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STEM Equity Evaluation Portal:

Results of a public consultation survey

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Background

The STEM Equity Evaluation Portal (the Portal) will be an online evaluation tool for STEM equity programs, which will also act as a national repository of evaluations, developed by the Office of the Women in STEM Ambassador (the Office).

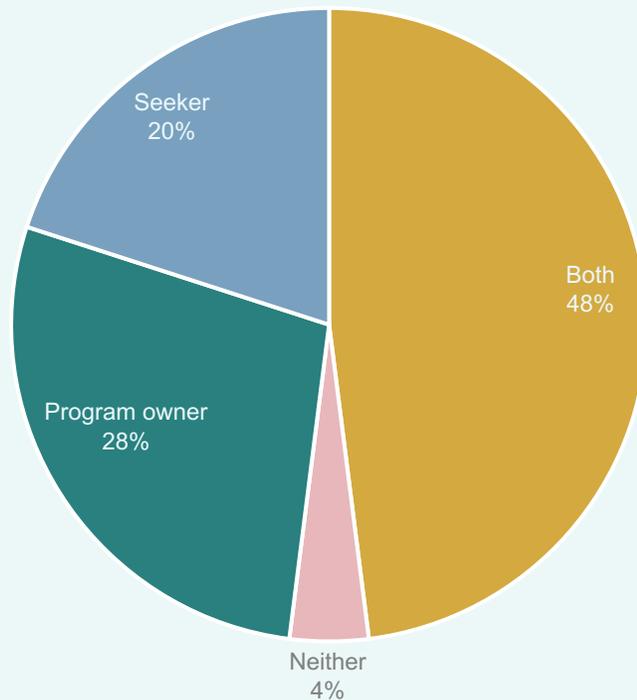
The Portal is being developed as an integral part of the [Australian Government's Advancing Women in STEM 2020 Action Plan](#) in response to recommendations from the [Women in STEM Decadal Plan](#). The Decadal Plan recommended a standardised national evaluation framework that guides evaluation efforts across all existing and future STEM gender equity initiatives.

The Office sought broad public, and targeted stakeholder, consultation to seek feedback and input from the people who are likely to use the STEM Equity Evaluation Portal.

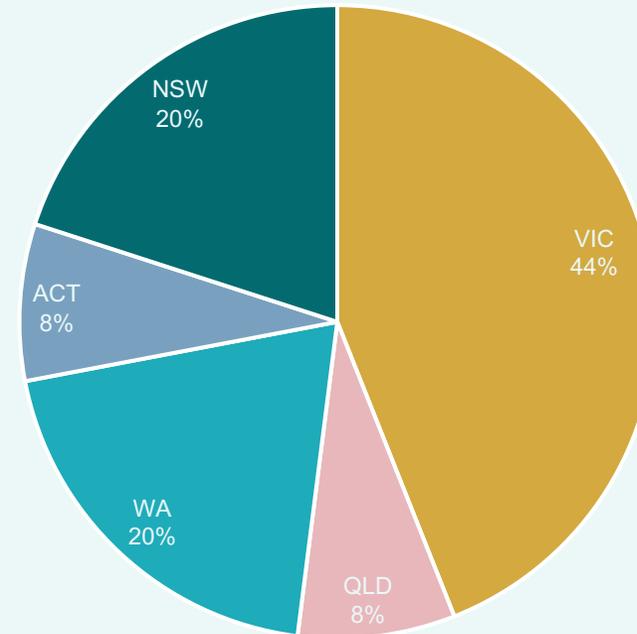
Feedback was collected via a survey between 30 September and 31 October 2021. The results are presented in this document and will inform the final iteration of the Portal.

Respondents were predominantly program owners & seekers from Victoria and NSW:

User type (n = 25)



State/territory (n = 25)



Program owners are people and/or organisations who are running and/or evaluating a STEM equity program; Seekers are people and/or organisations seeking evaluation data, equity programs and/or providers of programs (e.g., funders, government)

Responses

25
surveys

Sample: Survey sent via email to a list of ~250 targeted stakeholders. It was also shared broadly on all Women in STEM Ambassador social media platforms and various newsletters.

Responses: Received a total of 60 surveys. Excluded 45 surveys that were <75% complete. The analysis included 25 surveys completed at >75%.



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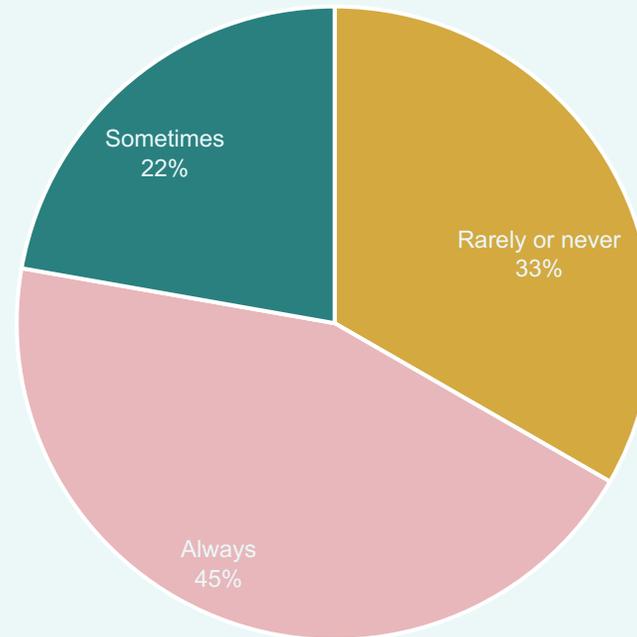
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Almost half of program owners report they always evaluate their programs:

Do you currently evaluate your program(s)? (n = 18)



Why and how program owners always evaluate:

always

- Metrics - number users, attendees at workshops etc
- Peer reviews - direct observation and third party review
- We have used the current Evaluation Framework for our key STEM gender equity program, and have also included evaluation considerations when designing new initiatives
- Monitor media activities; Digital data collection of intervention
- Research collaborations to determine how women's voices are portrayed in the media.
- Formative, summative and anecdotally; monthly reports are a good gauge of achievements, developing strategies, and areas of need.
- Surveys: Extensive pre and post surveys for all users. Quantitative and qualitative feedback over many years; Largest metric is currently tracking culture surveys



Why and how program owners sometimes evaluate:

sometimes

- Through participant uptake and feedback.
- Sort of - challenging to find data (and to get permission to survey our staff/students)
- As much as possible - we use theory of change and program logic models for all programs (very similar to the proposed evaluation framework). Where we have fallen short is in evaluating ongoing (i.e., not time-bound) programs that focus on inclusion and belonging. We are working on it, but haven't progressed past short-term event-based evaluation into social impact.



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Why program owners rarely/never evaluate:

rarely/never

- Feel bad asking people to fill in a survey and I'm not sure how else to evaluate programs apart from number of attendees. We ask people what they want and then provide that.
- Never, we're a small start-up social enterprise slowing scaling up, and looking for best practice evaluation tools.
- The intention is there however the evaluations are often not rigorous or do not have any significant depth due to staff having limited understanding or capacity in evaluation methods. Our evaluations often consist of simple feedback surveys without any meaningful strategy to capture impact. However we are slowly trying to improve this.
- We don't directly run events or packaged programs per se, but we have embarked upon evaluating our entire organisation within the women in STEMM community for the first time this year. The evaluation is looking at NPS, diversity, and makeup of the community/membership, satisfaction rating on the impacts we have and what those impacts actually are, and if they can be quantified. We have not had the resources to undertake such an evaluation in the past.



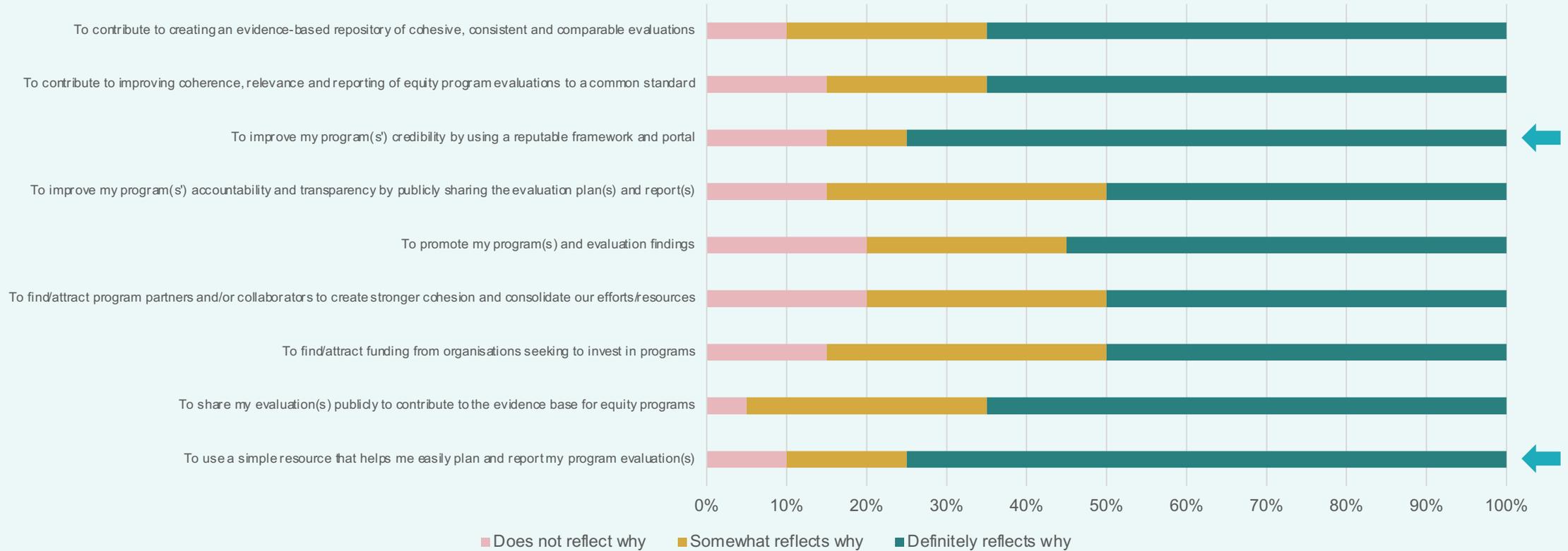


program owners

What they said about motivations to use the Portal and the usefulness of its features

program owners

would predominantly use the Portal to use a simple resource that helps them plan and report evaluations and to improve their program credibility.



Q: Indicate the extent to which the statements below reflect why you would use the Portal (n = 20)

Other reasons program owners said they would use the Portal:

- A resource for training other staff members in evaluation
- Feeling that we have to despite having established protocols in place for many years.
- If you were planning a new program or changes to a program to see if it was already being done.
- To check and benchmark that our evaluation practices are best practice to our best effort - it's not just a matter of having evaluation but rigorous, evidenced and effective.
- To demonstrate leadership to our ecosystem of stakeholders, and embed the practice of evaluation as a standard and expected part of program design and implementation
- To learn from other evaluations and gain an evidence base to guide our thinking
- To reduce the evaluation and reporting burden on volunteers that serve on our executive

Q: Are there any other reasons why you would use the Portal as a program owner? If so, please explain in the box below.. (n = 8)



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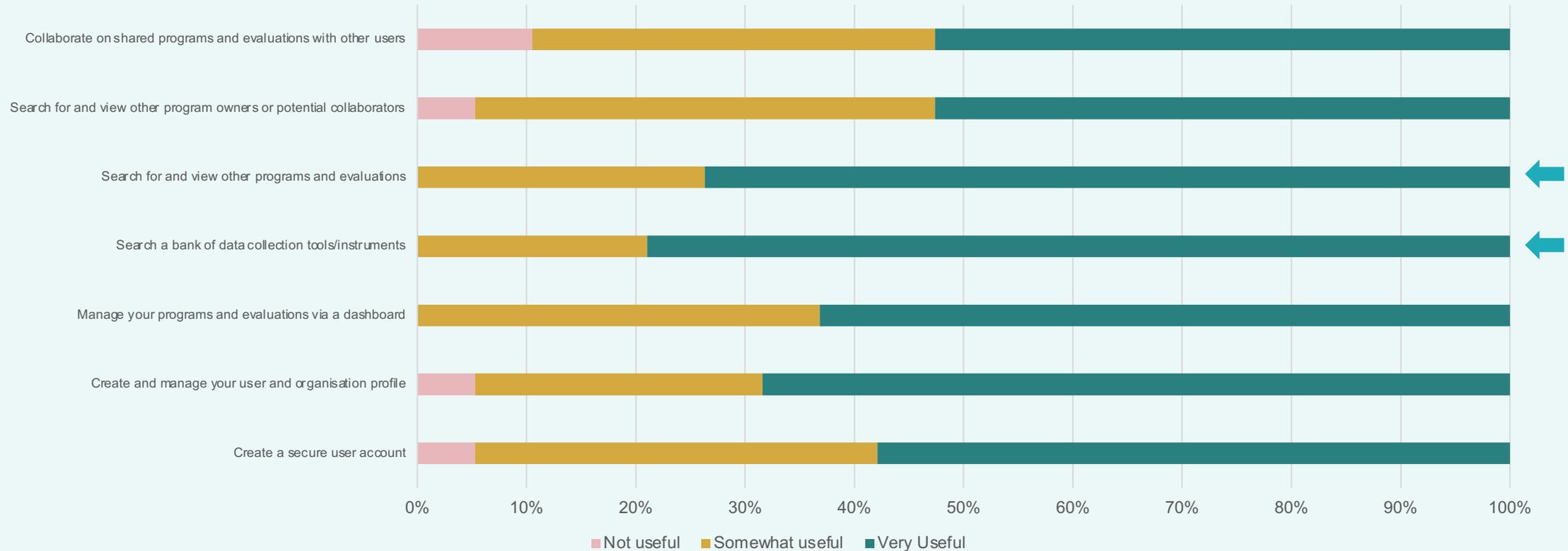
Program owners said that usability, credibility, visibility and mandating its use would incentivise them to use the Portal:

- **Usability:** Easy to use interface, rigorous data management and security, cross-usability (even auto-populated content) as much as possible. For example, linking grant opportunities to evaluation activities and reporting; or, we report to all funding bodies so how can we use the portal as the reporting platform and submit the generated reports as evaluation deliverables?; Ease of access; If it made it quick and easy to evaluate my program; To build evaluation capacity amongst our staff members
- **Credibility:** Simplicity as well as validity to the tools; if it was free and an accurate, representative tool; Benchmarking
- **Program visibility/promotion:** Additional publicity for my program. The possibility of reaching potential funders or partners; To find alternative tools to improve the marketability of the program, promote our achievements and purpose.
- **Mandate:** If I were mandated to

Q: What would motivate or incentivise you to use the Portal to plan and report your program evaluation(s)? (n = 11)

program owners

think that the most useful Portal features are the ability to search a bank of data collection tools/instruments and to view other programs and evaluations.



Q: Indicate the extent to which the Portal features below would be useful for you. (n = 19)

Other Portal features that program owners suggested:

- Allow for multiple program owners per program (and definitely per institution). One major advantage of having a Government reporting platform is continuity within a team with staff changes. In looking for collaborations, have a place to actively ask for collaborators based on interests/needs (similar to startup 'find a co-founder' type interactions). Have a specific section in the reporting on sharing 'failures' and what didn't work - although the framework asks for transparency on all data, to share learnings would complement this in avoiding repeated mistakes.
- Ease of navigation, intuitive, easy to guide staff who are new to evaluations on how to use
- Fund contribution
- Guides on standardised analysis techniques. The WiSTEM office proactively bringing together groups for evaluation
- The ability to not anonymise evaluations and group around program types - demonstrating best practice. I'd be concerned about brand damage if an evaluation was poor. I won't use it if there is a risk of public brand damage.

Q: Are there any other features that you would find useful as a program owner? If so, please explain in the box below. (n = 5)



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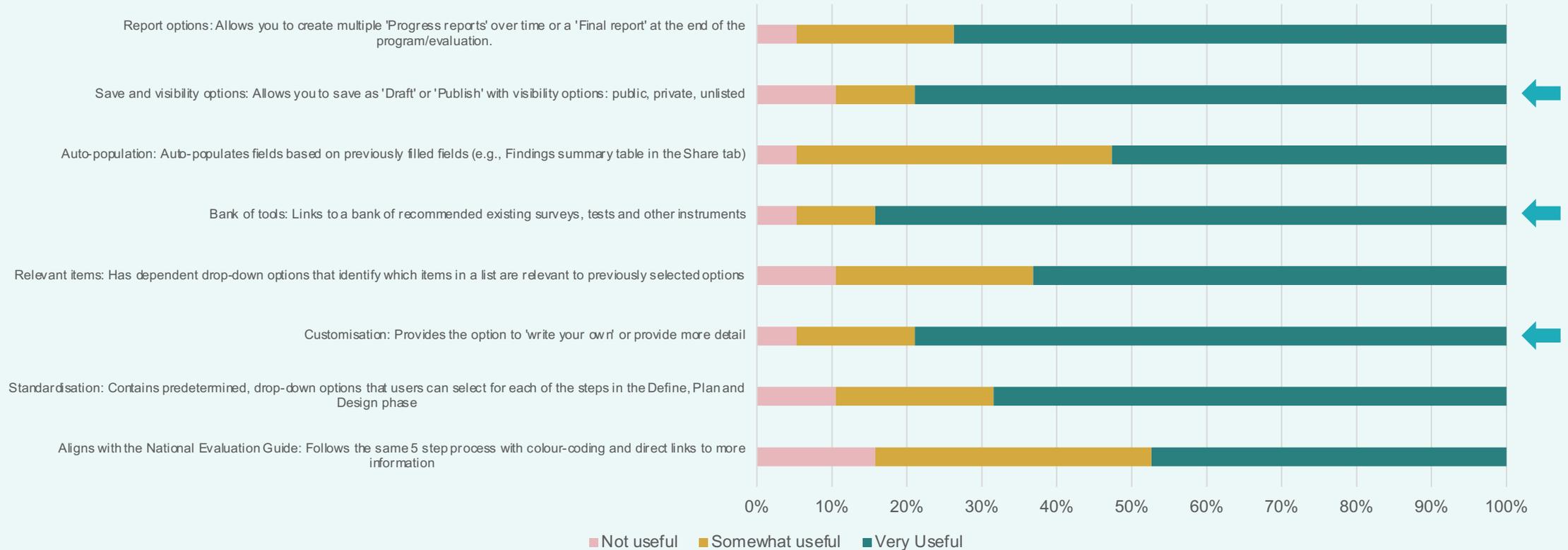
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program owners

think that the most useful features of the *Evaluation Planning & Reporting Tool* are the bank of instruments, the ability to customise elements and the save/visibility options.



Q: Indicate the extent to which the Evaluation Planning & Reporting Tool features below would be useful for you. (n = 19)

Other *Evaluation Planning & Reporting Tool* features that program owners said they would find useful :

- Ability for restricted view depending on audience. Allow multiple staff to login and work on the one report
- Being able to upload a final report in any format, ie after planning with the tool also being able to upload a pdf version of your public facing report.
- Both customisation and standardisation are needed: standard options to ensure comparability between program, but also allow for more specific/niche responses. Need more focus on data analysis, techniques, tools etc. - the use of good measurement tools is nulled if poor data/statistical analysis is conducted.
- Budgeting frameworks would be useful

Q: Are there any other features in the Evaluation Planning and Reporting Tool that you would find useful as a program owner? If so, please explain in the box below. (n = 7)



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Other *Evaluation Planning & Reporting Tool* features cont'd:

- Contact links to other programme managers
- I have tried to use the National Evaluation Guide to build evaluation capacity amongst staff however I found that staff who really don't have much evaluation experience still found the concepts in the guide difficult to digest (e.g. the idea of outputs vs outcomes vs impacts is not easy for beginners to understand). It would be helpful if there were some training videos to complement the guide to support their learning.
- If there was also a review of the reports by some kind of expert

Q: Are there any other features in the Evaluation Planning and Reporting Tool that you would find useful as a program owner? If so, please explain in the box below. (n = 7)



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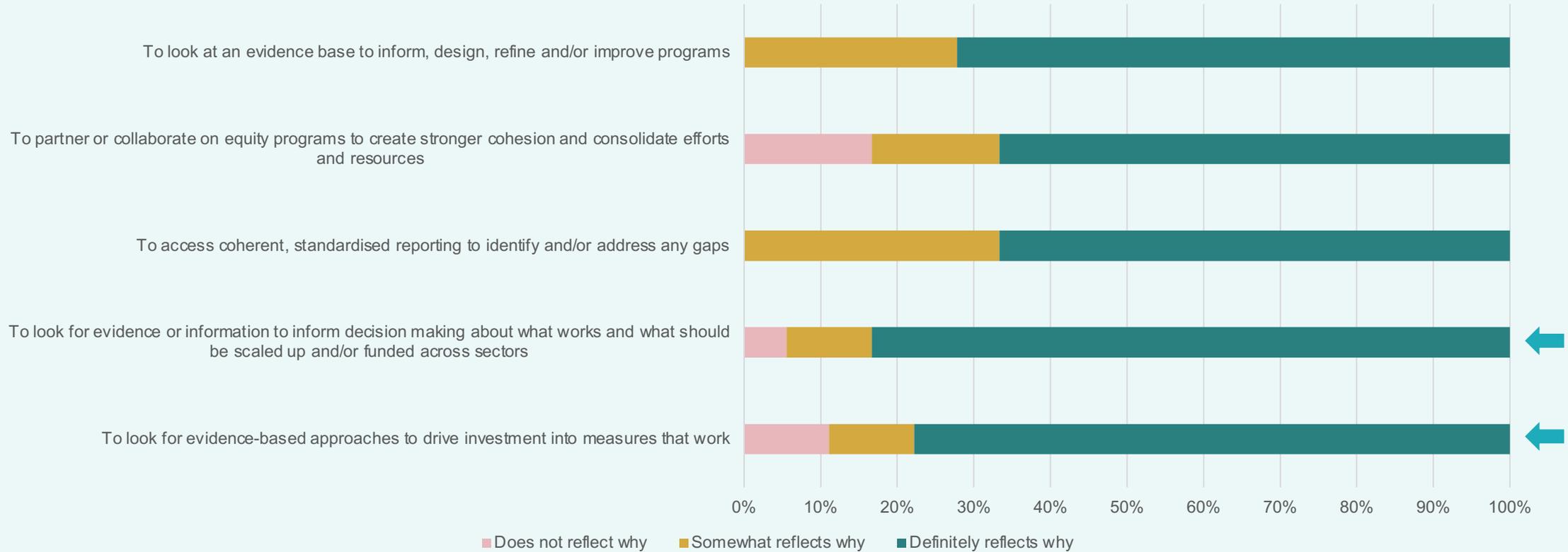
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seekers

What they said about motivations to use the Portal and the usefulness of its features

would predominantly use the Portal to look for evidence or information about what works, what should be scaled up or what to invest in.



Q: Indicate the extent to which the statements below reflect why you would use the Portal. (n = 18)

Other reasons seekers said they would use the Portal:



- A resource for training other staff members in evaluation
- To identify best practice programs
- To identify where there are gaps or opportunities to connect initiatives or programs for greater impact
- To see what is already out there to avoid repetition

Q: Are there any other reasons why you would use the Portal as a seeker? If so, please explain in the box below.. (n = 4)

Seekers said that the Portal's usability and credibility as a place to find out 'what works' would incentivise them to use it:

- **Usability:** Ease of access and data analytics; takes out the heavy lifting of manual evaluation of processes, reduces margin of error in decision making
- **Credibility:** Access to evidence-based approaches/frameworks/toolkits to guide our work is a huge incentive because accessing the academic literature is a major challenge for non-profit organisations; Confidence that the platform and data captured is appropriate for evaluating programs effectively; Good quality and expansive information available and ease of use
- **What works in equity, diversity and inclusion:** To obtain in-depth evaluations of programs of interest; Confidence that there is enough uptake amongst program owners to enable effective comparison of programs; If I could identify programs that work; looking at other dimensions of diversity and discrimination

Q: What would motivate or incentivise you to use the Portal as a seeker? (n = 8)



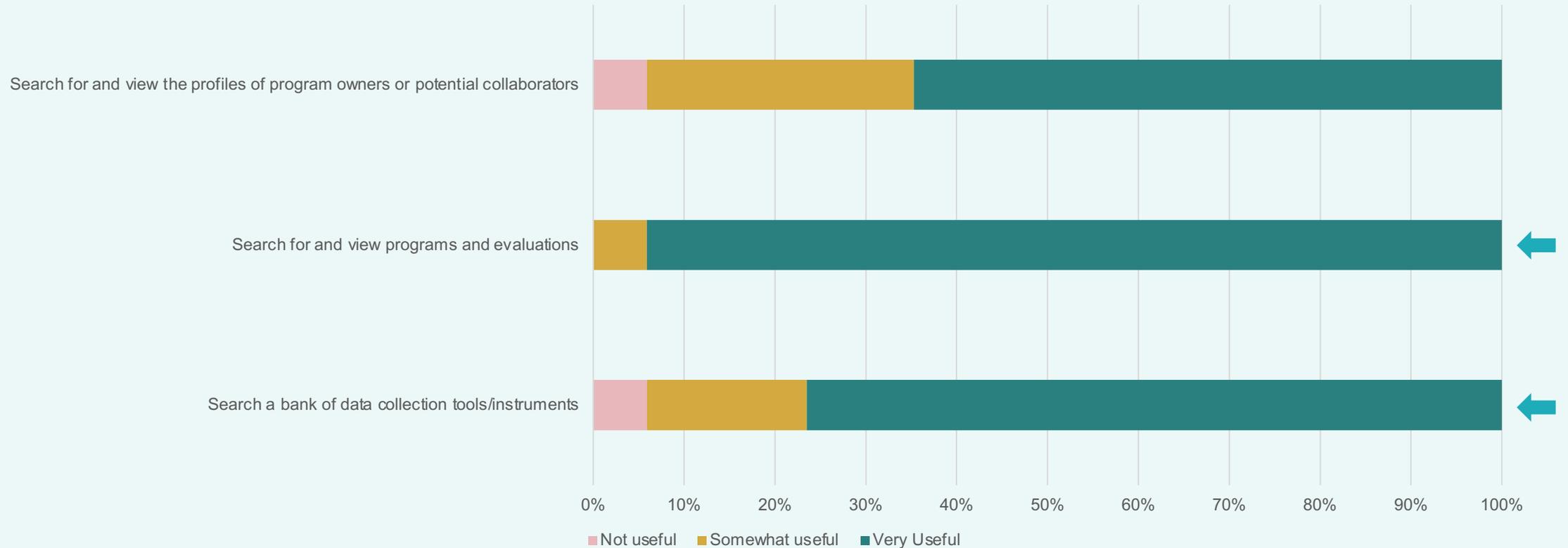
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think that the most useful features of the Portal are the ability to search for and view programs and evaluations and to search a bank of data collection tools/instruments.



Q: Indicate the extent to which the Portal features below would be useful for you. (n = 17)

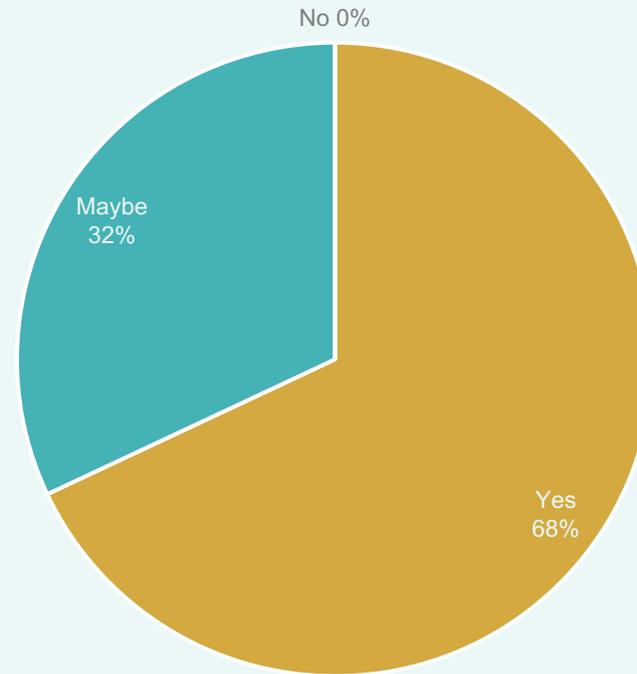
Other Portal features seekers said they would find useful :

- 
- Profiles of program owners to include contact details
 - Cost of programs
 - Comparison tools to evaluate programs
 - Ability to search by target group

Q: Are there any other features that you would find useful as a seeker? If so, please explain in the box below. (n = 2)

About 2/3 of respondents indicated that they would use the Portal when it is ready:

Do you plan to use the Portal ? (n = 25)



Respondents who said ‘yes they plan to use the Portal’ gave the following reasons:



- **A useful resource:** Significant resource; Need to know where the gaps are, to ensure that we aren't missing key points of attraction/retention/attrition; We evaluate our programs, so I would like to share that evaluation with others and learn from others; I am eager to build our organisation's evaluation capacity and hope this will be a helpful resource; I would like to be doing what works!
- **Consistency:** To streamline and make our evaluation consistent, and to contribute to collective evaluation insights; Confidence that the evaluation data is sound is also critical to allow for effective evaluation/comparison. This is much needed to bring all programs up to a minimum evaluation standard and transparency of impact ...
- **Collectivism:** Uptake amongst program owners is critical to allow seekers to have confidence that they are evaluating all available programs; ... and also connect us together - too many organisations/programs working in parallel, duplicating efforts etc.;

Q: Please explain why or why not (you plan or do not plan to use the Portal). (Yes, n = 9)

Respondents who responded 'maybe' mentioned uncertainty around applicability to their needs or existing measures:

- **Applicability:** Depends upon the applicability to our organisation and our needs. Would also depend on its value proposition - in that is the purpose for the benefit for our learning and quality management or it to to determine who should get funding and support;

Still unclear whether its applicable, and our funding means our equity efforts are not just regarding women in STEM, we have limited resources, so actions that are broad and maximise outcomes are key;

How will it interact with my existing data measures?

Q: Please explain why or why not (you plan or do not plan to use the Portal). (Maybe, n = 3)



general comments

Other comments, ideas or feedback shared by respondents

Some respondents commented on the value of the Portal for a broad range of users:

- We have found the Evaluation Model to be very easy to use - if you apply the same design principles you won't go wrong
- I mentioned the need for focus in evaluation data analysis, and ensuring the evaluation is done well, not just done. There is also the opportunity to connect with and learn from other sectors who have deep, established experience in evaluation of (gender equity) programs e.g., non-profits, international development etc. I'd be keen to use the portal as soon as it is available - it's a much needed practice, platform and community.
- I think Heads of Department and schools looking for change in STEM fields may be able to find great programs to enhance their school practice.

Q: Please provide any other comments, ideas or feedback that you would like to share. (n = 9)

Some respondents suggested that the Portal focus should extend beyond 'gender':

- Equity focus should go beyond gender - ethnicity, socioeconomic background, language, disability etc. - all these influence access to opportunities in STEM, but there is paucity of data and initiatives addressing this
- I really have issues with this being gender focused. It seems to defeat the purpose and doesn't effectively address issues for all women by ignoring broader inclusivity.

Q: Please provide any other comments, ideas or feedback that you would like to share. (n = 9)

Some respondents suggested quality control measures and the ability to longitudinally track impact on individuals:

- It would be great to have an independent process that could help in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of STEMM development programs in general, not just to spotlight programs designed for Women. To receive recognition that a proposed program meets best practice in terms of design and impacts would certainly attract funding from sponsors and contributors who volunteer time and effort. A quality improvement system should never be a competition but instead a learning and accountability value-add
- Will a unique student identifier be introduced along with the portal? The one true way to track impact across the sector over time.

Q: Please provide any other comments, ideas or feedback that you would like to share. (n = 9)

Some respondents suggested using the Portal be a condition of funding; others expressed concern of increased workload:

- Perhaps a condition of being awarded a grant could be to use the portal for evaluation, as all grants include some form of evaluation and success reporting anyway
- Why not have portal for collaboration last thing we need is more regulation and compliance. Aust need several ethics at each organisation involved in Program and each annual reports and to dept, org, funders. Please don't add to workload, please alleviate

Q: Please provide any other comments, ideas or feedback that you would like to share. (n = 9)

Some respondents proposed additional features and ideas for consideration:

- *[relating to program owner features]* Will reports be suggested/auto provided re comparison reports of like programs. Once a program has been entered will any database searching occur to flag to the program owner a like program has been run, is running and suggest coloration or contact to seek further input? Better to have pro active data mining that people try to guess other like activities/organizations.
- *[relating to evaluation data]* What are you going to do with the data? Will data mining comparison reports be made, will it become available for hack fests to mine further and discover any hooks/links/common points? Will templates, success programs be made available for others to use instead of the continual re inventing?
- *[relating to data entry of program sponsors, funders and partners]* ... maybe some can be table based, multi selection and add more as required e.g. sponsors there are likely to many similar across the nation. Or to avoid lots of duplicate differently spelt entries one table based plus a text if not in the table? Will make reports on number of sponsors and how many programs they support far easier to collate.

Q: Please provide any other comments, ideas or feedback that you would like to share. (n = 9)



Contact

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