



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire



Evaluation Strategy

Evaluation Team

September 2024

Foreword

The Evaluation Strategy has been reviewed by the Evaluation Team and has been updated with the latest guidance and approach to evaluation at the Combined Authority. The information in this strategy is accurate based on the Combined Authorities position on the 31st August 2024. This strategy will be updated periodically to reflect changes to the Combined Authority and evaluation as required.

Introduction

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is focussed on developing a strong, successful economy where everyone can build great businesses, careers, and lives in the region. The Combined Authority brings together local councils and businesses to achieve this vision, so that everyone in the region can benefit from economic prosperity supported by a modern, accessible transport network, housing, digital connections, and infrastructure.

The Combined Authority's work covers the 5 districts on West Yorkshire which are: Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield. The Combined Authority also works closely with the private sector through the [West Yorkshire Business Board](#) to ensure the needs of employers in the region are addressed through its work. The Combined Authority also operates the Metro network of bus stations, travel centres and public transport information in West Yorkshire.

Billions of pounds are being invested by the Combined Authority with local councils to deliver better transport, housing, regenerate towns and cities, protect the environment, and ensure that the needs of communities are being met. This also includes a commitment to a reduction in CO₂ emissions across West Yorkshire to net zero by 2038 in the West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan.

As a significant investor of public funds, the Combined Authority is committed to evaluating the effectiveness of its activities to understand how they were implemented, whether they represent value for money, and what effects they have had for whom, how and why. The Combined Authority recognises that evaluation is not an end in itself. If evaluation is to be useful, usable, and used, it needs to be an integral part of decision making, delivery and management, and the entire process of democratic accountability.

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Context

This Evaluation Strategy outlines the Combined Authority's commitment to effective evaluation. It is based on a thorough review of existing processes and interviews with staff from across the organisation which identified what was working well, and where the approach needed to be strengthened. This consultation directly informed the development of the **evaluation principles** which underpin the Combined Authority's approach to evaluation. These principles, are summarised as follows:

1. Evaluation planning is an integral part of developing the business case;
2. The focus of evaluation reflects the business case;
3. Evaluation efforts are proportional to the intervention's scale and complexity;
4. Monitoring and evaluation data is consistent across policy areas;
5. Evaluation will be undertaken independently of delivery;
6. Evaluation is a learning process and a key component in policy development;
7. Evaluation data and findings are disseminated effectively.

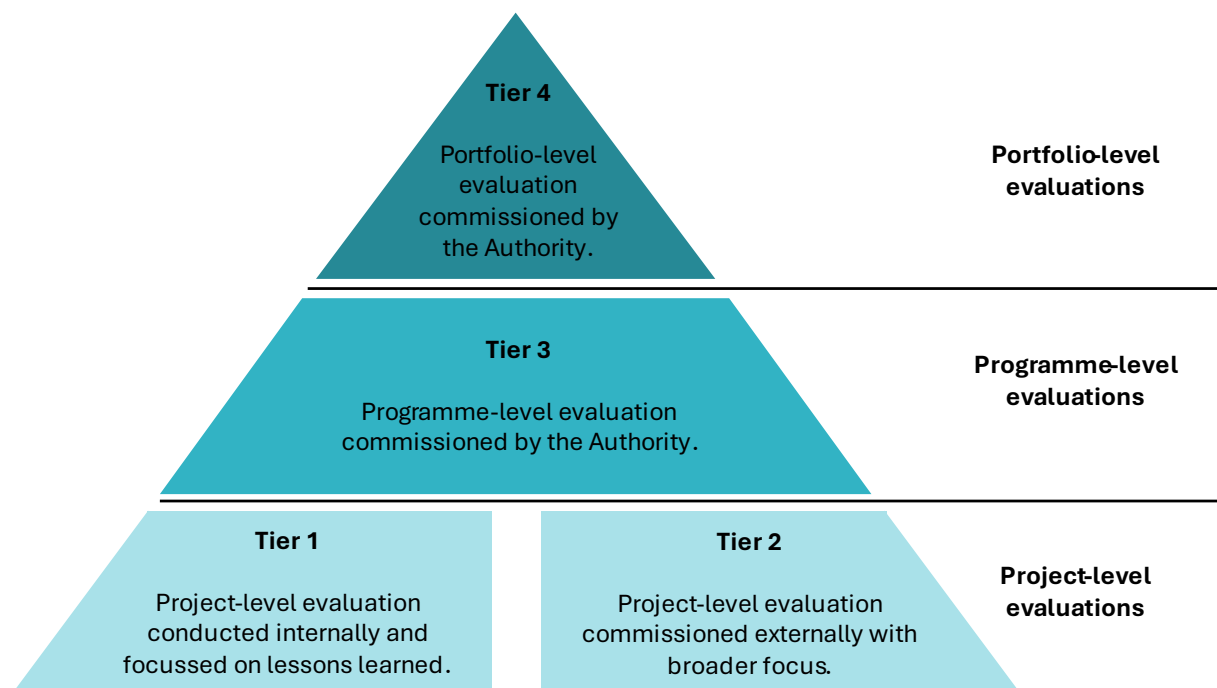
The Strategy builds upon existing good practice from within The Combined Authority. It aligns with the latest national guidance and outlines how The Combined Authority takes a consistent and robust approach to establishing the depth of evaluation that each intervention requires.

The Strategy also outlines the factors that The Combined Authority consider when conducting or commissioning evaluations and interventions, including the balance between the three types of evaluation detailed in the Magenta Book, namely:

- **Process evaluations** which are concerned with how an intervention is being, or was delivered, and any lessons that can be used to inform the remainder of the implementation period, or similar activities in the future.
- **Impact evaluations** which involve a post ante objective test of what changes have occurred, the extent of those changes, an assessment of whether they can be attributed to the intervention and a comparison of benefits to costs.
- **Economic evaluations** seek to determine whether the costs of an intervention have been or will be outweighed by the benefits achieved.

Evaluations within the Combined Authority take place at one of three levels – **policy (or portfolio), programme or project**. The evaluation level will be determined by an assessment of various factors including the size, complexity and the level of innovation involved in the intervention.

As demonstrated below, The Combined Authority will select and commission an evaluation methodology depending on the unique circumstances of individual interventions (an "Evaluation Tier"). These tiers are:



This Evaluation Strategy consists of three sections as follows:

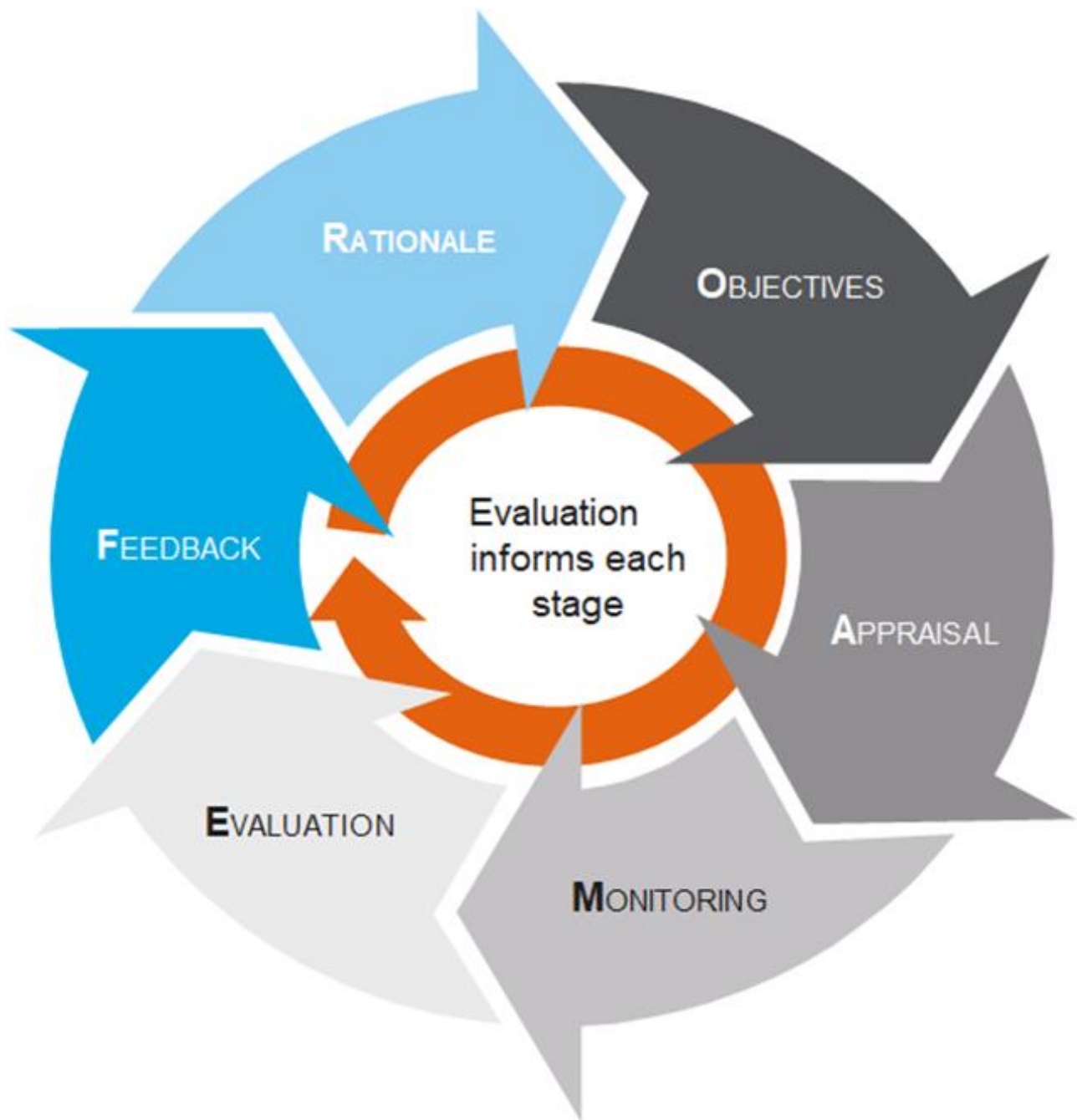
Section 1 focusses on best practice from national and international sources, and outlines how effective evaluations are designed, commissioned, and conducted. This section provides an outline of

- where evaluation sits in the policy, programme and project lifecycle;
- the purpose of evaluation;
- the main evaluation approaches; and,
- how to design effective evaluations.

Section 2 outlines the context within which this Evaluation Strategy will be delivered. This includes a review of current interventions and initial indications of future activities that the Combined Authority will deliver. This section provides important policy context.

Section 3 applies best practice to the context outlined in Section 2 and provides a framework for evaluating the Combined Authority's current portfolio of intervention projects, with recommendations on how to approach future funding streams.

SECTION 1 – The Purpose of Evaluation

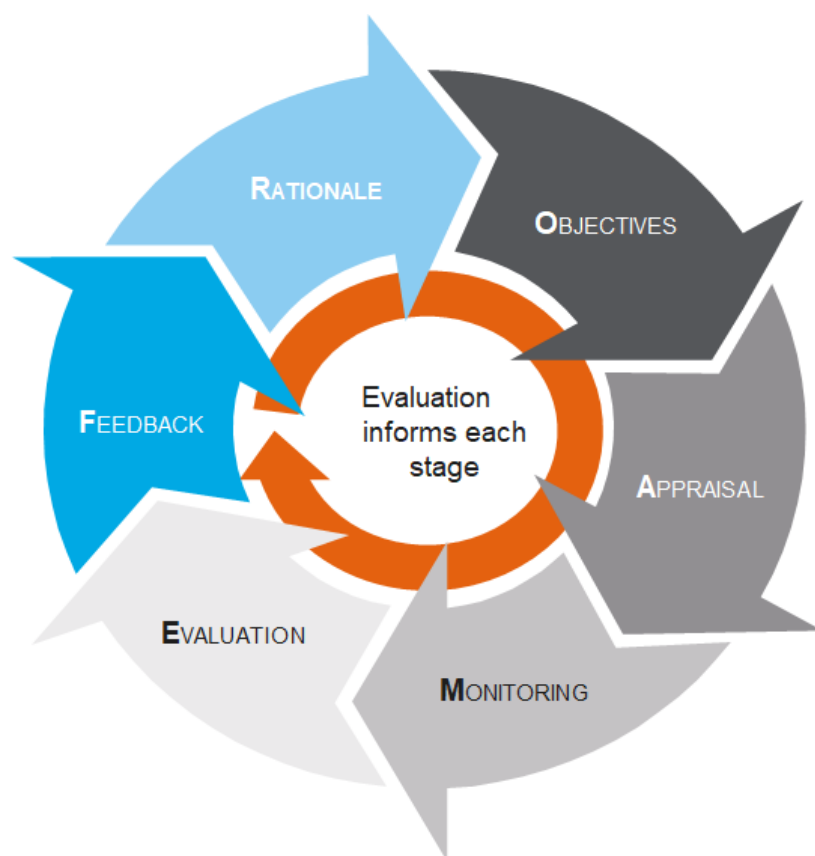


Evaluation is an objective process of understanding how an intervention was implemented, what effects it had, for whom, how and why. It forms a crucial stage in the ROAMEF lifecycle.

1.1 The Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation:

- is an **objective process** of understanding how an intervention was implemented, what effects it had, for whom, how and why;
- can provide defensible evidence to independent scrutiny processes; and,
- can contribute **valuable knowledge** to the policy evidence base.



Evaluation is an integral part of a broad policy cycle that formalised in the acronym ROAMEF.

Whilst each stage is presented separately in the diagram, they are all inter-connected. Furthermore, whilst evaluation is shown as a specific stage in the ROAMEF cycle, it is important to note that evaluation informs each stage, and that evaluation considerations need to be acted upon in each stage for the overall cycle to be effective.

A brief definition of each stage is provided below:

- Rationale – the rationale for the intervention is developed and tested. It is useful to consider the context within which the intervention will occur and the market failures

that necessitate action.

- Objectives – in this stage the objective of the intervention is developed and tested. The objectives can be captured in a logic model with a summary of the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes that are forecast. This approach aids the appraisal stage that follows.
- Appraisal – the purpose of appraisal within the ROAMEF cycle is to identify the best way of delivering the policy prior to implementation. It involves identifying a list of options which meet the stated objectives and assessing these for the costs and benefits that they are likely to deliver.
- Monitoring – the formal process to check, report and evidence that spend, outputs, milestones and outcomes have been achieved.
- Evaluation – as defined in the HM Treasury's Magenta Book "*Evaluation is a systematic assessment of the design, implementation, and outcomes of an intervention. It involves understanding how an intervention is being, or has been, implemented and what effects it has, for whom and why. It identifies what can be improved and estimates its overall impacts and cost-effectiveness.*" It examines the actual impacts of a policy to assess whether the anticipated effects, costs and benefits were in fact realised.
- Feedback – the final stage of the cycle reflects that evaluation is ultimately only of value if the lessons learned are used to inform future action. The cycle therefore shows that evaluation activity should directly inform the development of the rationale for future interventions.

The ROAMEF process is presented as a circle to reflect the fact that it is often iterative and there are significant interdependencies between the various elements. For example, data produced through monitoring activities are often used at the evaluation stage, to inform value for money calculations. In addition, evaluations can play a role in the policy development process – through, for instance, the use of pilots and trials. Therefore, whereas the simple ROAMEF policy cycle may suggest that an evaluation will take place after the intervention has been implemented, evaluations should be planned earlier and there is value in commissioning them whilst the intervention is in delivery as well as in the earlier stages of planning.

One of the important implications of the ROAMEF cycle is that evaluations, and evaluation considerations, inform each stage. For example, there is a crucial relationship in the ROAMEF cycle between the appraisal and evaluation stages. Effective appraisal of interventions will test the intervention's logic chain and seek to identify and remedy any gaps in logic and identify any critical assumptions. Appraisal will also review whether lessons from other similar activities have been used to inform the intervention's design. Forecast outputs, outcomes and benefits will be tested and used as a benchmark for the evaluation.

Additionally, evaluation is not only about looking back to rate success or failure. It has a contribution to make at every stage in the ROAMEF cycle. Evaluation can, at the earliest stage, strengthen or change potential interventions by helping to unpick intervention logics and reveal weaknesses in programme or project design allowing remedial action to be taken early.

The most common purposes of evaluations are therefore:

- **Accountability** - demonstrating how far an intervention has achieved its objectives, how well it has used its resources and what has been its impact.
- **Continuous improvement** - improving and developing capacity among programme participants and their networks and institutions.
- **Implementation** - improving the performance of projects and programmes, and the effectiveness of how they are delivered and managed.
- **Knowledge production** – understanding what works (for whom) and why (and in what contexts).
 - **Planning and efficiency** - ensuring that there is a justification for interventions and that public resources are efficiently deployed.

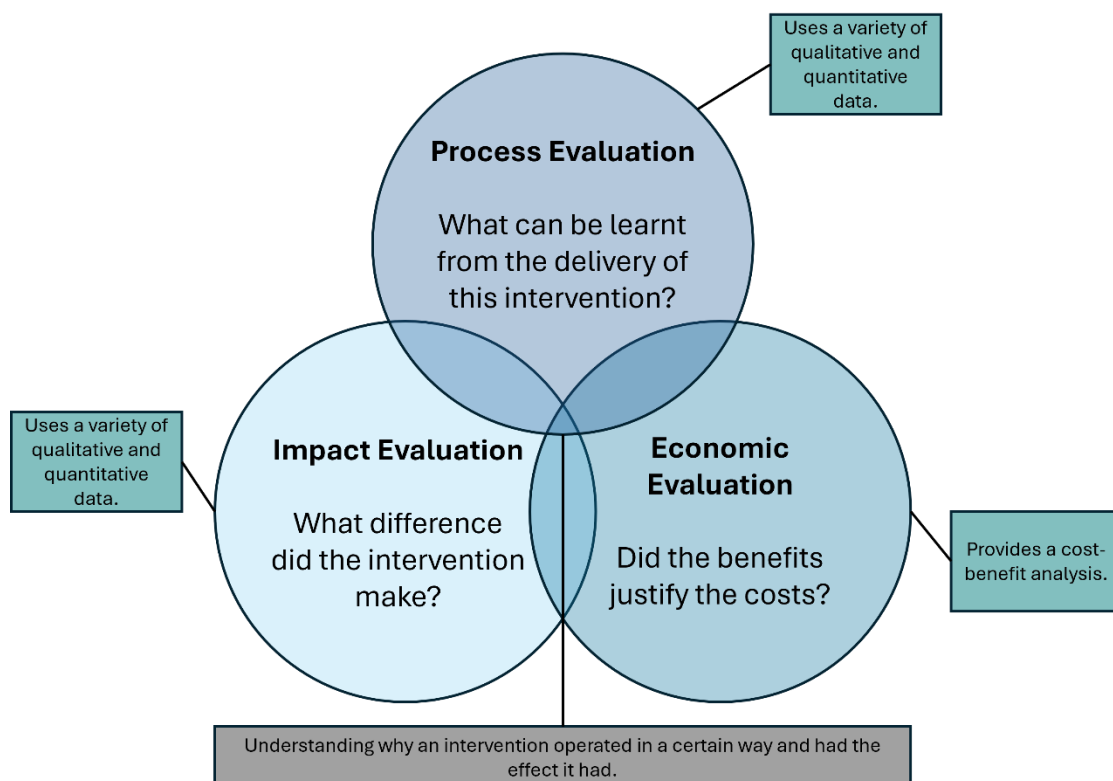
Ultimately evaluation is about learning and using this to inform future action. Effective evaluation enables the formation of robust, evidence base to inform future action. The Evaluation Team possess a series of evaluation templates which have been developed to ensure a consistent approach across the Combined Authority. The Evaluation Team is also developing a collection of examples from various projects to assist partners in designing evaluations and to generate a bank of evidence of what works across West Yorkshire to inform projects and policies in the future. All templates are accessible via PIMS for the relevant stage of the Assurance Framework.

1.2 Evaluation Approaches

As outlined in the previous section, evaluation can serve multiple purposes including accountability and knowledge production. Establishing the purpose of an individual evaluation is critical in determining the most appropriate overall approach. Different evaluation objectives are associated with different kinds of evaluation questions. For example:

- **Accountability** – evaluations will mainly meet the needs of policy makers and Government. These stakeholders will want to know how successful the intervention has been. Has it met its targets? Has public funding been invested effectively and efficiently? What overall impact has been achieved?
- **Continuous improvement** – evaluations will mainly meet the requirements of programme managers and the programme's main partners. Key questions will include are the management arrangements working efficiently? Are partners as involved as they need to be? Are interventions properly targeted in terms of eligibility?
- **Knowledge production** – evaluations will meet the needs of policy makers. Key questions will include what have we now learned about what works? Are the mechanisms for intervention and change better understood? Does the logic of the programme and its assumptions need to be questioned?

The Magenta Book categorises three types of evaluations which each have a different overall purpose. They are summarised in the diagram below.



1.2.1: Process evaluations

Process evaluations are concerned with **how** an intervention is being delivered or was delivered. They seek to identify lessons that can be used to inform the remainder of the implementation period, or future similar activities.

Process evaluations assess whether an intervention is being implemented as intended within its budget and timescale, whether the design is working, and which activities are working effectively, and which need attention. It supports an understanding of internal processes used to deliver outputs, alongside what was actually delivered and when, and is usually completed during delivery.

Process evaluations are particularly valuable where an intervention is particularly innovative. For example, where the Combined Authority is tackling a new policy area it is useful to understand which activities proved to be effective in delivering the policy objectives and how activities interact.

Such evaluations will often include the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from stakeholders. This data collection can cover subjective issues such as perceptions of how well an intervention has been delivered.

At a basic level, it is suggested that project teams use the standard WYCA template to create a Lessons Learned Log. This helps to record and reflect on any lessons learned during and after the implementation of the project. This can then be added to the Master Log for anyone who is working on a project to use, to reflect on past work to strengthen their projects.

1.2.2: Impact evaluations

Impact evaluations seek to determine **what** difference an intervention made. They involve an objective test of what changes have occurred, the extent of those changes, and an assessment of whether they can be attributed to the intervention. To assess the effectiveness of an intervention, it is necessary to gather high quality data before and after it is implemented. This means planning for baseline data collection before delivery of a scheme begins, including of a control group where this is required to determine a counter-factual. Although a thorough impact evaluation can be relatively expensive, it can offer valuable insights into what works, how and why.

A strong impact evaluation is one which is successful in isolating the effect of the policy / intervention from all other potential influences, thereby producing a good estimate of what would have happened in the intervention's absence (the counter-factual). Establishing the counterfactual is inherently challenging, since by definition it cannot be observed – it is an assessment of what would have happened if the policy / interventions had not gone ahead whilst accounting for changes that are unrelated to the intervention.

The level of rigour and resource involved in establishing the counter-factual should be tailored according to a range of factors including the intervention's budget, complexity, level of innovation and contribution to major policy objectives. In some cases, a thorough comparison of baseline and evaluation data will be appropriate (interrupted time series evaluation). However, in general a control group will be required that is comparable to the treatment group.

The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) can be used as an objective means of

scoring the robustness of the Counterfactual impact evaluations (CIE), ranging from 1 (least robust) to 5 (most robust) according to the method used and the quality of its implementation. Robustness, as judged by the Maryland SMS, is the extent to which the method deals with the selection biases inherent to policy evaluations and hence the ability to identify causation. More information can be found on the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth by using the link; <https://whatworksgrowth.org/resources/the-scientific-maryland-scale/>. Summary information on different approaches to the counter-factual are provided in [Section 3.5](#).

1.2.3: Economic evaluations

An effective impact evaluation may be able to demonstrate and quantify the outcomes enabled or delivered by an intervention but cannot determine whether those outcomes justified the intervention. The purpose of economic evaluations is to determine **whether the benefits achieved justify the costs**.

Economic evaluations typically use cost benefit analysis or cost-effective analysis. Cost-effectiveness analysis calculates These include cost-effectiveness analysis which values the costs of implementing and delivering the intervention, and compares this to the outcomes generated, to produce “cost per unit” estimate. Cost-benefit analysis places a monetary value on the changes in outcomes. The Green Book provides more detailed guidance on cost-benefit analysis and the valuation of economic impacts. The UK Government publishes standard monetary values of a range of outcomes, including through the [TAG data book](#) for transport

1.3 Designing Effective Evaluations

The Combined Authority has adopted the following eight stage process to design, conduct and commission effective evaluations:

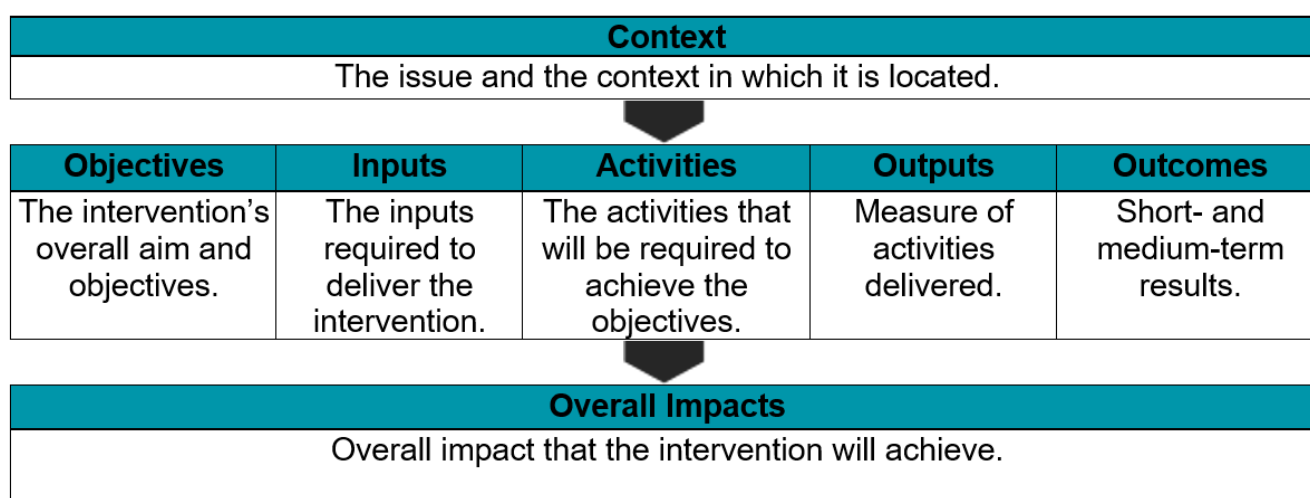
1. Develop logic chain
2. Identify evaluation objectives
3. Develop research questions
4. Select approach
5. Identify data requirements
6. Identify resources
7. Conduct or commission evaluation
8. Use and disseminate findings



This eight-stage process reflects existing activity from within The Combined Authority, advice from the evaluation literature base, and best practice from across the United Kingdom. As outlined in more depth in Section 2, the eight-stage process sits alongside The Combined Authority's Assurance Framework which outlines the approach taken to the management of projects and programmes funded by Government or local sources.

Step 1 – Develop the logic model:

A central component of all effective evaluations is a logic chain. A logic chain describes the relationship between an intervention's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts as illustrated in the diagram below.



The Combined Authority's Assurance Framework requires that a logic model is developed at the Strategic Assessment (SA). Where logic models already exist, they should be tested to ensure they meet the requirements set out below, as this will enable them to effectively inform the evaluation approach. Where a logic model is not in place it is crucial that one is developed before progressing to step 2 (identifying evaluation objectives). [Section 3.5](#) provides some advice on how to develop a logic model.

Logic models are useful devices to inform impact evaluation because they encourage thought towards the steps required for an intervention to have its desired effects, and the nature of effects that can be covered in evaluation. A logic model should represent the causal theory about why and how an intervention might work overtime, that is, the 'theory of change'.

Step 2 – Identify evaluation objectives:

Once the logic model is in place or has been tested and amended the next step is to define the overall evaluation objectives. The evaluation objectives should ultimately relate back to the business case and build on the assumptions used in the appraisal process. It should be SMART – that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable (or Attainable), Relevant, and Time-bound.

The logic model is a key input at this stage as it identifies the anticipated inputs, outcomes

and impacts; and the theoretical links between inputs and outputs that may need to be tested.

To create an overall evaluation objective, it is helpful to consider what constitutes a proportionate and realistic evaluation given the resources and data available, and what is already known about the policy area and the intervention. A good understanding of what is already known, and the existing evidence base informs the approach. For example, if an important question is whether the programme is more effective than similar ones evaluated previously, it will be important to ensure that the evaluation is planned, and data collected in such a way as to maximise comparability between the two sets of findings.

As outlined in Section 1.2, the Magenta Book suggests that there are broadly three types of evaluation, each with a different overall objective – process, impact and economic. It is useful to reflect on these three evaluation types.

An example of an evaluation objective for the Authority's Business Growth Programme (BGP) is provided below.

“To determine whether businesses that received a grant increased their turnover and staffing levels to a greater extent than businesses with similar characteristics that did not receive a grant. The evaluation will be commissioned by Spring 2020 and will be completed over 3 years to enable tracking of any longitudinal change.”

Step 3 – Develop research questions:

The research questions sit underneath the overall evaluation objective and provide lines of enquiry for the evaluation to pursue. Developing the research questions is an essential part of evaluation design. The questions can be:

- Descriptive and intended to observe, describe and measure changes (what happened?).
- Causal with the aim to understand and assess the relationship between cause and effect (how and to what extent is that which occurred attributable to the intervention?).
- Predictive and aimed at trying to anticipate what will happen as a result of planned interventions (for example, will the interventions to counter unemployment create negative effects for the environment or existing employers?).
- Critical and intended to support change often from value-committed stance (for example, how can equal opportunity policies be better accepted by small and medium-sized enterprises?).

The research questions flow from the evaluation objectives. An example of possible research questions for the Business Growth Programme is provided below.

“1) What change in turnover and staffing levels is visible in firms supported and those firms not supported by the BGP?”

- 2) How does any change in turnover and staffing levels in supported firms differ to unsupported firms with similar characteristics?
- 3) What other factors may account for differences in turnover and staffing levels between supported and unsupported firms?"

After identifying the research questions, they should be checked to see if that can be realistically answered with the available resources and considering any practical or theoretical limitations.

Step 4 – Select approach:

It is important to determine whether a process, impact or economic evaluation is best suited to the evaluation objectives and research questions. Alternatively, the evaluation may need to cover aspects of each of these areas.

The key here is to identify which of the three types of questions are of most interest given the nature of the intervention in question. Where interventions include novel or complex activities The Combined Authority may be most interested in how they were delivered. Where interventions have large forecast outputs and outcomes, an impact evaluation may be most appropriate. Where interventions are costly, and perhaps have more intangible forecast benefits, an economic evaluation may be of most interest.

Another factor to consider when reflecting on the evaluation approach is the extent to which previous evaluations of similar activity have addressed your evaluation objective and research questions. Where there is a robust evaluation of a similar intervention it may be desirable to adopt a very similar approach to compare which intervention was most effective and efficient in meeting the initial policy objectives.

The outcome for this step is the selection of either a process, impact or economic evaluation, or a blended approach that draws on each of the three approaches.

Step 5 – Identify data requirements:

Once the approach has been selected, it is necessary to identify what data will be needed to address the evaluation objectives and research questions. It is important to consider:

- If primary research is required with the beneficiaries of the intervention, how easy will it be to contact them?
- Is relevant data already being recorded (within the Combined Authority, the districts or in government statistics) and where are the gaps to address the evaluation objectives and research questions?
- If the evaluation is assessing impact, at what point in time should the baseline data and data on impact be measured?
- What data is required to establish the counterfactual position? For example, if you wish to compare the performance of businesses supported by an intervention with those that didn't receive support, what level of data can be obtained for the counter-factual group, and over what time frame?

One of the key considerations is obtaining a sample that reflects the total population of beneficiaries. Population in this context refers to everyone that was involved in an intervention. It is often not possible to include the whole population in the evaluation; a representative cross section or sample of the population should be selected to provide feedback. Some common sampling methods are described in the table below.

Type	Method	Description
Whole population	Census	All members of the population are included
Random: often used for quantitative work	Random	Sample selected from the population randomly
	Stratified	Homogeneous strata (for example schools in a schools project) within the population are identified. Random samples are then taken from each stratum
Non-random: often used for qualitative work	Quota	Sample members selected by means of a visible characteristic (for example gender) until quota is met
	Judgemental	Sample chosen based on evaluator's judgement of who can provide the most valuable information
	Snowball	Sample selected using networks where each sample member is asked to recommend future sample members
Mixed	Systematic	Selection of the nth member of a population or stratum, e.g. every 10th person to leave a lecture.

A summary of possible data collection methods, and the main advantages and disadvantages of each approach, is provided in the table below.

Method	Main advantages	Main disadvantages
Observation	Suitable for collecting data related to behaviour. It works well when subjects are involved in an activity and unable to provide detailed or objective opinions.	Subjects may change their behaviour if they are aware they are being observed. There is the potential for observer bias or difference in interpretation between observers. It is difficult to simultaneously observe and record.
Interview	Allows collection of in-depth information. More likely to get a representative cross- section of your audience. Respondents can be asked to explain their responses and questions can be clarified. Works well alongside a questionnaire.	Requires skill on the part of the interviewer to elicit honest responses. Creating an interview script, booking and conducting interviews is time-consuming and therefore expensive.

Focus groups	Very 'rich' source of data. The group situation provides security for respondents and may result in greater sharing than one- to-one interviews. The time available allows a moderator to explore issues in great detail and for respondents to reflect deeply on their opinions.	Time-consuming and expensive. Requires skill on the part of the interviewer as group dynamic is crucial to collecting useful data. It is crucial to ensure that an appropriate sample is selected for the group. Requires a suitable venue for the sessions.
Questionnaire	Inexpensive and can be anonymous which may result in beneficiaries being more honest. A large sample size is possible. Can be distributed in a number of ways. Correctly designed the questionnaire can be quick and easy for people to respond to.	Appropriate questionnaire design is crucial to success. Potentially low response rate particularly where the intervention didn't involve extensive interaction with beneficiaries. There is the danger of a self- selecting sample which does not fully represent the total population of beneficiaries. Clarification of questions and answers not possible.
Data mining	Data is already available and may include bookings and materials produced during workshops for example.	Must ensure reliability of data; Only provides at best a partial picture of what happened.

If an impact evaluation is required, it will be necessary to give careful thought to how deadweight or a robust counter-factual position will be established. These issues will have been considered at the appraisal stage and a conversation with the appraisal officer may help inform the approach and resulting data requirements.

Step 6 – Identify resources:

The completion of steps 1 to 5 will result in the scope of the evaluation being well-defined enabling the final confirmation of resources.

In general terms, for large scale relatively routine interventions the budgets required for evaluation will be a small proportion (normally less than 1%). On the other hand, for interventions that are innovative in character, and where evaluation has a strong learning and participatory aspect the costs are likely to be a relatively high proportion and around 5% to 10%.

The most appropriate basis for determining the budget is the nature and scope of the work required. When considering financial budget, the following questions may be helpful prompts:

- 1) Is it possible to accept increased risk of drawing a false conclusion about the impact and cost-effectiveness of the intervention? Are all stakeholders content to accept the risk?
- 2) Is it necessary to produce results for sub-groups of the targeted population? Or would the overall impact be sufficient? The risk here is that an intervention which works for some people but not all may be judged as ineffective. If face to face surveys are planned, could they be replaced with telephone interviews, postal or online surveys, possibly by reducing the amount of data collected?

- 3) How long do outcomes need to be tracked for? Are there proxy or intermediate outcome measures that could be used? What are the risks of shortening the tracking period?
Tracking over a longer period increases the costs.

It can be useful to either establish a Steering Group to oversee the evaluation, and the work involved in establishing or servicing this needs consideration. It is also necessary to consider management resources which may include day-to-day management of consultants, provision of data, reviewing draft documents and sharing findings. The level of staff time will vary throughout the evaluation but should not be under-estimated.

Finally, another important consideration is the capacity that partners have to engage in the evaluation as where interventions are delivered by partners, their ability to pro-actively engage will, to a large extent influence, the quality of the final work.

Step 7 – Conduct or commission evaluation:

In this step the evaluation will be conducted using internal resources (Tier 1), or externally commissioned resource (Tiers 2 - 4). An external organisation may have greater specialist expertise and may be seen as independent, which can be important for the credibility of the evaluation. However, in-house evaluators will have greater familiarity with institutional and management requirements and may well have easier access to information and key personnel.

Step 8 – Use and disseminate findings:

The effective dissemination of findings is critical if maximum value is to be obtained from the evaluation. Key questions to answer in this final step include:

- What will the findings be used for, and what decisions will they feed into?

How will the findings be shared and disseminated?

- How will findings feed back into the ROAMEF cycle?
- Who will the audience be who receives the evaluation?

Effective dissemination may comprise of an event or series of events at which presentations are made to main representatives from various stakeholders, and the implications of the evaluation findings are discussed. Other means to presents findings include the creation of infographics, factsheets, or case studies with staff briefings.

Relevant stakeholders may involve senior managers and decision makers, government departments and those involved in developing similar projects. Sometimes, political leaders and the public may have an interest in aspects of evaluation findings. It may also be appropriate to publish findings to support knowledge sharing with other areas.

SECTION 2 – Operational Context



West Yorkshire is worth over £62 billion and generates around 5% of England's output. The Combined Authority is working to ensure that *'good growth delivers high levels of prosperity, jobs and quality of life for everyone.'*

2.1 West Yorkshire Investment Strategy

The West Yorkshire Investment Strategy (WYIS) sets out the arrangements by which the Combined Authority will direct and make decisions about funding contained within the Single Investment Fund over a defined investment period. It explains the Combined Authority's key investment priorities and the criteria against which any schemes will be evaluated to ensure strategic fit. The priorities within the WYIS have been informed by the West Yorkshire Plan, the overarching strategic framework for the region.

The West Yorkshire Plan sets out a shared vision, narrative, and ambitions for the region. The purpose of the West Yorkshire Plan is to:

- Explain who West Yorkshire is and what we want to achieve
- Set the trajectory for the longer-term up to 2040
- Ensure that government and wider local and national stakeholders are clear on the priorities and ambitions of the region
- Ensure that all regional partners speak with one strong voice

The WY Plan includes five missions, that are aspirational and represent long term ambitions for West Yorkshire.

The WY Plan strengthens our existing policy framework which includes a suite of policies and strategies aligned to areas of delivery.

“Our vision for West Yorkshire is

A brighter West Yorkshire - a place that works for all. An engine room of ideas and creativity, where anyone can make a home.”

Five missions have been set to achieve this:

Mission One: A **prosperous** West Yorkshire – an inclusive economy with well paid jobs

Mission Two: A **happy** West Yorkshire – great places and healthy communities

Mission Three: A **well-connected** West Yorkshire - a strong transport system

Mission Four: A **sustainable** West Yorkshire – making lives greener

Mission Five: A **safe** West Yorkshire – a region where everyone can flourish.

All our policies and strategies work toward meeting at least one of these missions.

For full details of the policies, strategies and missions within the West Yorkshire Plan, please click [here](#).

The Combined Authority publishes an annual State of the Region report, which reviews of the performance of West Yorkshire against key socio-economic and environmental indicators. The reports are available [here](#).

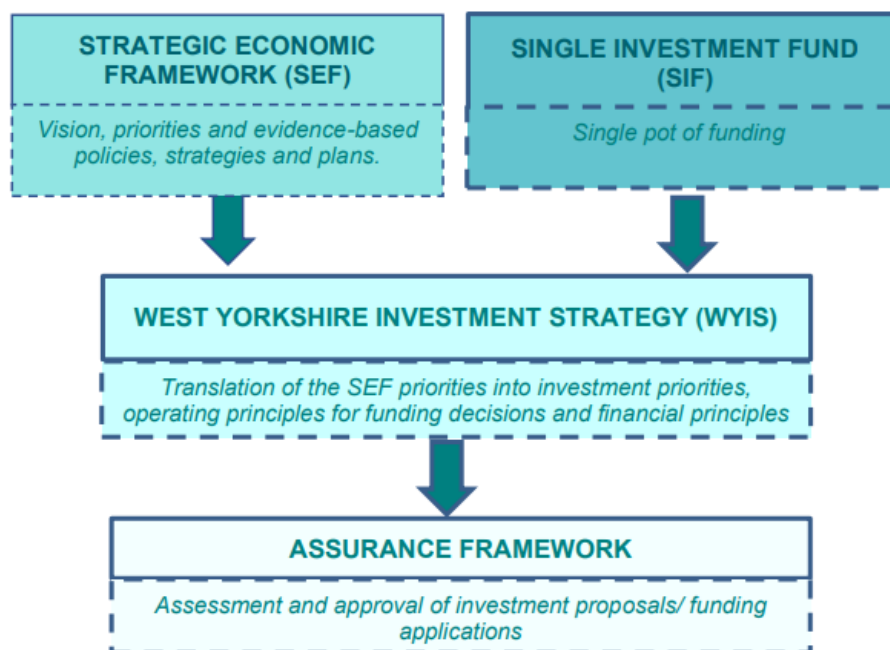
The report provides a stock take of where West Yorkshire currently stands, using a basket of headline indicators developed as part of the West Yorkshire Plan. It highlights areas of strength and positive trends in the local economy but also flags key issues and challenges that are priorities for future action.

The report aims to provide a balanced and objective view of economic performance in the region.

From the West Yorkshire Plan the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy sets out a series of investment priorities that will guide the Combined Authority's approach:

- 1) Investment Priority 1: Good Jobs and Resilient Businesses (including entrepreneurialism)
- 2) Investment Priority 2: Skills and training for people
- 3) Investment Priority 3: Creating Great Places and Accelerated Infrastructure
- 4) Investment Priority 4: Tackling the Climate Emergency, and Environmental Sustainability
- 5) Investment Priority 5: Delivering Sustainable, Integrated, Inclusive and Affordable Transport
- 6) Investment Priority 6: Creative Industries, Culture, Heritage, and Sport.

The diagram below shows the high-level process



2.2 Existing Activity

West Yorkshire Combined Authority are delivering a range of interventions funded through a series of Government funded programmes, which are subject to programme level

evaluations led by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and/or national evaluations led by the relevant government departments. This includes:

- Devolution Deal
- West Yorkshire + Transport Fund
- Transforming Cities Fund
- Getting Building Fund
- Brownfield Housing Fund
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)
- Bus Service Improvement Fund
- Levelling Up Fund

2.1.1 West Yorkshire Growth Deal and the Devolution Deals

The West Yorkshire Growth Deal was originally signed in 2014 covering the period from 2015 to 2021, with initial funding of £572.9 million. This was then supplemented by an additional £351 million from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and other partners.

In March 2021, a landmark Devolution Deal of £1.8 billion was announced alongside the creation of West Yorkshire as a Mayoral Combined Authority. This includes revenue funding, such as control of the Adult Education Budget, new policing and crime powers, funding for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, and £38 million over 30 years for the West Yorkshire Investment Fund (also known as Gainshare)

Investment under Growth Deal and the Devolution Deal is subject to scrutiny by central government, (currently a 5-yearly Gateway Review).

2.2.2: The West Yorkshire + Transport Fund

This is a 20-year investment commitment from government to the Leeds City Region, with a value of up to £1 billion, and future funding is also subject to the outcome of the Gateway Reviews (required every 5 years) and ministerial decision making. This forms a part of the West Yorkshire Growth Deal.

The fund included several strategic transport projects, including:

- Orbital road improvements
- Radial improvements on corridors for better public transport options into urban centres
- Road and rail improvements between district hubs to provide capacity and

better connectivity

Enhanced rail station gateways with increased car parking capacity for park and ride

2.2.4: Transforming Cities Fund

In November 2019, the Combined Authority submitted the City Region Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) bid.

The Authority was granted £317 million towards this from the Department for Transport, plus local match funding up to £140 million. Funded projects include the following major improvements:

- Transform bus and rail interchange in Halifax Town Centre
- Deliver pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in Bradford City Centre
- Major works to Leeds City Station gateway and City Square

The fund aims to achieve the following aims:

- Transform access for communities of persistent poverty to employment opportunities and skills centres.
- Create smart, clean, and liveable places which make cycling and walking the obvious choice for accessing town and city centres – improving air quality and reducing car dominance.
- Transform the public transport and active travel offer from housing and employment sites, ensuring that people are enabled to make sustainable travel choices from day one.

Make travel by bus an attractive and more reliable offer for commuters through spreading the benefits of 'Connecting Leeds' to the rest of the City Region.

2.2.5: Getting Building Fund

In 2020, West Yorkshire Combined Authority was awarded £52.6 million from the Government's Getting Building Fund investment programme to accelerate local, shovel-ready infrastructure projects to stimulate jobs and support economic recovery across the region. Projects included the creation of new, high quality office space in Bradford, new city centre green spaces in Leeds, and the implementation of energy efficiency measures to support low-income households.

2.2.6: Brownfield Housing Fund

In 2020, West Yorkshire Combined Authority was awarded £67 million from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to build a minimum of 4,500 new homes across West Yorkshire on Brownfield Land over the next four years. The aim is to help deliver much needed housing and to boost the region's economy. In 2022 an additional allocation of £22 million was awarded.

2.2.7: UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is proposed as a replacement for the loss of European Union structural funding (which is worth about €2.4 billion per year) and supports several aspects of economic development including support for businesses, innovation, and employment when the UK left the EU.

West Yorkshire has been allocated £83 million from UKSPF, funding a range of projects aimed at delivering on each of the levelling up objectives:

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs, and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.
- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

2.2.8: City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)

In 2022, West Yorkshire received £830 million as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, which aims to provide an integrated and inclusive transport network. This is a five-year programme with an end date of 2027 and its key objective is to help West Yorkshire achieve its ambition of net zero by 2038.

CRSTS includes a wide range of schemes, including bus and cycle corridors, mobility hubs, station improvements and £160 million towards development for a new Mass Transit network in West Yorkshire.

2.3 National Local Growth Assurance Framework

Central Government issued the latest version of the National Local Growth Assurance Framework (NLGAF) in January 2019. The Framework sets out how Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) must administer their Growth Deal funding and requires that Local Assurance Frameworks (LAF) developed by MCAs make the following commitments with regards to evaluation:

- Refer to specific documentation which sets out their approach, such as Growth Deal Evaluation plans.
- Enable the designing-in of impact evaluation. This should include as a minimum, logic modelling of the individual policies in scope to clearly outline the objective for the intervention and the metrics that will need to be measured.
- Ensure a proportionate approach to evaluation and based on the art of what is possible, where counter-factual is truly not feasible nor value for money, lower thresholds of evaluation design can still be meaningful. A logic model and strong monitoring data will allow triangulation with other data towards a theory-based evaluation as a minimum.
- Evaluation objectives should relate back to the business case and build on the assumptions used in the appraisal process. A good starting point for both the business case, and the monitoring and evaluation is the creation of a logic model.
- It is important to have consistency in how metrics are being counted across different interventions.
- Success will need to be monitored at various levels of granularity e.g., project level should build up to policy/intervention type evaluation.
- Put in place mechanisms to ensure that transport schemes are evaluated in line with the latest Department for Transport (DfT) guidance on the evaluation of local major schemes. MCAs should:
 - Set out proportionate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans that clarify requirements for individual schemes including funding of M&E activities; responsibility for undertaking M&E, how minimum standards will be met and timescales for completion and decisions.
 - Ensure that M&E plans are in place for schemes by the time that funding is signed off or before any data collection is programmed.
 - Put in place processes to ensure that the results of any monitoring and evaluations are published.
- With regards to transport schemes, it is recommended that MCAs should have the results of any monitoring and evaluation reviewed independently of the scheme promoter.

In summary, the National Local Growth Assurance Framework requires that The Combined Authority:

- Document their approach to evaluation.
- Take a proportional approach.
- Ensure evaluations are closely linked backed to the original intervention business case through a logic model.
- Complete evaluations at different scales.
- Ensure transport schemes reflect guidance from the DfT.

The West Yorkshire Assurance Framework aims to embed these principles at a West Yorkshire level.

2.3.1 English Devolution Accountability Framework

In addition to the National Local Growth Assurance Framework central government produced the English Devolution Accountability Framework (EDAF) for all MCAs with devolved funding to ensure that the funding given to MCAs is spent in a correct way whilst also ensuring value for money.

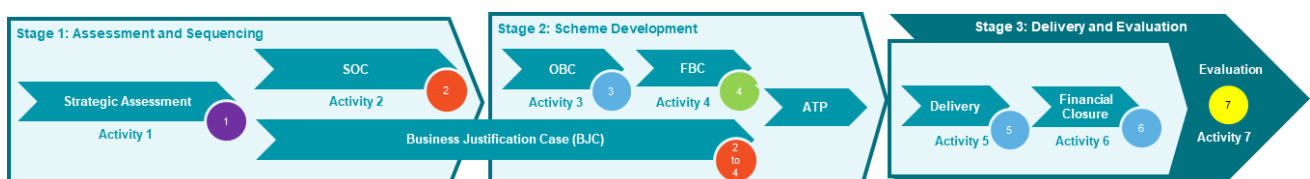
The EDAF makes references to evaluation and the key role this plays in ensuring transparency and scrutiny of the spends made by the MCAs. Part of this framework focuses on monitoring and evaluation. It states that all projects funded through the devolved funding must be subject to a process evaluation as a minimum. Where it is appropriate, an impact and economic evaluation should be carried out to show in greater detail the value for money and the overall impact of the project.

The current arrangements for central government to monitor and evaluate how the CA has spent the devolved funding is by a 5-year gateway review. The CA will be submitting the final documents to government in October 2024 for the latest gateway review. This is the second gateway review the CA has completed. The first one carried out was for the West Yorkshire + Transport Fund. This one has looked at both the West Yorkshire + Transport Fund and Gainshare.

While the EDAF has focused on Level 2 and 3 devolved funding and other government funding programmes it is uncertain what the exact monitoring and evaluation, and scrutiny processes will be under a deeper devolution deal. This strategy will be updated once those decisions have been made by central government.

2.4 Local Growth Assurance Framework

The Local Growth Assurance Framework (LGAF) is updated annually, reflecting the latest guidance from Government. The Framework outlines the approach that the Combined Authority takes to manage projects and programmes funded by Government.



The assurance process has three stages: assessment and sequencing; scheme development; and delivery and evaluation. There are seven activities across these three stages, but each scheme is given its own pathway, and they may not need to complete each activity. The process, and the intensity of appraisal applied, is tailored for each scheme depending on its type, scale, and complexity, with the appropriate activities applied. A summary of each of the seven activities is provided in the table below:

Stage	Activity	Overview
Assessment and Sequencing	1 – Pipeline Identification and Strategic Assessment	Review eligibility and prioritise scheme over others that have come forward as part of the call for projects.
	2 – Strategic Outline Case (SOC)	The scheme promoter completes the SOC to demonstrate that sufficient, robust, and evidenced scoping has been carried out to determine a preferred way forward for delivering the scheme objectives. The SOC should determine the short list of options.
Scheme Development	3 – Outline Business Case (OBC)	The OBC provides a thorough outline of the preferred option to deliver the scheme's objectives. The Combined Authority can award development funding to progress the project to its next decision point.
	4 – Full Business Case (FBC)	The FBC is completed by the scheme promoter and the Combined Authority can provide approval to either enter into a funding or loan agreement.
	4 – Business Justification Case (BJC)	The BJC is completed by the scheme promoter instead of an FBC in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to complete the four stages of business case development.
	Approval to Proceed	The Approval to Proceed applies where there was a FBC approved subject to specific conditions being met. Once these conditions are met, approval is complete, and the project can proceed.
Delivery and Evaluation	5 – Delivery	The scheme is managed and monitored through the Portfolio Information Management System (PIMS) to maintain a uniform approach across all projects. Any changes made outside the approved limits must be approved or rejected by the Authority's Case Officer.
	6 – Financial Closure	Activity 6 aims to ensure that the project has fulfilled all the necessary requirements and objectives as per the funding agreement. Lessons learned from this activity are recorded and used to improve future projects.
	7 - Evaluation	After the project is complete, an evaluation is conducted based on the Evaluation Plan (finalised at the FBC/BJC stage). This involves collecting evaluation data, including counterfactuals, and analysing these to answer key evaluation questions.

The Local Growth Assurance Framework process reflects the ROAMEF intervention lifecycle. Evaluation considerations are built in from the outset. For example, scheme promoters are required to develop a logic model as part of the Strategic Outline Case

(SOC). As part of the appraisal of the management case The Combined Authority considers whether the intervention has completed research on how other similar projects were designed and delivered. The Combined Authority is committed to continuous improvement and is currently strengthening links across the intervention lifecycle.

2.5 Context Summary

In summary, the Combined Authority is a major recipient of public funding. The interventions supported with this funding cover a wide range of economic development themes which are linked to our investment priorities including:

- 1) Investment Priority 1: Good Jobs and Resilient Businesses (including entrepreneurialism)
- 2) Investment Priority 2: Skills and training for people
- 3) Investment Priority 3: Creating Great Places and Accelerated Infrastructure
- 4) Investment Priority 4: Tackling the Climate Emergency, and Environmental Sustainability
- 5) Investment Priority 5: Delivering Sustainable, Integrated, Inclusive and Affordable Transport
- 6) Investment Priority 6: Creative Industries, Culture, Heritage, and Sport.

Currently, several major programmes are ongoing at the Combined Authority in various stages of delivery. Evaluation requirements differ depending on the funding source, but work is underway to apply a consistent approach to evaluation of programmes across similar policy areas. This will help the combined Authority to understand impact across its whole portfolio, reflecting the Single Investment Fund approach.

SECTION 3 – Evaluation Framework



This Strategy recommends that the Combine Authority conduct and commission evaluations at three levels – project, programme, and policy area.

3.1 Evaluation Principles

The following evaluation principles have been developed to reflect feedback from staff involved in consultation interviews to inform the Combined Authority's Strategy development; Government guidance in the Magenta Book, National Local Growth Assurance Framework (NLGAF), English Devolution Accountability Framework (EDAF) and, recognised good practice.

The principles also recognise that evaluation informs each stage of the ROAMEF cycle, with a particularly strong connection between appraisal and evaluation. The principles below have informed the evaluation approach outlined in this Strategy and will guide the way that the Combined Authority design, conduct and commission evaluations.

3.1.1 Evaluation planning is an integral part of developing the business case.

Evaluation planning occurs in parallel with the development of an intervention's business case. The Strategic Assessment template has a clear focus on asking scheme promoters to identify what problem or opportunity they want to address, and this informs the logic chain which is a critical evaluation tool. At the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) scheme promoters are required to complete a logic model.

As part of the Authority's continuous improvements, scheme promoters will be asked to draft an Evaluation Plan as part of the SOC and finalise it in the Full Business Case (FBC) or Business Justification Case (BJC). A budget will be agreed at FBC or BJC that reflects the agreed Evaluation Plan.

3.1.2 The focus of evaluation reflects the business case.

The Evaluation Plan will sit alongside the business case and will build on the intervention's logic model. Scheme promoters will articulate any assumptions between stages in the logic model and will outline their views on the evaluation objective and research questions. The Evaluation Plan should be completed by the project team and guided by the Authority's Case Manager. The Evaluation Team can provide standard templates and high-level advice and guidance. The main role of the Evaluation Team is to lead on programme evaluation.

The Authority's evaluations will be relevant and high quality with clear developmental and practical value. They will be undertaken to a sufficiently high standard that the findings can be reliably used for their intended purpose.

3.1.3 Evaluation efforts are proportional to the intervention's scale and complexity.

The nature of each evaluation is determined on a case-by-case basis as part of the appraisal process. Interventions that are modest in scale and do not represent a significantly novel approach will be subject to an internal, lessons learned evaluation conducted by the Combined Authority where there is no role in delivery or will not be evaluated.

Factors that are considered when determining whether to evaluate an intervention include the opportunity for learning; any urgency to make course corrections or future funding decisions; the potential for strategic or reputational risk; size of investment as a proxy for

importance; and the expectation of a positive expected return from the budget invested in an evaluation.

Individual evaluations establish a robust counter-factual position where possible. The Combined Authority seeks to use multiple methods and data sources, when possible, in order to strengthen evaluation design and reduce bias. All evaluation reports conducted or commissioned by the Combined Authority clearly articulate methods used and their limitations.

3.1.4 Monitoring and evaluation data are consistent across policy.

The Combined Authority ensures that there is consistency in how metrics are being counted across different interventions. The Portfolio Information Management System (PIMS) is based on a common performance framework which enables reliable reporting of outputs. Success will be monitored and evaluated at different levels from individual interventions through to whole policy areas.

3.1.5 Evaluation will be undertaken independently of delivery.

The Combined Authority will only undertake internal evaluations where there is no involvement in delivery. Wherever The Combined Authority does have a role in delivery, evaluations will be commissioned and completed by an external party on the Authority's Evaluation Panel.

The Combined Authority is committed to evaluation being independent of delivery to enable it to robustly demonstrate the validity of key evaluation findings.

3.1.6 Evaluation is a learning process and a key component in policy development.

The Combined Authority recognises that evaluation is not an end but is fundamentally a learning process. The Combined Authority is determined to ensure that lessons learned from evaluations inform future policy and the focus of bids for funding from Government.

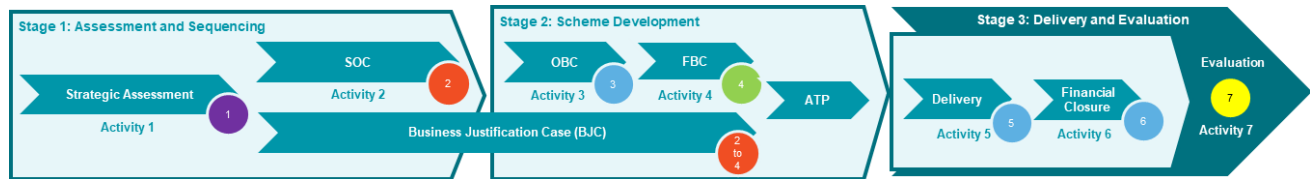
3.1.7 Evaluation data and findings are disseminated effectively.

The Combined Authority will share findings with appropriate audiences. Evaluation Plans developed by scheme promoters consider and identify audiences for the evaluation findings.

The Combined Authority will take time to reflect on evaluation results, generate implications for policy or practice, and adapt as appropriate. The Combined Authority recognise the value in combining the insights from evaluation results with learning based on experience.

3.2 Evaluation and the Assurance Framework

The diagram below summarises the evaluation points in the Assurance Framework.



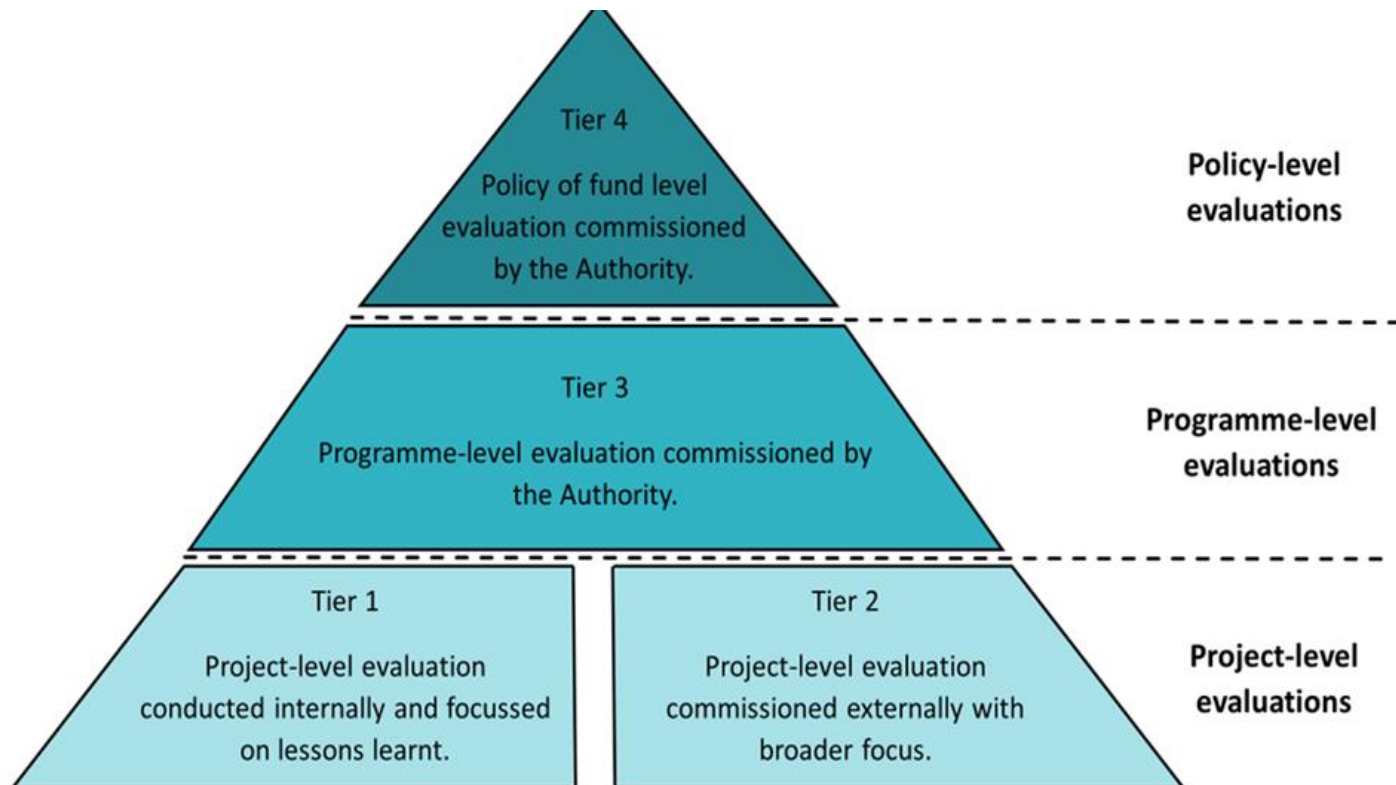
Decision Point	Promoter	Combined Authority
Strategic Assessment	Outline problem or opportunity to be addressed	Use evaluation evidence base to see how problem or opportunity has been addressed in past
Strategic Outline Case	Develop logic model and complete Evaluation Plan Part 1	Assess logic model and draft Evaluation Plan and provide feedback. Feed into appraisal process
Outline Business Case	Update Evaluation Plan	Assess Evaluation Plan and provide feedback. Feed into appraisal process.
Full Business Case/ Business Justification Case	Final Evaluation Plan Part 2 including objectives, research questions and budget	Approve Evaluation Plan and budget. Feed into appraisal process and check whether intervention has lessons learned from similar activities and used them to inform the development of the preferred delivery option.
Delivery	Collect and report on output data and participate in mid-term review	Monitor delivery and conduct or commission mid- term review, if stipulated in Evaluation Plan
Financial Closure Evaluation	Participate fully in evaluation and help disseminate findings, complete Project Closure Report (PCR)	Conduct or commission evaluation as stipulated in the Evaluation Plan, convene meeting to reflect on findings and lessons learned, disseminate findings and lessons within the organisation and externally to stakeholders

Evaluation is embedded in the Combined Authority's Assurance Framework reflecting the principles outlined in Section 3.1. One of the key components of the Authority's approach is the development of an Evaluation Plan by scheme promoters at the Strategic Outline Case stage. This Plan is refined during the Outline Business Case stage and is then finalised at either Full Business Case or Business Justification Case. A budget is attached to each Evaluation Plan to reflect the scale of evaluation.

The Evaluation Plan is used to develop a brief where the Combined Authority conducts an in-house evaluation, or a specification where The Combined Authority is commissioning a firm from the Evaluation Panel.

3.3 Selecting the Evaluation Approach

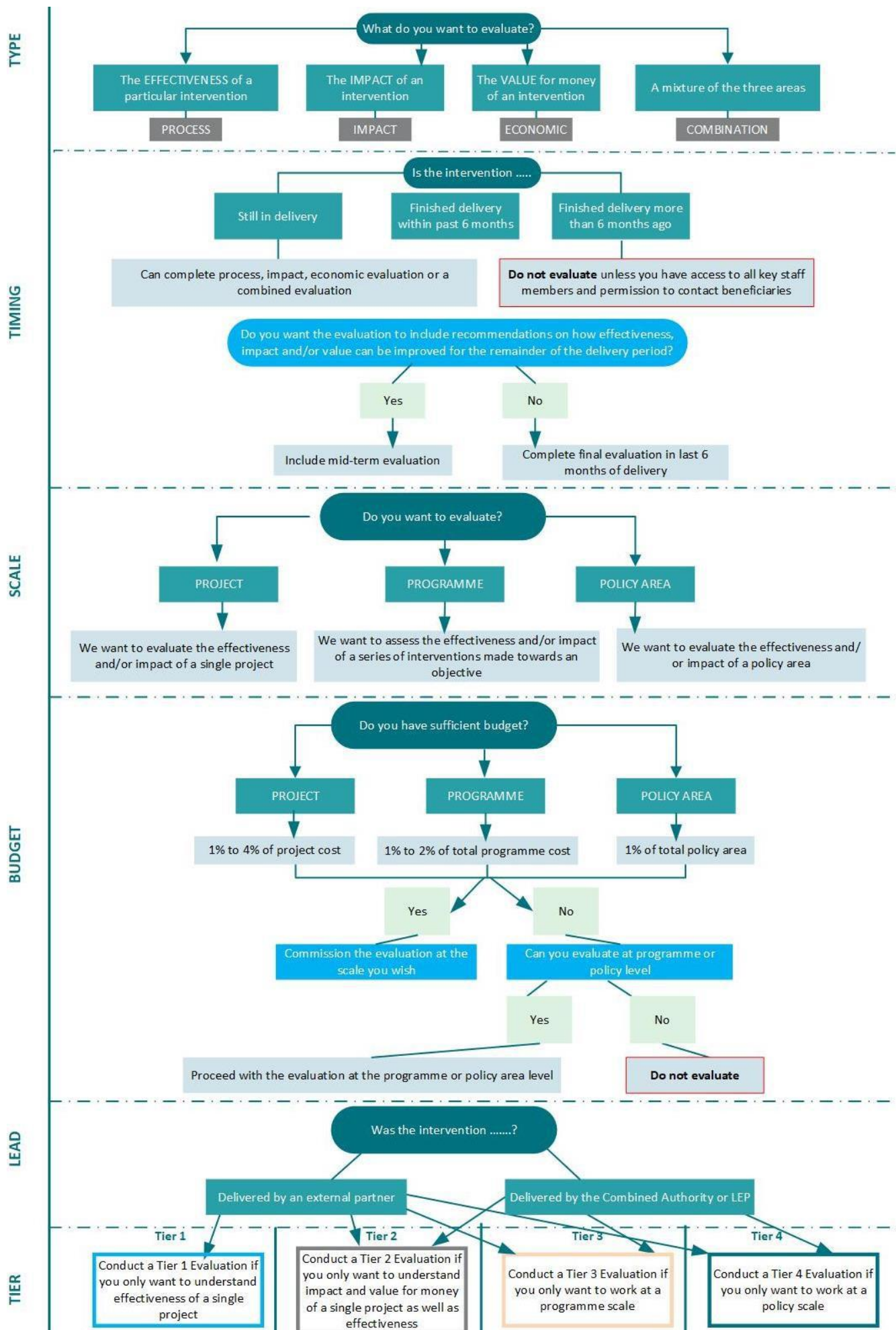
This Strategy outlines four tiers of evaluation that the Combined Authority will conduct or commission:



The five following considerations are used to determine the most appropriate evaluation tier:

- 1) **Type of evaluation:** The Combined Authority determines whether a process, impact or economic evaluation is required, or a combination of each three types.
- 2) **Timing of intervention:** The Combined Authority reviews the timing of the intervention and determines whether this limits which type of evaluation can be used.
- 3) **Scale of evaluation:** The Combined Authority considers whether to evaluate a project-level intervention, or group it with similar interventions within a programme, policy or fund-level evaluation.
- 4) **Budget for evaluation:** The available budget for evaluation may limit the evaluation scope or may dictate the evaluation scale.
- 5) **Lead on Intervention:** The Combined Authority reviews its role and determines whether it is sufficiently independent to conduct the evaluation, or instead needs to commission a firm on the Evaluation Panel.

The flow chart on the following page explores each of these considerations in turn and details the most appropriate evaluation tier based on a series of prompts.



3.4 Evaluation Tiers

3.4.1 Tier 1 Evaluations

The table below shows the key features of Tier 1 evaluations:

Tier 1 evaluation guide		
Type:	Process evaluation – how was the intervention delivered?	Major focus
	Impact evaluation – what difference did the intervention make?	Minor focus
	Economic evaluation – did the benefits justify the costs?	No focus
Timing:	Mid-term review – do you want to make recommendations for the remainder of the delivery period?	✓
	Final evaluation – complete evaluation within final 6 months of delivery or within 6 months of intervention concluding	✓
Scale:	Project level	✓
	Programme level	
	Policy/Fund level	
Budget:	Internal budget for staff time	✓
	External budget for firm on Evaluation Panel	
Lead:	Combined Authority staff complete evaluation	✓
	Firm on Evaluation Panel completes evaluation	

The following areas of good practice will be followed in the design and completion of Tier 1 evaluations:

Design – Evaluation Plan agreed at Full Business Case (Activity 4 or 5) setting out the overall objective, research questions, data collection methods and timescales.

Involve – Combined Authority staff will identify stakeholders to interview to determine how effectively the intervention was delivered. Where possible Combined Authority staff will approach direct beneficiaries and seek their views.

Gather data – given the nature of Tier 1 evaluations, data collection will be largely focussed on existing monitoring data including expenditure and output attainment. Staff conducting these evaluations may design questionnaires, convene a focus group or interview individuals to gather stakeholder's views. Any data gathered from beneficiaries will focus on their views on delivery.

- **Governance** – Combined Authority staff will either report to a Steering Group that was in place to oversee the intervention or share the findings with the Authority's Governance and Audit Committee. Staff conducting the tier 1 evaluation will ideally be situated in a team that does not manage the intervention in question.
- **Report** – a brief report will be created including an Executive Summary which will be shared with the Programme Appraisal Team (PAT).

Disseminate – key findings and lessons learned will be disseminated through the following

channels: Executive Summary shared with PAT and the Governance and Audit Committee; briefing session delivered to policy team; and, report made available on the intranet.

3.4.2 Tier 2 Evaluations

The table below shows the key features of Tier 2 evaluations:

Tier 2 evaluation guide		
Type:	Process evaluation – how was the intervention delivered?	Major focus
	Impact evaluation – what difference did the intervention make?	Major focus
	Economic evaluation – did the benefits justify the costs?	Major focus
Timing:	Mid-term review – do you want to make recommendations for the remainder of the delivery period?	✓
	Final evaluation – complete evaluation within final 6 months of delivery or within 6 months of intervention concluding	✓
Scale:	Project level	✓
	Programme level	
	Policy/Fund level	
Budget:	Internal budget for staff time	
	External budget for firm on Evaluation Panel	1% to 4% of project budget
Lead:	Combined Authority staff complete evaluation	
	Firm on Evaluation Panel completes evaluation	✓

The following areas of good practice will be followed in the design and completion of Tier 2 evaluations:

Design – Evaluation Plan agreed at Full Business Case (Activity 4 or 5) setting out the overall objective, research questions, data collection methods and timescales. The Evaluation Plan is then used to develop a specification for the evaluation.

- **Involve** – the specification will set out key stakeholders that the external firm will need to involve in the evaluation process.

Gather data – the specification will outline the data required to address the research objectives. Given that Tier 2 evaluations are likely to have a major focus on impact and value for money, extensive primary data collection is likely to be required. Where projects sit within a well-established policy area the data requirements should be specified to enable a like-for-like comparison with other projects with similar objectives.

Governance – the external firm should issue reports that can be shared with the Steering Group in place to oversee the intervention, or the Authority's Governance and Audit Committee where a Steering Group does not exist. Where possible a representative of end beneficiaries should be added to the Steering Group to ensure that users' views help influence the course of the evaluation. External firms will be asked to present key findings towards the end of their commission as a minimum requirement. Staff conducting the tier 1 evaluation will ideally be situated in a team that does not manage the intervention.

- **Report** – an extensive report will be created including an Executive Summary

which will be shared with the Programme Appraisal Team (PAT).

Disseminate – key findings and lessons learned will be disseminated through the following channels: Executive Summary shared with PAT and the Governance and Audit Committee; briefing session delivered to policy team; and, report made available on the intranet.

3.4.3 Tier 3 Evaluations

The table below shows the key features of Tier 3 evaluations:

Tier 3 evaluation guide		
Type:	Process evaluation – how was the intervention delivered?	Modest Focus
	Impact evaluation – what difference did the intervention make?	Major Focus
	Economic evaluation – did the benefits justify the costs?	Major Focus
Timing:	Mid-term review – do you want to make recommendations for the remainder of the delivery period?	
	Final evaluation – complete evaluation within final 6 months of delivery or within 6 months of intervention concluding	✓
Scale:	Project level	
	Programme level	✓
	Policy/Fund level	
Budget:	Internal budget for staff time	
	External budget for firm on Evaluation Panel	1% to 2% of combined projects' budget
Lead:	Combined Authority staff complete evaluation	
	Firm on Evaluation Panel completes evaluation	✓

The following areas of good practice will be followed:

- Design – Tier 3 evaluations are most likely to be conducted on interventions that have already passed through the Assurance Framework. An Evaluation Plan may therefore be developed retrospectively. Given the nature of programme-level evaluations, staff from different teams across The Combined Authority will be involved in developing a specification for the evaluation.
- Involve – the specification will set out key stakeholders that the external firm completing the evaluation will need to involve in the evaluation process.

Gather data – the specification will outline the data required to address the research objectives. Tier 3 evaluations are likely to have a major focus on impact and value for money, and extensive primary data collection is likely to be required. The specification will set out how consistent data is required to enable a like-for-like comparison of the effectiveness, impact and value for money offered by the individual projects. The specification will also outline the suggested approach to establishing the counterfactual.

Governance – given the strategic importance of Tier 3 evaluations for policy and strategy development, The Combined Authority will ensure that a bespoke Steering Group is established to oversee Tier 3 evaluations. The Combined Authority will also ensure that the

Governance and Audit Committee have strong visibility as the evaluation progresses.

- Report – an extensive report will be created including an Executive Summary which will be shared with the Programme Appraisal Team (PAT). The Combined Authority will develop a reporting framework to enable easier comparisons across reports.

Disseminate – a dissemination strategy will be developed with the assistance of the Authority's Communications Team. Given the strategic nature of Tier 3 evaluations the Authority will ensure that staff have sufficient time and space to reflect on the findings and build them into the policy cycle.

3.4.4 Tier 4 evaluations

The table below shows the key features of Tier 4 evaluations:

Tier 4 evaluation guide		
Type:	Process evaluation – how was the intervention delivered?	Major Focus
	Impact evaluation – what difference did the intervention make?	Major Focus
	Economic evaluation – did the benefits justify the costs?	Major Focus
Timing:	Mid-term review – do you want to make recommendations for the remainder of the delivery period?	
	Final evaluation – complete evaluation within final 6 months of delivery or within 6 months of intervention concluding	✓
Scale:	Project level	
	Programme level	
	Policy/Fund level	✓
Budget:	Internal budget for staff time	
	External budget for firm on Evaluation Panel	Around 1% to 2% of total policy area budget
Lead:	Combined Authority staff complete evaluation	
	Firm on Evaluation Panel completes evaluation	✓

The following areas represent good practice when designing and conducting Tier 4 evaluations:

Design – Tier 4 evaluations are most likely to be conducted on interventions that have already passed through the Assurance Framework. An Evaluation Plan will therefore be developed retrospectively. Given the nature of policy or fund-level evaluations staff from different teams across The Combined Authority will be involved in developing a specification for the evaluation. Where possible staff from the funder will be given the opportunity to contribute to the specification.

Involve – the specification will set out key stakeholders that the external firm completing the evaluation will need to involve in the evaluation process. Given the scale of a policy or fund-level evaluation stakeholder engagement will be a key component of the evaluation.

Gather data – the specification will outline the data required to address the research objectives. Tier 4 evaluations are likely to have a major focus on impact and value for money, and extensive primary data collection is therefore likely to be required. The

specification will set out how consistent data is required to enable a like-for-like comparison of the effectiveness, impact and value for money offered by the individual projects.

Governance – given the strategic importance of Tier 4 evaluations for policy and strategy development, The Combined Authority will ensure that a bespoke Steering Group is established to oversee Tier 3 evaluations. The Combined Authority will also ensure that the Governance and Audit Committee have strong visibility as the evaluation progresses and reports. Individual sub- committees may also be engaged.

- Report – an extensive report will be created including an Executive Summary which will be shared with the Programme Appraisal Team (PAT). The Combined Authority will develop a reporting framework to enable easier comparisons across reports.

Disseminate – a dissemination strategy will be developed and delivered with the assistance of the Authority's Communications Team.

3.5 Logic Model, Survey and Counter-Factual Guidance

This section outlines good practice that staff at the Combined Authority can draw on when developing or reviewing logic chains, and when establishing a counter-factual position.

3.5.1 Developing a logic model:

- i) Identify the issue** - confirm the challenges and / or opportunities that require intervention. A literature review of the factors that may be influencing the challenges and or opportunities should be undertaken, and examples of evaluations of similar interventions sought. See [What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth](https://whatworksgrowth.org/) [https://whatworksgrowth.org/] for evaluations of similar activity.
- ii) Identify the outcomes and overall impact sought** – for planned impacts: what is the intervention aiming to achieve in the long-term; what single measure would best reflect the intervention's overall aim; and, what national or local policy objectives will this intervention address? For outcomes: what is the intervention seeking to achieve in the short to medium-term? Examples could include less congestion for transport projects; more businesses for start-up schemes. How would you know whether the intervention was 'on course' to achieve the planned objectives? What kind of changes (in terms of individual behaviour, or in the organisations involved) would be expected as a result of intervention activities?
- iii) Develop the steps required to deliver the outcomes and impact** - for inputs, investigate the level of resource similar interventions have had and ask: what financial resources are required to effectively implement the intervention? For activities, review any similar interventions and in particular and identify process evaluations which assess which activities are most important in achieving the objectives. Ask: What output framework exists for the funding source, and which pre-set outputs are most relevant? What participation will directly result from the intervention (who will be reached), and what kind of response will people need to have to the intervention if it is to be

successful?

iv) Test the steps in the logic chain and the causal logic – Ask: why is the proposed objective and aims the most appropriate response to the challenges and / or opportunities identified in the context? Do the chosen activities reflect best practice? Why do you believe that they will address the objectives and lead to the forecast outputs? Can you clearly articulate why the activities will ultimately lead to the outcomes? What might get in the way of specific activities leading to the forecast outputs and outcomes?

3.5.1.1 Example of testing the logic model

A job training scheme to provide placements for long-term unemployed people in companies where they can gain marketable skills and qualifications. The scheme aims to increase the number of interviews and job offers the participants receive, thereby increasing the number in jobs and their incomes. There might ultimately be a reduction in overall unemployment.



Example questions at each stage:

Link (1). How were people recruited onto the scheme? What proportions were retained for the duration of their placement? For how long had they been unemployed before starting?

Link (2). What change was there in participants' skills and qualifications?

Link (3). What are the type and number of job offers obtained, and the characteristics of those participants obtaining them? Are there any improvement in skills contributed to participants gaining those interviews and job offers?

Link (4). What is the increase in the number and type of jobs, and the incomes of participants? Has the scheme generated genuinely new jobs, or have participants simply taken jobs that would otherwise have been offered to others?

Link (5) might include whether the scheme made any contribution to overall employment levels, either locally or nationally, taking account of economic conditions and trends. There might also be some attempt to measure the impact of the scheme on local economic performance.

3.5.2: Good practice in questionnaire design:

The key to effective questionnaire design is knowing exactly what you want to find out. Questions need to be linked to the intervention's objectives and forecast outputs and outcomes. The purpose, structure, wording and layout of questionnaires influence the response rate.

Purpose:

A questionnaire is only as good as the questions it contains, so ask yourself what you will do with the information that each and every question yields. If you are unsure of the answer, consider removing the question. Prioritising items in this way will help ensure that you make the most of the questionnaire.

Structure:

A questionnaire should always start with a brief sentence or two explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and what the data will be used for. As a rule, questions should move from the general to the specific.

Question types:

Consider whether you will use closed (multiple choice) or open-end questions (where the respondent uses their own words to respond). Closed questions are quicker and easier to answer, and the data is already sorted into categories. However closed questions do not provide depth of information, nor do they take account of responses which you had not anticipated.

Open-ended questions are more time-consuming and difficult to answer. Respondents will usually require some encouragement to give more than one-word answers and the interviewer needs to accurately record what was said. Analysing this data is more time consuming as answers need to be sorted into categories. However open-ended questions provide much richer data and give respondents the opportunity to properly explain their feelings and ideas.

Wording and layout:

Think about your wording to minimise bias in the questionnaire and avoid leading people to answer one way or another. Your questionnaire should be long enough to allow you to collect the information you need, but not so long it puts people off completing it.

Delivery:

Placing a questionnaire online can be a cost-effective approach if you have email addresses for the intervention's beneficiaries. There are some providers of free basic survey software that can be used for very short questionnaires.

3.5.3: Establishing the counter-factual:

The guidance below has been adapted from advice provided by the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (<https://whatworksgrowth.org/>). The Centre is focused on increasing the levels of understanding in terms of what really works in different policy areas. The identification and analysis of good quality evaluations is a central part of this.

The guidance below reflects the high standards they place on being able to effectively attribute the net impacts from an intervention to the assumed beneficiaries.

What is it?

The construction of a valid counter-factual is used to establish causality. By causal impact, we mean the difference between the outcome for individuals 'treated' in a programme, and the outcome they might have experienced without it. The counter-factual is therefore i.e. what would have happened to programme 'participants' (individuals, firms or areas) had they not been treated under the programme.

How is it measured?

A standard approach is to create a counter-factual group of similar individuals, firms or areas not participating in the programme being evaluated. Changes in outcomes can then be compared between the 'treatment group' (those affected by the policy, sometime called the 'intervention case') and the 'control group' (those not affected by the policy, sometimes called the 'reference case').

We can also choose similar groups and give them different treatments to assess what works better e.g. selecting two similar types of business and offering some mentoring support (more expensive) and others online materials (less expensive advice).

How to choose a control group?

The central idea is to make sure that the groups compared are similar. By choosing two similar groups (aside from the 'treatment', or intervention, or policy being evaluated) the counter-factual helps address concerns that other factors might be driving changes for participants in a programme. These other factors might be 'external' to the programme (for example, the intervention is offered to struggling areas,) or they might be 'internal' (e.g. only certain types of firms choose to take part in a business advice programme).

3.5.3.1 Assessing the Counter-factual Challenge: Selection Bias

A key issue in creating the counter-factual group is dealing with the 'selection into treatment' problem, or selection bias. Selection into treatment occurs when participants in the programme differ from those who do not participate in the programme.

An example of this problem for access to finance programmes would be when more ambitious firms apply for support. If this happens, estimates of policy impact may be biased upwards because we incorrectly attribute better firm outcomes to the policy, rather than to the fact that the more ambitious participants would have done better even without the programme.

Selection problems may also lead to downward bias. For example, firms that apply for support might be experiencing problems and such firms may be less likely to grow or succeed independent of any advice they receive. These factors are often unobservable to researchers.

3.5.3.2 Approaches to Assessing the Counter-factual: Randomisation

Evidence of this type is the highest quality of evidence and is considered the 'gold standard' for policy evaluations and is called randomisation control testing (RCT).

Randomisation, properly applied, means there is no selection into the treatment. This ensures that there are no differences between the treatment group (the one subject to the project, programme or policy) and the control group either on observable (e.g. age) or unobservable (e.g. ability) characteristics. Any difference post-treatment (post intervention) must therefore be an effect of the treatment (i.e. the project, programme, or policy).

There are five key steps:

- The original programme applicants are pre-screened on eligibility

requirements (pre-project or intervention).

A lottery (computer randomisation) assigns a percentage of the eligible applicants (usually 50%) to the control group and the remainder to the treatment group (the intervention group).

- Baseline data is collected (either from an existing data source or from a bespoke 'baseline' survey).
- The treatment (intervention, project, programme) is applied.
- Data is collected sometime after the treatment (again, either from an existing data source or a bespoke 'follow-up' survey).

In order to be fully robust, the randomisation a) must be successful (and tested via balancing tests); b) take account of attrition (drop-out) and; c) the control group must not be influenced by, or contaminated, by the treatment group.

3.5.3.3 Approaches to Assessing the Counter-factual: Difference-in-Difference.

The Difference-in-Difference method compares a treatment and control group before and after treatment. More specifically, the treatment effect is calculated by first evaluating the change in the outcome variable for the treated group, and then subtracting the change in the control group over the same period.

In Difference-in-Difference approaches, the control group provides the counter-factual growth path i.e. what would have happened in the treatment group had it not been treated. This is much better than a simple before and after treatment comparison, because it accounts for the fact that changes in outcome can be due to many different factors and not just the treatment effect.

Moreover, because Difference-in-Difference subtracts the differences between treatment and control both before and after the treatment, it effectively controls for any unobserved, time-invariant differences between the two groups.

The approach does not however account for unobservable differences between the two that vary with time.

For good Difference-in-Difference analysis it must be credibly argued that the treatment group would have followed the same trend as the control group. Secondly, there must also be a known time period for treatment so that the groups can be compared before and after the treatment.

4. Conclusions

As outlined in this Strategy, West Yorkshire Combined Authority are working with partner councils to deliver better transport and housing, regenerate towns and cities, protect the environment and work towards net zero, and championing and investing in culture, sport and creativity, whilst making sure that the needs of communities are met.

The Combined Authority operates in a complex environment, with major funding programmes and investment portfolios at different stages in the lifecycle. It is inherently challenging to allocate sufficient resource to the various stages of the lifecycle with programmes operating over different timescales.

The Combined Authority also has a wide-ranging policy remit which includes business support, investment in skills, transport, culture and climate. Whilst many of the Combined Authority's investments in interventions deliver direct economic, environmental and social benefits, some schemes primarily deliver long-term benefits and do so over decades rather than years.

The policy agenda is also fast moving and responsive. A relevant example is the Combined Authority's acknowledgement of a climate emergency which has led to actions including the commissioning of research to help identify how climate change and carbon considerations can be made central to all the Combined Authority's efforts.

As a significant investor of public funds, The Combined Authority is committed to evaluating the effectiveness of its activities in order to understand how they were implemented, whether they represent value for money, and what effects they have had, for whom, how and why. This Strategy makes best efforts to account for the complex operating environment and wide-ranging policy agenda, and provide a structure for evaluation. The Strategy acknowledges the close relationship between stages in the ROAMEF cycle in general, and between appraisal and evaluation in particular.

As detailed in Section 3.3, the Combined Authority will design, conduct or commission evaluations at either: project; programme; or, policy / portfolio level. There will be occasions where individual interventions will not be subject to evaluation because the resources required will not be matched by appropriate benefits. This may be the case for example where an intervention is well-established and has been subject to robust evaluation in the recent past.

This Evaluation Strategy reflects consultation with staff across the Combined Authority and builds on good practice that is occurring. A series of principles guide how evaluations will be delivered in practice. These include ensuring that evaluation planning is an integral part of developing the business case; that evaluation efforts are proportional to the intervention's scale and complexity; and, that evaluation data and findings are disseminated effectively. The evaluation principles inform ongoing efforts to increase evaluation capacity and capability.

The Combined Authority will review this Strategy periodically to update it with the latest national guidance on evaluation and changes to funding and activity in West Yorkshire

5. Glossary

This glossary is provided to define key evaluation terms for readers and provide consistency of interpretation across teams within the Combined Authority.

Appraisal	The process used to assess the costs, benefits, and risks of alternative ways to meet an intervention's stated objectives. In the ROAMEF cycle appraisal includes identifying a list of options which meet the stated objectives and assessing the costs and benefits that each option is likely to deliver.
Assurance Framework	The Combined Authority has an Assurance Framework which outlines the systems and processes that are in place to manage funding effectively, and to ensure the successful delivery of the outcomes in the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy.
Beneficiary	In this Strategy a beneficiary is the individual, business, social group, or organisation that benefits from improved outcomes, services, or products arising from the intervention(s) that the Combined Authority either commission, manage or deliver.
BJC	The Business Justification Case is part of the Assurance Framework for programmes/projects that are subject to lighter touch assurance.
Cost Benefit Analysis	This analysis quantifies as many of the costs and benefits of a policy as possible, including wider social and environmental impacts to determine "value for money". The Green Book provides detailed guidance on Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) and the valuation of economic impacts.
Counter-factual	Counterfactuals are hypothetical scenarios used to compare the outcomes of the treatment group with those who did not receive the intervention. They help to establish a reference case to measure the impact and effectiveness of an intervention. This often involves comparing outcomes for the treatment group with a similar control group. A counterfactual of some form is essential to demonstrate causality, but the effort invested in establishing the counter-factual should be proportional to the scale and complexity of the intervention and evaluation (see deadweight below).
Deadweight	Deadweight is one of the factors that needs to be considered when calculating net, as opposed to gross outputs or outcomes. Deadweight can be seen as a simplified version of the counter-factual and is defined in the Magenta Book as referring to " <i>outcomes that would have occurred without the intervention.</i> " Deadweight is typically calculated in evaluations with data gathered from beneficiary surveys or using benchmarks.
Displacement	Displacement is another factor that needs to be considered when calculating net, as opposed to gross outputs or outcomes. It refers to the extent to which an increase in economic activity promoted by an intervention is offset by reductions in economic activity elsewhere within the impact area.
Economic evaluations	Evaluations that seek to establish the value for money of an intervention. Essentially the evaluation will compare the benefits of an intervention with its

	costs.
Ex ante	Prior, or 'before the event', used to refer to evaluation or appraisal pre-intervention. An ex-ante evaluation is a prior evaluation, used to identify and forecast outputs and impacts, and to set out and test the rationale for an intervention before approval.
FBC	The Full Business Case is the final document in the process of applying for funding.
GDPR	The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is in UK law as the Data Protection Act 2018. It governs personal data rights, including the way companies handle personal data and the compensation that can be claimed for misuse of data. It is important that GDPR requirements are considered when designing and completing evaluations.
Green Book	HM Treasury's guidance on the completion of effective appraisal of policies, programmes, and projects. It also discusses the design, use of monitoring and evaluation, before, during and after implementation. It should be used in conjunction with other guidance, such as the Magenta Book for evaluation. The Green Book can be found here .
Gross to net	This is a calculation that moves from overall (gross) outputs, outcomes, and impact, then factors in deadweight, displacement, leakage, substitution, and other variables to determine the net position. Multipliers may also be used to account for factors such as increased supply chain spending or retention of spending in the local economy.
Gross Value-Added	Gross Value Added (GVA) is an economic measurement that can be used for an area, industry, or sector and is the difference in value between total economic output and intermediate consumption goods (inputs). It is used to measure the contribution made to an economy of one individual producer, industry, sector, or region.
Impact evaluations	These evaluations attempt to provide an objective test of what outcome changes have occurred, and the extent to which these changes can be attributed to the intervention. Establishing a counter-factual position is a key component of an impact evaluation.
Intervention	For the purposes of this Strategy the term intervention is used to describe a project or programme that the Combined Authority either commission, manage or deliver.
Leakage	Leakage is a factor that needs to be considered when calculating net, as opposed to gross outputs or outcomes. It occurs where some outputs or outcomes benefit those outside of the target area or group.
Logic model	The logic model (sometimes known as a logic map) is the sequence of steps that traces context and objectives through to outcomes and impacts. Logic models are a requirement throughout the Assurance Framework from Strategic Assessment (SA) stage. They are sometimes supplemented by a more detailed Theory of Change which explains the causal links in the logic model.

Magenta Book	HM Treasury's guidance on the completion of effective evaluations. It covers all aspects of the evaluation process including, scoping, design, conduct, use and dissemination of findings. This document is referred to numerous times throughout the strategy and can be found here .
Mid-term	Refers to the middle of the intervention period. Mid-term evaluations are carried out midway through the intervention period to develop and provide insights that can then be used to inform the remainder of the delivery
Monitoring	The process used to check, report and evidence that spend, outputs, milestones and benefits have been achieved. Monitoring data are a requirement for evaluation but are not sufficient to demonstrate causality.
Multipliers	Multipliers can be used in a gross to net calculation to account for wider economic benefits that flow from the intervention. As outlined in English Partnership's Additionality Guide (2008), there are two well-established types of multipliers – a supply linkage multiplier (for example, further expenditure in a supply chain) and an income multiplier (local expenditure from income derived from an intervention).
OBC	The Outline Business Case is completed by scheme promoters once the SOC has been submitted and approved by the Combined Authority.
Outputs	The amount of something produced which results directly from the funded activity of an intervention (e.g., kms of bus lane or number of participants in a training programme).
Outcomes	Outcomes are the results or effects that occur as a consequence of outputs directly delivered by an intervention and can be positive or negative. These can be short, medium, or longer term. Examples include, recipients of training moving into employment and reduced bus journey times as a result of a junction improvement.
Process evaluations	Assess whether an intervention is being implemented as intended, what has worked well and what has worked less well during intervention design or delivery and why to capture key lessons for the future. This often involves interviews, surveys and workshops with stakeholders. Process evaluations are also sometimes called formative evaluations.
Programme	An initiative or area of work at the Combined Authority that aims to achieve specific outcomes and objectives through the allocation of resources and implementation of policies and activities. The main responsibility of the Evaluation Team is to design and implement programme level evaluations.
Project	A project refers to a specific plan, whether at design or implementation stage, developed at the Combined Authority or at local authority districts to address a particular need. They involve the allocation of resources (usually through a larger programme) to achieve specific outcomes and objectives). 'Project' and 'scheme' are generally used interchangeably for the purposes of evaluation.
ROAMEF	The policy, programme and project cycle consisting of six stages Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback

Scheme	A scheme refers to a specific plan, whether at design or implementation stage, developed at the Combined Authority or at local authority districts to address a particular need. They involve the allocation of resources (usually through a larger programme) to achieve specific outcomes and objectives). 'Project' and 'scheme' are generally used interchangeably for the purposes of evaluation.
Scheme promoter	The scheme promoter is the applicant for funding from the Combined Authority.
SMART objectives	Objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable (or Attainable), Relevant, and Time-bound
SOC	The Strategic Outline Case is a key document in the Combined Authority's assurance process. Scheme promoters use it to demonstrate that sufficient, robust, and evidenced scoping has been carried in order to determine a preferred way forward for delivering the scheme objectives.