



APONT
**Aboriginal Governance
& Management Program**

Our Decisions | Our Actions | Our Future

ABORIGINAL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (AGMP) SURVEY REPORT

***AGMP intern Gretel Bull's assistance in coordinating survey responses and records, compiling and graphing the data and drafting this report is valued**

The findings of this report are based on analysis of the first 30 survey responses received. The findings focus only on several key questions in the survey, numbered at the top of the graphs.

At the date of receiving the 30th survey response, 147 surveys had been sent to CEOs/managers of NT Aboriginal organisations of all sizes and sectors across the Northern Territory. We recognise the CEOs/managers are themselves not the organisation, but in most cases they are hired by the organisation to have the sort of information addressed in the survey at their fingertips.

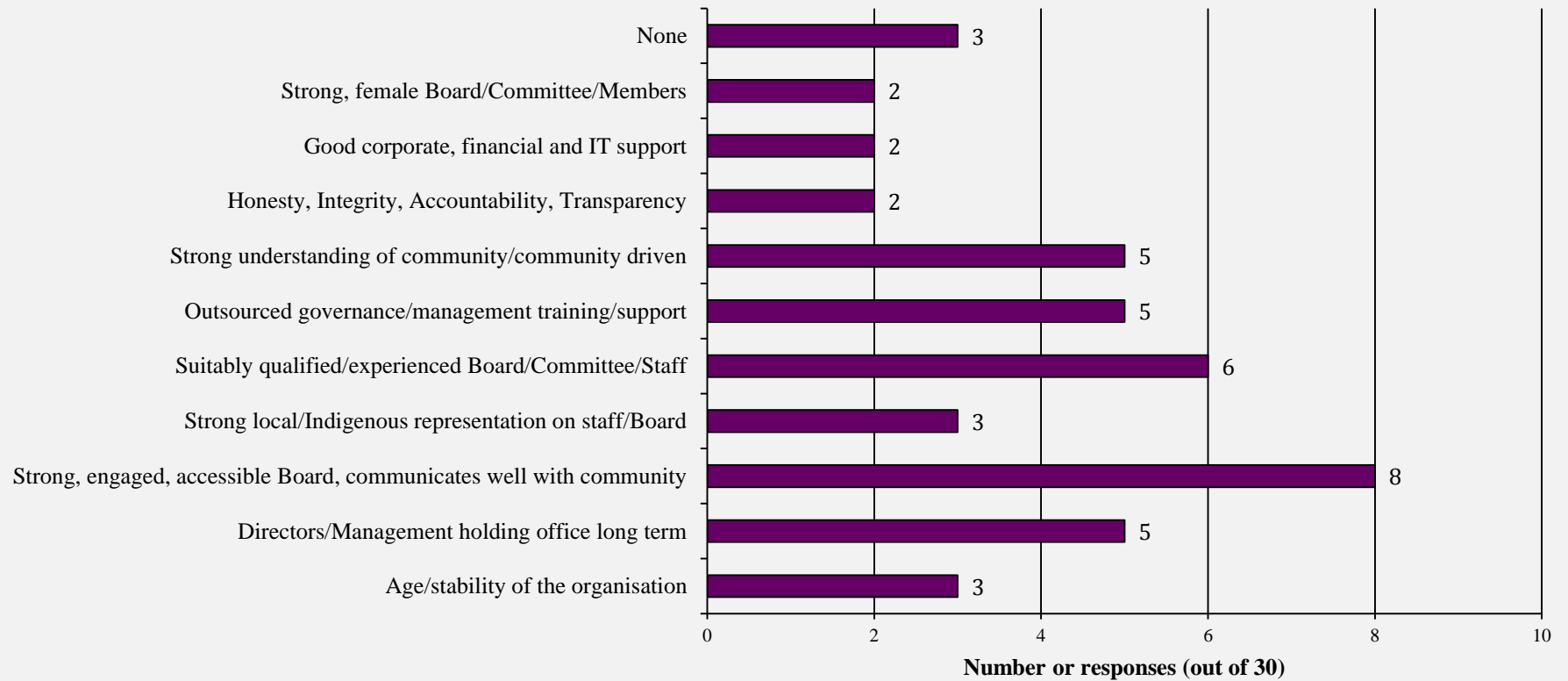
Furthermore, as this was an on-line survey, often the CEOs/managers are the only ones in the organisation with regular computer access. From our intern's coordination of responses, indeed her encouragement of some, it seems the relatively small number of responses cannot be attributed to lack interest in or need for governance and management support. It is more likely indicative of the pressure these organisations are working under, including their CEOs/managers, and the resulting time constraints.

At 80% (24/30), the vast majority of survey respondents characterised their organisation's work as remote or mostly remote (defined in the survey as work in communities 100 kms or more from Alice Springs or Darwin, even if the organisation is based in Alice Springs or Darwin).

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percentage, with the exception of the annual governance and management budget pie chart.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRENGTHS

16. What are the main governance and management strengths of the organisation?



- All 30 respondents answered question 16.
- The common themes arising from the open-ended responses to question 16 are synthesised into eleven categories reflected in the graph above.
- A further 16/30 (53%) respondents recorded responses that did not fit into any of the above categories. These singular responses are not graphed.
- Some organisations cited several different strengths both across and outside the synthesised categories, while others cited only one. Accordingly, the recorded responses outnumber the responding organisations.

Commonalities

- **8/30 (27%) respondents indicated one of their main governance and management strengths is a board with one or more of the following attributes: strength, engagement, accessibility, and effective communication with the community. This was the most common response in question 16.**
- 6/30 (20%) respondents cited suitably qualified and experienced board/committee/staff as their strength. Another 5/30 (17%) cited each of the following: a strong understanding of the community/organisation, driven by the community's needs and desires; directors/managers holding positions long term; and outsourced governance and management training and/or support.
- 3/30 (10%) respondents reported that their organisation had no governance or management strengths at all.

“Good organisations are organisations that make good decisions.” – Wali Wunungmurra, Strong Aboriginal Governance Summit

Some conclusions

- This data demonstrates that many organisations already have, or perceive themselves as having a strong board – despite the most commonly listed governance and management weakness amongst respondents (8/25, 32%) in question 17 below being variable levels of understanding among managers and directors as to what constitutes good governance and management practices and/or funding requirements.
- The data also indicates that attracting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced directors and staff, strong community understanding and engagement and outsourced governance and management training/support are important factors in effective governance and management.

“We have a strong focus on policies and procedures to support our operations, and on ensuring staff and Directors understand and fulfil their roles and functions. We see ourselves as being in a strong position but acknowledge hard work is needed to maintain this position.” – Survey respondent Steve Roeger, CEO, Dhimurru

GOVERNANCE WEAKNESSES, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

17. What, if any, are the main governance and management weaknesses, problems and challenges of the organisation?



- 25/30 respondents answered question 17.
- The common themes arising from the open-ended responses to question 17 are synthesised into seven categories reflected in the graph immediately above.
- A further 18/25 (72%) respondents recorded responses that did not fit into any of the above categories. These singular responses are not graphed.
- Some organisations cited several different weaknesses both across and outside of the synthesized categories, while others cited only one. Accordingly, the recorded responses outnumber the responding organisations.

Commonalities

- **8/25 (32%) respondents to this question cited as a main governance and management weakness variable levels of understanding by directors and managers of funding requirements and what constitutes good governance and management practice. A further 6/25 (24%) cited insufficient governance and management training and/or support as a weakness, while 5/25 (20%) cited lack of financial security/insufficient resources due to short term or uncertain funding arrangements. These three categories were the most commonly occurring responses to question 17.**
- Problems with recruitment and retention of suitably qualified/experienced staff (especially Indigenous staff) were cited by 4/25 (16%) respondents, and a dysfunctional/uncommitted/non-existent board or committee were identified by 3/25 (12%) respondents.

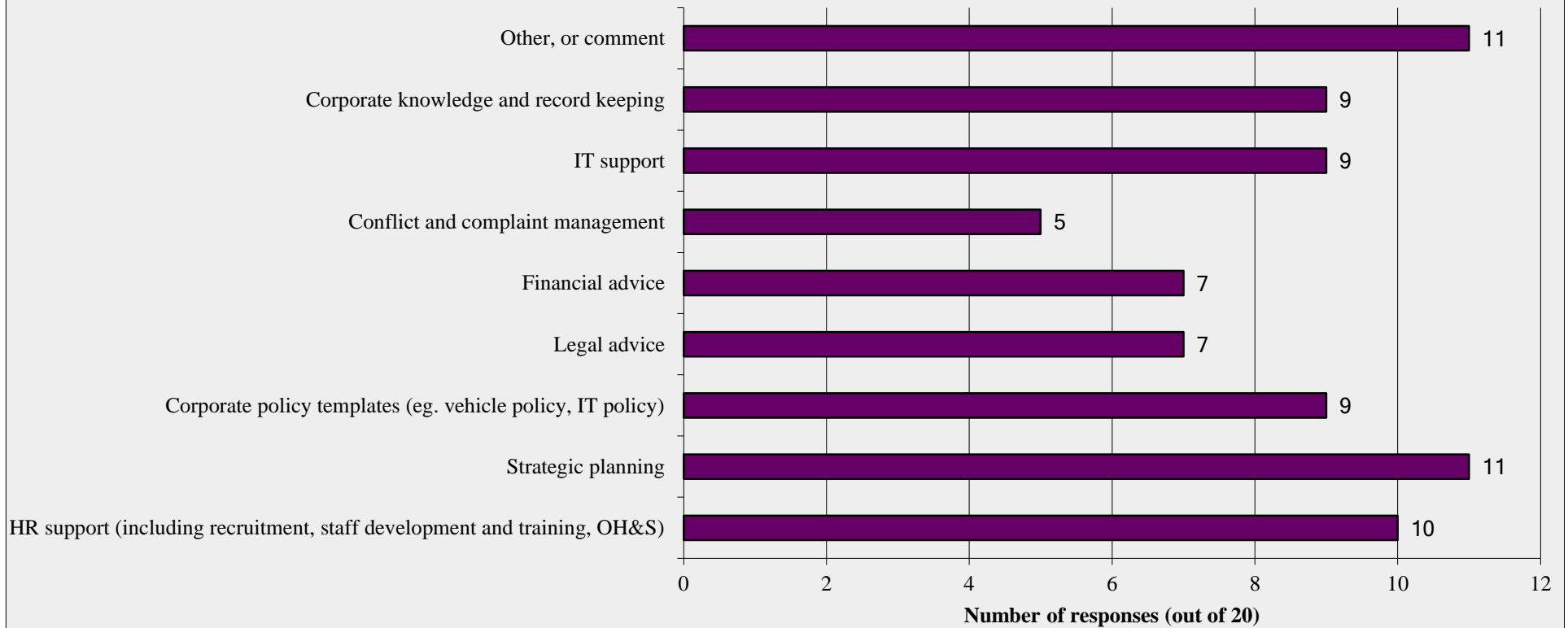
“The main challenge is the grant funding cycle. Slowly the Federal Government is offering 5 year funding agreements but many are still only 12 months.” – Survey respondent Alison Doyle, CEO, Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association

Some conclusions

- The frequency of organisations citing varying levels of understanding of good governance and management practices, insufficient governance and management training and/or support, and dysfunctional/uncommitted/non-existent Board/Committee suggests there is a widespread need for further support in these areas.
- Organisations citing problems with recruitment and retention of suitably qualified/experienced staff (especially Indigenous staff) may benefit from assistance in leadership development, succession planning and HR support.

KEY MANAGEMENT NEEDS

18. What, if any, are the key needs of the organisation to address its management weaknesses, problems or challenges? (Nominate up to three needs.)



- 20/30 respondents answered question 18.
- Respondents were asked to nominate up to three needs, however some respondents nominated more than this. Accordingly, the recorded responses outnumber the responding organisations.
- Some respondents (11/20 or 55%) chose to leave a comment instead of/in addition to nominating categories of need offered. These responses are represented in 'Other, or comment' in the graph immediately above.

Commonalities

- **11/20 (55%) respondents cited strategic planning as a key need to address their management weaknesses, problems or challenges, while 10/20 (50%) cited HR support (including recruitment, staff development and training, OH&S). These two were the most frequently cited need categories.**
- Corporate knowledge and record keeping, IT support and corporate policy templates were also frequently nominated management needs, with 9/20 (45%) respondents nominating each of these.
- Financial advice and legal advice were each nominated as needs by 7/20 (35%) of respondents.

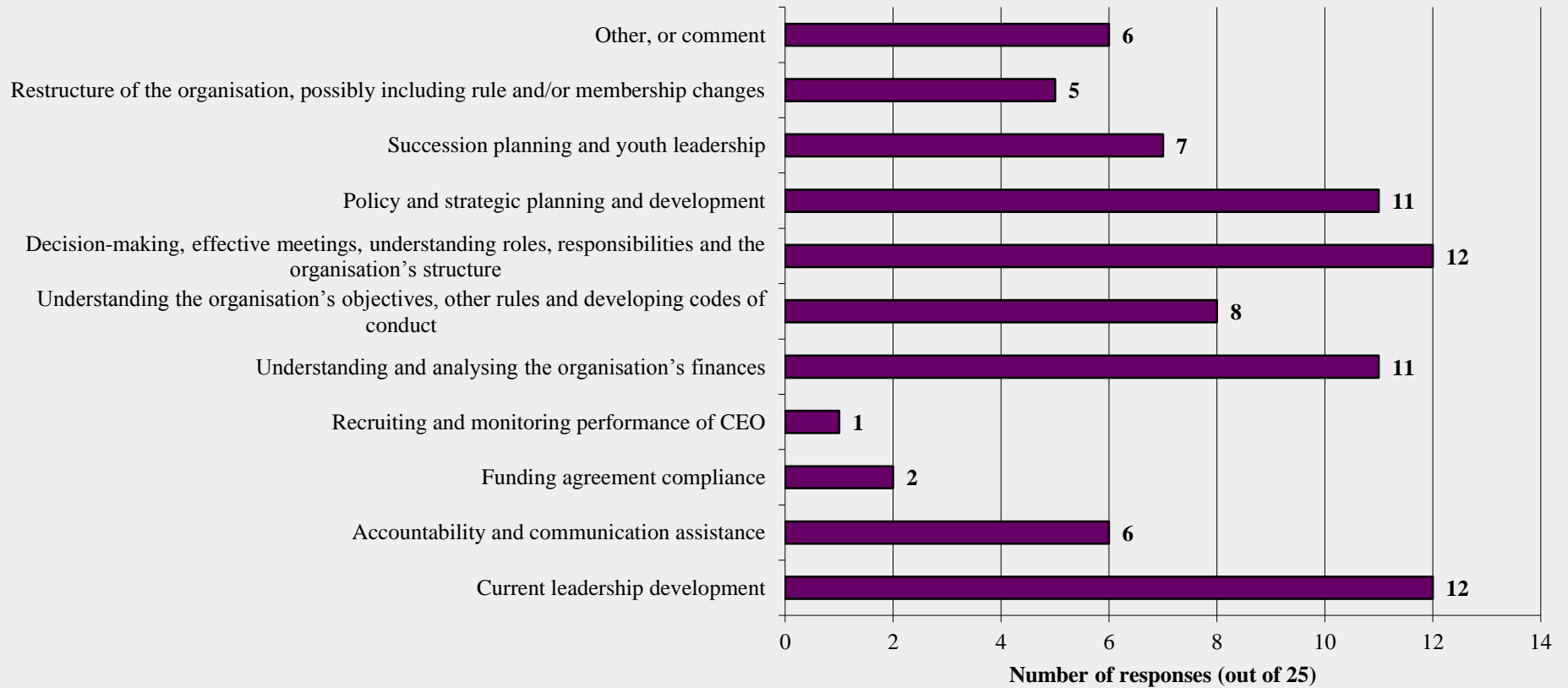
“We would benefit from training on financial systems, human resources and occupational health and safety regulations and other compliance measures associated with health service delivery” – Survey respondent Moana Tane, Health Service Manager, Marthakal Homelands Health Service

Some conclusions

- The frequency of organisations reporting strategic planning and HR support as key to addressing management weaknesses, problems and challenges suggests widespread need for planning and development strategies to build capacity and optimise stability and sustainability. Addressing the frequently reported corporate knowledge and record keeping need may assist here too.
- The frequently reported need for corporate policy templates is consistent with the variable levels of understanding of roles, responsibilities and practices, policies and procedures reported in questions 17 and 19.

KEY GOVERNANCE NEEDS

19. What are the main needs of the organisation to address its governance weaknesses, problems or challenges, if any? (Nominate up to three needs.)



- 25/30 respondents answered question 19.
- Respondents were asked to nominate up to three needs, however some respondents nominated more than this. Accordingly, the recorded responses outnumber the responding organisations.
- Some respondents (6/25 or 24%) chose to leave a comment instead of/in addition to nominating categories of need offered. These responses are represented in 'Other, or comment' in the graph immediately above.

Commonalities

- **12/25 (48%) respondents cited current leadership development as a main need in addressing governance weaknesses, problems and challenges, while a further 12/25 (48%) cited decision-making, effective meetings, understanding roles, responsibilities and the organisation's structure. 11/25 (44%) respondents nominated understanding and analysing the organisation's finances while another 11/25 (42%) nominated policy and strategic planning and development.**
- Understanding the organisation's objectives, other rules, and developing codes of conduct (8/25 or 32% of respondents), succession planning (7/25 or 28% of respondents) and accountability and communication assistance (6/25 or 24% of respondents), were also frequently occurring areas of need.

“I think I could safely say we need as much help as possible. We have people who do not speak much English, they are elderly and have limited knowledge of any type of meeting and function process.” – Survey respondent Diane Nona, Administrator, Urapuntja Aboriginal Corporation

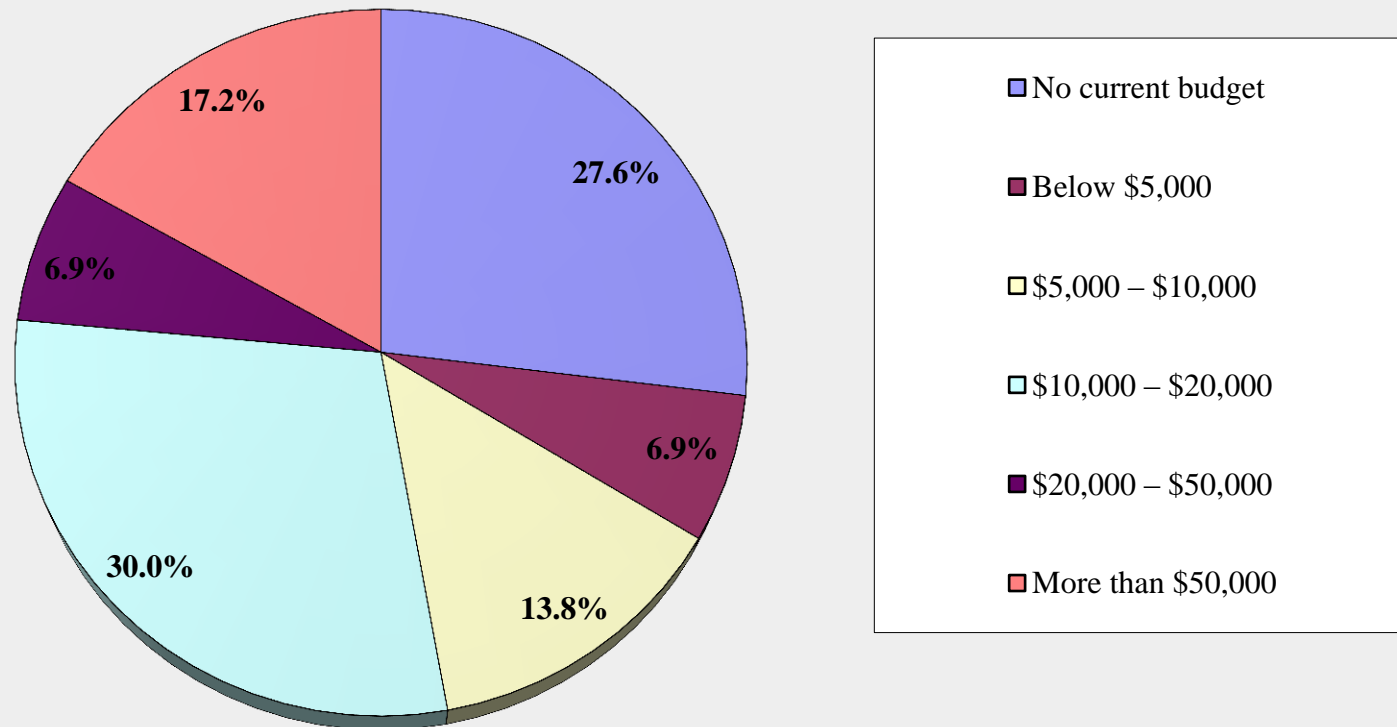
Some conclusions

- Together and consistent with common weaknesses reported in question 17, variable levels of understanding of roles and responsibilities, finances, organisational structures, objectives and other rules , and their translation into sound decision-making, again suggest a widespread issue or set of issues. The need for current leadership development might be considered code for addressing these.
- Strategic planning is frequently identified as a priority management *and* governance need (though this is possibly one of several areas where the distinction between management and governance is blurred in the survey and on the ground).

“We gotta work with our young people to prepare them to be able to govern, to be leaders in communities, in our organisations. We need a road map for the next 20 years for your kids that allows them to excel in both worlds.” – David Ross, Strong Aboriginal Governance Summit

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT BUDGET

23. What is the organisation's (approximate) annual budget for governance and management support?



- All 30 respondents chose to answer question 23.
- Given the relatively large size of some governance and management support budgets reported, it is possible some respondents misinterpreted the question and inaccurately reported their budgets.
- Notwithstanding some possible misinterpretation in the answers, the point of this part of the report is to highlight that 1. funding is, or has been, available to organisations to strengthen their governance and management, and 2. adequate funding for governance and management is not necessarily the answer to the needs. To supplement (some) organisations' own funding for this, there are existing agencies funded to provide governance and management training and support to Aboriginal organisations free of charge. Pro bono supports can be made available. For some organisations, it's a matter of determining the options and the most appropriate provider, tools and resources for them. For others, of course, it's a more fundamental matter of appropriate organisational structure.

Commonalities

- **16/30 (52%) respondents reported their annual governance and management support budget as greater than \$10,000, with 9/30 (30%) reporting a budget of \$10,000-\$20,000, 2/30 (6.9%) reporting \$20,000-\$50,000, and 5/30 (17.2%) reporting a budget of more than \$50,000.**
- Of the remaining respondents, 4/30 (13.8%) reported an annual governance and management support budget of \$5,000-\$10,000, 2/30 (6.9%) reported a budget of less than \$5,000, while a further 8/30 (27.6%) reported having no current budget.

Some conclusions and other statistics (drawing also on responses to related questions)

- Some organisations surveyed have fairly significant funds allocated annually to governance and management support.
- 11/30 (27%) respondents reported accessing governance and management training and/or support through the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) at no cost. ORIC was the most frequently cited governance and management support service utilised (data taken from question 21).

- A further 10/30 (33%) respondents reported using private governance and management consultants, training and/or support, paid with either funds secured for the purpose in funding arrangements or self-funding (data taken from question 21).

“It is very difficult and costly to attend any courses for members and directors of our corporation as we are so remote.” – Survey respondent Penny Smith, Art Centre Manager, Karungkarni Art and Culture Aboriginal Corporation

NEXT STEPS

The next significant step in the APO NT Aboriginal Governance and Management Program is a series of regional workshops. The workshops will provide an opportunity for chairpersons, other board members and executive officers of NT Aboriginal organisations as a group to discuss the survey results and provide feedback. The feedback will, in turn, guide the further development of the Program.