

Identifying the Evaluation Capacity of Community Health Organizations

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OBJECTIVE

- To examine the extent to which community-based health and health care improvement programs have the capacity and will to produce rigorous evidence of their effectiveness

BACKGROUND

- The Local Funding Partnerships (LFP) program, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, provides funding for innovative program models to improve the health and health care of vulnerable populations
- More information is needed on community-based programs' capacity to evaluate models of service delivery and produce evidence of effectiveness
- The federal Social Innovation Fund (created by the current administration) is seeking evidence of effective programs for improving health outcomes
- Models that are shown to be effective may receive funding from the Social Innovation Fund for replication across the country

STUDY DESIGN

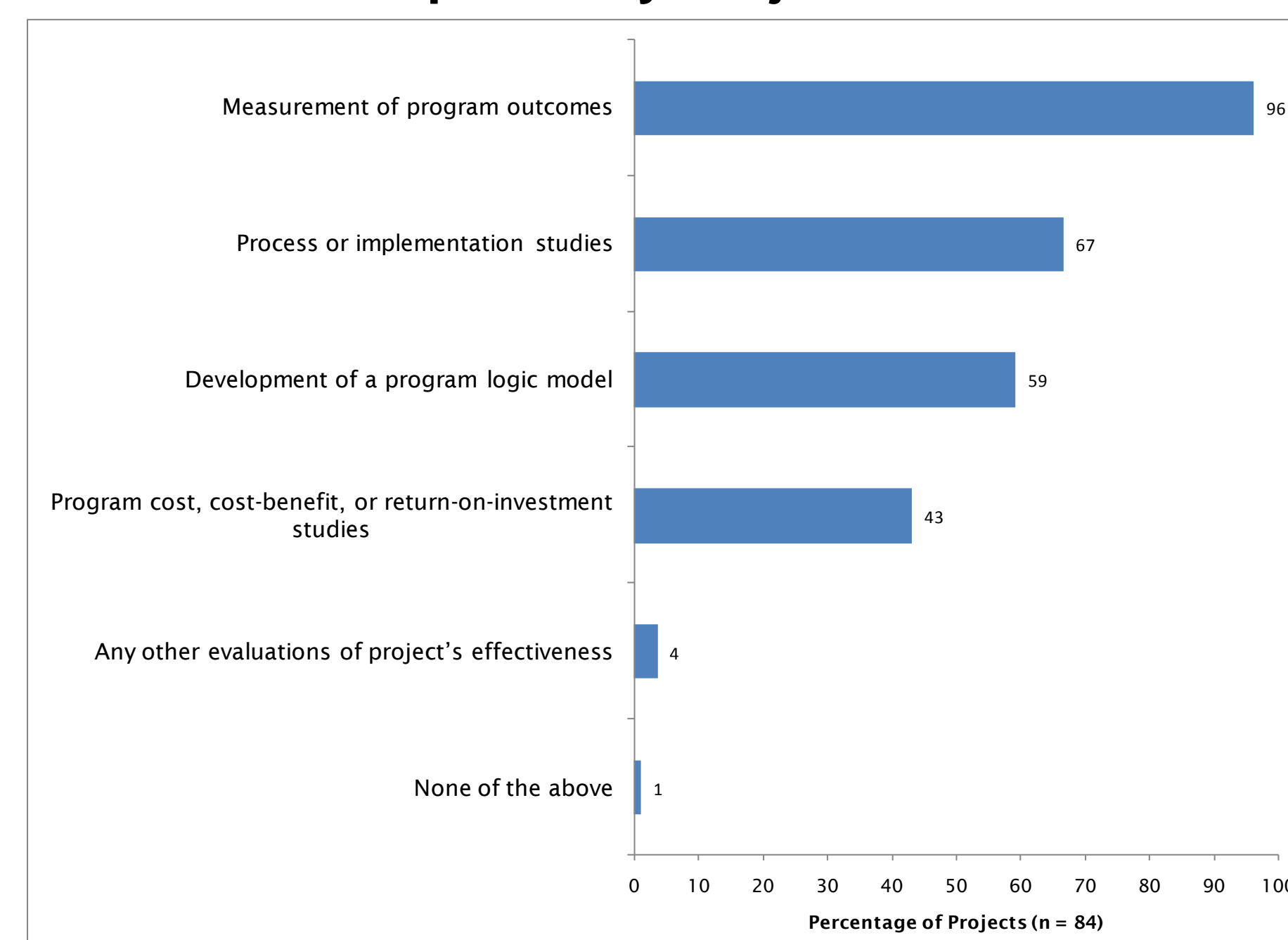
- We conducted a survey with the project directors of 86 LFP grantees funded from 2003 to 2008
- The 45-minute telephone survey contained questions on the project intervention, whether the project completed an evaluation, the type of evaluation, and how the evaluation results were used and disseminated
- The survey was administered from November 2009 to January 2010 and achieved a 98% response rate
- This research study was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

FINDINGS

Principal Finding

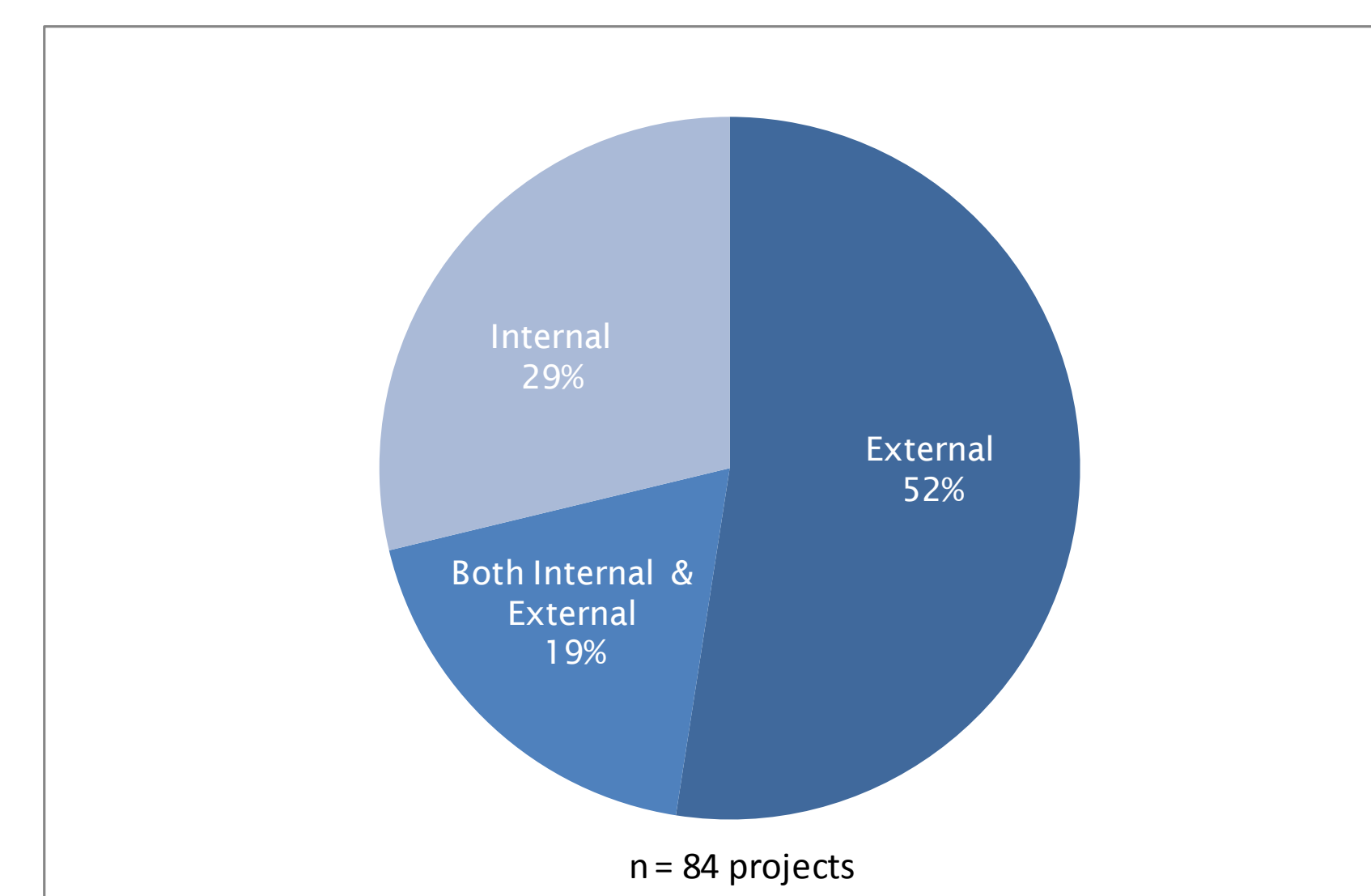
- The majority of community grantees are conducting evaluations to demonstrate evidence of effectiveness, and these evaluation efforts are being used by grantees to support the future sustainability of their projects

Figure 1: Types of Evaluation Activities Reported by Projects



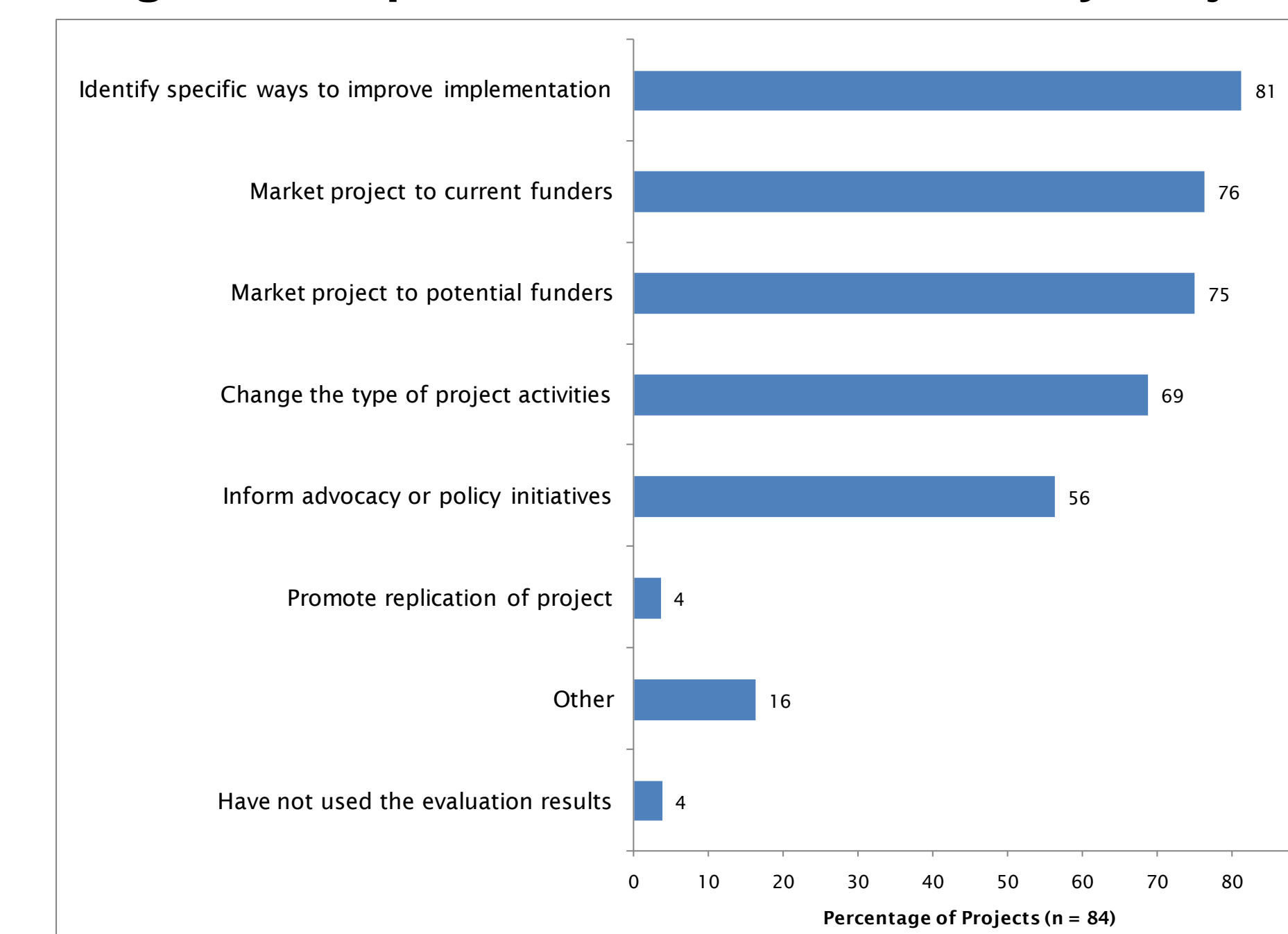
- Almost all projects surveyed reported having an evaluation that measures program outcomes (Figure 1)
- More than half of projects hired an independent evaluator (52%) to undertake the evaluation (Figure 2), 64% of whom were academic consultants

Figure 2: Organizations Conducting Evaluations



- Many projects have organizational capacity for evaluation: 69% had evaluation funding in their operating budgets and 84% report one or more staff are trained in evaluation or measurement (most often in graduate school)
- All projects reported conducting ongoing data collection to assess type of services (84%), client characteristics (66%), program outcomes based on survey and administrative data, (50%), cost data (37%), and medical outcomes (33%)
- Among completed grants, the factor most commonly credited (38%) for sustaining operations was evidence of effectiveness
- The most common uses of the evaluation were to improve the project's implementation (81%), market to current funders (76%), and market to future funders (75%) (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Reported Use of Evaluations By Projects



CONCLUSIONS

- Grantees in the LFP program recognize the importance of producing evidence of effectiveness and have varying levels of capacity for conducting rigorous evaluations
- More than half of the LFP projects have commissioned independent evaluators to examine their effectiveness (however, this study does not report on the quality of the evaluations)
- Some projects in this program may be producing evidence of effectiveness that could help gain access to federal funding for replicating their models

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