



Cabinet Office



HM Treasury

Strengthening evaluation in government

Lucie Moore

Head of the Evaluation Task Force

Question

What percentage of government's largest programmes do you believe should be rigorously evaluated to ensure value for taxpayer money?



We need more evaluation



“...the use of evaluation continues to be variable and inconsistent...[so] **government cannot have confidence its spending in many policy areas is making a difference**”

National Audit Office, Evaluation Government Spending (2021)

The Evaluation Task Force



Evaluation
Task Force



Cabinet Office



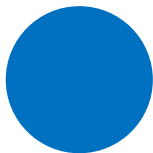
HM Treasury

The Evaluation Task Force is working to improve the quality, quantity, and use of evaluation evidence in government

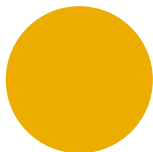


What is the central mission of the Evaluation Task Force?

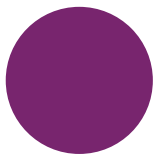
The ETF intends to improve people's lives by ensuring robust evidence on the effectiveness of policies and programmes sits at the heart of spending and operational decisions.



improve the way government programmes are evaluated in order to **inform decisions on whether they should be stopped, continued, expanded or modified**



support departments to **conduct programme evaluations that are both robust and proportionate**



empower departmental analysts to play a central role in the design of programmes as well as spending and operational decisions affected by evaluation results



The ETF works directly with 16 Ministerial departments



Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs



Department for Science, Innovation & Technology



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office



Department for Culture, Media & Sport



Department of Health & Social Care



Department for Education



Department for Work & Pensions



Department for Business & Trade



Department for Transport



Home Office



Cabinet Office



HM Treasury



Ministry of Defence



Ministry of Justice

...who work with ~295 public bodies

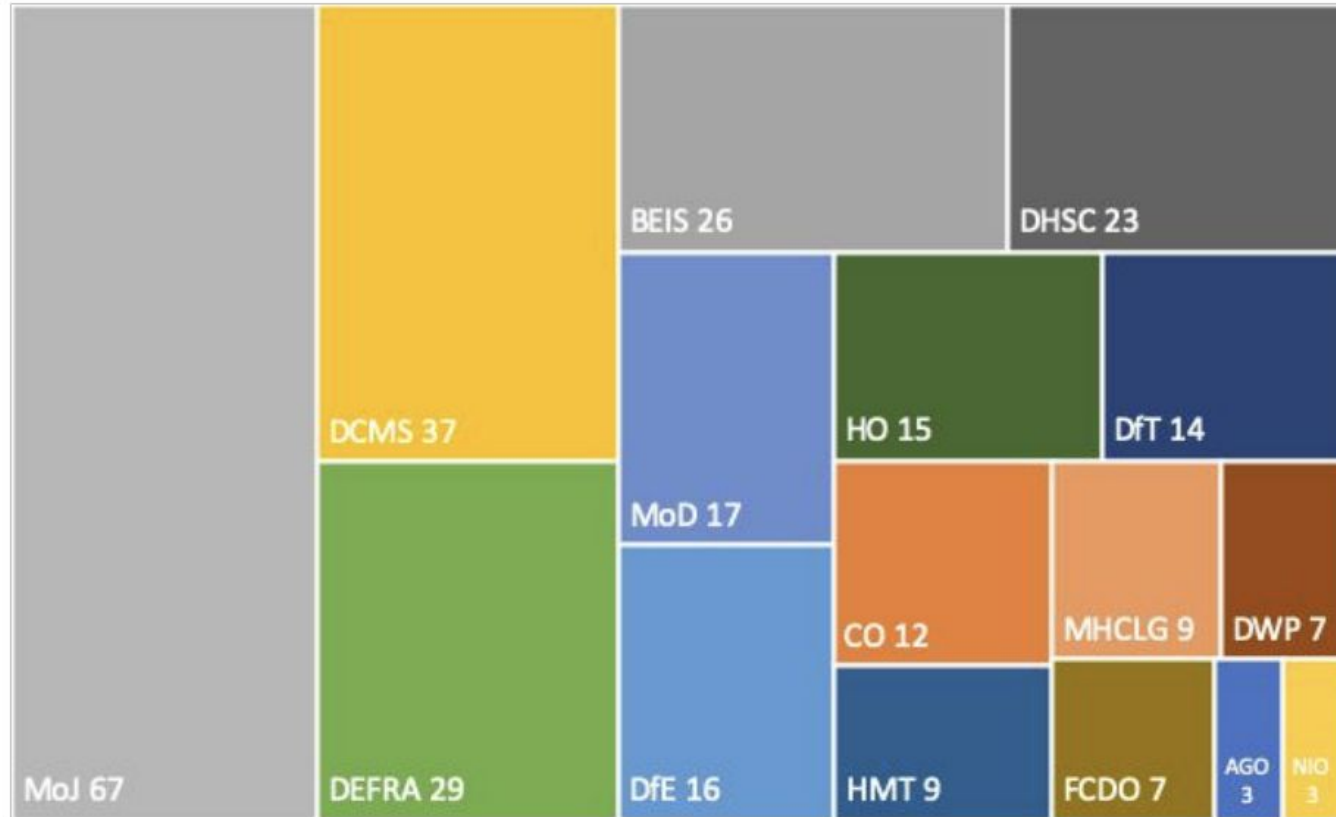


Figure 3: ALB Landscape by FTE numbers – 31st March 2020

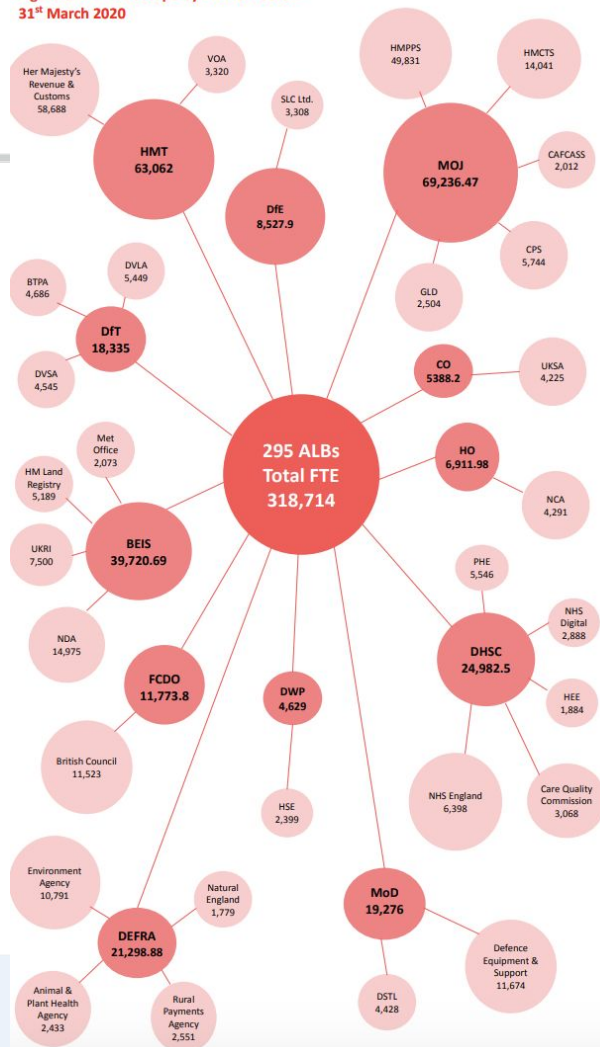
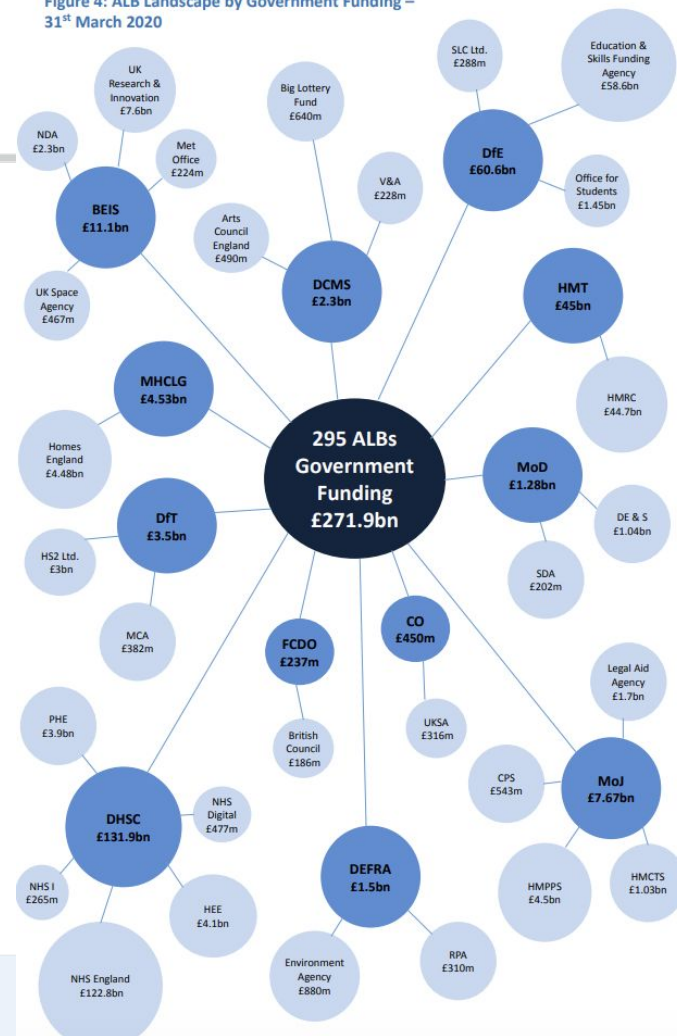
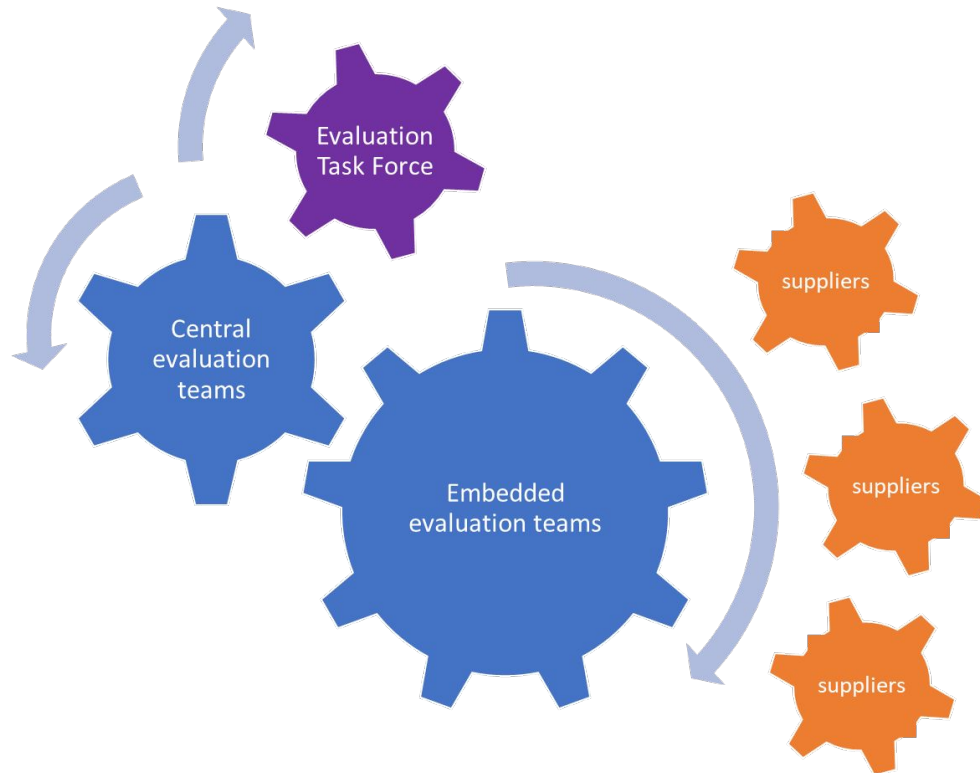


Figure 4: ALB Landscape by Government Funding – 31st March 2020



We are one part of the wider evaluation system in government



Evaluation in UK government

CGEG

The **Cross Government Evaluation Group (CGEG)** is a community of practice of cross-disciplinary evaluation specialists

Directors of Analysis

Departmental Director of Analysis (DDAn) - oversee the evaluation delivery, prioritisation, staffing and often budgets of evaluation across their department.

Social Research Profess

Government Social Research ([GSR](#)) is the analytical profession that social and behavioural research and advice

Analysis Function

The **[Analysis Function \(AF\)](#)** supports the development of professional standards for analysts across HM Government

The ETF's mission is to put evidence at the heart of decision making



Incentives



Capabilities



Resources



Incentives to do evaluation

*“Business cases are **unlikely to receive approval** without a **robust and proportionate** evaluation plan, properly aligned with the delivery context of the specific project or programme.”*

Treasury Approvals Process
For projects and programmes

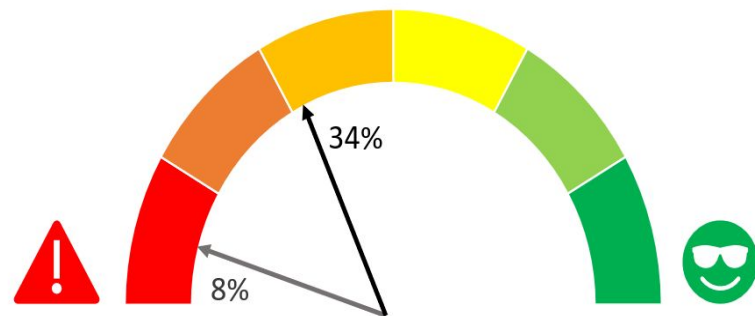
Spending review 2025



Government
Finance
Function



Incentives to do evaluation



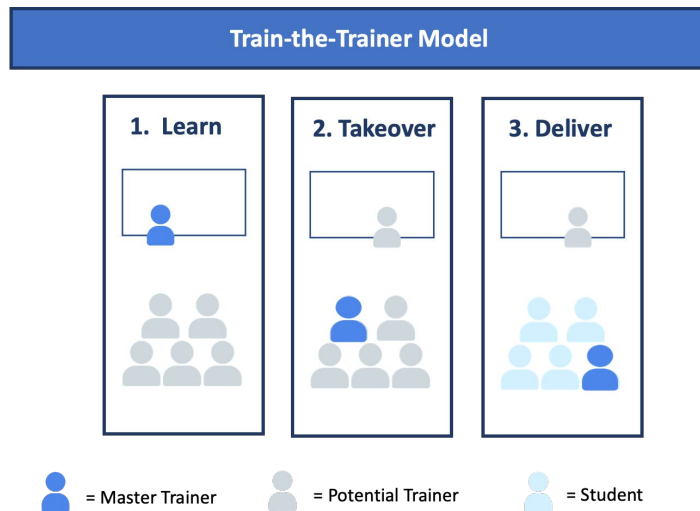
34% of government major projects have **good quality evaluation** plans
...an increase from 8% in 2019



Capability to do evaluation



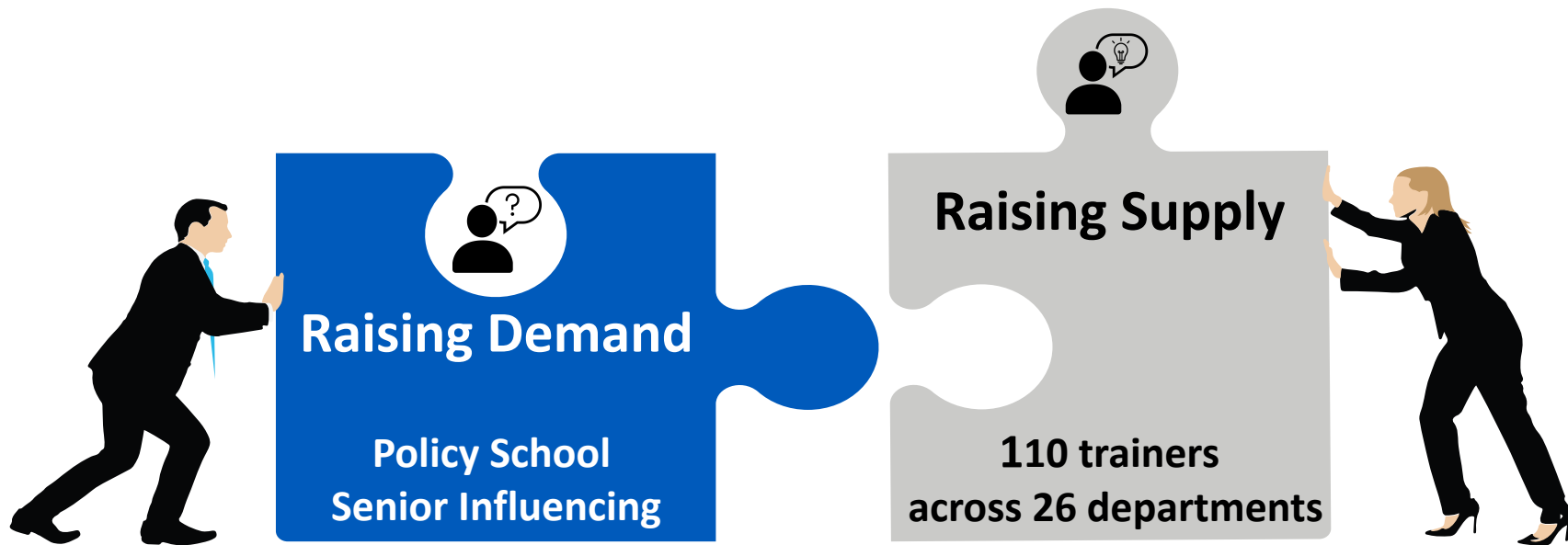
Evaluation academy



www.gov.uk/government/publications/etf-evaluation-academy-20-resources



Capability to do evaluation




Resources to do evaluation

Advice and support to departments - The ETF has supported 549 different programmes across government with evaluation advice, spanning £554bn of spend





Resources to do evaluation

**GOV.UK**

Evaluation Registry

BETA This is a new service - your [feedback](#) will help us to improve it.

[< Back](#)

Evaluation Registry

The Evaluation Registry is a service owned by the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury [Evaluation Task Force](#) (opens in new tab).

This is where planned, ongoing and complete government evaluations from all departments and the Scottish Government are registered.

For further information on guidance on government use of the registry go to [Guidance on using the Evaluation Registry](#) (opens in new tab) and [frequently asked questions](#) (opens in new tab).

Search keywords

Apply filters
Clear all filters

☒ Show all sections

Organisations
☒ Show

Evaluation types
☒ Show

Evaluation stages
☒ Show

Evaluation methods

Showing 1-25 of 1652 results

[Updated review of the Evidence of Legacy of Major Sporting Events: July 2015](#)
Organisation(s) The Scottish Government
Evaluation type(s) Other
Evaluation stage Complete

[Community agency, control and wellbeing](#)
Organisation(s) Cabinet Office
Evaluation type(s) Impact evaluation
Evaluation stage Complete

[A process study of the Horizon Programme](#)
Organisation(s) Ministry of Justice (MOJ)
Evaluation type(s) Process evaluation
Evaluation stage Complete

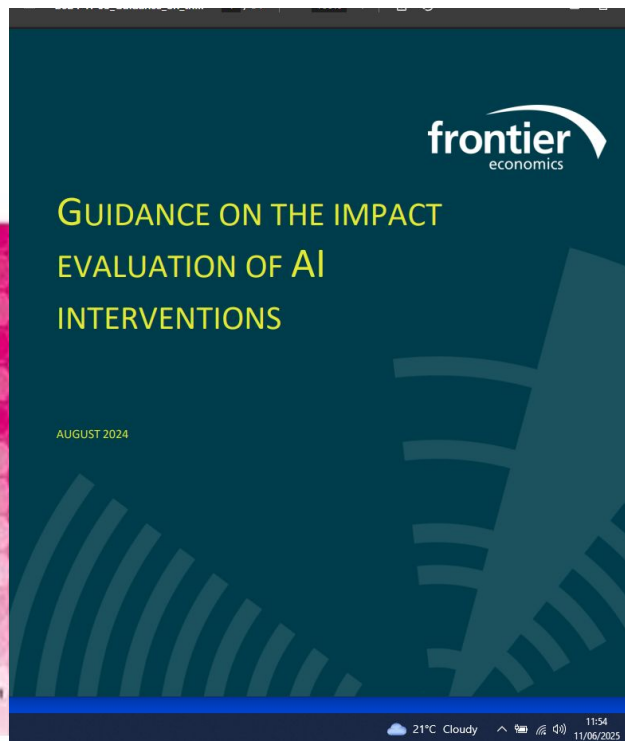
Search by keyword,
organisation, evaluation type,
method and stage



Resources to do evaluation

Magenta Book

Central Government guidance on evaluation



Resources to do evaluation

Evaluation & Trial Advice Panel (ETAP)



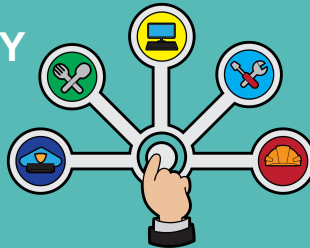
65 PANEL MEMBERS

23 FROM ACADEMIA

23 FROM RESEARCH INDUSTRY

13 FROM GOVERNMENT

6 FROM WHAT WORKS CENTRES



**Wide range of
methodological
expertise....**



**EXPERIMENTAL
QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL
THEORY-BASED
ECONOMIC**



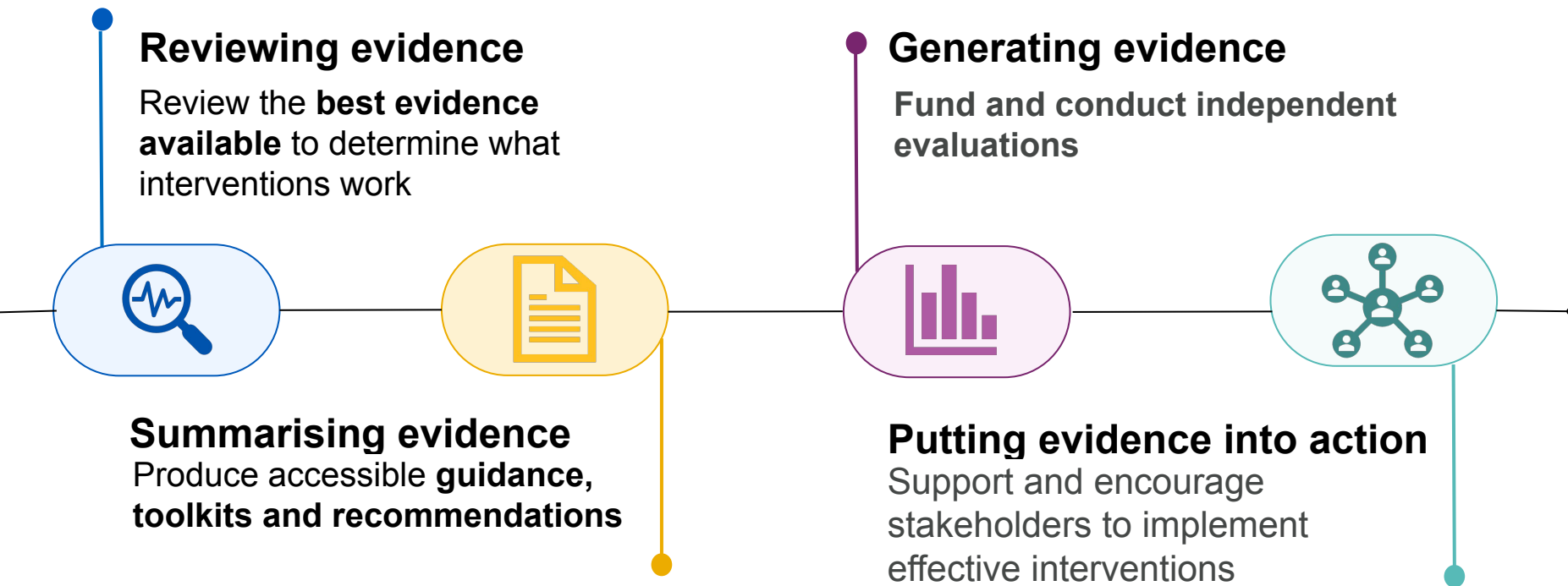
Resources: The What Works Network



TASO



Resources: The What Works Network





Resources: over £35 million invested in priority evaluations

Evaluation Accelerator Fund

The Evaluation Accelerator Fund (EAF) supports evaluation across government to transform our understanding of the impact of activity in priority policy areas.

Figure 1: There is a sustained increase in the probability of being a paid employee from two to seven years after first therapy

Changes in monthly employee pay and the probability of being a paid employee, compared with one year before first therapy, 25- to 60-year-olds who completed NHS Talking Therapies treatment between 1 April 2014 and 31 December 2022, England



New Labour Markets Evaluation and Pilots Fund



We need your help!



Come and work in the ETF for a year!

Funding opportunity

UKRI policy fellowships 2025

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	UK Research and Innovation, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
Funding type:	Fellowship
Award range:	£180,000 - £280,000
Publication date:	14 April 2025
Opening date:	22 April 2025 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	15 July 2025 4:00pm UK time



Evaluation Task Force resources

Use the evaluation registry

evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/

Search Evaluation Registry

enter a keyword or search term here

Search all evaluations

Check out our academy modules

www.gov.uk/government/publications/etf-evaluation-academy-20-resources

Module 1: Introduction to Evaluation

Module 2: Developing a Theory of Change

Module 3: Scoping an Evaluation

Module 4: Process Evaluation

Module 5: Impact Evaluation - Experimental Designs

Module 6: Impact Evaluation - Quasi-Experimental Designs

Module 7: Impact Evaluation - Theory-Based Designs

Module 8: Value for Money Evaluation

Module 9: Planning and Managing an Evaluation

Module 10: Communicating Evidence and Decision Making

And lots more on our website

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/evaluation-task-force





Cabinet Office



HM Treasury

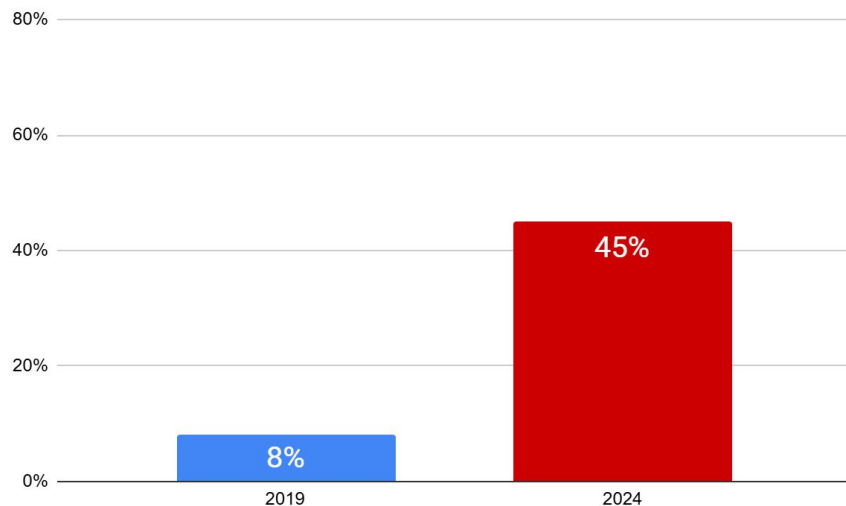
For more info or to get in touch

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/evaluation-task-force

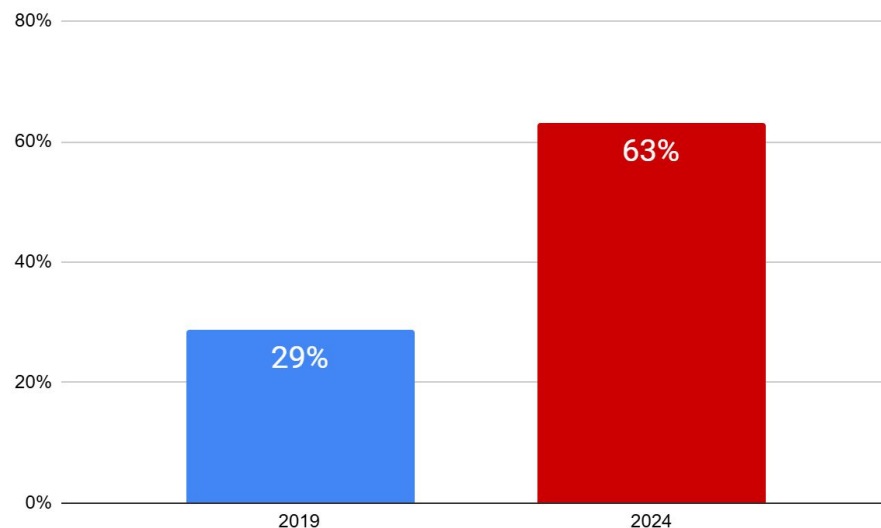
lucie.moore@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Evaluation coverage has improved a lot since 2019

% of **spend** with **high quality** evaluations



% of **projects** with **any** evaluation



Doing the GMPP review in part drove the results

Review	% of <i>projects</i> with robust* evaluation plans	% of <i>spend</i> with robust* evaluation plans	Size of GMPP
2019 - PM's Implementation Unit	8%	8% (£35bn out of £432bn)	108 projects £432bn
2023 - phase 1 of ETF review	22%	41% (£332bn out of £805bn)	244 projects £805bn
2024 - phase 2a of ETF review	30%	44% (£364bn out of £834bn)	227 projects £834bn
2025 - FINAL phase 2b of ETF review	34%	45% (£378bn out of £834bn)	227 projects £834bn

Quality assessment framework developed with Ipsos

Review dimensions

1. **Aims** - clarity of evaluation rationale, research questions, audience.
2. **Methods** - quality of overall evaluation and individual components (impact, process and VfM)
3. **Management** - suitability of management plans

Scoring

0 = substantial missing information to judge this criteria

1 = limited info to assess quality, and/or significant improvement required

2 = substantial and satisfactory info included. Some improvement possible

N/A = criterion doesn't apply.

Components of a 'typical' high quality evaluation for a major project

1. **Clear aims:** well articulated evaluations questions and objectives
2. **Mixed methods:**
 - a. Strong emphasis on theory of change - reflecting complexity
 - b. Components of quantitative experimental/QED designs e.g. diff-in-diff, A/B testing for digital programmes
3. **Iterative:**
 - a. Early evaluation planning, baseline and data collection
 - b. Phases of process/impact/VfM evaluation - learning
4. **Embedded into the wider programme:**
 - a. Alignment with monitoring and benefits realisation
 - b. Clear governance and senior buy-in for use of evaluation findings
 - c. Suitably resourced

Example 1: mixed methods with learning focus

Farming and Countryside Programme (Defra)

Large and complex programme with many components being tested in parallel

Evaluation:

- Test and learn approach focused on iterative learning, and feedback into the programme design
- Overall theory-based impact evaluation design, but large suite of evaluation activity testing individual components of the scheme, with some individual strands including QED

ETF assessment: overall a comprehensive evaluation plan.

Example 2: high-quality TBE

Freeports (MHCLG)

Special areas with different tax and customs rules, to stimulate local economic activity and boost investment.

Evaluation: overall theory-based impact evaluation design, with quasi-experimental components, plus comprehensive PE and VfM evaluation.

ETF assessment: overarching TBE design considered suitable based on scoping work, given that Freeports model is a complex programme of interventions.

Examples where full scale evaluation not considered proportionate

Print Reprourement project (MoJ)

Renews the department's printer contracts across MoJ estate.

ETF assessment is no formal evaluation is required.

Washington Embassy Refurbishment (FCDO)

Various repairs and works to UK Washington embassy - e.g. repairing drainage, temperature control.

ETF assessment is that existing monitoring and benefits management plans are proportionate, without full scale IE.



Residence Wall



Residence Bedroom



Water Leak

Barriers to evaluation identified by the NAO - 2021

- Lack of political interest in, or support for, evaluation
 - mismatch between political timetables and the timelines of evaluation producers;
 - electoral cycle;
 - political decisions being driven by values rather than outcomes;
 - project owners disinclined to evaluate due to negative exposure if harmful or neutral impact is detected.
- Project owners seeing evaluations as an imposed process or hurdle rather than as necessary Research & Development (R&D) to ensure good value for money and optimal design of future interventions.
- Weak integration of people and processes to join policy and analysis effectively. Policy not designed with testing and evaluation in mind and analysts involved too late in the policy-making process. Evaluation plans not built into standard project approval processes at a sufficiently early stage.
- Lack of resources to manage evaluation effectively.
- Shortage of evaluation specialists