Third Sector Capacity Building Survey results

August 2021

Foreword

'Capacity Building' in the third sector has traditionally been driven by those who commission or fund support, often with short-term goals in mind including training rather than developing the capacity of an organisation in the long-term.

As a learning organisation, The Robertson Trust is committed to considering our role, and how we can add value, to support the capacity, skills and capability of the organisations we fund, and the third sector more broadly. To make our role as strategic as possible, we want to better understand the needs of our grant holders and partners in the third sector in order to improve the lives and wellbeing of people affected by poverty and trauma across Scotland.

Working with our grant holders and partners, we want to make our support proactive, so that organisations become stronger, more resilient and are better able to meet the needs of the individuals and communities they support.

With that goal in mind, we devised this Third Sector Capacity Building Survey to understand 'what works?' and what our partners and grant holders need to build their capacity in the long-term. The results of that engagement, including observations and reflections on next steps, are presented in this report.

We will use these anonymous findings, gathered from across the third sector, to contribute to the design of our current and future offers; helping us to respond to the challenges organisations are currently facing whilst also informing the development of a longer-term package of support.

Stewart Macgregor, Funding Manager
August 2021

Survey details

- The purpose was to understand what support organisations currently receive to build capacity and why, what they think "works" and what they will need to build capacity in the long-term
- The survey was open from 7th May – 21st June 2021
- 540 people responded, including our grant holders and other third sector organisations
- The anonymous findings will be used to contribute to the design of our current and future offers, and our wider engagement with the third sector
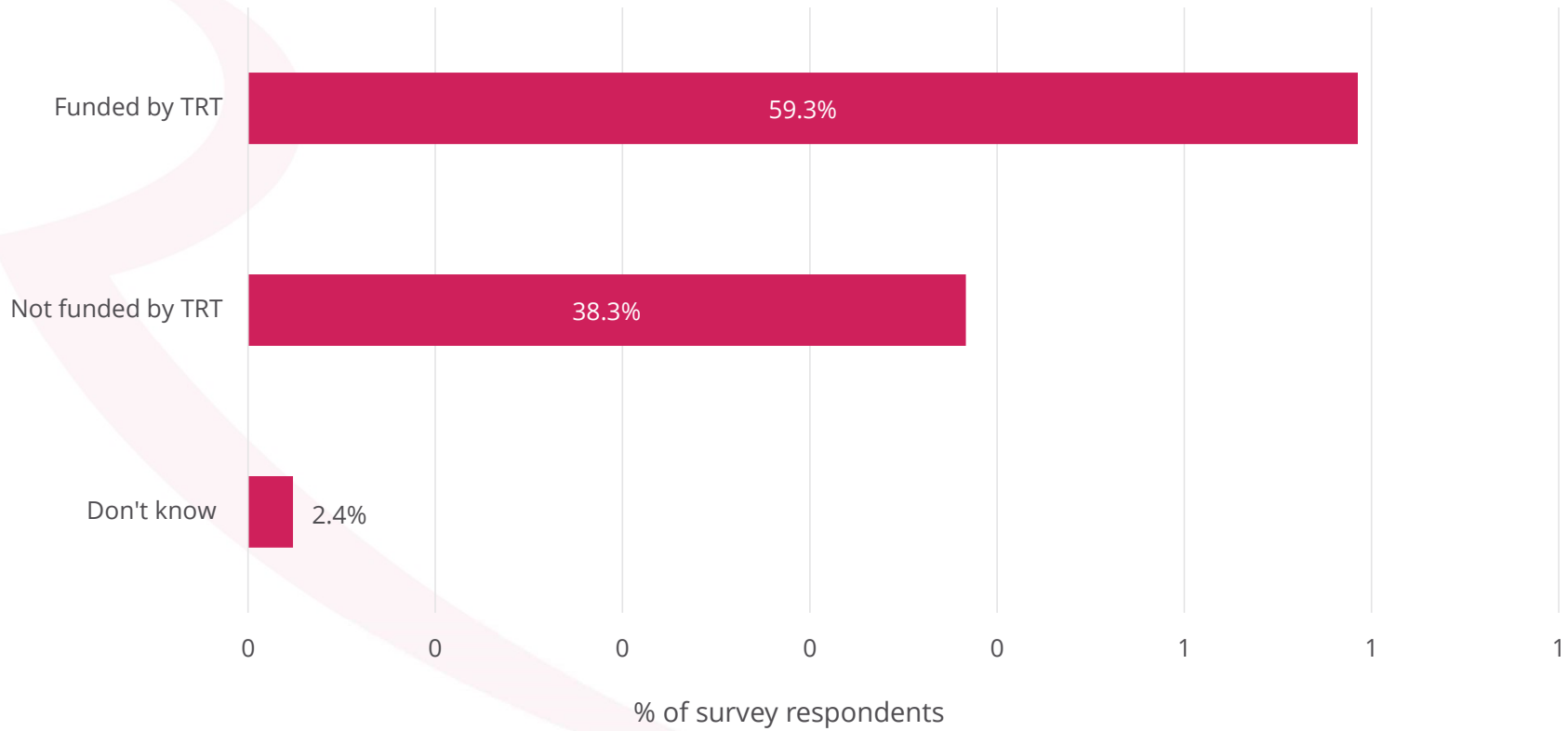
Key findings

- **Varied access** About 1/3 of organisations accessed capacity building support of which 22% paid for this:
  - 24.2% of small charities (income >£25k) had less access to capacity building vs 46.7% of large organisations (income <£1m)

- **Complex environment** Charities access support from a wide – if cluttered – range of organisations from the charity, public and private sectors.

- **Different needs** Many respondents flagged that they wanted support in lots of different areas and some had very particular needs that they wanted bespoke support to address.

- **Online access** Respondents talked positively about accessing capacity building support online and would like to see some element of this retained in the long-term: 36.5% of respondents wanted to access blended learning (a mix of online and in person) in the future; 32% of respondents wanted to access online only.

- **Funders' role is important** Respondents urged us to consider *their* capacity to take up and embed support, and our role in negatively impacting on their capacity. They also recommended that we try new things, ensure we don't duplicate with other providers and listened to their needs before developing a programme or co-developing support.

Key findings (cont.)

- **Varied support** There is a gap between what organisations wanted and what they were able to access in the last 12 months:
  - 71.8% wanted support with funding strategy (incl. 31.3% of charities with an annual income >£25k, and 10.7% of charities with an annual income <£1m) but only 28.3% accessed this.
  - 42.8% wanted longer programmes of learning but only 16.3% had accessed this. However many respondents saw the value of a one-off sessions as an introduction to a topic. Charitable organisations value both breadth and depth of support.

- **Targeted support** Capacity building that was tailored to respondents' needs, offered choice, and which was delivered by providers with relevant third sector experience, was important to many organisations.
  - 1-2-1 and peer supports were particularly popular. Many respondents thought that developing relationships with their funders were important to help them access the right support.

Who responded?

Most survey respondents were funded by us

	%
Funded by TRT	59.3%
Not funded by TRT	38.3%
Don't know	2.4%

% of survey respondents

Most respondents were from organisations between £100k-£1m

- <£25k: 12.2%
- £25k-£100k: 21.7%
- £100k-£1m: 44.4%
- >£1m: 17.0%
- Don't know: 4.6%

% of survey respondents
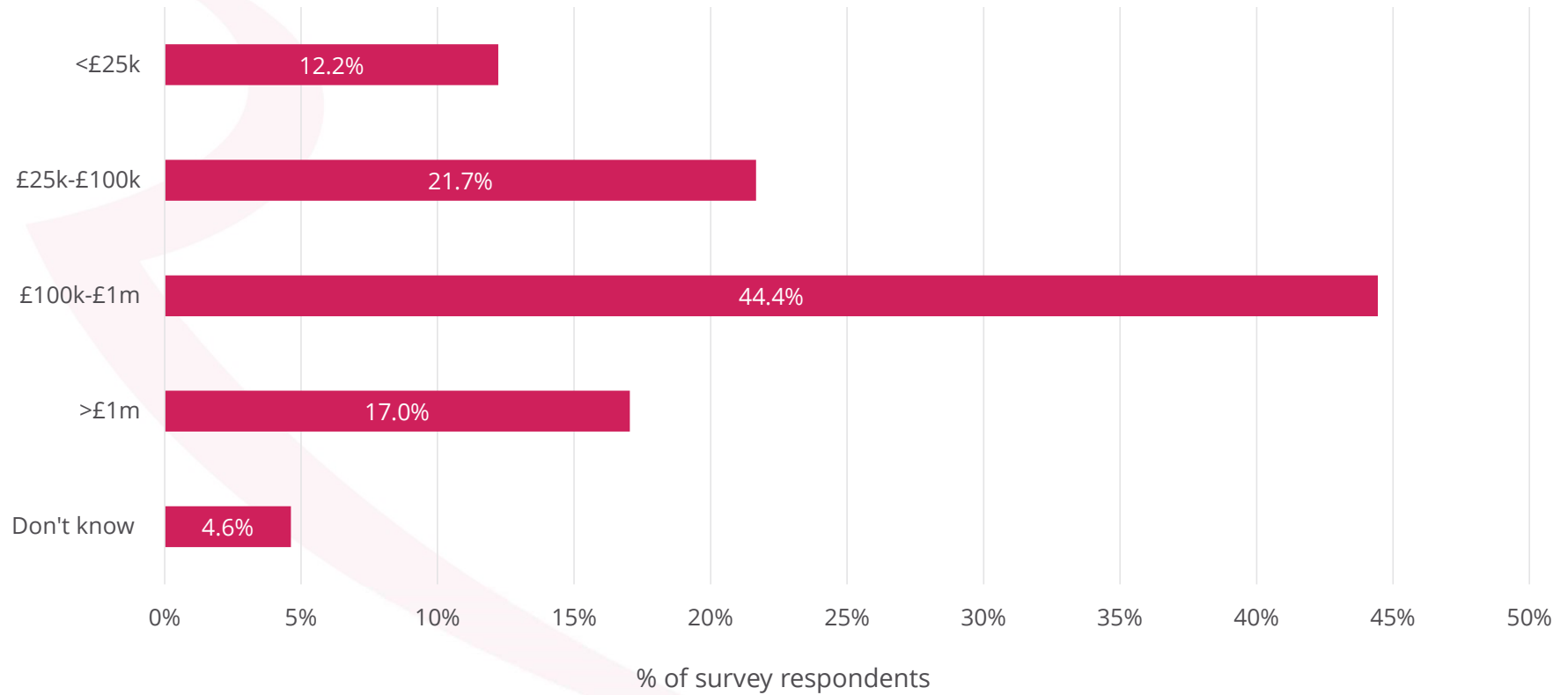
Most respondents had not accessed capacity building support in the last 12 months

Yes — 36%

No — 64%

% of survey respondents
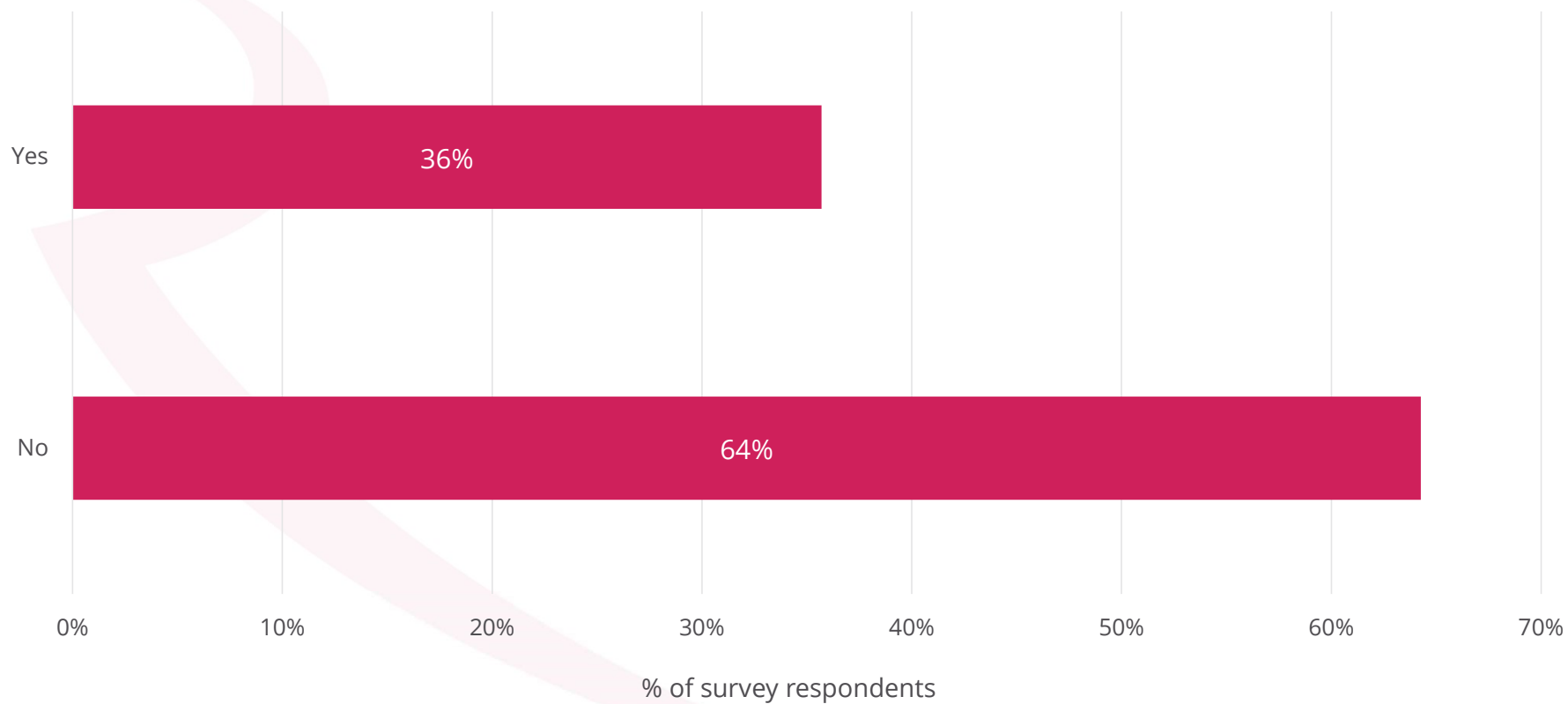
For those that did access capacity building support, what was it like?

Leadership was the type of capacity building that most respondents accessed

Horizontal bar chart showing % of survey respondents:
- Leadership: 38.6%
- Buisness Planning: 37.2%
- Other: 31.0%
- Funding Strategy: 28.3%
- Governance: 22.1%
- Policies / Procedures: 20.0%
- HR Support: 18.6%
- Financial Management: 15.9%
- Facilities/ Health & Safety: 15.2%

% of survey respondents
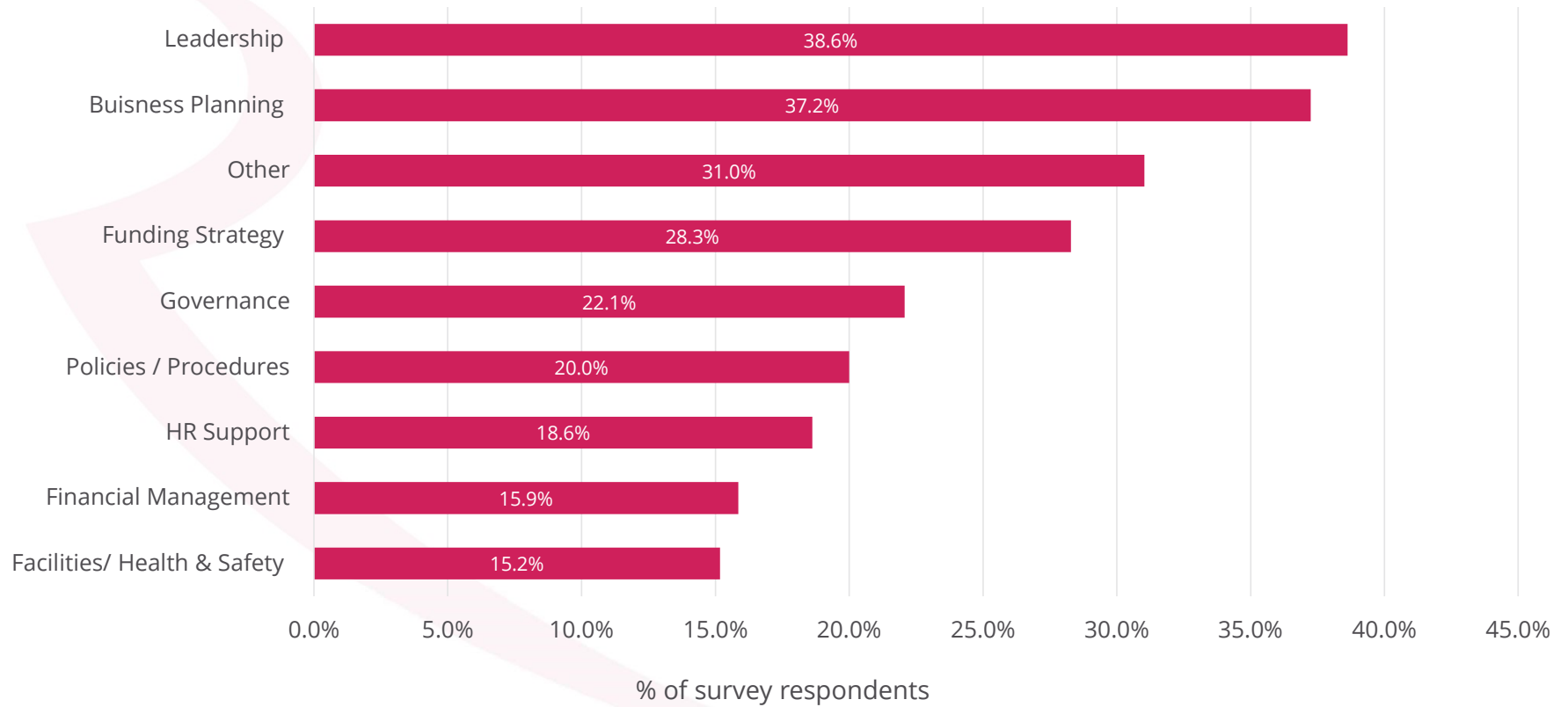
Organisations accessed a wide-range of capacity building support

'Other' types of support delivered included:

- Digital and IT support

- Evaluation and monitoring

- Marketing and communications

- Post-covid recovery

Many organisations accessed support for more than one topic suggesting a wide-range of support needs.

Most capacity building training was delivered through training workshops and masterclasses

Bar chart — % of survey respondents:

- Masterclasses/ Workshops: 61.7%
- Consultancy support for specific task: 51.1%
- Peer Learning Support: 26.2%
- Learning Programme: 16.3%
- Other: 7.1%

% of survey respondents
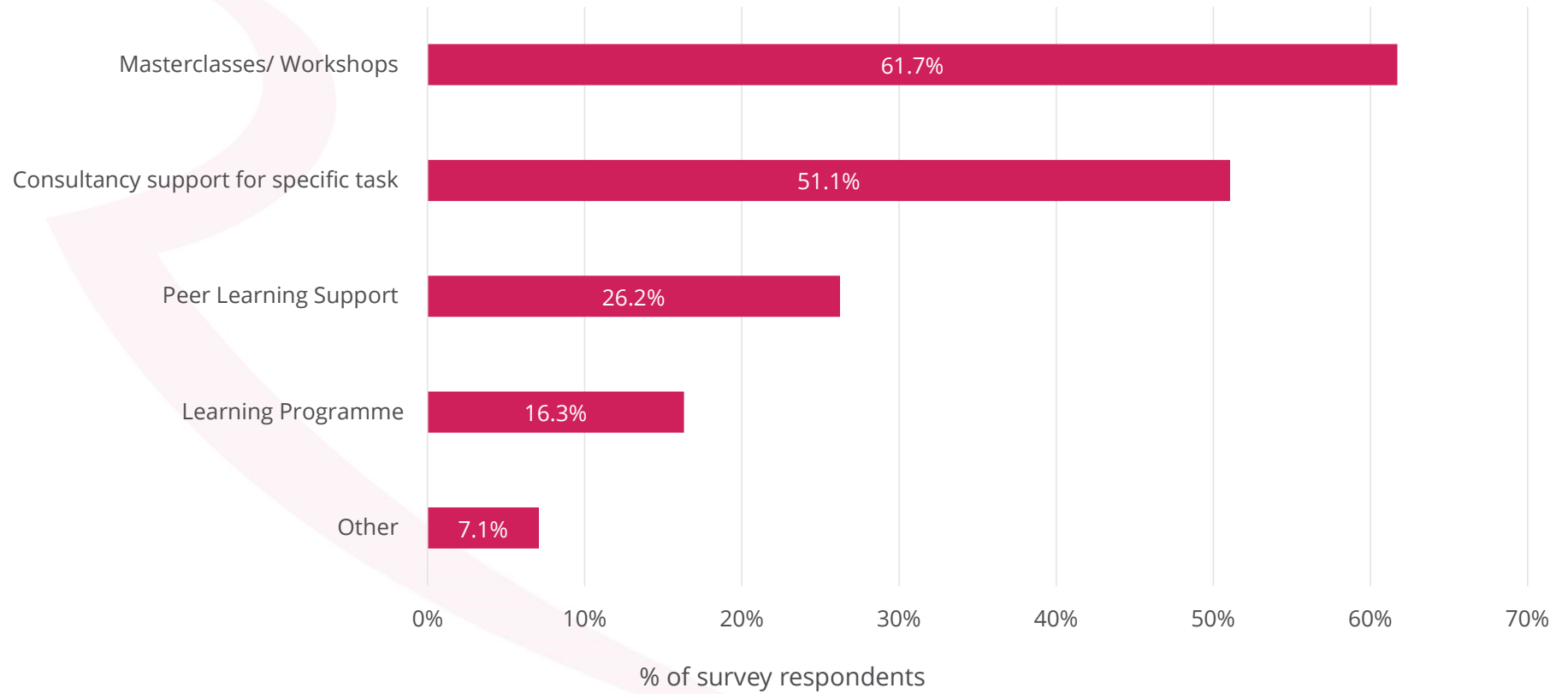
A wide range of organisations supplied capacity building support

The survey showed that organisations accessed support from lots of different organisations. Many organisations accessed support from more than one place. Common answers were:

- Inspiring Scotland

- Third Sector Interfaces (such as GCVS) and local authorities

- Scottish Government and other national agencies such as SCVO

- Charities such as Kinharvie, Citizens Advice and Community Enterprise Scotland

- Private sector organisations especially law and accountancy firms

- Other funders such as Corra Foundation and Gannochy Trust

- Freelancers and consultants brokered by other Funders

Most people accessed capacity building support through self-referral

	% of survey respondents
Self-referral	47.8%
Referred by another funder	27.2%
Referred by membership org	19.1%
Other	18.4%
Referred by TRT	5.2%

% of survey respondents
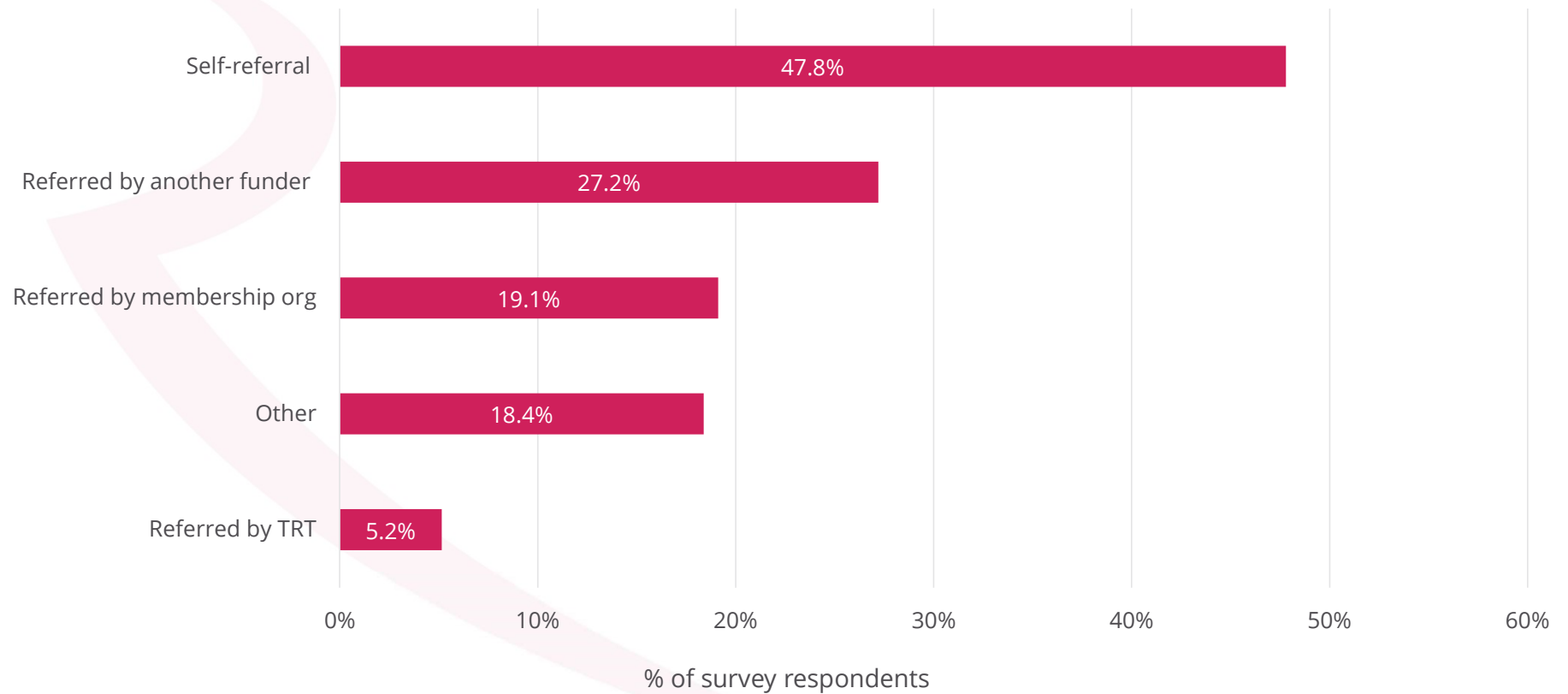
Most organisations do not pay for capacity building support

No Cost — 74.5%
Cost — 22.6%
Don't Know — 2.9%

% of survey respondents
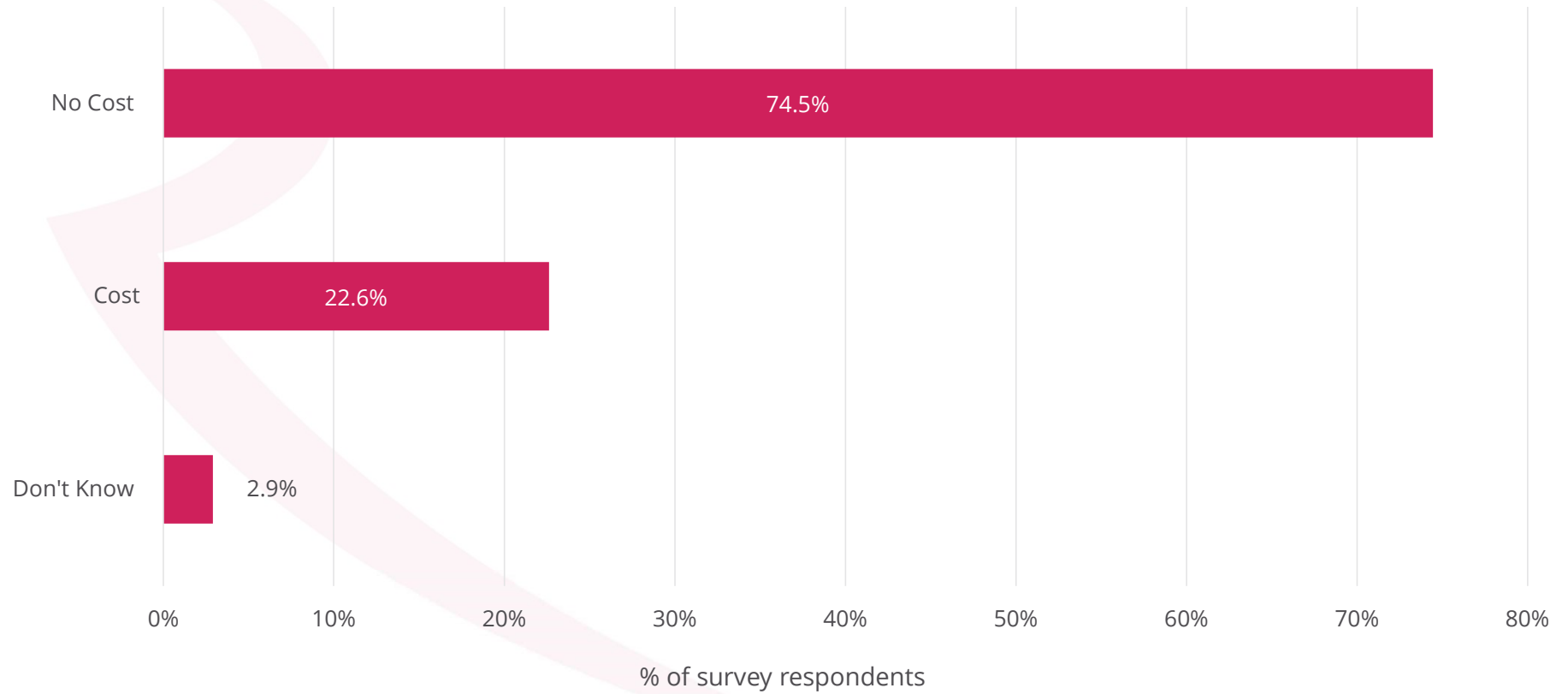
What capacity building support did stakeholders want to see?

Key areas for capacity building were funding strategies & business planning

Funding Strategy — 71.8%
Business Planning — 53.4%
Leadership — 35.5%
Policies / Procedures — 34.8%
Financial Management — 33.3%
Governance — 32.5%
HR Support — 32.2%
Facilities / Health & Safety — 25.7%
Other — 2.9%

0.0%   10.0%   20.0%   30.0%   40.0%   50.0%   60.0%   70.0%   80.0%

% of survey respondents
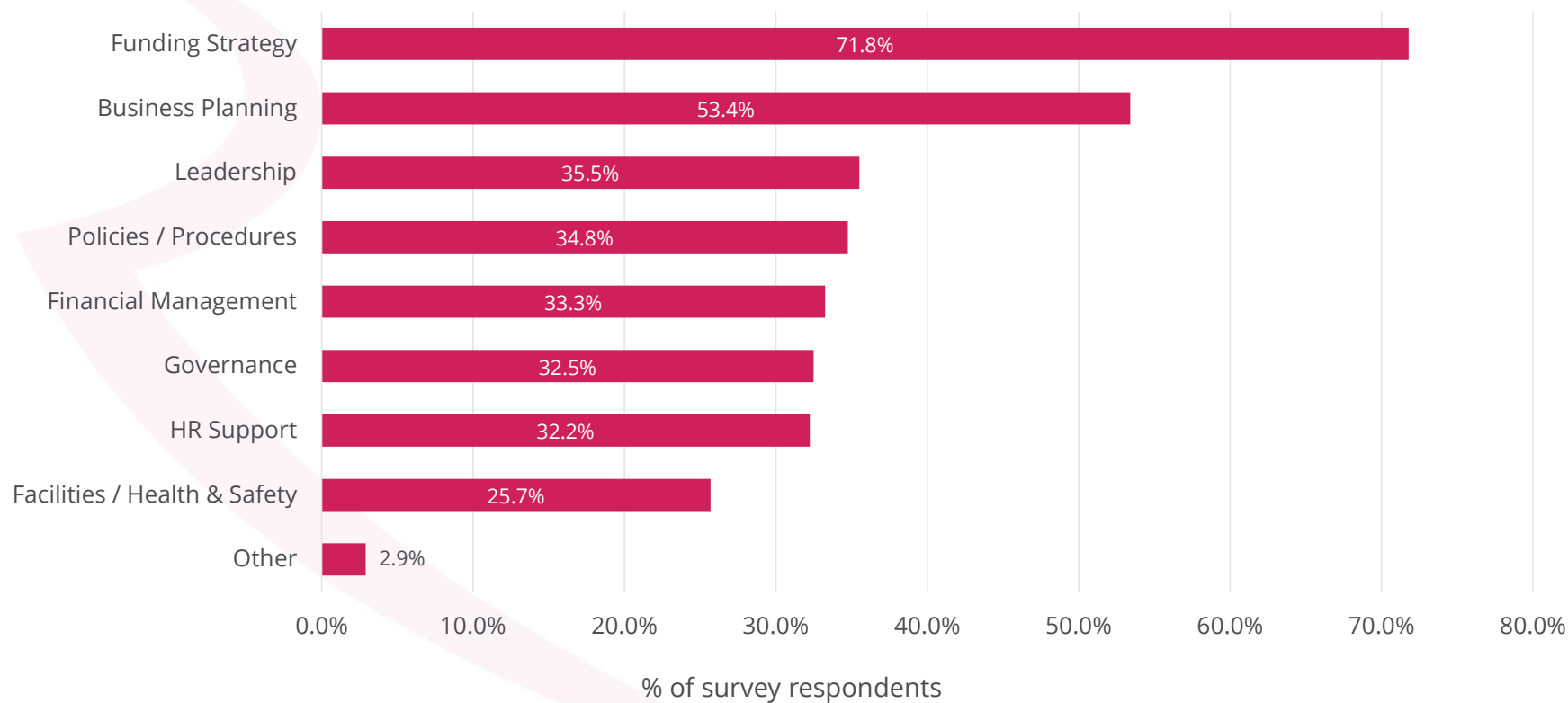
There is a huge range of support which organisations wanted to see

Organisations told us they would like support on multiple topics, pointing to support needs across a wide-range of areas. The 'other' support that organisations wanted to see included are:

- Digital strategy and IT

- Organisational sustainability

- Monitoring and evaluation

- Quality assurance

- Communications, marketing and promotion

- Diversity and equality

- Leadership skills

When we asked for specific topics there was a very wide range of responses

- There were over 200 wide-ranging responses to the questions about specific capacity building topics that respondents would like to access.

- Many respondents gave multiple suggestions suggesting a range of knowledge and skills needs.

- Many responses fit into categories for key areas of development such as 'funding strategy', 'HR support' etc.

- Lots of respondents were very specific – we've provided a collated appendix at the end.

When we asked for specific topics there was a very wide range of responses

Suggestions included:

- Recruiting and working with board and trustees
- Managing a team and managing conflict
- GDPR and data protection
- Sustainability
- Strategy development
- Covid recovery
- Managing uncertainty

- Volunteer development and support
- Becoming a 'learning' organisation
- Testing and scaling services
- Income generation strategy
- Becoming a 'trauma-informed' organisation
- Collaboration with other charities
- Digital skills and delivery

Blended and online were the most popular approaches for delivery

Horizontal bar chart titled by the heading above. X-axis labelled "% of survey respondents" from 0% to 40%.

- Blended: 36.5%
- Online: 32.0%
- No Preference: 19.1%
- In person (subject to restrictions): 12.3%
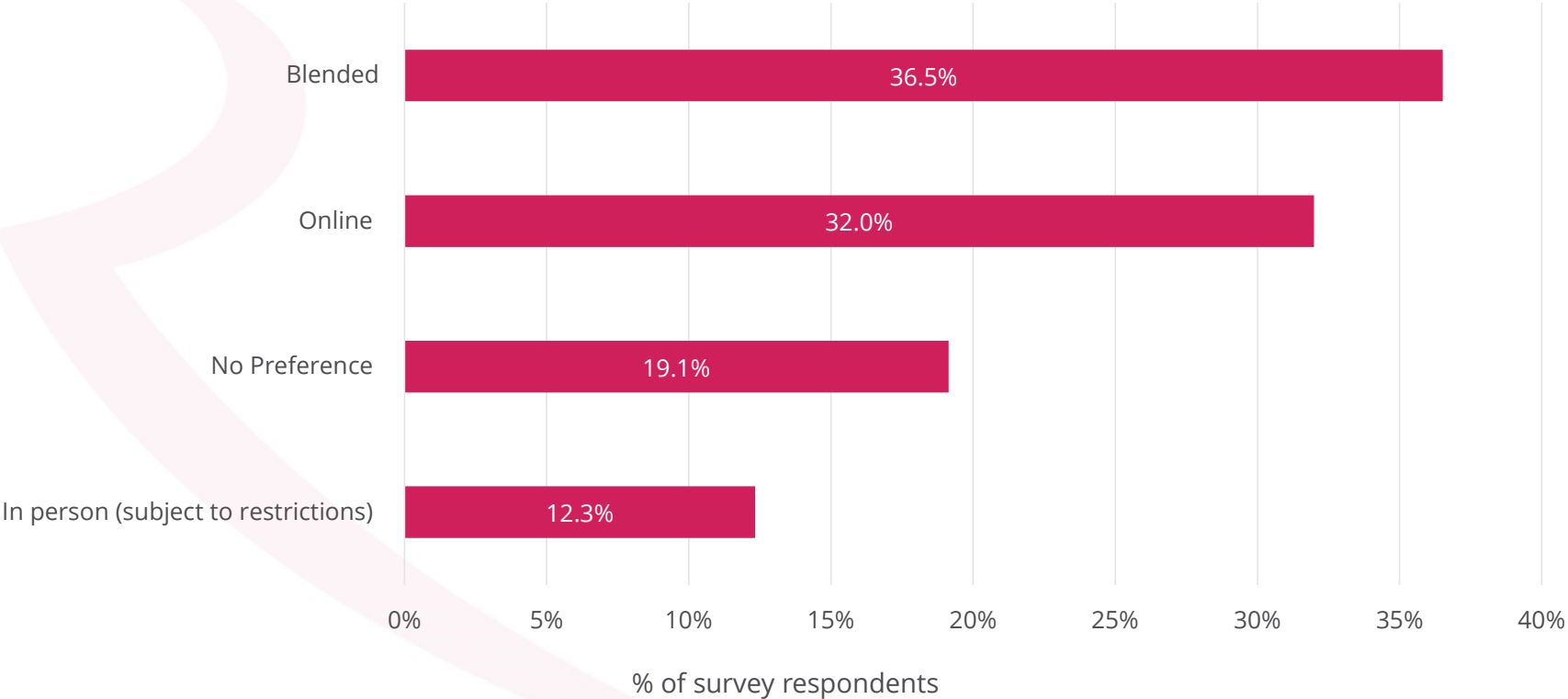
Most respondents preferred having learning opportunities during work hours

Work Hours — 63.5%

No Preference — 31.2%

Evenings — 5.3%

% of survey respondents
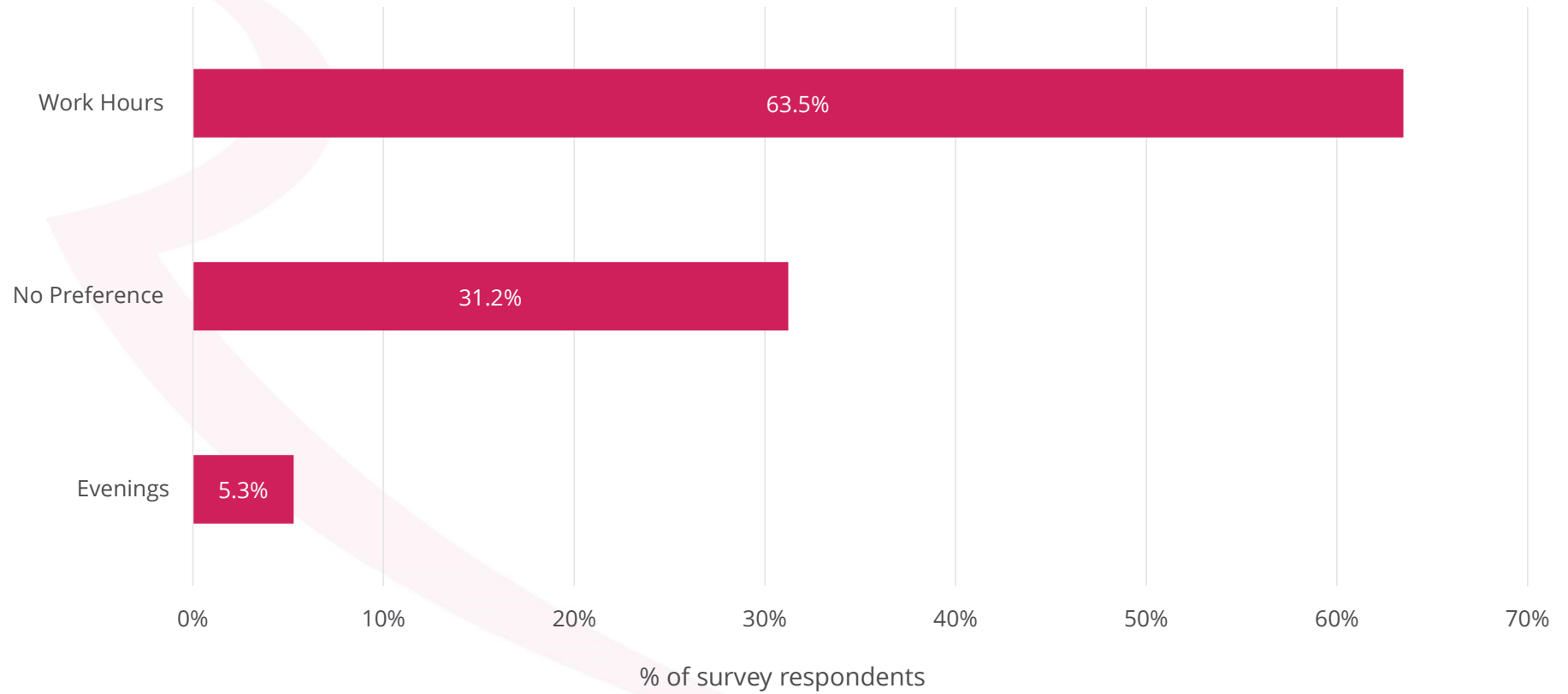
A small majority of respondents preferred longer programmes of learning

Longer Programmes	42.8%
No Preference	39.0%
One off	18.1%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%   35%   40%   45%

% of survey respondents
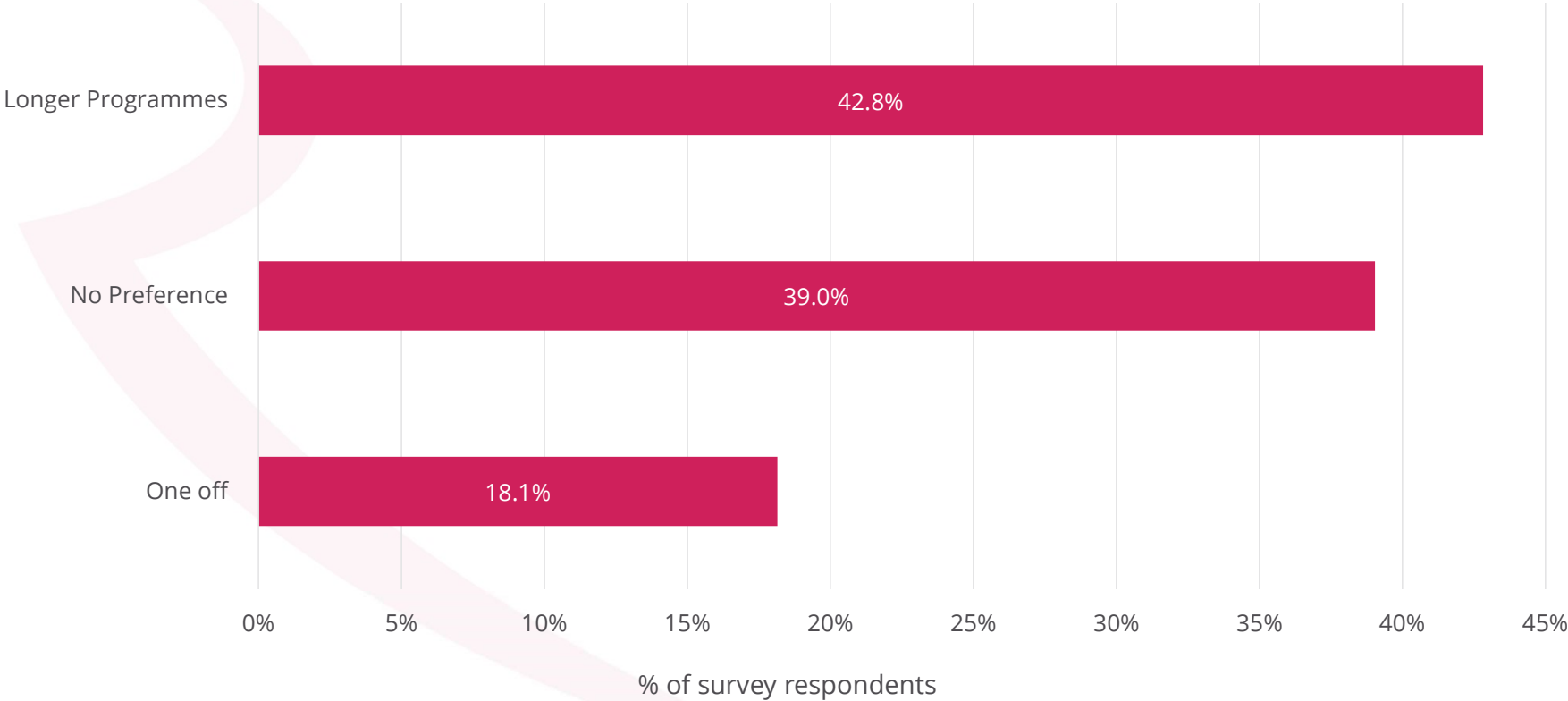
What else did organisations tell us they wanted from capacity building support?

Consider organisations' capacity for support

- Having capacity building support during school-hours to fit in with child care.
  "Mornings to accommodate childcare after school"

- Keeping online delivery in the long-term. This was seen as easier to attend than in person sessions.
  "As a small organisation with 2 members of staff we have found it much easier to access the on-line training as it doesn't take up too much of the working day."

- Providing pre-recorded sessions that staff and volunteers could access in their own time.
  "Online and on-demand"

- Recompense for staff to attend capacity- building support.
  "Recognise the time away from the desk & recompense for that"

Bespoke support

- Some respondents mentioned the importance of having a choice.

  "Offering a menu - of one to one consultancy or mentoring plus workshops or webinars helps to access ideas and approaches as well as having support for more complex or larger scale activities."

  "Allow orgs to decide what they want NOT what they are offered"

- Some emphasised the need to understanding what organisations needed before offering support.

  "Research the needs of organisations then commit and stick with it to the point of SQA accreditation rather than a series of random programmes that seem worthwhile at the time but don't result in real change for the organisation or the individual."

  "I think to just keep asking! The needs of organisations change all the time. Our personal weakness is the board so if they were to change, our capacity building needs would almost certainly change too"

  "Please make sure you listen to third sector CEOs and tailor support accordingly- some of us are pretty competent and being 'improved' by providers with less knowledge or experience can feel patronising."

  "Development of a program based on stakeholder need & feedback"

Bespoke support

- Some organisations wanted to develop relationships to support accessing appropriate opportunities.

    "A one off visit for a chat to discuss options moving forward would also be a benefit."

    "Talk to staff about their individuals skills prior to the support"

- Many mentioned wanted tailored 1-2-1 support and mentoring, including positive past experiences.

    "Ways of linking professional expertise to volunteer run groups would be a huge help. For example: a professional community development worker can support our organisation for xx amount of days/ hours to help us develop skills and reach xyz outcome. We find ourselves going round in circles near to giving up when if we could have a period of intense professional support it would help us learn and boost resilience."

    "a provision of x hours support 1-1 eg how Cranfield does can be very useful for tailored support - not necessarily a large number of hours, but very useful at the start of reviewing a certain area of business."

    "experts seconded into organisations would be a lot more efficient than trying to teach staff in organisations how to do everything. 3-5 days of time for someone to come in and review financial management procedures, create new policies and reorganise the book keeping would be much more beneficial than any class someone can attend."

Provide support that is relevant to them

- Some organisations suggested co-designed and co-developed models.

    "Involve third sector organisations in co-design and delivery of programmes. pay them to deliver to peers. This way you access direct knowledge and experience from the sector and invest financially in the sector."

    "Quite tired of lazy assumptions that anyone from the private sector can deliver useful training for the third sector... Frequently watch people proudly unwrapping basic, conventional ideas as though they're pearls when our practice is already more developed because it has to be. Given time and money Robertson could go looking to find the expertise and experience within the sector and invest in it to everyone's benefit: work with excellent practitioners to share that practice effectively. (And pay them/their organizations for the time away from their continuing responsibilities.)"

- Similarly, a few mentioned the need for capacity building support to be delivered by providers with experience in the charity sector.

    "Make certain that those delivering training have had the relevant PRACTICAL experience"

Funding to support capacity building

- Some organisation made a case for additional grants to support their capacity building.

  "All of the above are helpful but how they are delivered is key. Organisations don't lack the will to learn, they just lack the time. A mandatory 5% of grant costs to be made available as a training budget would help embed learning and allow for thinking and prioritisation of learning opportunities. Thus wouldn't have to always be in the firm of a training budget but could be for learning hours for staff...Capacity building done right won't be as cheap as something superficial"

  "Calling the support an organisational effectiveness grant provided to grantees provides flexibility and also tailoring support to the needs of the organisation"

- Others flagged up that capacity to embed capacity building was difficult.

  "Over the years we have brought in or been provided with pro bono support but without the capacity to implement recommendations (sometimes the recommendations were not realistic for our organisation) we don't appear to make progress. We continue to deliver high quality work which is externally recognised but sustainability doesn't always follow"

Consider the negative impact of our practices

- Some said they felt that capacity building was mandatory if a funder arranged it.

  "Even though funders do say that attending is optional, it sometimes feels that people turn up at sessions to be seen to be participating rather than because they want or need to. It's a sort of presenteeism which isn't always an effective use of time"

- A few organisations flagged that they found funding applications impacted on their capacity to deliver.

  "Making a funding application can be a nightmare for smaller 3rd sector organisation. It almost warrants employing someone simply to do this task. Having policy and procedures in place is essential but can take expertise to devise. For some the desire to help the communities we live in is stifled by the need to almost run a small business enterprise."

  "Donors often destroy our capacity by their demands....after 25 years in the sector, I am kind of done with rebuilding capacity when the donors are the ones often causing the problem in the first place."

- Some organisations encouraged us to think differently about how we delivered capacity building support.

  "Don't do more of the same-try different things-we need a better normal.

  "Don't replicate what others are doing - it's quite a crowded "space" and helpful if resources and inputs are not duplicated. Consider what, uniquely, RT can contribute and offer that"

Targeted support

- Many organisations said they preferred capacity building that was targeted to the same types of organisations.

  "if it could be one organisation at a time, or with similar organisations as sometimes joint events can be dominated by one organisation and often we can be different in our needs etc"

  "Just enterprise has a good programme but their focus is not so much on the third sector although they do help the third sector. It would be amazing to have support specifically for the third sector only as we have so many different problems working with vulnerable groups."

  "Need different levels of the same capacity building session(s) to cater for all organisational size/capacity/age"

  "Sessions could perhaps make clear what level of experience they're aimed at too, as many attendees have a mix of skills and it's not always clear who would benefit most."

  "Organise thematic mentoring opportunities for organisations or provide them with funding so that they can buy the skills their organisation needs."

Peer support

- Opportunities to receive peer-support was popular.

   "Bringing groups together to talk about how they do things. Give other groups ideas"

   "Peer approach works as its people who've been there & done that"

   "Networking with wider organisations out with locality to share ideas"

   "Build in time for Peer to Peer learning - Everyone has something valuable to share -2 hour courses are great for quick info sharing but the best value always comes when we have time to talk and hear how others do it in a real life settings and skills"

   "Opportunities to develop relationships with similar organisations, partner organisations"

Deep dive: what kind of capacity building support do our grant-holders want?

320 survey respondents were funded by The Robertson Trust

Chart showing number of survey respondents by funding status:
- Funded by TRT: 320
- Not funded by TRT: 207
- Don't know: 13

Number of survey respondents
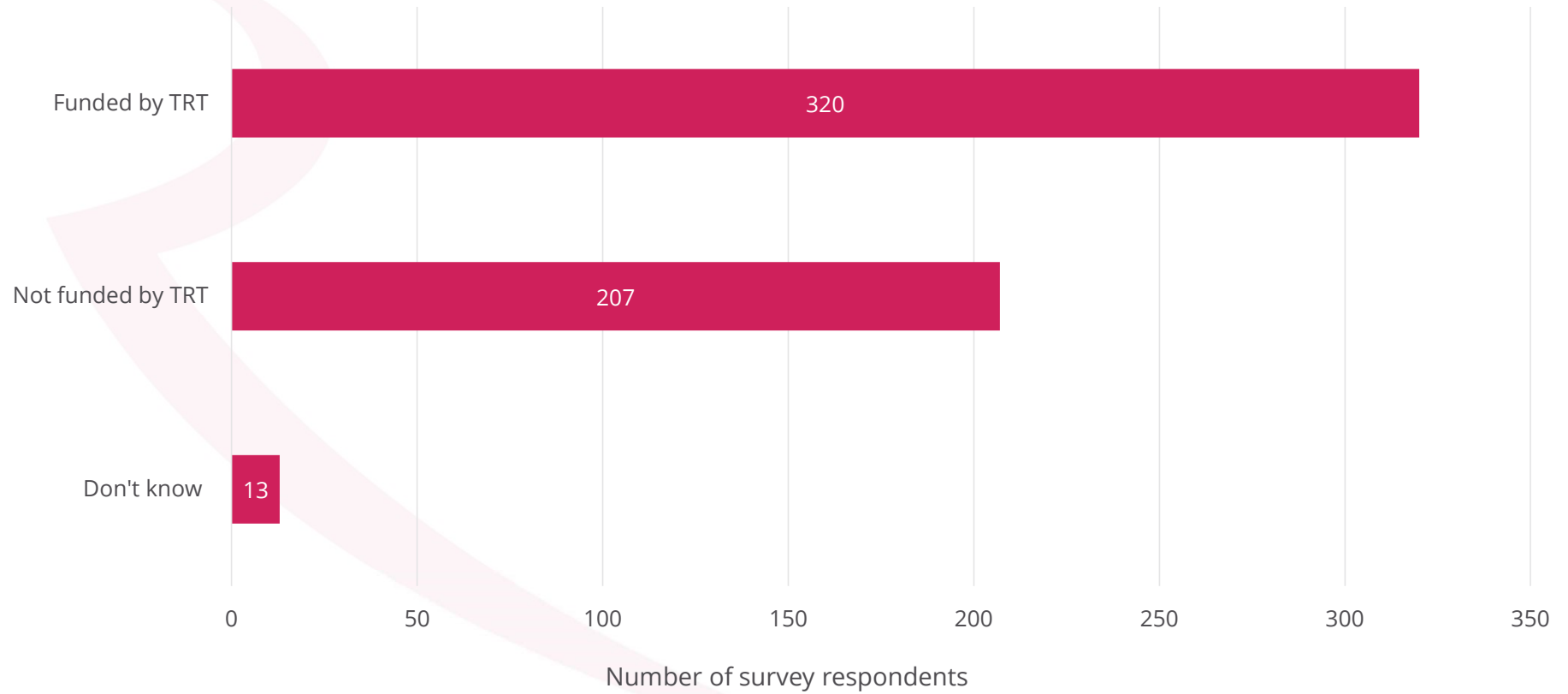
Most respondents funded by The Robertson Trust were from organisations between £100k-£1m

Legend:
- Not Funded by Robertson Trust
- Funded by Robertson Trust

Band	Not Funded by Robertson Trust	Funded by Robertson Trust
<£25k	6.9%	5.0%
£25k-£100k	7.0%	14.3%
£100k-£1m	13.5%	30.9%
>£1m	8.5%	8.2%
Don't know	2.4%	0.9

% of survey respondents by funder
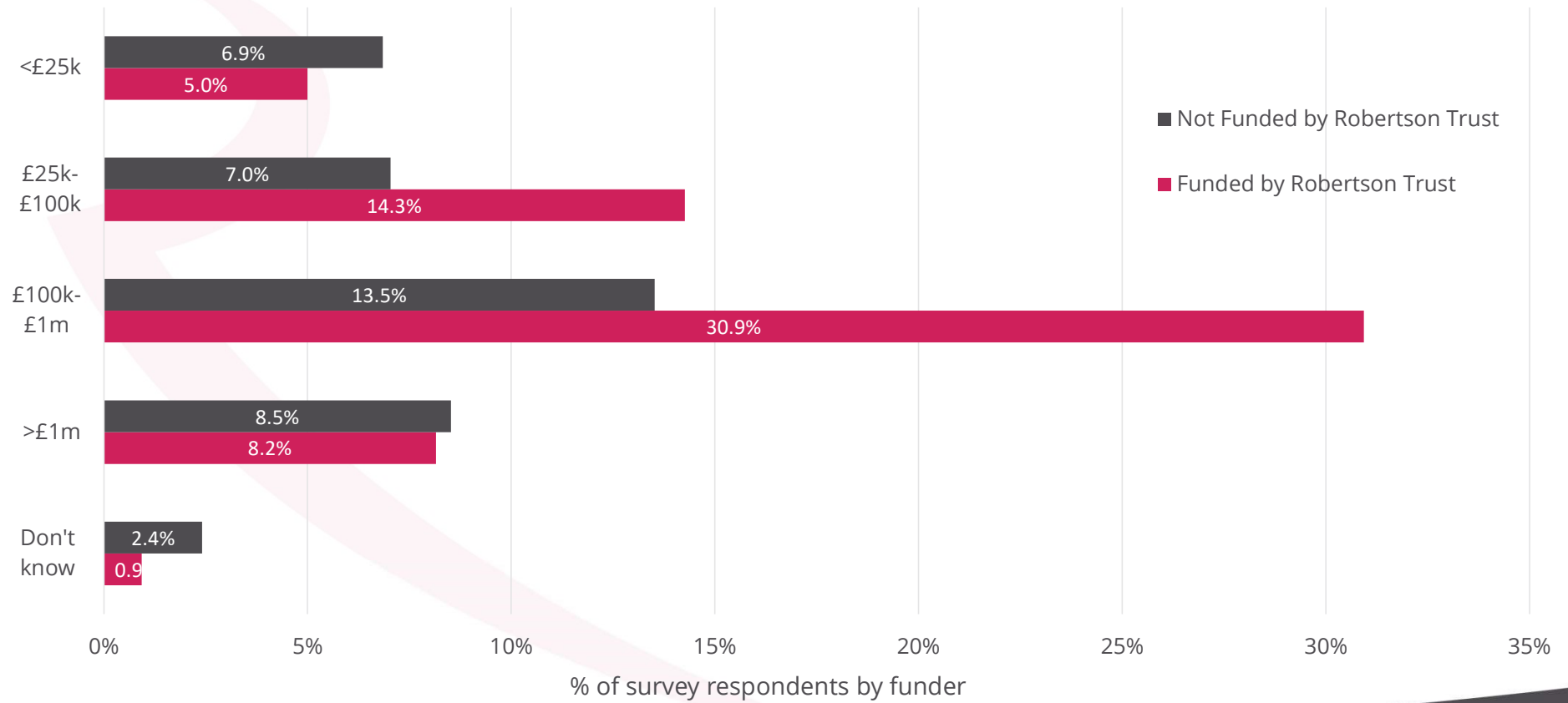
Our grant-holders wanted funding strategy and business planning capacity building support

% of survey respondents by funder

Legend:
- Not funded by TRT
- Funded by TRT

Category	Not funded by TRT	Funded by TRT
Funding Strategy	23.6%	21.9%
Business Planning	18.10%	16.10%
Policies / Procedures	8.3%	12.1%
Leadership	11.1%	11.2%
Financial Management	8.9%	11.2%
HR Support	9.4%	10.5%
Governance	11.4%	9.7%
Facilities / Health & Safety	9.2%	7.4%
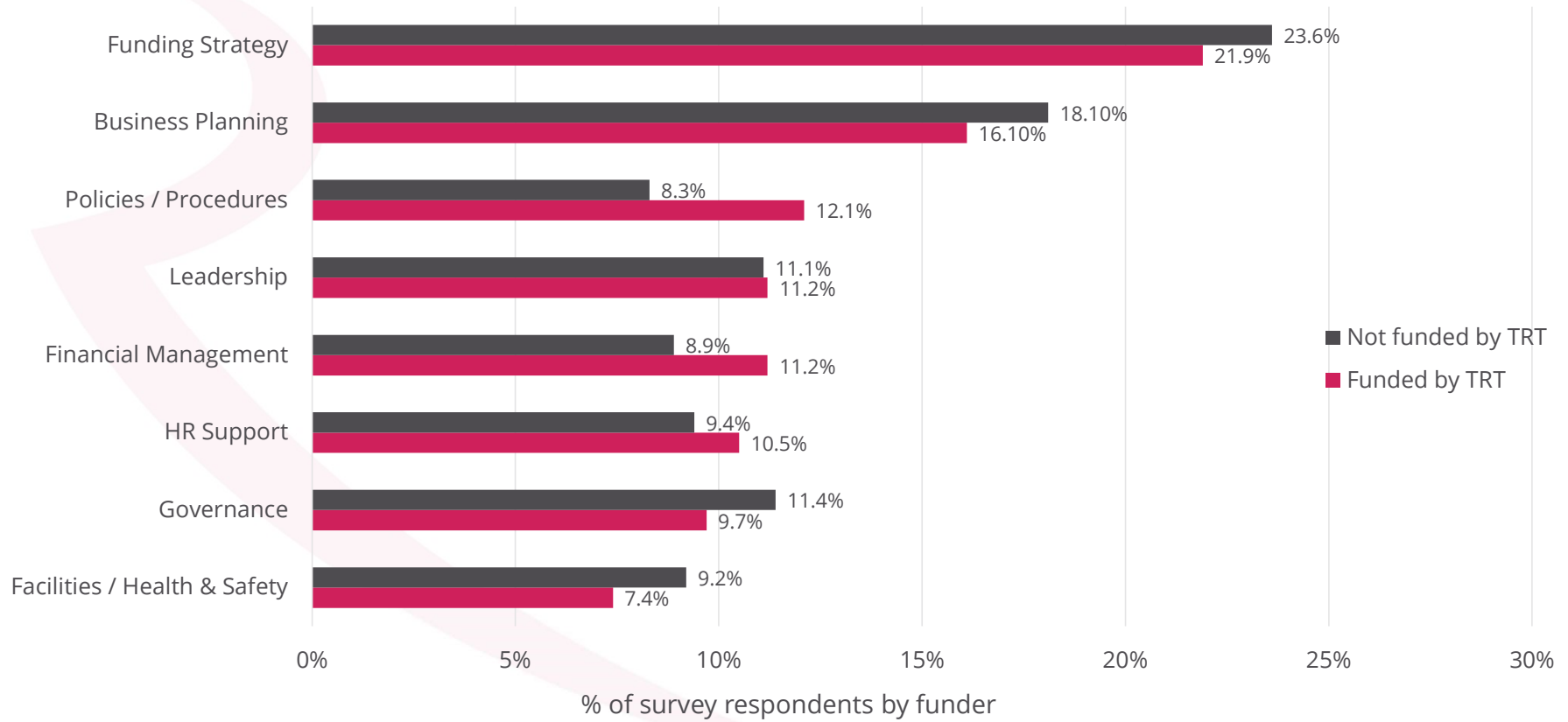
Our grant-holders wanted online and blended delivery

% of survey respondents by funder

Legend: Not Funded by TRT, Funded by TRT

Category	Not Funded by TRT	Funded by TRT
Online	8.6%	22.9%
Blended	13.6%	22.2%
No Preference	4.8%	14.4%
In person (subject to restrictions)	4.5%	7.6%
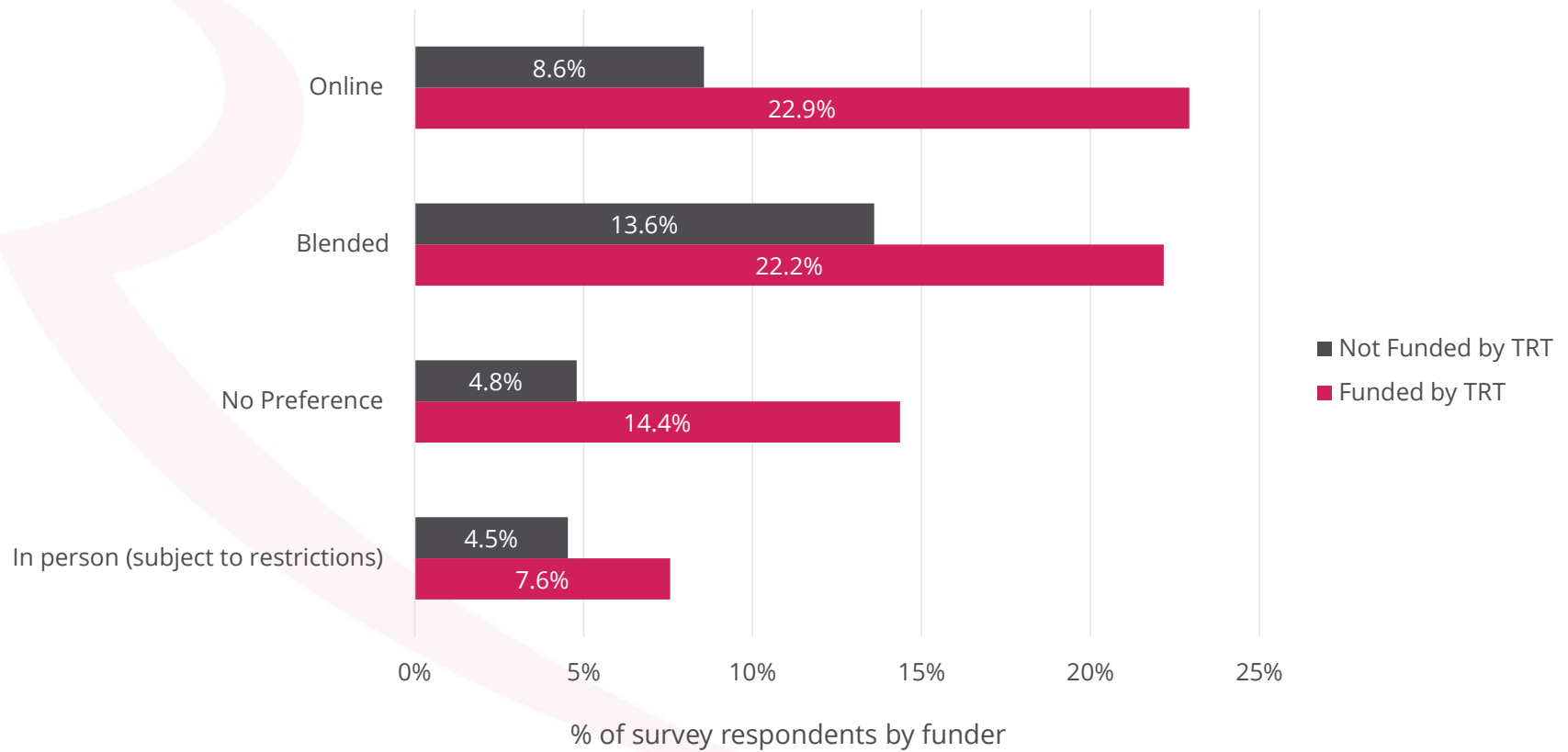
Our grant-holders prefer capacity building support during working hours

Work Hours	16.2% (Not Funded by TRT) / 46.1% (Funded by TRT)
No Preference	12.9% (Not Funded by TRT) / 18.4% (Funded by TRT)
Evenings	2.5% (Not Funded by TRT) / 2.5% (Funded by TRT)

Legend:
■ Not Funded by TRT
■ Funded by TRT

% of survey respondents by funder
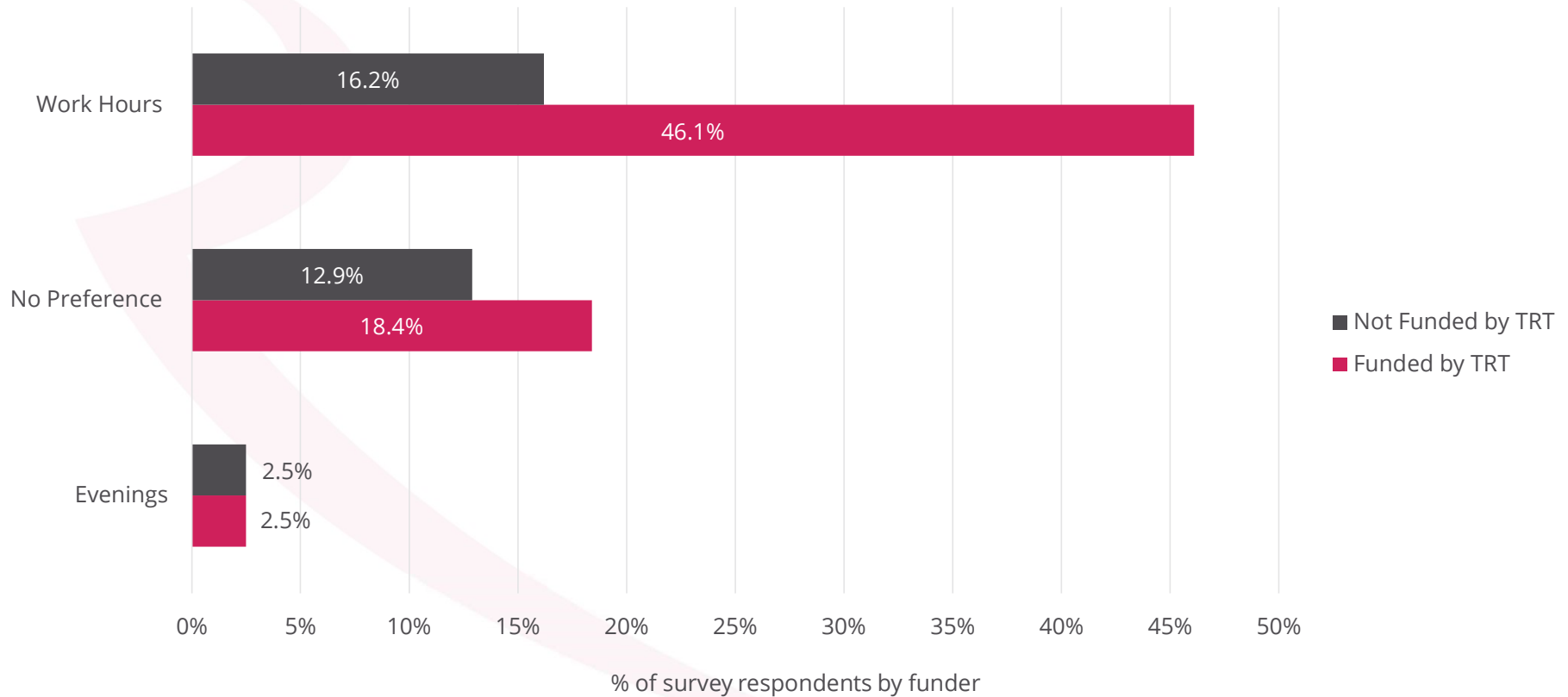
Most of our grant-holders had no preference about the length of capacity building

Longer Programmes
- Not Funded by TRT: 17.1%
- Funded by TRT: 24.9%

No Preference
- Not Funded by TRT: 8.6%
- Funded by TRT: 30.0%

One off
- Not Funded by TRT: 5.8%
- Funded by TRT: 12.1%

■ Not Funded by TRT
■ Funded by TRT

% of survey respondents by funder
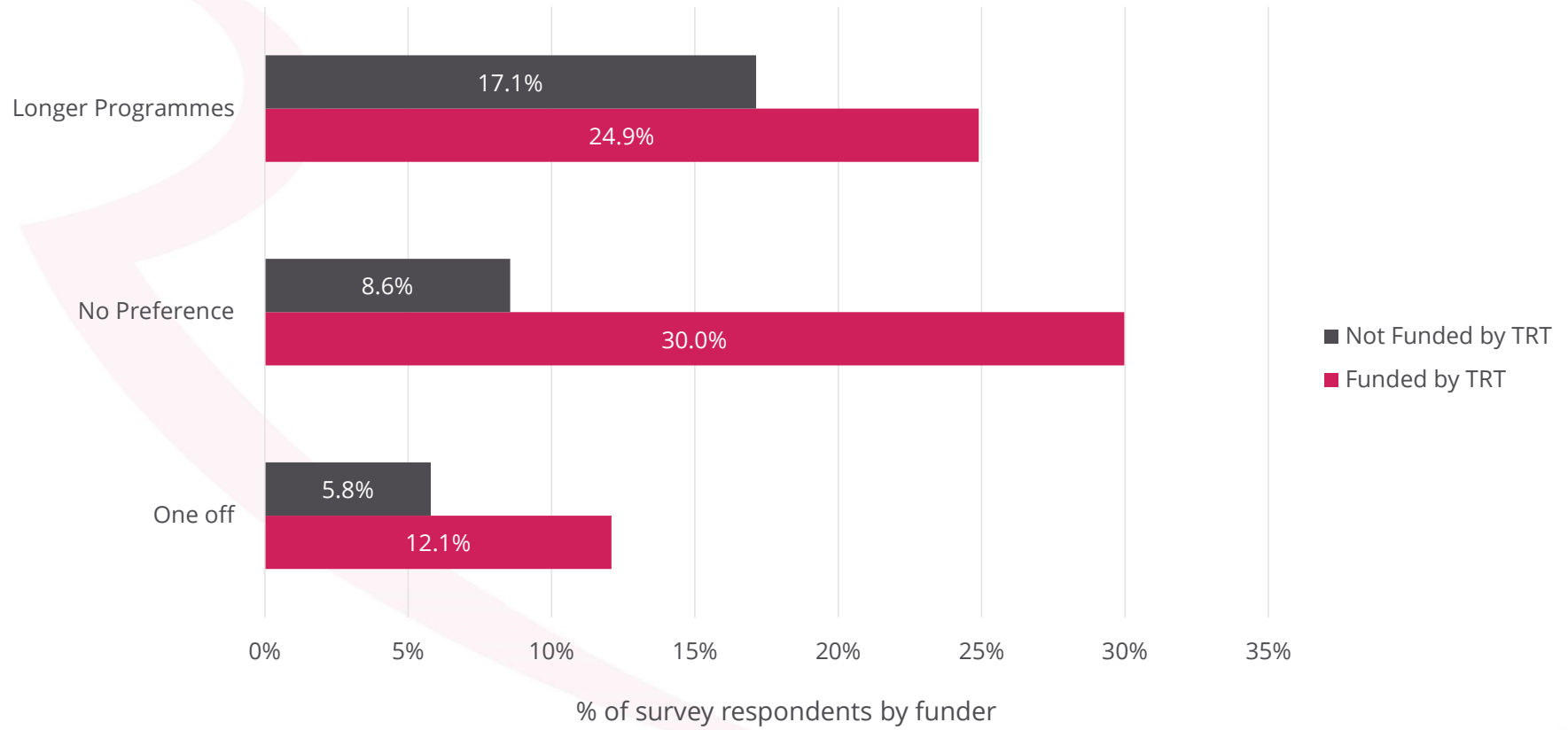
Deep dive: what do organisations of different sizes want?

Most respondents were from organisations between £100k-£1m: our sample is different to SCVO's profile of the sector

% of survey respondents

Legend:
- ■ SCVO
- ■ Survey Respondents

Category	SCVO	Survey Respondents
<£25k	56.8%	12.2%
£25k-£100k	17.3%	21.7%
£100k-£1m	13.7%	44.4%
>£1m	3.9%	17.0%
Don't know	8.3%	4.6%

Smaller groups accessed less capacity building support

>£1m
- 53.3% (Not accessed capacity-building support)
- 46.7% (Accessed capacity-building support)

£100-£1m
- 60.8% (Not accessed capacity-building support)
- 39.2% (Accessed capacity-building support)

£25k-£100k
- 71.8% (Not accessed capacity-building support)
- 28.2% (Accessed capacity-building support)

<£25k
- 75.8% (Not accessed capacity-building support)
- 24.2% (Accessed capacity-building support)

% of survey respondents by funder

Legend:
- Not accessed capacity-building support
- Accessed capacity-building support

A large proportion of small groups wanted support with funding strategies

% of survey respondents by funder

Legend:
- Facilities/ Health and Safety
- HR Support
- Policies/ Procedures
- Financial Management
- Funding Strategy
- Leadership
- Governance
- Business Planning

>£1m
- Facilities/ Health and Safety: 7.3%
- HR Support: 5.6%
- Policies/ Procedures: 7.3%
- Financial Management: 10.7%
- Funding Strategy: 10.7%
- Leadership: 14.6%
- Governance: 9.0%
- Business Planning: 20.2%

£100k-£1m
- Facilities/ Health and Safety: 7.2%
- HR Support: 11.9%
- Policies/ Procedures: 11.9%
- Financial Management: 11.0%
- Funding Strategy: 20.1%
- Leadership: 10.8%
- Governance: 11.6%
- Business Planning: 16.0%

£25k-£100k
- Facilities/ Health and Safety: 8.5%
- HR Support: 10.5%
- Policies/ Procedures: 12.1%
- Financial Management: 9.8%
- Funding Strategy: 22.2%
- Leadership: 9.8%
- Governance: 9.5%
- Business Planning: 17.6%

<£25k
- Facilities/ Health and Safety: 10.7%
- HR Support: 7.1%
- Policies/ Procedures: 11.6%
- Financial Management: 9.8%
- Funding Strategy: 31.3%
- Leadership: 11.6%
- Governance: 6.3%
- Business Planning: 11.6%

Larger organisations preferred blended delivery; smaller groups preferred online

% of survey respondents by income group

Legend:
- No Preference
- Blended
- Online
- In person (subject to restrictions)

>£1m
- No Preference: 17.2%
- Blended: 44.8%
- Online: 29.3%
- In person: 8.6%

£100-£1m
- No Preference: 30.4%
- Blended: 36.1%
- Online: 30.4%
- In person: 9.9%

£25k-£100k
- No Preference: 15.1%
- Blended: 35.5%
- Online: 36.6%
- In person: 12.9%

<£25k
- No Preference: 13.6%
- Blended: 31.8%
- Online: 34.1%
- In person: 20.5%
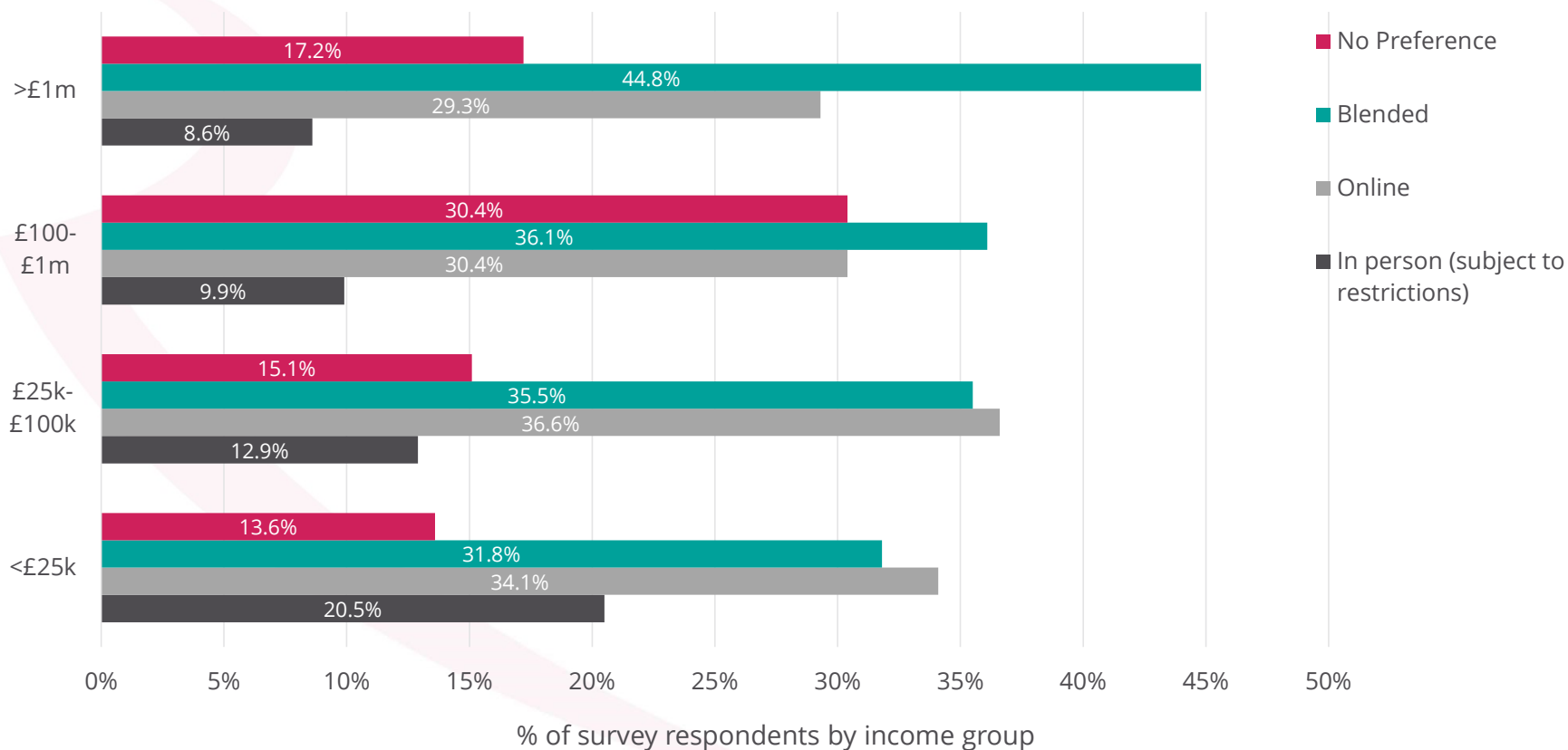
All income groups, apart from <£25k, wanted capacity building support during working hours

Evening
No preference
Work hours

>£1m
- 1.7%
- 22.4%
- 75.9%

£100-£1m
- 3.1%
- 30.4%
- 66.5%

£25k-£100k
- 4.3%
- 34.4%
- 61.3%

<£25k
- 15.9%
- 43.2%
- 40.9%

% of survey respondents by funder

Longer programmes are popular across all income groups

% of survey respondents by income
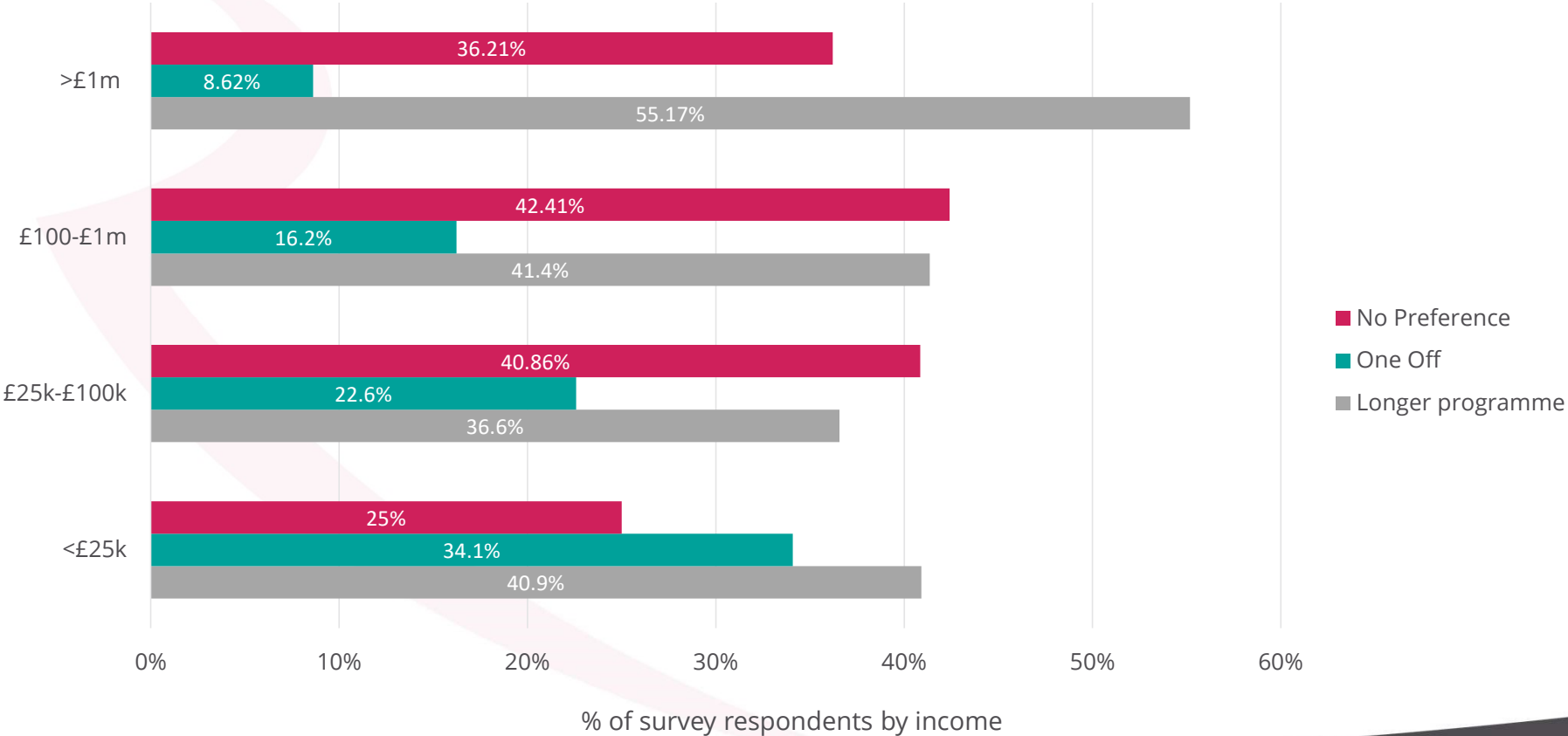
Conclusions

Conclusions

Current picture of capacity building

- About one-third of survey respondents accessed capacity building support in the last 12 months.

- Most were one-off masterclasses and workshops and were accessed by self-referral. Three-quarters of organisations who accessed capacity building were able to do so for free.

- There is a wide-range of providers of capacity building support including organisations from the public, charity and private sectors.

- Small organisations (under £25k) accessed less capacity building. Funding support was the most important topic for small organisations.

Conclusions

Future capacity building need

- As a whole, respondents most wanted to see capacity building about funding strategy and business planning.

- There is a huge range of support topics that organisations wanted to see – many replied with multiple topics suggesting a large range of capacity building needs.

- In terms of delivery, most respondents preferred blended or online delivery, during work hours or school hours. They preferred longer programmes of support but saw the value of workshops as an introduction. Respondents saw the value in providing both breath and depth in capacity building.

- Respondents asked us to consider their capacity to take up support and our role in negatively impacting on their capacity. They also recommended that we try new things, ensure we don't duplicate with other providers/funders and listened to their needs before developing a programme.

- Capacity building that was tailored to their needs, relevant to them, offered a choice, and delivered by providers with experience, was important to many organisations. 1-2-1 support and peer-support were popular.

Recommendations

If offering capacity building support, funders should try to:

- Target to groups of organisations – by topic and by size/ capacity.

- Ensure support is high-quality, relevant, and providers have relevant experience.

- Provide the option to attend online and share recorded sessions widely.

- Schedule them during the working day and during school hours if possible.

- Consider the time taken to deliver the support and the capacity of grant holders to implement it.

- Build in capacity building opportunities to meet others and develop peer-support networks.

- Ensure elements of capacity building is bespoke 1-2-1 support such as coaching, mentoring or having access to 'experts'. Organisations want support that is tailored to their needs and circumstances.

- Co-designed and co-delivered capacity building support drawing on the extensive experience already in the sector.

- Consider how you will support grant holders to implement capacity building support within their organisations'.

- Give grant holders choice and control over their capacity building support - organisations have shown us that they have a wide-range of needs and support they would like to access.

- Develop a supportive relationships with grant-holders and help them find the bespoke support that they need.

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