

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2022-2025

Evaluation Guidance for Good Growth Projects

Introduction

This guide contains information to assist project deliverers to commission evaluations, which are important because they help us to:

- **Assess Effectiveness and Impact:** to see whether the project's goals have been achieved and what impacts it has had;
- **Provide Accountability:** to make sure that public funds have been used as intended;
- **Shaping Future Programmes:** by taking lessons learnt from projects to design future programmes;
- **Understanding Value for Money:** to see whether the project has been a good use of public money, which depends on the value of the grant given and the impacts it has had.

For the detailed guidance, which commissioned external evaluators should be familiar with, please refer to the [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#).

In all circumstances, if you need further guidance, please contact your Project Lead.

Good Growth Funding Contract Rules

In receiving Good Growth funding, your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) responsibilities include:

- **Data collection and sharing:** you are required to collect, store, submit and make available to the Good Growth Team project monitoring data.
- **Commissioning an external evaluator:** all projects are expected to commission an independent, external evaluator as best practice. The evaluation should match the project's size, with smaller projects needing less detailed evaluations.
- **Evaluation report:** each project evaluation will result in a final report which will need to be shared with the Good Growth Team.

Meeting Data Protection and Privacy Regulations

Make sure you follow data protection rules, privacy regulations and share clear privacy policies with the people you work with. These policies should permit external evaluators to access confidential project monitoring data, where necessary. It's recommended to involve beneficiaries in the evaluation, informing them that external evaluators might contact them for feedback on their experience with the project.

Timescales and Budgets for Evaluation

All projects are required to submit an evaluation report to the Good Growth Team by the time of their final claim at the latest.

We strongly recommend that projects start commissioning an external evaluator as early as possible to make sure that one can be found and that they're good value. More importantly, by commissioning as early as possible this will give the evaluator enough time to:

- Fully understand the project and the Good Growth programme (including the [Investment Plan](#), [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#) and the [Good Growth principles](#));
- Design and conduct the evaluation well, and;
- Share a draft report for projects to review before submitting to the Good Growth Team.

To give you an idea of timings, the design of an evaluation can take up to one month to complete and the evaluation itself may take two to three months to complete. Although the evaluation should match the complexity of the project.

Evaluation costs can vary a lot depending on the scope of the work, with 5% of the total cost of the project as a very rough estimate of cost.

Evaluation

Evaluations assess the design, management and impact of projects. The objectives of the project-level evaluations are:

1. To assess the project's context and objectives, project management and delivery;
2. To report project progress against contracted spend, outputs and outcomes targets;
3. To assess the project's impacts including contributions to the [Good Growth principles](#) and those not captured by contracted output and outcome targets;
4. To identify lessons learnt and best practices for future projects and programmes.

When commissioning evaluations, projects should learn about the different methods and technical terms that external evaluators might use, and understand what should be included in evaluation reports.

1. Case for intervention

The evaluation report must explain why the project is needed, what it is looking to achieve and the impact it is seeking to deliver (its case for intervention). In evaluations, this is presented in a logic model which is a flow chart-like diagram that links the project's:

- **Context:** explains why the project or change is needed in the first place - what issues the project is aiming to address and/or opportunities it is looking to act on, and how the proposed project supports local and regional policy;
- **Market failure:** are a set of economic arguments that explain why without the project the private sector alone cannot deliver the needed improvements, or cannot do so in desirable timescales or levels of quality;
- **Project objectives:** defines what the goals of the project are;
- **Project inputs:** overview of the organisations and/or partners involved and their credentials as well as the source of the project's funding (including SPF and match funding if applicable) and amounts;
- **Activities:** overview of the activities and/or services the project will deliver and individuals or organisations who will benefit;
- **Outputs:** overview of contracted SPF output targets to be delivered by March 2025;

- **Intended outcomes:** overview of contracted SPF outcome targets to be delivered by 2030 and equally as importantly, wider outcomes associated with project delivery (those not captured within contracted output and outcome targets);
- **Impact:** overview of the project's longer-term regional and/or sectoral effects which should match the outcomes, [Levelling Up](#) objectives, [Good Growth principles](#) and aspirations identified in the [Investment Plan](#).

Note: much of this information would have already have been captured within project's application forms and can be re-used and enhanced with more information where gaps exist.

2. Process review

All projects are expected to conduct a process review. The content, coverage and detail of the review should be proportionate to the funding received.

- **Smaller funding allocations (receiving less than £50,000 in SPF funding):** high-level process evaluation (2-3 pages) which may be completed directly by the Project. Through reflection, the review should explore the project's experiences with the Good Growth programme and its delivery and management team. More specifically, identifying the programme's strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement, and lessons learnt from:
 - first engagement with the programme;
 - the process of bidding and support received from the programme;
 - the contracting process;
 - delivery, claiming and ongoing project management support and contract management;
 - whether project activities delivered were in line with the original plan and if not, what were the reasons for any change.
- **Moderate funding allocations (receiving between £50,000 and £1m in SPF funding):** a simple process evaluation covering the same topics as those projects receiving lower value awards, to be conducted by a commissioned external evaluator. In addition, for projects directly supporting individuals and/or businesses, the process review should also assess project implementation, marketing and engagement, activities delivered, management and governance, and monitoring. The review should include conversations (via interviews or focus groups) with key staff and/or any delivery partners of the funding recipient, and other relevant stakeholders. Their perspectives should be more diverse, detailed and demonstrate critical thought.
- **Large funding allocations (receiving more than £1m in SPF funding):** comprehensive and detailed process evaluation will include all the aspects identified above but will also include consultations with the project's direct beneficiaries such as businesses, organisations or individuals.

3. Performance against target outputs and outcomes

The evaluation should measure and explain the project's performance against their contracted spend, outputs and outcomes targets. If the project has under- or over-performed against its targets, the evaluation should explain why this has happened through a combination of desk-based research and consultations with the project and/or wider delivery team.

If projects submit evaluation reports before finishing the project or when final outputs and outcomes can be claimed, the reports should include forecasted outputs as well as outcomes (to the end of 2030) and provide a realistic explanation for forecasts made.

4. Impact evaluation

All projects are expected to identify and assess their impacts.

As a minimum, evaluations should respond to impact evaluation questions included in the [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#), and identify and assess project contributions to:

- i) changes in beneficiaries;
- ii) wider outcomes and impacts of the programme that are not captured within the project's contracted output and outcomes including contributions to local and regional policy;
- iii) the [Investment Plan](#), UKSPF objectives, Cornwall Council's [Good Growth principles](#); and
- iv) project's additionality.¹

Commissioned external evaluators should use the most appropriate and proportionate evaluation methodologies (for a full list see [HM Magenta Book](#)) to conduct [their impact evaluations](#).

For projects receiving more than £500,000 in SPF funding, if applicable, evaluators are expected to quantify the impacts of the intervention in terms of gross value added (GVA) and employment.² For more information, including about additionality and ensuring comparability across all SPF-funded projects, commissioned evaluators are expected to read the [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#).

5. Conclusions and Lessons Learnt

Conclusions should be centred around the above components and answer the following four questions:

1. Was the project effective?
2. Did they effectively implement the project?
3. Did the project provide good value for money?

¹ Additionality - extent to which something happens as a result of the project that would not have happened without the project.

² GVA - a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area as a result of the project.

Employment – full time-equivalent jobs created as a result of the project.

4. Is there evidence of additionality in the project?

This chapter should also highlight lessons learnt for the Good Growth programme which can be used to inform the design and delivery of future programmes.