evaluation practices and capabilities across government

- establish baseline information that allows changes to be measured and assessed over time

- evaluate the impact of APS-wide evaluation reforms and inform the sequencing of future reforms

- identify priority areas where the ACE could provide additional support to help entities embed the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy.

The State of Evaluation reporting invited participation from all Commonwealth entities subject to the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) in relation to:

- a **survey** of evaluation design and planning processes, the enabling support provided by in-house evaluation units, and related information about evaluation practices, capabilities and culture at an entity-level, and

- a **stocktake of evaluations** at different stages of implementation, with a focus on establishing a baseline for 2023–24.

Of the 194 Commonwealth entities invited to participate, **92** entities completed the survey and **38** entities provided input to the stocktake of evaluations. The method and analytic approach for the survey and stocktake are described in Appendix 2.

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1 The requirement to use robust evaluation to understand the long-term impacts of what the APS does is enshrined in the APS Value of Stewardship – see Stewardship guidance | Australian Public Service Commission, accessed 14 January 2025.

2 Appendix 1 provides details of whole-of-government evaluation reforms implemented since 2019.

Findings

The findings in this report show good progress in establishing foundations for more rigorous evaluation across government. The evaluation network across the Australian government has grown substantially, increasing from 19 in-house evaluation units in 2021 to 28 units in 2024.

Similarly, high levels of cross-agency engagement are supporting knowledge sharing and evaluation capability building across the APS, with a vibrant and active Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice that currently comprises around 1,000 members from over 80 entities. This reflects the positive influence evaluation reforms are having at a whole-of-government level.

It is clear, however, that further work is needed to embed high-quality evaluation at a systemic level. For example, only 35% of entities report having a senior leader responsible for evaluation at the entity level; only 31% of entities report routinely and publicly disseminating evaluation findings or reports; and only 25% of entities have an enterprise-level strategy or framework to plan and prioritise evaluations.

More work is also needed to ensure that all agencies have the capabilities required to deliver culturally appropriate evaluation. Findings show only 35% of entities (and 48% of large entities) reported having established processes to ensure that evaluations are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Evaluation activity

924 evaluations – at different stages of implementation – were identified in the Stocktake, by 38 responding entities. This likely represents an underestimate since non-responding entities may also have undertaken some evaluation activities. 331 evaluations were identified as 'completed' and, of these, 217 were completed in the 2023-24 period (the remainder were completed in other years). This will be used as a baseline for future reporting, noting definitional issues led to some differences in reporting of an evaluation's timing or status.

The Stocktake provided insights into the different evaluation types being used across government. Combined approaches, that is, different combinations of process, outcome, impact and economic evaluations, are the most common (77%).

65% of evaluations were delivered partly or fully by external providers. Hybrid (internal-external) models can provide an opportunity to build in-house evaluation capabilities and expertise. Of the 65% of evaluations at least partly delivered by external providers, 22% adopted this hybrid approach.

Evaluation design and planning

In-house evaluation units have increased in number and size: 28 entities reported having a dedicated evaluation unit in 2024, and another 7 reported plans to establish one by 2027. Large entities are making faster progress growing in-house capabilities and putting systems in place to support good practice. This included 68% of entities reporting that evaluation is used to inform policy and program design or decision-making.

While only one-quarter of entities use enterprise-level strategies and frameworks to prioritise and plan evaluations, another 31% reported that they are considering developing an enterprise-level strategy or framework by 2027. More work is needed to: integrate evaluation into routine corporate planning processes; embed robust evaluation planning for all new or significantly amended programs in the early stages of policy development; and to support entities to use strategic risk-based approaches to evaluate the right thing at the right time.

Evaluation evidence use

Entities most commonly reported using evaluations to inform policy and program design and decision-making (68%). The same proportion reported using outcome or impact evaluations to assess whether policies and programs are achieving their objectives.

In addition, a large majority of entities (90 %) reported considering evaluation evidence in the context of various entity-level business planning processes.

Motivations, enablers and barriers were also identified. Improving implementation was the most common motivation for evaluation (77% of entities), followed by accountability, transparency and knowledge building. The most common barrier to embedding a culture of evaluation was limited staff time (56% of entities), while support from agency leadership was the most common enabler (69%).

Evaluation capability building

61% of entities reported engaging in some form of evaluation capability building in 2023-24, with interagency knowledge sharing being the most common approach reported (47% of entities). Other approaches included engaging with written guidance materials, practical learning, attending Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice events, and training (all around 30% of entities). 22% of entities reported engaging in capability building initiatives specific to impact evaluation.

The most common services provided by in-house evaluation units (n=28) included: advisory services (89%), evaluation capability building (82%), and delivering evaluations (71%).

Entities identified priority areas for more central support from the ACE to help improve their evaluation practices. The top responses (identified by more than 50% of entities) were for enhanced guidance and tools, more tailored information sessions, and a Commonwealth Evaluation Maturity Model.

Two clear areas for improvement are ensuring systems are in place to ensure ethical evaluation, and culturally appropriate evaluation with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. 35% entities indicated that they had established processes to ensure evaluations are culturally appropriate, and only 21% of agencies have ethics review processes in place.

Next steps

Future efforts will focus on implementing system-wide supports for good evaluation practice, while ensuring entities have the flexibility to tailor and customise approaches that work best for them.

The ACE's forward work program reflects the priorities identified by entities, with a focus on: refreshing the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit; developing a comprehensive suite of training resources; and designing an evaluation maturity assessment tool. In addition, the APS Evaluation Profession will be launched in 2025. Targeted support for rigorous impact evaluation will be delivered through: formal partnerships; technical advice; ACE-delivered impact evaluation training; and the Impact Evaluation Practitioner's Network.

Introduction

The Commonwealth Evaluation Policy (the Policy) aims to embed a culture of evaluation and learning from experience to underpin evidence-based policy and delivery across the Australian Government. The Policy was introduced in December 2021 and applies to all Commonwealth entities and companies subject to the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act).

The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) was founded in Treasury in July 2023 to put evaluation evidence at the heart of government decision-making. The ACE has an ambitious agenda for improving the quality and depth of evidence and its use by: providing leadership across the APS; working with partners to deliver impactful evaluations; supporting entities with evaluation planning and use; and building evaluation capability across the service.

Regular reporting on the State of Evaluation in the Australian Government is critical for delivering on the ACE's mission. It will:

- establish baseline information about the current state of evaluation at a system-level and monitor changes over time

- inform the prioritisation and sequencing of future reform initiatives

- identify areas where the ACE can support entities to embed the Policy and enhance the guidance and resources available in the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit.

Project overview

The ACE commenced work to develop the inaugural report in July 2024. The design and implementation approach were developed in partnership with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group. All Commonwealth entities and companies subject to the PGPA Act (194 in total) were invited to contribute.

The ACE conducted a whole-of-government survey and data collection activity between August and November 2024. This involved seeking entity level responses to a survey questionnaire (the Survey) and input to a stocktake of evaluation activities in the 2023-24 period (the Stocktake).

The Survey:

- allowed for entity-level response to questions related to organisational supports and processes for evaluation planning, design and utilisation

- captured information about entity-level evaluation capability building initiatives

- identified areas where the ACE could provide additional support to help entities embed the Policy and strengthen their evaluation practices.

The Stocktake:

- captured information about formal evaluations planned, commenced, and/or completed, with a focus on the 2023–24 reporting period

- identified attributes related to each evaluation, including information about the design, delivery approach, analytical methods, evidence use, publication, and alignment with the Budget Framework and Commonwealth Performance Framework.

Together, the Survey and Stocktake results help to better understand the current state of evaluation activities, practices, capability building efforts and culture across the Australian Government.

All information collected through the Survey and Stocktake was provided on the basis that only aggregate information would be used for reporting purposes.

The ACE will work with portfolio departments and interested agencies to develop entity-level reports and actions plans in 2025.

Responding entities

Of the 194 Commonwealth entities and companies subject to the PGPA Act that were invited to contribute:

- **92 entities** responded to the Survey (47% response rate)

- **38 entities** provided valid responses to the Stocktake (20% response rate).

The number of entities who responded to the Survey and Stocktake relative to the size of their organisations is shown below in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: State of Evaluation survey sample breakdown

Large (> 1001 employees)	34
Medium (251 – 1000 employees)	16
Small (101 – 250 employees)	18
Micro (< 100 employees)	24
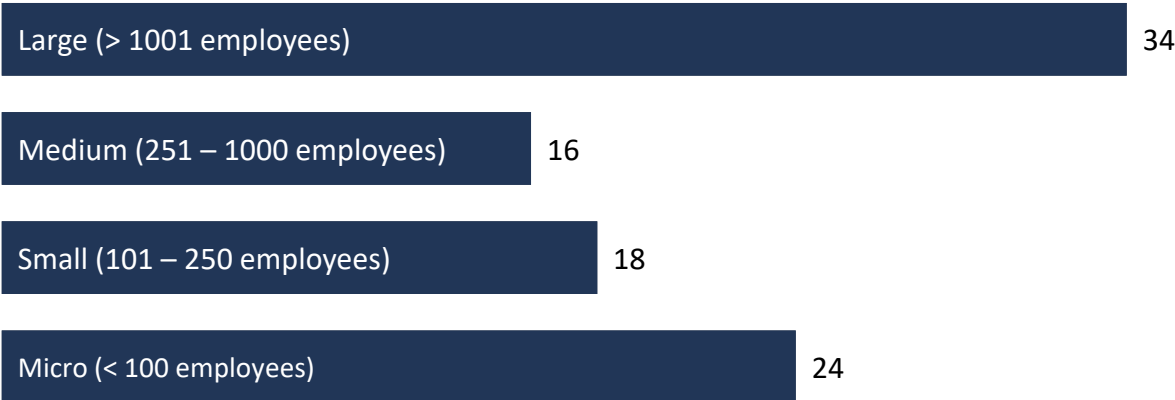
Figure 2: State of Evaluation stocktake sample breakdown

Large (> 1001 employees)	23
Medium (251 - 1000 employees)	4
Small (101 - 250 employees)	5
Micro (<100 employees)	6

Evaluation activities

Measuring and understanding how evaluation is being used across the Australian government is critical for increasing the volume, quality and use of evaluation.

This Stocktake was the first attempt to measure the number and nature of evaluations at a whole-of-government level. It involved entities self-reporting on characteristics about the status, delivery approach, evaluation type, and alignment with related whole-of-government reporting frameworks. Despite progress building in-house evaluation capabilities across government, the level of detail and comparability of information identified in the Stocktake varied according to organisational norms and definitional issues. Data fields were not mandatory, so missing data has also been reflected in how results are reported below.

In future, the ACE will, in collaboration with responding entities, analyse the detailed characteristics of evaluations identified in the Stocktake to help:

• identify exemplars of good practice;

• raise awareness about rigorous evaluation methods that can be used to understand the impact and effectiveness of programs delivered in specific contexts; and

• identify opportunities to increase the coverage and accuracy of reporting in future years.

Main findings

• 924 evaluations were identified by 38 responding entities in the Stocktake, including evaluations that were in the planning stage, in progress or completed.

• 331 evaluations were identified as 'completed' by responding entities. Of these 217 were completed in the 2023-24 period (the remainder were completed in other years).

• 65% of reported evaluations were delivered partly or fully by external providers.

Reported evaluation activity

The Stocktake recorded the details of **924** evaluations, from 38 responding entities. This likely represents an underestimate since non-responding entities may also have undertaken some evaluation activities. Nonetheless, this establishes an indicative baseline for the volume and characteristics of evaluation activities underway across the Australian Government.

Around 36% of evaluations (331, n=921) were reported as completed, and the remaining 64% were reported to be either in the planning stage (338 evaluations) or in progress (252 evaluations; Figure 3).[3] Of the completed evaluations, 217 were completed in 2023–24, according to the status and timeframes entered by responding entities.[4]

Figure 3: Status of evaluations identified across the Australian Government[5]

338	252	331
Evaluations planned	Evaluations in progress	Evaluations completed

3 Unspecified status

The characteristics of evaluations reported as completed varied across entities. For example, reported timeframes associated with each evaluation varied depending on when an evaluation was deemed complete: at the time an evaluation report was finalised; or when findings were published, distributed to key stakeholders, or responded to by management.

The ACE will collaborate with entities to enhance the design of the Stocktake data collection tool for future reporting to improve consistency and comparability.

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3 Estimated completion dates for some evaluations identified through the Stocktake were subject to human error. Bilateral engagement with entities will clarify any erroneous entries to ensure the validity of longitudinal reporting in future reports.

4 Stocktake input was analysed according to entity attributions about status and timeframes to establish consistent baseline information for evaluations completed in the 2023-24 period.

5 Data collection focussed on evaluations in the 2023–24 period. It involved entities self-reporting on the characteristics of each evaluation including status, delivery approach and evaluation type. There was some variation in timeframes and status attributed to individual evaluations across entities. Definitional issues and organisational norms influenced the status and characteristics attributed to evaluations by entities.

Evaluation delivery and type

463 evaluations (65%, n=712[6]) were identified as being delivered partly or fully by external providers (Figure 4).

The types of evaluation identified (n=650 evaluations) included both: 502 multifocal evaluations (77%) where the evaluation included multiple approaches, and 148 single approach evaluations (Figure 5). The latter group comprised: 56 outcome evaluations (9%), 29 process evaluations (4%), 22 impact evaluations (3%), 4 economic evaluations (1%), and 37 'other' (6%).

The 502 multifocal evaluations had a diverse mix of approaches. The most common included: 141 process/outcome evaluations (28%, n=502); 74 process/outcome/economic/impact evaluations (15%, n=502); and 35 impact/outcome (7%, n=502). The remaining 50% were 'other combinations'.

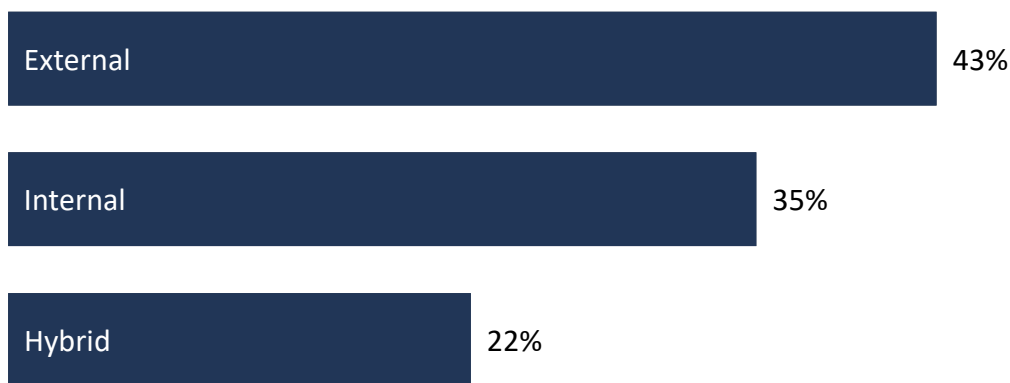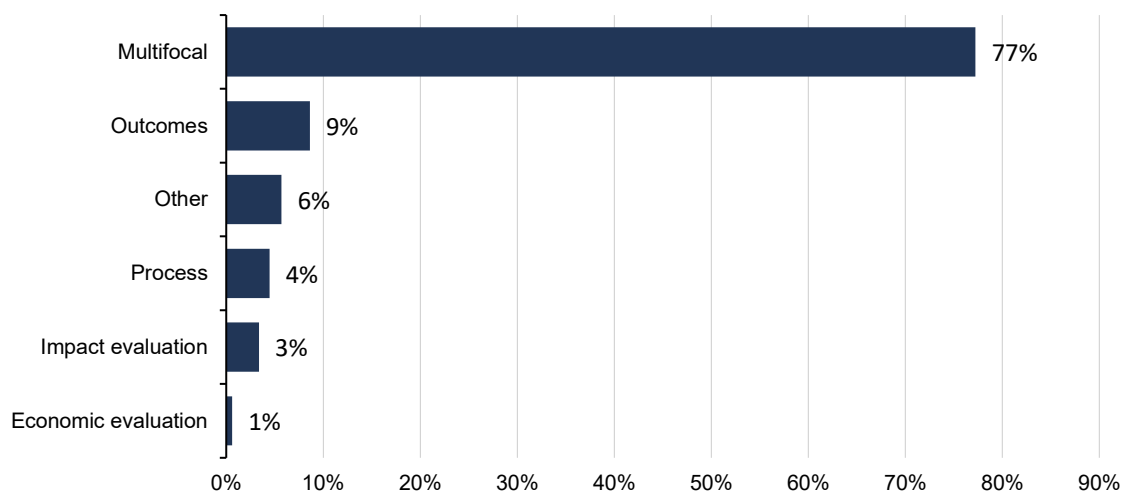## Figure 4: Evaluation delivery approach

Approach	Percentage
External	43%
Internal	35%
Hybrid	22%

Figure 5: Evaluation type[7]

Type	Percentage
Multifocal	77%
Outcomes	9%
Other	6%
Process	4%
Impact evaluation	3%
Economic evaluation	1%

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6 This figure excludes 212 evaluations with unspecified delivery approaches.
7 These percentages represent total numbers for evaluation types specified in the Stocktake (n=650).

Evaluation design and planning

Understanding how entities approach evaluation design and planning is helpful for identifying where targeted supports could help improve the number and quality of different types of evaluation.

Main findings

- 28 entities (30%, n=92) reported having a dedicated evaluation unit or function in 2024, and another 7 reported plans to establish one by 2027.

- The median evaluation unit staffing level was 4.5 ASL (range: 1 – 45 ASL), and staffing levels for these units increased substantially between 2022–23, and 2023–24.

- 32 entities (35%, n=92 entities) reported having an SES Band 1 (Assistant Secretary or equivalent) leader responsible for evaluation at an entity-level, of which 18 were large entities (53%, n=34 large entities with more than 1,000 employees).

- 47 entities (51%, n=92) reported that they had central monitoring processes for evaluation activities.

- Entity-level evaluation frameworks and evaluation strategies are an emerging priority for entities, with only 23 entities (25%, n=91) reporting that they had adopted either an evaluation framework, or evaluation strategy, or both.

Growth in the evaluation network

The survey revealed strong growth in the evaluation network across the Australian Government.

Embedding strong evaluation practices during early policy and program design is critical for establishing fit-for-purpose monitoring and evaluation arrangements across the policy cycle. In-house evaluation units can help support good evaluation practice. This expertise can help to clearly identify program objectives and outcomes, delivery timeframes and baseline data. In-house expertise can also help to establish robust performance monitoring from the outset to ensure programs are fit-to-evaluate at a future point.

28 entities (30%, n=92) reported that they had a dedicated evaluation unit or function in 2024, with a further 7 (11%, n=64) reporting plans to establish one by 2027 (Figure 6).

Marked growth in evaluation units can be noted following the Independent Review of the Australian Public Service, 2019 (Thodey Review).

## Figure 6: Reported number of central evaluation units over time
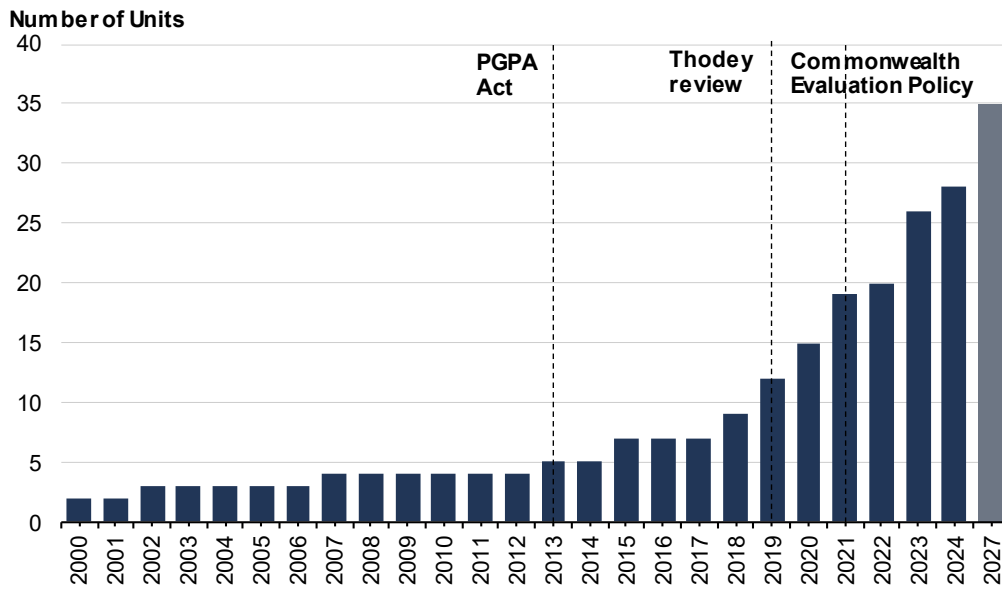
Note: Recent figures are likely to be accurate, whereas past figures likely underestimate the number of central evaluation units due to recall failure. For example, a stocktake conducted by the Productivity Commission in 2019 identified 18 central evaluation units, rather than the 12 identified in this stocktake (Productivity Commission 2020, *Indigenous Evaluation Strategy: Background Paper*, Appendix B, pp414-415).

Number and size of existing evaluation units

The average staffing levels (ASL) in evaluation units across the Australian Government varies across 27 entities that reported having an evaluation unit or function.

Staffing levels ranged from 1 to 45 ASL, with a median ASL of 4.5 and an average of 8 (Figure 7).

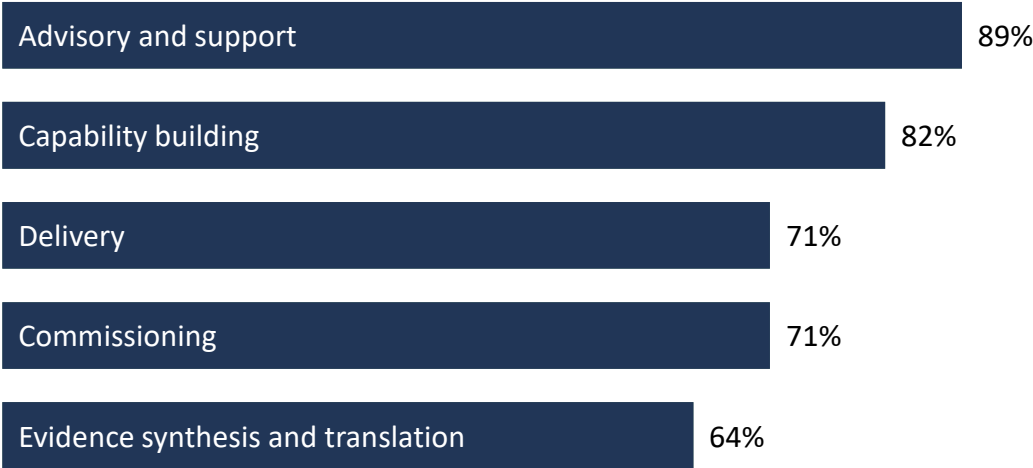### Figure 7: Evaluation unit size across the Australian Government
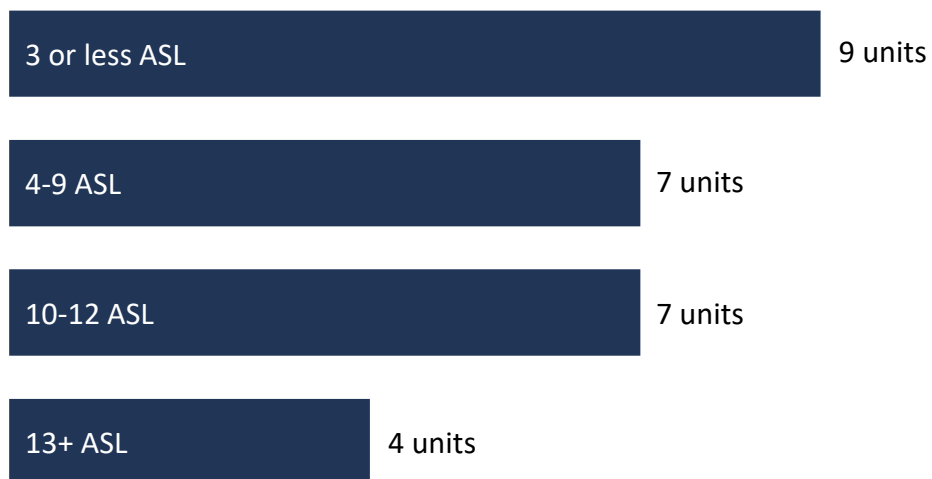
Survey results also indicated a substantial increase in ASL in both new and established evaluation units between 2022–23 and 2023–24.

This growth in evaluation unit ASL was driven by large entities, 50% of which (9 entities, n=18) reported an increase. One medium-sized entity (n=4) and 2 small entities (n=5) also reported an increase in ASL. Micro entities reported no change in ASL levels.

Role and function of existing evaluation units

Evaluation units provided a range of service types, with the most common being: advisory and support services, capability building, and evaluation delivery (Figure 8). Entities also reported on specific services provided by evaluation units or functions. The most reported specific services were performance measurement/monitoring support (86%, n=27), and evaluation planning and design (86%, n=27).

Figure 8: Types of services provided by evaluation units

Advisory and support — 89%
Capability building — 82%
Delivery — 71%
Commissioning — 71%
Evidence synthesis and translation — 64%

Graphic represents the types of services that evaluation units most commonly provide for their entity, and entities could select multiple options (n: 27).

Senior leadership oversight

32 entities (35%, n=92) reported having an SES Band 1 (Assistant Secretary or equivalent) leader responsible for evaluation at an entity-level. This was true for 18 large entities (53%, n=34), while 4 small entities (22%, n=18) reported that they had a senior leader responsible for evaluation (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Senior leadership oversight of evaluation by entity size
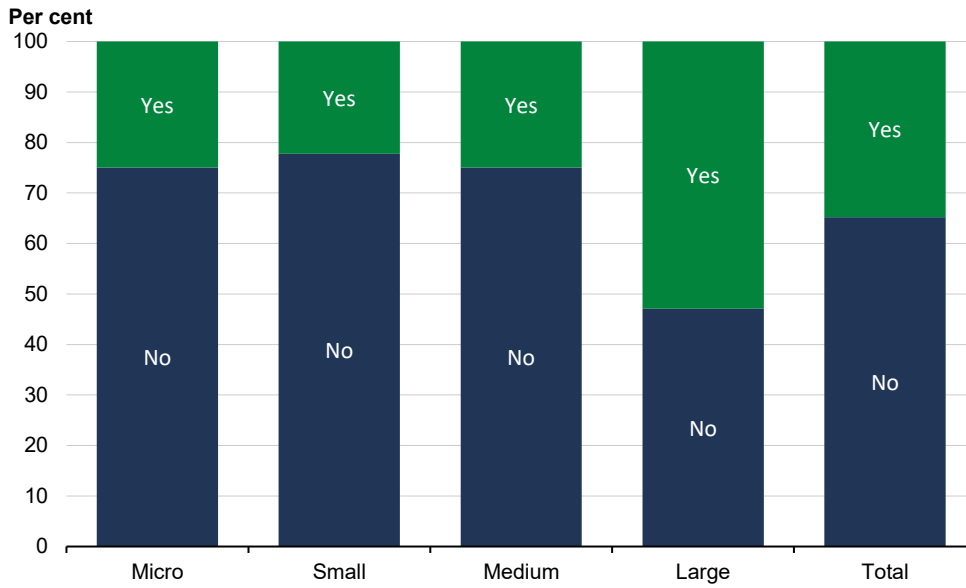
Note: Micro: <100 employees. Small: 101-250 employees. Medium: 251-1,000 employees. Large: >1,001 employees.

Enterprise-level governance

Enterprise-level evaluation strategy or framework

23 entities (25%, n=91) reported having an enterprise-level evaluation strategy or framework, or both (Figure 10). A further 28 entities (31%, n=91) reported that they are considering developing an enterprise-level strategy or framework by 2027.

Figure 10: Enterprise-level evaluation strategy or framework
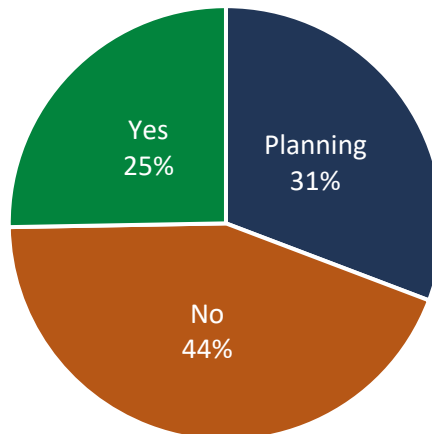
Central monitoring

47 entities (51%, n=92) reported the extent to which their entity centrally monitors the status and use of evaluation. Among those respondents, this monitoring most commonly covered: completed evaluations, evaluations in progress and planned evaluations (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Entity-level central monitoring of evaluation activities

- Completed evaluations — 85%
- Evaluations in progress — 74%
- Planned evaluations — 70%
- Management responses — 62%
- Evaluation evidence use — 43%
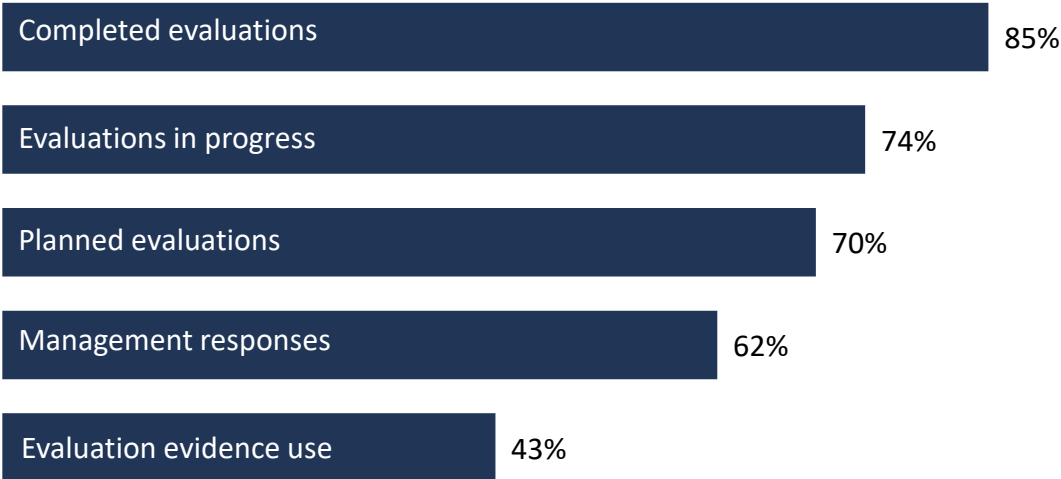
Evaluation evidence use

Evaluation evidence is only helpful if it is used to inform decisions and enhance program design and delivery. Understanding how and why entities use evaluation evidence is essential for fostering consistent practice and embedding a culture of evaluation.
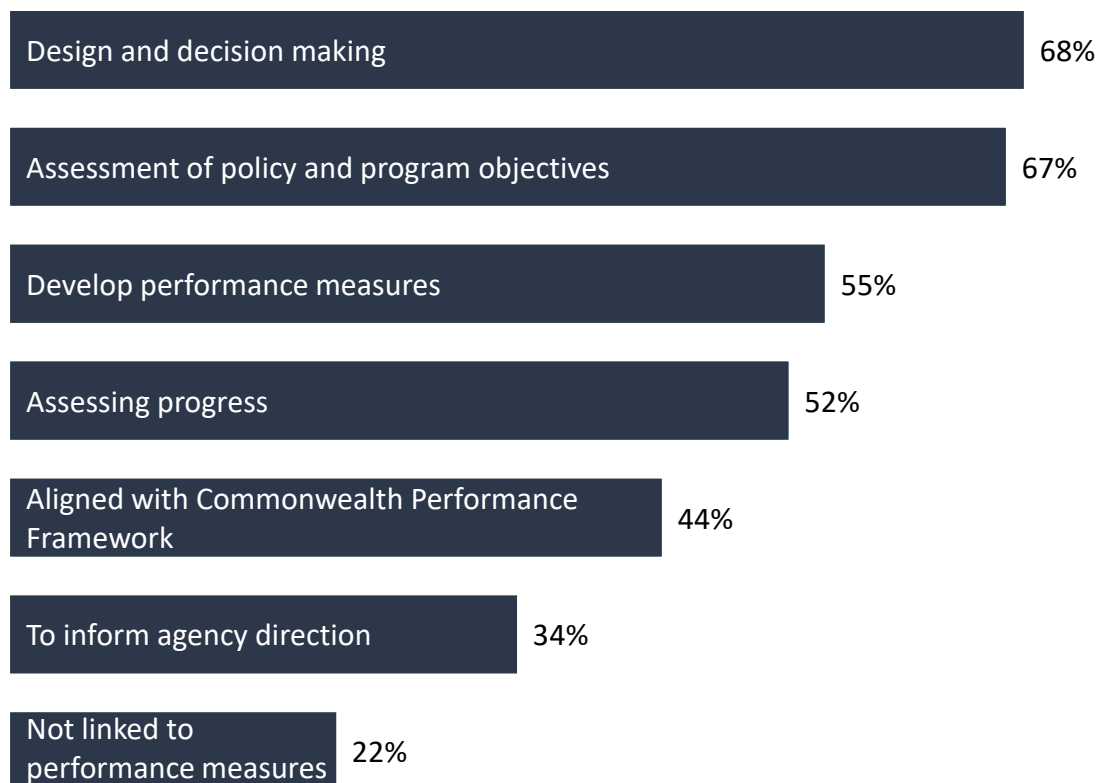
Main findings

- Entities most commonly reported using evaluations to inform policy and program design and decision-making (68%). The same proportion reported using outcome or impact evaluations to assess whether policies and programs are achieving their objectives.

- The most commonly reported motivation for evaluation at the entity-level was to improve the implementation (68 entities or 77%, n=88), followed by accountability, transparency, and knowledge building.

- 83 entities (90%, n=92) reported that they consider evaluation evidence in the context of various entity-level business planning processes, including 32 large entities (94%, n=34).

- Evaluation evidence sharing emerged as an area for improvement, with only 27 entities (31%, n=87) reporting that they routinely and publicly disseminate evaluation findings or reports.

- 49 entities (69%, n=71) reported that support from entity leadership was the biggest enabler that helped to embed a culture of evaluation within their entity.

Use of evaluation evidence

The most common use of evaluations *generally* was to inform policy and program design and decision-making (68%, n=92). The same proportion used *outcome or impact* evaluations to assess whether policies and programs are achieving their objectives. Other uses of evaluation evidence are shown in Figure 12.
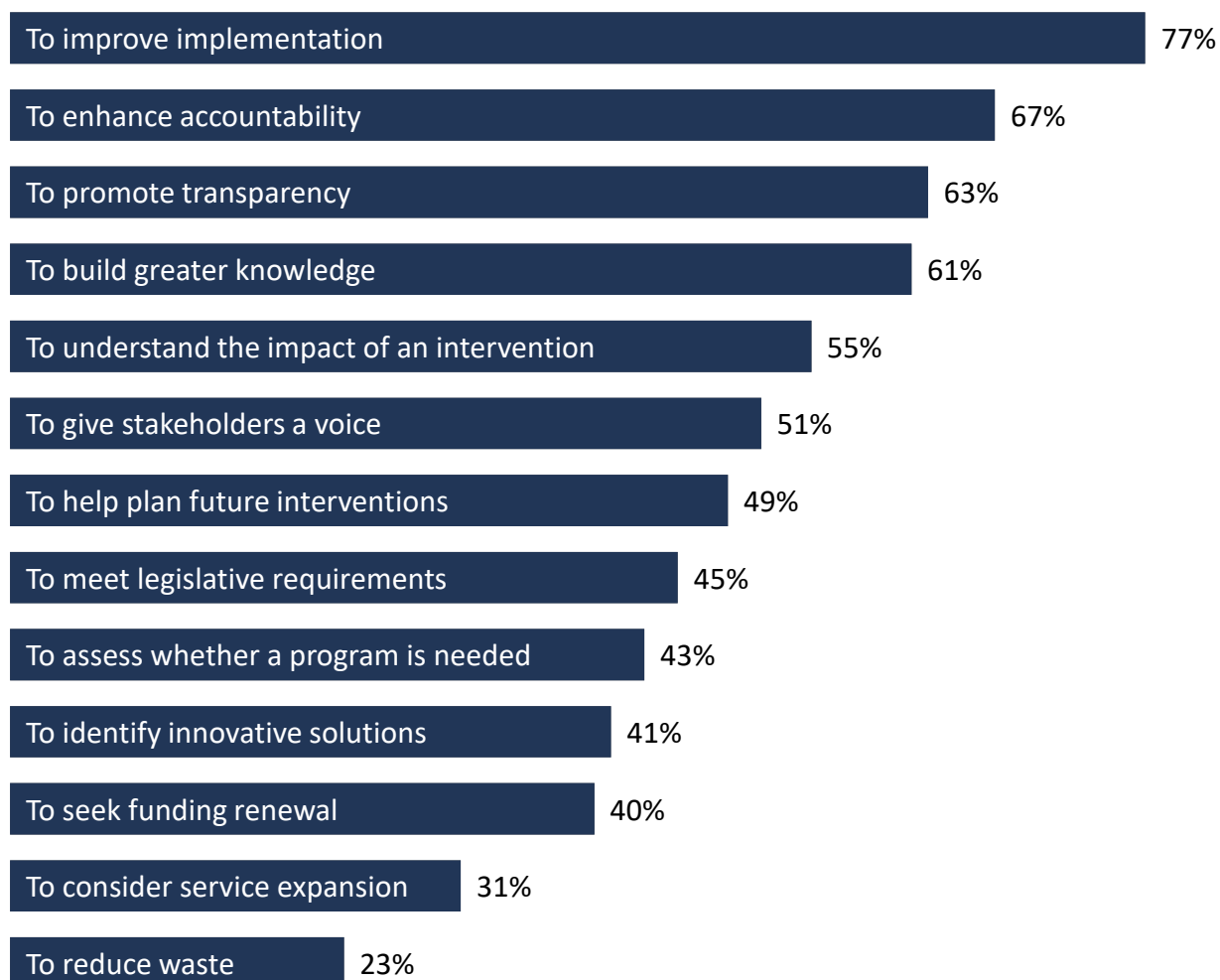
Figure 12: Use of evaluation evidence by entities

Use	Percentage
Design and decision making	68%
Assessment of policy and program objectives	67%
Develop performance measures	55%
Assessing progress	52%
Aligned with Commonwealth Performance Framework	44%
To inform agency direction	34%
Not linked to performance measures	22%

Motivations

Almost all entities (88 out of 92, or 96%) reported on the motivations driving evaluation evidence within their organisation. The most frequently reported motivation was "to improve implementation" of policies, programs, and services. This was followed by: enhance accountability; promote transparency; and build greater knowledge (Figure 13).
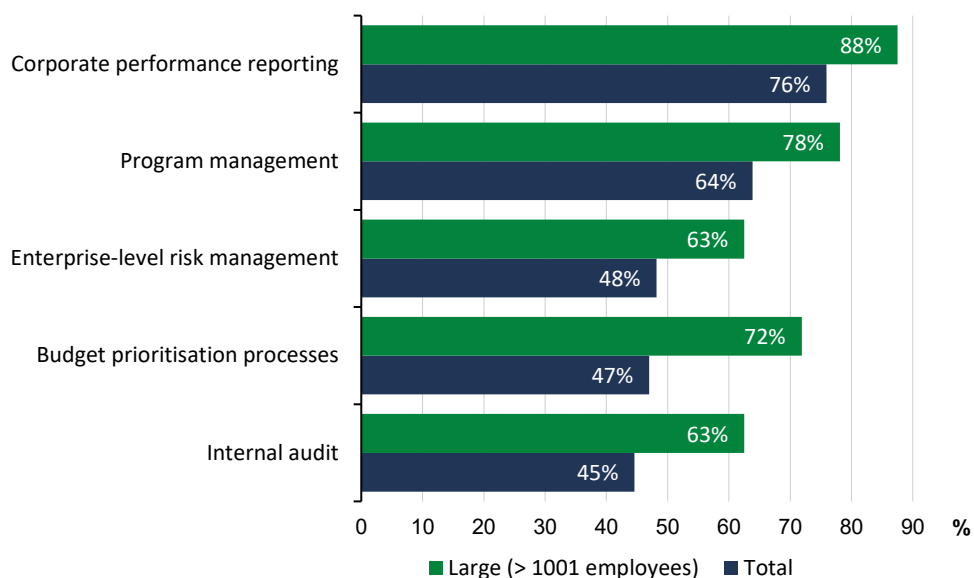
Figure 13: Motivations for evaluation activities across entities

Motivation	Percentage
To improve implementation	77%
To enhance accountability	67%
To promote transparency	63%
To build greater knowledge	61%
To understand the impact of an intervention	55%
To give stakeholders a voice	51%
To help plan future interventions	49%
To meet legislative requirements	45%
To assess whether a program is needed	43%
To identify innovative solutions	41%
To seek funding renewal	40%
To consider service expansion	31%
To reduce waste	23%

Embedding evaluation into everyday practice

83 entities (90%, n=92) reported that evaluation evidence is considered in the context of various entity-level business planning processes, with 32 large entities (94%, n=34) reporting this to be the case. The business planning processes where evaluation evidence was most commonly used were corporate performance reporting, and program management (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Evaluation consideration in the context of everyday practice (n=83, large entities n=32)

Legend: ■ Large (> 1001 employees) ■ Total

Corporate performance reporting: 88% / 76%
Program management: 78% / 64%
Enterprise-level risk management: 63% / 48%
Budget prioritisation processes: 72% / 47%
Internal audit: 63% / 45%

Evaluation evidence sharing

27 entities (31%, n=87) report that they routinely and publicly disseminate evaluation findings or reports (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Routine and public dissemination of evaluation findings
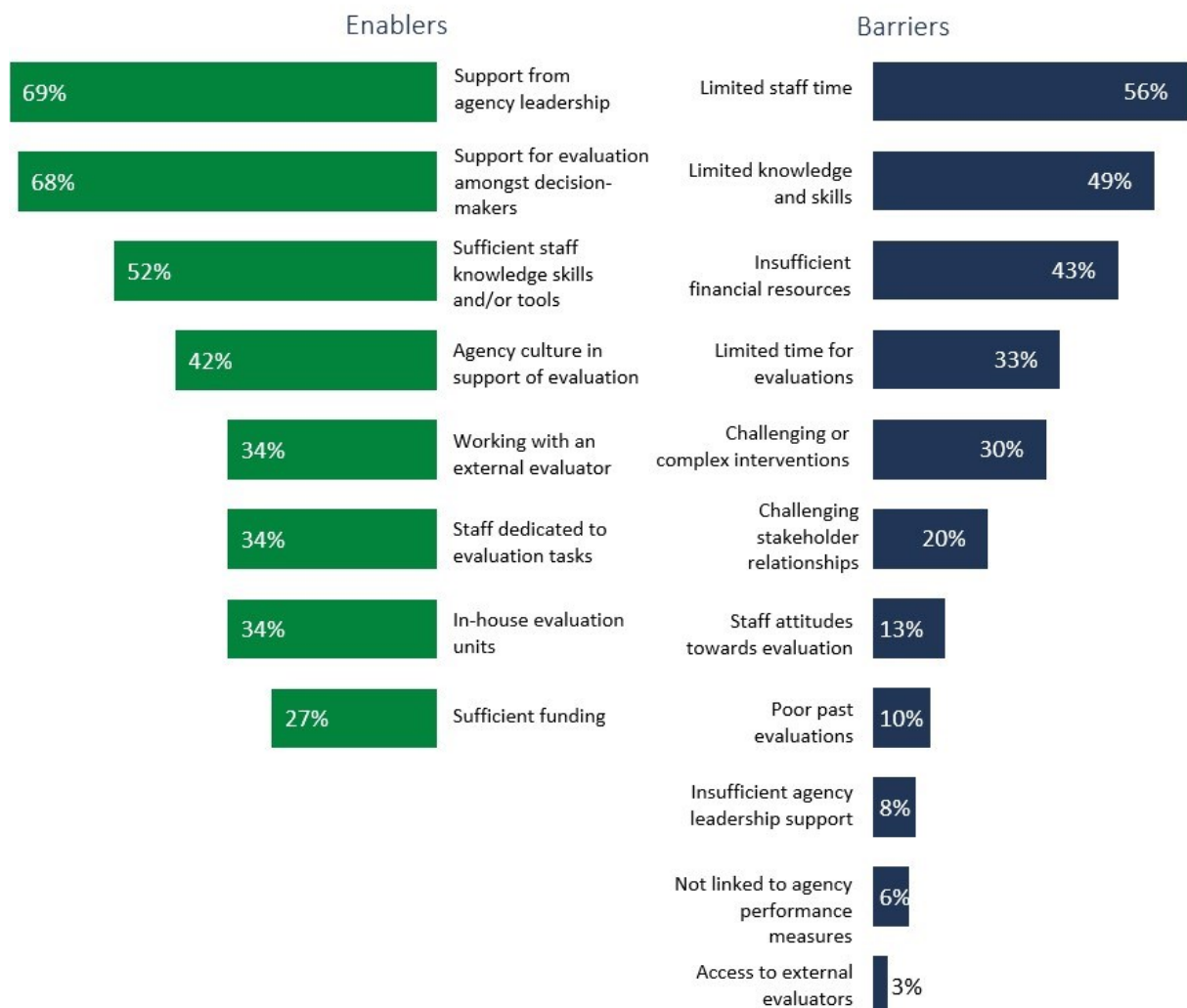

Yes 31%
No 69%
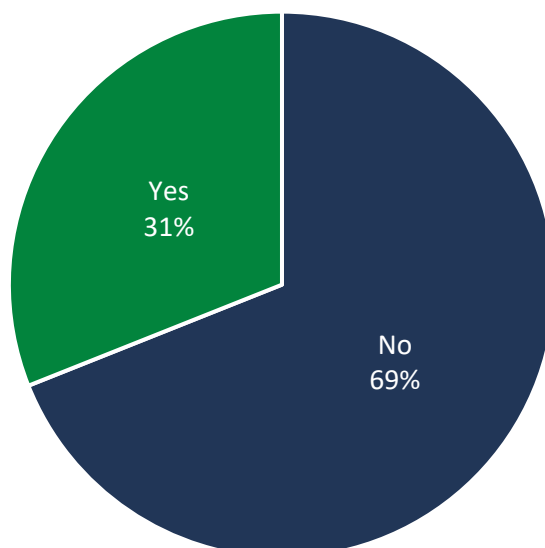
Barriers and enablers

71 entities (77%, n=92) shared insights into key supports or enablers that helped their entity in embedding a culture of evaluation since the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy came into effect in 2021. Support from entity leadership (69%), and support for evaluation amongst decision-makers (68%) were the most reported enablers, each selected by more than two-thirds of responding entities. 27 entities (31%, n=87) report that they routinely and publicly disseminate evaluation findings or reports (Figure 16).

The survey also attempted to identify major barriers to embedding a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, with 79 entities (86%, n=92) providing a response. Limited staff time was the most common barrier identified (56%, n=79), followed by limited knowledge and skills, and insufficient financial resources.

Figure 16: Key barriers and enablers to embedding a culture of evaluation

Enablers		Barriers	
Support from agency leadership	69%	Limited staff time	56%
Support for evaluation amongst decision-makers	68%	Limited knowledge and skills	49%
Sufficient staff knowledge skills and/or tools	52%	Insufficient financial resources	43%
Agency culture in support of evaluation	42%	Limited time for evaluations	33%
Working with an external evaluator	34%	Challenging or complex interventions	30%
Staff dedicated to evaluation tasks	34%	Challenging stakeholder relationships	20%
In-house evaluation units	34%	Staff attitudes towards evaluation	13%
Sufficient funding	27%	Poor past evaluations	10%
		Insufficient agency leadership support	8%
		Not linked to agency performance measures	6%
		Access to external evaluators	3%

Evaluation capability building

Understanding how entities build evaluation capability and identifying opportunities for improvement at a system level are essential for ensuring evaluation efforts are sustainable.

Identifying priority areas for the ACE to provide additional support was a key objective of the Survey.

Main findings

- 54 entities (61%, n=89) indicated that they had engaged in some form of evaluation capability building.

- A smaller proportion, 19 entities (22%, n=88) indicated that they had engaged in capability building specific to impact evaluation. These were predominantly large entities.

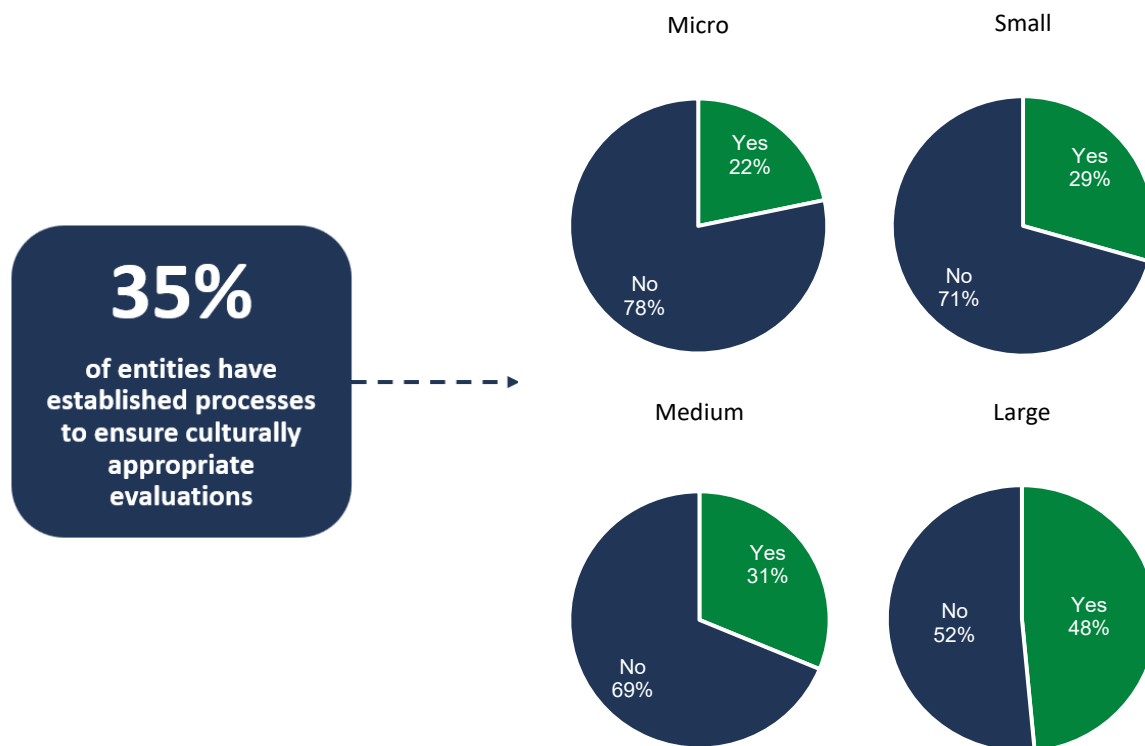- 31 entities (35%, n=89) indicated that they had established processes to ensure evaluations are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. This was higher, closer to 50% for large entities (16, n=34)

- 19 entities (21%, n=90) reported having an established ethics review process.

- 48 entities (62%, n=77) indicated that enhanced guidance and tools from the ACE would assist them in delivering on the intent of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy.

Capability building

Most **in-house evaluation units** (23 entities, 82%, n=28) reported delivering evaluation capability building initiatives within their organisation. Other services provided by in-house evaluation units to help build evaluation capability and good practice at an entity-level included: advisory services (89%), delivering evaluations (71%), commissioning (71%), and evidence synthesis and translation (64%).

Among the **entities** who responded to questions about capability building, more than half indicated that they had engaged in some form of evaluation capability building in 2023–24 (54 entities, 61%, n=89). Inter-entity knowledge exchange was the most common capability building approach reported (42 entities, 47%, n=88). Other approaches included engaging with written guidance materials, practical learning, attending Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice events delivered by the ACE, and training (all identified by around 30% of entities; Figure 17). 22% of entities reported engaging in capability building initiatives specific to impact evaluation during 2023–24.

Figure 17: Key evaluation capability building activities

Activity	Percentage
Inter-agency knowledge exchange	47%
Written materials (e.g. guidance)	36%
Practical learning	35%
Commonwealth Evaluation CoP events	30%
External training	29%
Internal training	28%
Capability through formal external partnerships	22%
Evaluation coaching/mentoring	19%
Internal CoP events	15%

Culturally appropriate and ethical evaluation

31 entities reported that they had established processes to ensure that evaluations are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities (35%, n=89; Figure 18). 16 large entities reported having such processes (48%, n=33). The most common processes that agencies identified for this purpose included: centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, perspectives, priorities, and knowledges in all stages of evaluation; and working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on evaluation.

Where entities provided additional information (in open text fields) in relation to why established processes were not in place at an entity-level, some cited adherence to related whole-of-government frameworks in place of entity-specific processes.

Entities reported that it would be helpful if the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit included practical advice and guidance about key considerations for culturally appropriate evaluation in the evaluation toolkit.

The most frequently used resources to support culturally appropriate evaluations were: the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, and the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research.

Figure 18: Processes established to ensure culturally appropriate evaluations with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities
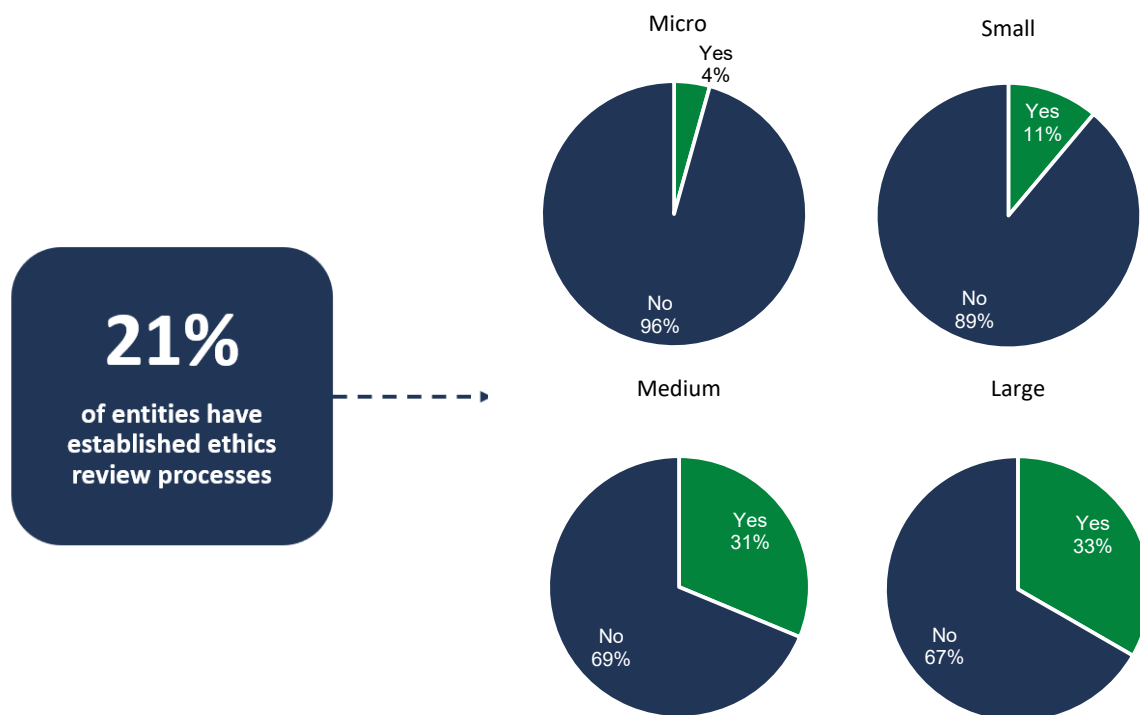
35%

of entities have established processes to ensure culturally appropriate evaluations

Micro

Yes
22%

No
78%

Small

Yes
29%

No
71%

Medium

Yes
31%

No
69%

Large

No
52%

Yes
48%

Ethical evaluation

21% entities reported having an established ethics review process (19 entities, n=90). This proportion was higher among large entities, with 33% reporting ethics review processes (11 entities, n=33), while only one micro-sized entity reported that they had an ethics review process in place (n=23; Figure 19).

There were 71 responding entities without an established ethics review process. Of these, 59 responded to the follow-up question about their approaches to assure ethical evaluation practice. 20 entities reported that while they did not have a formal process, their evaluation strategy and/or policy provided ethical practice guidance. Another 8 entities reported that a formal process was under consideration or review.

Figure 19: Entities with established ethics review processes for evaluations

21%
of entities have established ethics review processes

Micro
Yes 4%
No 96%

Small
Yes 11%
No 89%

Medium
Yes 31%
No 69%

Large
Yes 33%
No 67%

Future priorities

Entities were asked to select the actions or activities (multiple) that could help support them to deliver on the policy intent of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy. Most entities indicated that they would value: enhanced guidance and tools (48 entities, 62%, n=77), and tailored information sessions about the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy and topics related to evaluation (41 entities, 53%, n=77; Figure 20).

Figure 20: Central support to implement the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy

Category	Percentage
Enhanced guidance and tools	62%
Tailored information session	53%
Evaluation Maturity Model	52%
Mandatory evaluation requirements	32%
Stronger legislative requirements	13%
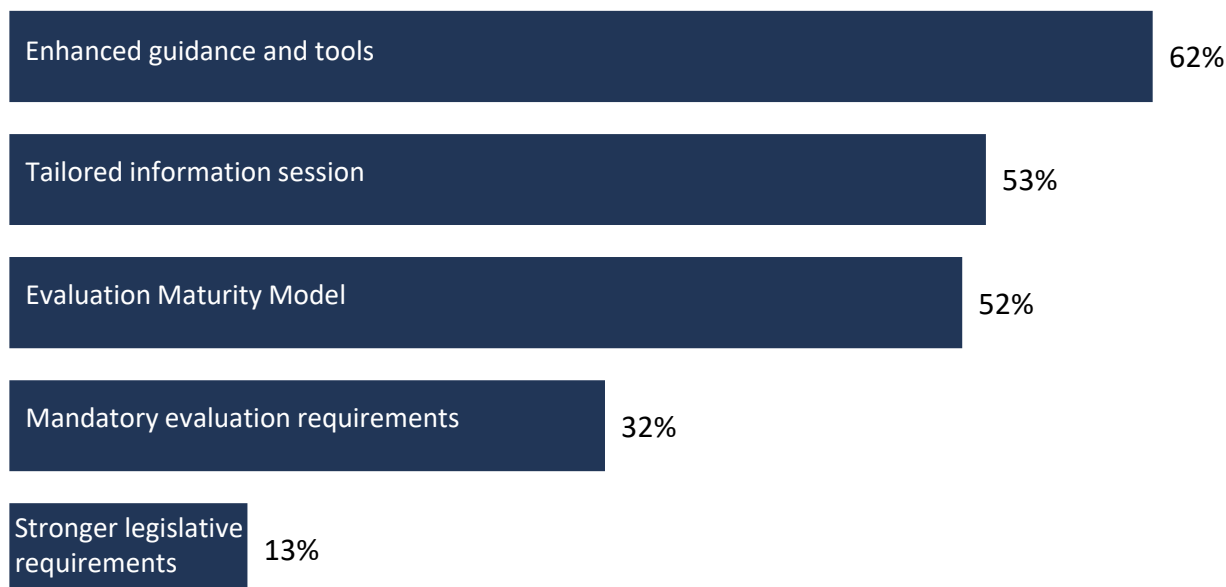
The ACE's role in capability building

Entities were asked to select actions or activities that ACE could deliver, which could help them build evaluation capability and embed an enduring culture of evaluation. Entities could select multiple activities. From the 75 responding entities, the most popular activities included: online training through APS Learn (46 entities or 61%), ACE-developed evaluation training resources (43 entities or 57%), and an expanded Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit (39 entities or 52%) (Figure 21).

The ACE's forward work program reflects the priorities identified by entities, with a strong focus on:

- refreshing the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit;

- developing a comprehensive suite of training resources and train-the-trainer supports for use by entity evaluation units;

- expanding the set of online learning resources on APS Learn;

- collaboratively designing an online evaluation maturity assessment tool; and

- supporting the launch of an APS Evaluation Profession.

Providing opportunities for cross-agency partnerships and collaboration continues to be a high priority for the ACE. The APS Evaluation Profession will launch in 2025. This will allow entities with technical expertise in diverse evaluation methodologies and related fields to help build evaluation skills across the service.

The ACE will also deliver targeted support for rigorous impact evaluation through: formal evaluation partnerships; technical advice on impact evaluations; and ACE-delivered impact evaluation training for practitioners. The ACE also partners with the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) and others to lead the Impact Evaluation Practitioners Network, which is open to academics and impact evaluation practitioners from all Australian jurisdictions. The Network's objective is to support knowledge sharing, capability uplift and professional networking amongst impact evaluators.

Figure 21: Support from ACE to build evaluation capability

Support type	Percentage
Online training through APS Learn	61%
Provision of training resources	57%
Expanded Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit	52%
Evaluation coaching/mentoring	48%
Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice Events	48%
Train-the-trainer support	43%
Dedicated centrally held evaluation funding	41%
Coordinated evaluation procurement arrangements	41%
Centrally supported ethics review arrangements	39%
Technical support for impact evaluations	37%
External training provider panel	25%

Appendix 1: Evaluation reforms in the Australian Government

The Australian Government has an ambitious plan to embed an enduring culture of evaluation across the APS and beyond. This APS reform priority reflects findings in the 2019 Independent Review of the APS that evaluation practices across the APS had declined considerably over the past few decades, with recommendations aimed at building good practice (Recommendation 26 refers).

Establishing a well-resourced central enabling evaluation function – the ACE was established in Treasury from July 2023) – and increasing the resourcing and remit for in-house evaluation units across government are central pillars for achieving enduring cultural change.

Staged reforms to strengthen evaluation capabilities, practices and culture across the APS have been co-designed and implemented progressively since 2020, with key milestones including:

- Introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy and Toolkit (December 2021)

- Launch of the Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice (September 2022)

- New evaluation requirements in the Budget Process Operational Rules (December 2022)

- Establishment of the Australian Centre for Evaluation (July 2023)

- Embedding evaluation in Commissioner's Direction on the APS Value of Stewardship (2024)

In addition, many Commonwealth entities have taken their own steps to improve evaluation practices, capabilities, and culture within their organisation. This includes, for example: establishing a dedicated evaluation unit, developing an enterprise-level evaluation strategy and/or forward work plan, or introducing an evaluation oversight committee.

Figure 22 shows a timeline of the main reform initiatives implemented over this period.

Figure 22: Evaluation reform timeline

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Independent Review of the Australian Public Service (APS) Recommendation 26	Central Evaluation Team Established in the Department of Finance Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group established	Commonwealth Evaluation Policy (the Policy) and Toolkit were designed collaboratively with around 50 entities The Policy and Toolkit came into effect from December 2021	Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice launched Budget Process Operational Rules amended to include evaluation requirements	Australian Centre for Evaluation (the ACE) established in Treasury Outreach to all Ministers and Portfolio Departments to raise awareness about the ACE	Evaluation embedded in Commissioner's Direction and APS Value of Stewardship Impact Evaluation Partnerships and Trials commence Hub and Spoke Evaluation Network

Appendix 2: Method and analytic approach

Survey and Stocktake design

The SoE Survey and Stocktake were co designed by the ACE with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group, along with detailed guidance to support this data collection. Figure 23 presents the project timeline.

Figure 23: State of Evaluation in the Australian Government – Project Timeline
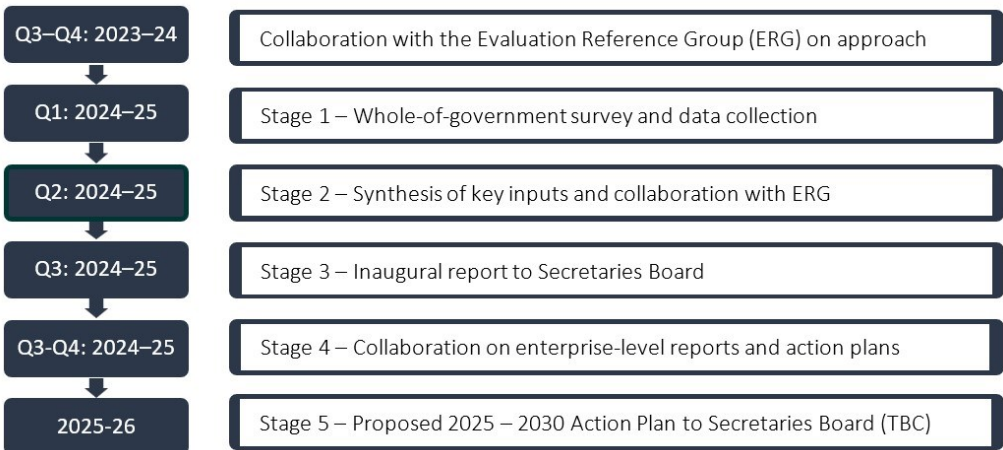
Q3–Q4: 2023–24	Collaboration with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) on approach
Q1: 2024–25	Stage 1 – Whole-of-government survey and data collection
Q2: 2024–25	Stage 2 – Synthesis of key inputs and collaboration with ERG
Q3: 2024–25	Stage 3 – Inaugural report to Secretaries Board
Q3-Q4: 2024–25	Stage 4 – Collaboration on enterprise-level reports and action plans
2025-26	Stage 5 – Proposed 2025 – 2030 Action Plan to Secretaries Board (TBC)

The SoE Survey and Stocktake were co designed by the ACE with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group, along with detailed guidance to support this data collection. Figure 23 presents the project timeline.

To ensure that the Survey and Stocktake were relevant and accessible to the diversity of Australian Government entities, the ACE provided dedicated support before and during the data collection period. The ACE supported a total of 61 entities through two information sessions and held bilateral engagements with over 60 entities during the design and implementation period.

The Secretary to the Treasury wrote to the Accountable Authorities of all Australian Government entities subject to the PGPA Act, requesting input from their respective entities into the SoE Survey and Stocktake. This resulted in a strong response rate for the SoE Survey (47%), and a 20% response rate for the SoE Stocktake.

Analysis considerations

This Survey was designed to collect data from Australian Government entities, with diverse staff sizes, types of services delivered and organisational focus, as well as governance arrangements. As a result, none of the survey questions were mandatory, to allow for broad participation.

This diversity also extends to the level of evaluation awareness and practice across entities. To manage this, the ACE provided comprehensive guidance about evaluation terminology and concepts via a series of guidance documents, as well as information sessions (group and one on one).

As a result of these considerations, sample sizes may vary between questions due to non response bias, given no questions were mandatory. Details about the n for analysis are provided where appropriate, and where they vary from the survey sample (N = 92).

Responses to the Stocktake were collected via a template distributed along with the survey. Entities were advised to include information on any evaluation activities planned, commenced, or completed in the 2023–24 period. It looked to collect information on formal evaluations that generate evaluation questions or evaluation criteria, evaluation plans and evaluation reports.

All submissions to the Stocktake were reflected in the results above. Extended consultation with entities is required to validate the number of evaluations and evaluation types identified. Responses may include evaluative activities that, while they do not follow the same methods as a formal evaluation, do produce information to support performance monitoring and decision making.

Table 1 shows a high level overview of the different areas of focus for the Survey and Stocktake.

Table 1: Summary of Survey and Stocktake Characteristics

	Survey	Stocktake
Purpose	Capture comparable information about agency-level evaluation practices, institutional arrangements, capacity building efforts and culture.	Capture information about evaluations planned, commenced, and/or completed and used with a focus on establishing a baseline for 2023–24. This includes evaluations delivered internally, externally or in a hybrid approach
Areas of focus	• Formal Evaluation (that is, commissioned evaluations) • Informal evaluation and monitoring (that is, the routine use of evaluation planning, tools, and approaches as part of everyday business)	• Formal Evaluation (that is, commissioned evaluations)
Structure	• The survey is structured as follows: • Agency information, including agency-level governance arrangements • Evaluation design and planning • Evaluation use • Evaluation capability and capability building	• For each formal evaluation, the stocktake will collect information about the: • Design and delivery • Analytical methods • Status and timeframes • Evidence use and publication • Alignment with Budget Framework and Commonwealth Performance Framework
Response format	One survey response per agency	Itemised list of formal evaluations planned, commenced and/or completed with a focus on the 2023 – 24 period

Appendix 3: Responding entities

This appendix lists all responding entities below:

Army Amenities Fund (AAF) Company

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

AgriFutures Australia

Army and Air Force Canteen Service

Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)

Attorney General's Department

Australia Post

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Australian Communications and Media Authority

Australian Digital Health Agency

Australian Federal Police

Australian Financial Security Authority

Australian Human Rights Commission

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Australian Institute of Marine Science

Australian Military Forces Relief Trust Fund

Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA)

Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd

Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation

Australian Securities and Investments Commission

Australian Signals Directorate (ASD)

Australian Sports Commission

Australian Taxation Office

Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade)

Bundanoon Trust

Bureau of Meteorology

Cancer Australia

Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)

Clean Energy Regulator

Climate Change Authority

Coal Mining Industry (Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation

Comcare

Commonwealth Grants Commission

Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Department of Education

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Department of Finance

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Health and Aged Care

Department of Home Affairs

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

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

Department of Social Services

Department of the House of Representatives

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Department of the Senate

Department of the Treasury

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission

eSafety Commissioner

Federal Court of Australia

Fisheries Research & Development Corporation

Food Standards Australia New Zealand

Future Fund Management Agency

Geoscience Australia

Grains Research & Development Corporation

High Speed Rail Authority

Housing Australia

Infrastructure Australia

Inspector General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS)

Inspector General of Taxation and Taxation Ombudsman

IP Australia

Murray Darling Basin Authority

National Competition Council

National Disability Insurance Agency

National Emergency Management Agency

National Health and Medical Research Council

National Indigenous Australians Agency

National Mental Health Commission

National Reconstruction Fund Corporation

Office of Parliamentary Counsel

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman

Organ and Tissue Authority

Productivity Commission

Professional Services Review

Regional Investment Corporation

Reserve Bank of Australia

Royal Australian Mint

Royal Australian Navy Central Canteens Board (RANCCB) trading as The Navy's Anchorage (TNA)

Safe Work Australia

Screen Australia

Services Australia

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Appendix 4: Stocktake results

Table 2: State of Evaluation Stocktake summary

Evaluation attributes	Large entity evaluations n (%)	All evaluations n (%)
Evaluation stage		
Planned	330(40%)	338 (37%)
Commenced	223 (27%)	252 (27%)
Completed	279 (34%)	331 (36%)
Unspecified	2 (0%)	3 (0%)
Assessment of effects on specific cohorts#		
First Nations	157 (51%)	174 (48%)
Gender	119 (39%)	134 (37%)
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups	110 (36%)	120 (33%)
Geography (regional/remote)	171 (56%)	220 (60%)
Age-groups	88 (29%)	99 (27%)
Evaluation delivery*		
Internal	231 (37%)	249 (35%)
External	259 (42%)	309 (43%)
Hybrid	133 (21%)	154 (22%)
Evaluation Type		
Process	21 (4%)	29 (4%)
Outcomes	53 (9%)	56 (9%)
Economic evaluation	4 (1%)	4 (1%)
Impact evaluation	21 (4%)	22 (3%)
Other	34 (6%)	37 (6%)
Combined approaches	428 (76%)	502 (77%)
Process/Outcome	128 (30%)	141 (28%)
Outcome/Impact	31 (7%)	35 (7%)
Process/Outcome/Impact/Economic	69 (16%)	74 (15%)
Publication of findings*		
Decision taken to publish in full	103 (27%)	124 (27%)
Decision taken to publish in part	24 (6%)	38 (8%)
Decision taken not to publish	118 (31%)	136 (30%)
Under consideration	131 (35%)	155 (34%)
Evaluation evidence use*		
Findings and/or recommendations actioned in full	36 (13%)	52 (15%)
Findings and/or recommendations actioned in part	76 (28%)	93 (27%)
Findings and/or recommendations considered but not actioned	24 (9%)	26 (8%)
Findings and/or recommendations under consideration	140 (51%)	173 (50%)

Entities could respond with Y/N/NA for each evaluation, and each cohort. Any evaluations which selected "N" for all cohorts being assessed were treated as an NA/blank response and were excluded from analysis. Proportions reported here are from all evaluations where at least one specific cohort was reported as being assessed and will not add up to 100% as entities could select multiple cohorts.

*Questions were not mandatory, and thus the total proportions may not add up to 100% due to missing data.

Appendix 5: Survey results (table format)

For questions marked with an asterisk (*) sign in the table below, entities were able to select multiple choices. Proportions here reflect the number of entities selecting a choice from the total number of respondents and will not add up to 100%

Questions were not mandatory, and thus the total proportions may not add up to 100% due to missing data.

For certain questions, analysis is presented only in aggregate (without large agency breakdown).

Table 3: Survey results table

Survey question	Large entities (n = 34, if not specified otherwise)	Overall Proportion (n = 92, if not specified otherwise)
Entity and governance characteristics		
Does your agency have a senior officer (SES or equivalent) with oversight responsibility for evaluation at an enterprise-level? (Q. 5)	53%	35%
Does your agency have a dedicated evaluation unit or function? (serving part or all of your entity) (Q. 6)	53%	30% (28 entities)
What was the Average Staffing Level (ASL) for the unit or function in 2023-24? (Q. 6.3, average)	11 ASL	8.3 ASL
Has there been any decision to substantially change the level of ASL in the evaluation unit or function since 2022-23? (Q. 6.4) (for n=27)		
Increase	50%	43%
Decrease	6%	3.5%
No change	44%	53.5%
What type of services does the evaluation unit or function provide? (please select all that apply) (Q6.5) (for n=27)		
Advisory and support		89%
Capability building		82%
Commissioning		71%
Delivery		71%
Evidence synthesis and translation		64%
Other		32%
Are there plans to establish a dedicated evaluation unit or function within your agency? (Q. 6.7) (n = 65)		
We have a unit or function which performs a similar role as an evaluation unit	19%	11%
No plans exist	50%	78%
Planned	31%	11%
How many dedicated evaluation staff (ASL) work in your agency (outside of a dedicated evaluation unit or function)? (Q. 8, average)	8.3 ASL	6.4 ASL
Is evaluation considered in the context of enterprise-level business planning processes, such as (please select all that apply): (Q. 9) *		
Corporate performance reporting	88%	76%
Program management	78%	64%
Enterprise-level risk management	63%	48%
Budget prioritisation processes	72%	47%
Internal audit	63%	45%

Table 3: Survey results table (continued)

Survey question	Large entities (n = 34, if not specified otherwise)	Overall Proportion (n = 92, if not specified otherwise)
Prioritisation and evaluation planning		
Does your agency have an enterprise-level evaluation strategy or framework? (Q. 10)		
Yes, evaluation framework	3%	12%
Yes, evaluation strategy	18%	11%
Yes, both	6%	2%
No	73%	75%
Does your agency centrally monitor the status and use of evaluations? (please select all that apply) (Q. 11)* (proportions are out of 47 respondents to this question, of which 18 were large agencies)		
Completed evaluations	94%	85%
Evaluations in progress	83%	74%
Planned evaluations	83%	70%
Management responses to completed evaluations	67%	62%
Evaluation evidence use	9%	43%
Does your agency have a centrally managed forward work plan for conducting evaluations? (Q. 12) (n=91)	50%	41%
How does your agency currently identify, prioritise, and schedule evaluation activities? (please select all that apply) (Q. 13)* (n=75, of which 32 were large agencies)		
Evaluation activities are managed by individual line areas	81%	61%
Driven by senior leadership	66%	51%
Based on commitments made through Cabinet and Budget processes	59%	35%
By exception, based on issues identified through routine risk, performance, or audit activities	50%	35%
Few evaluations are undertaken so no formal prioritisation or scheduling is required	25%	28%
Based on an enterprise level evaluation strategy and/or framework	41%	28%
How does your entity use evaluation (please select all that apply)? (Q. 14)*		
Evaluation informs policy/program design or decision-making	82%	68%
Outcome or impact evaluation is undertaken to inform whether policies or programs achieve their objectives	82%	68%
Evaluation tools and approaches inform the development of performance measures	61%	55%
Evaluations support reporting on performance under the Commonwealth Performance Framework	48%	44%
Evaluation informs the direction of the agency	33%	34%
Evaluations are undertaken but generally do not inform the development of agency performance measures	61%	22%
Evaluation is conducted during development or implementation of policies or programs to help assess whether they are on track	73%	52%

Table 3: Survey results table (continued)

Survey question	Large entities (n = 34, if not specified otherwise)	Overall Proportion (n = 92, if not specified otherwise)
Evaluation delivery		
Does your agency use any defined processes to assure the quality of its evaluations? (Q. 15)	50%	38%
What proportion of evaluation work commences early in the policy/program cycle? (Q. 16)		
Almost all evaluations (>75%)	15%	7%
Most evaluations (51%-74%)	9%	11%
Some evaluations (26%-50%)	23.5%	18%
Very few evaluations (<25%)	23.5%	14%
N/A or unsure	29%	50%
Does your entity use external evaluation services? (Q. 17)		
External service providers	73%	59%
Evaluation is conducted in-house	3%	4.5%
Performance monitoring/reporting are used rather than evaluation	12%	19%
Other arrangements	12%	12%
Evaluation is not undertaken at all	0%	5.5%
What proportion of evaluations are conducted by evaluators from outside your entity? (Q. 18)		
Almost all evaluations (>75%)	24%	17%
Most evaluations (51%-74%)	3%	5%
Some evaluations (26%-50%)	21%	43%
Very few evaluations (<25%)	17%	17%
N/A or unsure	35%	18%
What are the motivations for evaluation within your entity? (please select all that apply) (Q. 19) *		
To improve implementation	88%	77%
To enhance accountability	76%	67%
To promote transparency	65%	63%
To build greater knowledge	68%	61%
To understand the impact of an intervention	71%	55%
To give stakeholders a voice	59%	51%
To help plan future interventions	62%	49%
To meet legislative requirements	59%	45%
To assess whether a program is needed	68%	43%
To identify innovative solutions	53%	41%
To seek funding renewal	62%	40%
To consider service expansion	50%	31%
To reduce waste	47%	23%
N/A or unsure	9%	16%

Table 3: Survey results table (continued)

Survey question	Large entities (n = 34, if not specified otherwise)	Overall Proportion (n = 92, if not specified otherwise)
Enablers and barriers		
Within your agency, what supports have helped to embed a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy in December 2021? (please select all that apply) (Q. 20)*		
Support from agency leadership	69%	69%
Sufficient staff knowledge, skills and/or tools	62%	52%
Agency culture in support of evaluation	45%	42%
Staff dedicated to evaluation tasks	52%	34%
In-house evaluation units	59%	34%
Support for evaluation amongst decision-makers	76%	68%
Sufficient funding	41%	27%
Working with an external evaluator	34%	34%
Within your agency, what have been the major barriers (if any) to embedding a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy in December 2021 (that is, the reasons why evaluation may NOT occur)? (please select all that apply) (Q. 21)*		
Limited staff knowledge, skills and/or tools	80%	49%
Limited staff time	60%	56%
Insufficient financial resources	53%	43%
Shortage of time to complete evaluation	53%	33%
Challenging or complex interventions	50%	30%
Challenging stakeholder relationships	33%	20%
Staff attitudes towards evaluation	23%	13%
Poor past evaluations	20%	10%
Insufficient agency leadership support	17%	8%
Not linked to agency performance measures	10%	6%
Access to external evaluators	3%	3%
Indigenous evaluations and ethical practice		
Does your agency have processes established to ensure evaluations are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities? (Q. 22) (n=89)	48%	35%
Please indicate the extent to which processes below are applied consistently (Q. 22.1, proportion reflects the aggregate proportion of "used for all evaluations")	Aggregate responses only (small n)	
Centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, perspectives, priorities and knowledges in all stages of evaluation	-	7%
Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and stakeholders on evaluation	-	7%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, oversight and/or governance on evaluation activities	-	7%
Disseminating, synthesising and translating evaluation findings in accessible forms that can be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	-	17%
Strengthening and supporting the capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, entities and communities to engage in and use evaluation	-	3%

Table 3: Survey results table (continued)

Survey question	Large entities (n = 34, if not specified otherwise)	Overall Proportion (n = 92, if not specified otherwise)
Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within your entity	-	13%
To what extent does your agency draw on the following resources to support evaluations to be culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities? (please select all that apply) (Q. 24, proportion reflects the aggregate proportion of "used for all evaluations")	Aggregate responses only (small n)	
National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms	-	8%
Productivity Commission's Indigenous Evaluation Strategy	-	4%
Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data	-	6%
AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research	-	8%
AES First Nations Cultural Safety Framework	-	4%
Does your agency's evaluation practice adopt any of following approaches to support culturally appropriate evaluation? (please select all that apply) (Q. 25)		
The entity routinely considers evaluating the impacts of its mainstream policies and programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	50%	32%
Evaluations include an examination of how entities are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop and deliver policies and programs	34%	21%
Data used for evaluation are collected in a culturally safe manner.	50%	41%
The entity provides opportunities for staff to strengthen their cultural capability	75%	63%
The entity allocates sufficient time and resources for meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during evaluations	25%	23%
Does your agency have an evaluation ethics review process? (Q. 26)	33%	21%
Evaluation evidence use		
To what extent does your agency use evaluation evidence to (responses indicating "always" and "often") (please select all that apply) (Q.28)	Aggregate responses only	
Plan/revise general strategies	-	37%
Plan/revise program initiatives	-	39%
Plan/revise grant initiatives	-	25%
Report to Board of Directors	-	30%
Report to Government	-	46%
Report to stakeholders	-	42%
Advocate for a cause	-	10%
Share findings with peers	-	32%
Make funding allocation decisions	-	25%
Does your agency routinely disseminate evaluation findings or reports publicly? (Q.30)	25%	31%
Did your agency include any evaluation findings in the 2023 Annual Report? (Q. 31)	24%	32%

Table 3: Survey results table (continued)

Survey question	Large entities (n = 34, if not specified otherwise)	Overall Proportion (n = 92, if not specified otherwise)
Evaluation capability and ACE support		
In the 2023-24 financial year, did your agency engage in evaluation capability building activities? (please select all that apply) (Q. 32)*		
Written materials (for example, published guidance)	67%	36%
Exchanged knowledge with other government agencies	67%	47%
Participated in the Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice events	61%	30%
External training	55%	29%
Internal training	52%	28%
Opportunities to learn by being involved in an evaluation design or implementation	48%	35%
Internal agency-level evaluation Community of Practice events	33%	15%
Built capability by working with external evaluation providers (as an explicit part of the contract)	30%	22%
Evaluation coaching/mentoring	27%	19%
In the 2023-24 financial year, did your agency engage in any capability building specific to impact evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental designs? (Q. 33)	48%	22%
What additional activities or actions could be taken centrally that would help to support your agency to deliver on the policy intent of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy? (Please select all that apply) (Q. 34)*		
Develop a Commonwealth Evaluation Maturity Model and supporting tools	70%	52%
Tailored information session	67%	53%
Stronger legislative requirements	20%	13%
Mandatory requirements to evaluate interventions that meet certain criteria	40%	32%
Enhanced guidance and tools	80%	62%
Are there specific areas where additional support from the Australian Centre of Evaluation would help your agency to build evaluation capability and embed an enduring culture of evaluation across the Australian Government? (please select all that apply) (Q. 38)*	Aggregate responses only	
Online training through APS Learn	-	61%
Provision of training resources	-	57%
More guidance/resources on the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit	-	52%
Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice Events	-	48%
Evaluation coaching/mentoring	-	48%
Train-the-trainer support	-	43%
Enhanced coordinated evaluation procurement arrangements to access evaluation service providers	-	41%
Dedicated centrally held funds to support high quality evaluation (similar to UK's Evaluation Accelerator Fund)	-	41%
Centrally supported ethics review arrangements	-	39%
Technical support for impact evaluations	-	37%
External training provider panel	-	25%

Appendix 6: Survey results (graph format)

Agency information

Agency Characteristics

Figure 24: Size of agency (N:92)

Q3: What is the size of your agency (number of employees)?
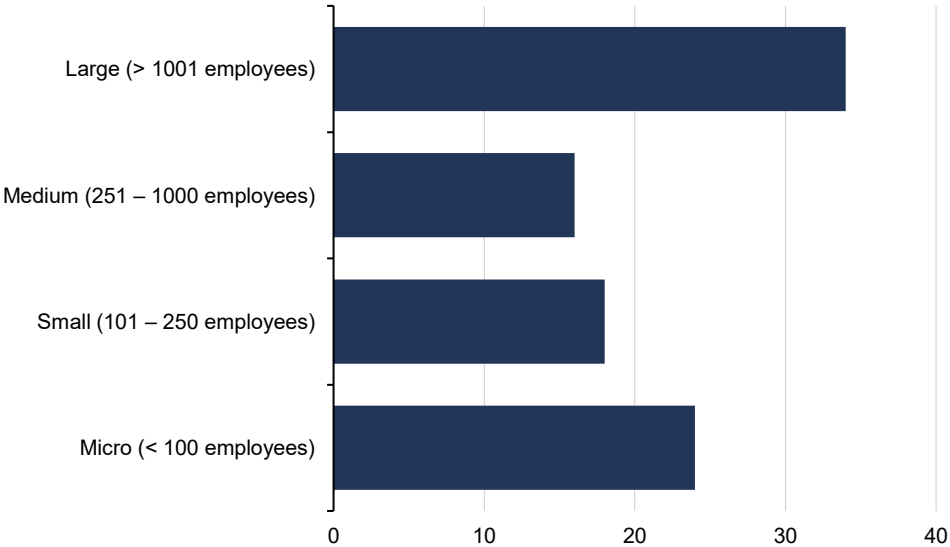
Figure 25: Nature of government programs, services or activities agency administers (N:79)

Q4: What is the nature of government programs, services or activities that your agency administers?
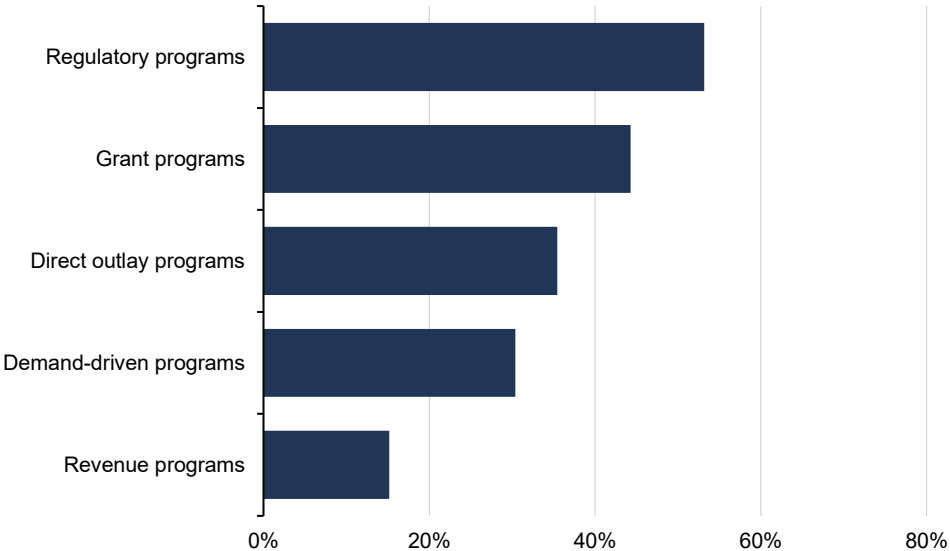
Governance Characteristics

Figure 26: Senior officer (SES or equivalent) with oversight (N:92)

Q5: Does your agency have a senior officer (SES or equivalent) with oversight responsibility for evaluation at an enterprise-level?
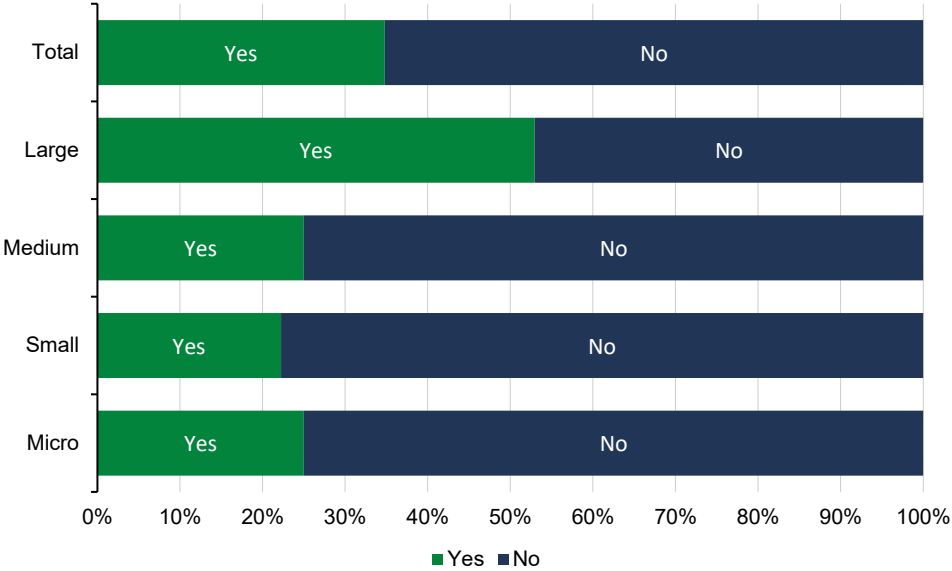
Figure 27: Dedicated evaluation unit or function (N:92)

Q6: Does your agency have a dedicated evaluation unit or function?
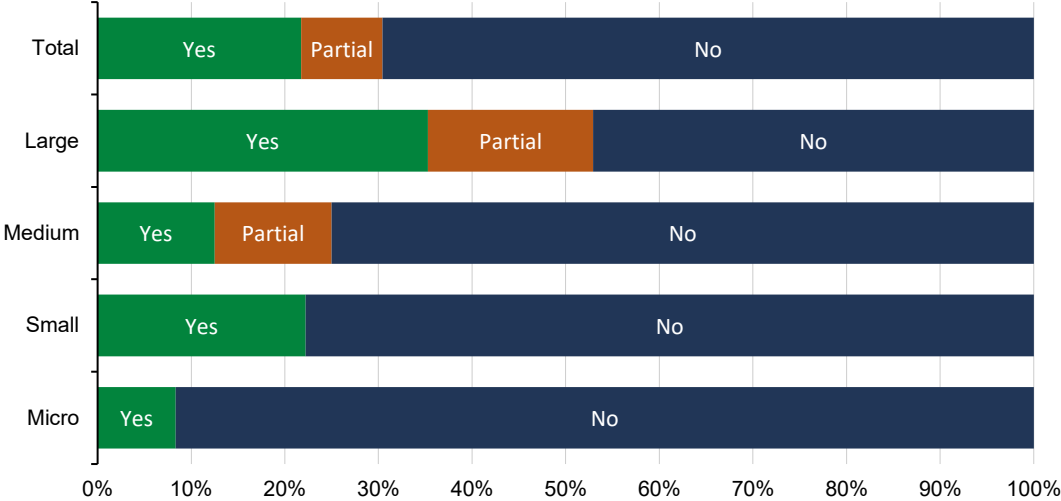
Figure 28: Year of Establishment (N:27)

6. 1 When was this unit or function established (year)?

Number of Units
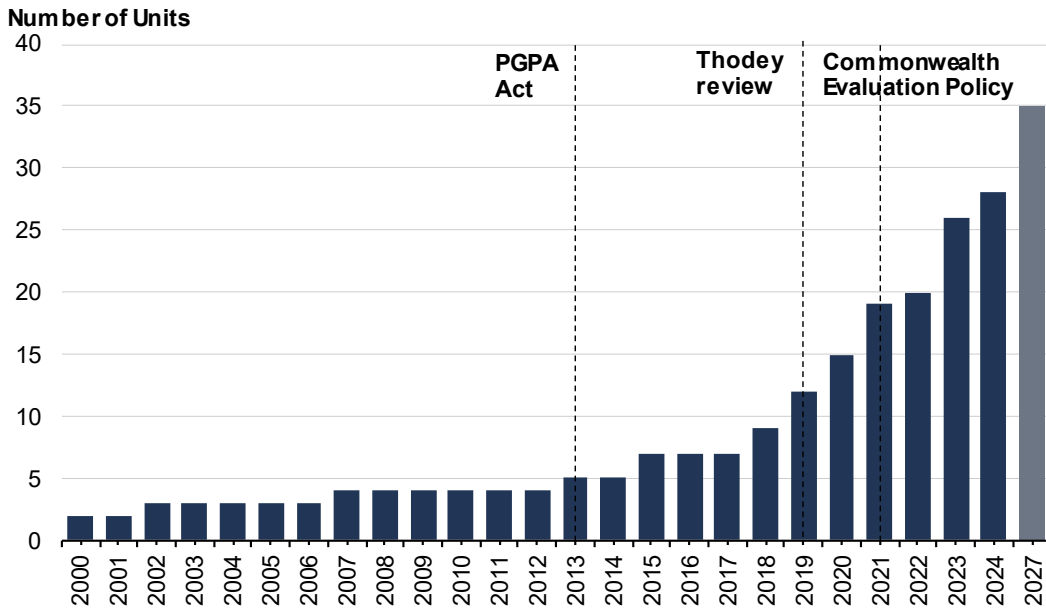
Figure 29: ASL in 2023-24 (N:27)

Q6.3: What was the Average Staffing Level (ASL) for the unit or function in 2023-24?

Category	Units
3 or less ASL	9 units
4-9 ASL	7 units
10-12 ASL	7 units
13+ ASL	4 units
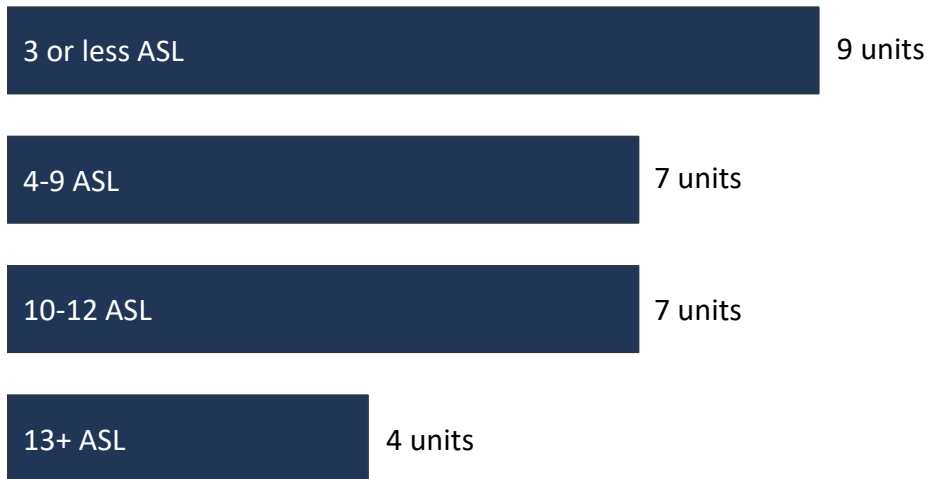
Average ASL= 8.27
Median ASL= 4.5

Figure 30: Decisions to change ASL level (N:28)

Q6.4: Has there been any substantial decisions to change the level of ASL in the evaluation unit or function since 2022-23?

Legend: ■ Increase ■ No change ■ Decrease
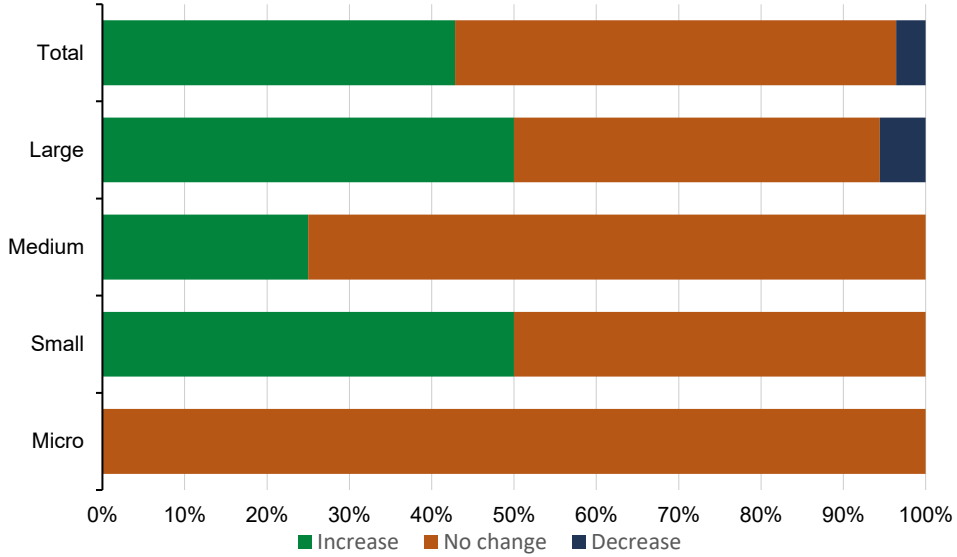
Figure 31: Service the evaluation unit or function provides (N:28)

Q6.5: What type of services does the evaluation unit or function provide?
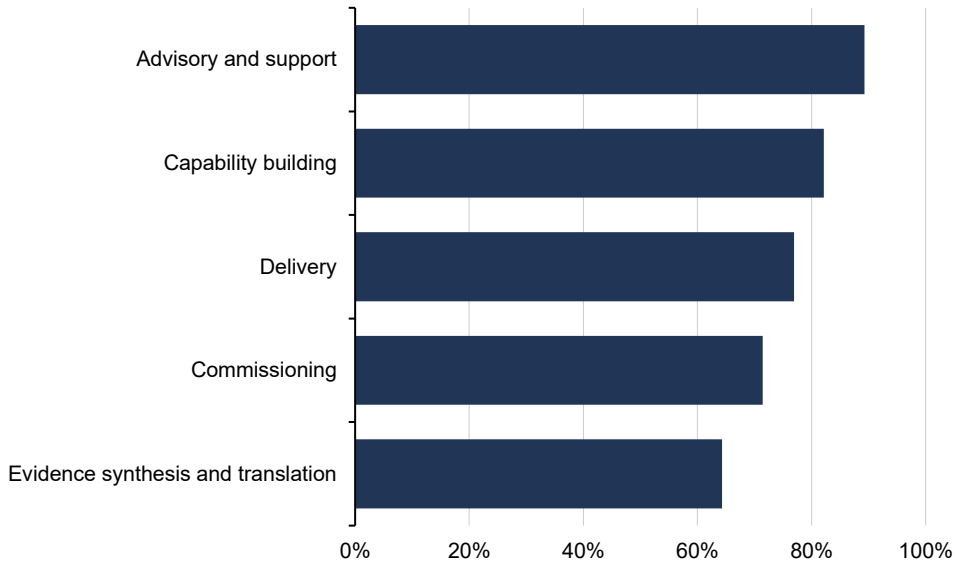
Figure 32: Specific support activities or support the evaluation unit provides to other areas of the agency (N:28)

Q6.6: What specific support activities or support does the evaluation function or unit provide to other areas of the agency?
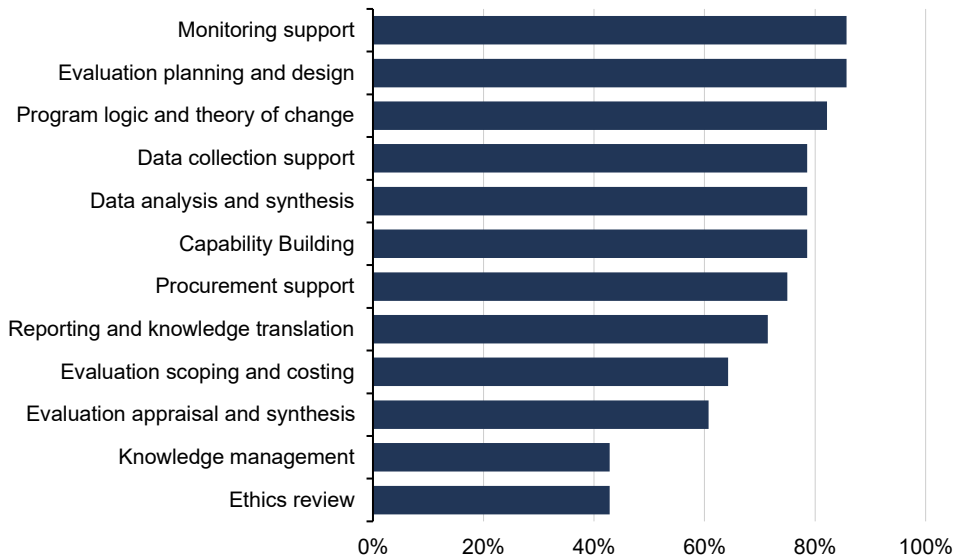
Figure 33: Plans to establish a dedicated unit or function (N: 64)

Q6.7: Are there plans to establish a dedicated evaluation unit or function within your agency?
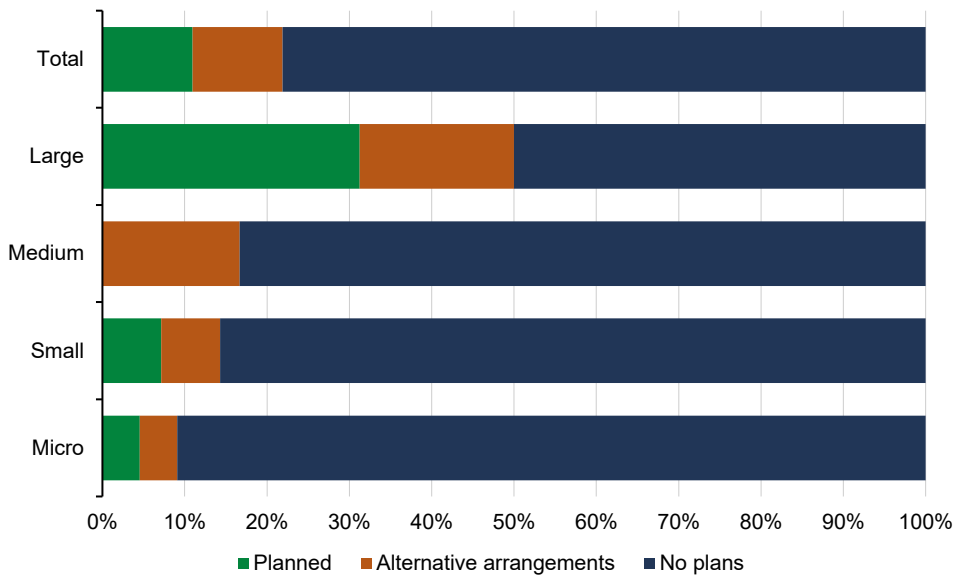
Figure 34: Evaluation specific roles outside of a dedicated evaluation unit or function? (N: 89)

Q7: Does your agency have any evaluation specific roles outside of a dedicated evaluation unit or function?
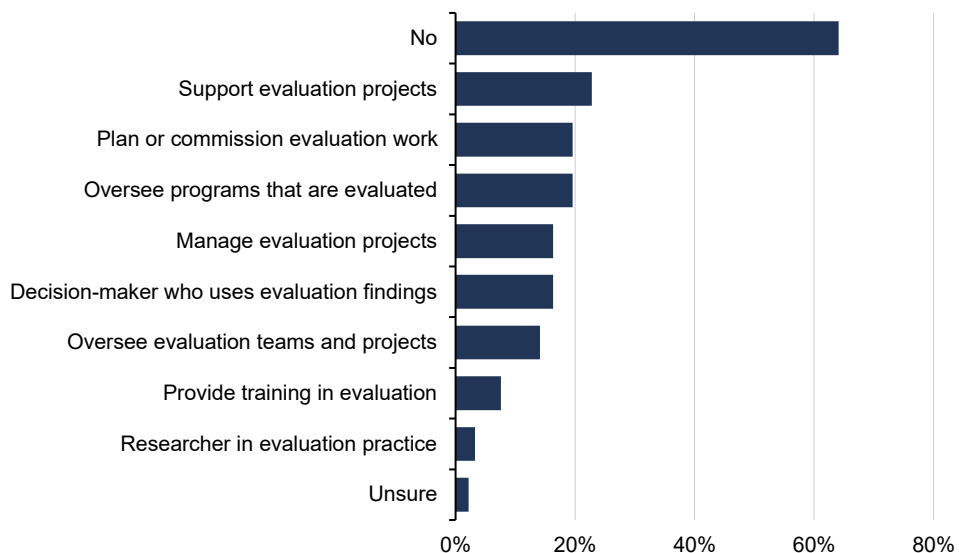
Figure 35: Evaluation specific roles outside of a dedicated evaluation unit or function (N: 91)

Q8: How many dedicated evaluation staff (ASL) work in your agency (outside of a dedicated evaluation unit or function)?
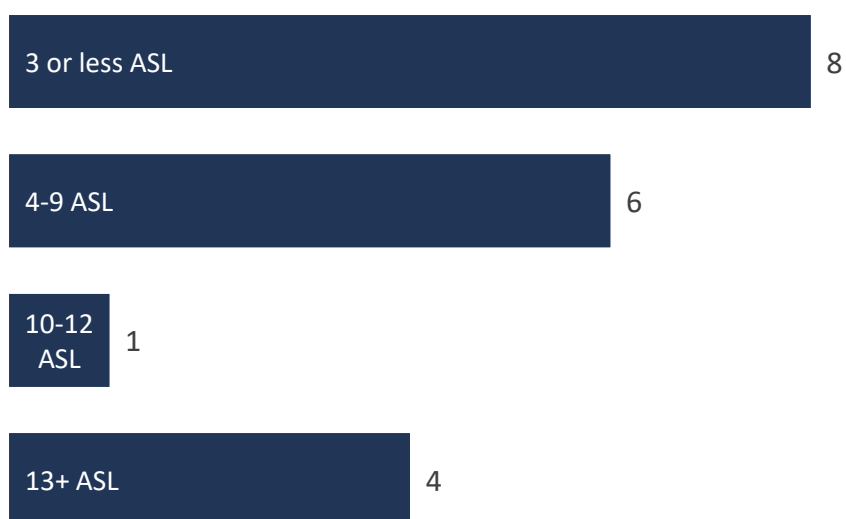
Average ASL = 6.41 (N: 21)

Figure 36: Percentage of entities that reported considering evaluation in the context of specific enterprise-level business planning processes (N: 83)

Q9: Is evaluation considered in the context of enterprise-level business planning processes, such as:
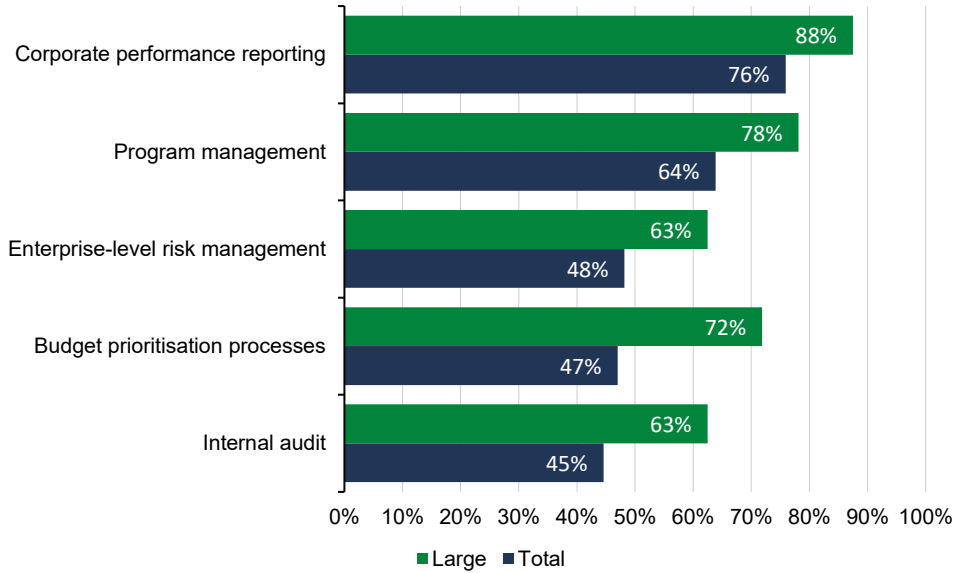
Evaluation design and planning

Prioritisation and evaluation planning

Figure 37: Enterprise-level evaluation strategy or framework (N: 91)

Q10: Does your agency have an enterprise-level evaluation strategy or framework?
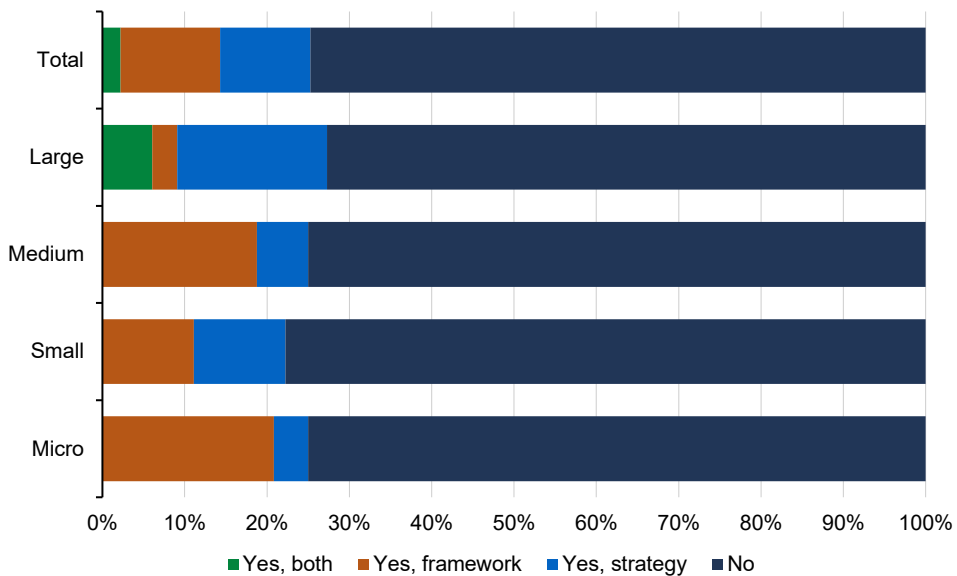
Figure 38: When this strategy or framework came into effect (Strategy N: 12, Framework N:13)

Q10_1: When did this strategy or framework come into effect?
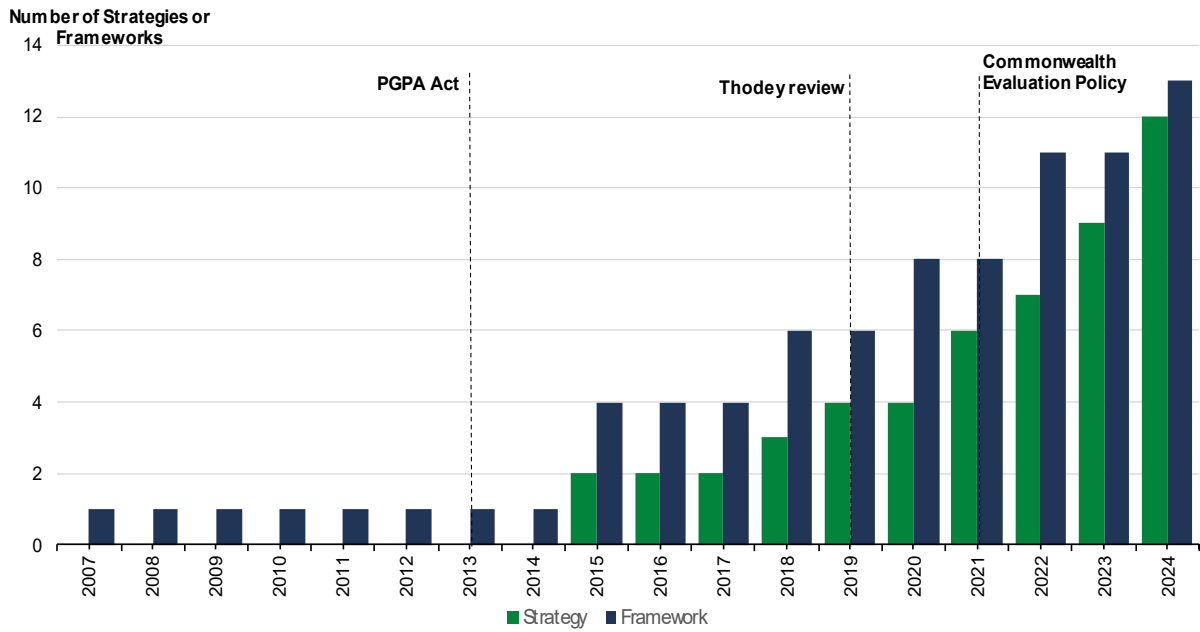
Figure 39: What the evaluation strategy and/or framework addresses (N: 21)

Q10.1: Does your evaluation strategy and/or framework address:
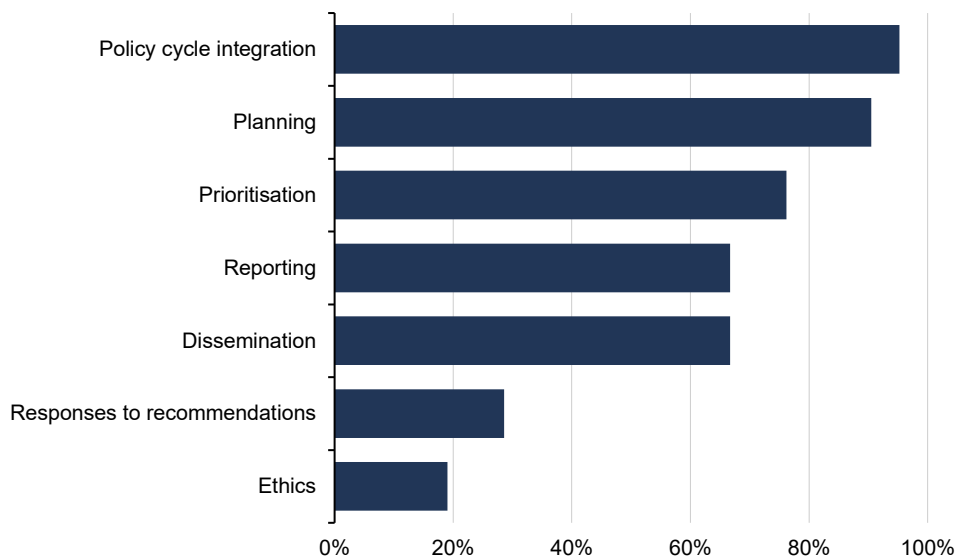
Figure 40: Plans to develop a strategy (N: 68)

Q10.2: Is your agency planning to develop an enterprise-level evaluation strategy?
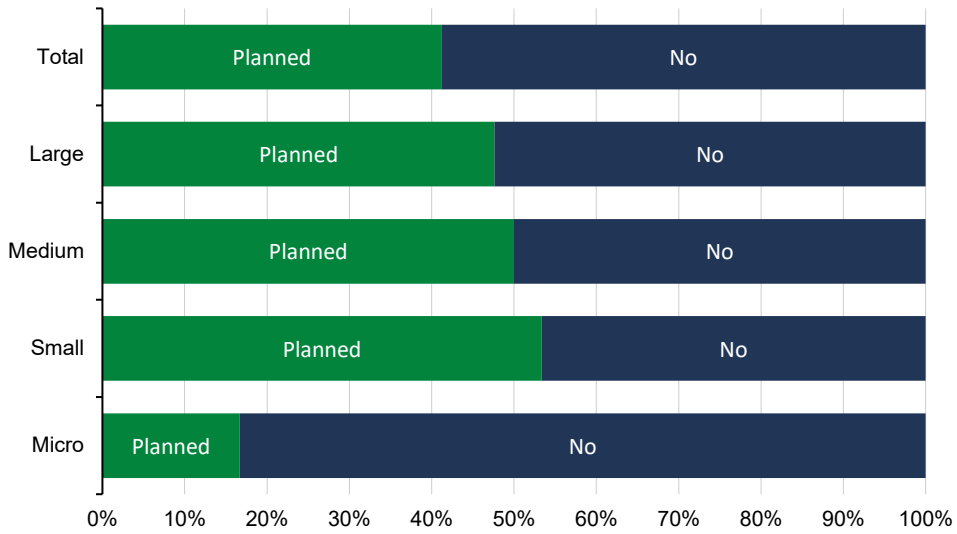
Figure 41: Plans to develop a framework (N: 67)

10.3: Is your agency planning to develop an enterprise-level evaluation framework?
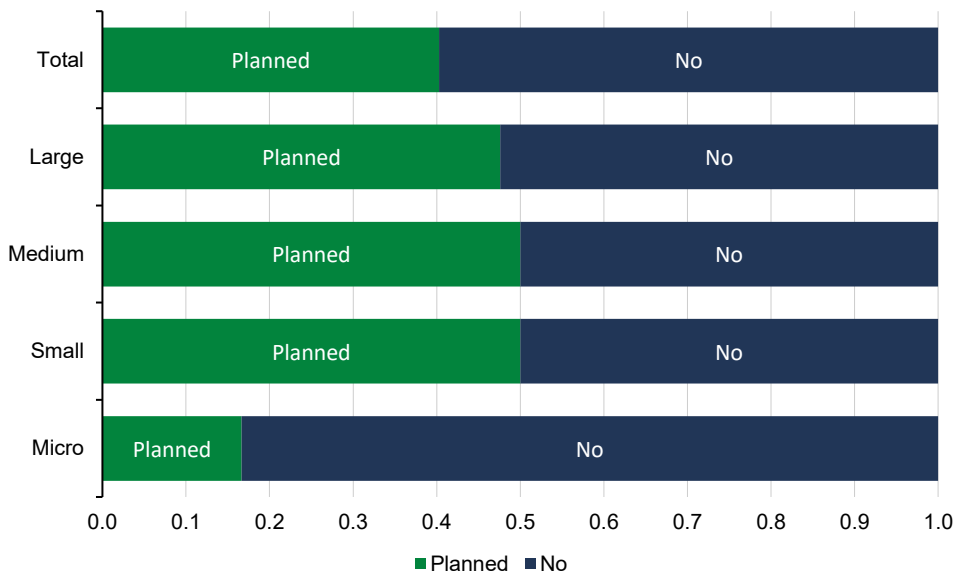
Figure 42: Central monitoring of the status and use of evaluations (N: 47)

Q11: Does your agency centrally monitor the status and use of evaluations?
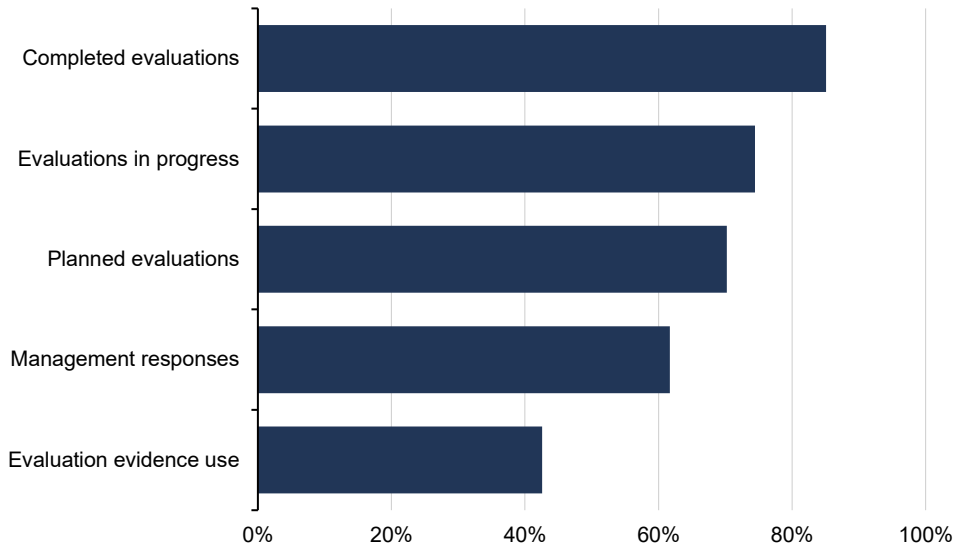
Figure 43: Centrally managed forward work plan for conducting evaluations (N: 91)

Q12: Does your agency have a centrally managed forward work plan for conducting evaluations?
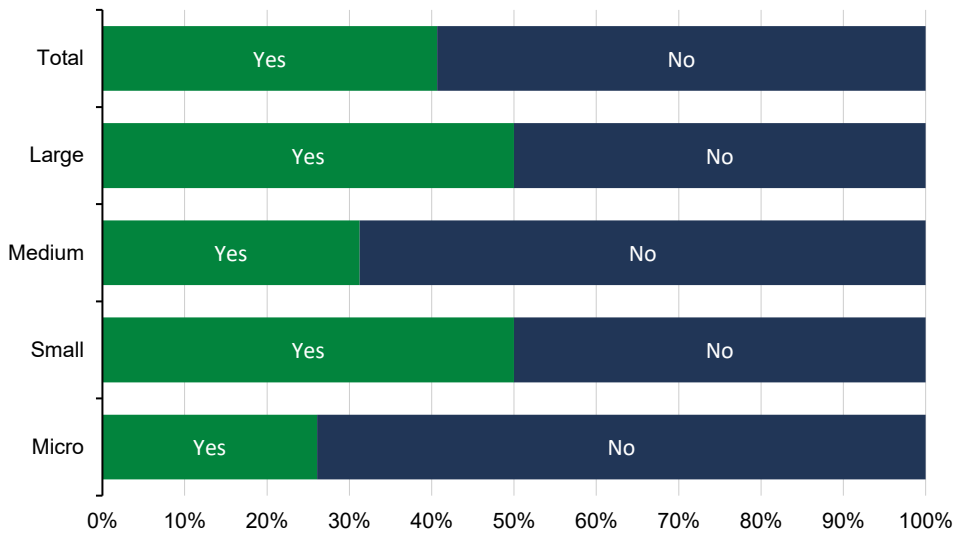
Figure 44: How evaluation activities are identified, prioritised and scheduled (N: 82)

Q13: How does your agency currently identify, prioritise, and schedule evaluation activities?
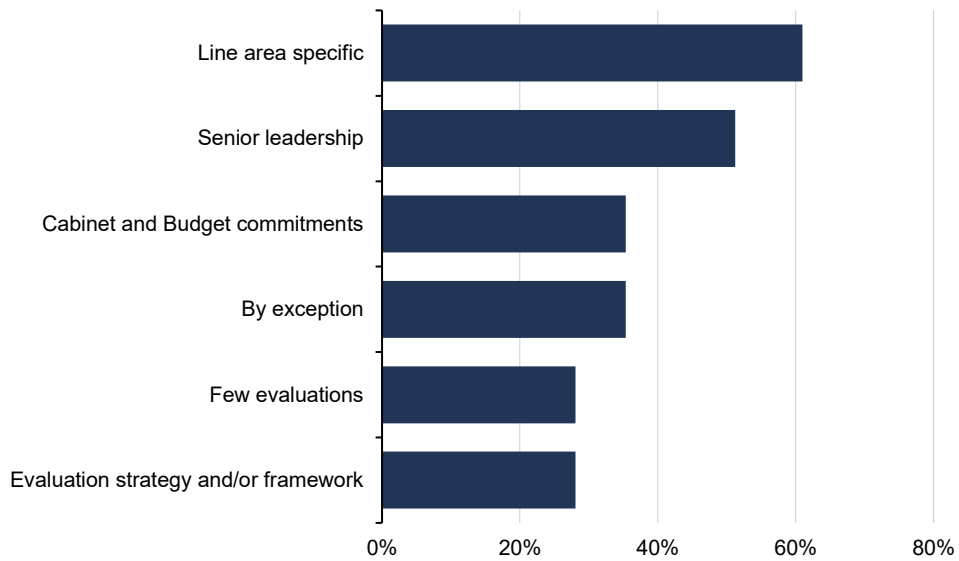
Figure 45: How agencies use evaluation (N: 70)

Q14: How does your agency use evaluation?
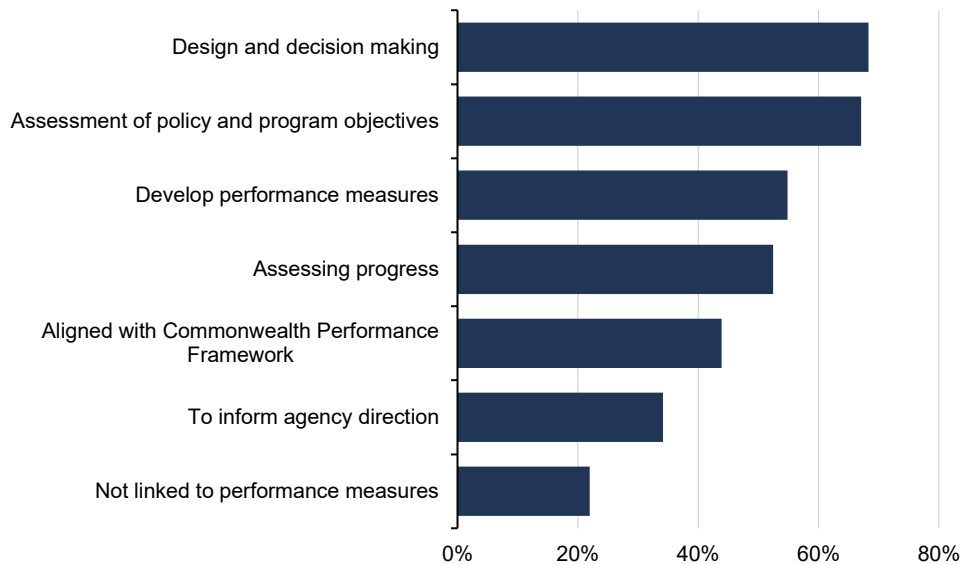
Execution and evaluation practice

Figure 46: Defined processes to assure quality of evaluations (N: 91)

Q15: Does your agency use any defined processes to assure the quality of its evaluations?
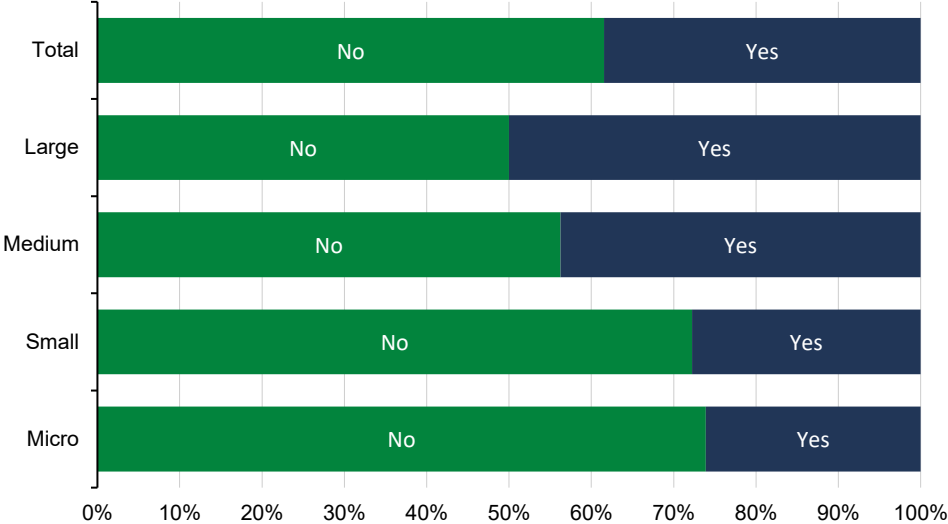
Figure 47: Proportion of work commenced early in the policy/program cycle (N: 88)

Q16: What proportion of evaluation work commences early in the policy/program cycle?
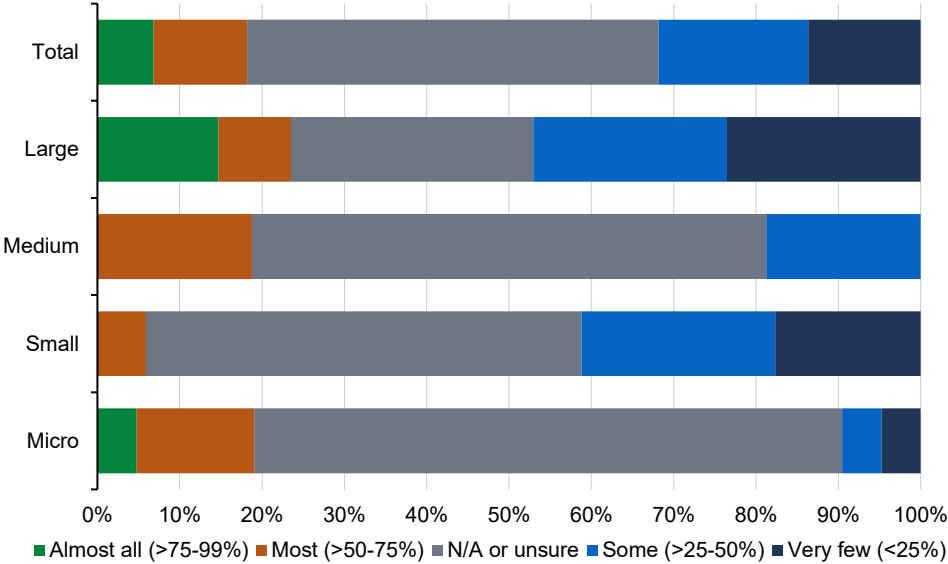
Figure 48: Use of external evaluation services (N: 91)

Q17: Does your agency use external evaluation services?

In-house ■ External services ■ Other reasons ■ Performance monitoring/reporting ■ Not conducted
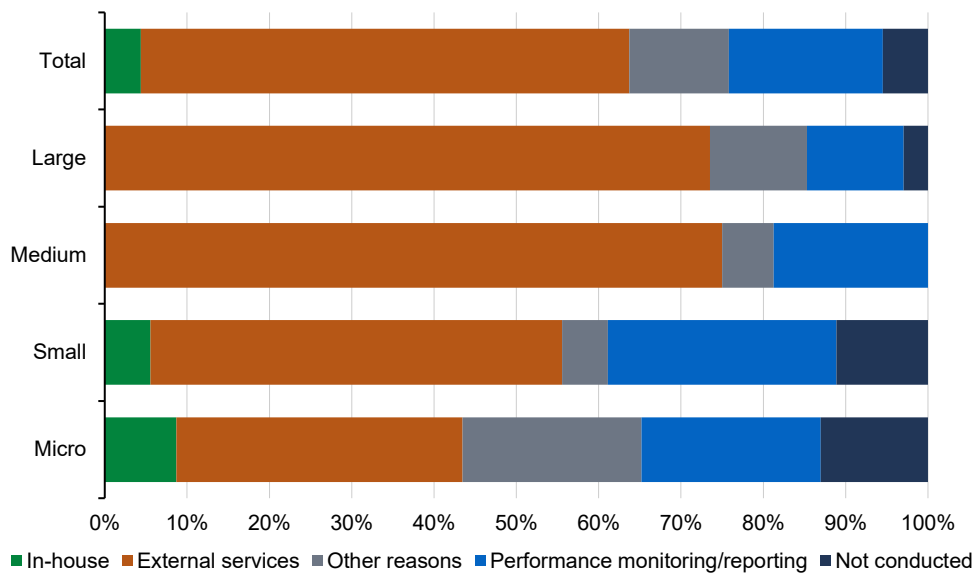
Figure 49: Proportion of evaluations conducted by evaluators from outside your agency (N: 90)

Q18: What proportion of evaluations are conducted by evaluators from outside your agency?

■ Almost all (>75-99%) ■ Most (>50-75%) ■ N/A or unsure ■ Some (>25-50%) ■ Very few (<25%)
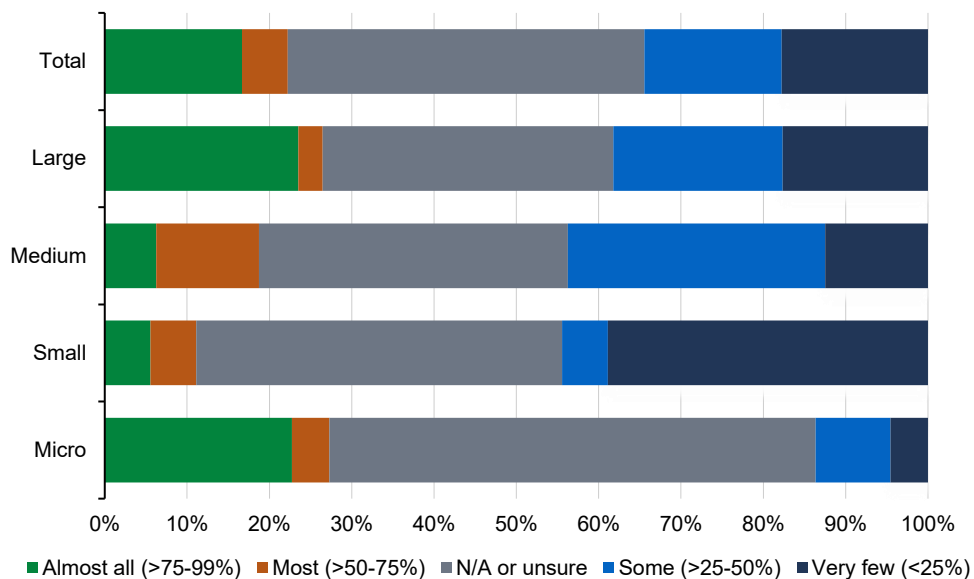
Purpose of evaluation

Figure 50: Motivations for evaluations (N: 88)

Q19: What are the motivations for evaluation within your agency?
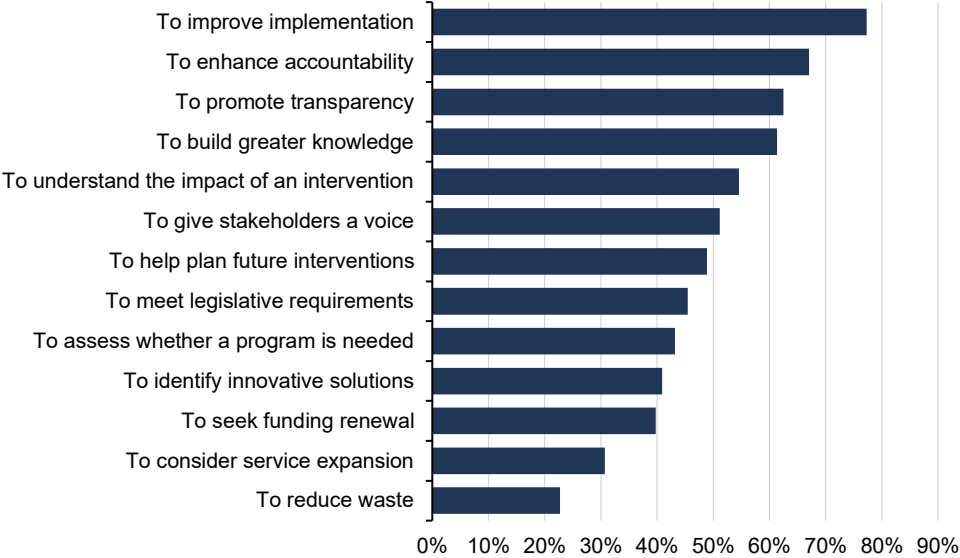
Barriers and supports

Figure 51: Supports that have helped to embed a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy in December 2021 (N: 71)

Q20: Within your agency, what supports have helped to embed a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy in December 2021?
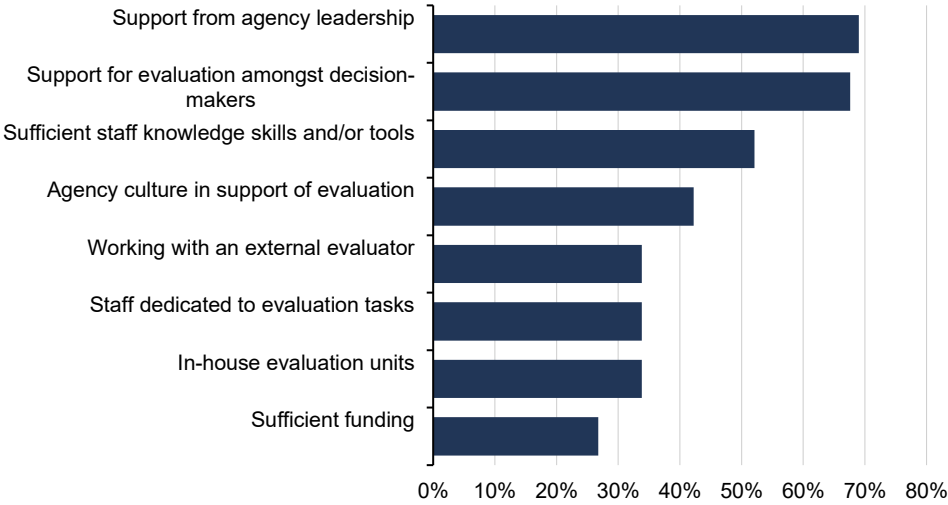
Figure 52: The major barriers to embedding a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy in December 2021(N: 79)

Q21: Within your agency, what have been the major barriers (if any) to embedding a culture of evaluation since the introduction of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy in December 2021 (that is, the reasons why evaluation may NOT occur)?

Indigenous Evaluation

Figure 53: Processes established to ensure evaluations are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities (N; 89)

Q22: Does your agency have processes established to ensure evaluations are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities?
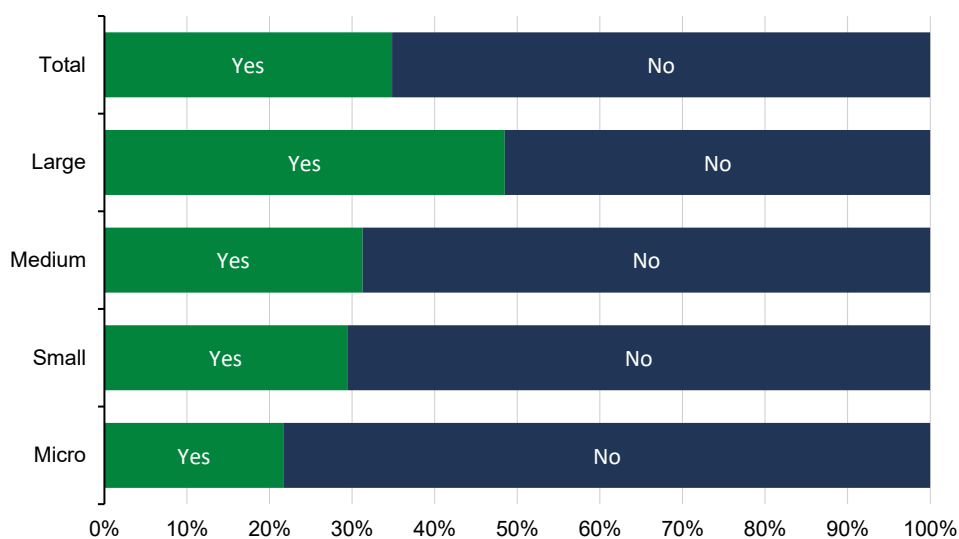
Figure 54: The extent to which processes are applied consistently (N: 29)

Q22.1: Please indicate the extent to which processes below are applied consistently
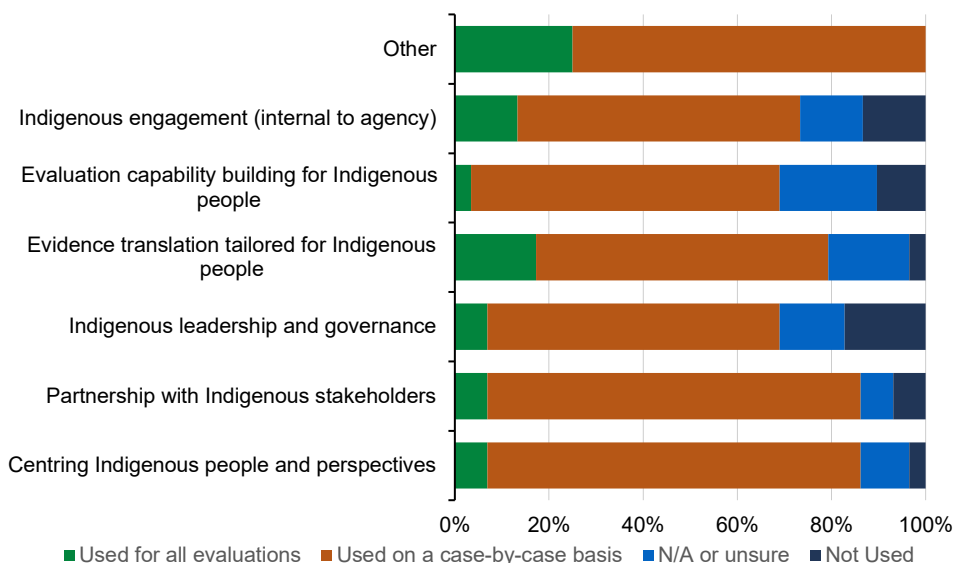
Figure 55: To what extent does your agency draw on resources to support evaluations that are culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities? (N: 77)

Q24: To what extent does your agency draw on the following resources to support evaluations to be culturally appropriate with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities?
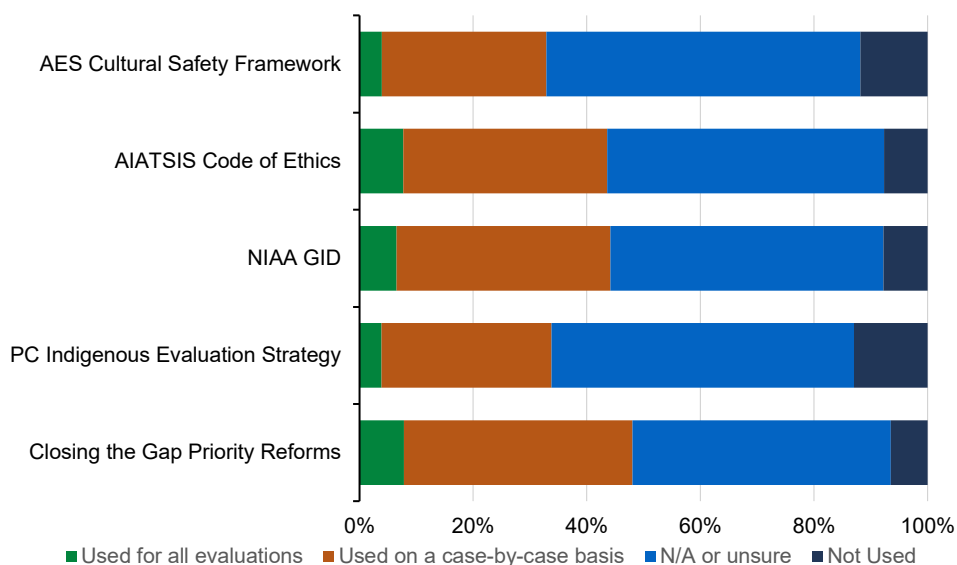
Figure 56: Approaches to support culturally appropriate evaluation (N: 60)

Q25: Does your agency's evaluation practice adopt any of following approaches to support culturally appropriate evaluation?
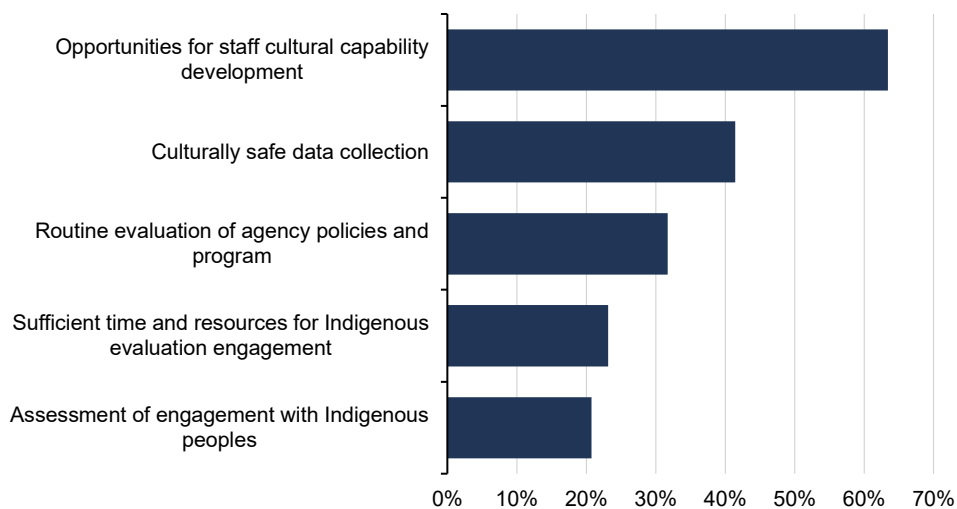
Ethical Evaluation

Figure 57: Existence of an agency evaluation ethics review process (N:90)

Q26: Does your agency have an evaluation ethics review process?
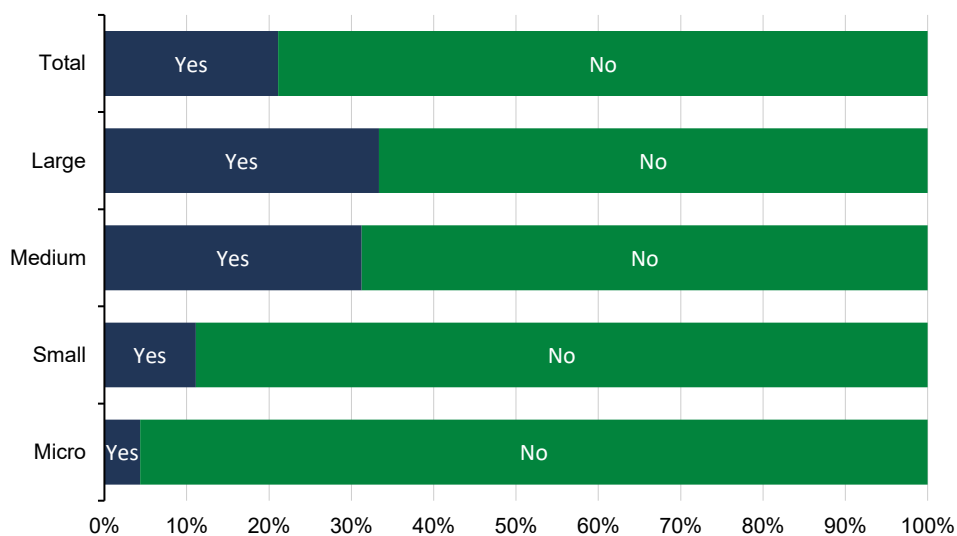
Figure 58: How the evaluation ethics review process operates (N:19)

Q26.1: Please specify how the evaluation ethics review process operates
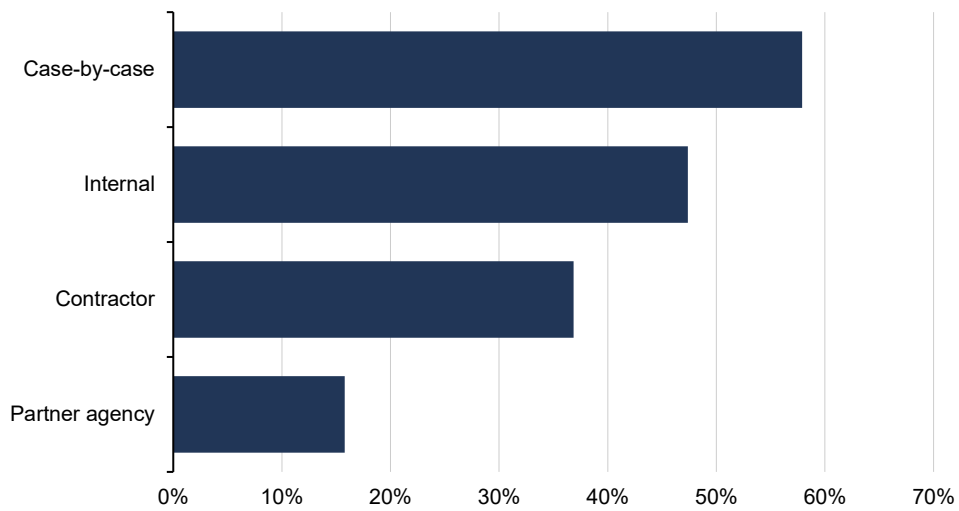
Figure 59: Plans to establish an evaluation ethics review process (N:59)

Q26.2: Please specify if any of the following apply
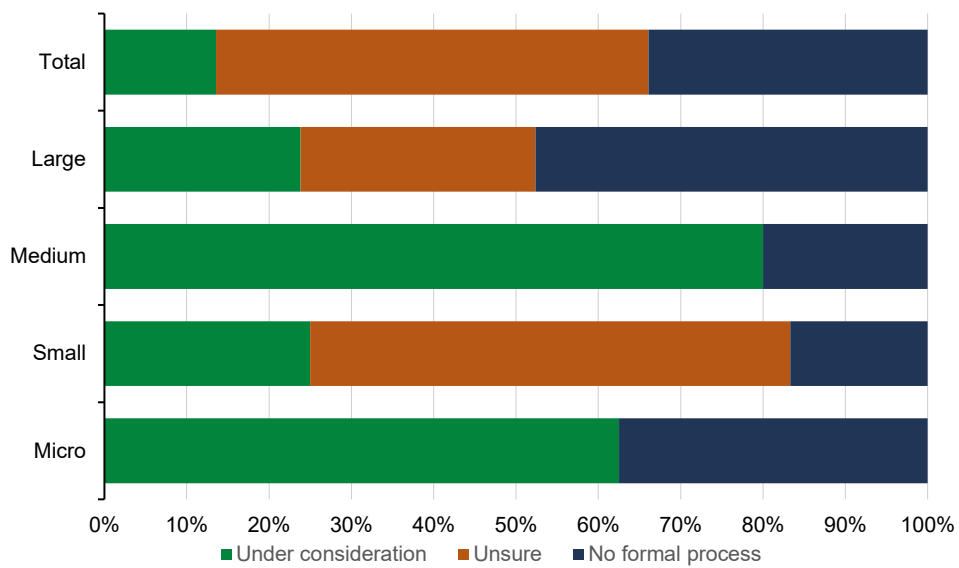
Evaluation evidence use

Evaluation evidence use

Figure 60: Extent agency uses evaluation evidence (N:79)

Q27: To what extent does your agency use evaluation evidence to…
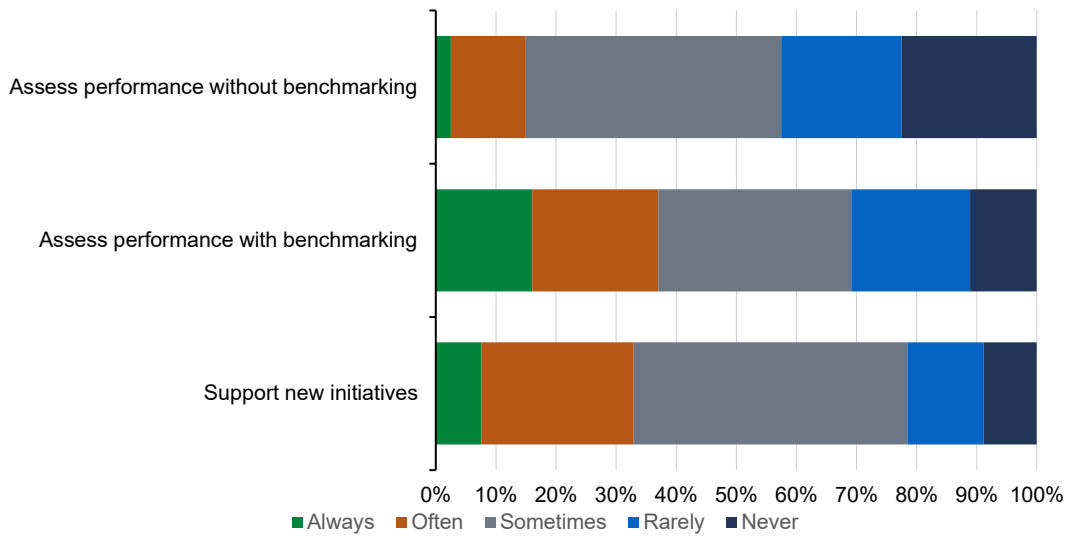
Figure 61: Extent agency uses evaluation evidence (N:81)

Q28: To what extent does your agency use evaluation evidence to…
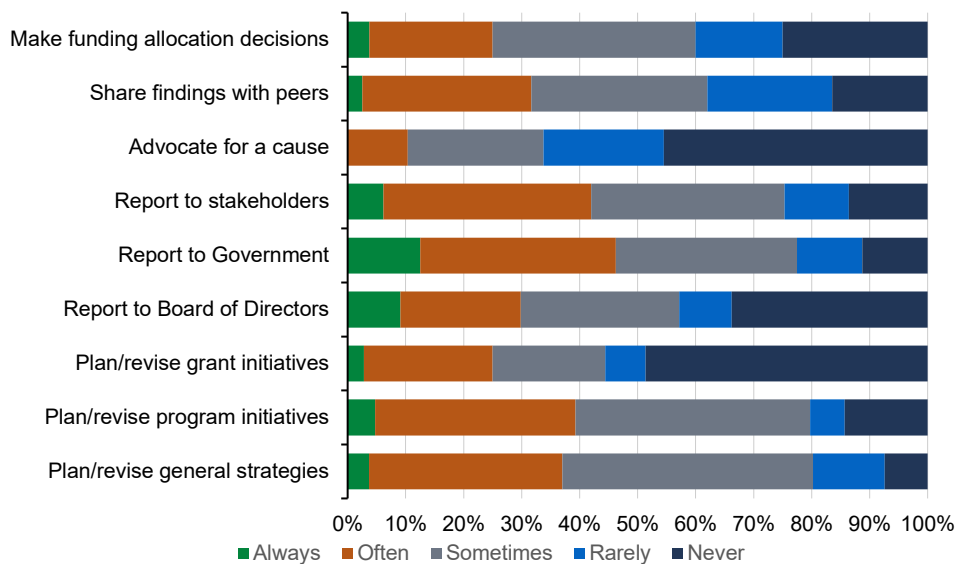
Figure 62: Extent agencies present evaluation findings to stakeholders (N:79)

Q29: To what extent are evaluation findings presented to each of these stakeholders?
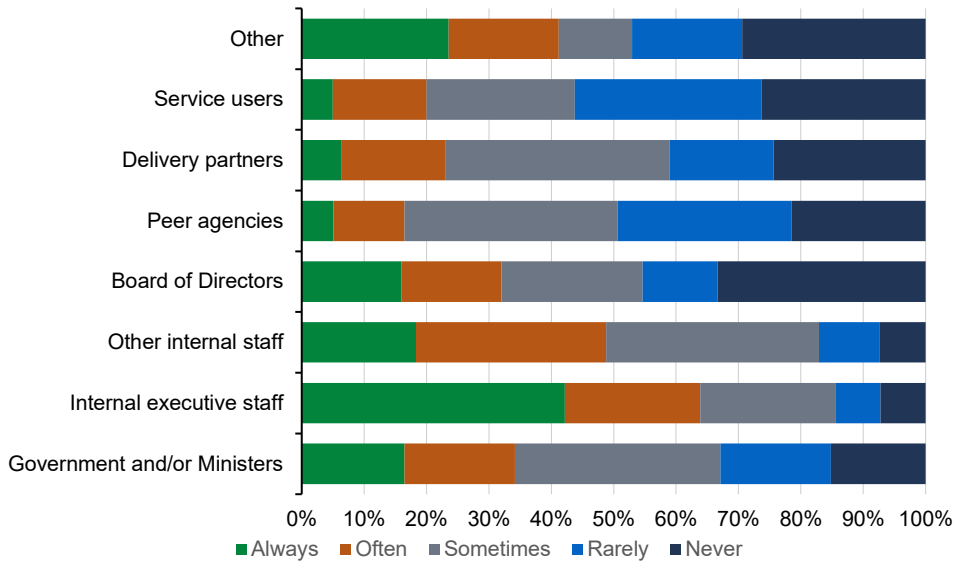
Figure 63: Routine dissemination evaluation findings or reports publicly (N:87)

Q30: Does your agency routinely disseminate evaluation findings or reports publicly?
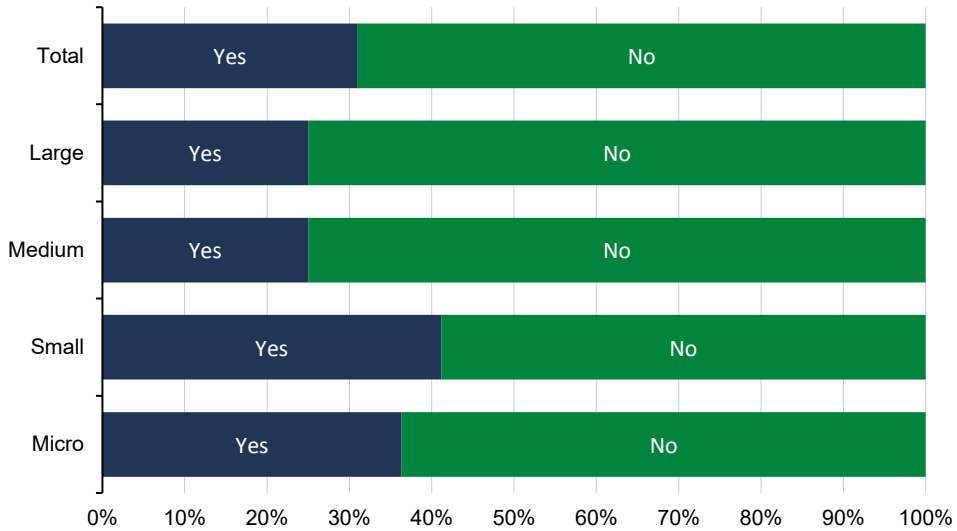
Figure 64: How evaluation findings or reports are distributed to stakeholders (N: 48)
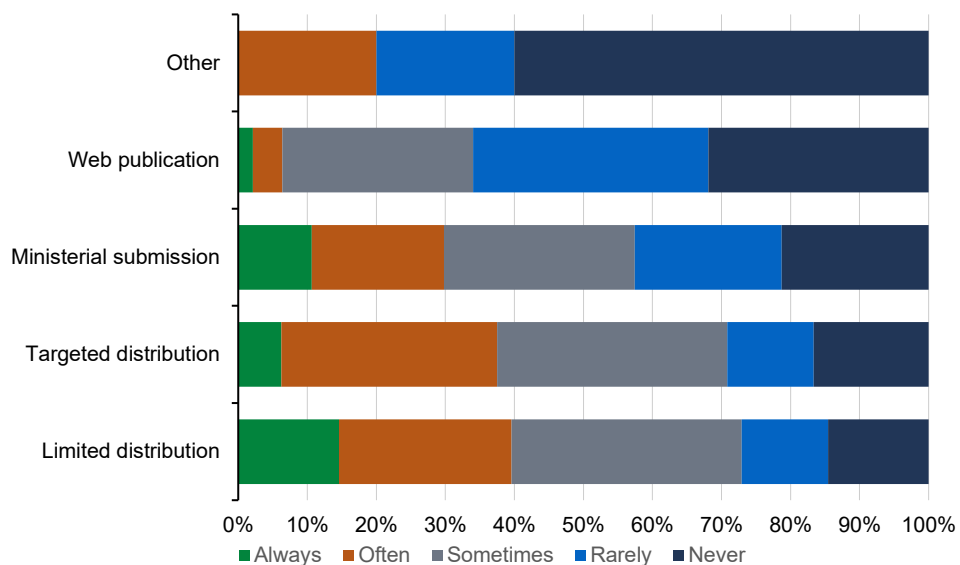
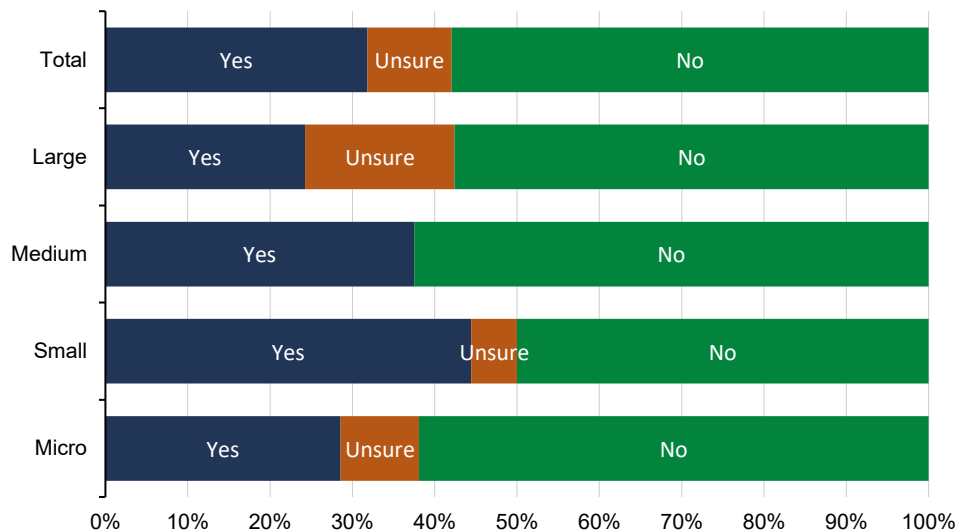Q30.1: Please specify how evaluation findings or reports are distributed to stakeholders

Figure 65: Inclusion of evaluation findings in the 2023 Annual Report (N:88)

Q31: Did your agency include any evaluation findings in the 2023 Annual Report?

Evaluation capability building

## Evaluation capability building efforts

Figure 66: In 2023-24 agency engagements in evaluation capability building activities (N: 54)

Q32: In the 2023-24 financial year, did your entity engage in evaluation capability building activities?

Figure 67: In 2023-24 agency engagements in evaluation capability building specific to impact evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental designs (N:88)

Q33: In the 2023-24 financial year, did your agency engage in any capability building specific to impact evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental designs?
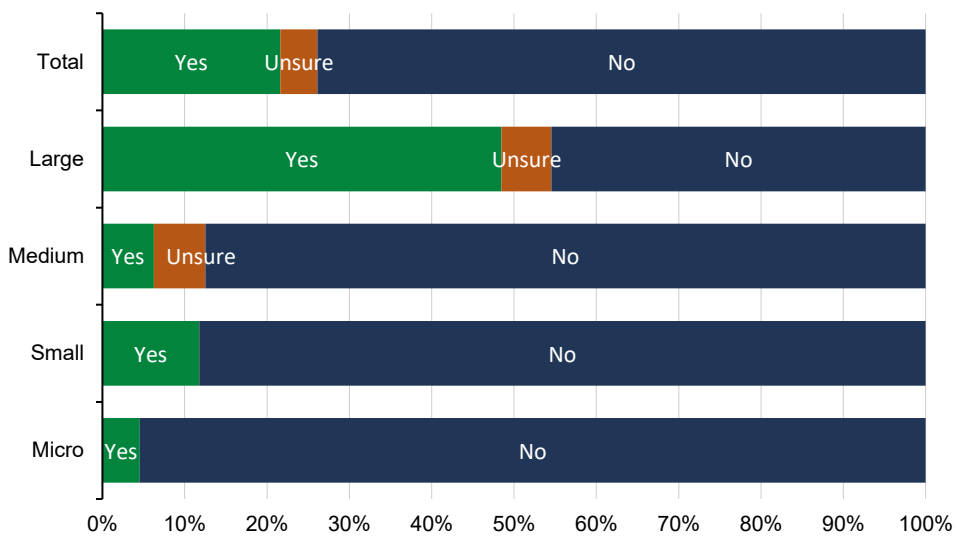
Additional support to embed the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy

Figure 68: Additional activities or actions that could be taken centrally that would help to support agencies to deliver on the policy intent of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy (N:64)

Q34: What additional activities or actions could be taken centrally that would help to support your agency to deliver on the policy intent of the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy?
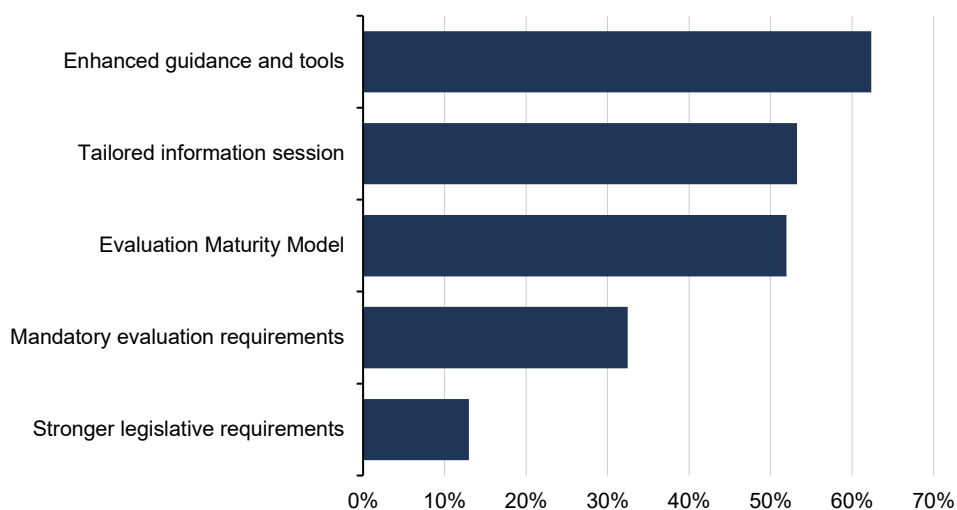

Figure 69: Areas where additional support from the Australian Centre of Evaluation would help agencies to build evaluation capability and embed an enduring culture of evaluation across the Australian Government (N:66)

Q38: Are there specific areas where additional support from the Australian Centre of Evaluation would help your agency to build evaluation capability and embed an enduring culture of evaluation across the Australian Government?