

# Research to inform how The National Lottery Community Fund can best support VCSE sector organisations with data and evidence

## Report

29<sup>th</sup> August 2019



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Summary & recommendations

## Business objective

To develop a strategy for how the National Lottery Community Fund (the Fund) can support the VCSE sector to meaningfully use data and evidence

## Research objective

Research commissioned to help inform the Fund's strategic approach by;

- Understanding **current approaches** to data & evidence
- Understand **needs** for help and support
- Identify **challenges and barriers** to accessing help and support
- Identify **priorities** for providing support
- Suggest **specific solutions** for delivering support

## Overview of approach





## STAGE 2

### 23 x 35 minute tele-depths

- **18 Customers**
  - Spread across portfolio, grant size, current grant status and organisational size
- **5 Potential Customers**
  - Mix of organisational size



## STAGE 3

### Co-creation workshop

- **Half-day workshop:** 20<sup>th</sup> June
- **Attended by:**
  - 4 Customers (1 Simple & 3 Standard funding)
  - 2 Potential customers
  - 6 Fund employees
  - 1 external stakeholder

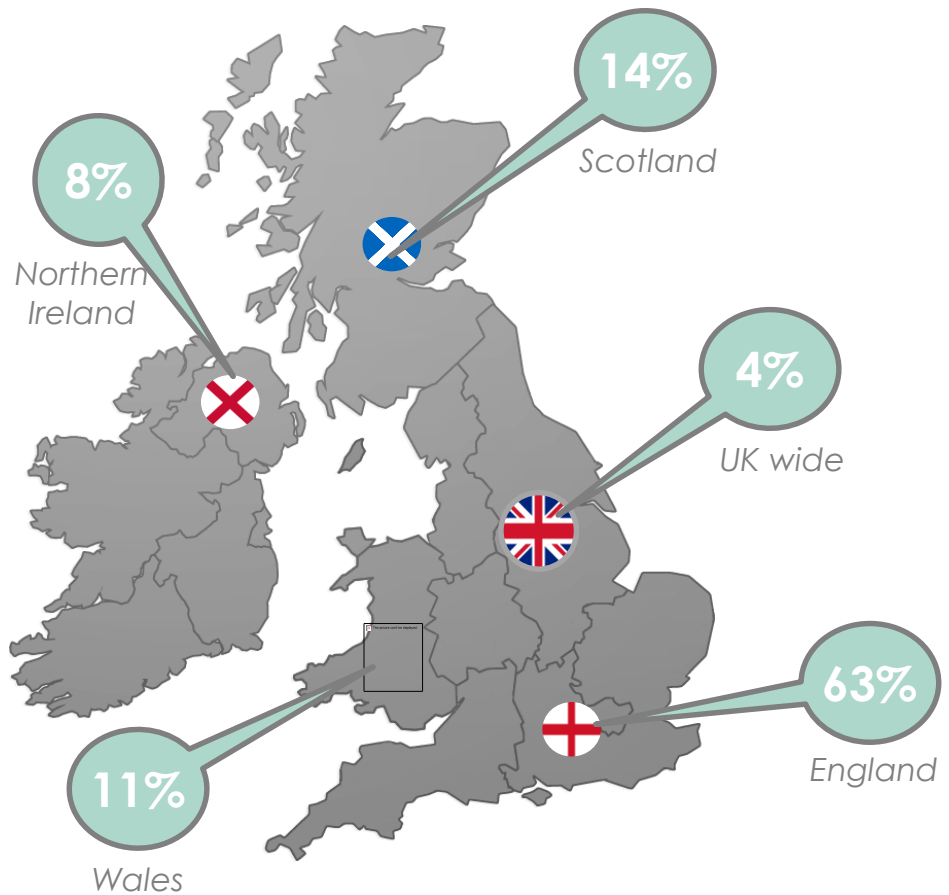


## STAGE 4

### Quantitative survey

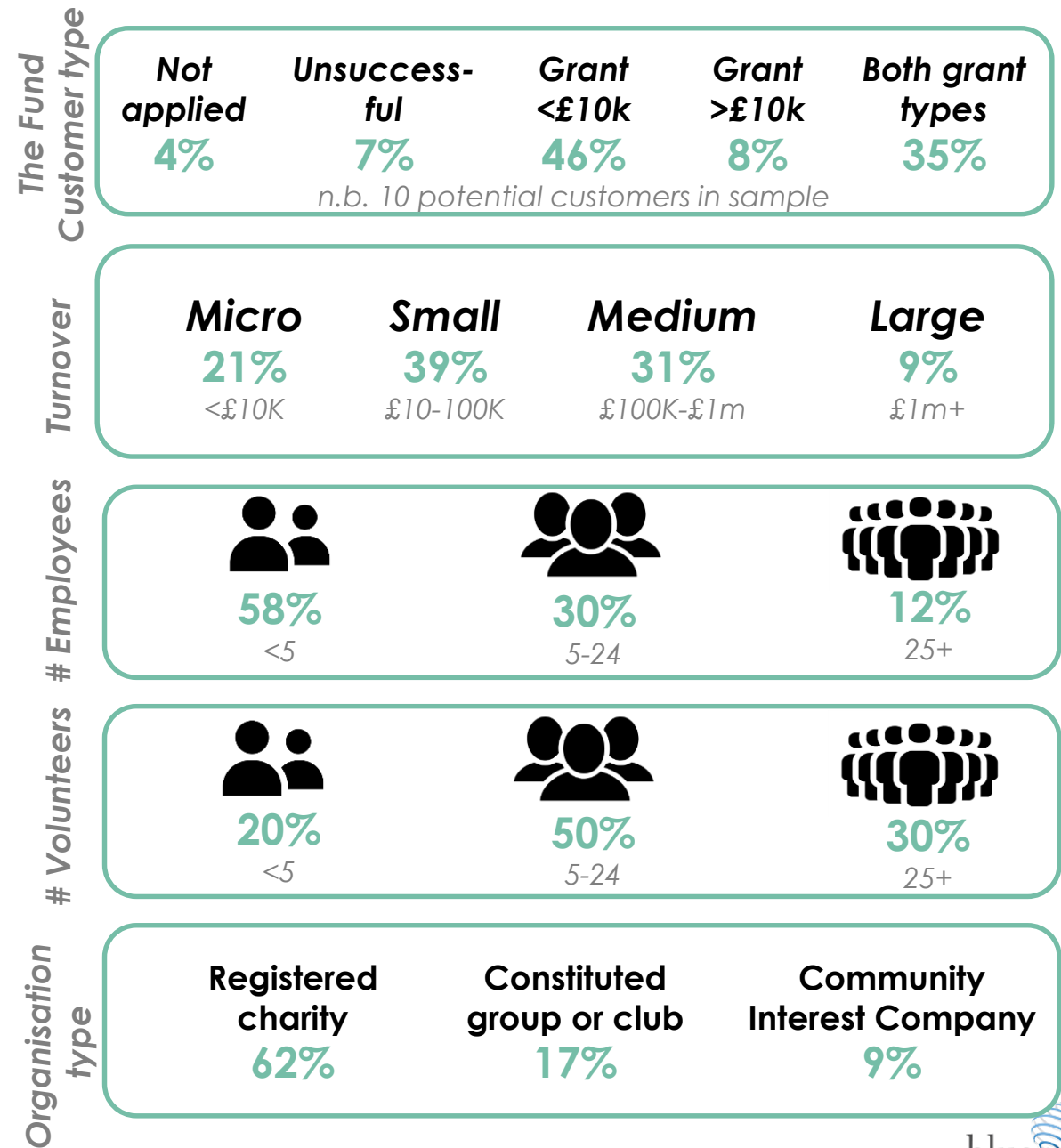
- **Online survey**
  - Amongst customers and potential customers
  - Spread across portfolio, grant size, current grant status and organisational size
- **Total 523 completed responses**

See appendix for sample details



Geographically spread across all portfolios: England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, UK wide

Fieldwork dates: w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> July – w/c 12<sup>th</sup> August





## Research challenges



- **Qualitatively**, able to tailor discussion and understand individual needs and attitudes at a more granular level but complex and varied
- N.B. Recruitment more challenging than previously experienced for the Fund (time pressures; lack of enthusiasm to take part in research generally)
- Many (especially smaller organisations) were more motivated to take part to 'give back' to the Fund, than because they were engaged with data and evidence

## Typologies developed to help structure discussion at co-creation event



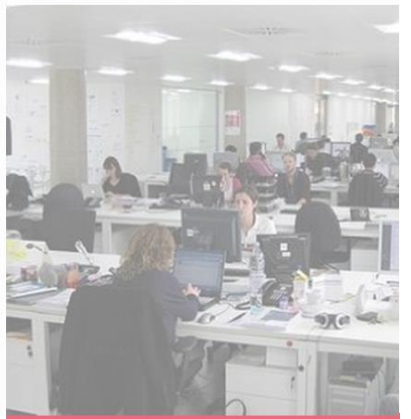
1  
Micro cause-focused volunteers



2  
Ambitious grassroots groups



3  
Developing experts



4  
Established complex organisations

# Quantitatively, size (& current level of engagement with using data & evidence) provides more actionable insight

Organisational culture (e.g. ambition) proved more difficult to meaningfully identify quantitatively. Analysis by size of organisation and reliance on grant funding (and current behaviours) provides clearer and more actionable insight.

## MICRO

<£10K

- 53% Constituted group or club
- 97% <5 employees
- 1 in 5 have no grant funding
- Focused on single issue or beneficiary
- 23% never received grant from the Fund (13% unsuccessful application)

## SMALL

£10K-£100K

- 61% Registered Charity
- 88% <5 employees
- 56% received >1 Simple grant from the Fund

## MEDIUM

£100K-£1m

- 86% Registered Charity
- 73% 5-24 employees
- Applied for both Simple and Standard funding from the Fund

## LARGE

£1m+

- 83% >25 employees
- 68% statutory funding
- Tend to be in receipt of Standard grant only from the Fund
- Dealing with multiple issues and beneficiary types

Greatest reliance on grant funding

% income from donations and fundraising

Likelihood to receive statutory funding



A photograph of a library with curved wooden bookshelves filled with books. The shelves are illuminated by a large skylight, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. The books are arranged in neat rows, and the overall scene conveys a sense of knowledge and learning.

The meaning of 'data & evidence'



## The Fund's interpretation



- Any information that enables people, organisations and communities to reflect, learn, prove and improve

**More holistic interpretation**

## Customers' & potential customers' interpretation



### **Most commonly associated with:**

- Formal, quantitative data collection methods (more informal approaches not always perceived to be 'data & evidence')
- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation required by funders and commissioners

**Interpretation often driven by funder requirements**

It's collecting information...  
it's about **recording progress**

I assume it means statistics to **evaluate success** of the project

Data is **showing that there is a need** for what we are doing

It's to **prove to the funder** that the money has been spent on what we set out to achieve

It's a **complex issue**....data and evidence is **gathering knowledge** and acting on it

'Insight' suggests some kind of **analysis, not just the figures** but an analysis of what it means

## “DATA” associations:

- Statistics, numbers
- Facts and figures
- Quantitative data collection (internal and externally gathered)
- Monitoring activities
- Formal, scientific approaches

## “EVIDENCE” associations:

- Proving the overall success and evaluation of a project or activity
- Providing accountability e.g. how income / funds have been spent
- Demonstrating impact or outcomes
- Reporting to funders or commissioners

## “INSIGHT” associations:

- Holistic analysis, more rounded and all encompassing
- Less formal
- Includes qualitative processes, case studies, lived experiences
- But for minority: 'vague', 'wooly' lacks meaning in isolation

**Varied levels of experience, skills & knowledge – different starting points**

# Language, terminology & sector jargon is problematic

Less grant funding experience  
& less knowledgeable

- Unfamiliar, difficult to understand
- Lacks relevance
- Significant barrier to engagement with subject

More experienced & more knowledgeable

- Time consuming to keep up to date
- Buzz words & sector trends not always helpful
- Changing and inconsistency between funders problematic

*Stop using jargon people don't understand.*  
(Small, Simple, NI)

*[in response to stimulus] Too much jargon - most of it is jargon! Not many relevant to us, we're not big enough.*  
(Small, Simple, NI)

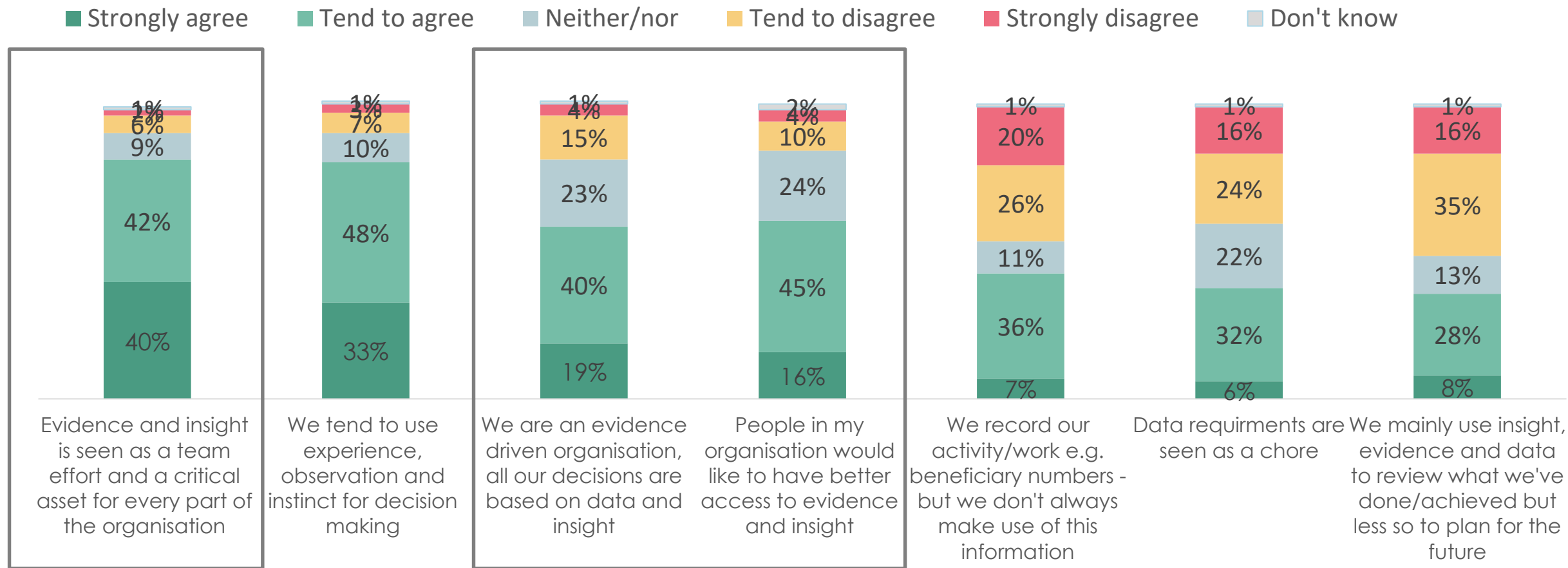
*People get confused about all these words such as outputs and outcomes.*  
(Medium, Simple, Scotland)

*The use of D&E has been sporadic for different funders and organisations...funders have different priorities.*  
Medium, Simple, UK wide)

*Over the last 15 years we've been through various phases of what funders and commissioners think is evidence e.g. phase of outcomes which is very difficult when working in a complex system.*  
(Medium, Standard, UK)

# Some positive attitudes towards data & evidence

There are indications of some positive attitudes: 82% agree that evidence and insights is seen as a **team effort** and 59% agree that they are an **evidence driven organisation**. However, there are also signs of areas for improvement and 61% would like better access to data & evidence. Attitudes appear to be driven more by organisational culture than structural characteristics such as size or turnover.



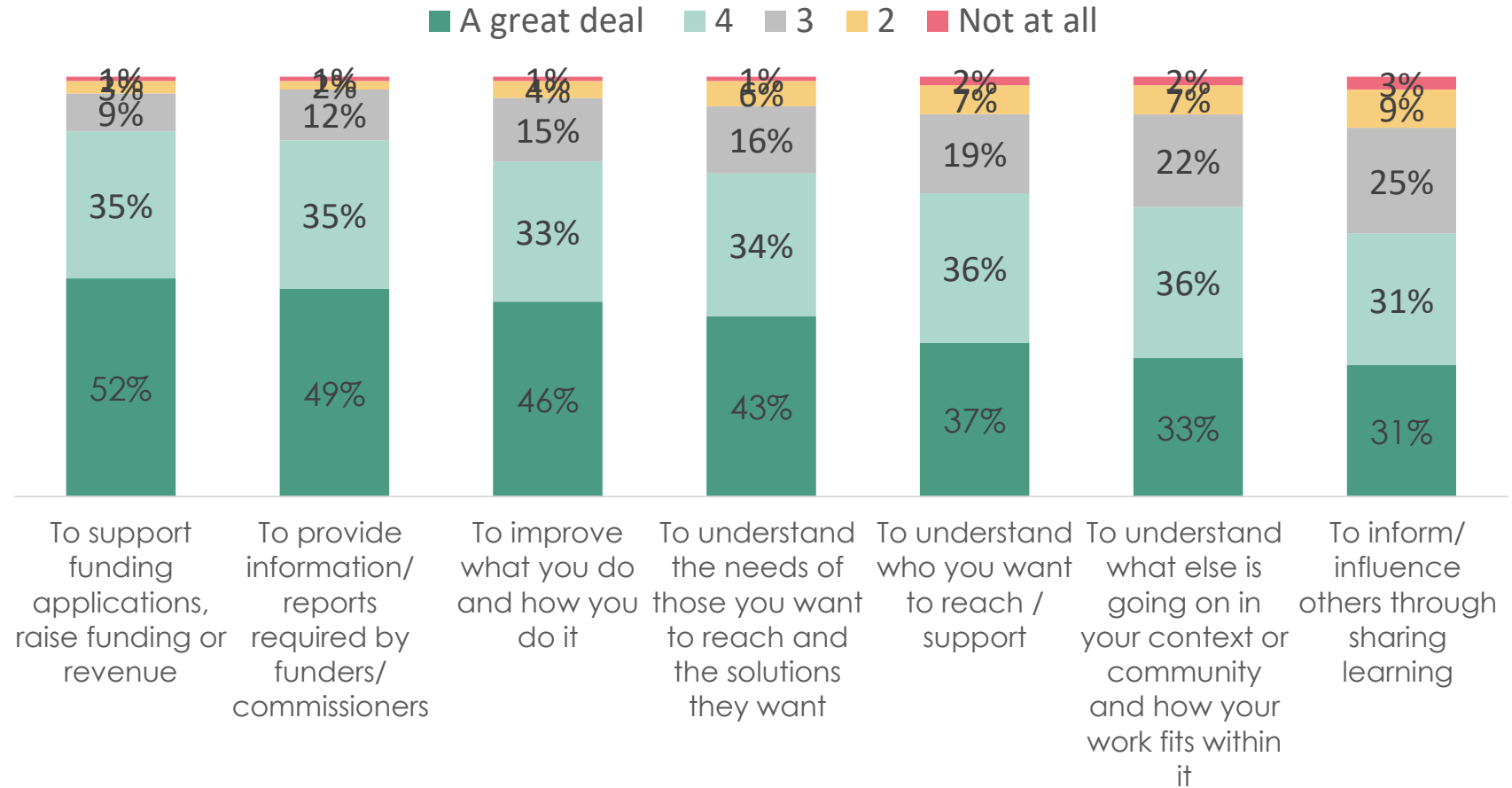
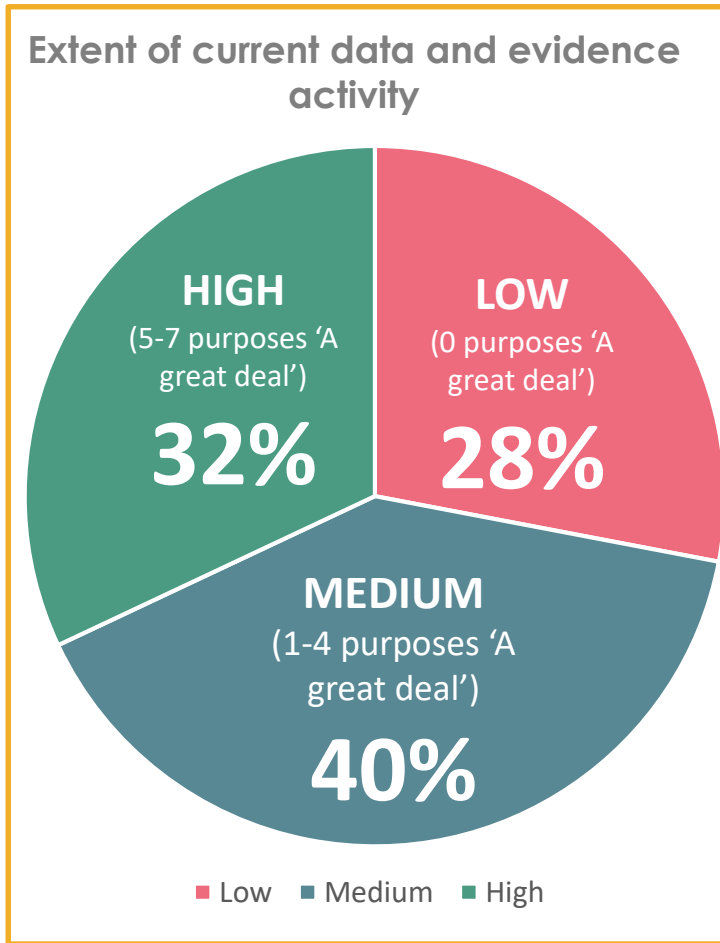


A close-up photograph of a person wearing a white lab coat, holding a blue pen and writing on a data table. The table has multiple columns and rows, with some text and numbers visible. The person's hands are in focus, and the background is slightly blurred, showing a computer keyboard and other papers. A semi-transparent teal banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "Current uses of data & evidence".

## Current uses of data & evidence

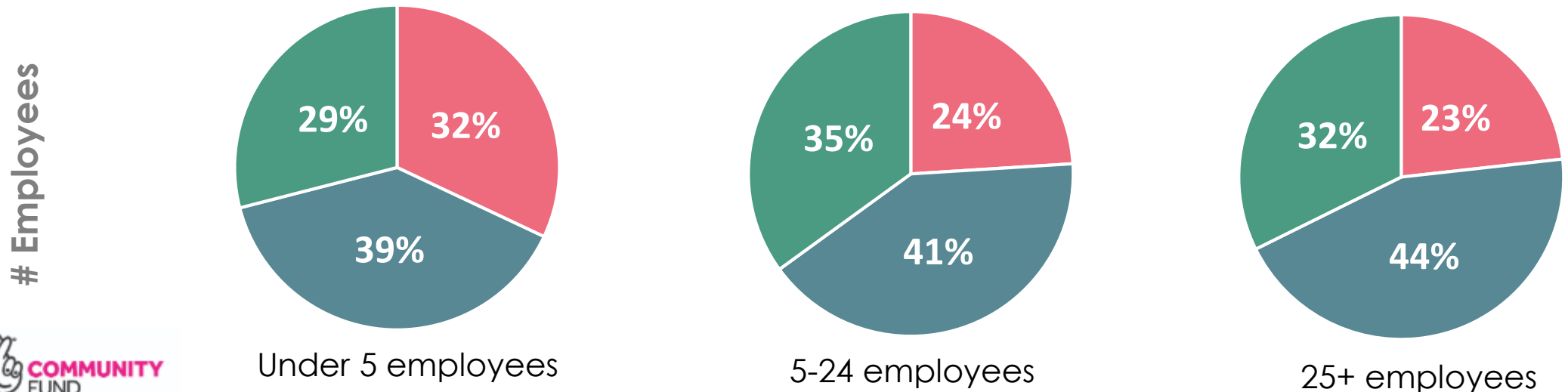
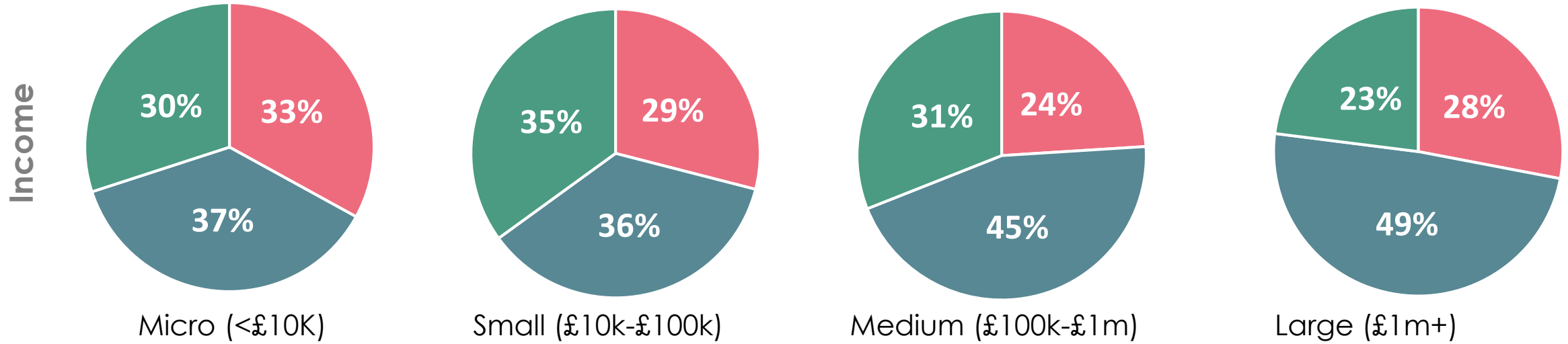
# All VCSE organisations are using data and evidence to some extent

When prompted, it is apparent that VCSE organisations are using data and evidence for a range of purposes, although there is considerable variation in the extent of activity. A third (32%) report doing 'a great deal' across at least 5 different purposes, whilst nearly as many (28%) do not consider they do 'a great deal' for any purpose.



# Organisational size influences nature of current data and evidence activity (1/3)

Quantitatively organisational size (turnover, number of employees) appears to have a relatively small influence on extent of current uses of data and evidence – however, qualitative analysis reveals significant differences in the nature of the activity.



# Organisational size influences nature of current data and evidence activity (2/3)

To understand what else is going on in your context or community and how your work fits within it

- **Micro** community action group having informal conversations with people in their community to understand need e.g. need for a village notice board
- **Micro** parent run organisation supporting families with autistic children: using own knowledge and experience of being a parent of autistic children

VS.

- **Large** national charity conducting scoping research to understand extent of food poverty and support offered nationally
- **Large** potential customer influencing crime and law policy using own research and National Stats to identify e.g. areas with highest proportion of stop and searches

To improve what you do and how you do it

- **Micro** sports club asking beneficiaries to complete annual paper feedback forms to review what's working well / less well
- **Micro** cricket club keeping record of number of games played to ensure all have equal opportunity to play

VS.

- **Large** - attendance at Evaluation Support Scotland training has had significant and widespread impact across the organisation
- **Medium** charity supporting the traveller community has made improvements as a result of adopting a 'most significant change' methodology



# Organisational size influences nature of current data and evidence activity (3/3)

To inform / influence others through sharing learning

- **Micro** community action group attending quarterly meetings to share and discuss best practice with other local villages / groups
- **Small** community development group, supporting area of deprivation, facilitating informal meetings and consultations with local community to discuss progress of work

VS

- **Medium** charity supporting low income families sharing data with other charities doing similar work - using D&E tool (MESH) to share data nationally / merge data sets

To understand who you want to reach / support

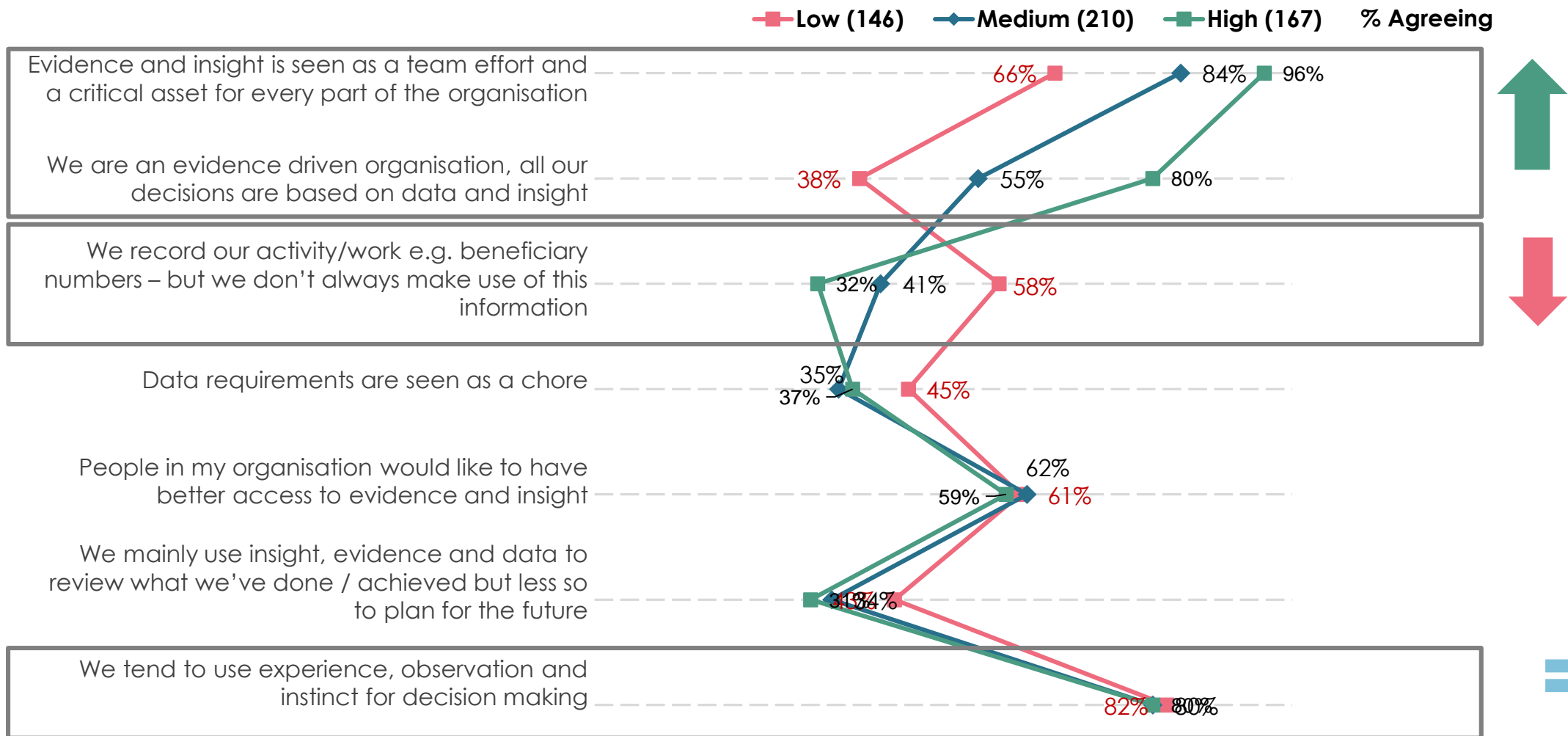
- **Small** charity supporting the elderly. Volunteers working on the ground and talking to people on a daily basis. Aware of who needs support and what support is required from day to day interactions.

VS

- **Large** organisation using specialist database designed for domestic violence sector enabling them to capture, share and analyse data nationally

# Current activity is also determined by attitudes

The key **attitudes associated with the highest levels** of current engagement with data and evidence are that it is a team effort and a critical asset and that all decisions are based on data and insight. Whereas those with **lower levels of engagement** are less likely to actually use the data they collect. **All organisations** are also using experience, observation and instinct for decision making regardless of their use of more formal data and evidence.



Q1. Thinking about your organisation as a whole, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base all respondents (523)

# Qualitative insight highlights importance of organisational culture

POSITIVE attitudes  
(and higher levels of  
current activity)  
driven by range of  
factors

- **Individual personality:** naturally organised, enjoy numbers, spreadsheets, accounting etc
- **Personal experience/knowledge:**
  - Data & evidence training (which has since been implemented into the organisation)
  - Seeing positive changes as a result of using data & evidence
  - Professional expertise: individual taking on responsibility for data & evidence
- **Organisational ambitions**
  - See data and evidence as tool to meet organisational goal e.g. growth, meet new challenges

*I use  
spreadsheets  
for everything,  
even at home  
(Micro, Simple,  
England)*

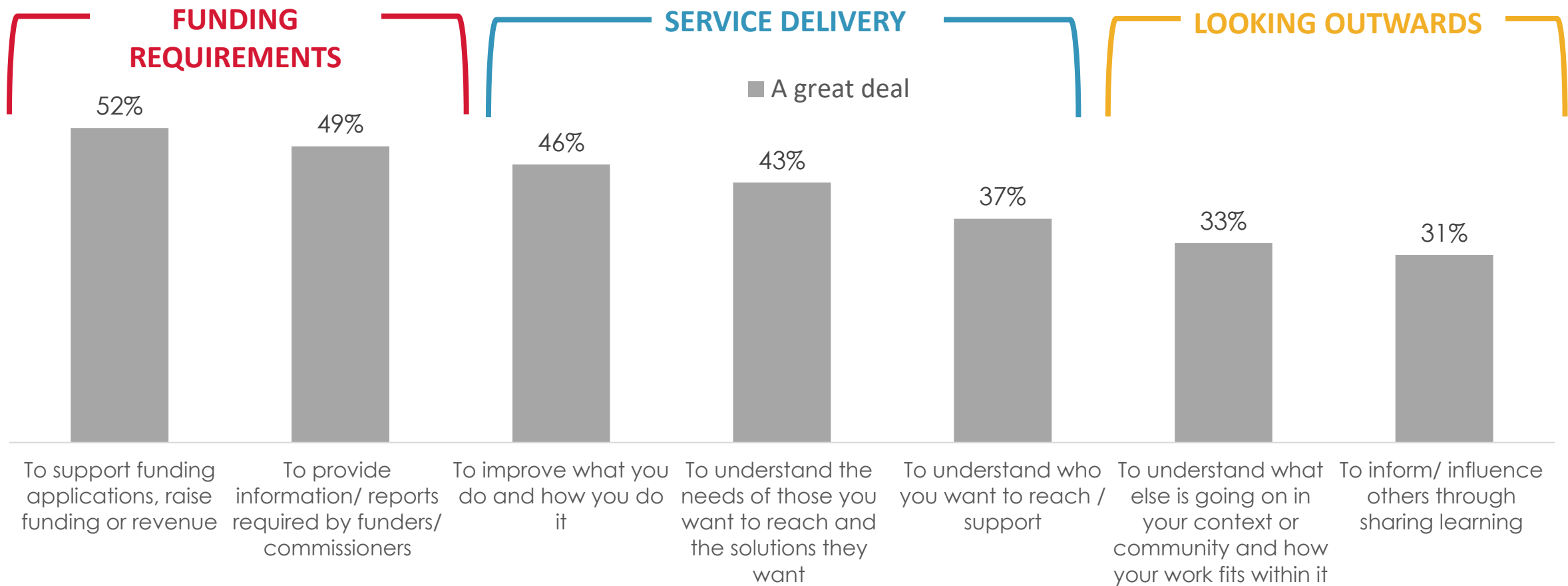
NEGATIVE attitudes  
(and lower levels of  
current activities)  
driven mainly by little  
understanding of the  
benefits

- **Lack of priority:** firefighting day to day issues and focusing on core service delivery
- **Not currently used effectively:** collect information required by funder (jumping through hoops)– not out of choice or perceived as beneficial to the organisation
- **Additional barriers reinforcing attitude:** lack of time, money, resource

We do D&E  
once a year, it's  
**not driving  
decision** making  
on a daily basis –  
**we're too busy**  
(Micro, Simple,  
England)

# Funder requirements influences current uses of data and evidence

Currently VCSE organisations are most likely to be using data and evidence for funding reasons – either to support applications or to meet funder requirements. They are less likely to currently use data and evidence for more outward facing reasons such as understanding the context/community or influencing others.

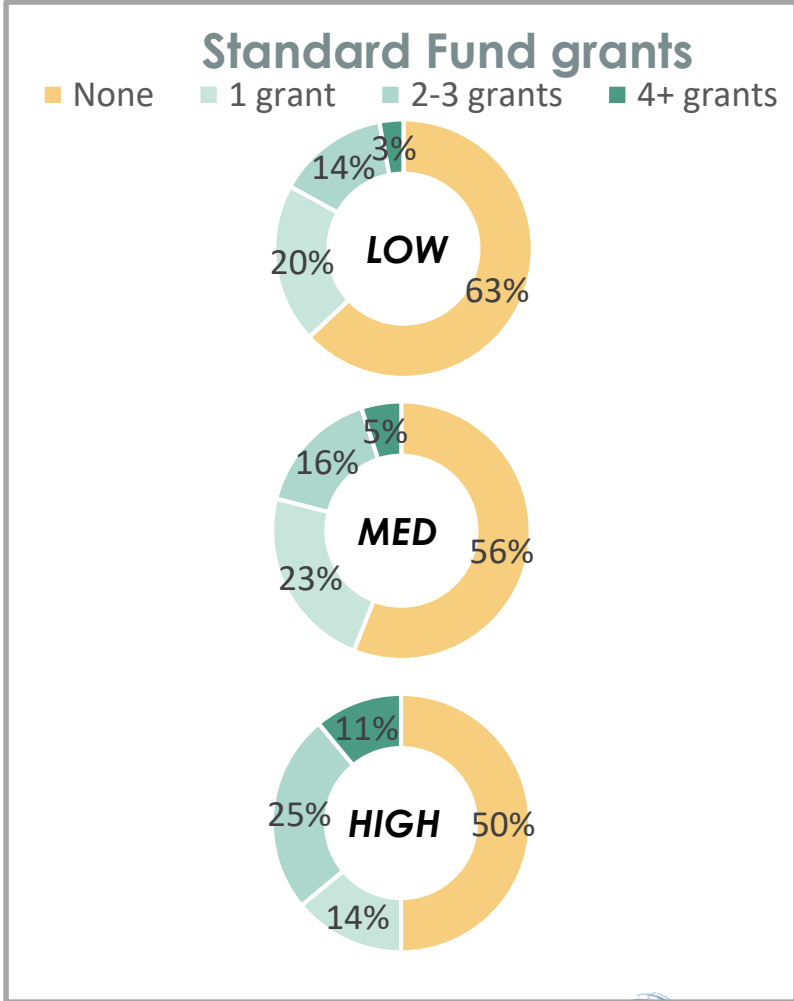
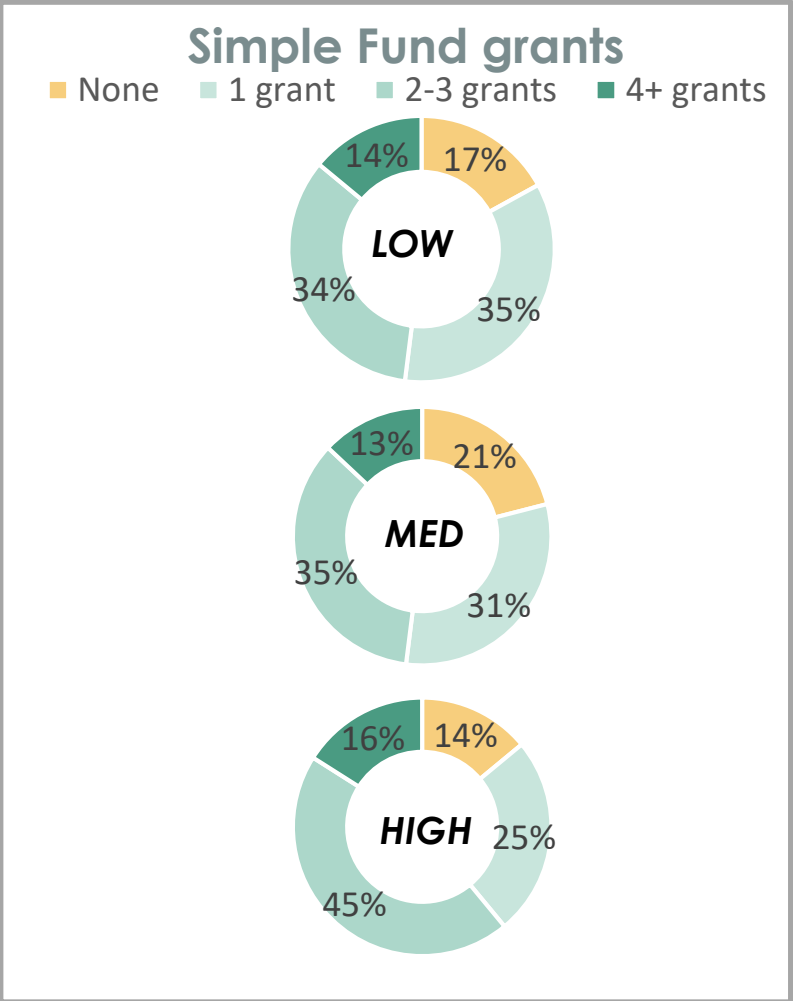
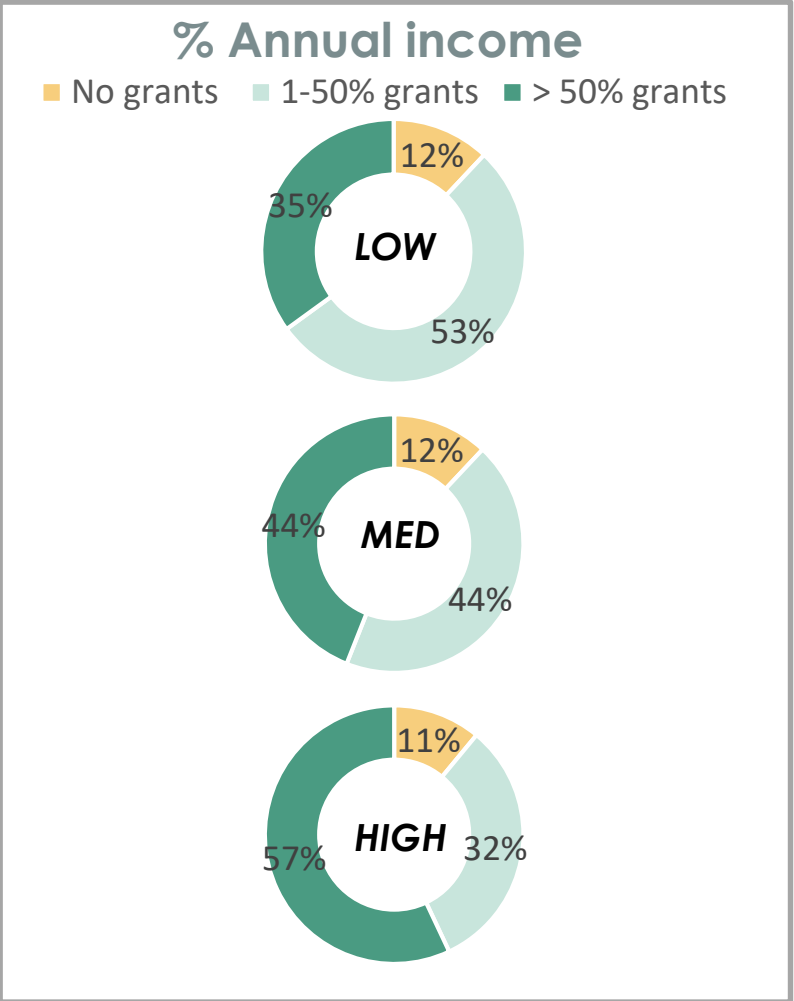




# The extent of current data & evidence activity is most strongly associated with source of income



Organisations with **a higher proportion of their income from grant funding are most engaged** with using data and evidence – particularly those with experience of larger grants. This appears to have a stronger influence than absolute size of organisation.



Base all respondents (523)

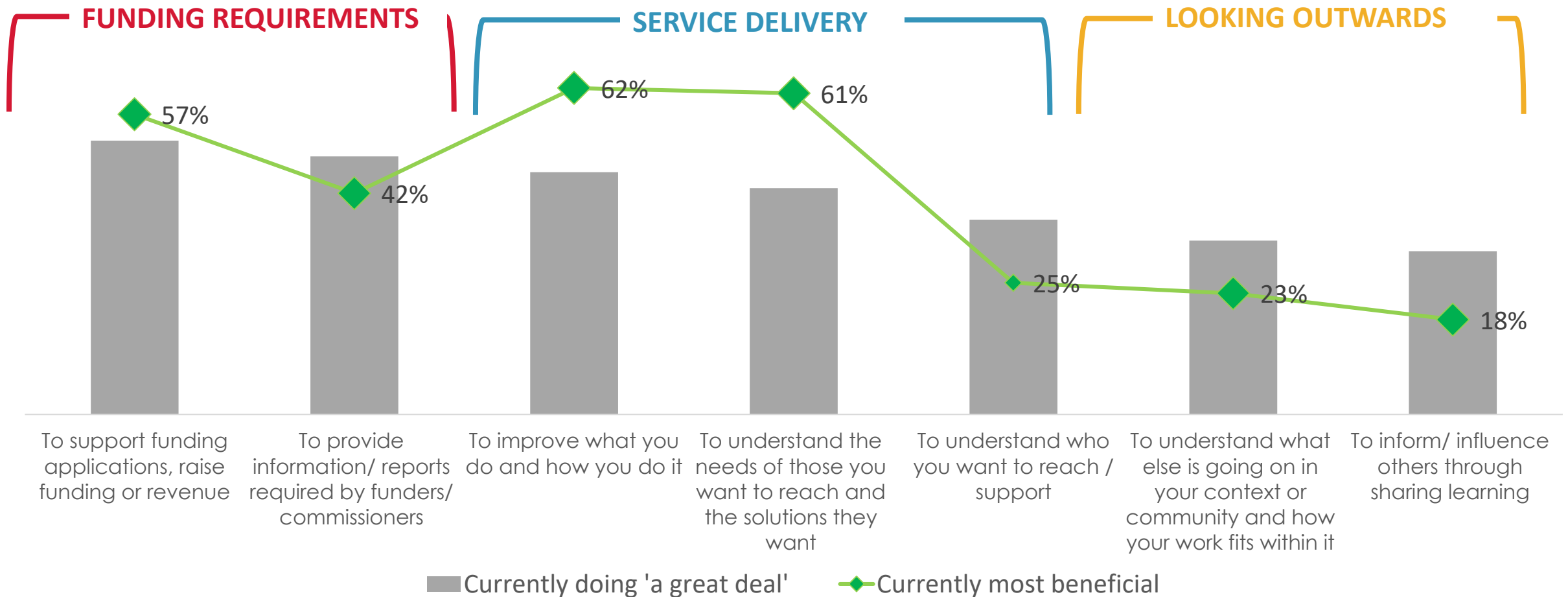


**Gap analysis: identifying potential future benefits**

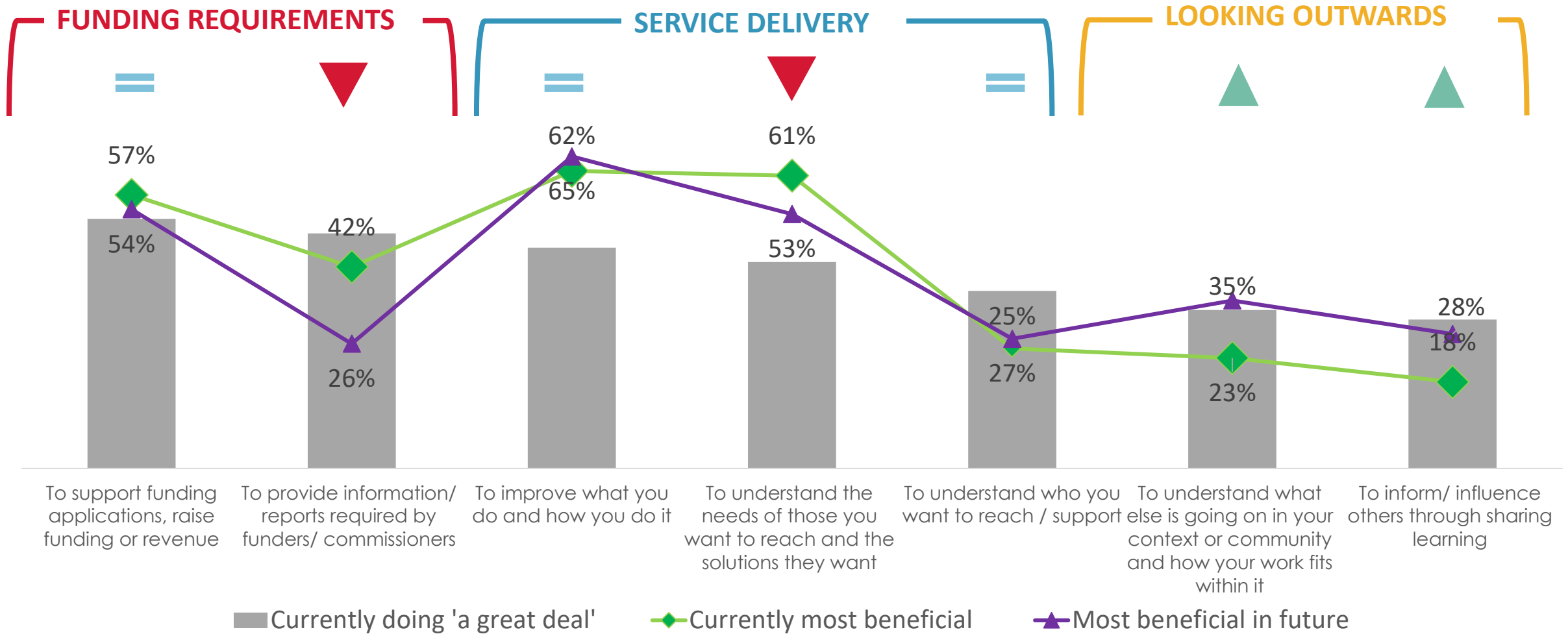


# Currently service delivery focused uses are perceived to be most beneficial

Currently using data and evidence for **service delivery** related issues (e.g. improving working practices and understanding the needs of beneficiaries) is thought to provide greatest benefit to organisations. This is closely followed by using data and evidence to **support with funding applications**.



When thinking about the future, organisations believe areas related to **service delivery** will be most beneficial. **Providing information/reports** to funders is seen as potentially less beneficial. The largest gap between what is currently beneficial and the perceived potential future benefits is in using data and evidence to understand the context or community.





## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

- To provide information/reports required by funders/commissioners
- To support funding applications, raise funding or revenue



- Role to support funding applications will continue to be important
- Frustration with requirements from funders – not always seen as beneficial/having a positive impact on the organisation

*We have done a feedback form/survey for funders...we have to do it, it's **not for the benefit of the group***  
(Micro, Simple, England)

*We collect stuff because it's required by the funder...which is really **annoying***  
(Medium, Simple, England)

## SERVICE DELIVERY

- To understand the needs of those you want to reach & the solutions they want
- To understand who to reach / support
- To improve what you do and how you do it

## LOOKING OUTWARDS

- To understand what else is going on in your context or community and how your works fits within it
- To inform / influence others through sharing learning



- An appetite to better understand the 'bigger picture' i.e. at a local, regional or national level and how services are contributing
- Widespread desire to learn from other organisations doing similar work to share best practice
- However, not always currently given priority, time or space

*Sharing knowledge and learning is a great opportunity, I would love to do it on an international level*  
(Medium, Simple, England)

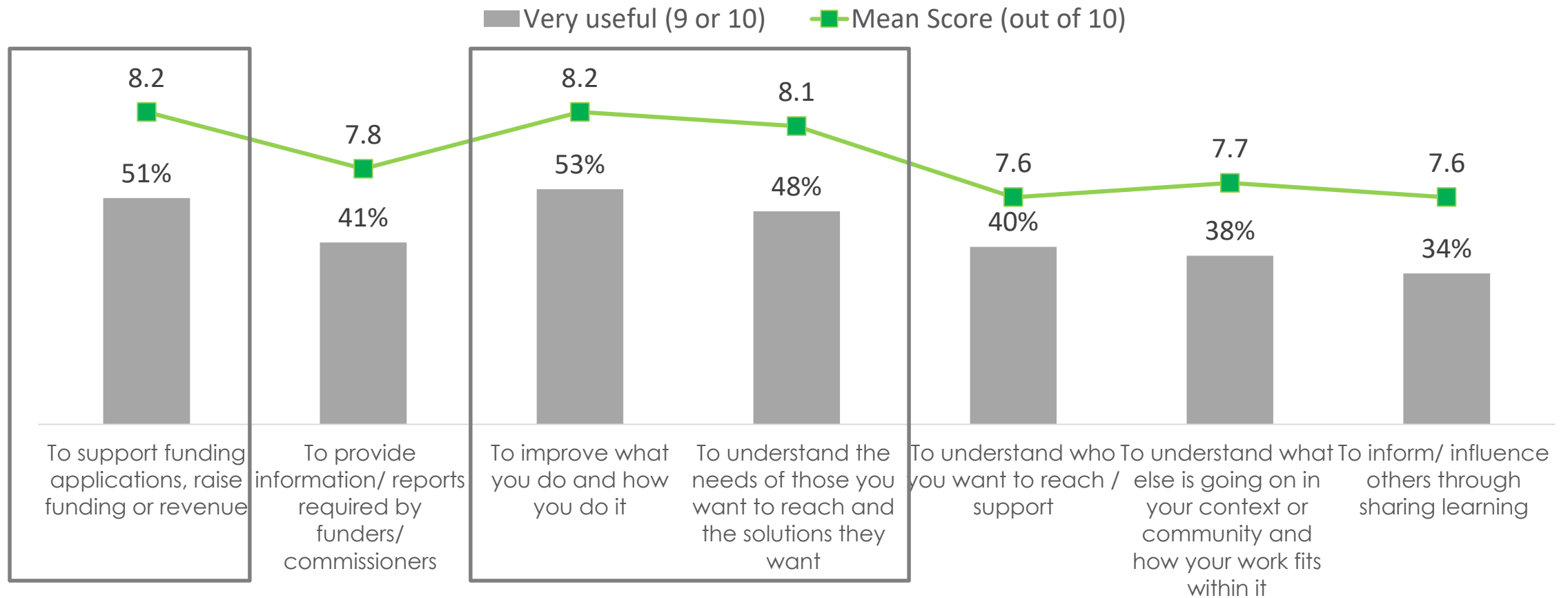
A photograph of a woman with long black braids, wearing a green top, smiling and talking to a man in a yellow shirt. The man is holding a blue pen and a clipboard. They are in a professional setting, possibly a conference or meeting. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "Appetite for help & support".

**Appetite for help & support**

# Highest interest in help or support with using data and evidence for...

- Improving what they do and understanding the needs and wanted solutions of beneficiaries (Service delivery)
- Funding application support

## Less interest in support for looking outwards



**FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

**SERVICE DELIVERY**

**LOOKING OUTWARDS**

Q4. How useful do you think it would be for your organisation to receive help or support with using evidence and insight for each of the following purposes?

Base all respondents (523)

Despite the perception that 'looking outwards' could potentially benefit organisations in the future there is less appetite for help and support with this

For some, they know what they should/could be doing, but difficult to find **time or capacity** to actually do it. Other priorities and doing 'the day job' take precedent – it can be perceived as a 'nice to have'

Appears less likely to be a skills or capability issue preventing organisations from sharing learning of understanding context (and therefore **less need for formal training**)

Learning from others or understanding context only beneficial if directly relevant to specific characteristics of their organisation. More difficult for organisations to envisage support or help that is **sufficiently tailored**

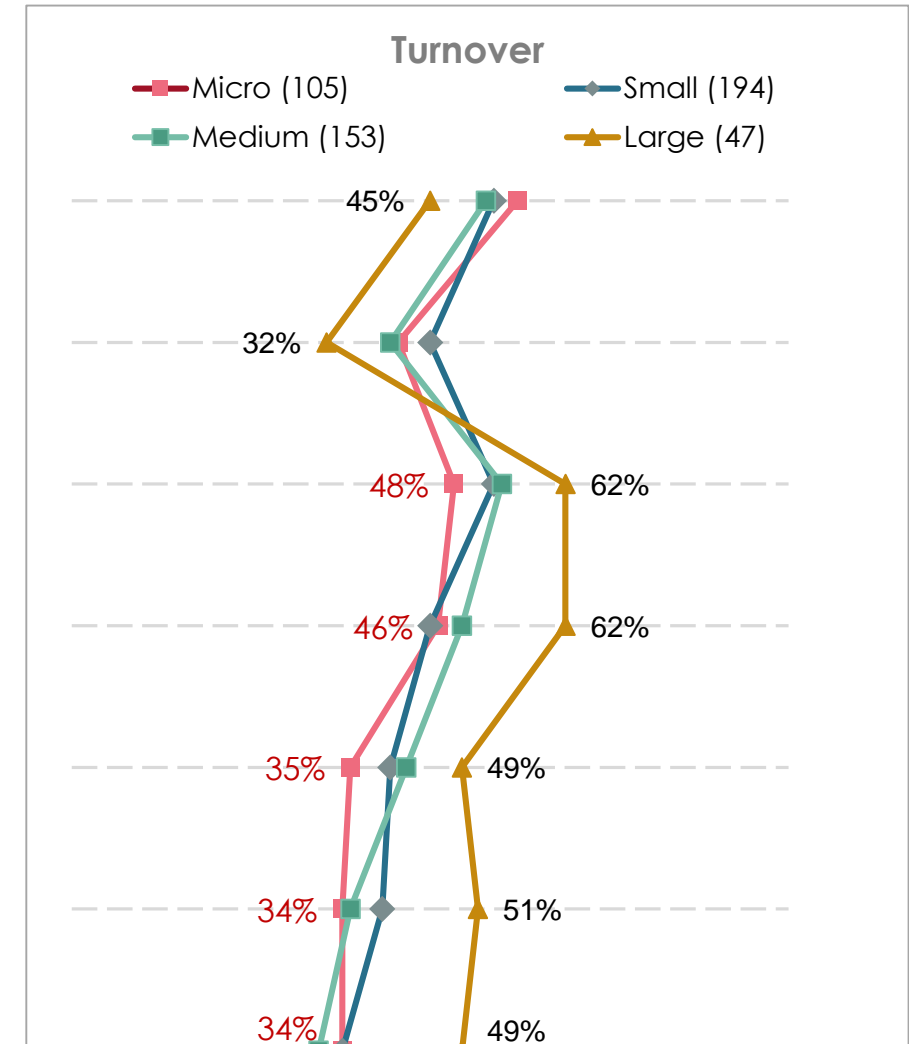
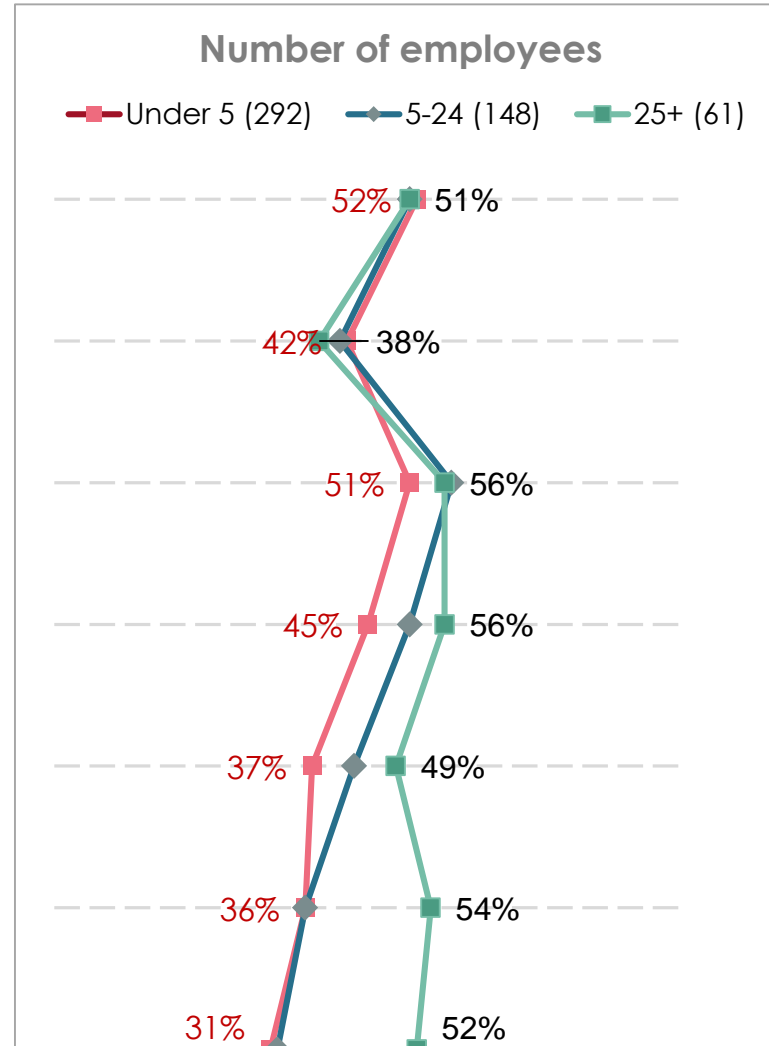
**Potentially as important for the Fund to consider how it can help remove barriers to accessing help and support (i.e. lack of time and capacity) as much as how it can provide support solutions**

# Appetite for support and help is broadly consistent across type of organisations <sup>29</sup>

The level of interest in support and help in using data and evidence for different purposes is broadly consistent across different organisations. Larger organisations show slightly higher levels of interest, however there are no significant and consistent differences by country portfolio, activity or beneficiary type.

% Very useful (9 or 10 out of 10)

- To support funding applications, raise funding or revenue
- To provide information / reports required by funders/commissioners
- To improve what you do and how you do it
- To understand the needs of those you want to reach and the solutions they want
- To understand who you want to reach / support
- To understand what else is going on in your context or community
- To inform /influence others through sharing learning



Q4. How useful do you think it would be for your organisation to receive help or support with using evidence and insight for each of the following purposes?

Base all respondents (523)



# Reasons for not being interested in help or support:

## The majority.... (mainly micro & small organisations)

- Do not understand how they could benefit; are unclear how using data and evidence could help their organisation
- Believe they are too small to benefit
- Assume the support provided will be intended for larger organisations with more formal data and evidence processes in place

We run a **village hall** so the needs of a small community are generally well known and not complex.  
(Small), survey open-ended)

It's a very small event and **there's not much data to be gathered**. Certainly not to justify a formal programme.  
(Small, survey open-ended)

## The minority.... (medium and large organisations)

- Feel they are sufficiently trained, skilled and equipped
- Do not feel the Fund will be able to provide appropriate support (want practical not theoretical support)

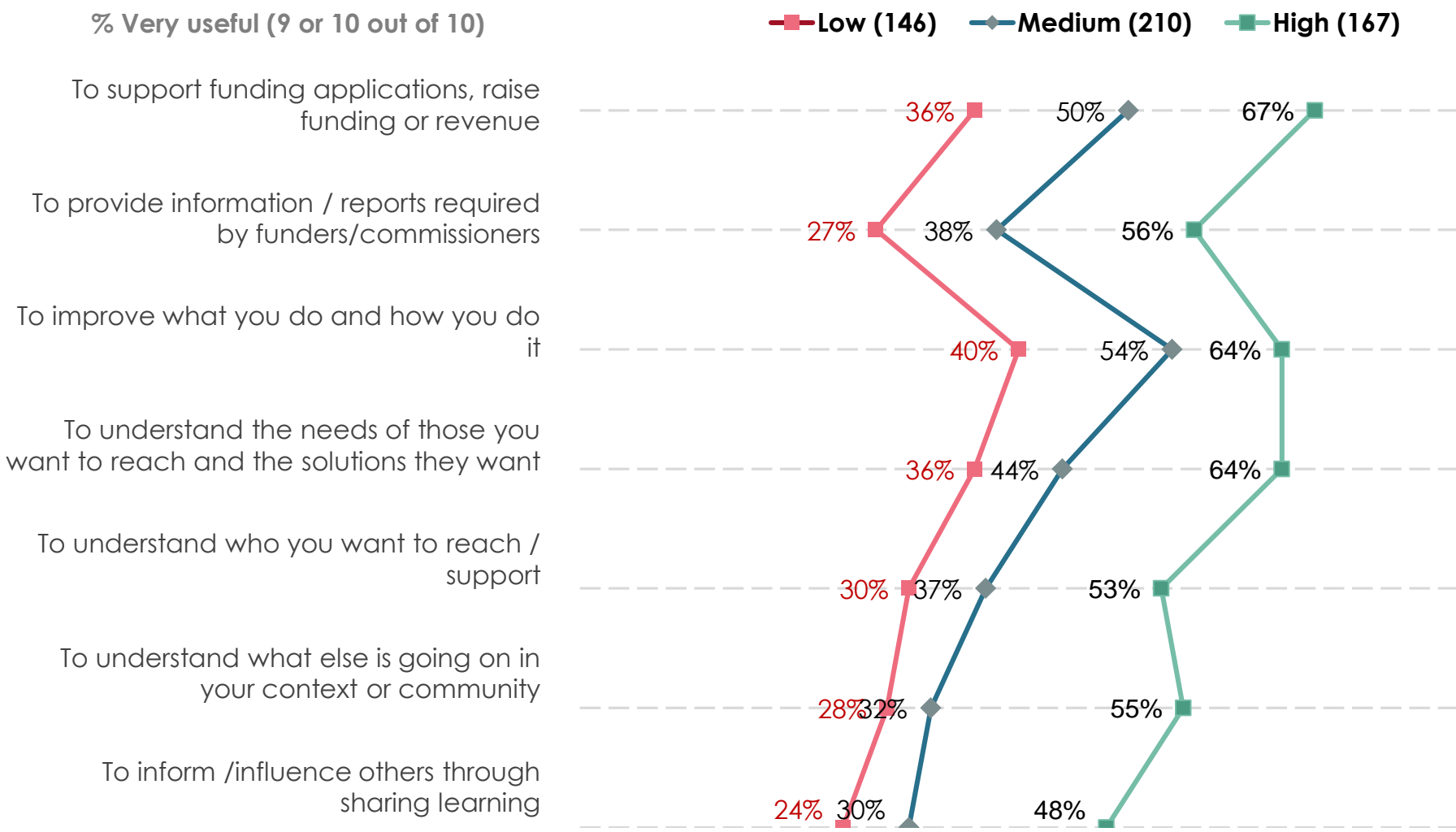
We already **understand the principles** of evidence and data, we don't think another organisation coming at issues from an **abstract or academic stance** would understand anything better.  
(Medium, survey open-ended)

I think **we're pretty damn good** at these things – all decisions are based on evidence and evaluation. We're not perfect but we're doing the best we can and are open to change.  
(Large, Standard, England)

**We have a lot of experience** and in house expertise from volunteers who can provide the help and support we need. It's extremely important that we have the data and insight needed to further our objectives and we feel **confident that we have the people and skills required** to do so. Data and insight is not all about accessing funds and reporting on this. It's part of everything we do. (Medium, survey open-ended)

# Organisations with the highest levels of current engagement with data and evidence activities are most interested in support and help

Consistently organisations that are currently using data and evidence to the greatest extent demonstrate highest levels of appetite for support and vice-versa. This is the case for all purposes of data and evidence.



Those already using data and evidence to a greater extent have bought into the potential benefits – need product/service led strategy for support

Those using data and evidence to a lesser extent are likely to be less aware of the potential benefits – need benefit led strategy for support

Q4. How useful do you think it would be for your organisation to receive help or support with using evidence and insight for each of the following purposes?

Base all respondents (523)

## Micro & small organisations not currently using data and evidence or interested in support:

- Language barrier: phrase 'data & evidence' does not resonate, associated with sector jargon and funder requirements
- Current practices (e.g. informal conversations with local residents, anecdotal feedback) not associated with 'data and evidence'
- Time poor and reliant on volunteers

However, many appreciated opportunity of qualitative research interview to reflect on issues not ordinarily considered

*Why would all of this benefit us... but I'd be interested if I understood why we should do it?  
(Micro, Simple, Wales)*

*This discussion [telephone depth] has been **useful for making me think about it all...**perhaps there are other things we should be thinking about  
(Micro, Potential)*

**The least engaged need education or awareness raising to understand the potential relevance and benefits of using data and evidence: an opportunity to reflect on how to use currently available data or think about what is realistically possible (not be daunted or overwhelmed)**

# Customers express interest in a range of types of support and help

Although there is greatest interest in free online resources, this is closely followed by good practice/case studies and around half are very interested in skills development and consultancy/tailored advice. **There is no single type of support which will meet all customers needs, as different organisations and individuals have different preferences.**



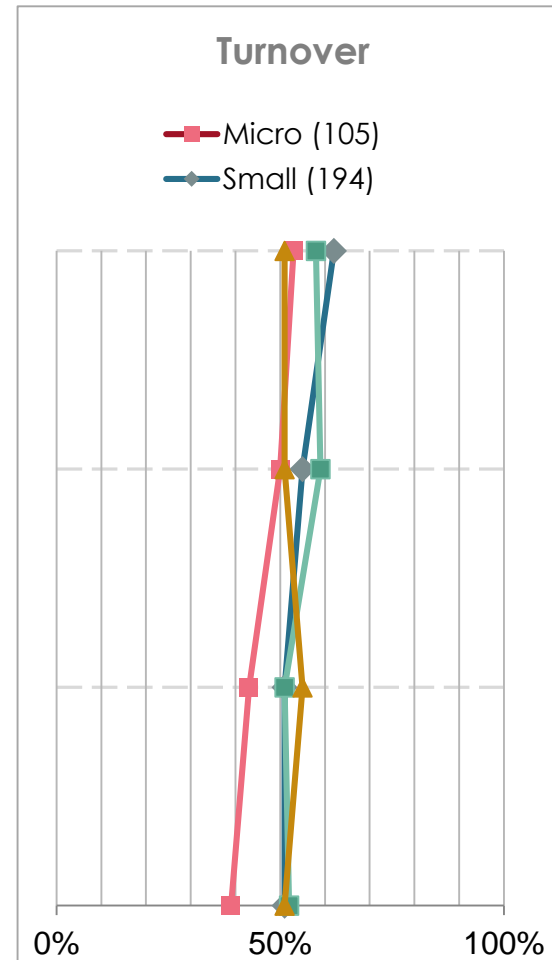
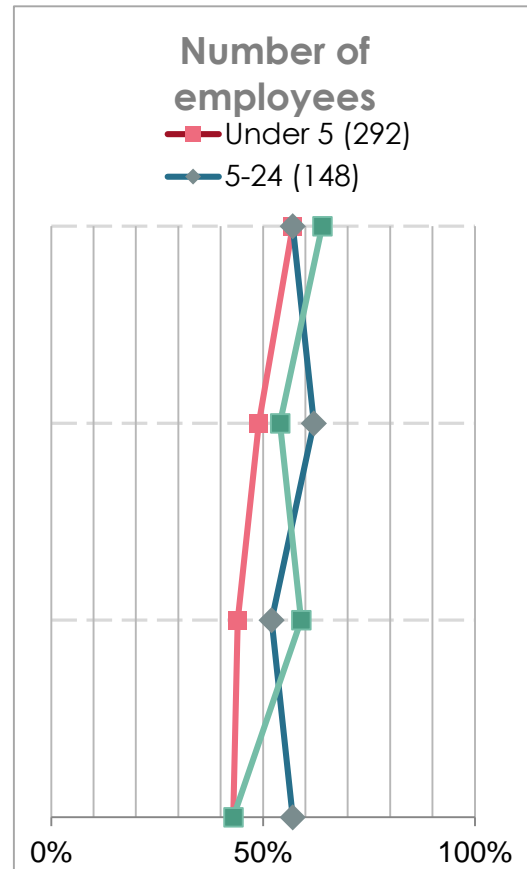
**Q5.** Thinking about help or support with using insight, data and evidence [to.....] how interested would your organisation be in the following types of support?

**Base** all respondents (523)

# Level of interest in types of help & support consistent across organisations

There is significant interest in all types of help and support across different types of organisations – there are some slight variations according to organisational size and grant funding. However, appetite does not vary consistently by country portfolio, activity or beneficiary type.

% 'Very interested' for any purpose



- Most appealing to organisations that record activity but don't always use it
- Most appealing to organisations that describe themselves as 'evidence driven' & have desire for better access to D&E
- Experienced Standard >£10k NLCF grant holders
- Most appealing to larger organisations with >25 employees
- Most appealing to organisations with >50% income from grant funding
- Least appealing to Micro organisations and those with low levels of current engagement with data & evidence)

Q4. How useful do you think it would be for your organisation to receive help or support with using evidence and insight for each of the following purposes?

Base all respondents (523)



# Great variation in personal and organisational preferences for how support is provided

There is significant interest in all types of support and help. Although meeting the specific needs of organisations will be challenging as many organisations want tailored support – direct relevance to the individual organisation is key

Having access to **online** training has been the easiest, most cost effective way of accessing training and information for our organisation as we are all on part time hours  
(Small, survey open-ended)

Definitely more **tailored help** (e.g. for rural areas, villages, small organisations) would be useful.  
(Small, survey open-ended)

**Tailored support is essential** as when dealing with disabled participants data collection methods have to be inline with their ability.  
(Large, survey open-ended)

Support would need to **fit our needs**, our **local** priorities and be given **in our community**.  
(Large, survey open-ended)

I want it to be tailored and to be able to talk to someone **face-to-face**  
(Micro, Simple, Wales)

Access to good, accessible **online materials** would be very helpful... e.g. an **easy to follow guide** to government data, how to find and access locally focused online data such as local health stats and income inequality stats.  
(Micro, survey open-ended)

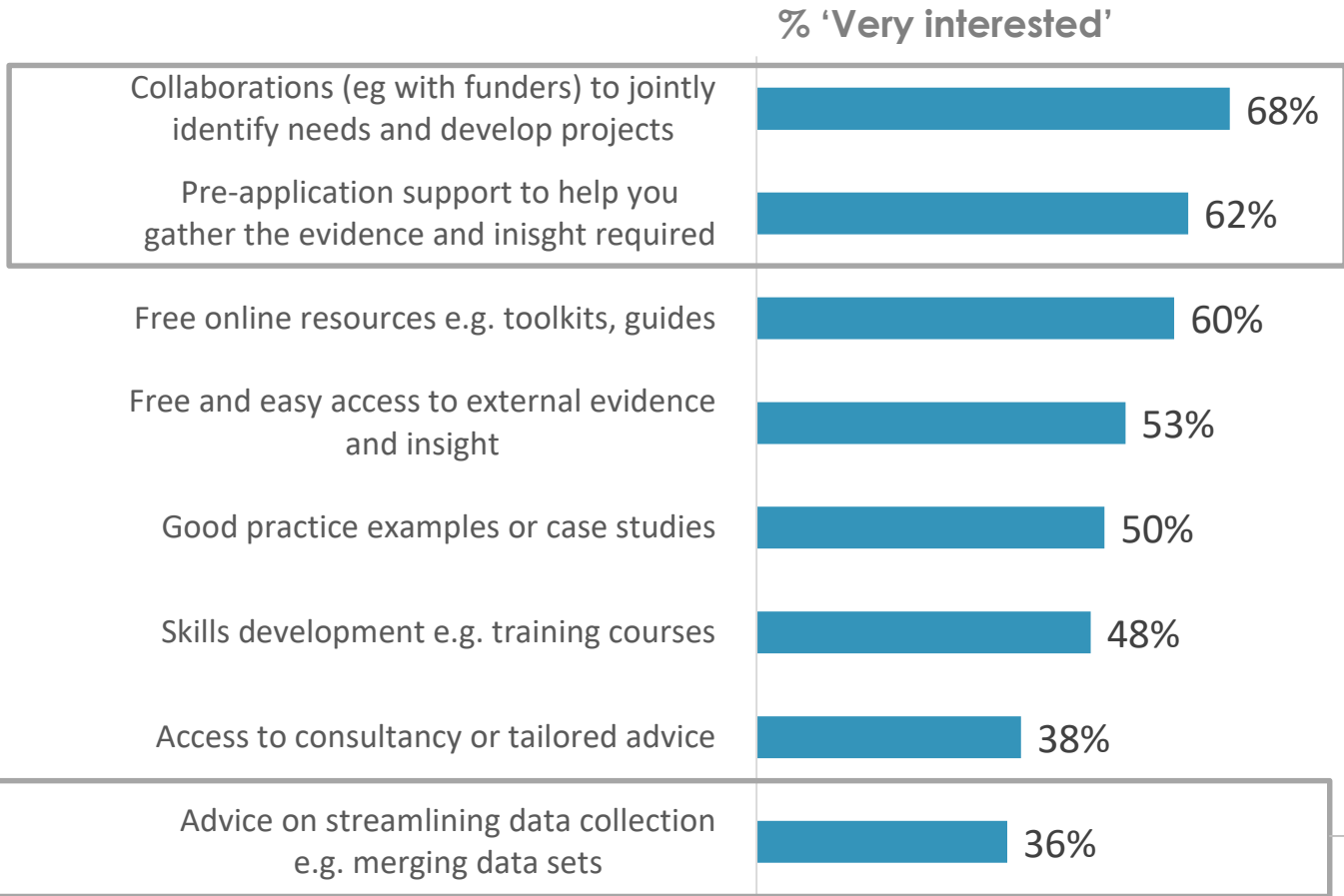
A photograph of a professional event. In the foreground, a woman with long black braids, wearing a green top, is looking towards the right. In the background, a man in a yellow shirt and blue lanyard is looking towards the right. To the right, the back of a man's head and shoulder in a white shirt with a blue collar is visible. A semi-transparent blue banner with white text is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Support solutions for specific purposes

**53%**  
Very useful

- Consistently high levels of interest across organisations: the overarching reason for many why they would use data and evidence
- Particularly appealing to ‘Enquirers’
- Qualitatively: desire to improve motivating for all

*We're always trying to improve  
(Micro, Simple, Wales)*



### Particularly interesting to:

- those not currently receiving grant funding
- those that have not applied or been unsuccessful in applying for Fund grants
- those wanting to understand context or local community

**Linking organisations working on similar projects** so that funding can be used more effectively  
(Medium, survey open-ended)

For some larger organisations this helps overcome a significant barrier to more effective use of internal tracking and monitoring data

**To overcome industry issues with jargon potential to position support around ‘improving’ especially for smaller / less experienced organisations**

**48%**  
Very useful

- More appealing at either end of the spectrum:
  - Most useful for larger (over £1m turnover) and UK Wide organisations
  - Also appealing to those unsuccessful in applying for Simple Fund grants (<£10K) (often smaller)
- Nearly half interested in help with using qualitative information – particularly the case for larger organisations (e.g. how to use case studies, focus groups to provide more robust evidence)
- Around two in five interested in help to establish unmet need

% 'Very interested'



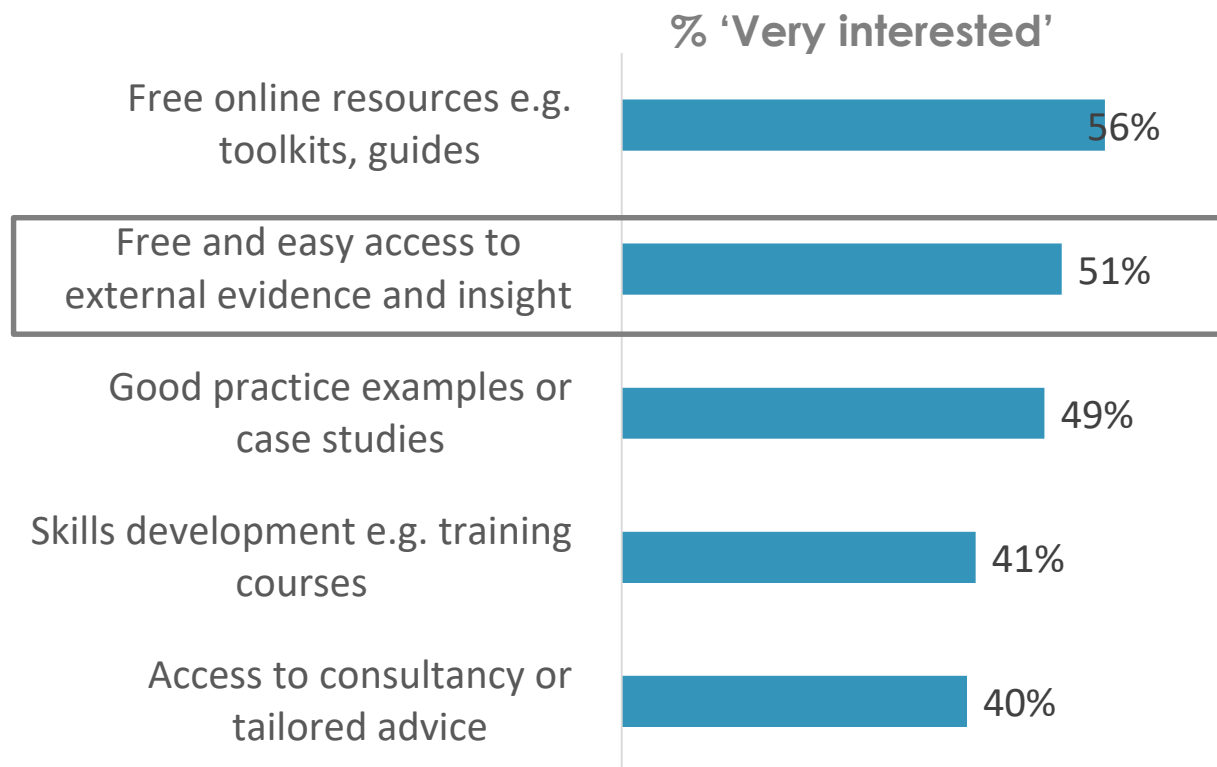
### Smaller organisations:

- Currently doing this through informal practices e.g. using own intuition/day to day experiences – less likely to understand how they can be supported on day to day basis
- However, do need support in demonstrating need as part of funding applications
- Example of an organisation needing help to work with sections of the local community which they are not currently in touch with (via 'facilitated conversation') to understand their needs

*We were recently turned down for a grant because we didn't show enough evidence of the need – but what does that mean? How do we evidence the need?  
(Micro, Simple, England)*

**48%**  
Very useful

- Most useful for larger (over £1m turnover) and UK Wide organisations
- Particularly appealing to 'Enquirers'



- As with understanding needs, smaller organisations currently doing this through informal practices – less likely to understand how they could be supported by the Fund
- Around half are interested in access to external evidence and insight. Qualitatively, this often relates to finding specific local statistics and how these compare the national picture. Navigating publically available data to find relevant statistics can be problematic, e.g. finding:
  - Childhood obesity figures
  - Prevalence of sexual abuse
  - Sport participation



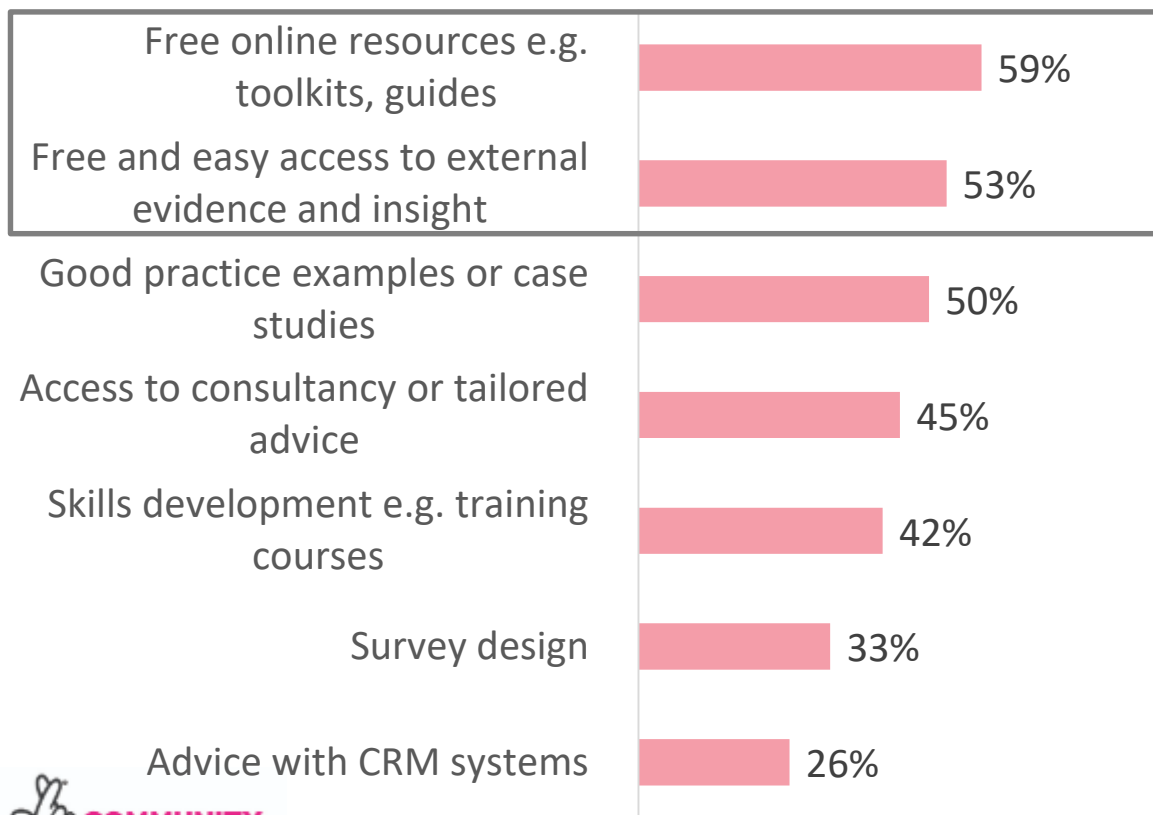
# FUNDER REQUIREMENTS

To support funding applications, raise funding or revenue

51%  
Very  
useful

- Most interest from two different groups of organisations at either end of spectrum:
  - micro organisations (N.B. including a high proportion of constituted groups/clubs rather than registered charities and those not currently in receipt of grant funding)
  - those with heavy reliance on grant funding (>50% of income)
- Half are interested in access to external evidence and insight (more popular than help with CRM systems or survey design)

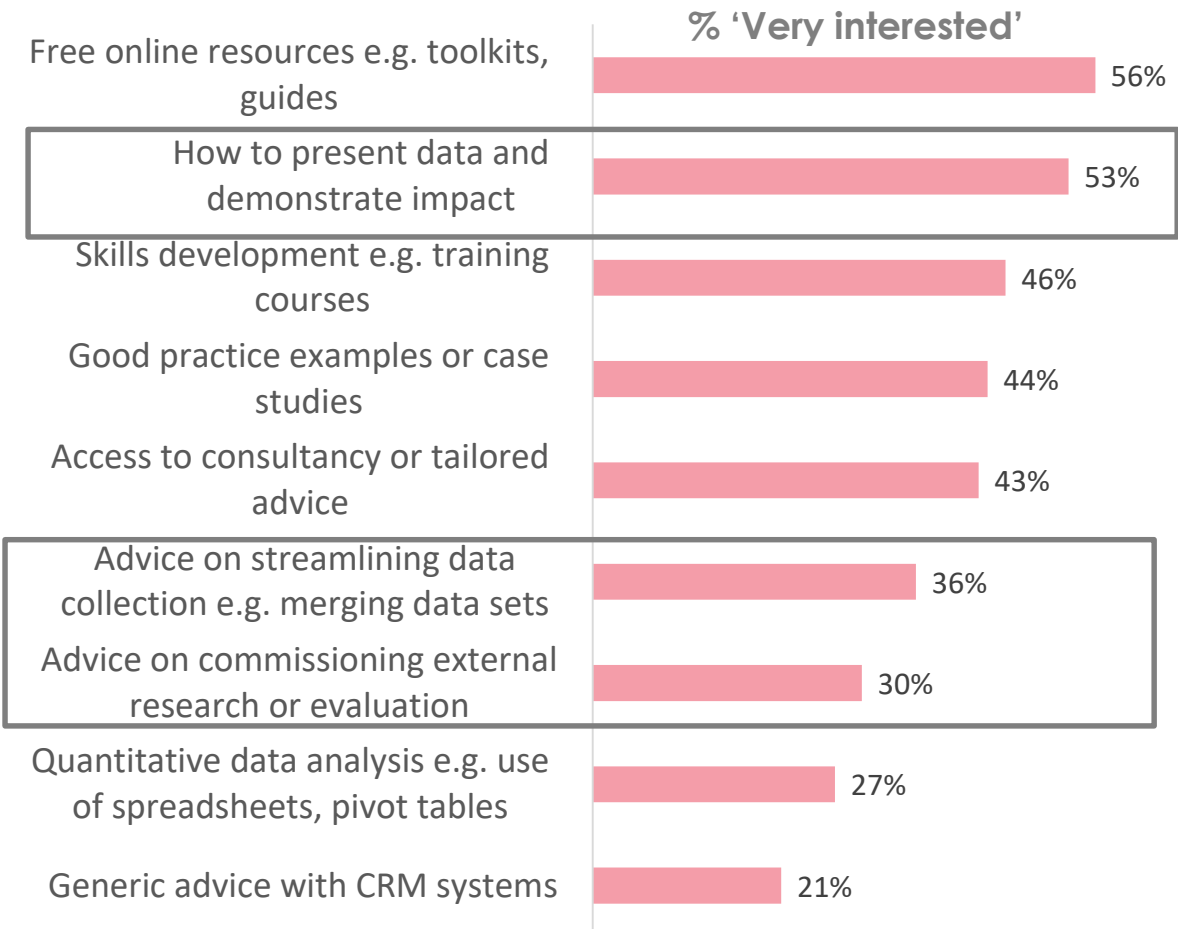
% 'Very interested'



- Smaller organisations express a need for help with understanding the funding application process including: understanding the data requirements; comprehension of language; and reducing the time and resource burden required to complete applications
- Organisations that are more familiar and experienced with the grant application process are more likely to want support to help prove the need - often in the form of toolkits and guides rather than skills development or training

41%  
Very  
useful

- Most useful for those with heavy reliance on grant funding >50% turnover
- Higher interest amongst those working in areas of 'Disadvantage' and 'Advice, Rights and Responsibilities'
- N.B. No differences across size of organisation or whether received the Fund grants

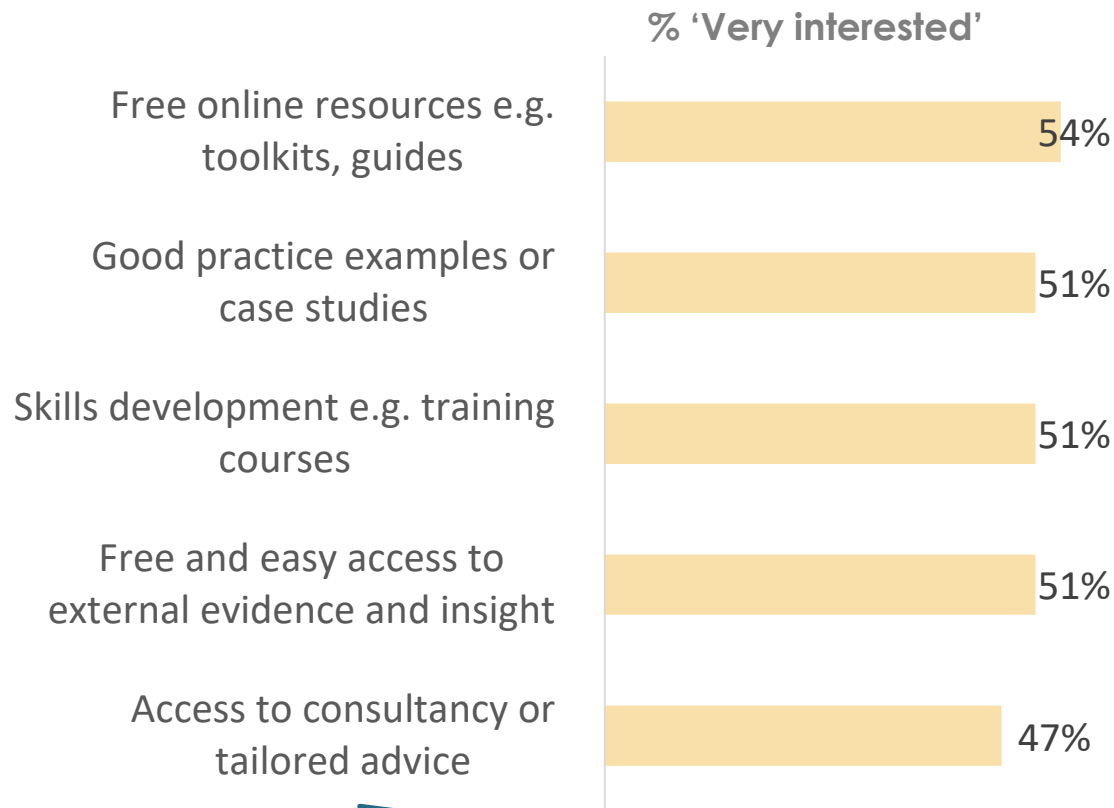


- Providing reporting and monitoring information is a significant frustration (although less so for the Fund specifically). However, it is apparent that it is not always being used effectively internally
- Around half are interested in help with presenting data to demonstrate impact – more often larger organisations, and associated with the need for advice with external research/evaluations
- Around a third express interest in advice on streamlining data collection – this includes helping organisations to ensure the process is less burdensome for 'front-line staff' and collected consistently. Ensuring funder requirements align with other internal processes
- In terms of online resources some express a need for feedback survey templates to help them capture data

Funding requirements often perceived to be 'necessary bug bear' – help to ensure recording and monitoring contributes to organisational learning could be a more motivating message

38%  
Very useful

- Most useful for large organisations with over 25 employees and a turnover of £1m+
- Greater interest amongst those who are currently using data and evidence to review activity but not using it to plan for the future
- Greater interest amongst those who believe their organisation wants better access to data & evidence
- Around half interested in each of the possible ways of providing support or help



- Larger organisations express a desire to understand the bigger picture and how their work contributes/compares at a regional / national level e.g. benchmarking data or development of national data bases
- Smaller organisations more likely to be using intuition and personal knowledge / experience so less likely to see how the Fund can provide support or help
- For more ambitious smaller groups, appetite to understand what else is being provided by others in the community to avoid duplication of support, share best practice

*On the whole we try and make the most of what's in front of our eyes... **we're foot soldiers**, we talk to people (Micro, Simple, England)*

*Help looking at the **wider picture**. Sometimes you are just focused on getting stats related to your funding bid and meeting your targets but sometimes looking wider can give some really unexpected and positive outcomes which happened to us. (Medium, survey open-ended)*

34%  
Very useful

- Most useful for large organisations with over 25 employees and a turnover of £1m+
- Greater interest amongst those who are currently using data and evidence to review activity but do not use it to plan for the future
- There is greatest appetite for online resources to help support sharing of learning and nearly half are interested in support on how to present data & evidence.



- The scale and type of support needed is dependent upon scope and remit of the organisation (i.e. local vs. national)
- Interest in tool to help connect with other relevant groups

*We'd like to join the dots at a national level – some sort of **national directory** to connect us to other groups (Small, Potential, England)*

*A report/ **project finding sharing platform** for organisations to help us share what we have done and learnt (Medium, survey open-ended)*

***Linking local organisations** together to **share resources/experiences** and meet up (Small, survey open-ended)*

Some more specific needs arose from the qualitative interviews and co-creation workshop which are worth noting by the Fund

- How to gather robust data from beneficiaries with low literacy levels (due to a range of reasons) in an efficient and non time consuming way
- How to measure 'soft outcomes' – particularly for smaller organisations that may not be familiar with or are daunted by the language surrounding validated tools for measuring outcome and impact
- How to develop more sophisticated IT systems in order to record and track beneficiary progress and feedback efficiently (but without the need to invest in major CRM systems)
- Training on how to use social media to advertise services more effectively and reach communities not currently in touch with and increase uptake of services

Some question how the Fund is using the data and evidence it collects via the grant funding process – they feel the Fund could do more to share its learning?





# Barriers & challenges



# Lack of time and resources is the most significant barrier

The most significant barrier to taking up support and help with using data and evidence is lack of time, resource and capacity. This is true for all types of organisations, but especially for smaller organisations (in terms of both number of employees and turnover) who are often focussed on 'doing the day job'

## % 'Definitely a barrier' for any type of support



**Finding time** is always a barrier to small organisations such as ours.  
(Small, survey open-ended)

It's important to understand that organisations are interested in using data and evidence but **capacity**, especially in relation to human capital, is always a challenge.  
(Medium, survey open-ended)

For small organisations in particular there needs to be a **balance between the time and resources** that data gathering and analysis require and the **capacity** within the organisation.  
(Small, survey open-ended)

Q6. Would any of the following be a barrier to you / your organisation taking up [type of support]?

Base all respondents (523)

Not having people with appropriate skills, knowledge and ability to take up support opportunities

A lack of infrastructure - particularly IT

A perception that data and evidence can be a confusing, complex area

- Whilst only 12% of organisations think that a lack of support from people within the organisation is a barrier a lack of clarity about how the support will help (20%) or a belief that it will be insufficiently tailored (32%) are more likely to act as barriers.
- There is a call for easy to navigate bite-sized support

Ongoing time and resource required to implement learning and advice effectively

- Some organisations want to see specific grants and funding to overcome this

*Internal **resources and skill-set** is a problem  
(Medium, survey open-ended)*

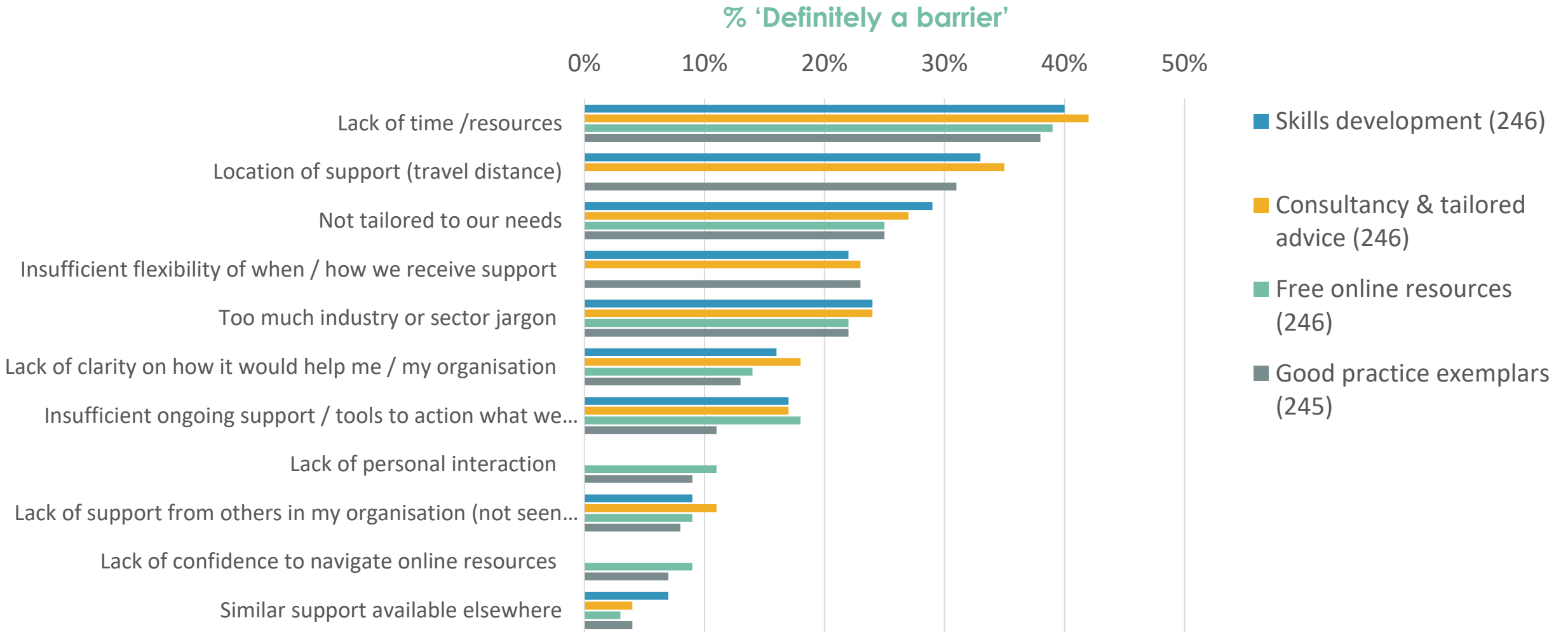
*Our organisation lacks **infrastructure, access to IT and admin support** which all act as a barrier  
(Small, survey open-ended)*

*This is a mine-field for small organisations who often lack resources to make best use of them. Training that makes it **simple and straightforward** is the answer as this can often become **over complicated**  
(Medium, survey open-ended)*

***Grants that cover people's time to learn and implement actions...** not just external training courses/consultants... the biggest barrier is staff capacity  
(Medium, survey open-ended)*

# Customers face similar barriers for all types of support

The barriers organisations face in taking up support with using data and evidence are broadly consistent across all the different types of support asked about in the survey. Lack of time, the location of support, lack of tailoring or inflexibility and too much jargon are the most frequent barriers.



The use of **JARGON** makes support and training less accessible for smaller, less experienced organisations (especially unsuccessful applicants)

The **LOCATION** of support can be problematic for both for practical/ time/ cost implications but also to ensure it is relevant

The data and jargon often required is geared to people who work in the third sector not geared to small local community organisations. It is daunting. They seem to be written to exclude people who do not know the **jargon**  
(Micro, survey open-ended)

[I want] forms that are easier to understand, **less jargon**  
(Small, survey open-ended)

**Location of training** is a huge problem due to our location and the expense of attending is prohibitive to our organisation  
(Medium, survey open-ended)

As a small charity we would really appreciate **free and local training** that we are notified about at least 6 weeks in advance of due to time constraints  
(Medium, survey open-ended)

Support needs to be **localised**, many organisations do not have the **time or money** to travel. Hold training events where **local groups can share best practice**, data etc.  
(Medium, survey open-ended)





## Summary and recommendations

'Data & Evidence' in itself is not motivating but 'improving what we do' is

The Fund needs to carefully consider how its support is positioned and be able to **clearly articulate why it thinks organisations should use data and evidence**. Communications and messaging needs to be focussed on the reason or purpose for using data and evidence especially how it can help organisations improve. Producing data and evidence for funders is often frustrating and not perceived to benefit the organisation themselves – how can the Fund help organisations turn this around?

Current practices driven by grant funding and organisational culture

Currently the extent to which organisations are using data and evidence is strongly influenced by both being in receipt of grant funding and organisational culture. (Size of the organisation influences the nature rather than extent of use.) The Fund needs to **consider the role it wants to play in influencing attitudes towards data & evidence**. The survey demonstrates there is an appetite for support, however, this should be balanced with the small minority of larger organisations that are resistant to 'being told what to do'.

There is no clear cut 'winner' in terms of solutions for providing support

There is widespread interest in help or support with using data and evidence for a range of purposes and an appetite for this to be provided via a range of methods (e.g. online support, good practice examples, skills development and consultancy). This interest in support is broadly consistent across different types of organisations. This provides a good platform for **the Fund to make a judgement about where it wants to make the most significant difference** to the sector. However, **organisations want tailored support**; the challenge will be ensuring organisations can easily identify and access relevant support.



Those currently least engaged with data & evidence activities have least interest in support

The organisations that are currently engaged with using data and evidence show the greatest appetite for support and help. The Fund should consider **how it can reach those organisations that are not currently engaged with using data and evidence activities** and have least appetite for support. This group of generally smaller groups and clubs, that are less likely to be in receipt of funding, have less awareness of how data and evidence could help them – is there a role for the Fund in thought leadership and awareness raising?

Understanding context & shared learning not seen as a priority

Although organisations see the potential in using data and evidence to help them to understand the context/community in which they operate and for sharing learning this is not a priority area for support and help for the majority. For smaller organisations it appears to be more about enabling and removing barriers rather than providing tools or specific support solutions. It is the larger organisations that express an interest in specific support solutions such as online resources, toolkits and guides.

Language and jargon is a significant barrier to accessing support

Although time, resources and capacity are the most significant barriers to organisations taking up help or support with data and evidence, the use of jargon is also a major issue. This is particularly the case for smaller organisations and those entering the grant funding process for the first time. **The Fund needs to ensure the language used does not alienate these organisations and support is accessible to all.** It needs to demonstrate it understands grassroots organisations (not too theoretical) and avoid potential to be seen to be out of touch with the reality of 'work on the ground'.

Support solutions	Target organisations
<p><b>Awareness raising and engagement programme:</b> encouraging organisations to reflect on how they can use data and evidence to improve what they do (especially how to effectively use information already collected e.g. informal, anecdotal evidence)</p>	<p>Micro &amp; small organisations,</p>
<p><b>Pre-application support:</b> helping organisations navigate the application process and associated language, including advice on how to gather the evidence and how to present it as part of a compelling case using the appropriate terminology</p>	<p>Smaller organisations especially inexperienced or unsuccessful in applying for grants</p>
<p><b>Local collaboration to identify needs:</b> helping organisations to come together to jointly understand the needs of local communities and develop projects (and put forward a case for funding).</p>	<p>Smaller organisations especially inexperienced or unsuccessful in applying for grants</p>
<p><b>Free and easy access to external data:</b> helping organisations navigate and access publically available data</p>	<p>All organisations</p>
<p><b>Identifying unmet need:</b> helping organisations to identify unmet need using more sophisticated and structured tools, including understand how their work fits within the bigger picture and streamlining data collection processes</p>	<p>Larger organisations, experienced in grant funding</p>
<p><b>Demonstrating impact:</b> supporting organisations present a convincing case to funders using robust data and evidence, including advice on commissioning external research and evaluation</p>	<p>In receipt of grant funding (&amp; larger organisations)</p>
<p><b>Qualitative research:</b> advice on how to gather and use qualitative insight</p>	<p>All organisations</p>
<p><b>Using monitoring &amp; recoding data:</b> helping organisations to make better internal use of data required by funders</p>	<p>Grant holders</p>



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