

## 6 Stage Project Process



# Planning your Project Evaluation

## 1. Background

At Advantage West Midlands we use public money to develop strategies and policies and give grants to programmes and projects all aimed at promoting the economic development and regeneration of the region. It is our job to ensure that this money is wisely spent and that the activities we support make a real difference. Part of this work is building an evidence base of the projects that we fund so that we know which types of projects are successful in delivering their outputs and outcomes and making permanent improvements to the region.

Evaluation is the tool that we use to measure the effectiveness of our interventions and capture lessons learnt to improve future work.

Government reviews of the Regional Development Agencies' evaluation activities and the recent Sub National Review have highlighted the need for us to improve our evaluation activities in general and to focus more on the outcomes and impacts of our interventions.

We are currently developing an overarching Evaluation Strategy that will cover all aspects of our work. Under this Evaluation Strategy in general we will plan, deliver and resource the evaluation of strategies, policies and programmes from within the Agency.

Evaluation at a project level will be integrated with and support our own wider evaluation activity but be planned and resourced by the project in consultation with our Evaluation team.

## 2. Objectives and Scope

The purpose of this document is to set out our requirements for Project Level Evaluation Plan at the Full Project Application Stage. It does not cover the planning of the evaluation of strategies, policies and programmes managed by the Agency and it is not intended to provide an authoritative treatise on evaluation. Further guidance can be found in the references in Section 5.

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### **3. Making evaluation more meaningful**

Whilst evaluation has always been embedded in the sixth stage of our project life cycle – Evaluation and Closure it is important that we plan for evaluation when we appraise and approve our projects.

Planning Project Evaluation as part of development will help us test the logic of our project development and inform appraisal as well as helping to ensure that any data we need for evaluation is collected economically as part of the project and is available when we need it.

As a consequence it is now a requirement that all Full Stage Applications for Grant Funding are accompanied by a Project Evaluation Plan.

The Project Evaluation Plan will set out:

- how and when you plan to evaluate the project;
- who will carry out the evaluation i.e. your own staff or external consultants;
- how you will report back and to whom; and
- estimates of evaluation cost (included within the Total Project Costs);

We will expect you to consult with us and secure our approval for the Terms of Reference of any Evaluation activity funded by the project. We will also expect you to collect any data needed to support the evaluation activity defined in your evaluation plan during the delivery of the project wherever possible and to deliver the Evaluation Report to us at the Agency.

### **4. Using the AWM Templates**

We have provided templates for you to use – an Evaluation Plan Template and a Project Evaluation Terms of Reference.

#### **4.1 AWM Evaluation Plan Template**

Within the template there are a number of sections, all of which you need to complete.

##### **1. Summary**

Insert the Project Name and the Project Sound-Bite here.

##### **2. Project evaluation strategy**

Select one of the two evaluation strategies identified and a realistic date for the final evaluation.

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Generally larger and longer running projects will be the ones that benefit from an interim evaluation so that lessons learnt in the early phases of delivery can be captured early and benefit the project and any similar projects under development.

### 3. Project definition

This refers out to the Definition section of the Project Management Plan for your project that you are submitting as part of the Full Application.

This is to save you duplicating information that you are providing in other parts of this application. You should however bear in mind that any subsequent changes you make to the project will need to be considered for their impact on the agreed evaluation plan and changes made where required.

If you are planning out an evaluation on a project approved prior to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 you will not have a project management plan in this format to refer out to and should include this information here.

### 4. Evaluation scope

You should set out the scope of the evaluation here. You must consider the value of the project and the opportunities for benefiting from the lessons learnt from the evaluation. It is worth considering wider evaluations for larger projects or projects that are likely to be repeated across the region than on small local projects.

The scope of the evaluation could include some or all of the following:

- **Initial conditions/issues** – what was the situation before the project
- **Policy impacts:** How has the project fitted in with, and contributed to, broader corporate policy and strategy? (Tier 2 outcomes, Regional Sustainability framework, Regional Economic Strategy etc)
- **Achievements:** What has been the progress against the initial objectives/planned outcomes/baselines? Has the project really made a difference? How? (examples)
- **Unanticipated outcomes:** Have there been any unanticipated impacts, positive or negative? What changed?
- **Constraints:** What problems did the project encounter? How were these managed?
- **Beneficiary perception:** (If relevant): What are the perceptions of the project from the community/the project's beneficiaries? What do they recommend could be done differently next time?

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- **Partnership:** (If relevant): How have partnership processes worked? Have shared understanding and trust increased? What opportunities and difficulties for partnership working were encountered? What has been the community involvement in the project?
  - **Sustainability:** Are the outcomes of the projects sustainable? Will improvements continue?
  - **Value for Money:** There needs to be a comparative look at the target area/group against the wider area/group in relation to an assessment of the overall value for money, including additionality factors and leverage?
  - **Lessons learned/recommendations:** What are the key lessons learned? Can recommendations be made for future projects/strategy/policy?
  - **Best practice:** What aspects of project design and delivery contributed most/least to the project's success? Are there any parts of the project that might serve as a model for best practice?

## 5. Evaluation methodology

You should select the methodologies that you think will be best suited to measuring the success of the project and set these out in this section of the plan.

It is likely to be appropriate to use different evaluation methodologies for any interim evaluation to those used in the Final Evaluation. If you are proposing an interim evaluation you should identify which techniques apply to which evaluation. Example methodologies are included below:

### Quantitative:

- Statistical Analysis;
- Data Comparison.

### Qualitative:

- Interviews; (structured, semi-structured, unstructured)
- Surveys;
- Focus Groups;
- Observation.

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## **6. Outputs and deliverables**

The deliverables for the evaluation activity will be a report. You should set out here the audience for this report and determine to whom it should be circulated.

You may also consider whether it would be appropriate to present the findings to stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The format for the report and the review and approval mechanisms should be set out and should contain as a minimum:

- An executive Summary;
- the areas outlined above;
- Key learning points; and
- associated recommendations clearly stated.

(For interim evaluations – In particular, should the project be continued and, if so, as before or in an amended form?)

## **7. Evaluation inputs**

The following base information will be made available to the evaluation team –

- The Current West Midlands Economic Strategy document;
- Advantage West Midlands Corporate Plan;
- Any appropriate Advantage West Midlands Zone Corridor or Cluster Delivery Plan;
- Any Agency Policies and Standards cited in the Application
- Original project Application documentation;
- Current cumulative information on project spend and outputs achieved;
- Project closure report as completed by project sponsor (ex-post evaluations only);
- Other quantitative and qualitative data captured during project delivery.

## **8. Delivery and management arrangements**

The plan should state whether the evaluation will be carried out by the delivery organisation or sub contracted to an external body.

If the Evaluation is to be carried out internally the plan should also provide details of the staff that will be involved in the actual work, including previous experience. [If there are any

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particular groups that need to be included this should be detailed – for example of you want to undertake any “capacity building” by using some of the community to interview within their own groups].

If the Plan is for external evaluation you should say so here and set out how the assignment will be procured to assure best value and compliance with procurement rules.

Independent Evaluation is generally preferable to an “in house” exercise as it brings an independent view and broader experience to bear. However external evaluation is likely to be more expensive than an “in house” exercise and should be generally reserved for larger projects or for pilot projects that will set the precedent for region-wide or national implementation. For guidance we would expect that you commission external evaluations for all projects where you are seeking a grant from us of more than £500,000 you should look for external evaluation and include the external spend within the total project costs.

## **4.2 Project Evaluation Terms of Reference Template**

The AWM Project Evaluation Terms of Reference is a document that you can customise to provide Terms of Reference for your own evaluation staff or as a brief for commissioning external consultants.

## **5. Evaluation references**

Available from [www.offpat.info](http://www.offpat.info)

- [Offpat Project Advice Note 4/2005 – Evaluation](#)
- [Evaluating the Impact of England’s Regional Development Agencies – Developing a Methodology and Evaluation Framework](#)