

# The Public Value Framework: with supplementary guidance

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# Foreword

The publication of Sir Michael Barber's report 'Delivering better outcomes for citizens: practical steps for unlocking public value' in November 2017 sent a clear signal on the importance of public value and of government having a greater focus on outcomes delivered for taxpayers' money.

The report recommended trialling the internationally pioneering Public Value Framework as a tool for maximising the value delivered from funding. The report's wider recommendations also included practical steps to improve performance in two key areas: the availability and use of performance data and the prevalence of continuous and disruptive innovation.

In the months that have passed since the publication of Sir Michael's report, the Treasury has continued to push forwards with these recommendations. We have completed five pilot reviews of the Public Value Framework that have helped us to understand how the framework operates in practice and across a range of different areas of spend. They have demonstrated the value of the framework as a powerful diagnostic tool which can be used to identify ways to strengthen the process of turning inputs into outcomes. The pilots have also demonstrated the importance of data and innovation, as set out in the November 2017 report. We have adapted the framework to signal the ongoing importance of improvements in these areas to support public value.

The publication of this document marks the beginning of the next phase in the public value agenda. As Sir Michael identified in his report, for the Public Value Framework to be effective it needs to be embedded in daily routines and processes across the public sector. It needs to become part of the culture, such that the expectation becomes that departments will work together and with the Treasury to continuously improve their performance against the framework, and with it the value they deliver for taxpayers. The next phase of this work is designed to achieve just that.

Steps have already been taken to begin embedding the framework across existing planning and performance processes. Starting from 19/20, departments will be reflecting their performance against the Public Value Framework in their Single Departmental Plans, setting out the improvements they have already made and what more they plan to do going forward.

Public value is also set to be a central feature of the forthcoming Spending Review. The 2019 Spending Review will have a renewed focus on the outcomes achieved for the money invested in public services, with maximising public value being a key element of that.

Sharing this revised version of the framework and guidance on what was learnt during the piloting phase will allow individuals across the public sector to access and apply the framework in their own organisations, supporting the shift in culture that Sir Michael's original report set out to achieve.

The framework and this new approach offer an important opportunity to think differently about performance and develop a greater understanding of the process of turning inputs into outcomes across public services. We will continue to consult and work with spending teams, the Cabinet Office and departments to develop the detail of this approach in the coming months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Truss', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
13 March 2019

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2017, the government published a report led by Sir Michael Barber in to improving the public value delivered by the public sector. The report made a series of recommendations, the central one of which was to implement a new Public Value Framework as a practical tool for maximising the value delivered from public spending and improving outcomes for citizens.
- 1.2 The government responded to Sir Michael's review at Autumn Budget 2017, welcoming its recommendations and announcing that it intended to trial the use of the Public Value Framework through a series of pilots during 2018.
- 1.3 The Treasury has been working closely with departments to deliver this programme of pilots over the past year. These have covered a range of different spending areas and have been invaluable in both helping to test and develop the framework itself, and beginning to understand the most effective ways of using it to uncover insights that can improve performance.
- 1.4 This publication is the product of that work. It is split in to three parts. The first part provides a recap of the Public Value Framework and sets out the latest version. This version of the framework supersedes the previous version that was published as an annex to Sir Michael's original report. Part two provides further context and advice for anybody interested in using the Public Value Framework in their organisation, including practical guidance on what to consider when designing an effective process for applying the framework. The final chapter then contains detailed explanations and guidance on each of the questions within the new framework. The contents of this document have been designed to be accessible to a variety of users, including those with no prior knowledge of the framework.
- 1.5 The content of this publication has been developed with support and input from a wide range of parties. The Treasury is immensely grateful to both those who have been involved in the pilots and those who have given their time outside of the piloting process to help with the development of this work. Without this input we would not have made nearly as much progress on either developing the framework or understanding how to use it.
- 1.6 Nonetheless this document, and the wider public value agenda, remains a work in progress. The process of developing the framework will continue, and this publication is likely to be updated on a periodic basis to incorporate the latest thinking as the work is pursued. Any and all engagement on how it could be improved is always welcome.



# Chapter 2

## The revised public value framework

### Background of the framework

- 2.1 The challenges of assessing public sector productivity are well known. Whereas in the private sector, the output of services can be valued using their prices, the free-at-the-point-of-use or subsidised nature of public services prevents an equivalent method for valuing output.
- 2.2 Traditional approaches to assessing public sector productivity have focused on measuring the quantity of inputs used and services provided to the public. Substantial progress has been made over the past decades in developing and refining these methodologies – the ONS have published a time series of total UK public service productivity dating back to 1997 – however limitations remain. For some public services, outputs remain stubbornly difficult to measure. Defence is such an example, with outputs that are hard to define and measure, such as ‘peace and stability.’ The challenge, therefore, becomes how to improve public sector productivity performance when it is difficult to define quite what this is.
- 2.3 The Public Value Framework offers one way of achieving this. Instead of seeking to quantify inputs and outputs and observe the relationship between them, the framework instead seeks to define everything that a public body should be doing in between to maximise the likelihood of delivering optimal value from the funding it receives. It sets out the activities that are required to turn public money in to policy outcomes, creating a set of criteria that can then be used to assess the extent to which those activities are taking place and, by extension, how likely it is that value is being maximised.

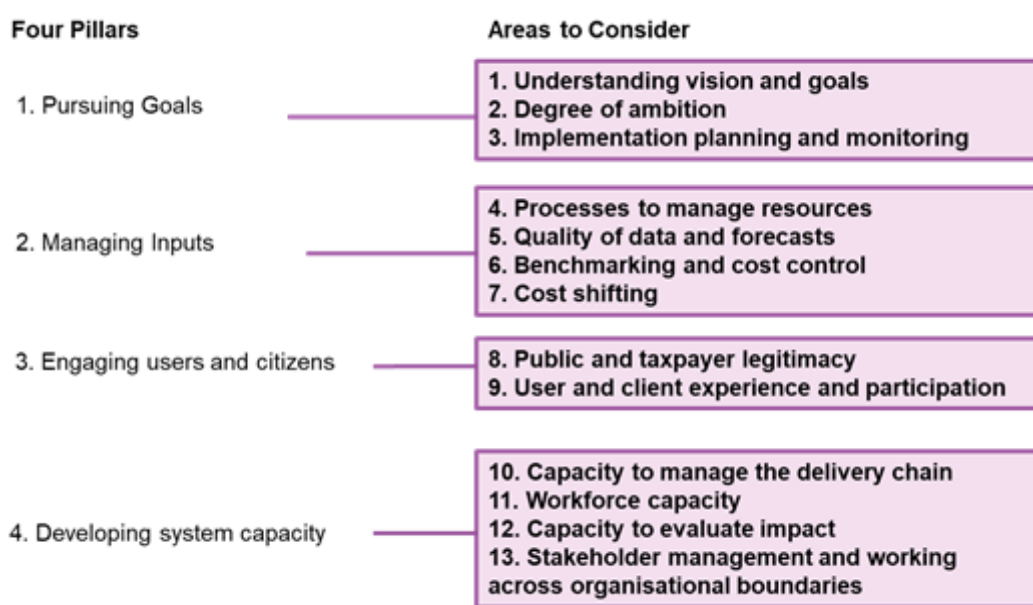
### Overview of the framework

- 2.4 The main criteria that contribute to public value are grouped into four sections or ‘pillars’ that structure the framework:
  - **pillar one: pursuing goals** focuses on what overarching goals the public body is aiming to achieve and how it is monitoring the delivery of these
  - **pillar two: managing inputs** tests the public body’s basic financial management
  - **pillar three: engaging citizens and users** highlights the need to convince taxpayers of the value being delivered by spending and importance of engaging service users

- **pillar four: developing system capacity** emphasises the long-term sustainability of the system and the importance of stewardship

2.5 Each pillar is then broken down in to a set of further areas to consider (13 in total across the framework). Within each of these areas to consider there are a series of headline questions (35 in total) designed to explore a specific element of departmental performance. Underneath each question there are then a series of prompts: these are designed to be a guide for the type of material that a good response to the question might cover. The list of prompts is by no means exhaustive and in certain circumstances may not be appropriate, but is designed to help assess what material the user might need to look for. The diagram below illustrates the structure of the framework.

### The structure of the public value framework



2.6 The core output of an assessment using the framework is an adapted Red Amber Green (RAG) rating that represents the likelihood that public value is being maximised from a particular area of spending (further advice on how to develop RAG judgements from an assessment is set out later in this guidance on page 18). Assessments should also produce a set of evidence-based judgements and findings that can be used to inform a set of recommendations on how further value could be derived.

### How the framework can be used

2.7 These core outputs are only part of the benefits of using the framework. Often the process of undertaking assessments can be as valuable as the output itself:

- **the framework is a powerful diagnostic tool:** the findings from an assessment can establish a common understanding of a policy or programme’s performance, pulling together perspectives from across the organisation to form a collective view
- **it allows an organisation to take stock of a policy or programme:** the framework provides an opportunity to review an area that may not have

been scrutinised or challenged for a number of years and ensure that priorities are aligned and reflected in every stage of delivery

- **it can be used to inform policy design:** departments have reported that the framework is particularly useful when they are considering a new strategic direction for a policy or programme. The framework can be a useful way to think about future policy design, by taking public bodies back to first principles and considering prioritisation
- **the framework gives a whole system view:** the framework allows a public body to view an issue from multiple angles, including those from inside and outside the organisation. Public bodies can use it to consider how different parts of the delivery chain fit together; testing the alignment of the policy or programme's overall objectives down to the experience of front-line users
- **it questions why you're doing things the way you're doing things:** the framework is dynamic, inviting multiple perspectives on a particular area or problem to test underlying assumptions. It can be a useful focal point for generating momentum behind a change in conventional thinking. The framework also challenges organisations to think about a range of potentially new areas or processes (e.g. cost shifting or user and citizen engagement) they may not have considered in detail before
- **it builds a comprehensive evidence base:** to answer the questions in the framework, the public body will need to draw together information and data from a number of sources. This allows a public body to gather together a wealth of evidence all in one place that can be used to create a consensus across, and/or within, an organisation about issues and their potential solutions. This evidence can then be used as a base to inform future plans for a policy or programme

## Revisions to the framework

2.8 The box below summarises the main changes to the framework from the previous edition (published in Sir Michael's report in 2017).

### Box 2.A: Main changes to the framework

Whilst the main structure of the latest version of the framework remains broadly the same (having stood up to significant testing during the pilot reviews), we have introduced some changes to make its questions clearer, more focused and easier to use.

The main changes we have made are:

- reducing the number of main questions from 152 to 35
- distinguishing between headline questions (which require quality judgements) and prompt questions (which support such overall judgements but typically require more yes/no responses)
- re-structuring some areas of the framework and amending the language to make it a clearer and more intuitive tool

- 2.9 A summary of the main questions in the framework follows on page 9. Chapter 4 sets out each of the headline questions contained within the new framework in further detail. A copy of the full framework, with headline questions and prompts (that can be used in assessments) is provided as annex B.

## THE PUBLIC VALUE FRAMEWORK – SUMMARY

### PILLAR ONE: PURSUING GOALS (6 questions)

Understanding vision and goals	1. How well-defined is the overall vision for this area of spending?
	2. What measurable and SMART objectives have been set to achieve the goals and vision?
	3. What evidence does the public body use to link its chosen objectives to the vision/goals in this area of spend?
Degree of ambition	4. What evidence does the public body use to satisfy itself that its vision and objectives are as realistically ambitious as they possibly can be for this area?
Implementing planning and monitoring progress	5. How does the public body monitor delivery of its goals and objectives?
	6. What data is used to track progress against delivering the vision, objectives and indicators?

### PILLAR TWO: MANAGING INPUTS (9 questions)

Managing financial resources	7. How does the public body plan to manage its financial resources?
	8. What processes exist for the public body to review its use of resources?
	9. What management information is regularly provided to key decision-makers to help inform decisions?
Quality of data and forecasts	10. How does the public body track how much has been spent (and on what) at each stage of the delivery chain, from central government to the front line?
	11. What forecasts does the public body produce to understand and manage the impact of in-year spending on future years?
	12. What evidence does the public body use to decide what it needs to purchase to meet its performance and financial objectives?
Benchmarking & cost control	13. How does the public body use cost benchmarking to improve efficiency and performance?
Cost shifting	14. How aware is the public body of cost shifting risks?
	15. What strategy and contingency plans are in place to effectively manage risks?

### PILLAR THREE: USER AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT (6 questions)

Public and taxpayer legitimacy	16. What understanding does the public body have of what citizens think about the area of spend?
	17. What does the public body do with these insights?
User and client experience and participation	18. Does the public body understand the link between user and client experience and better outcomes?
	19. How does the public body plan to improve the experience of users and clients?
	20. What evidence does the public body hold of the link between user participation and improved outcomes?
	21. How does the public body plan to improve participation and change user/client behaviour?

### PILLAR FOUR: DEVELOPING SYSTEM CAPACITY (14 questions)

Capacity to manage the delivery chain	22. How strong is the delivery chain (from ministers to users)?
	23. How does the public body systematically identify, manage and strengthen areas of weakness within the delivery chain (such as financial weak points)?
	24. How responsive and resilient is the delivery chain to changing circumstances?
	25. How effective and consistent is commercial delivery throughout the organisation?
	26. How is new technology identified, developed or deployed to reduce costs and improve outcomes?
	27. What processes and data does the public body use to monitor and plan for changes in its workforce?
Workforce capacity	28. How does the public body intend to build the skilled workforce it will need to continue to deliver and adapt to future changes?
	29. How is the public body assessing and developing its leadership capability?
	30. How does the public body use performance data and trajectories to manage and improve performance?
Capacity to evaluate impact	31. How is space created to trial and identify 'disruptive innovations' throughout the system?
	32. What strategic evaluations of policies and programmes are undertaken or commissioned to understand whether actions have had the intended effects?
Stakeholder management	33. How well does the public body understand the position of its key interest or stakeholder groups?
	34. What is the public body doing to improve the support from key interest groups for the policy or programme?
	35. How effectively do teams work across functional boundaries within public bodies, and across inter-organisational boundaries, to achieve better outcomes?

# Chapter 3

## Using the framework

- 3.1 The criteria within the Public Value Framework can be helpful across a range of scenarios, from policy development to operational design of a delivery system. What follows in this section, however, is guidance on using the framework for a specific purpose: to make an assessment of an area of spend.
- 3.2 There are multiple ways of using the framework to facilitate an assessment. The public body could, for example, use the framework to make ongoing assessments of day to day processes or as a tool to support a standalone review. Rather than setting out a prescribed approach, this chapter outlines some guiding principles and insights on how to use the framework based on practical experience. These are likely to apply regardless of the approach a public body is taking. As HMT do more reviews in future, we will be able to offer further guidance on what works and key features that best support the process.

### Guiding principles

- 3.3 Sir Michael's review set out a series of principles to follow when using the framework. These have proved valuable in designing and testing different approaches during the pilot phase:
- **constructive:** to get most out of the framework, it's important that people approach discussions constructively and in the right spirit. Users are more likely to gain deeper and more effective insights if they actively engage in the process and are prepared to discuss issues openly
  - **credible:** results from the framework must be credible if they are going to lead to effective action. Users can take steps to improve the credibility of insights by ensuring outputs are evidence-based, using up to date and accurate data. Involving specialists – those with expertise on the specific area of spend under review or on a particular area of the framework (e.g. finance professionals on Pillar 2 or HR teams on Pillar 4) - will also help to strengthen findings. Further suggestions on who to involve in assessments are set out at paragraph 3.13
  - **impartial:** framework assessments offer the opportunity to gather multiple perspectives on a particular problem. Assessments should, however, try to give primacy to evidence and facts as they are presented. Assessments are far more likely to be effective at improving performance if they are underpinned by objective, impartial, evidence-based analysis

- **complementary:** using the framework can provide new insights into an area but is by no means the only tool for examining performance. Many public bodies already have performance monitoring routines. Assessments that can align with, and ideally add value to, these existing performance management processes or organisational reviews are more likely to both yield useful insights and gain the internal traction necessary to be effective. The assessment process should not be burdensome and as a rule should not require a vast amount of new information to be generated; they should assess the evidence as it currently exists
- **appropriately incentivised:** steps should be taken to secure buy-in that will ensure those involved engage with the review and implement its recommendations. Reviews that have strong backing from senior management or are being used as the basis for further programmes of work are likely to have greater impact. Assessments should also be designed to encourage the right behaviours (e.g. encouraging those involved to enter the process in an open and constructive spirit)
- **accessible:** assessments should produce outputs that can be understood by a wide audience (i.e. not just those who are experts in the particular area of spend). Doing so will ensure that the outputs from the process are meaningful and recommendations can be carried forward

## Practical questions to address

- 3.4 Whatever way a public body chooses to apply the framework, it is likely to need to answer a similar set of logistical questions to determine their approach. These questions, and further points to consider on each, are set out further in the following section. Users are likely to find these questions interdependent: agreeing a position on one is likely to influence (or limit) the choices available in others.

## When: the timing and frequency of assessment

- 3.5 One of the key strategic questions that users will need to consider initially is for how long and how frequently they want to conduct an assessment. A range of approaches that could be taken to using the framework are set out in the table on page 12. The following section, however, provides further detail on two formal approaches to using the framework: conducting a discrete review or embedding the framework as part of a process of continuous assessment.

### The discrete approach

- 3.6 Discrete, one-off assessments provide a snapshot of performance and identify areas that could be strengthened. Used in this way the framework is a powerful diagnostic tool that can provide a set of cross-organisational recommendations for senior leaders to pursue. Such assessments could be a quick and dynamic way to bring together perspectives from different parts of the organisation and reconsider why things are done the way they are (and whether there are better ways). The timing of a discrete review may vary. Typically HM Treasury have conducted pilots over a four to six week period. A rapid (one week) review was also trialled. Our experience of the benefits and challenges of this approach are summarised in the table on page 12.

Table 3.A: Indicative approaches to conducting an assessment using the framework

	Individual self-assessment	Light-touch assessment	Rapid review	Discrete review	Continuous assessment
<b>Key features</b>	One person conducting their own assessment of an area of spend against the framework	Quick overview, not using a formal methodology (e.g. perhaps just to identify where gaps exist against the framework – or focused on only one Pillar)	Short, intense one-off assessment of what is already known about a policy or programme, by using systematic review methods to search and critically appraise existing research	Longer, more detailed one-off assessment	Assessments against the framework are continuously updated as part of performance tracking in the organisation
<b>Time required</b>	An afternoon	A week	2-3 weeks (one week for preparation, the actual assessment and follow up)	4-6 weeks	Reviewing at regular intervals (depending on when the organisation thinks is useful)
<b>Potential resource</b>	1 person	At least 2-3 people (to get more than one perspective)	Depends on context and scope, but suggest 3-4 FTE (the 'People' section provides further advice on selecting people for teams)		Likely to need to be the permanent responsibility of one person
<b>Potential output</b>	Short narrative on strengths and gaps against the framework.	Summary of initial judgements.	Report or set of recommendations (likely to be more/less detailed dependent on the time and resource available for the assessment)		Detail of how performance against the framework is changing over time
<b>Pros</b>	Useful exercise for someone who's just started working on a policy or programme	Light commitment of resource. Focuses on the questions the organisation is most interested in. Could be used to launch more detailed work or evidence gathering	Can be done over short time period. Likely to lead to quick and dynamic discussions	Length of review allows for deeper look into an area of spend; longer opportunity to gather evidence, analysis and wider consultation	Embedded into existing performance processes. Allows you to track how performance against the framework is changing over time. Most likely to support long-term culture change
<b>Cons</b>	Only takes into account one perspective. Not supported by evidence – judgements likely to be highly subjective	Less likely to tell you anything new. Use of evidence likely to be weak. Does not provide true benefit of the framework: looking at performance in all areas that contribute to public value	Very resource intensive. Pre-work still required to allow assessment to take place in a week. Likely to be a full-time commitment for the team. Involvement of the right people (and contacts across the organisation) therefore vital. Limited time to build evidence base	Still likely to be resource intensive. Requires commitment within the organisation. Risk the process is a one off. Longer time period also leaves potential for process to drift. Steps needed to incentivise process to keep up momentum	Needs to be maintained. Likely to require preparation to launch. Need to avoid process becoming burdensome or potential to lose interest. Will need sustained support from senior leaders



- 3.7 There are some potential limitations to the one-off approach. Whilst, for example, the findings from such a review are likely to lead to a wide set of recommendations, across a number of areas, these may not be as deep as those obtained through regular reviews (particularly if the process is subject to tight time constraints). Users should also consider how they ensure the results of the process are then used and acted upon.

### Continuous assessments

- 3.8 Continuous assessments, on the other hand, involve a public body regularly monitoring or reporting on its performance against the framework on an ongoing basis. This approach increases the likelihood that the principles of the framework are embedded into the organisation's business as usual activity and could lead to more informed findings as knowledge and evidence of performance is built over time.
- 3.9 This approach therefore has the potential to lay the foundations for significant, long-term organisational change. It should be noted, however, that continuous assessments are likely to be more resource intensive: requiring support from a permanent structure or team to maintain the work on an ongoing basis. Given this, they are likely to require sustained support from senior leadership.

### What: the scope being assessed

- 3.10 All assessments, regardless of whether they are discrete or continuous, need a clearly articulated scope. The scope of an assessment can broadly be defined in one of three ways: by an input (e.g. a budget line prescribing a specific amount of spend, typically for a discrete programme), process (e.g. a service or delivery chain) or outcome (e.g. a measurable government priority e.g. reducing the tax gap, or increasing the health of the population).
- 3.11 However a scope is defined, discussions are likely to take place around what the scope means in practice and what activities should or should not be included in it. It is unlikely the scope will ever feel like a perfect fit, given the interdependencies of most public policies or services. Questions on scope should therefore be approached pragmatically, keeping in mind the overall objective of the assessment and any history or wider context that should be noted. Scopes can be defined in more than one way (e.g. by looking at both an input and process) if this sets the assessment within wider or more effective parameters.
- 3.12 It is vital that an initial scope is agreed up front by all parties involved. This can, however, be reviewed at a later stage, should project teams find the initial definition creates challenges. If in doubt, users may find it helpful to start an assessment with a broad scope then define inwards, rather than limit the scope too greatly initially and need to expand. This may lead to a larger assessment than initially envisaged. If this is the case, users should consider the impact this may have on the capacity of the project (e.g. more people or time that this may require).

## Who: the people involved in the assessment

- 3.13 The people involved in an assessment are likely to be the single most influential determinants of success. The framework at its simplest is merely a list of questions: the right people, with the necessary skills, knowledge and mindset, is what makes the process valuable.
- 3.14 Quite what constitutes the right number of people will depend on the objectives of the exercise. There are benefits and drawbacks to both larger and smaller teams: larger teams can draw on greater capacity and a wider pool of skills and experience, though they can be difficult to coordinate. Smaller teams will be more streamlined and nimble but can lack the requisite expertise to effectively examine all areas of performance.

## Skills

- 3.15 There is no ideal skills mix for assessment groups: this will vary depending on the context. For example, an assessment exploring a cross-cutting outcome may benefit from a team that can provide an inter-organisational, strategic view. By contrast, smaller reviews focused on assessing a single policy or programme might be more effectively resourced by a team capable of absorbing large quantities of technical information.
- 3.16 Nonetheless, any assessment is likely to benefit from involving people with the following skillset:
- **methodical:** all assessments will need to involve a process of gathering evidence to answer questions in the framework. Having people who can approach that task methodically, with a meticulous attention to detail, will lead to more effective outputs
  - **analytical and communication skills:** addressing the questions in the framework requires gathering and analysing extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence. Synthesising and succinctly communicating the findings from this evidence requires individuals with strong analytical and communication skills. Without this, outputs risk becoming lost in narrative detail rather than focusing on key insights
  - **innovation:** one of the biggest challenges with using the framework is in looking beyond the evidence that exists and thinking creatively to seek out alternative viewpoints or different delivery options. The most radical findings are likely to come where assessment teams are willing to challenge existing assumptions and question the way things are done
  - **collaboration:** assessments benefit from people who are naturally collaborative, keen to involve a range of parties and have a good understanding of the organisation to know which teams or stakeholders to involve. Assessments can also involve flexible working across a range of workstreams, so typically benefit from people who understand the links between different areas of the framework and are willing to work with other members of the team to develop a deeper understanding of performance

## Knowledge

- 3.17 We would recommend that public bodies try to establish a cross-disciplinary team to work on an assessment, to draw on expertise and increase buy-in to the process from different teams across the organisation. Given it is unlikely that one team will contain all the necessary skills and expertise to respond to the framework, however, the team are likely to also need to engage both across the organisation and externally to gather the evidence that will be required. Teams should consider the simplest and most effective way to do this. Including people with strong networks as part of the team is likely to be of particular benefit.
- 3.18 Knowledge also underpins the quality of the performance judgements. For example, it's likely that finance experts will be best equipped to consider questions on financial management in Pillar 2. Involving the right expertise will help reach the most useful and insightful findings. For assessments looking at specific services, the knowledge of those with operational experience is likely to be invaluable for developing insights.
- 3.19 Assessments can, however, also benefit from the input of those less familiar with the area under review. People who are new to the area are more likely to challenge inbuilt assumptions about the policy or programme. This can help assessment teams to take a step back and reappraise performance with a fresh perspective, potentially leading to more original insights.

## Mindset

- 3.20 Whilst skills and knowledge are prerequisites for successful assessments, mindset is the most important attribute to look for in assessment teams. Teams with the right mindset are likely to broadly share three characteristics: they will be committed to the aims of the review; open-minded and willing to challenge conventional thinking as part of the process; and have a desire to identify areas for improvement (given the real value of assessments is understanding how things can be improved to deliver even better public value).

## Where: the organisational context and enabling environment

- 3.21 The support of the public body's leadership and wider stakeholders is likely to be key to ensuring assessments are appropriately targeted, prioritised, and effectively resourced. They are also likely to prove vital, at the end of the process, to ensuring that findings and recommendations are ultimately acted upon.
- 3.22 Consideration should therefore be given to how senior officials and political leaders for the public body are sighted on and feed in to the process. This could involve making senior officials accountable owners or primary decision-makers. Doing so would ensure that there is a clear escalation point for potential disputes that may arise during the process, as well as promote and encourage assessment teams to follow the key principles of effective assessments.
- 3.23 Consideration should also be given to how the team engage with and encourage buy-in from wider stakeholders. They could potentially involve

groups who have an interest in the assessment process (such as regulators) or those that could influence and support findings and recommendations (such as delivery bodies). Poor engagement from these groups with the review process could lead to challenges implementing changes at a later date, particularly when these groups form a key part of the delivery chain.

- 3.24 Public bodies should also acknowledge previous audits or reviews that may have been carried out on the area under review. Doing so early on will avoid potential duplication and referring to recommendations and findings from other reviews may help to further strengthen the outputs from the process.

## How: the assessment methodology

- 3.25 Whilst the specifics of any assessment methodology are likely to be unique to the circumstances, one-off assessments (and continuous to begin with) are likely to go through a similar set of basic stages:

- 1 **initiation** – agreeing the scope, governance and team involved in the review
- 2 **pre-assessment work** - briefing the team, deciding where to focus and what evidence to collect
- 3 **analysis** – evidence gathering, forming judgements
- 4 **follow up** – presenting findings, developing solutions

- 3.26 Further considerations for each stage are set out below. Much of this follows project management and organisational design principles likely to already be familiar to many public bodies.

### Stage one: initiation

#### Agreeing scope

- 3.27 The first stage for any public body looking to use the framework is likely to be defining exactly what it is they want to assess. Further advice on developing an effective scope was set out earlier in this chapter.
- 3.28 Assessments typically work best where all parties recognise the value of exploring the area in scope. Initial discussions to agree a scope can take time and users should be mindful of the interaction with wider political considerations or organisational dynamics. Active stakeholder engagement is therefore likely to be critical at this point in the process.

#### Establishing governance

- 3.29 Effective governance, defining clear accountabilities for delivering the assessment, are key to delivering effective output and increasing the likelihood that recommendations arising from the assessment will be pursued and improvements to public value ultimately delivered.
- 3.30 We would advise agreeing the governance structure and its members before beginning the assessment itself. This provides the project with a stable initial structure but can be returned to and amended as the assessment progresses if necessary. The next few paragraphs set out the key roles that a governance structure is likely to contain.

### Senior sponsor

- 3.31 Assessments typically generate more traction within an organisation if they are either a political or senior official priority. The more influential the individual or body at the head of the governance structure, the more likely the assessment is to have access to the resources it requires to operate effectively (and more likely that findings will be followed through at the end of the process).
- 3.32 Where more than one organisation is involved in a review, joint governance may be required (where the output is presented simultaneously to more than one party). Managed well, this can often be an effective means of ensuring disagreements between the organisations are resolved at the appropriate level of seniority based on a shared understanding of the evidence.

### Responsible senior owners

- 3.33 Beneath the head of the governance structure, there needs to be a group or individual responsible for delivering the assessment, including its content and timing. They should be identified early to allow them to be involved in agreeing the assessment scope, developing the remainder of the governance structure and securing the necessary resources for the project to be successful. They should also have sufficient seniority within the organisation to be an effective leader and champion for the process.

### Steering groups

- 3.34 In addition, assessments that are led by a senior individual may benefit from support from a steering group. Steering groups are typically made up of senior leaders who oversee or have an interest in the area under review, who can help provide strategic guidance and endorsement of the final report and recommendations. The size and composition of the steering group is likely to vary but should always aspire to a manageable number of people who will be able to devote the necessary time and attention to contribute valuable input for the project.

### Core project team

- 3.35 Public bodies will also need to decide how to resource their review at the start of the process. Public bodies will want to refer back to the advice outlined earlier in this chapter (3.13) on points to consider whilst selecting individuals to participate in a team.
- 3.36 Teams may benefit from assigning a single assessment lead or project manager responsible for coordinating activity and collating findings and recommendations. Where assessments are undertaken across organisation boundaries, the public body may choose to have a lead from each participating organisation, responsible for coordinating activity in their area. For a discrete assessment, changing the reporting lines of individuals on the assessment team to the relevant lead official for the duration of the review may also help to strengthen the process.

### Terms of reference

- 3.37 Pulling together a set of terms of reference can be a useful tool for securing collective agreement on the design of an assessment methodology. These

should cover: (a) the scope of the assessment; (b) its objectives and main deliverables; (c) the agreed governance structure; (d) an outline of the assessment process (such as how evidence will be gathered, whether the assessment will require site visits, reporting routines etc.); and (e) a delivery plan (including key milestones and deadlines). An example of a template that could be used for an assessment's terms is set out in annex C. Once agreed, these terms can be cleared through the head of the governance structure and shared with all participants as appropriate.

## Stage two: pre-assessment preparation

- 3.38 For discrete assessments or projects that are gathering people from different parts of the organisation (or external contributors) it may be the case that not all participants share a consistent understanding of the area in scope. In these circumstances, assessments may benefit from investing some time building understanding of the area of spend, possibly by holding a teach-in of the policy or programme under review. Similarly, time spent briefing and familiarising participants on the framework itself at the start of the process, can help to ensure all are clear on its contents and principles.
- 3.39 Additionally, spending time before the assessment preparing for the analytical phase of the review is likely to be helpful. This may involve:
- understanding how each question in the framework applies to the area in scope. The framework questions are broadly defined and can be interpreted differently in different contexts. Agreeing exactly *how* questions apply to the agreed scope is likely to significantly speed up the process of gathering and assessing evidence
  - doing an exercise to make some initial judgements (without reference to evidence) on the area of spend's likely performance against the questions in the framework. This can help to define a series of hypotheses to be tested during the review and may help identify areas where evidence gathering could be a challenge
  - agreeing which questions to prioritise. This is a particularly valuable exercise to focus resources for an assessment on the areas that are of most interest. Discussing and agreeing this prioritisation with the senior elements of the governance structure can be particularly valuable
  - compiling a data statement of the current system that defines the data gaps. This can help to build consensus throughout the assessment on the nature of the issues to focus on. The statement can include data on inputs, outputs and outcomes of the system, and key challenges to delivery

## Stage three: analysis

### Evidence-gathering

- 3.40 Assessments that are grounded in evidence and based on robust, good quality data are more likely to produce findings that are credible and valuable. The project team will therefore need to plan a process to gather the evidence necessary to inform its judgements, considering what kind of evidence they will require and when and how this will be gathered.

- 3.41 Typically, the earlier evidence requirements are defined the better: this gives the assessment team more time to devise a strategy for gathering it. Assessments usually require a mixture of qualitative and quantitative evidence spread across one or more organisations. The ease with which this can be gathered can vary: teams may need to undertake visits to speak to individuals or groups within and outside their organisation, and evidence can be difficult to extract. This engagement is also an opportunity to uncover new evidence the assessment team was unaware of: this should be actively designed in to the engagement process. The more time there is for the whole process to take place the less chance there is of affecting delivery timescales.
- 3.42 Interviews and/or site visits are likely to be beneficial when exploring operational delivery performance, and particularly in areas where performance accountability is devolved to separate bodies. If delivery is spread across a number of similar bodies (such as local authorities, schools or police forces) then teams will need to devise an appropriately logical sample. This does not necessarily need to be statistically robust, but should be defensible and lead to effective insights. Arranging interviews and visits typically have a long lead-in time, so for discrete assessments, these should be arranged as early as possible to ensure there is enough time to incorporate the insights gained in to the findings.
- 3.43 Logging evidence effectively is key to effective assessments, since it will enable the assessment team to quickly and transparently recall the evidence that underpins critical judgements. Since assessments (particularly continuous assessments) can require the collation of large amounts of evidence from different sources, creating a standardised template and process for doing this is invaluable.

### Forming judgements

- 3.44 The core outputs of an assessment are potentially threefold:
- 1 a **set of findings**, based on analysis of the available evidence against the criteria in the framework
  - 2 an **overall RAG judgement** representing the likelihood of value being maximised from the spending in scope (and potentially further RAG judgements for each pillar and/or area to consider); and
  - 3 a **series of recommendations** for how to improve the public value delivered from the scope in question
- 3.45 Synthesising the volume of evidence typically accumulated through a review in to concise and valuable findings is a challenging process. As per some of the points made in earlier sections of this chapter, the best analysis typically occurs when the people involved approach the task with an open mindset, in a supportive and enabling environment. At this point, the right balance should be sought between collective discussion and leaving time for individuals to undertake individual work to support establishing findings. Teams may also want to consider involving external representatives or expertise during the assessment phase to strengthen the credibility of the judgements.



- 3.46 Developing clear assessment criteria will help when considering RAG judgements against the criteria of the framework. There may be mixed views at this point on performance in particular sections of the framework that will need to be reconciled. Assessments will want to consider carefully how these criteria are developed and applied, as this is likely to impact the quality and depth of the conclusions eventually reached through the process.

### Box 3.A: Example assessment criteria used in public value pilots

In its later pilots of the public value framework, HM Treasury developed an assessment matrix focused on assessing both the performance of an area against the framework and the quality of the evidence this judgement is based on.

Assessment against the Public Value Framework					
Performance	Evidence base				
		Very weak or absent	Weak	Moderate	Substantial
Very weak					Red and yellow diamond pattern
Weak			Red and yellow diamond pattern	Red and yellow diamond pattern	Green and yellow diamond pattern
Moderate		Red and yellow diamond pattern	Green and yellow diamond pattern	Green and yellow diamond pattern	Green
Strong		Red and yellow diamond pattern	Green and yellow diamond pattern	Green	Green

To achieve a strong performance rating, areas had to demonstrate that there was not only activity taking place that satisfied the criteria of the framework, but that the process was operating as effectively as it could and that it represented absolute best practice. If an area could not demonstrate all three, then they were unlikely to be awarded green.

Judging the quality of evidence requires taking into consideration evidence or data that would help make a judgement on the performance of the area of spend but for whatever reason, was unavailable at the time of the review. This can lead to difficulties, but can also be an effective incentive for teams to be more rigorous in their assessments.

- 3.47 If RAG judgements are used, they should not take priority over the identification of findings and recommendations. The colour judgement is a helpful visual representation of the likelihood of value being maximised from a particular area of spend, and the process of agreeing RAG judgements can be helpful in deepening the assessment team’s understanding of performance across the framework. However, the ultimate purpose of assessments is to improve performance: findings and recommendations are more likely to do this than a colour.

## Stage four: follow up

### Presentation of findings

- 3.48 Depending on how public bodies are intending to use their findings the process, they may choose to produce a final report or product to capture the key findings and recommendations. The format of this (e.g. document, slide



presentation etc.) should be agreed through the governance chain at the outset of the review. Whatever format the public body chooses to use, the final product should be designed in a way that will help the public body pursue recommendations and take steps to improve performance that have been generated from the process (i.e. decisions on format should take account of the most effective means of communicating the key content to the intended audience. We would suggest, as far as possible, the public body aims to make the product succinct, unambiguous and clearly drafted in accessible language).

- 3.49 Assigning clear responsibility for compiling and finalising this output to an individual (possibly the working-level assessment lead), who can then work with members of the project team or wider parties to feed in to the process, is likely to be helpful.
- 3.50 Potential delays in signing-off the final output through the governance chain can be mitigated through agreeing clear steps and deadlines in the clearance process (e.g. circulation of the output for comments, final circulation of a draft etc.).
- 3.51 Continuous assessments will need to agree the frequency with which output is generated. This will need to take account of the time taken to produce each output, the timescales in which performance might change and the benefits of providing timely information to decision-makers using the output of the assessments.

### Developing solutions

- 3.52 The framework doesn't specifically make judgements on how to generate solutions for the issues it identifies. It is designed to outline what a public entity should do to maximise the public value it delivers from its funding. Given, however, the huge variation in public entities, it does not prescribe how an organisation should be doing this.
- 3.53 An assessment through the framework is likely to lead, in many cases, to further discussions on development of solutions to the issues identified. Some tools that could help users at this stage include:
  - holding a workshop to map findings to assess where there is strong evidence and where further evidence is needed. This can be followed by the development of further recommendations to address gaps
  - plotting recommendations on an impact vs difficulty matrix (e.g. to assess high impact, low effort activities considered to be 'quick wins' vs high impact, high effort activities considered to be major projects)
  - appraising recommendations by agreeing criteria to review them. For example:
    - suitability – do the proposed actions address the key issues and will they be able to deliver desired outcomes?
    - feasibility – can the proposed actions be delivered, with system capabilities and resources?
    - acceptability – is there sufficient political and public support for this?

**In summary:**

- apply healthy pragmatism throughout
- pace and momentum are important
- don't let the review process drift
- if in doubt, keep it simple
- reviews should, as a rule of thumb, use evidence that already exists
- involve and create opportunities to draw on evidence across the organisation
- the environment you set up informs the mindset of the people involved
- senior sponsorship is key – make sure SROs are actively engaged

# Chapter 4

## Exploring the framework

- 4.1 The questions contained within the latest version of the framework have been developed based on experience from the pilots and wider consultation. This chapter is intended to unpack the questions in the framework to help users understand what they are asking and how they might be answered.
- 4.2 The version of the framework outlined here is not intended to be definitive. There remain specific gaps to address: for example some of the newer or more subject-focused questions require more prompts. More broadly as time progresses our understanding of public value – both within and outside government – is likely to evolve. The framework will need to evolve with it to ensure it continues to capture everything a public entity needs to be doing to maximise public value, and remains at the forefront of global best practice. The intention is therefore for this to be a living document, with further updates likely to be published in due course.

### Questions of pillar one: pursuing goals

- 4.3 Setting a clear vision and goals is vital for any area of spend. Without these, it is difficult to determine whether a policy, programme or service is performing as it should or maximising potential value. This pillar asks three key questions (broadly aligned with the three areas to consider): Do you have goals? How ambitious are they? Do you know where you are in delivering them?
- 4.4 There are several terms that are frequently referred to in this pillar of the framework it may be helpful to clarify:
- **vision/goals:** interchangeable terms for any statement used to set out the highest-level ambitions for a policy or programme e.g. to make the UK one of the top-5 tourist destinations in the world, or make the country healthier
  - **objectives:** these are the things an entity has chosen to deliver to realise their vision/goals. Objectives should always be measurable and are often delivered within a particular time-period
  - **indicators:** these are metrics that indicate whether objectives are on track to be delivered. As such indicators are closely linked to delivery plans and trajectories for delivery objectives
- 4.5 For government departments, the vision and goals for the area of spend are likely to link closely to the information provided in Single Departmental Plans.
- 4.6 Given how vital clear goals are to public value, the responses to questions in this pillar are likely to create an important foundation for the responses provided elsewhere in the framework. A strong response to these first few questions in pillar one is likely to support responses in further sections. Weak evidence on the other hand, is likely to limit what the public body can provide elsewhere.

## Area 1: understanding vision and goals

### Pillar one: question 1

#### How well defined is the overall vision and goals for this area of spending?

- Are the vision or goals expressed clearly such that they could be understood by a member of the public?
- Are they outcome rather than output-focused?
- Are they linked to specific and measurable goals?
- Does the vision balance short-term and long-term aims appropriately, even if this has meant making tough choices?
- Is it clear how aims have been prioritised using well-understood criteria and a well-defined process?

- 4.7 Vision/goals should be clear, widely understood and with measurable statements of intent. A mix of short and long-term goals are important to ensure the public body is considering both immediate needs and future aims. A particularly important prompt for this question probes whether the vision/goals are *outcome* (i.e. focused on improving performance overall) or *output*-focused (defining success as increasing the quantity of goods or services produced). Public bodies should be aiming to develop *outcome*-focused goals that allow for a more nuanced understanding of performance, most likely to set direction on how the organisation can maximise value.

### Pillar one: question 2

#### What SMART objectives have been set to achieve the goals and vision?

- Do the objectives result in improvements to outcomes that can easily be clearly understood?
- Do they incorporate metrics to assess the impact on human capital?
- Can the public body articulate how these objectives will maximise benefits for the whole of government?

- 4.8 To maximise the likelihood of realising the overall vision/goals, these need to be broken down into a set of discrete objectives to deliver. These can sometimes (but not always) be output-focused, for instance reducing the number of homeless people below a certain threshold. Question two tests the quality of the objectives in place, i.e. they should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based) and result in genuine improvements to people's lives. The last two prompts then test the breadth of the objectives.
- 4.9 Where possible, strong objectives will also include metrics to assess the impact on human capital (i.e. how the policy or programme contributes to building knowledge, skills, competencies or attributes that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being). The public body should be able to articulate not only how these

will support the immediate vision/goals of the organisation but how they will maximise benefits for government overall.

### **Pillar one: question 3**

#### **What evidence does the public body use to link its chosen objectives to the vision/goals in this area of spend?**

- Is this evidence reviewed at regular intervals to ensure objectives remain relevant?
- Does the public body know the range of policy interventions available that could be used to achieve their vision/goals?
- Does the evidence show the relative effectiveness of different policy interventions based on the latest academic research and examples of what works?

4.10 Systematic approaches to government planning and delivery are often criticised for setting inappropriate targets that encourage perverse behavioural incentives and end up undermining the realisation of overall goals and vision. To mitigate this risk, the link between vision/goals and the objectives set to pursue them needs to be clearly understood. Given the rapidly changing contexts many public bodies operate in, the relationship between a public body's vision/goals and objectives should be regularly reviewed, to ensure they remain relevant.

4.11 Evidence of objectives being referred to across different levels of the organisation could help to demonstrate that they are being effectively used to set direction. Staff at all levels should be able to understand and clearly link what they are doing to overall objectives. Evidence of research and consideration of different policy interventions could also be used, to demonstrate the public body is aware of the range of policy interventions available and has assessed their relative effectiveness to determine their approach.

## Area 2: degree of ambition

### Pillar one: question 4

What evidence does the public body use to satisfy itself that its vision and objectives are realistically as ambitious as they can possibly be in this area?

- Does it understand the ambition of its goals in relation to:
  - global best practice?
  - comparators in similar sectors?
  - historical performance?
- Have major interdependencies and constraints that may limit ambition been identified and, where needed, overcome?
- Are goals that require significant organisational change (e.g. structural, cultural, behavioural) along the delivery chain still being considered and, where relevant, adopted?
- Are strategies in place to manage and overcome major contextual constraints (such as limits to timescales, resourcing, technology or politics)?

4.12 The vision and goals of a policy or programme need to be ambitious to drive necessary change. However, they should not become so ambitious they become impossible to apply. Both insufficient and overly stretching ambition can be problematic and frustrate an organisation's ability to deliver.

4.13 There are two types of ambition this question explores: relative and absolute ambition. Relative ambition is tested through the first few prompts. These ask the public body to demonstrate their vision/goals are suitably ambitious through comparators. Users of the framework are likely to need to gather a range of evidence to demonstrate this on current and historic performance and how they compare against similar organisations, similar sectors or international examples. Understanding of past delivery failures, for instance, can give a sense of the urgency or level of change required to improve performance.

4.14 However relative ambition is only part of the answer. A public body can, for example, be more ambitious than its foreign or domestic equivalents or more ambitious than last year, yet still not be as ambitious as it could be. Absolute ambition is therefore about demonstrating that for the funding available that the public body is being as ambitious as it can be. This cannot be demonstrated by comparisons alone and is tested in the question's last few prompts. Absolute ambition is difficult to demonstrate, but is a question the public body should be continuously exploring internally. Understanding of barriers or contextual factors that may limit its ambition and considering the benefits of, and where relevant, choosing to overcome these (in spite of the reform this may require) can be useful ways in to this question.

## Area 3: implementation planning and monitoring progress towards indicators and goals

### Pillar one: question 5

How does the public body monitor planning and implementation of its goals and objectives?

- Is there a defined strategy with a clear delivery plan?
- Have meaningful milestones been set at sufficiently frequent intervals to support regular assessments of progress?
- Are there trajectories, showing the expected outturn at suitable intermediate points?
- Have appropriate and useful lead and lag indicators been identified for each objective?

4.15 Without clear plans and a rigorous system for monitoring progress towards objectives, the overarching vision/goals for a policy or programme are unlikely to be realised. Question five seeks evidence of when and how the organisation is monitoring delivery of its goals and objectives, with prompt questions exploring the key features and quality of processes in place. For central government, a well written Single Departmental Plan could act as a source for this question. Responses should, however, try to reach an overall assessment of the total planning and performance capability of the public body; not just consider the quality of one or two specific sources.

4.16 The monitoring processes under review should allow for a good understanding of the challenges involved in achieving objectives. Where possible, reference could be made to previous incidents where performance issues have been identified (or overlooked) by existing processes. Indicators should provide timely data to inform delivery. Assessment teams may also want to question the suitability of the indicators in place and whether they encourage the right incentives.

### Pillar one: question 6

Does the public body have the data necessary to track progress against delivering the vision, objectives and indicators?

- Can this data be broken down for comparisons (e.g. by unit or region?)
- Are there data gaps (and what currently prevents the public body from filling them?)

4.17 Good data and analysis are key to successful delivery. This question therefore focuses on the availability, quality and use of the data necessary to track delivery of vision, objectives and indicators. Data should be substantial enough to act as a base for decision-making. It should be considered accurate, easy to acquire and broken down appropriately in a way that can be used to benchmark or measure performance (e.g. by unit or region). Some organisations may have natural limitations to the data they can gather. As far as is

reasonable, however, review teams should come to a conclusion on whether public bodies have access to quality data with which they can monitor implementation.

## Questions of pillar two: managing inputs

4.18 This pillar is about testing a public body's basic financial management. Completing this section is likely to therefore require good engagement with the public body's finance function and draw on evidence from established financial processes.

### Area 4: managing financial resources

#### Pillar two: question 7

##### How does the public body plan to manage its financial resources?

- Is there a medium-term financial plan for the public body to live within its means?
- Does this plan set out the total financial resources available and how the public body is funded (e.g. central funding, commercial income etc.)?
- Is this plan linked with its performance objectives, strategy and delivery plan?
- Does this plan outline the risks around the financial resources available and set out plans to mitigate these (such as where it may be dependent on other organisations to provide funding to meet costs)?
- Does the public body understand the drivers of demands for its services (including the link to the experience of users and citizens?)
- Are there contingency plans in case funding pressures emerge or there are increases in demand?
- If applicable, can the public body demonstrate its funding mix is optimal with reference to alternative funding models?

4.19 Question 7 explores how a public body plans to use its funding. Public bodies should have an awareness of the magnitude of their total financial resources. Spending plans should ideally be produced across a medium-term time period (e.g. in central government that could be over a three- to five-year spending review period) and set out how the public body intends to meet organisational objectives within its allocated budget. Income assumptions should be tested and considered realistic. Evidence, in particular, should be provided of the public body taking steps to identify and manage potential risks. Strong reprioritisation and contingency mechanisms should be in place to deal with significant and unforeseen pressures. Where public bodies have the potential for different income sources, they should be considering alternative funding models that could be used to maximise income.



### **Pillar two: question 8**

#### **What processes exist for the public body to review its use of resources?**

- Do these run at regular intervals?
- Do the processes escalate emerging pressures promptly to senior decision-makers?
- Do they involve continuously assessing whether the existing allocation of resources remains the most productive?
- Do they include periodic zero-based budgeting exercises?
- Do they monitor changes in demand, using appropriate data?

4.20 Strong financial processes provide assurance that inputs are being managed effectively in a public body. Public bodies should be systematically reviewing their use of resources, considering how funding is supporting key objectives or whether there are more productive ways it could be used. Evidence-based assessments should also be undertaken of the likelihood and scale of risks, with findings from these being reviewed or escalated to senior decision-makers.

### **Pillar two: question 9**

#### **What management information is regularly provided to key decision-makers to help inform decisions?**

- Is this information relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive?

4.21 Effective decisions on funding rely on accurate and comprehensive financial data. Question nine therefore asks the public body to demonstrate it has systems in place that allow it to produce relevant, timely and consistent management information. Evidence should be available to senior decision makers using this information to mitigate risks or improve organisational performance.

## Area 5: quality of data and forecasts

### Pillar two: question 10

How does the public body track how much has been spent (and on what) at each stage of the delivery chain, from central government to the front line?

- Is data defined, structured, maintained and governed consistently?
- Is data recorded on an appropriate central finance system (e.g. OSCAR in central government using HMT's Common Chart of Accounts) in-line with best practice guidance such that it is possible to break down spending by programme/economic category?
- Does the public body have visibility over how resources have been allocated/deployed in arms-length or affiliated bodies?
- Does the public body integrate the expertise of other functions (e.g. HR, Estates or Commercial) to generate further insights and improving decision making?

4.22 Good financial data creates a single version of the truth on which further discussion and activity can follow. Financial data that is consistently defined and presented allows organisations to identify financial weak points and take action to address these. This question therefore tests if in the public body's own context, it has consistent data that allows it to track how much is being spent, where and on what. Public bodies should be capable of taking a view of how funding is being allocated across the entire delivery chain, including arms-length bodies, through an appropriate mechanism (e.g. the Online System for Central Accounting and Reporting – or OSCAR – in central government, supported by consistent guidance on categorisation, such as the Treasury's Common Chart of Accounts).

4.23 Financial data in isolation, however, does not provide you enough insight to improve the management of inputs. For this, finance teams also need to be working with and integrating the expertise of other functions. Sharing data and seeking views for example from colleagues in HR, Commercial or Estates on financial data could form deeper judgements or ideas on how to improve efficiency. This will improve the insights derived from the data and support better decision-making.

## Pillar two: question 11

What forecasts does the public body produce to understand and manage the impact of in-year spending on future years?

- Are these provided at regular intervals?
- Are in-year forecasts accurate (i.e. to within 1% of the outturn figure)?
- Do these forecasts include the impact of the in-year forecast on the following year?
- Are there plans to mitigate any pressures created in subsequent years?

4.24 Both short and long-term financial planning are essential to ensuring organisations stay within allocated budgets. Long-term financial planning relies on effective forecasts. Question eleven therefore tests a public body's forecasting capability and how it subsequently uses this information. The first two prompts consider how regularly a public body provides forecasts and the accuracy of what is produced. There is a link here between the use of forecasting and area seven of the framework - that looks in more detail at the phenomenon of cost shifting. Forecasting can be a valuable tool to understand where costs may be created elsewhere in future. The final set of prompts therefore also test how forecasts once identified are then being used to alter financial plans to alleviate future pressures.

## Pillar two: question 12

What evidence does the public body use to decide what it needs to purchase to meet its performance and financial objectives?

- Does this evidence demonstrate the link between the purchase of inputs to the delivery of objectives?
- Is this evidence used to inform future decisions on the purchase of inputs?

4.25 This question tests how a public body knows what it needs to buy (and at what price) to deliver outcomes, e.g. how does the Royal Navy determine how many ships it needs and at what specification? Or at a more granular level, how does an organisation decide how much stationery it needs to run an office? Review teams should form a view on how effectively public bodies are assessing purchasing options to ensure they maximise value for money. Ideally, public bodies should be able to demonstrate a clear link between expenditure and the specific outputs they support. This detail should then be incorporated into the organisation's financial planning (being used, for example, when a public body is choosing to conduct a zero-based budgeting exercise). Evidence should also be available of insights and experience from previous purchases being used (and stored) to inform future spending decisions.

## Area 6: benchmarking and cost control

### Pillar two: question 13

To what extent does the public body use its understanding of how its costs compare to others in improving efficiency performance?

- Does the public body undertake internal and external (including international) comparison of both overall and unit cost data? Is it able to explain any major cost differences?
- in terms of front-line/back office services?
- in terms of unit costs in functional areas of spend (e.g. property or IT)
- To understand and implement best practice (both domestically and internationally)?
- Does the public body have systems to monitor and control costs in real-time?

4.26 For common areas of spend, benchmarking can provide an invaluable tool to support data analysis, provide insights into organisational structure (such as the split between frontline and back-office functions) and identify where further efficiencies can be made. As with ambition, benchmarking against comparable organisations will only reveal relative performance: organisations that compare favourably in benchmarking exercises could still use their resources more efficiently. However significant value could be generated if all organisations used their resources as well as the top quartile.

4.27 Organisations should therefore both understand their relative performance within appropriate benchmarks, and be striving to continuously improve this. Responses to this question should demonstrate an understanding of the unit costs for this area of spend and how they compare to relevant benchmarks. The public body should then set out how they are using benchmarking data to improve policy or drive efficiencies (e.g. perhaps through setting targets aspiring to fall within the top 10% against comparators).

## Area 7: cost shifting

4.28 Cost-shifting is where one organisation's activities creates financial costs elsewhere – either onto other organisations (such as other government departments) or forward in time (causing costs tomorrow due to decisions today). For example, if we increase funding for the police, this could translate into an increase in the number of police charges, creating additional demand in the courts and prison system. This is a longstanding issue across the public sector, as different public services work collectively across organisational boundaries to tackle complex, cross-cutting issues.

4.29 Some degree of cost-shifting is inevitable: the work of government is inherently interconnected and actions in one area will inevitably cause reactions in another. As such cost-shifting in itself should not be perceived as a good or bad phenomenon. Questions in this area test the extent to which the public body understands: (1) the magnitude of the risks of cost shifting (specifically where it is vulnerable to costs being

shifted on to it, where it likely to shift costs on to others, and where it is likely to be shifting costs in to the future) and what it is doing to manage these risks and mitigate their consequences.

### **Pillar two: question 14**

#### **How would you assess the level of awareness in the public body of the risks of cost shifting?**

- Is it aware of the risk of having costs shifted on to it from other parts of the public sector?
- Is it aware of shifting costs on to other parts of the public sector? (and/or private sector)
- Is it aware where it is shifting costs in to future years?

4.30 The first step to managing cost shifting is understanding the various forms it can take and the potential impacts. Prompts for this question set out the different types of cost-shifting that could be taking place: on to the public body; from the public body on to others; or in to future years.

### **Pillar two: question 15**

#### **Is a strategy and set of contingency plans in place that effectively manage risks?**

- Does this strategy cover each of the risk identified above (i.e. risk from other parts of the public sector; to other parts of the public and/or private sector; or in to future years?)

4.31 To then reduce the negative impact of cost-shifting, public bodies need to have plans in place to address and mitigate potential issues. Users should in particular consider whether plans take a short-term view of risks, i.e. defer spending to later years or delay programme implementation to create immediate savings.

## **Questions of pillar three: engaging users and citizens**

4.32 Experience from testing the framework has shown Pillar 3 to be the most challenging of the pillars for public bodies to understand and demonstrate performance for. This is understandable: most of the activities set out in pillars 1, 2 and 4 are relatively well-established. Pillar 3 is more novel, but nonetheless a vital component of any assessment of public value.

4.33 Pillar 3 aims to ensure that citizens perspectives are incorporated into policy and delivery. Public value is in part self-fulfilling: a public service is genuinely more valuable (and taxpayers more likely to be willing to fund it) if citizens believe in its value – that it is a legitimate use of public money – and commit to it. By collating insights from citizens and users, it becomes possible for government to focus its efforts on activities that will result in genuine improvements to people’s lives and thus, maximise public value.

4.34 ‘Citizens’ here refer to those individuals living within the jurisdiction of the relevant public body. The size of this pool will vary, depending on whether the public body under

review is local, regional, or national in its scope. 'Users' are a particular sub-group who are those citizens who use or are clients of the public body's policy or services. For example: whilst most citizens to funding for schools through paying taxes, children and parents would be considered the direct users who regularly engage with them.

- 4.35 Who the users are of a public service may not always be immediately clear. For this reason, we would suggest public bodies take some time to consider and identify the users of their services before embarking on responses to this Pillar.

## Area 8: public and citizen legitimacy

### Pillar three: question 16

What understanding does the public body have of what citizens think about the area of spend?

- Are the drivers of these perceptions understood?
- Are differences in opinion between different groups of citizens understood?
- Is there a defined process for gathering these insights?

- 4.36 Public bodies should be cautious about equating positive public perception with good performance (and negative public perception necessarily with bad performance). Immediate, unpopular action is sometimes necessary for long-term benefit. Public satisfaction (e.g. opinion polls) can also lack credibility and fluctuate for a number of reasons. This question instead should examine the extent of a public body's understanding of perceptions. Without this understanding, organisations may fail to recognise where a particular course of action is losing credibility or where they need to be proactively making the case to build support for a particular agenda.
- 4.37 Evidence should be provided for this question of the public body engaging with a breadth of citizens to gather insights. A strong answer would be one that demonstrates the public body not just engaging with those who have greatest interest or regular interaction with the policy or service but seeking diverse views from a range of citizens.
- 4.38 Public consultations that focus on gathering the views of particular segments of the population (usually those affected by a reform or policy change) do not count as evidence in this area: this activity is captured in stakeholder engagement.

### **Pillar three: question 17**

#### **What does the public body do with these insights?**

- Is there an effective strategy to influence public perceptions that is based on these insights?
- Does the strategy acknowledge the potential trade off that may be required to policy development in order to address public perceptions?
- Is the strategy being successfully delivered throughout the delivery chain?
- Are insights being disseminated and used across the organisation?

4.39 Once the public body has this understanding, the next question then focuses on what they do with it. The key strategic decision is around the trade-off between changing public perceptions (i.e. making the case for why a particular course of action is beneficial) and incorporating these insights in to policy design. For example, a local authority may have solid evidence that it's number one policy priority is improving literacy in the local area, and wants to devote its entire budget to funding the three most effective policy interventions to tackle the problem. Its citizen engagement activity, however, reveals that the public's perception of the number one policy priority is filling potholes. This question explores what the public body is doing in response to this challenge and how it makes the decision on what to prioritise. Evidently it cannot ignore the potholes, but great public engagement on the benefits of improving literacy may give the local authority greater latitude to pursue policies that will more effectively improve outcomes and maximise value.

## **Area 9: user and client experience and participation**

### **Pillar three: question 18**

#### **Does the public body understand the link between user and client experience and better outcomes?**

- Does the public body assess the cumulative impact of different programmes on users and clients and how that affects their experience of the system?

4.40 This question explores the extent to which a public body is aware of how user experiences affect outcomes. The way users think about or experience services can have a significant impact on their behaviour. For example, patients who have access to a personal health budget (i.e. are involved in the budgeting and planning of their care) are more likely to have a higher care-related quality of life and psychological wellbeing, less likely to require GP appointments, and less likely to attend A&E, compared to those without a personal health budget.

- 4.41 The interaction of various public services on the experience of users is a particularly important point to explore. Positive or negative experiences of other services, for example, (potentially from within the same department or from other parts of government) may significantly influence how users interact with the service or programme under review.

### **Pillar three: question 19**

#### **How does the public body plan to improve the experience of users and clients?**

- Is it aware of what contributes to improving experiences for users or clients?
- Is there an overall long-term strategy for improving experiences?
- Does this consider the changes necessary throughout the delivery chain to improve performance?
- Is this strategy being effectively delivered across the whole delivery chain?
- Is this strategy being tracked to measure success and ensure it is achieving its intended goals?

- 4.42 Public bodies who understand the link between experience and outcomes should then have a strategy to improve outcomes by optimising the user experience. They should be aware of the key factors that are likely to contribute to improved experience for their users or clients, based on insights gathered or user/client feedback. For improvements to the experience of users and clients to be most effective, activity should be aligned to an overarching strategy, that is used and understood across the delivery chain. Where possible, public bodies should also be drawing on relevant benchmarks to make judgements on where and how user experience could be improved.

### **Pillar three: question 20**

#### **What evidence does the public body hold of the link between user participation and improved outcomes?**

- Does this evidence include data on user participation in policy action?
- Does it include the drivers of better participation levels?

- 4.43 Similar to the above, this question explores the extent to which the public body understands how user participation improves outcomes. Actively engaged users are typically more likely to undertake or support activity that improves outcomes. Returning to the example of education, parents who are more engaged with their child's learning – by reading to them at home for instance - will contribute to an improved educational outcome for that child, at no additional cost to the taxpayer. The strongest responses to



this question will be able to refer to key drivers of user participation, which could then be used to consider ways the public body could influence these levels.

### **Pillar three: question 21**

#### **How does the public body plan to improve participation and change user/client behaviour?**

- Is there an overall long-term strategy?
- Does this consider the changes necessary throughout the delivery chain to improve performance?
- Is this strategy being effectively delivered across the whole delivery chain?
- Is this strategy being tracked to measure success and ensure it is achieving its intended goals?

4.44 Having identified the link and key drivers for increased participation in the previous question, public bodies should then be able to outline how they are using these insights to improve participation or change user/client behaviour to support better outcomes. This activity should take place throughout the delivery chain as necessary, whilst the strongest responses would be able to draw on benchmarks to show their levels of public participation as equivalent or better than comparators and make reference to a comprehensive strategy, communicated across the organisation, and suitably tracked to ensure progress.

## **Questions of pillar four: developing system capacity**

- 4.45 The final pillar of the framework is about stewardship: leaving a service or institution in better shape than you found it. It tests the underlying quality and resilience of a public body or service to ensure an organisation is strong enough to deliver in the long-term.
- 4.46 This pillar is the largest in the framework, given the range of different areas it examines to form a judgement on the organisation's overall capacity. Completion of this section is likely to require consultation across the organisation. Users should therefore consider preparation for completion of this pillar carefully and incorporate into relevant planning for their assessment (more information on the principles/points they may want to consider is outlined in chapter 3).

## **Area 10: capacity to manage the delivery chain**

- 4.47 A delivery chain is set of relationships involved in delivering a policy or programme from the political decision-maker at the top (e.g. minister in central government) to the front-line user. This, for example, could be the chain of teams, systems and people between the Secretary of State for Education and the pupil being taught in a primary school; or the Secretary of State for Health and the patient in a GP surgery.
- 4.48 Delivery chains can often include both those within and outside of a public body who are involved in the delivery process. Success or failure of delivery often rests on the strength of this chain and the links or robustness of the accountability and oversight within it. A thorough understanding of how the chain fits together is therefore vital to

enabling greater public value. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link; if any of the links are broken, effective delivery of policy improvements will be virtually impossible, regardless of how much additional funding or resource is brought in to fix the problem.

## Pillar four: question 22

### How strong is the delivery chain (from ministers to users)?

- Is the delivery chain well-defined and understood within the organisations involved?
- Are there clear roles and responsibilities (i.e. named people throughout the chain accountable for each link within it)?
- Are policy or programme owners able to effectively influence accountable people at different stages of the chain?
- Is the delivery chain responsive and resilient to changing circumstances, including major external shocks (such as machinery of government or political changes)?
- Can it balance coping with short-term pressures (e.g. unexpected increases in demand for services) with developing the system's long-term capacity?
- Where relevant, is there a plan for systems or services going offline (that identifies potential risks, includes a data recovery strategy and impact analysis on users)?

- 4.49 Delivery chains can be complex and in many circumstances, there is likely to be more than one operating at any given time. Due to this, it can be challenging to identify the main delivery chain or set of stages or interactions through which a policy or programme is being delivered. Process maps, organisational charts or assessments of financial accountability could be helpful reference points. Significant challenges identifying the delivery chain could also be symptomatic of an underlying problem.
- 4.50 Depending on the nature of the organisation or area of spend under review, some organisations may want to consider the horizontal as well as vertical relationships to assess delivery performance (e.g. how different teams or functions in the organisations are working collaboratively across the organisation).
- 4.51 Prompts for this question consider how accountability is assigned and understood throughout the chain. Accountability should be focused on making sure that outcomes are delivered overall, rather than just maintaining the specific set processes or activities within the team's remit.
- 4.52 Delivery chains also need to be set up to withstand external shocks or changes in the wider environment. Public bodies should be contemplating significant potential shocks that may impact delivery and their readiness to respond. The resilience and adaptiveness of the delivery chain is therefore also considered in the last few prompts. Prompts here provide examples of some of the scenarios that could pressurise the delivery chain (e.g. machinery of government changes; short-term increases in demand; systems failure). Evidence of mitigations in place (such as a strategy or processes to minimise adverse effects) or reference to previous performance history may give some indication of how

likely the public body would be able to cope in such changing circumstances. On systems failure specifically, the public body should be able to point to a data recovery strategy, explain the main likely causes of the service going off line and outline how different groups of users would be affected if the service was to be made unavailable for any prolonged period.

### **Pillar four: question 23**

#### **How does the public body manage the delivery chain and continuously identify ways to improve it?**

- Is there a team within the body that continuously explores how the chain could be strengthened?
- Do staff all along the chain understand what they are trying to achieve and why?
- Do they regularly feedback on delivery issues and suggest how the chain can be improved?
- Is feedback through these routes acted upon and (where possible) resolved?
- Are differences between performance and financial accountability chains understood?

**4.53** This question is seeking evidence of the public body taking action to identify problems and improve its delivery chain. Whilst it's common for individuals and teams to understand their own immediate remit, it is equally important to be thinking strategically about the delivery chain, with a view overall on how it is performing. This is important to both strengthen weaknesses but also consider whether the chain could be changed or simplified (e.g. in response to new technology).

**4.54** Strong internal communications and levels of awareness amongst staff of operational performance and organisational objectives are also key to empowering staff, encouraging the right behaviours and thus enabling delivery. Further prompts test that regular opportunities for staff to feedback issues are available and that such feedback from different levels is acted upon. Previous examples of where underperformance has been identified and challenged could further help demonstrate these processes are suitably robust.

### Pillar four: question 24

How effective and consistent is commercial delivery throughout the organisation?

- Is the pipeline of forthcoming commercial activity well-understood and regularly updated (at least every six months) to allow sufficient planning?
- Are all relevant commercial options analysed prior to agreeing a sourcing pathway, and competition maximised through early market engagement and accessible service design requirements?
- Are contracts flexible and adaptable, then managed effectively to extract maximum value throughout the lifecycle?
- Are services or activities that no longer add value effectively decommissioned?

4.55 Delivery chains often include parties both within and outside of government. In cases where the delivery chain includes systems or services that have been contracted out to external providers, this question tests the commercial capability of the main public body to monitor and influence delivery. Prompts are based on *the Civil Service Commercial Standards* used by central government to drive continuous improvement across the commercial function.

### Pillar four: question 25

What is the public body doing to identify, develop and deploy new technology to reduce costs and improve outcomes?

- Are users and staff being increasingly encouraged to use digital services?
- Has new technology been designed with a user-centred approach (i.e. considering how to simplify and improve the experience of the range of users that will interact with the service?)
- Is the service iterated and improved on frequently, using agile, iterative and user-centred methods?
- Is data on service performance regularly collated and monitored, to analyse the success of the service, with insights gathered then used to support the next phase of development?

4.56 New technology is changing the way delivery takes place across the public sector and providing greater opportunities for services to deliver more with less. This question seeks an assessment of the public body's existing technology capability. Whilst public bodies may not be in the process of deploying new technology at the time of review, evidence on how they have previously designed (or embarked on) programmes to implement new innovations could be used to respond to this question. Evidence that the public body is

continuing to explore further scope to implement or create new efficiencies through technology could also be provided. As per the prompt questions, modern technology platforms should be designed primarily with the user experience in mind. The service should be continuously reviewed, with data on performance regularly gathered and scrutinized.

## Area 11: workforce capacity

### Pillar four: question 26

What processes and data does the public body use to monitor and plan for changes in its workforce?

- Are these linked to financial planning and wider service delivery goals?
- Do these processes identify risks, such as skills or knowledge gaps and recruitment/retention issues?
- Do processes gather accurate and up-to-date workforce data?
- Is this data used to define future workforce requirements over the short and long-term?
- Have been indicators been developed to monitor workforce changes?
- Are these indicators regularly reviewed and used by decision-makers to monitor whether the strategy is being implemented successfully?
- How is the industrial relations context monitored and are contingency plans in place to respond to potential risks?

4.57 This question tests the organisation's understanding of its current workforce capability through an assessment of its existing workforce planning processes and data. Workforce planning is the collection of processes undertaken in the organisation to align changing organisation needs with those of its workforce. Ideally, workforce plans should have strong links to financial planning and a clear connection with the organisation's goals and objectives. For government departments, this should be brought together in their Single Departmental Plans.

4.58 Effective processes are reliant on good, accurate workforce data. The extent to which the public body can disaggregate data that can lead to useful insights on say, gaps in skills or professions in the existing workforce, should therefore also be particularly considered. The final prompt in this question tests a particular set of processes that should be present to monitor and manage potential industrial relations risks, given the significant impact these can have on the delivery chain.

## Pillar four: question 27

How does the public body intend to build the skilled workforce it will need to continue to deliver and adapt to future changes?

- Is a strategy in place to guide changes over the long-term that is linked to the public body's overall vision and goals?
- Does this strategy define future workforce requirements?
- Does the strategy set out how the public body intends to attract and develop valuable key skills, such as commercial, finance, policy or transformation skills?
- Is the public body planning for the impact that new technology or automation could have on the workforce in future?
- Is there a strategy for embedding any necessary behavioural/cultural change that could be required in future?
- Is there a plan for the public body to develop the diversity of its workforce?

4.59 Question 27 tests what the public body is doing to build its workforce in future. This includes everyone in the delivery chain, both direct employees or indirect contractors. The main source of evidence public bodies are likely to draw on to respond to this question is a workforce strategy.

4.60 The first few prompts for this question give some indication of the features you would expect to find in this, e.g. links to the organisation's overarching vision/goals, understanding of skills gaps and future workforce requirements. Public bodies should also be able to demonstrate some understanding of upcoming changes in their broader context (e.g. changes in technology) that may impact their workforce. Changes required to the culture or behaviours of the organisation to support changes to delivery are often a neglected factor when leading organisational transformation. The public body should therefore also be able to demonstrate these factors have been carefully considered. Finally, the public body should also be able to demonstrate how it is taking steps to increase the diversity of its workforce, given the link between diverse workforce and increases in innovation and productivity.

## Pillar four: question 28

### How is the public body assessing and developing its leadership capability?

- Has the organisation articulated what good leadership looks like?
- Do staff consider senior leaders to:
  - Have a clear vision for the future of the organisation?
  - Manage change well?
  - Be responsive to feedback and focused on improving staff engagement?
- Is leadership performance monitored and managed effectively?
- Is there a strategy in place to develop leadership skills in the public body and address identified gaps?

4.61 Good leadership is essential to the effective running of all large organisations and public services are no exception. Leaders play a vital role in driving performance, encouraging greater innovation and demonstrating behaviours that will support better delivery. This question therefore seeks to assess the organisation's current leadership capability. Prompts give some indication of the features that would be expected in an organisation that was regularly assessing leadership capability. What good leadership looks like should be clearly articulated. Staff perceptions on leadership should be sought and evaluated. Senior leadership as a cadre should also be monitored and effectively managed, with skill and knowledge gaps clearly identified and evidence the public body is taking action to address these.

## Area 12: capacity to evaluate impact

4.62 Responses for questions in this area are likely to require reference back to the key outcomes, goals and objectives for the area of spend that were outlined for responses to the questions in pillar one.

## Pillar four: question 29

### What access does the public body have to the data sets it needs?

- Is data available considered accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive?
- Are there data gaps?
- Does the public body know what currently prevents gaps from being filled?
- Is it actively taking steps to overcome those obstacles?
- Are data sources shared widely across the organisation, so all are aware of what's available?
- Are data sets also made available to other departments and delivery partners, to use insights and allow better practice?
- Where possible, is data made public, so it can be used by users, citizens and other parties?

4.63 Data is an essential tool for maximising public value: without robust data to support evidence, no reliable judgements can be made. Data should be accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive and there should be standards and guidance to support this. The public body should be constantly reviewing the data that it requires, should be aware of its data gaps and able to demonstrate it has considered or (where possible) taken steps to mitigate these e.g. recruited to address their data skills gap and built the infrastructure to share data across the organisation.

4.64 Efficient and effective public services will be realised when we work across boundaries. Therefore, data should also be widely shared across the organisation and with delivery and other partners to strengthen processes e.g. evidence that departments fund teams to work across boundaries such as for the race disparity audit. Where barriers to sharing outside the organisation exist (e.g. legal, technical), the organisation should be able to demonstrate concrete steps to work with partners to overcome these.

4.65 Finally, where possible, data sets should be publicly available, to bolster accountability by ensuring the public and Parliament have the information they need to hold budget holders to account.



## Pillar four: question 30

### How does the public body use performance data and trajectories to manage and improve performance?

- Is this data analysed at regular intervals to identify what works, what is not working, mitigate future risks and implement strategies to improve performance?
- Are these insights, examples of effective practice and learning from past performance being shared with senior leaders and used to improve performance?
- Is learning being used swiftly and cascaded down delivery chains to enable the system to respond and evolve?

- 4.66 This question examines how well the public body uses performance data, for instance whether it has systems in place to gather and evaluate accurate, timely performance data. Delivering public value across large systems is impossible without good performance data. Effective systems allow public bodies to take swift remedial action when problems arise and to understand whether actions are having their intended impact.
- 4.67 In particular, users may want to consider here how performance data is disaggregated to provide insights into what is impacting performance. Data should be analysed regularly, with the potential to be used as an evidence base for conclusions on what is or is not working.
- 4.68 How performance data, once produced, is then being communicated should be carefully considered. Insights should be shared with senior leaders, with public bodies ideally being able to draw on examples of when this has helped to improve performance. Evidence should also be sought of learning from this process being cascaded across the organisation, to enable staff at all levels to suggest improvements.

## Pillar four: question 31

### How is space created to trial and identify 'disruptive innovations' throughout the system?

- Do leaders encourage a culture of constructive challenge, where employees at all levels feel able to suggest and trial new ideas, even if these might not work?
- Do employees regularly discuss new ways to improve performance, including through marginal gains?
- Does the public body know when existing processes need disrupting or change?
- Does the public body research what new ideas have been tried elsewhere (making allowances for differences in context, circumstances or culture)?
- Are new ideas regularly tested first to understand if they will work in practice?
- Are policy makers confident using a range of methods to conduct formal trials or pilots?

- 4.69 Continuous innovation, both marginal and disruptive, is key to improving outcomes and reducing costs. The former are incremental improvements, frequently data driven, that improve service delivery for no extra cost. The latter are radical new practices that completely displace one method of providing a function or service with another, frequently better and for lower cost.
- 4.70 This is not something that should be taking place solely at the margins of a department, for instance through an innovation fund. Innovation should be something that runs through the culture of the organisation, whereby everybody is constantly seeking ways of improving the way things are done at all levels.
- 4.71 This question explores the extent to which organisations are innovating, how they are doing so, and whether the processes are in place to share best practice across the organisation. A culture of innovation or challenge is something that public bodies often find difficult to provide clear evidence for. Evidence could be provided of innovation being actively promoted and regularly discussed by the public body (particularly by senior leaders) and embedded in organisational culture through a number of routes (e.g. internal communications or performance management processes). Staff survey results may also help to identify how empowered staff feel to suggest improvements. Nonetheless, this is likely to be a challenging area for the public body to find evidence to support and may mean it is necessary to gather new evidence.

### Pillar four: question 32

What strategic evaluations of policies and programmes are undertaken or commissioned to understand whether actions are having the intended effects?

- Are these undertaken or commissioned on a systematic basis (before, during and after implementation)?
- Are insights used to adapt processes or improve performance?
- Is the learning from these evaluations being shared from the centre and contributing to a range of activity that will improve outcomes (such as objective setting or financial processes)?

4.72 Robust evaluations of the performance of policy or programmes are not frequently prioritised but often prove to be invaluable sources of information to help improve future delivery. Users should challenge evidence provided for this question to ensure it demonstrates the public body taking a strategic approach to the regular use of evaluations and the insights they provide, seeking more than just occasional examples of evaluations taking place. Evaluation should be an embedded part of policy or programme development, not just at the end of implementation. Learning should be shared across the organisation and be contributing to a range of activity (e.g. renewing objectives or evaluating financial processes).

## Area 13: stakeholder management and working across organisational boundaries

### Pillar four: question 33

How well does the public body understand the position of its key interest or stakeholder groups?

- Can it identify the key drivers of interest group/stakeholder views?
- Does it know how to effectively influence them?

4.73 The support of key stakeholders can make or break a policy or programme. Public bodies need a clear understanding of their key stakeholder groups, their views and the main concerns underpinning these to influence them effectively. Interest or stakeholder groups in this area refer to those with a strong interest in the outcomes of the area of spend under review.

4.74 These groups are, of course, likely to also be citizens and users. Due to this, responses to this question may overlap with pillar three. Key stakeholders should, however, be treated as more specific individuals or groups whose interest means they wield particular influence over the success of a policy or programme.

4.75 Public bodies can refer to a track record of engaging and building support from groups to respond to this question but will need to demonstrate the positive effect this has had on outcomes. Whilst public bodies should be monitoring closely the views and impact of key stakeholders, they should also guard against prioritising the views of particularly

vocal interest groups. The views and interests of a range of stakeholders should be taken into account to determine an approach that delivers the greatest public value.

#### **Pillar four: question 34**

**What is the public body doing to improve the support from key interest groups for the policy or programme?**

- Is there an overall long-term strategy?
- Is this strategy widely understood and being effectively delivered across the whole delivery chain?
- Is delivery of the strategy being tracked to measure success and ensure it is achieving its intended goals?

- 4.76 Having identified the views of stakeholders and the concerns underpinning these, public bodies should then have a strategy for effectively engaging them to maintain the strength of their relationships and, if possible, improve their support for a policy or programme.
- 4.77 Successful management of stakeholder relationships should not be measured on whether the stakeholders are for or against a particular government policy. What matters here is whether stakeholders understand the approach and steps are being taken to maintain constructive relationships and, where possible and over time, bring them on board. To do this effectively public bodies will need to take a joined-up approach to their stakeholder engagement and provide consistent messages at different levels of the organisation.

#### **Pillar four: question 35**

**How effectively do teams work across functional boundaries within public bodies, and across inter-organisational boundaries, to achieve better outcomes?**

- Are there incentives to encourage collaboration and are examples of best practice actively promoted or celebrated?
- Are different professions working together effectively to achieve outcomes (e.g. policy and analysts)?

- 4.78 Many policy problems are multi-dimensional. As such, dealing with them in silos can often lead to contradictory approaches that are collectively counter-productive. This is a bad result for users who don't get what they need, outcomes that don't improve, and for the taxpayer. Working in silos is a risk in any organisation and this risk is particularly acute for organisations as large as those in the public sector.
- 4.79 Collaboration is vital to mitigate these problems and a key component to the effective delivery of complex issues that cut across a number of organisations. This question seeks evidence of the public body working effectively with both those inside (i.e. teams within the public body) and outside (i.e. with other parts of government or providers) the organisation.

4.80 On internal collaboration, examples could be provided of where multi-disciplinary teams are working together across the public body to resolve challenges, as well as where collaboration is being actively promoted and celebrated. On external collaboration, evidence could refer to working effectively with other parts of central or local government, devolved administrations, wider parts of the public sector, the private sector or third party service providers.



# Annex A

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Allocative efficiency	The efficiency with which resources are used to achieve outcomes
Disruptive innovation	An innovative practice that displaces established processes with a completely novel and often lower cost way of achieving the same or better outcomes
Drivers	A factor that has a material effect on the activity of another entity
Economy	How cheaply inputs are purchased
Effectiveness	The impact outputs have on desired outcomes. Cost effectiveness is where resources are used in the optimal way to achieve outcomes
Efficiency	A key feature in the process of turning money into desired outcomes; i.e. to improve efficiency is to improve economy and/or productivity and/or effectiveness
Funding	The financial resource available
Goals	Milestones or future-focused, long-term achievements intended to lead towards a set vision
Human capital	Knowledge, skills, competencies or attributes that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being
Inputs	Resources that are purchased using public money
Marginal gains	An incremental improvement, frequently data driven, with the potential to provide a boost to performance for no extra cost
Objectives	Specific achievements to help reach a defined goal. Typically measurable and set over a given time
Outputs	Goods or services produced from inputs (activities maybe substituted where outputs are difficult to measure)
Outcomes	The intended impact of spending public money, i.e. the objectives sought by government. They can be either direct (usually measurable and timely) or indirect (causality usually difficult to determine, and may have a time lag)
Productivity	The ONS estimates the productivity of public services by comparing growth in total output with growing in total inputs

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	used. Productivity will increase when more output is being produced for each unit of input
Public value	The value created when public money is translated into outputs/outcomes which improve people's lives and economic well-being
RAG rating	A red/amber/green rating. In the case of the framework, this represents the likelihood of value being maximised from the area of spend under review. RAG judgements can also be given to indicate performance against a particular pillar or area to consider
Vision	Defines the optimal desire future state; what an organisation wants to achieve over time

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# Annex B

## Framework summary

## THE PUBLIC VALUE FRAMEWORK – SUMMARY

### PILLAR ONE: PURSUING GOALS (6 questions)

Understanding vision and goals	1. How well-defined is the overall vision for this area of spending?
	2. What measurable and SMART objectives have been set to achieve the goals and vision?
	3. What evidence does the public body use to link its chosen objectives to the vision/goals in this area of spend?
Degree of Ambition	4. What evidence does the public body use to satisfy itself that its vision and objectives are as realistically ambitious as they possible can be for in this area?
Implementing planning and monitoring progress	5. How does the public body monitor delivery of its goals and objectives?
	6. What data is used to track progress against delivering the vision, objectives and indicators?

### PILLAR TWO: MANAGING INPUTS (9 questions)

Managing financial resources	7. How does the public body plan to manage its financial resources?
	8. What processes exist for the public body to review its use of resources?
	9. What management information is regularly provided to key decision-makers to help inform decisions?
Quality of data and forecasts	10. How does the public body track how much has been spent (and on what) at each stage of the delivery chain, from central government to the front line?
	11. What forecasts does the public body produce to understand and manage the impact of in-year spending on future years?
	12. What evidence does the public body use to decide what it needs to purchase to meet its performance and financial objectives?
Benchmarking & cost control	13. How does the public body use cost benchmarking to improve efficiency and performance?
Cost shifting	14. How aware is the public body of cost-shifting risks?
	15. What strategy and contingency plans are in place to effectively manage risks?

### PILLAR THREE: USER AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT (6 questions)

Public and taxpayer legitimacy	16. What understanding does the public body have of what citizens think about the area of spend?
	17. What does the public body do with these insights?
User and client experience and participation	18. Does the public body understand the link between user and client experience and better outcomes?
	19. How does the public body plan to improve the experience of users and clients?
	20. What evidence does the public body hold of the link between user participation and improved outcomes?
	21. How does the public body plan to improve participation and change user/client behaviour?

### PILLAR FOUR: DEVELOPING SYSTEM CAPACITY (14 questions)

Capacity to manage the delivery chain	22. How strong is the delivery chain (from ministers to users?)
	23. How does the public body systematically identify, manage and strengthen areas of weakness within the delivery chain (such as financial weak points?)
	24. How responsive and resilient is the delivery chain to changing circumstances?
	25. How effective and consistent is commercial delivery throughout the organisation?
	26. How is new technology identified, developed or deployed to reduce costs and improve outcomes?
Workforce capacity	27. What processes and data does the public body use to monitor and plan for changes in its workforce?
	28. How does the public body intend to build the skilled workforce it will need to continue to deliver and adapt to future changes?
	29. How is the public body assessing and developing its leadership capability?
Capacity to evaluate impact	30. How does the public body use performance data and trajectories to manage and improve performance?
	31. How is space created to trial and identify 'disruptive innovations' throughout the system?
	32. What strategic evaluations of policies and programmes are undertaken or commissioned to understand whether actions have had the intended effects?
Stakeholder management	33. How well does the public body understand the position of its key interest or stakeholder groups?
	34. What is the public body doing to improve the support from key interest groups for the policy or programme?
	35. How effectively do teams work across functional boundaries within public bodies, and across inter-organisational boundaries, to achieve better outcomes?

## Pillar one: pursuing goals

### Q1) How well defined is the overall vision and goals for this area of spending?

- Are the vision or goals expressed clearly such that they could be understood by a member of the public?
- Are they outcome rather than output-focused?
- Are they linked to specific and measurable goals?
- Does the vision balance short-term and long-term aims appropriately, even if this has meant making tough choices?
- Is it clear how aims have been prioritised using well-understood criteria and a well-defined process?

### Q2) What SMART objectives have been set to achieve the goals and vision?

- Do the objectives result in improvements to outcomes that can easily be clearly understood?
- Do they incorporate metrics to assess the impact on human capital?
- Can the public body articulate how these objectives will maximise benefits for the whole of government?

### Q3) What evidence does the public body use to link its chosen objectives to the vision/goals in this area of spend?

- Is this evidence reviewed at regular intervals to ensure objectives remain relevant?
- Does the public body know the range of policy interventions available that could be used to achieve their vision/goals?
- Is evidence available of the relative effectiveness of different policy options, based on the latest academic research and examples of what works?

### Q4) What evidence does the public body use to satisfy itself that its vision and objectives are realistically as ambitious as they can possibly be in this area?

- Does it understand the ambition of its goals in relation to:
  - global best practice?
  - comparators in similar sectors?
  - historical performance?
- Have major interdependencies and constraints that may limit ambition been identified and, where needed, overcome?
- Are goals that require significant organisational change (e.g. structural, cultural, behavioural) along the delivery chain still being considered and, where relevant, adopted?

- Are strategies in place to manage and overcome major contextual constraints (such as limits to timescales, resourcing, technology or politics)?

**Q5) How does the public body monitor planning and implementation of its goals and objectives?**

- Is there a defined strategy with a clear delivery plan?
- Have meaningful milestones been set at sufficiently frequent intervals to support regular assessments of progress?
- Are there trajectories, showing the expected outturn at suitable intermediate points?
- Have appropriate and useful lead and lag indicators been identified for each objective?

**Q6) Does the public body have the data necessary to track progress against delivering the vision, objectives and indicators?**

- Can this data be broken down for comparisons (e.g. by unit or region)?
- Are there data gaps (and what currently prevents the public body from filling them?)

**Pillar two: managing inputs**

**Q7) How does the public body plan to manage its financial resources?**

- Is there a medium-term financial plan for the public body to live within its means?
- Does this plan set out the total financial resources available and how the public body is funded (e.g. central funding, commercial income etc.)?
- Is this plan linked with its performance objectives, strategy and delivery plan?
- Does this plan outline the risks around the financial resources available and set out plans to mitigate these (such as where it may be dependent on other organisations to provide funding to meet costs)?
- Does the public body understand the drivers of demands for its services (including the link to the experience of users and citizens?)
- Are there contingency plans in case funding pressures emerge or there are increases in demand?
- If applicable, can the public body demonstrate its funding mix is optimal with reference to alternative funding models?

**Q8) What processes exist for the public body to review its use of resources?**

- Do these run at regular intervals?
- Do the processes escalate emerging pressures promptly to senior decision-makers?

- Do they involve continuously assessing whether the existing allocation of resources remains the most productive?
- Do they include periodic zero-based budgeting exercises?
- Do they monitor changes in demand, using appropriate data?

**Q9) What management information is regularly provided to key decision-makers to help inform decisions?**

- Is this information relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive?

**Q10) How does the public body track how much has been spent (and on what) at each stage of the delivery chain, from central government to the front line?**

- Is data defined, structured, maintained and governed consistently?
- Is data recorded on an appropriate central finance system (e.g. OSCAR in central government using HMT's Common Chart of Accounts) in-line with best practice guidance such that it is possible to break down spending by programme/economic category?
- Does the public body have visibility over how resources have been allocated/deployed in arms-length or affiliated bodies?
- Does the public body integrate the expertise of other functions (e.g. HR, Estates or Commercial) to generate further insights and improving decision making?

**Q11) What forecasts does the public body produce to understand and manage the impact of in-year spending on future years?**

- Are these provided at regular intervals?
- Are in-year forecasts accurate (i.e. to within 1% of the outturn figure)?
- Do these forecasts include the impact of the in-year forecast on the following year?
- Are there plans to mitigate any pressures created in subsequent years?

**Q12) What evidence does the public body use to decide what it needs to purchase to meet its performance and financial objectives?**

- Does this evidence demonstrate the link between the purchase of inputs to the delivery of objectives?
- Is this evidence used to inform future decisions on the purchase of inputs?

**Q13) To what extent does the public body use its understanding of how its costs compare to others in improving efficiency performance?**

- Does the public body undertake internal and external (including international) comparison of both overall and unit cost data? Is it able to explain any major cost differences?
  - in terms of front-line/back office services?
  - in terms of unit costs in functional areas of spend (e.g. property or IT)?

- in comparison to historic performance?
- to understand and implement best practice (both domestically and internationally)?
- does the public body have systems to monitor and control costs in real-time?

**Q14) How would you assess the level of awareness in the public body of the risks of cost shifting?**

- Is it aware of the risk of having costs shifted on to it from other parts of the public sector?
- Is it aware of shifting costs on to other parts of the public sector? (and/or private sector)
- Is it aware where it is shifting costs in to future years?

**Q15) Is a strategy and set of contingency plans in place that effectively manage risks?**

- Does this strategy cover each of the risk identified above (i.e. risk from other parts of the public sector; to other parts of the public and/or private sector; or in to future years?)

**Pillar three: user and citizen engagement**

**Q16) What understanding does the public body have of what citizens think about the area of spend?**

- Are the drivers of these perceptions understood?
- Are differences in opinion between different groups of citizens understood?
- Is there a defined process for gathering these insights?

**Q17) What does the public body do with these insights?**

- Is there an effective strategy to influence public perceptions that is based on these insights?
- Does the strategy acknowledge the potential trade off that may be required to policy development in order to address public perceptions?
- Is the strategy being successfully delivered throughout the delivery chain?
- Are insights being disseminated and used across the organisation?

**Q18) Does the public body understand the link between user and client experience and better outcomes?**

- Does the public body assess the cumulative impact of different programmes on users and clients and how that affects their experience of the system?

**Q19) How does the public body plan to improve the experience of users and clients?**

- Is it aware of what contributes to improving experiences for users or clients?

- Is there an overall long-term strategy for improving experiences?
- Does this consider the changes necessary throughout the delivery chain to improve performance?
- Is this strategy being effectively delivered across the whole delivery chain?
- Is this strategy being tracked to measure success and ensure it is achieving its intended goals?

**Q20) What evidence does the public body hold of the link between user participation and improved outcomes?**

- Does this evidence include data on user participation in policy action?
- Does it include the drivers of better participation levels?

**Q21) How does the public body plan to improve participation and change user/client behaviour?**

- Is there an overall long-term strategy?
- Does this consider the changes necessary throughout the delivery chain to improve performance?
- Is this strategy being effectively delivered across the whole delivery chain?
- Is this strategy being tracked to measure success and ensure it is achieving its intended goals?

**Pillar four: developing system capacity**

**Q22) How strong is the delivery chain (from ministers to users)?**

- Is the delivery chain well-defined and understood within the organisations involved?
- Are there clear roles and responsibilities (i.e. named people throughout the chain accountable for each link within it)?
- Are policy or programme owners able to effectively influence accountable people at different stages of the chain?
- Is the delivery chain responsive and resilient to changing circumstances, including major external shocks (such as machinery of government or political changes)?
- Can it balance coping with short-term pressures (e.g. unexpected increases in demand for services) with developing the system's long-term capacity?
- Where relevant, is there a plan for systems or services going offline (that identifies potential risks, includes a data recovery strategy and impact analysis on users)?

**Q23) How does the public body manage the delivery chain and continuously identify ways to improve it?**

- Is there a team within the body that continuously explores how the chain could be strengthened?



- Do staff all along the chain understand what they are trying to achieve and why?
- Do they regularly feedback on delivery issues and suggest how the chain can be improved?
- Is feedback through these routes acted upon and (where possible) resolved?
- Are differences between performance and financial accountability chains understood?

**Q24) How effective and consistent is commercial delivery throughout the organisation?**

- Is the pipeline of forthcoming commercial activity well-understood and regularly updated (at least every six months) to allow sufficient planning?
- Are all relevant commercial options analysed prior to agreeing a sourcing pathway, and competition maximised through early market engagement and accessible service design requirements?
- Are contracts flexible and adaptable, then managed effectively to extract maximum value throughout the lifecycle?
- Are services or activities that no longer add value effectively decommissioned?

**Q25) What is the public body doing to identify, develop and deploy new technology to reduce costs and improve outcomes?**

- Are users and staff being increasingly encouraged to use digital services?
- Has new technology been designed with a user-centred approach (i.e. considering how to simplify and improve the experience of the range of users that will interact with the service)?
- Is the service iterated and improved on frequently, using agile, iterative and user-centred methods?
- Is data on service performance regularly collated and monitored, to analyse the success of the service, with insights gathered then used to support the next phase of development?

**Q26) What processes and data does the public body use to monitor and plan for changes in its workforce?**

- Are these linked to financial planning and wider service delivery goals?
- Do these processes identify risks, such as skills or knowledge gaps and recruitment/retention issues?
- Do processes gather accurate and up-to-date workforce data?
- Is this data used to define future workforce requirements over the short and long-term?
- Have indicators been developed to monitor workforce changes?

- Are these indicators regularly reviewed and used by decision-makers to monitor whether the strategy is being implemented successfully?
- How is the industrial relations context monitored and are contingency plans in place to respond to potential risks?

**Q27) How does the public body intend to build the skilled workforce it will need to continue to deliver and adapt to future changes?**

- Is a strategy in place to guide changes over the long-term that is this linked to the public body's overall vision and goals?
- Does this strategy define future workforce requirements?
- Does the strategy set out how the public body intends to attract and develop valuable key skills, such as commercial, finance, policy or transformation skills?
- Is the public body planning for the impact that new technology or automation could have on the workforce in future?
- Is there a strategy for embedding any necessary behavioural/cultural change that could be required in future?
- Is there a plan for the public body to develop the diversity of its workforce?

**Q28) What leadership capability does the public body have?**

- Has the organisation articulated what good leadership looks like?
- Do staff consider senior leaders to:
  - Have a clear vision for the future of the organisation?
  - Manage change well?
  - Be responsive to feedback and focused on improving staff engagement?
- Is leadership performance monitored and managed effectively?
- Is there a strategy in place to develop leadership skills in the public body and address identified gaps?

**Q29) What access does the public body have to the data sets it needs?**

- Is data available considered accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive?
- Are there data gaps?
- Does the public body know what currently prevents gaps from being filled?
- Is it actively taking steps to overcome those obstacles?
- Are data sources shared widely across the organisation, so all are aware of what's available?
- Are data sets also made available to other departments and delivery partners, to use insights and allow better practice?

- Where possible, is data made public, so it can be used by users, citizens and other parties?

**Q30) How does the public body use performance data and trajectories to manage and improve performance?**

- Is this data analysed at regular intervals to identify what works, what is not working, mitigate future risks and implement strategies to improve performance?
- Are these insights, examples of effective practice and learning from past performance being shared with senior leaders and used to improve performance?
- Is learning being used swiftly and cascaded down delivery chains to enable the system to respond and evolve?

**Q31) How is space created to trial and identify 'disruptive innovations' throughout the system?**

- Do leaders encourage a culture of constructive challenge, where employees at all levels feel able to suggest and trial new ideas, even if these might not work?
- Do employees regularly discuss new ways to improve performance, including through marginal gains?
- Does the public body know when existing processes need disrupting or change?
- Does the public body research what new ideas have been tried elsewhere (making allowances for differences in context, circumstances or culture)?
- Are new ideas regularly tested first to understand if they will work in practice?
- Are policy makers confident using a range of methods to conduct formal trials or pilots?

**Q32) What strategic evaluations of policies and programmes are undertaken or commissioned to understand whether actions are having the intended effects?**

- Are these undertaken or commissioned on a systematic basis (before, during and after implementation)?
- Are insights used to adapt processes or improve performance?
- Is the learning from these evaluations being shared from the centre and contributing to a range of activity that will improve outcomes (such as objective setting or financial processes)?

**Q33) How well does the public body understand the position of its key interest or stakeholder groups?**

- Can it identify the key drivers of interest/stakeholder views?
- Does it know how to effectively influence them?

**Q34) What is the public body doing to improve the support from key interest groups for the policy or programme?**

- Is there an overall long-term strategy?
- Is this strategy widely understood and being effectively delivered across the whole delivery chain?
- Is delivery of the strategy being tracked to measure success and ensure it is achieving its intended goals?

**Q35) How effectively do teams work across functional boundaries within public bodies, and across inter-organisational boundaries, to achieve better outcomes?**

- Are there incentives to encourage collaboration and are examples of best practice actively promoted or celebrated?
- Are different professions working together effectively to achieve outcomes (e.g. policy and analysts)?

# Annex C

## Template terms of reference

The following terms of reference could be used to set up a discrete formal review using the Public Value Framework:

### Public Value Review, Terms of Reference – [Name of scope]

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#### Scope (see section 3.10 of guidance)

Include in this section: (i) The overall scope; (ii) areas or questions of focus; (iii) areas out of scope (if clarity required).

#### Sponsors (see section 3.31)

This is likely to be a senior or political leader for the public body.

#### Objectives

E.g. “to establish a shared understanding of the challenges, their causes and prospective solutions within [scope] based on accurate, comprehensive information” or “to produce a set of recommendations to improve performance.”

#### Deliverables (see section 3.48)

E.g. A report covering: (a) findings; (b) A set of recommendations and actions agreed by the Steering Committee; and (c) RAG assessments of each of the 13 areas to consider (including commentary) to inform headline assessments for each of the pillars and an overall RAG rating.

#### Governance (see section 3.29)

##### Responsible Senior Owner (RSO)

The RSO will be accountable to their relevant political leadership for delivering this report.

[Name, Job title, Department]

##### Steering Committee

Members: [Name], [Job title]

Additional invitees (non-quorum members): [Name], [Job title]

Steering Committee Meeting Dates: [Dates]

##### Project Team

Time and resource commitment required for the project from the team: “e.g. day-to-day activity will be coordinated by the Project Manager; the core project team will meet approx. X times.”

**Method**

This section could set out the guiding principles for the review. The principles outlined in section 3.3 of the guidance could be a helpful initial point of reference. The summary box on page 22 may also be helpful for further ideas.

**Timescales**

This section outlines the broad stages of the project and what action will be undertaken when (e.g. set up; data gathering and analysis; checkpoint meetings; dates for further work such as interviews; front-line visits; deep dives; report drafting and finalisation).

**Post review**

This final section could outline how an organisation is intending to take forward recommendations from the process and monitor progress against these.



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This document can be downloaded from  
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