Results of the 2011 Evaluation Capabilities Survey

Introduction

A rising demand for high quality evaluation has generated interest in the knowledge, skills and dispositions associated with evaluation excellence. Four fifths of respondents to the 2009 membership survey wished the European Evaluation Society to pursue work on this topic. http://www.europeanevaluation.org/library/ees-surveys.htm

Accordingly EES sponsored panel discussions at the 2010 Prague evaluation conference and held consultations with the Network of Evaluation Societies in Europe (NESE). Next, a proposed capabilities framework that took account of comments received following the 2009 survey was attached to a letter from the EES President and posted on the website together with a follow up questionnaire.
(Evaluation Capabilities - A message from the President)

The deadline for responses was set at July 31, 2011. By that date 127 submissions had been received. A synthesis of the responses follows.

Role of EES

The proposed framework (Annex 1) is designed to assist in self- development, training and capability building. It is a voluntary, non-prescriptive instrument subject to revision and adaptation. The consensus of the EES Board has long been that all professionalization initiatives should be grounded within national and local contexts so that EES should limit its role to that of a catalyst.

Hence this "quality of practice stream" initiative is only intended to raise awareness and generate a principled debate about the role and content of evaluation in the European space and beyond. As shown in Annex 2, the Society's strictly exploratory and catalytic stance has been validated by 2011 survey results: only 46% of the respondents hold the view that the proposed competencies framework should be actively promoted by EES as it stands.

The evaluation capabilities framework

Unanimity regarding detailed wording of individual capabilities items remains elusive. But the survey results have confirmed broad based support for the overall structure as well as the substantive content of the proposed framework (Annex 3). Twenty two (or 73%) of the capability items received strong support from 70% of the respondents or more while the remaining eight items were endorsed by 50-70 percent of respondents. No addition to the proposed framework was suggested.

Knowledge, practice and dispositions were once again validated as the main poles of evaluation capabilities. Within these three domains mastering the antecedents of evaluation quality; demonstrating the capacity to manage and deliver evaluations and understanding the potential and limits of evaluation instruments and tools were the most popular clusters.

Somewhat less valued were appreciation of the role of evaluation in society and interpersonal skills.

The specific capabilities most highly prized were: gathering, using and interpreting evidence with care and judgment; reporting fairly and encouraging effective evaluation use: identifying relevant questions; assessing the evaluation context and identifying the program logic and upholding ethical standards and democratic values.

Bringing up the rear were awareness of evaluation history and trends; contributing to the evaluation community; appreciating linkages with the social sciences and reaching out to clients and stakeholders.

Promoting evaluation excellence

The 2011 questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the priority actions required to promote evaluation excellence. Towards enhancing the quality of evaluation practice the survey disclosed exceptionally strong support for harmonized evaluation guidelines. Sharing of good practices through connectivity among evaluators, mentoring and improved access to quality assurance advice also evinced substantial support. Next in line was enhanced access to quality training highlighted by four fifths of respondents, somewhat ahead of greater availability of academic offerings at the MA and PhD levels (Annex 4).

Support for improved evaluation governance was very low (38%). Evidently, the opinions offered reflected ambivalence about independence as an immutable evaluation quality criterion given the growing demand for formative and real time evaluations and for evaluation capacity building advice within organizations. Also relatively low was support for control over entry to the profession. Only 54% of respondents considered it highly desirable. This confirms 2009 survey results that ranked certification last in the benefits that might accrue from an agreed evaluation capabilities framework.

Conclusion

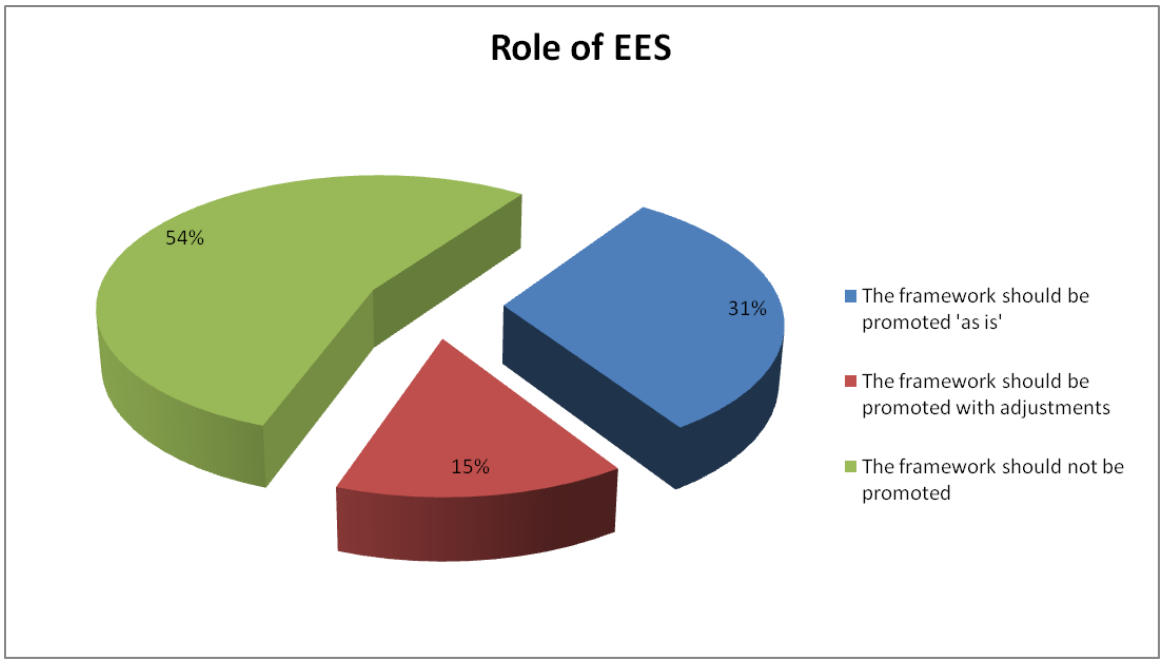
Given the good response rate and the conclusive results evinced by this second survey the EES Board will forward the proposed capabilities framework to NESE prior to its submission to a panel to be held at the 10th EES Biennial Conference in Helsinki.

Annex 1

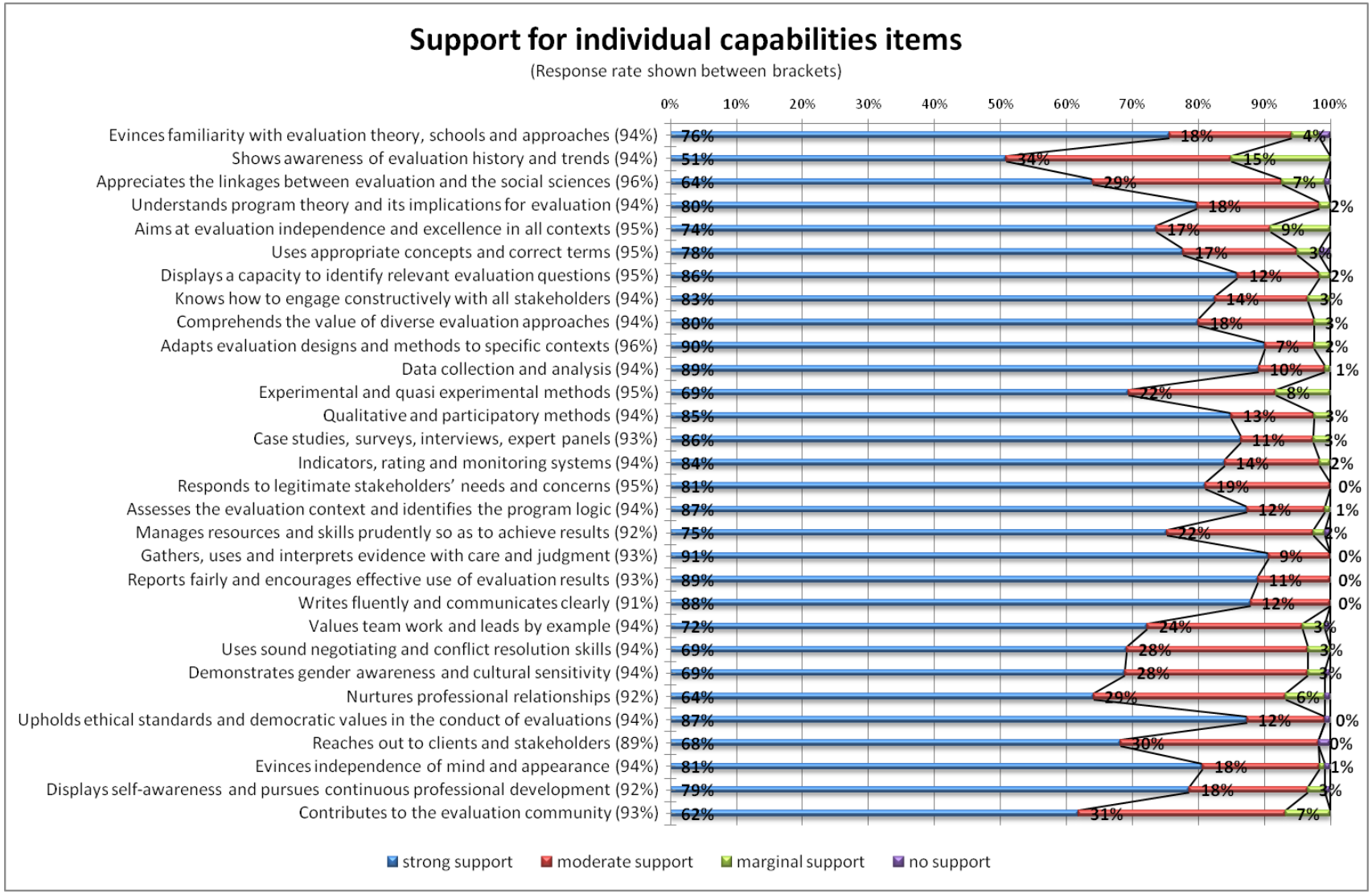
Indicative evaluation capabilities framework

1. Evaluation knowledge
    - 1.1 Appreciates the distinctive role played by evaluation in society
        - 1.11 Exhibits familiarity with evaluation theories, schools and approaches
        - 1.12 Shows awareness of evaluation history and trends
        - 1.13 Appreciates the linkages between evaluation and the social sciences
        - 1.14 Understands program theory and its implications for evaluation
        - 1.15 Aims at evaluation independence and excellence in all contexts
    - 1.2 Masters the antecedents of evaluation quality
        - 1.21 Uses appropriate evaluation concepts and correct evaluation terms
        - 1.22 Displays a capacity to identify relevant evaluation questions
        - 1.23 Knows how to engage constructively with all stakeholders
        - 1.24 Comprehends the value of diverse evaluation approaches
        - 1.25 Adapts evaluation designs and methods to specific contexts
    - 1.3 Understands the potential and limits of evaluation instruments and tools
        - 1.31 Data collection and analysis
        - 1.32 Experimental and quasi experimental methods
        - 1.33 Qualitative, participatory and mixed methods
        - 1.34 Case studies, surveys, interviews, expert panels
        - 1.35 Indicators, rating and monitoring systems
2. Professional practice
    - 2.1 Demonstrates capacity to manage and deliver evaluations
        - 2.11 Responds to legitimate stakeholders' needs and concerns
        - 2.12 Assesses the evaluation context and identifies the program logic
        - 2.13 Manages resources and skills prudently so as to achieve results
        - 2.14 Gathers, uses and interprets evidence with care and judgment
        - 2.15 Reports fairly and encourages effective use of evaluation results
    - 2.2 Displays interpersonal skills
        - 2.21 Writes fluently and communicates clearly
        - 2.22 Values team work and leads by example
        - 2.23 Uses sound negotiating and conflict resolution skills
        - 2.24 Demonstrates gender awareness and cultural sensitivity
        - 2.25 Nurtures professional relationships
3. Dispositions and attitudes
    - 3.1 Upholds ethical standards and democratic values in the conduct of evaluations
    - 3.2 Reaches out to clients and stakeholders
    - 3.3 Evinces independence of mind and appearance
    - 3.4 Displays self-awareness and pursues continuous professional development
    - 3.5 Contributes to the evaluation community

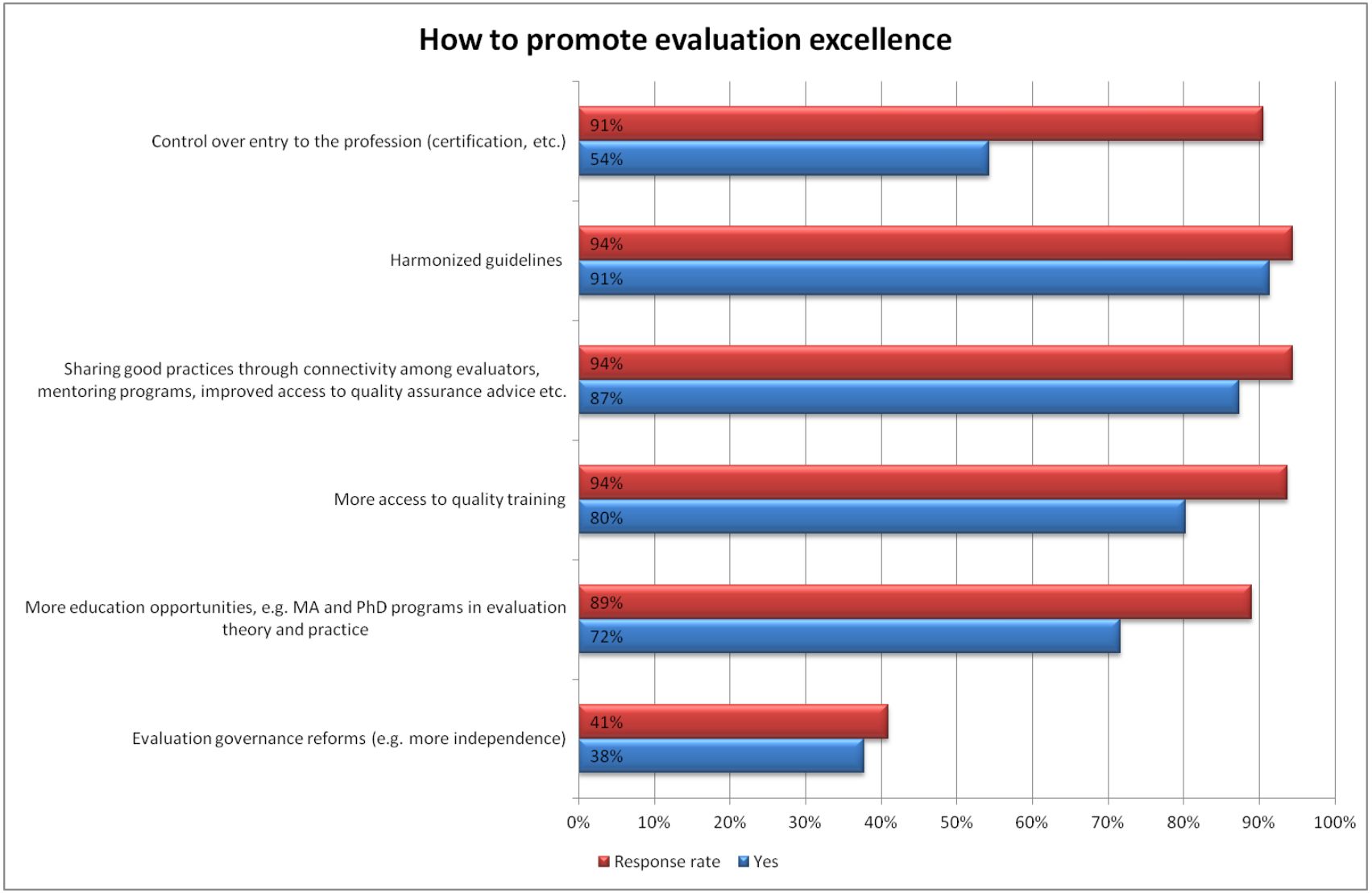
Annex 2


Role of EES
54%
31%
15%
The framework should be promoted 'as is'
The framework should be promoted with adjustments
The framework should not be promoted

Annex 3


Support for individual capabilities items
(Response rate shown between brackets)
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Evinces familiarity with evaluation theory, schools and approaches (94%)
76%
18%
4%
Shows awareness of evaluation history and trends (94%)
51%
34%
15%
Appreciates the linkages between evaluation and the social sciences (96%)
64%
29%
7%
Understands program theory and its implications for evaluation (94%)
80%
18%
2%
Aims at evaluation independence and excellence in all contexts (95%)
74%
17%
9%
Uses appropriate concepts and correct terms (95%)
78%
17%
3%
Displays a capacity to identify relevant evaluation questions (95%)
86%
12%
2%
Knows how to engage constructively with all stakeholders (94%)
83%
14%
3%
Comprehends the value of diverse evaluation approaches (94%)
80%
18%
3%
Adapts evaluation designs and methods to specific contexts (96%)
90%
7%
2%
Data collection and analysis (94%)
89%
10%
1%
Experimental and quasi experimental methods (95%)
69%
22%
8%
Qualitative and participatory methods (94%)
85%
13%
3%
Case studies, surveys, interviews, expert panels (93%)
86%
11%
3%
Indicators, rating and monitoring systems (94%)
84%
14%
2%
Responds to legitimate stakeholders' needs and concerns (95%)
81%
19%
0%
Assesses the evaluation context and identifies the program logic (94%)
87%
12%
1%
Manages resources and skills prudently so as to achieve results (92%)
75%
22%
2%
Gathers, uses and interprets evidence with care and judgment (93%)
91%
9%
0%
Reports fairly and encourages effective use of evaluation results (93%)
89%
11%
0%
Writes fluently and communicates clearly (91%)
88%
12%
0%
Values team work and leads by example (94%)
72%
24%
3%
Uses sound negotiating and conflict resolution skills (94%)
69%
28%
3%
Demonstrates gender awareness and cultural sensitivity (94%)
69%
28%
3%
Nurtures professional relationships (92%)
64%
29%
6%
Upholds ethical standards and democratic values in the conduct of evaluations (94%)
87%
12%
0%
Reaches out to clients and stakeholders (89%)
68%
30%
0%
Evinces independence of mind and appearance (94%)
81%
18%
1%
Displays self-awareness and pursues continuous professional development (92%)
79%
18%
3%
Contributes to the evaluation community (93%)
62%
31%
7%
strong support
moderate support
marginal support
no support

Annex 4


How to promote evaluation excellence
Control over entry to the profession (certification, etc.)
91%
54%
Harmonized guidelines
94%
91%
Sharing good practices through connectivity among evaluators, mentoring programs, improved access to quality assurance advice etc.
94%
87%
More access to quality training
94%
80%
More education opportunities, e.g. MA and PhD programs in evaluation theory and practice
89%
72%
Evaluation governance reforms (e.g. more independence)
41%
38%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Response rate
Yes