10 FINDINGS: EFFICIENCY

In the preceding chapters, evaluation findings are presented in relation to appropriateness (*Chapter 7*) and effectiveness (*Chapters 8* and *9*). This chapter examines the extent to which the NSPP and funded activities have been delivered efficiently and represent value for money to the Australian Government.[86]

10.1 Measuring efficiency in the suicide prevention context

Measuring efficiency in the suicide prevention context faces two key challenges:

- Lack of outcome data

- Difficulties assessing the cost of suicide and consequent economic benefit of prevention.

Considerable information is available regarding the inputs and outputs of NSPP-funded projects. As identified in *Chapter 6*, 16,222 individual and 2,425 group activities were delivered by the 47 projects that provided MDS data over the six months to March 2013.

However, as detailed in *Chapter 8*, outcome measurement using validated tools has been rare among NSPP-funded projects. Only three of the 47 projects conducted evaluations that measured outcomes using validated tools (see *Section 8.3*). Challenges associated with outcome measurement are identified in *Chapter 8,* and *Chapter 12* identifies ways to improve outcome measurement in future.

A further key challenge is that there is limited information available about the financial cost of suicide in Australia (see *Appendix E*), making it difficult to determine the economic benefit of prevention. Indeed, the report on the Senate Inquiry into Suicide, *The Hidden Toll*[87], sought to address this deficit by recommending that the Australian Government commission a detailed independent economic assessment of the cost of suicide and attempted suicide in Australia.

Given these limitations, the efficiency of NSPP-funded projects was examined from the following perspectives:

- Apparent cost efficiency of projects, calculated by relating costs to outputs (ie, hours of service delivered) to enable analysis and comparison of average cost-per–hour of service delivery (*Section 10.2*)

- Sustainability of projects (*Section 10.*3)

- Potential efficiency improvements, based on consultations with projects and the Department (*Sections 10.4 and 10.5*).

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[86] "Efficiency is the extent to which an evaluand produces outputs and outcomes without wastage of time, effort, money, space, or other resources. Efficiency alone is insufficient to determine merit or worth – an evaluand could be highly efficient but produce outcomes of insufficient value (eg, too small an effect), or it could still be excessively costly even though it used as few resources as possible (ie, it exceeded budgetary or time constraints, even in its most efficient form)." J Davidson, 'Efficiency', in S Mathieson (ed), *The Encyclopaedia of Evaluation,* Sage Publications, London, 2007, p123.
[87]Commonwealth-Government, *The Hidden Toll: Suicide in Australia. Report of the Senate Community affairs Reference Committee.* 2010, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra, p14

10 Findings: Efficiency

> **Key finding**
> - A detailed independent economic assessment of the cost of suicide and attempted suicide in Australia is needed to help inform future investment decisions.

10.2 Cost efficiency of projects

In this section, the apparent cost efficiency of NSPP-funded activities is analysed based on projects' costs and their *outputs*, ie, the services and support that projects deliver.

Specifically, this section provides a cost analysis of NSPP-funded projects for the six month period from October 2012 to March 2013. Using MDS data, project costs have been allocated to activities in order to calculate the average cost per activity per hour for each project.

Key assumptions and caveats are as follows:

- Annual funding has been pro-rated to identify expenditure for the six month MDS snapshot period
- It has been assumed that expenditure equates to funding, ie, NSPP funding is fully expended by the projects
- For each project, costs have been allocated to activities based on the relative proportion of hours reported for each activity in their MDS data
- The MDS data included in this analysis is presented in terms of 46 NSPP-funded projects, as one organisation submitted combined data for two projects (see *Section 6-1*).

10.2.1 Expenditure by program activity

The MDS program level data identifies nine program activities. For the purposes of cost analysis, these nine activities were classified as either outputs (activities which represent project outputs) or inputs (administration and other activities which are not outputs but rather support the delivery of outputs) as follows:

Outputs:
- Service provision
- Research and development
- Information development and provision.

Inputs:
- Travel
- Event/activity planning
- Administration
- Event/activity promotion
- Supervision
- Other.

Costs were allocated to each of these nine activities based on the relative proportion of hours reported in the MDS for each activity, as summarised in the following *Table 10-1*.

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10 Findings: Efficiency

Table 10-1: Expenditure by program activity, October 2012 to March 2013

Activities	Expenditure		Allocation of all expenditure to outputs	
Outputs	$ million	%	$ million	%
Service provision	$2.4	29%	$5.3	65%
Research and development	$0.8	10%	$1.8	23%
Information provision	$0.5	6%	$1.0	12%
Subtotal – outputs	**$3.7**	**45%**	**$8.1**	**100%**
Inputs				
Travel	$1.1	13%		
Planning	$1.1	14%		
Administration	$1.2	15%		
Promotion	$0.7	9%		
Supervision	$0.2	2%		
Other	$0.2	2%		
Subtotal – inputs	**$4.5**	**55%**		
Total expenditure	**$8.1**	**100%**		

Expenditure over the six month period totalled $8.1 million. This represents half (50%) of the total NSPP funding for the year 2012-13 (see *Figure 5-1*). Direct expenditure on output activities totalled $3.7 million (45%), and $4.5 million (55%) was expended on administrative and other input activities.
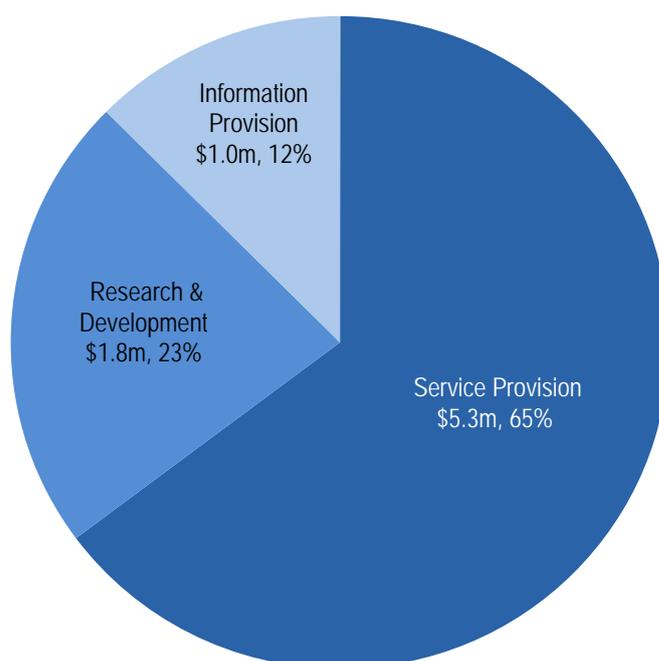
Expenditure on input activities was then allocated to output activities based on the relative proportion of hours for each output activity. The results (shown in the final two columns of *Table 10-1*) identify that the total expenditure of $8.1 million was utilised as follows:

- Service provision $5.3m (65%)

- Research and development $1.8m (23%)

- Information provision $1.0m (12%)

This is illustrated in the following *Figure 10-1.*

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10 Findings: Efficiency

Figure 10-1: Total expenditure by output, October 2012 to March 2013

As illustrated above (*Figure 10-1*), if expenditure associated with input activities is allocated to the three output areas, the total expenditure associated with service provision represents nearly two-thirds (65%) of all expenditure, with R&D and information provision representing 23% and 12% of expenditure respectively.

> **Key findings**
> ▪ Service provision (65%) and information provision (23%), account for 88% of expenditure.

10.2.2 Project efficiency

This section provides an analysis of project efficiency by calculating and analysing the cost per hour of service provision by NSPP-funded projects. The cost per hour was calculated for each of the 39 projects that submitted data identifying time spent undertaking individual or group service provision activities.
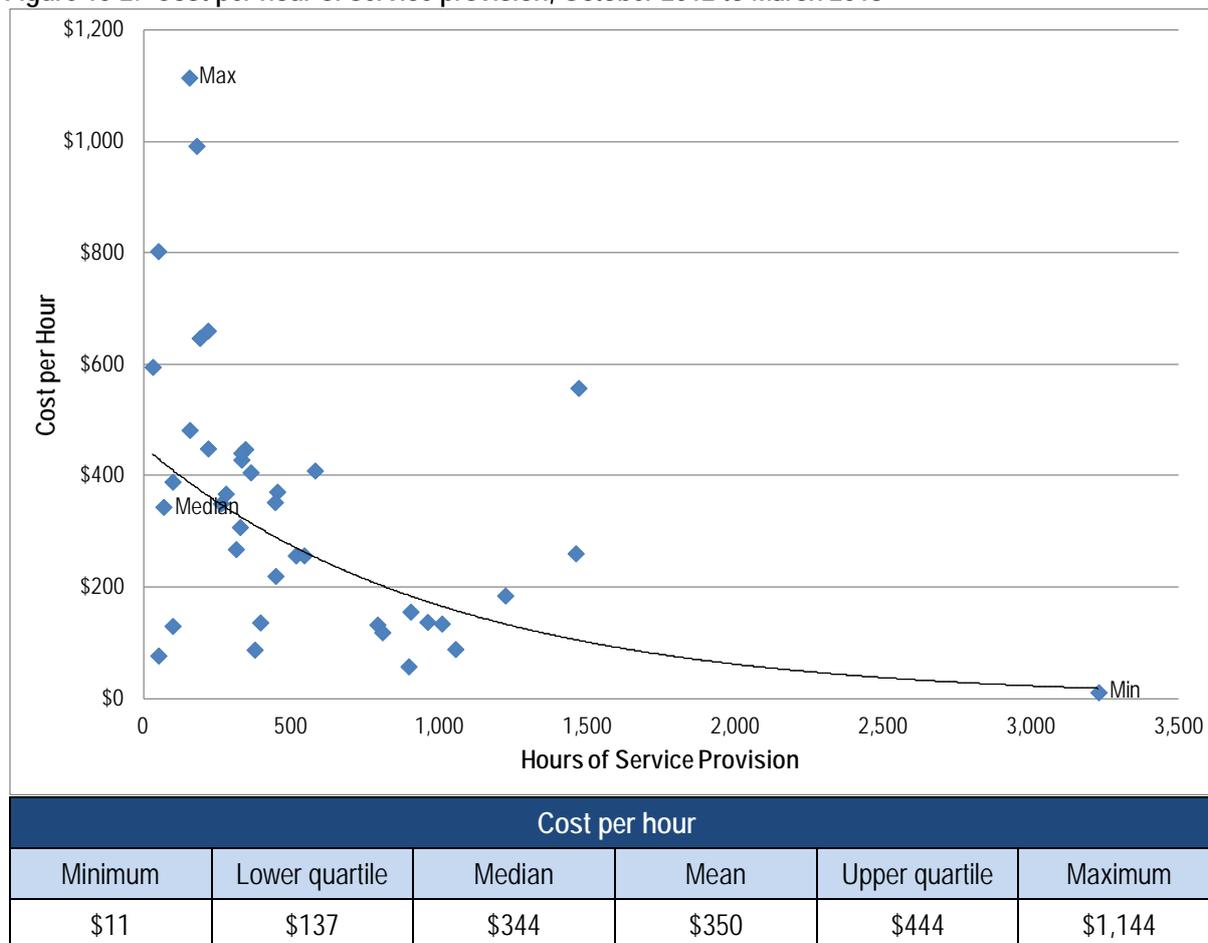
The remaining projects did not submit individual or group activity data as they solely undertook R&D and/or information provision activities, and/or worked with other organisations to build capacity rather than delivering direct services. Based on the information available, it is not possible or meaningful to identify the cost per hour of outputs for R&D or information provision.

The cost per hour of service provision was calculated for each project by dividing the estimated expenditure associated with service provision (see *Table 10-1*) by the total hours of service provision as identified in the individual and group MDS data combined.

The following *Figure 10-2* illustrates the cost per hour and total hours of service provision for the six-month period to March 2013 for each of the 39 projects analysed.

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10 Findings: Efficiency

Figure 10-2: Cost per hour of service provision, October 2012 to March 2013

Cost per hour					
Minimum	Lower quartile	Median	Mean	Upper quartile	Maximum
$11	$137	$344	$350	$444	$1,144

As identified above, the cost of service provision ranged from $11 to $1,144 per hour (median $344; mean $350 per hour). For most projects (75%), cost was below $444 per hour (upper quartile).

Of the 39 projects, 36 (92%) had a cost per hour of between $50 and $700, with three outliers outside this range (two above and one below this range). These three outliers are discussed below. Possible reasons to explain these outliers are identified, based upon review of available data and consultation with the projects:

- $1,114 per hour – This project had one of the highest reported percentages of time spent in relation to travel (23.5%) and administration (18.3%), which contributed to the high cost per hour. Consultation with this project indicated that it spends a significant amount of time developing resources and supporting other organisations in relation to suicide prevention rather than directly delivering services itself.

- $992 per hour – Similar to the previous project, this project reported a particularly high percentage of time spent in relation to travel (19.2%) and administration (28.8%). It is possible that low levels of recorded activity also elevated the cost per hour for this project.

- $11 per hour – This project delivered a significant amount of service provision (3,228 hours) during the period and nearly all of this was direct client support (group) using volunteers. The high use of volunteers resulted in this notably low cost per hour.

In relation to *Figure 10-2,* it is worth noting that the exponential trend line indicates an inverse relationship between the number of hours of service provision and the cost per hour, ie, the more hours of service delivered, the lower the cost per hour.

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10 Findings: Efficiency

10.2.3 Cost drivers

Further analysis was undertaken in relation to the cost per hour of service provision, to identify key drivers of cost. This analysis explored whether cost per hour appeared to be linked to:

- Project size, measured by project funding
- Primary type of service delivered (individual or group)
- Use of volunteers
- Proportion of time spent on travel
- Proportion of time spent undertaking administration
- Proportion of time spent undertaking event/activity planning
- Project reach, ie, national, state-wide or local.

To explore the above, projects were divided into categories for each variable as follows:

Table 10-2: Potential cost drivers

Potential cost driver	Category	Projects included in cohort
Project size	Small	Project funding for 2012-13 is below the median for all projects
	Large	Project funding for 2012-13 is above the median for all projects
Individual/group	Individual	Projects for which the majority of service delivery time was individual
	Group	Projects for which the majority of service delivery time was group
Volunteers	Yes	Projects that indicated they use volunteers
	No	Projects that indicated they do not use volunteers
Travel	High	Projects which reported the proportion of time spent on travel was above the median for all projects
	Low	Projects which reported the proportion of time spent on travel was below the median for all projects
Administration	High	Projects which reported the proportion of time spent on administration was above the median for all projects
	Low	Projects which reported the proportion of time spent on administration was below the median for all projects
Event/activity planning	High	Projects which reported the proportion of time spent on event/activity planning was above the median for all projects
	Low	Projects which reported the proportion of time spent on event/activity planning was below the median for all projects
Reach	National	Projects with national reach
	State-wide	Projects with state-wide reach
	Local	Projects with local reach

Note: The categories for all cost drivers except volunteers include the 39 projects for which the cost per hour was calculated. The categories related to volunteers include only 34 projects as information regarding volunteer numbers was not available for five projects.

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The following *Figure 10-3* identifies the average cost per hour for each of the above categories.

Figure 10-3: Average cost per hour of service provision, by category, October 2012 to March 2013
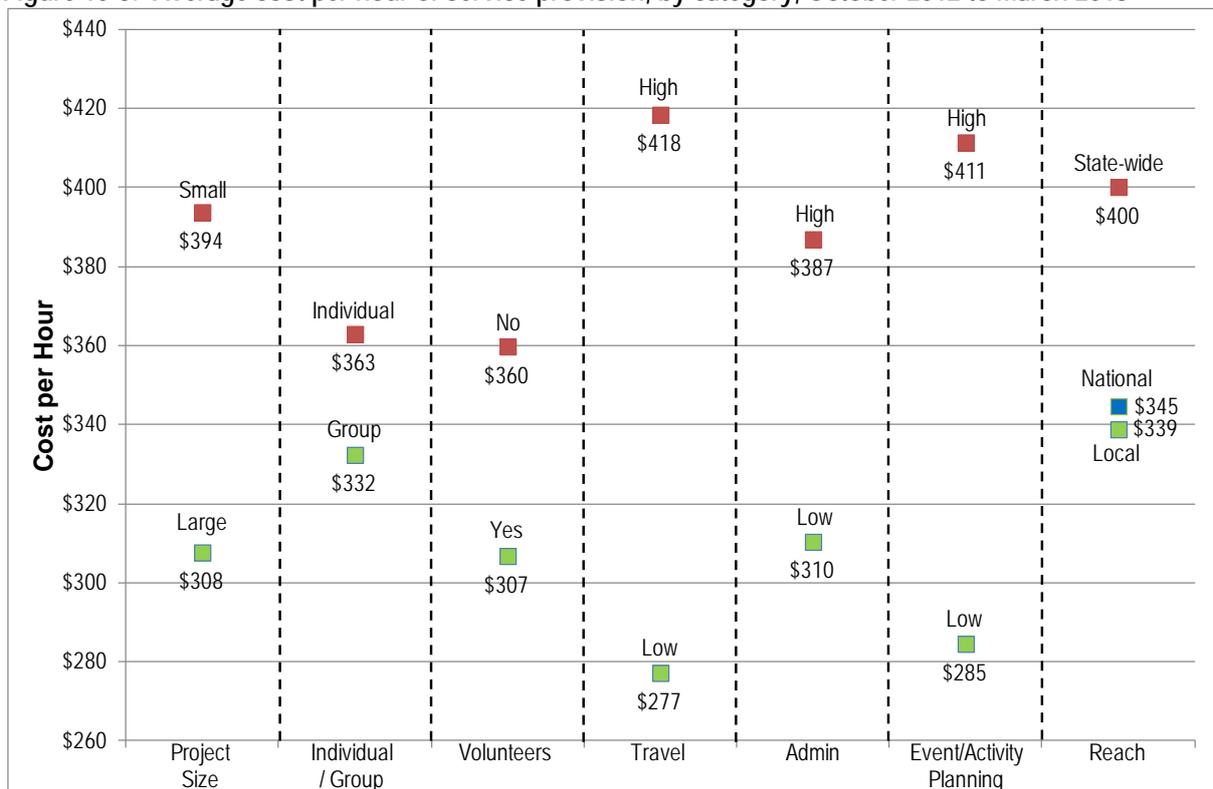
As indicated above, the difference in average cost per hour is relatively small for two categories:

Individual/group: Individual ($363), Group ($332) – difference of $31 per hour

Reach: State-wide ($400), National ($345), Local ($339) –
difference of between $6 and $55 per hour.

This suggests that the type of service delivered (Individual or Group) and the project reach (national, state-wide, local) have only a minor bearing on the cost per hour of service.

Conversely, the difference in the average cost per hour is relatively large for the following categories:

Project size: Large ($308), Small ($394) – difference of $86 per hour

Volunteers: Yes ($307), No ($360) – difference of $53 per hour

Travel: Low ($277), High ($418) – difference of $141 per hour

Admininistration: Low ($310), High ($387) – difference of $77 per hour

Event/activity planning: Low ($285), High ($411) – difference of $126 per hour.

This suggests that each of the above factors potentially has a significant impact on the cost per hour of service delivery.

Of particular note is the result for travel, which indicates that projects which spend a large amount of time undertaking travel ($418, High) have an average cost per hour some 51% higher than projects

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which spend less time undertaking travel ($277, Low). This suggests that travel time is potentially a key driver of costs.

It is important to note when interpreting the above analysis that the differing costs per hour may reflect a range of factors, including:

- Varying accuracy and completeness of projects' MDS reporting

- Differences in the nature of the services delivered by projects

- Relative efficiency of each NSPP project.

> **Key findings**
>
> - The cost per hour of service provision varies across projects.
>
> - Projects that provide relatively more hours of service tend to have a lower cost per hour. This may demonstrate greater efficiency of these projects, or other factors such as data accuracy or the different types of services delivered.
>
> - Projects that spend relatively more time on travel and event/activity planning, tend to have a higher overall cost per hour of service, ie, travel and event/activity planning appear to be key drivers of cost.

10.3 Sustainability of projects

This section examines the potential for projects to be able to continue operating in future, in the absence of NSPP funding. Analysis is provided of:

- Non-NSPP funding

- Volunteer support

- In-kind support

- Projects' self-assessment of sustainability

- Overall assessment of sustainability.

10.3.1 Non-NSPP funding

Projects were asked to indicate in the survey whether they received any funding in addition to that provided under the NSPP and, if so, to identify the funding sources as follows:

- Australian Government

- State/territory government

- Private business or corporate funds

- Research

- Non-government organisation

- Philanthropic

- Donations

- Other.

10 Findings: Efficiency

Table 10-3 provides a breakdown of the number of additional funding sources reported by the NSPP-funded projects.

Table 10-3: Number of additional sources of funding for NSPP projects

No. of additional sources of funding	Projects	
	No.	%
0	28	56%
1	12	24%
2	8	16%
3	1	2%
4	0	0%
5	1	2%
Total	50	100%

As indicated in *Table 10-3*, 44% of projects received funds other than NSPP funding and 56% did not receive any other funds. The most commonly reported sources of additional funds were:

- Private – five projects
- Philanthropic – four projects
- Donations – four projects.

Only two projects received additional funding from a state/territory government.

However, other survey information indicates that where non-NSPP funds were received, this typically represented a very small proportion of total project funding/income. This is consistent with the fact that private, philanthropic and donations were the most commonly reported additional funding sources.

10.3.2 Volunteer support

The following *Table 10-4* summarises the share (%) of projects' full time equivalent (FTE) workforce which was made up of volunteers. As identified, nearly two thirds of projects (65%; 31 of 48respondents) did not have any volunteers, ie, all staff were paid employees. Of the 35% of projects which received some level of volunteer support:

- Six projects (13%) – volunteer workforce represented between 1% and 25% of total FTE
- Two projects (4%) – volunteer workforce represented between 26% and 50% of total FTE
- Four projects (8%) – volunteer workforce represented between 51% and 75% of total FTE
- Five projects (10%) – volunteer workforce represented between 76% and 100% of total FTE.

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Table 10-4: Share of project FTE workforce represented by volunteers

Volunteer share of workforce	Projects (no.)	Projects (%)
0%	31	65%
1%–25%	6	13%
26%–50%	2	4%
51%–75%	4	8%
76%–100%	5	10%
Total	48	100%

Note: N=48, as data was not available for two projects.

10.3.3 In-kind support

As identified in the following *Table 10-6*, NSPP-funded projects benefited from a range of in-kind support.

Table 10-5: Projects that received in-kind support, by type of support

In-kind support	Projects (no.)	Projects (%)
Internal	17	34%
External	15	30%
Infrastructure	17	34%
Staff	14	28%
Management	18	36%
Other	19	38%
Total	48	100%

Note: N=48, as data was not available for two projects.

As shown above, the prevalence of in-kind support was similar across all six types of support, ranging from 28% (staff support) to 38% (other) of projects receiving in-kind support.

10.3.4 Projects' self-assessment of sustainability

The survey asked project representatives to indicate the sustainability of their project in the absence of NSPP funding, on a scale from 1 (not sustainable) to 5 (very sustainable).

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10 Findings: Efficiency

Table 10-6: Projects' self-assessment of sustainability

Sustainability	Rating	Projects (No.)	Projects (%)
Not sustainable	1	37	74%
	2	10	20%
	3	3	6%
	4	-	0%
Very sustainable	5	-	0%
Total		50	100%

As indicated in the above *Table 10-6*, all 50 projects rated their sustainability without NSPP funding at 1, 2 or 3, indicating that no projects were likely to be sustainable to any significant degree without NSPP funding. Nearly three-quarters of projects (74%) reported a rating of 1, indicating their belief that there was no likelihood that they would be sustainable. Only three projects rated themselves as 3 in terms of sustainability, indicating marginal sustainability.

This suggests that the majority of projects would not be sustainable in the absence of NSPP funding. This viewpoint was supported in consultations with Department STO and CO representatives.

10.3.5 Overall assessment of sustainability

The analysis set out in this section indicates that few, if any, projects believe they would be able to continue in the absence of NSPP funding. This assessment is based upon the information presented, indicating that:

- 56% of projects had no alternative sources of income

- 44% of projects received other income; however, this represented a very small proportion of their total income

- 56% of projects were reliant on in-kind support

- 65% of projects did not have the assistance of any volunteers, ie, all workers were paid staff

- 94% of projects rated themselves as 1 (not sustainable) or 2, in terms of sustainability.

No projects rated themselves as 5 (very sustainable) or 4, in terms of sustainability, while only three projects rated themselves as 3, indicating marginal sustainability.

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10 Findings: Efficiency

Key findings

- More than half (56%) of projects received no additional funds other than NSPP funding.

- Where non-NSPP funds were received, they were typically from private, philanthropic sources and donations and represented a very small proportion of total project funding/income.

- Only two projects received additional funding from a state/territory government.

- 65% of projects did not have the assistance of any volunteers, ie, all workers were paid staff.

- The vast majority of projects did not believe that their project would be sustainable without continued NSPP funding.

10.4 Program administration

Three aspects of project administration were examined in the project survey:

- Level of communication by DoHA with projects
- Responsiveness of DoHA in communicating with projects
- Potential improvements.

10.4.1 Level of communication by DoHA with projects

The majority of projects reported high levels of satisfaction with the level of communication they received from the DoHA office that administers their project (*Table 10-7).* Thirty-two projects (66%) rated their level of satisfaction with DoHA communication as 5, ie, very satisfied (15 projects), or 4 (17 projects).

Table 10-7: Level of satisfaction with DoHA communication

Satisfaction	Rating	Projects (No.)	Projects (%)
Very dissatisfied	1	0	0%
	2	5	10%
	3	12	24%
	4	17	35%
Very satisfied	5	15	31%
Total		49	100%

10.4.2 Responsiveness of DoHA communication with projects

The majority of projects (30 of 49, 62%) rated their satisfaction with DoHA's responsiveness in terms of communication as either 5, ie, very satisfied (17 projects), or 4 (13 projects), as shown in *Table 10-8.*

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Table 10-8: Level of satisfaction with DoHA responsiveness

Satisfaction	Rating	Projects (No.)	Projects (%)
Very dissatisfied	1	0	0%
	2	3	6%
	3	15	31%
	4	13	27%
Very satisfied	5	17	35%
Total		**48**	**100%**

10.4.3 Potential improvements

Twenty-two projects offered suggestions for improving DoHA's administration of projects. These suggestions fell into three main categories:

- Contract notification delays
- Engagement and communication with projects
- Reporting processes.

Contract delays

Several respondents were concerned about delays in notifying project representatives when contracts had been awarded. They reported this made it difficult to plan for subsequent funding periods and, in particular, to secure staff. Others called for longer lead times to develop tender responses and, as noted in *Section 9.2.1*, longer funding periods were also requested. One respondent suggested that an online portal would assist with contract management.

Engagement and communication with projects

A number of respondents believed that DoHA contract managers sometimes do not have a good understanding of what the projects do, and called for better engagement with the projects. Suggestions to improve engagement included:

- Visits to project sites by contract managers so that they can see achievements 'on the ground'
- A single point of contact for contract management and communication of issues
- Improved handover between DoHA staff at times of staff turnover, so that historical knowledge of projects is not lost
- Regular formal meetings with DoHA to provide project updates.

Other respondents asked that DoHA place more emphasis on facilitating and enhancing communication between funded organisations.

Reporting processes

Views and concerns expressed by projects in relation to reporting processes included:

- Need to streamline data collection to make it less onerous and repetitive

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- Current reporting system does not enable all relevant information to be captured

- Concern about occasions when reports have been lost by DoHA, resulting in requests for projects to re-submit.

> **Key findings**
>
> - Projects reported high levels of satisfaction with regards to the level of communication and responsiveness of the DoHA office responsible for the administration of their project.
>
> - Suggestions for improving DoHA administration of projects included:
>   - Improved contract management, eg, speedier notification of contact awards and greater engagement of DoHA contract managers with projects
>   - More streamlined reporting that is less repetitive and more inclusive of project activities
>   - Greater care in data management so that resubmission of data is not required.

10.5 DoHA administrators' perspectives of NSPP program efficiency

Staff from the DoHA State/Territory Offices (STOs) and Central Office (CO), who are responsible for administering the NSPP-funded projects, were asked to comment on the efficiency of the program in terms of program administration and the consistency of NSPP administration model with the DoHA National Alignment process (DNA).

10.5.1 Program administration

For most STO and CO staff, NSPP-funded projects comprised a relatively small component of the total number of contracts that they were responsible for overall. Consequently, they reported that the administration of the NSPP projects was not particularly problematic in terms of their total workload. However, they identified a number of barriers to efficient administration:

- Resource constraints made it difficult for DoHA staff to have the level of engagement with projects that they felt would be ideal. For the most part, their interaction with the project staff focused on contract management issues and they did not have capacity to provide much practical support or advice to project staff

- Teleconferences were the main source of communication between projects and DoHA staff. While a number of STO staff reported making annual visits to meet with project staff, CO staff reported that they did not have the budget to do this, which made it difficult to develop an in-depth understanding of the projects. STO and CO staff reported that some project staff were more proactive than others in providing updates to DoHA or seeking advice

- Relatively high levels of staff turnover within the STOs resulted in a loss of corporate knowledge that was frustrating for project representatives who were required to repeat information about their projects to new STO staff

- Some of the smaller projects had difficulty getting their reports in on time. Generally however, projects submitted their deliverables on time and without difficulty, by virtue of the fact that they had been funded for a sufficiently long period of time such that any issues with the process had been resolved

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- In some cases, smaller NGOs were not able to produce reports to the standard required by DoHA. As one interviewee noted, '*the public sector and private sector communicate differently*'.

Suggestions from STOs and CO for improving the efficiency of project administration included:

- Providing guidelines for project administration that cover practical information such as what to do with under-spends, what to do if projects do not submit their reports on time, etc. It was indicated that such guidelines exist for other funding programs

- Provide more resources to the STOs and CO to enable more 'hands-on' support for projects and facilitate site visits

- Consider changing the reporting templates to ensure they are consistent with the Australian Accounting Standards as specified by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (note that further detail of the nature of the discrepancies was not provided)

- Reduce the number of funded projects to reduce the administrative burden

- The planned change to an online grants management system (see *Section 10.5.2*) was expected to improve efficiency.

One respondent commented that it was inefficient to have NSPP-funded projects administered through eight different offices (seven STOs plus CO), and that administration would be streamlined if all projects were administered from one office. Another commented that CO would be better able to focus on setting suicide prevention policy direction if they did not also have to administer project funding.

10.5.2   Consistency of NSPP administration model with the DoHA National Alignment process

The term 'DoHA National Alignment' (DNA) encompasses a range of changes within the Health and Ageing portfolio that are intended to transform the Department into a contemporary, best-practice organisation that is 'both capable and flexible'. The two key projects within the DNA include the Database Alignment Project (which aims to improve efficiencies within data collection, storage and analysis processes) and the IT Governance Project (which will implement a formal approach to the governance of all IT work across the Department, thereby reducing duplication and better supporting the future needs of the Department).[88]

Another key change occurring through the DNA program is the consolidation of 159 programs into 18 flexible funds. This change is intended, over time, to reduce red tape and provide increased flexibility to respond to emerging issues and deliver better value for money with quality- and evidence-based funding.[89] As part of the NSPP evaluation, STO and CO staff were asked to comment on the alignment of the existing NSPP administration with the DNA process.

The DNA process was generally viewed as a promising development that would lead to improved administrative efficiency. However, many interviewees at STO level felt that it was a difficult transition phase that was increasing the administrative burden. One interviewee reported that team resourcing had been reduced prematurely, in anticipation of the efficiencies that the DNA would deliver. Another reported that the SAP financial management changes had created more work for the team (but did not provide details).

Several respondents reported that the shift to a flexible funding model had not affected the NSPP administration yet as there had been no new funding rounds in recent years. Indeed, STO staff

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[88] Suicide prevention sector staff, personal communication via email, 26 February 2013.
[89] Department of Health and Ageing, *Annual Report 2011-2012*, DoHA, Canberra, 2012.

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generally felt that they had minimal involvement in funding processes or decision-making for the NSPP, so a move to flexible funding was not likely to impact on them. However, they spoke positively about changing to an online grants management system, which is expected to occur in the near future. They anticipated that this would result in less paper-work and improved efficiency. Most respondents felt that they received an adequate level of support from CO to navigate the DNA changes.

Key findings

- A potential improvement identified by STO and CO staff was that they undertake site visits to funded organisations in order to better understand the work of these projects. This was seen as particularly valuable given the relatively high turnover of STO staff and consequent absence of corporate knowledge.

- STO and CO staff believed that the DoHA National Alignment (DNA) changes will lead to more efficient administration of the NSPP projects; however, these benefits have not yet been realised.

10.6 Summary of key findings

Economic Analysis

- A detailed independent economic assessment of the cost of suicide and attempted suicide in Australia is needed to help inform future investment decisions.

Project Expenditure

- Service provision (65%) and information provision (23%), account for 88% of project expenditure.

- The cost per hour of service provision varies across projects.

- Projects that provide relatively more hours of service tend to have a lower cost per hour. This may demonstrate greater efficiency by these projects, or other factors such as data accuracy or the different types of services delivered.

- Projects that spend relatively more time on travel and event/activity planning tend to have a higher overall cost per hour of service, ie, travel and event/activity planning appear to be key drivers of cost.

Sustainability

- More than half (56%) of projects received no additional funds other than NSPP funding.

- Where non-NSPP funds were received, they were typically from private, philanthropic sources and donations and represented a very small proportion of total project funding/income.

- Only two projects received additional funding from a state/territory government.

- 65% of projects did not have the assistance of any volunteers, ie, all workers were paid staff.

- The vast majority of projects did not believe that their project would be sustainable

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without continued NSPP funding.

Administration

- Projects reported high levels of satisfaction with regards to the level of communication and responsiveness of the DoHA office responsible for the administration of their project

- Suggestions for improving DoHA administration of projects included:
  - Improved contract management, eg, speedier notification of contact awards and greater engagement of DoHA contract managers with projects
  - More streamlined reporting that is less repetitive and more inclusive of project activities
  - Greater security in data storage so that resubmission of data is not required.

- A potential improvement identified by STO and CO staff was that they undertake site visits to funded organisations in order to better understand the work of these projects. This was seen as particularly valuable given the relatively high turnover of STO staff and consequent absence of corporate knowledge.

- STO and CO staff believed that the DoHA National Alignment (DNA) changes will lead to more efficient administration of the NSPP projects; however, these benefits have not yet been realised.