

Competencies of Certified Nonprofit Professionals

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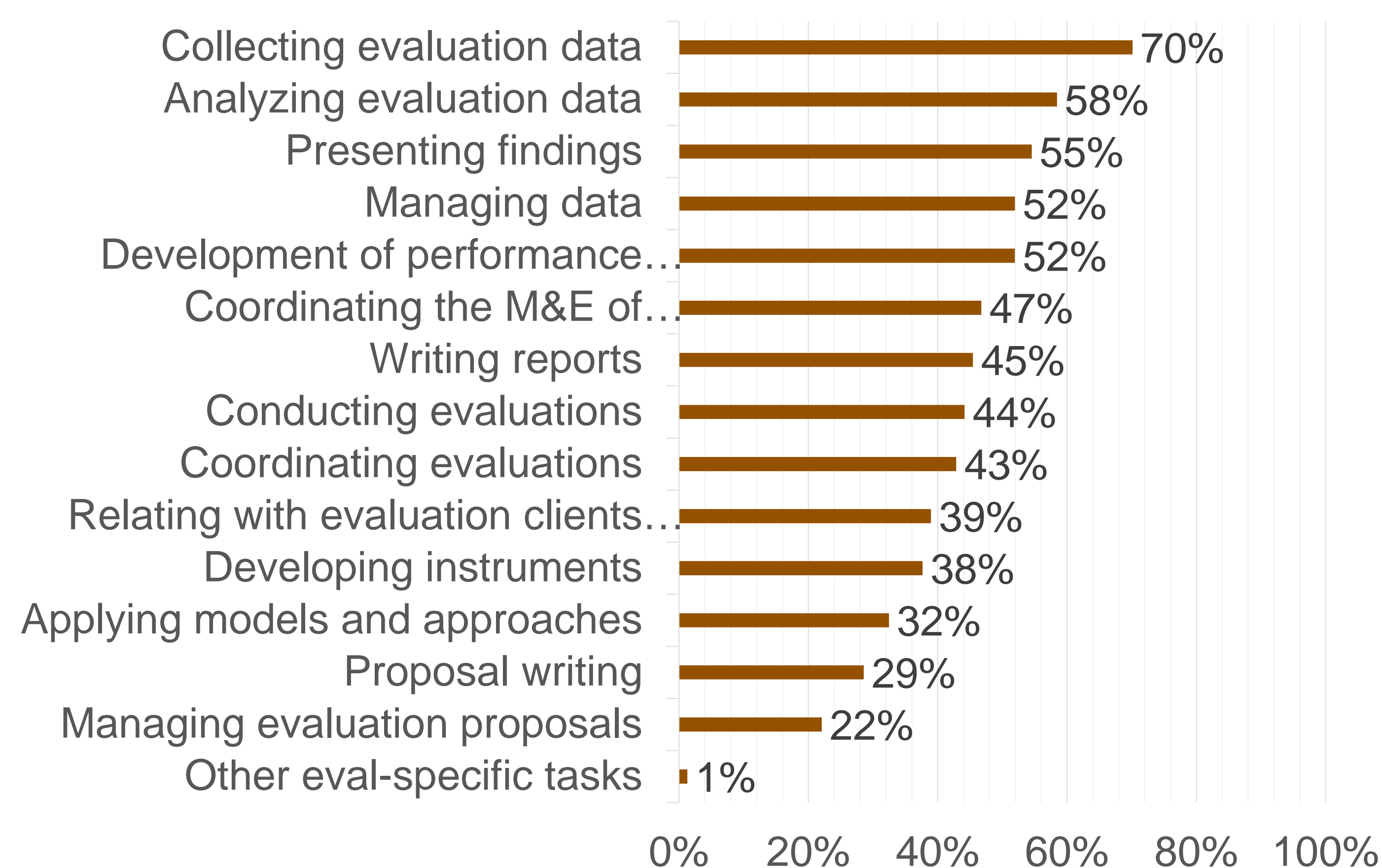
Results

Some of the findings from the survey are included here: As shown in Figure 1, certified nonprofit professionals engage in a wide range of evaluation tasks. Most commonly, they engage in evaluation groundwork (e.g., collecting, analyzing, presenting, and managing evaluation data). They are less likely to be engaged in more conceptual and developmental evaluation tasks (e.g., managing evaluations, writing grants, developing instruments, and applying evaluation models and approaches). This is not surprising, because these professionals only commit an average of 20% of their time on evaluation-related tasks ($n = 55$, $M = 19.73$, $SD = 22.04$). This includes respondents who typically do not spend any time on evaluation-related tasks and those who spend almost all of their time (up to 95%) on such tasks.

Most frequently, respondents indicated spending 5% ($n = 12$) or 10% ($n = 10$) of their weekly time on evaluation tasks. Nevertheless, respondents indicated frequent use and moderate levels of confidence in applying reflective practice competencies, and occasional use and moderate confidence in applying technical, situational, and management competencies. They used interpersonal practice competencies most frequently and also showed the highest level of confidence in the domain.

When asked how specific skills were obtained, it became evident that coursework and professional development provide the biggest contribution to developing a range of competencies (see Table 1). Skills are largely developed through coursework or professional development. Some skills are self-taught. Internships, AMI, specialized trainings are less reported for skills development.

Fig 1. Task Engagement



Discussion

While many respondents indicated that important skills are developed in coursework, university programs have an opportunity to develop skills related to visualizing information and communication more broadly. In particular the following skills were reportedly self-taught by more than 50% of the respondents: Professional report writing, visual presentation development, storytelling, interpersonal communication, writing for the general public, and public speaking. It is also notable that more than 40% of respondents indicated not having any skills in using publishing layouts and graphic design, which are self-taught by over 35% of respondents, and covered in coursework taken by less than 30% of the respondents.

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Table 1. Skills Development

| | Coursework | Internships | AMI | Spec. Train. | Another PD | Self-Taught | No Skills |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----|--------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Research design | 81% | 4% | 23% | 10% | 31% | 17% | 8% |
| Fin Res Dev and Management | 87% | 19% | 6% | 13% | 52% | 21% | 4% |
| Logic modelling | 67% | 15% | 2% | 15% | 31% | 23% | 19% |
| Evaluation models and approaches | 73% | 18% | 6% | 8% | 41% | 25% | 12% |
| Qualitative data analysis | 79% | 25% | | 10% | 44% | 27% | 2% |
| Quantitative data analysis | 79% | 29% | 2% | 10% | 44% | 29% | 6% |
| Evaluation theory | 71% | 17% | 8% | 10% | 37% | 33% | 13% |
| Program design | 71% | 37% | 12% | 15% | 54% | 35% | 2% |
| Data collection | 77% | 33% | 2% | 13% | 48% | 35% | 2% |
| Publishing layouts | 25% | 8% | 2% | 6% | 22% | 37% | 43% |
| Graphic design | 27% | 10% | 4% | 6% | 17% | 40% | 40% |
| Data visualization | 42% | 13% | 2% | 12% | 29% | 40% | 27% |
| Grant writing | 67% | 27% | 8% | 17% | 29% | 44% | 15% |
| Project management | 69% | 38% | 8% | 17% | 60% | 48% | 2% |
| Professional report writing | 69% | 29% | 6% | 15% | 50% | 52% | 0% |
| Visual presentation development | 46% | 19% | 6% | 10% | 31% | 54% | 10% |
| Storytelling | 54% | 25% | 10% | 23% | 50% | 60% | 2% |
| Interpersonal communication | 65% | 45% | 16% | 22% | 55% | 63% | 0% |
| Writing for the general public | 63% | 25% | 6% | 12% | 54% | 63% | 4% |
| Public speaking | 75% | 41% | 14% | 16% | 59% | 69% | 4% |

Background and Context

Funding was requested to identify research and evaluation competencies and related training needs among professionals in the nonprofit sector. The rationale for this study was to establish a research agenda in Nonprofit Management that draws on prior work in the area of evaluation competencies. To that end, the following research activities were implemented: (1) identify a database of Certified Nonprofit Professionals through coordination with the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance and the Association of Certified Nonprofit Professionals; (2) implement a web-based questionnaire; (3) analyze questionnaire data; (4) present findings at pertinent conferences; and (5) use findings to shape future curricula.

Methods

Data presented here were collected in a survey of Certified Nonprofit Professionals who were credentialed between 2009 and 2018. A total of 77 individuals completed the survey. Questions explored what competencies these professionals use in their daily practice, how confident they feel in using evaluation competencies, and what gaps exist in the educational preparation of nonprofit professionals.