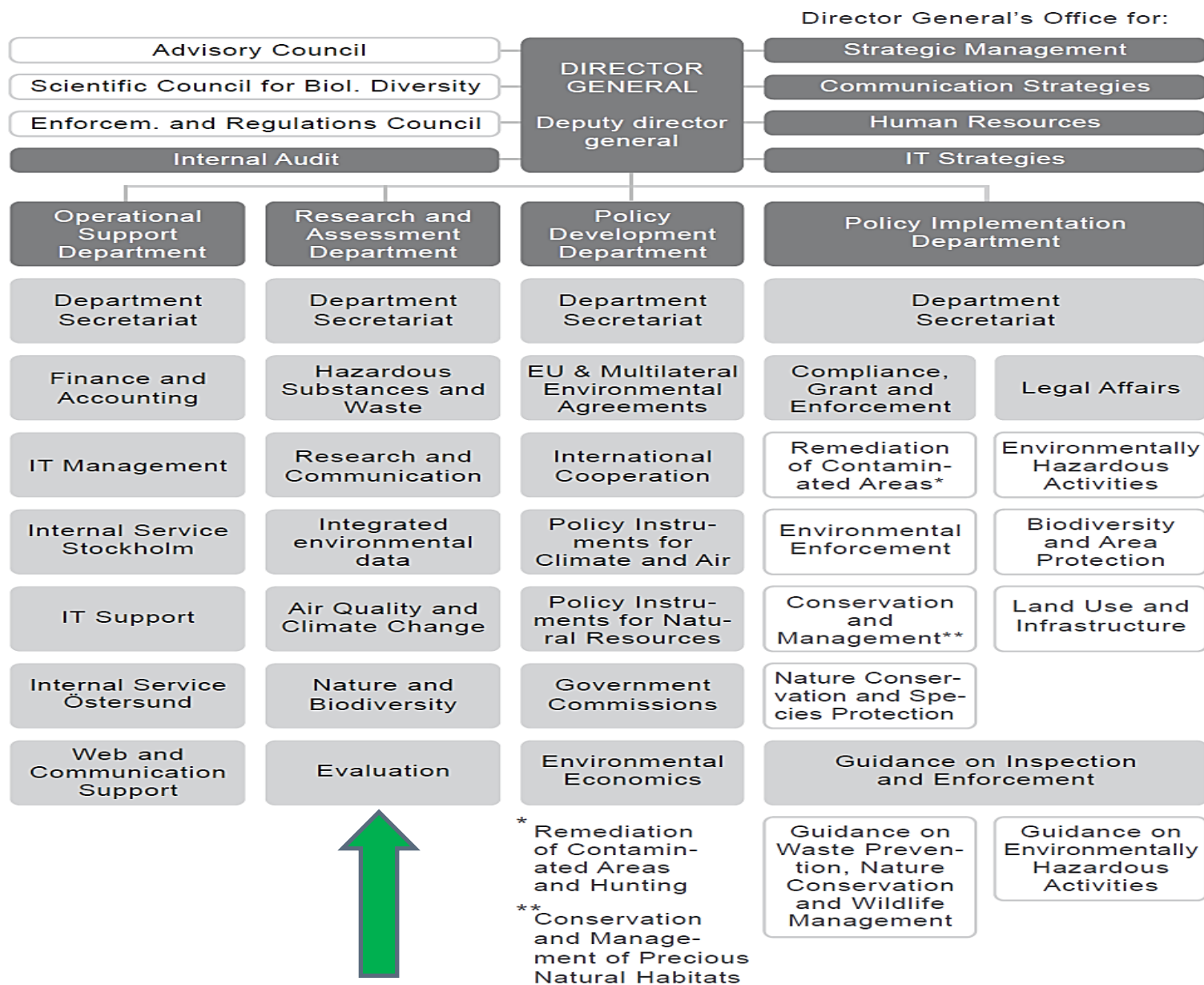# Exploring the conditions of use of evaluation

What we do and don't do at the Swedish EPA to make sure that our evaluations come to use

Björn Persson

Evaluator @ Swedish EPA

The Swedish EPA's organisation

Director General's Office for:

Advisory Council		Strategic Management
Scientific Council for Biol. Diversity	**DIRECTOR GENERAL**	Communication Strategies
Enforcem. and Regulations Council	**Deputy director general**	Human Resources
Internal Audit		IT Strategies

Operational Support Department	Research and Assessment Department	Policy Development Department	Policy Implementation Department	
Department Secretariat	Department Secretariat	Department Secretariat	Department Secretariat	
Finance and Accounting	Hazardous Substances and Waste	EU & Multilateral Environmental Agreements	Compliance, Grant and Enforcement	Legal Affairs
IT Management	Research and Communication	International Cooperation	Remediation of Contamin-ated Areas*	Environmentally Hazardous Activities
Internal Service Stockholm	Integrated environmental data	Policy Instru-ments for Climate and Air	Environmental Enforcement	Biodiversity and Area Protection
IT Support	Air Quality and Climate Change	Policy Instru-ments for Natu-ral Resources	Conservation and Management**	Land Use and Infrastructure
Internal Service Östersund	Nature and Biodiversity	Government Commissions	Nature Conser-vation and Spe-cies Protection	
Web and Communication Support	Evaluation	Environmental Economics	Guidance on Inspection and Enforcement	

* Remediation of Contamin-ated Areas and Hunting

** Conservation and Manage-ment of Precious Natural Habitats

| Guidance on Waste Preven-tion, Nature Conservation and Wildlife Management | Guidance on Environmentally Hazardous Activities |

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Which evaluations are given priority?

1. Government commissions

- (almost) Always High Priority

pros and cons:

+ Considered important at political level

- Not always issues with big environmental impact

- Often late in SEPA:s planning process

Which evaluations are given priority?

2. Commissions from the different units of SEPA

Annual Enquiries each autumn
- Internal marketing (internal website, e-mail etc)
- Proposals received
- Dialogue 1 with presumptive clients
- Evaluators make a preliminary priority (based on use, timing and value)
- Dialogue 2 with probable/discarded clients
- Final priority decided by Head of Department

Which evaluations are given priority?

2. Commissions from the different units of SEPA/Criterias for prioritisation

- **Use**: The importance of an explicit objective for the evaluation and how results/outcome could be used, e.g. as basis for decision making or as support in developing an issue.
- **Timing**: Timing is important for use. E.g. before a decision on continued investment in an area. Or as an opportunity to learn from experiences before committing to new investment.
- **Value**: To make sure evaluation resources are used where it is most relevant based on SEPA:s strategies and priorities.

Which evaluations are given priority?

2. Commissions from the different units of SEPA

pros and cons:

+ Explicit need within the agency

+ Explicit and often motivated client

- Seldom identifies issues which are interdepartmental or lack an obvious location within the agency

Which evaluations are given priority?

3. Internally initiated evaluations

Evaluations suggested by the evaluators themselves and then approved and decided by Head of Department. Very rare at SEPA.

Pros and cons:

+ *Could identify complex issues and recurring problems based on the experiences of the evaluators*

- *Could suffer from lack of explicit client*

The evaluation process

Reading, pre-study, problem description

Gathering of data (e.g. surveys, interviews)

Analysis, conclusions

Publishing of report

Formal check points:

Definite project plan

Preliminary results

Final delivery

= amount of dialogue and communication with client

Approx. 25 weeks effective time

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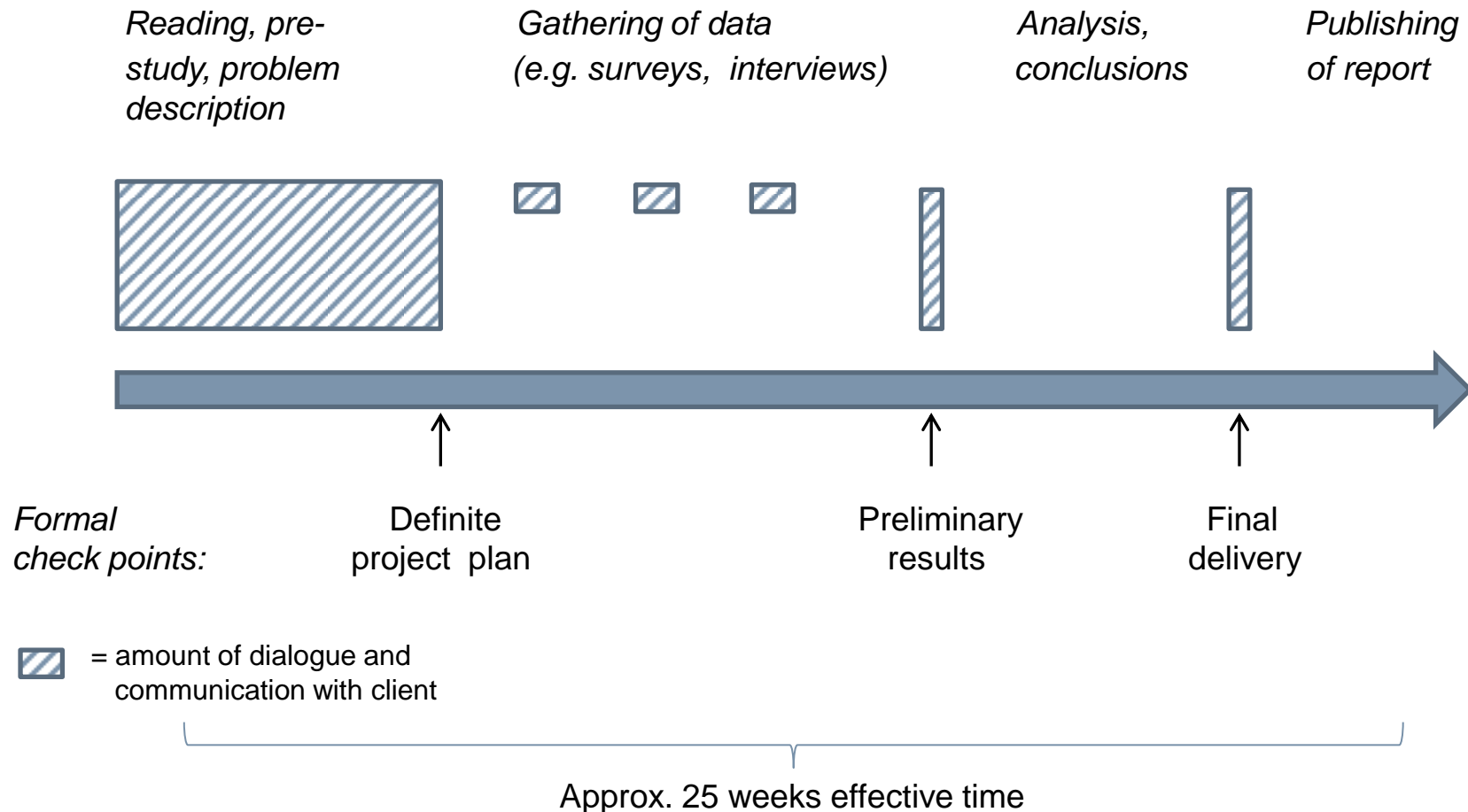
Research evaluation made in 2012

- Performed by Wendy Maycraft Kall, Uppsala University

- A comparative study on the evaluation functions in three Swedish Executive Agencies:
- The Environmental Protection Agency
- The Civil Contingencies Agency
- The National Board of Health & Welfare

Quotes from the research evaluation on SEPA:s evaluation unit

- *"There is a lack of fixed routines for following up on previous evaluations and their effects. At times a kind of follow-up is performed in the Annual Report. In that context it is a simpler presentation with questions posed to the client a few years later."*

Quotes from the research evaluation on SEPA:s evaluation unit

- *"For The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency follow-up is something that could be developed. For example a report system could map out how the evaluations are used in practice and establish if the performed evaluation did have any substantial effects."*

Internal follow-up made in 2013

- Purpose: A comprehensive picture of our collected work 2010-2012, extending our knowledge and point to ways of improvement.

- Goal: Follow up on the effects of the evaluations and if they are presently used.

- Approach: A questionnaire sent out to the clients of 21 evaluations performed betwen 2010 and 2012.

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Government Commission on municipalities actions against littering in public areas

Purpose and goal:
"To give a status report of the municipalities actions against littering, provide a basis for designing guidelines for the municipalities". Key question: "How do the municipalities work against littering and what underlying factors decides their actions".

Contribution 1:
"A solid knowledge base for establishing guidelines for municipalities on how to work against littering. Through the evaluation we could verify different existing theories on which problems the municipalities experienced in their work against littering, clarify which needs for guidance they had, etc."

Government Commission on municipalities actions against littering in public areas

Contribution 2:

"The evaluation was used in the presentation of the Government Commission 'Special actions to reduce littering'. It is also part of the content presented on SEPA:s and *Håll Sverige Rents* web platforms, and contributes to raising the level of knowledge on littering issues."
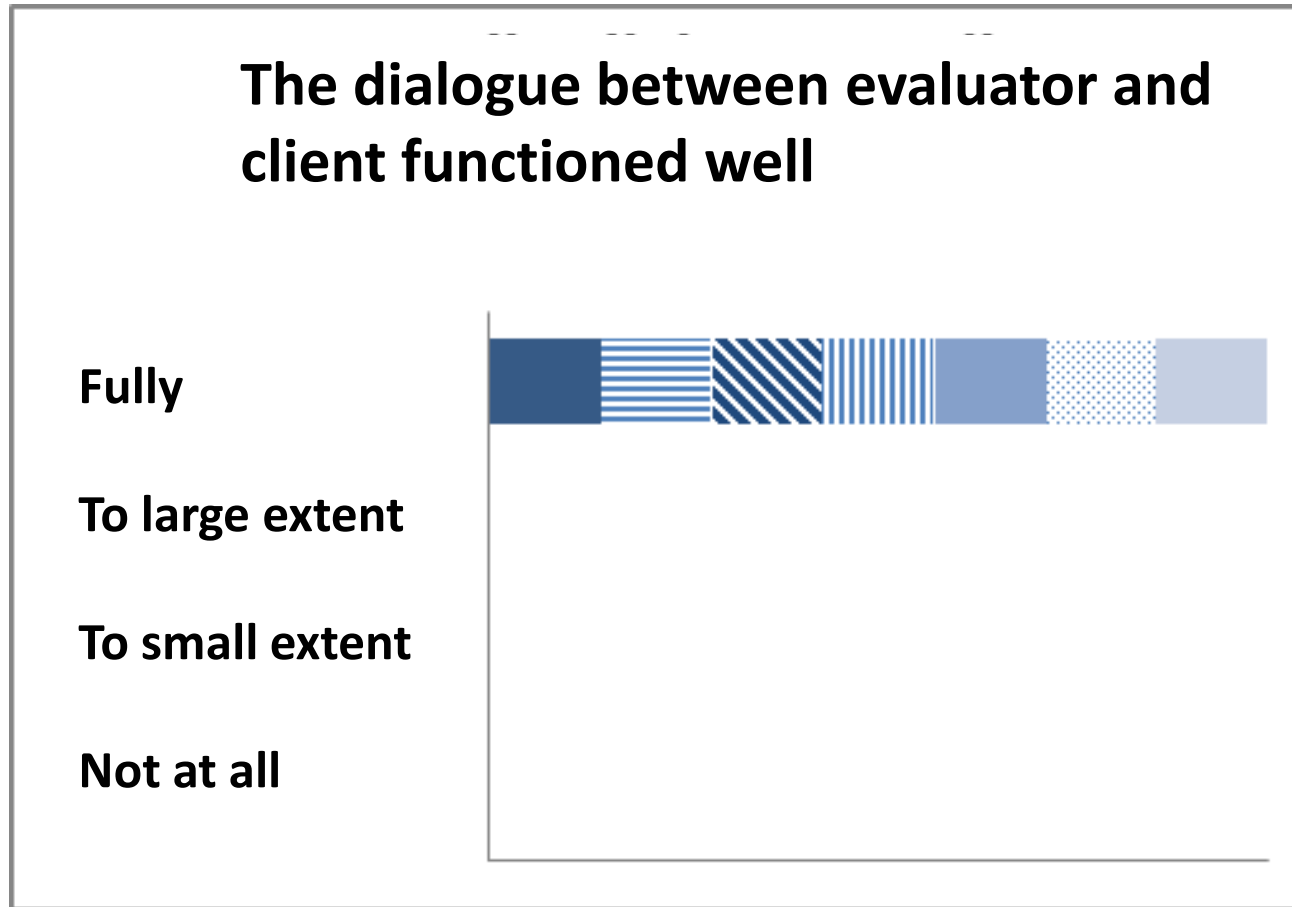
Government Commission on Environmental Management efforts in State Agencies

Purpose: "Provide a basis for the presentation of the Commission showing the environmental effects and consequences of environmental management efforts in State Agencies".

Contribution: "A study of how the State Agencies are succeeding in their activities regarding Environmental Management Systems, pros and cons, challenges etc. A basis for how the support from SEPA towards the State Agencies should be designed, a basis for alterations in the Environmental Management in State Agencies Ordinance etc.".
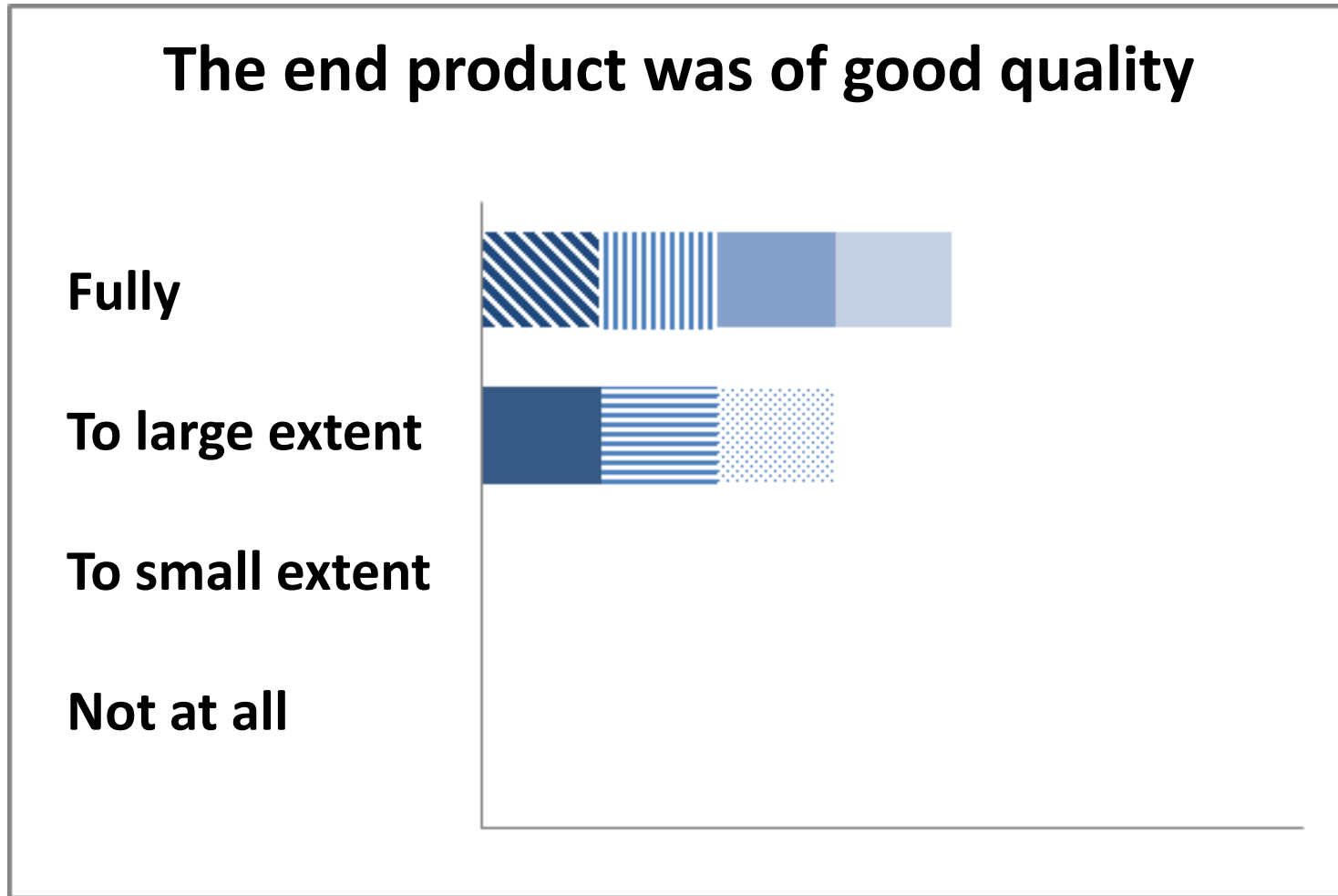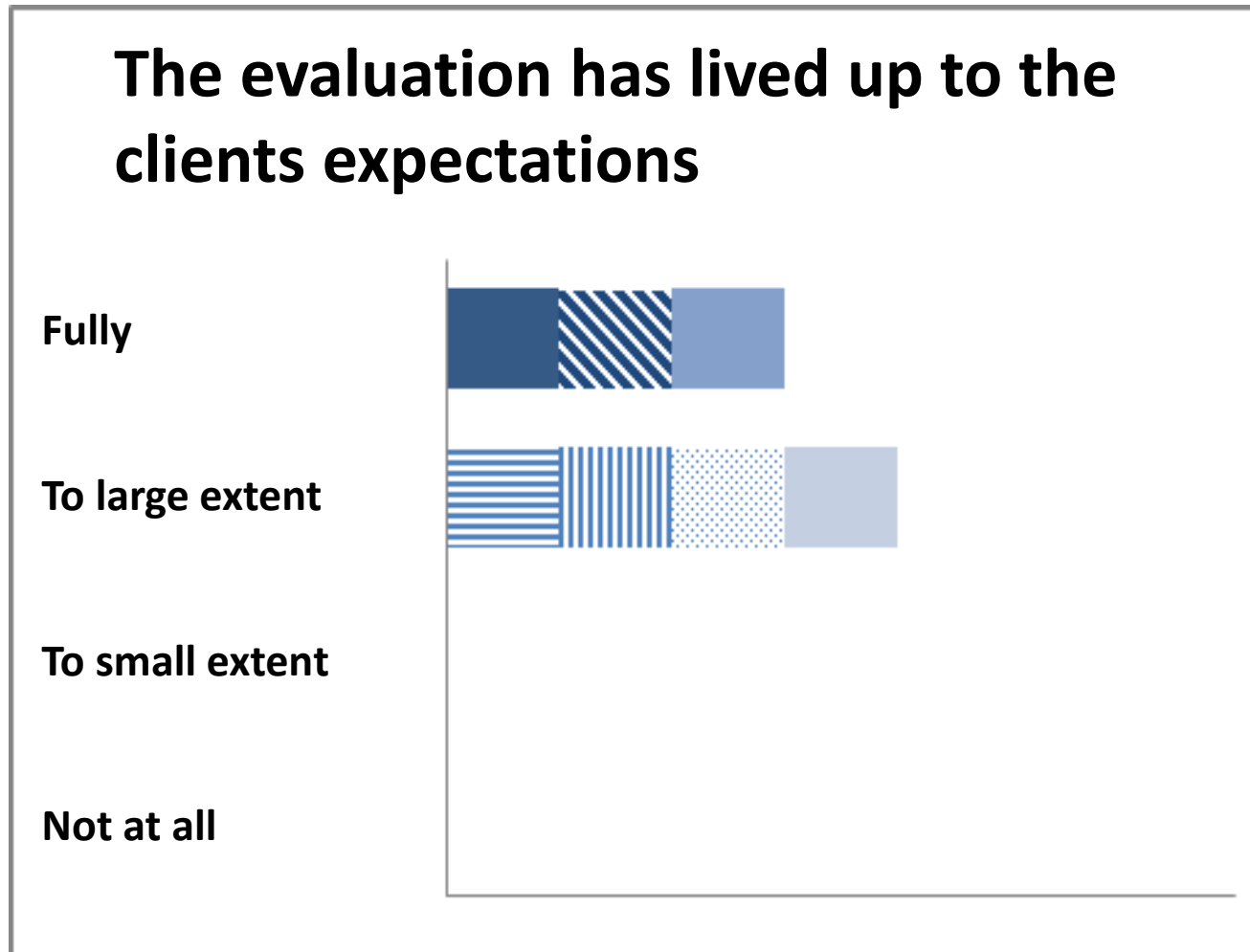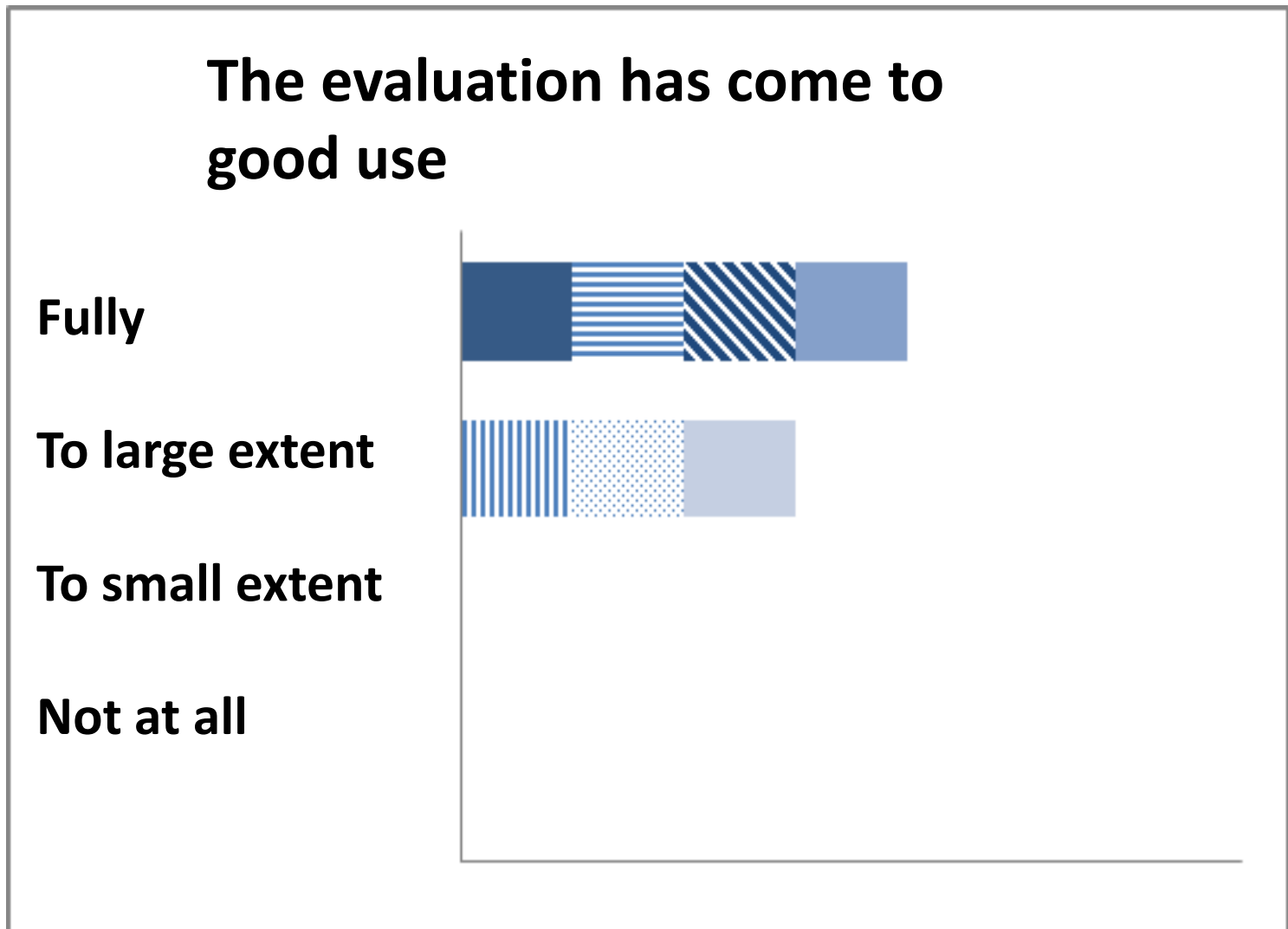
Evaluations performed in 2012

The dialogue between evaluator and client functioned well

Fully

To large extent

To small extent

Not at all

Naturvårdsverket | Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

Evaluations performed in 2012

The end product was of good quality

Fully

To large extent

To small extent

Not at all

Naturvårdsverket | Swedish Environmental
Protection Agency

Evaluations performed in 2012

The evaluation has lived up to the clients expectations

Fully

To large extent

To small extent

Not at all

Naturvårdsverket | Swedish Environmental
Protection Agency

Evaluations performed in 2012

The evaluation has come to good use

Fully

To large extent

To small extent

Not at all

Protection Agency

Printed reports & Downloads

	Printed reports	Downloads
In-depth evaluation of Sweden's environmental objectives 2012	161	2052
Municipalities actions against littering in public areas	27	431
Environmental Management efforts in State Agencies	23	328

To follow up – what does it amount to?

- Relation: Time spent – use?

- Relation: Downloads and prints - impact?

- Relation: Client dialogue – value?

Concluding thoughts

- Which are the deciding factors for an evaluation coming to use?

- Which deciding factors can You, as an evaluator, influence or control in order to increase the possibility of an evaluation coming to use?

- Any thoughts?

Concluding thoughts

- Must all evaluation be 'user-driven'? Is it possible, or even desirable, that all evaluation is performed with the perspective of immediate use?

- Is there a risk that certain kinds of evaluations will not be made if the user-perspective becomes too dominant? As opposed to the evaluator's possibility, or prerogative, to independently formulate questions and problems.