

SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey Report of Survey Findings

November 2012

Western Australian Centre for Health Promotion Research

About SiREN

SiREN is the WA Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Applied Research and Evaluation Network. The SiREN project is coordinated by the Western Australian Health Promotion Research Centre (WACHPR) and supported by the Western Australian Department of Health (WA Health) Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program (SHBBVP).

The objectives of SiREN are:

1. To identify sexual health and blood-borne virus (BBV) public health research priorities in Western Australia (WA) for the priority populations specified in the national sexually transmitted infections (STIs), hepatitis and HIV strategies and the Western Australian model of care implementation plans.
2. To develop partnerships between WA-based researchers, the WA Health SHBBVP and the national sexual health and BBV research centres.
3. To develop and enhance partnerships between government and non-government service providers, researchers and policy makers working towards the prevention and control of STIs and BBVs; and
4. To contribute to an evidence base to inform WA Health's policy and decision making for the prevention and control of STIs and BBVs within WA.
5. To contribute to the national sexual health and BBV research agenda, in particular development of the national STI, hepatitis and HIV strategies 2014-2017.

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SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey

The purpose of the *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey* was to determine the training and skills needs of WA health organisations involved in sexual health promotion or the control and prevention of blood-borne viruses. The results of this survey will assist the SiREN project to prioritise and develop workshop, training and toolkit resources that cater specifically to the needs of the WA SHBBV sector.

Data Collection Methods

The data for this needs assessment was collected through an online survey developed using survey monkey (see www.surveymonkey.com). The survey consisted of twelve questions that gathered information in the following areas: research and evaluation; barriers and enablers for research and evaluation; training and resources; and the role of SiREN.

The survey was anonymous however some demographic information was collected including size and location of organisation. Disclosure of organisation identity, size and location was optional.

An existing email distribution list obtained from WA Health provided the starting point for the *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey* distribution list. The list included organisations in Western Australia funded by WA Health SHBBVP. Additional contacts were added to this list following feedback obtained from members of the SiREN Management Team. The final distribution list contained 61 contacts

A link to the online survey was sent by email to the distribution list on 17th August 2012. Survey recipients were also asked to forward the survey to appropriate organisations in their networks. The survey remained open for four weeks until 14th September 2012. A reminder email to completed the survey was sent in week three and week four.

Survey findings

This section summarises the findings of the *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey* including response rate and type of organisation that responded to the survey.

Response rate

Exact distribution numbers for the online survey through forwarded networks were uncertain, however 23 survey responses were received which represented a response rate of at least 38% based on the original distribution to 61 recipients.

Type of organisation

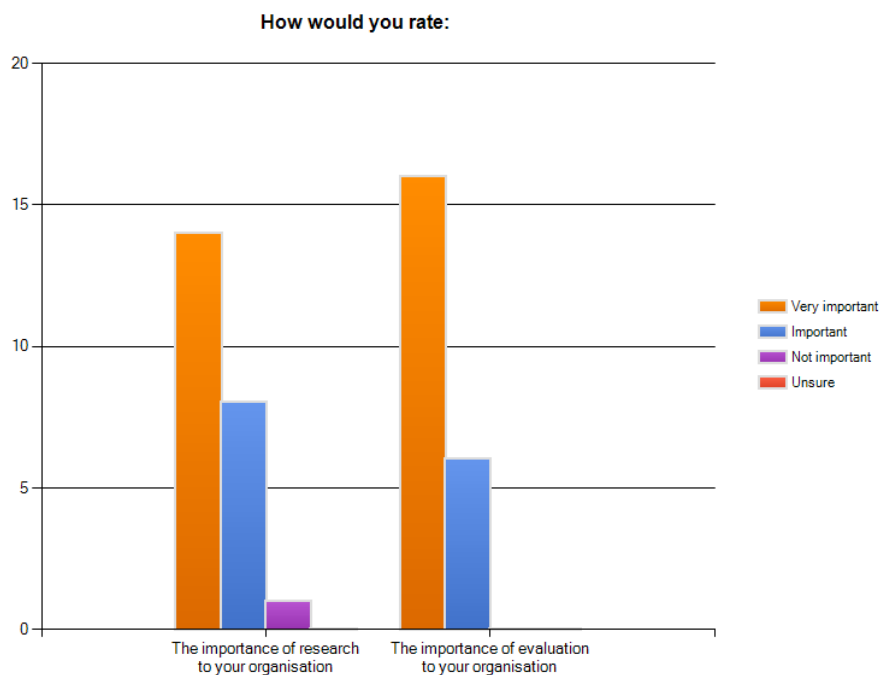
Responses came from more than 10 different organisations in metropolitan, rural and regional locations. Mainly large or medium organisations disclosed their identity. Smaller organisations may have been more easily identified and therefore may have elected not to disclose their identity. The data available on organisations indicated representation from organisations working with a range of minority groups including people with disabilities, injecting drug users, gay men and men who have sex with other men, people living with HIV and other BBV's and migrants and new refugees.

Importance of research and evaluation

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of research and evaluation to their organisation.

Figure 1 shows, of the total sample of 23 responses, 14 (61%) respondents reported research as 'very important' in their organisations, eight (35%) reported research as 'important' and one (4%) respondent reported that research was 'not important' to their organisation. Figure 1 also shows that of the total sample 16 (70%) respondents reported evaluation as 'very important' to their organisation and six (26%) respondents reported evaluation as 'important'.

Figure 1: Importance of research and evaluation to organisations



Respondents were also asked to identify any research and evaluation activities currently being undertaken in the SHBBV sector. Respondents reported a wide range of research and evaluation activities currently being undertaken within the sector, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Current Research and evaluation activities

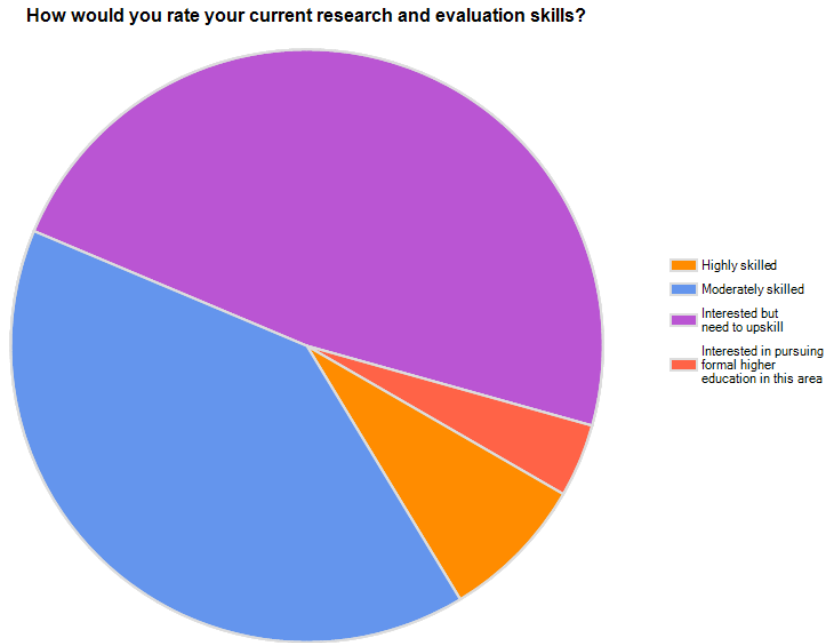
<i>Research</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief interventions • Participatory action research • Literature review • Migrant/refugee alcohol and other drug (AOD) use, better practice in physical activity with migrant AOD users, domestic violence (DV) survivors, migrant/refugee women with mental health issues • How men who have sex with men (MSM) prefer to access services • Needs assessment consultations with the WA youth sector (focus group and online survey) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient audits • STI clinical audits. • Staff or client satisfaction survey • Survey of current practice with regard to STI screening • Men’s health survey • Attendance records - numbers, cultural backgrounds, age, demographics. • Participant feedback /evaluation forms for training • Evaluation of a pilot program • Program evaluation • Prevalence studies • Evaluating service delivery and impacts of time to treatment on rates of gonorrhoea. • Disease surveillance

The two types of evaluation mainly focused on by organisations were process evaluation and formative evaluation. Process evaluation involves analyzing the early development and actual implementation of the strategy or program and formative evaluation is a method of judging the worth of a program while the program activities are forming or happening. There was limited evaluation of behavioural outcomes.

Skills in research and evaluation

Respondents were asked to rate their current skills in research and evaluation. Just over half the respondents (n=12, 52%) indicated that they were interested in research and evaluation but needed to improve their skills. Twelve (52%) participants selected ‘highly’ or ‘moderately skilled’ and one (4%) participant selected that they were ‘interested in pursuing higher education in research and evaluation’. These results are presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Research and evaluation skills



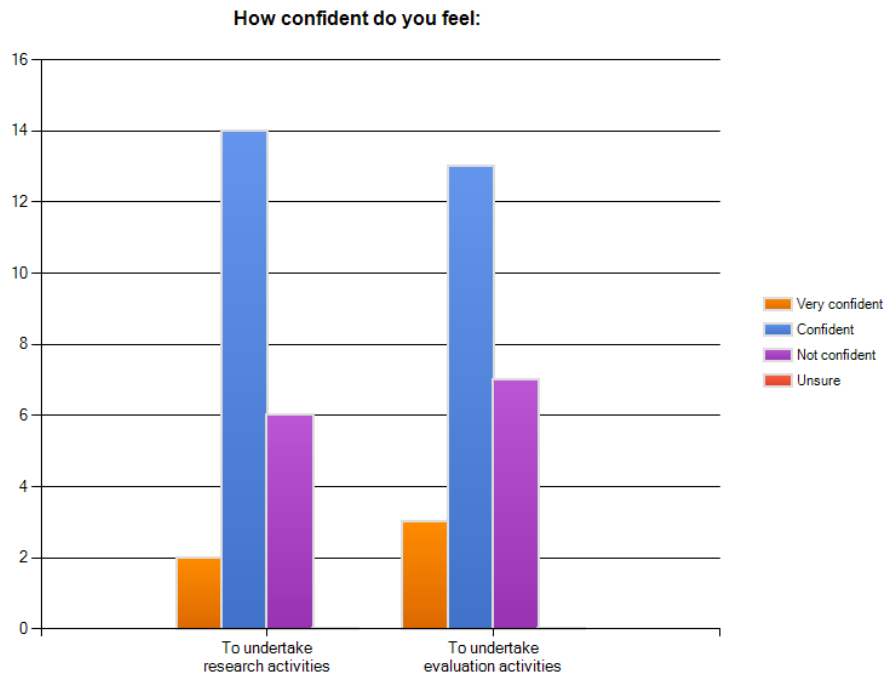
Confidence in undertaking research and evaluation

Respondents were asked how confident they were in undertaking research and evaluation activities in their organisation. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents rated they were ‘confident’ in undertaking research activities (n=14, 61%) or ‘very confident’ (n=2, 9%) with six (26%) participants indicating they were ‘not confident’ in undertaking research activities. One participant did not answer the question.

These results were similar for evaluation with 13 (57%) participants who reported feeling ‘confident’ in undertaking evaluation activities, three (13%) participants reporting feeling ‘very confident’ in undertaking evaluation activities and seven (30%) participants reporting they were ‘not confident’.

Comments from respondents revealed that some were nervous about undertaking research and evaluation activities. It was also mentioned that mentoring/consultancy on research and evaluation would be helpful in the future.

Figure 3: Confidence in undertaking research and evaluation activities



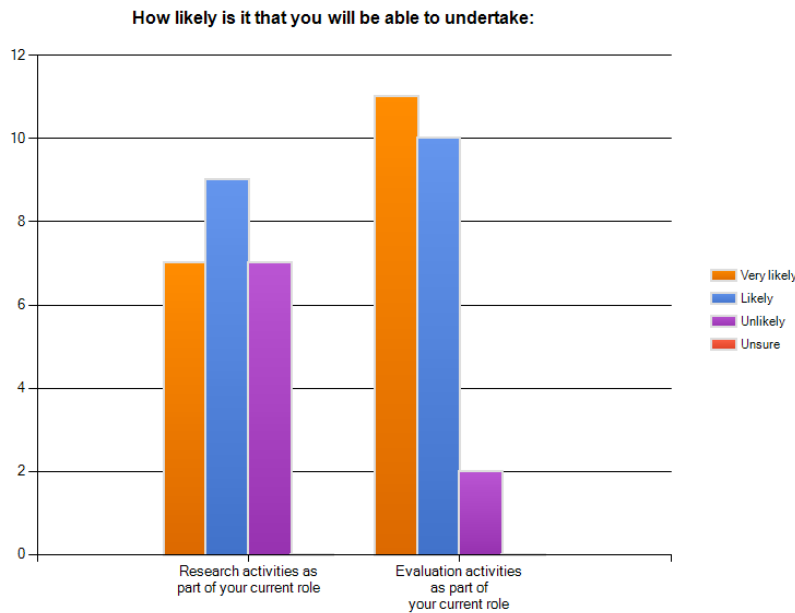
Likelihood of undertaking research and evaluation activities

Respondents were asked how likely it was that they would take part in research and evaluation activities. The results are shown in Figure 4.

The survey results indicated that the majority of the respondents were ‘very likely’ or ‘likely’ to undertake research activities in their organisation (n=16, 70%). Seven (30%) participants indicated that they were ‘unlikely’ to undertake research activities in their organisation.

Similarly the majority of participants indicated that they were ‘very likely’ or ‘likely’ to undertake evaluation activities in their organisation (n=21, 91%). Only two (9%) participants indicated that they were ‘unlikely’ to undertake evaluation activities.

Figure 4: Likelihood of undertaking research and evaluation activities



Barriers and enablers for research and evaluation

Respondents were asked to identify the barriers and enablers associated with undertaking research and evaluation activities.

The main **barriers to research and evaluation** that emerged from the survey were:

- Lack of time and funding
- Staffing capacity and skills
- Resources being unavailable or limited
- Costs involved (both perceived and actual).

The main **enablers for research and evaluation** as outlined by the respondents in the survey were:

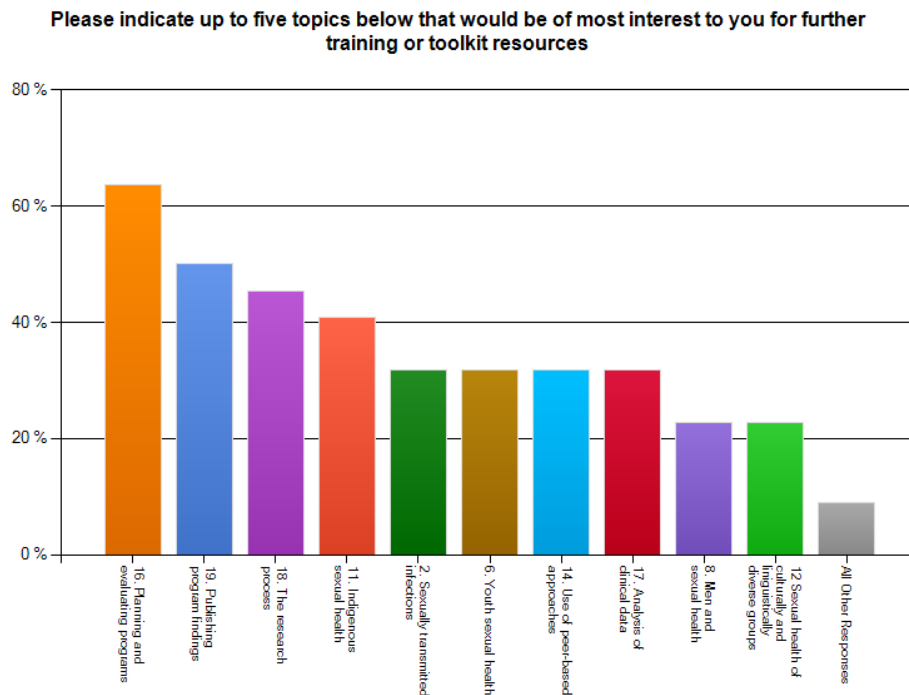
- Motivated and keen staff to learn and improve on skills already acquired
- Ongoing encouragement for research and evaluation
- Resources such as online tools
- Training programs
- Increased funding due to recognised importance of research and evaluation.

Training and resources of most interest

Respondents were asked to indicate which topics would be of most interest to them for further training or toolkit resources. As shown in Figure 5, the topics that were of most interest to participants were: planning and evaluation programs (n=14, 61%), publishing

program findings (n=11, 48%), the research process (n= 10, 44%), Indigenous sexual health (n=9, 39%) and youth sexual health (n=7, 30%).

Figure 5: Topics of most interest for training or toolkit resources



Role of SiREN

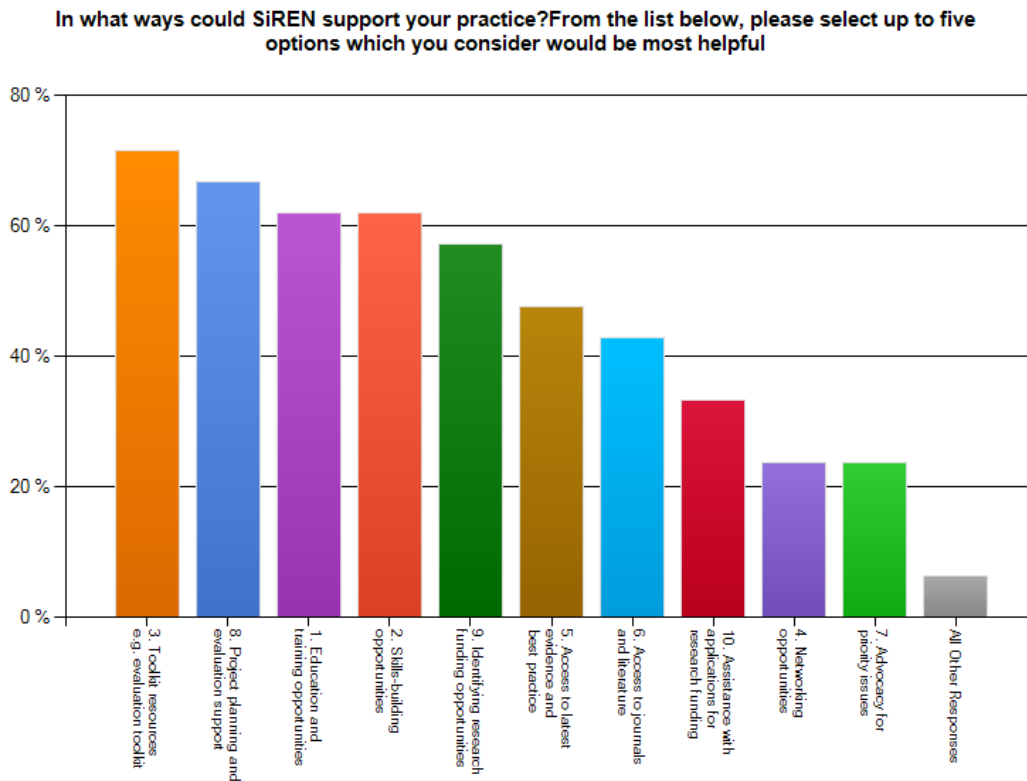
Finally, respondents were asked to identify the most helpful ways that SiREN could support their practice and increase research and evaluation activities in the WA SHBBV sector.

Ten (43%) respondents provided comments and the following ideas emerged:

- Involving staff in research and evaluation activities
- Creating user-friendly resources/website
- Making programs more relevant to key stakeholders
- Ensuring key stakeholders were involved
- Raising awareness about the importance of research and evaluation.

Figure 6 shows the topics that participants are interested in for SiREN to support their organisation. The five topics of most interest to organisations were: **tool kit resources** (n=15, 65%), **project planning and evaluation support** (n=14, 61%), **skills building opportunities** (n=13, 57%), **education and training opportunities** (n=13, 57%) and **identifying research opportunities** (n=12, 52%).

Figure 6: Most helpful ways in which SiREN could support practice



Strengths of the survey

The main strengths of the survey were:

- Participants had the option to remain anonymous when responding to the survey, allowing their answers to remain confidential if they wished
- The survey was not too extensive or complicated, it was quick and simple to complete making it an acceptable burden on participants to complete
- The results of the survey provided an insight into the knowledge and skills gaps in the SHBBV sector
- The online survey was efficient and enabled a large number of organisations around Western Australia to provide feedback in a short time frame
- As a result of the survey being administered online this also meant it had relatively low costs associated
- The survey was sent to all known stakeholders within the WA SHBBV sector. These stakeholders were asked to forward the survey on to their networks further increasing the reach of the survey

- The survey can be readministered at regular intervals (e.g. every 2 years) and the results over time compared to identify progress in building research and evaluation capacity in the SHBBV sector.

Limitations of the survey

The main limitations of the survey were:

- Due to the large number of organisations the survey was sent to and the option for respondents to remain anonymous it was not possible to determine who actually received the survey and who actually completed the survey
- The representativeness of the survey findings for the WA SHBBV sector is unclear
- The survey provided insufficient detail to explain some of the comments and some of the comments made by respondents were open to many interpretations
- The survey results were potentially biased as more responses may have been received from one area of the SHBBV sector than the other.

Despite these limitations, the *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey* provided some preliminary insights related to the current level of knowledge and skills in research and evaluation in the SHBBV sector. The survey provided some evidence into the capacity for research and evaluation in the sector and exposed areas where there were gaps in knowledge and skills in research and evaluation. The survey also highlighted topics of interest to organisations in the sector and provided guidance on how SiREN could best support these organisations. Overall, the results indicated a common interest among stakeholders in program planning and evaluation, skills building and the research process.

Conclusions and next steps

The *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey* collected preliminary data on the knowledge and skills needs of the WA SHBBV sector in relation to increasing research and evaluation capacity. It is important to remember that the survey results are not representative of the entire sector, but a small cross-section of the sector. The survey results can, however, be considered to provide a reasonably good representation of the training and skills needs of the SHBBV sector, based on the wide range of organisations that responded to the survey. Organisations that disclosed their identity were of varying size and geographical locations around Western Australia.

The *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey* has provided some useful insights and additional evidence concerning the knowledge and skills gaps within the WA SHBBV sector in relation to research and evaluation. In particular:

- The importance of research and evaluation was very high (95%)

- The majority of the sample were interested in developing their research and evaluation skills
- The likelihood of undertaking research and evaluation activities within current roles was fairly high (70%). However, it is worth noting that a third of the sample did not think it was likely they would be able to undertake any research activities within their current role.
- Barriers to undertaking research exist and need to be investigated further. Enablers which would support research and evaluation activities were also noted and included training and resources, ongoing support and encouragement to participate in research and evaluation, and access to additional funding.
- Western Australian evidence associated with priority groups was lacking and considered important.
- Topics of most interest for training and toolkit resources were planning and evaluation, publishing program findings, the research process, Aboriginal health and youth sexual health
- Interest in resources and training related to a range of minority groups was also noted. These included: people with disabilities, people who inject drugs, gay men and men who have sex with other men, people living with HIV and other BBVs, and migrants and new refugees.

Two main priorities were identified by the [SiREN Project Team](#) and the [SiREN Resources Reference Group](#) for 2012-2013 following analysis of the results of the *SiREN Sector Needs Assessment Survey*. These were:

1. A focus on **workshops and toolkit resources** which address reported knowledge and skills gaps in planning and evaluating programs. Workshops and toolkit resources are currently under development and will be available during 2013.
2. Provision of **information and support** in relation to the research process, for example guidance with ethics submissions, identification of funding opportunities, review of draft project plans, support in developing an evaluation strategy for a program.

Since the SiREN project was established in May 2012, at least 20 hours of support have been provided to WA SHBBV organisations in the period June-October 2012. Requests for information and support are expected to increase in the coming months as more stakeholders become aware of the free consultancy services available through SiREN.

A new SiREN website was launched in October 2012 – see www.siren.org.au. This

site is intended to provide a 'one stop shop' for SHBBV organisations to access information to support research and evaluation activities, including notice of upcoming training and skills building events.

Demonstration projects will be established during 2013-2014 which showcase best practice in planning, implementing and evaluating effective SHBBV programs. Evaluation of these projects will be conducted and reported through various channels including the SiREN website, an e-News bulletin and a research and evaluation symposium planned for 2014.