Cabinet Office

Scoping an Evaluation

Evaluation Task Force Academy 2.0

Hello

ETF Evaluation Academy

Module 1: Introduction to Evaluation

Module 2: Developing a Theory of Change

Module 3: Scoping an Evaluation

Module 4: Process Evaluation

Module 5: Impact Evaluation - Experimental Designs

Module 6: Impact Evaluation - Quasi-Experimental Designs

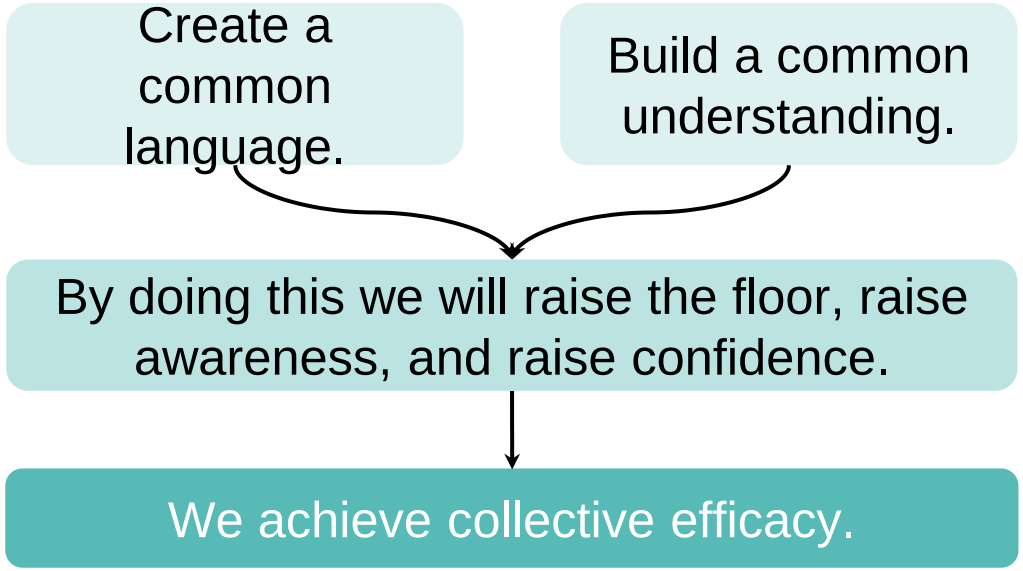
Module 7: Impact Evaluation - Theory-Based Designs

Module 8: Value for Money Evaluation

Module 9: Planning and Managing an Evaluation

Module 10: Communicating Evidence and Decision Making

The Evaluation Academy will upskill analysts across HMG departments in key evaluation methodologies and evaluation management techniques and will result in better and more evaluation across HMG.



Module 3: Overview of content

- Learning outcomes
- Why do we scope?
- Determining the purpose of an Evaluation
- Writing Evaluation Questions
- Identifying end users
- Choosing an Evaluation Method
- Planning and Managing your Evaluation
- Advocacy and application of learning

Key

Know/Comprehend: lowest level of complexity

Apply/Analyse: medium level of complexity

Evaluate/Create: highest level of complexity

Learning outcomes

- I can list and explain the key components of the evaluation Scoping stage
- I can scope and commission evaluation projects that will provide actionable findings that can be applied to future policies and projects
- I can determine the purpose of an evaluation
- I can create measurable and clear evaluation questions
- I can identify possible end users of the evaluation who have capacity to effect change
- I can contrast different evaluation methods and advise on the methodological rigour and value different evaluation approaches
- I can identify outcome measures
- I can advocate for including evaluation across the policy cycle

Why do we scope?

Why do we scope?

Activity: Think about the broad question at the top of this slide and write down some possible answers.

What is scoping? It determines what you can and will deliver. It ensures that your evaluation is focused, relevant, and feasible.

Why do we scope?

- Decide what to evaluate
- Determine the best evaluation method
- Understand what is and is not possible to measure
- Anticipate and plan for obstacles
- Ensure the evaluation will be used

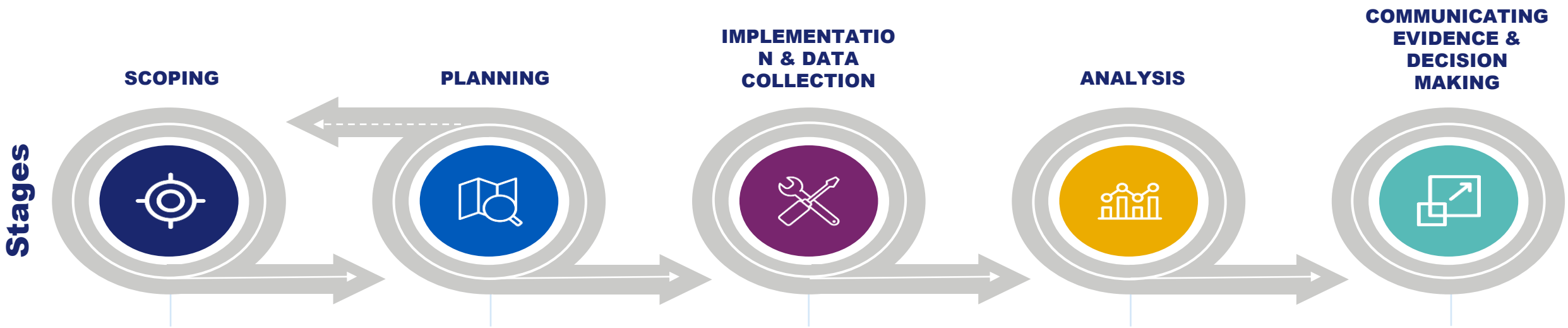
Teaching case study: MoJ

"One tip I'd really recommend is **clearly agreeing the scope** for an evaluation, and **getting sign-off** from stakeholders on this.

While the aim of an evaluation can be clear at the start, as complex **evaluations can take years to deliver**, there will inevitably be developments in policy priorities, and **new ideas** that policy and operational colleagues will want evidence on.

While incorporating new priorities into ongoing research can be a good idea when possible, **it won't always be feasible**, and may have a negative impact on the original aims."

Stages of evaluation

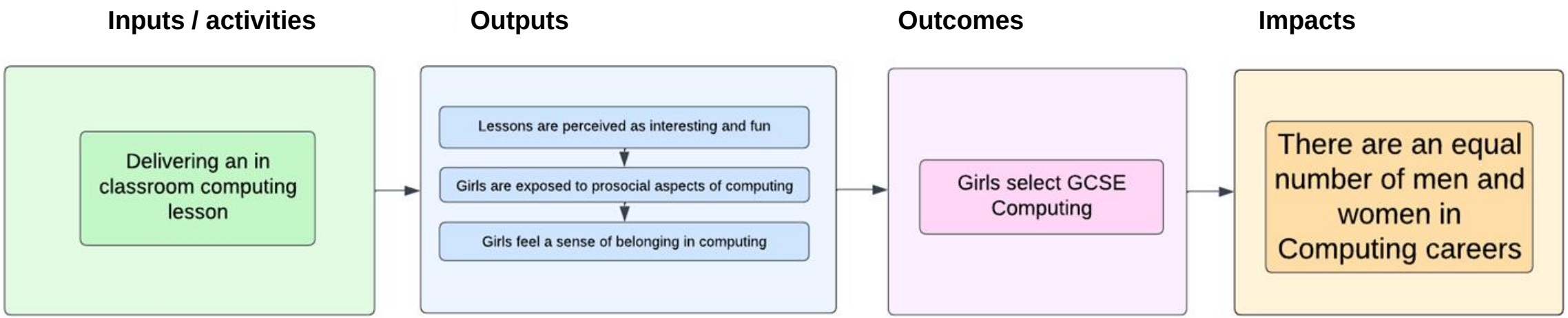


Activities*

1. Create a Theory of Change
2. Determine the purpose
3. Write evaluation question(s)
4. Define outcome measures
5. Identify primary intended users
6. Choose an evaluation method

**Scoping & Planning stages can occur at the same time and support each other.*

Case Study: Getting more girls into computing



Assumptions / Context

- Teacher confidence in lesson delivery
- Schools may or may not continue to encourage computing beyond the intervention

Determining the purpose of an evaluation

Determine the purpose of an evaluation

A good evaluation has a clearly articulated purpose which reflects stakeholder needs.

Activity: What are some common reasons for running evaluations?

- Learn if a programme does or doesn't work
- Learn why a programme does or doesn't work
- Provide feedback at early stages
- Creating evidence to advocate for change
- Ensure accountability

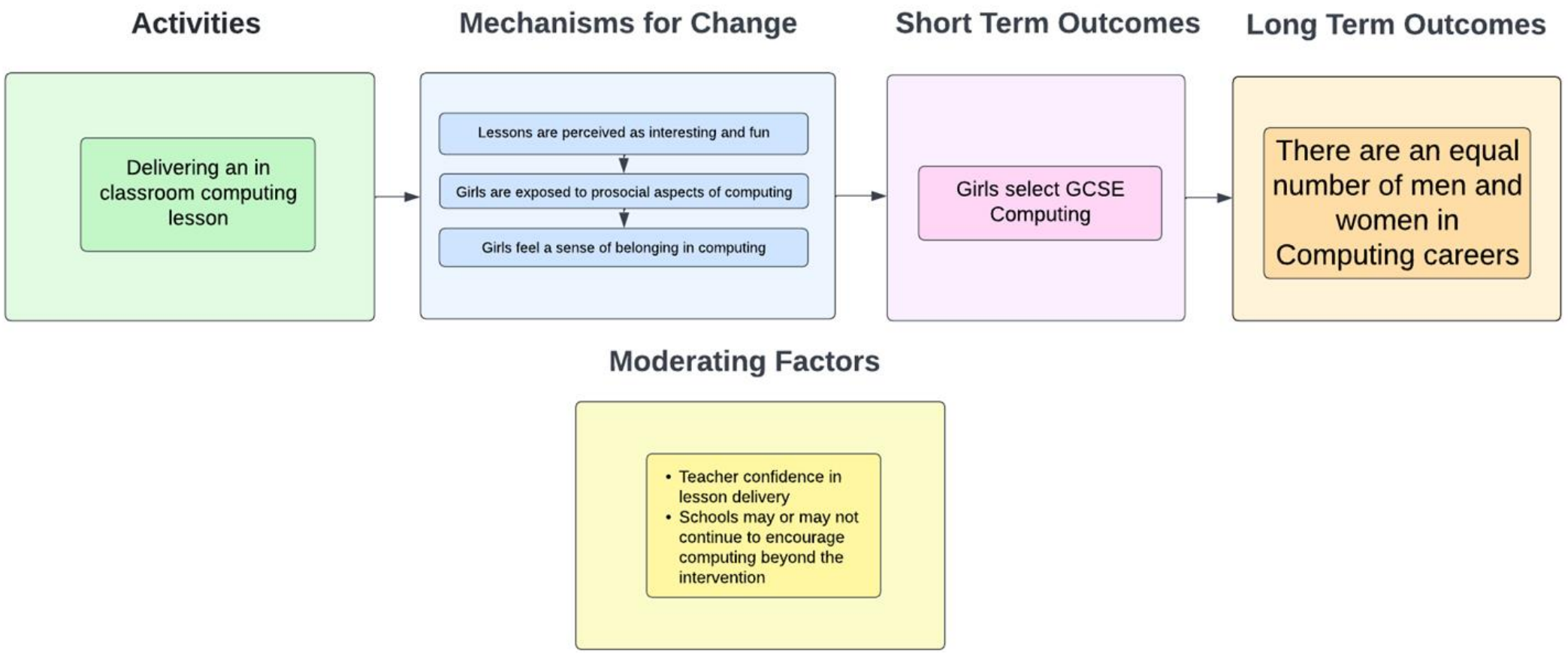
Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Justice

Cabinet Office

Agreeing the purpose of the evaluation

Can you list the main purposes of our computing evaluation?



Writing evaluation questions

Identify the key questions the evaluation will seek to answer

- Are residents more likely to pay their water bills on time if they receive a personalised reminder to do so?
- Are the students enrolled a school tutoring programme receiving all of the services they are supposed to?
- Does participating in a job training programme help people get higher paying jobs within 3 months of completing the programme?

Why evaluation questions are important

Tell you what you **will be able to learn**

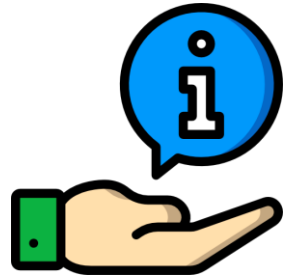
Clarify what you **won't learn**

Focus your evaluation on **useful questions**

Evaluation questions should be specific, measurable, and relevant

Focus on gathering relevant information

Facilitate clear communication between stakeholders

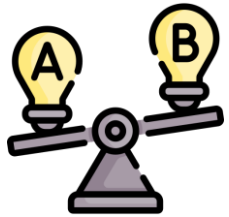


Give decision-makers the information they need

Building an evaluation question

1. Sample

2. Outcome



3. Comparator

4. Timeframe

Defining a sample

A group whose outcomes you are interested in

A group you can reach and collect data on

Activity: What might a good sample be for our coding programme?
What age group?
What types of schools?

Possible sample

- Girls aged 10-11
- At English state schools
- Who are offered the new programme
- Pre-GCSE subject choice

Defining an outcome measure

Outcome measures are what we use to **answer** our evaluation questions

Outcome measures should be **relevant** and **sensitive**

An outcome measure is something:

You want to learn about

You can collect data on

That could be plausibly influenced by your programme

Impact outcome measures

Impact evaluations - **one primary outcome measure.**

When selecting outcome measures ask yourself:

- Can you measure any outcomes directly?
- If not, can you use a proxy measure?
- How long after your programme are you likely to see a change?
- How far into the future will you continue to see a change?
- When is the data collected or updated?

Activity: What might be a good impact outcome for our coding programme?

Case study: DLUHC

Did the Troubled Families programme successfully reduce the proportion of looked after children?

Case study: DFE

Did funding a new MA in social work improve the knowledge and employment of social workers?

Case study: Scottish Government

What was the economic impact of building new rail infrastructure in Scotland?

Process outcome measures

You may want to assess **how well a programme is being implemented** and whether it is being **delivered as intended**.

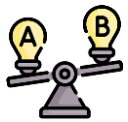
Process measures can answer questions such as:

- To what extent was the programme implemented as planned?
- Were there any unanticipated barriers or challenges to programme implementation?
- Were the programme activities delivered with fidelity?
- Were the activities and resources used in the programme appropriate and effective?
- Were the programme's intended participants reached and engaged in the programme activities?

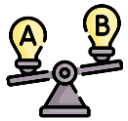
Activity: What process outcomes might we be interested in for our coding programme?

What number of sessions were delivered and attended?
What was the fidelity of programme delivery?
What was teacher and pupil satisfaction?
How much did we reach the intended audience?

Comparator



The yardstick you will use to determine if the programme was “successful” or not



This group is ideally similar in every way to your treatment group

Activity: What might be a good comparator group for our coding programme?

Girls age 10-11 in English state schools who are not offered the new programme.

Timeline

Thoughtfully choosing a time frame is important because many outcomes change over time. You can ask yourself:

- Is your programme delivered at a particular time?
- How far in the future are you comfortable assuming your outcome measure was affected by your programme?
- Is your data collected at specific points?

Activity: What might be a good timeline for our coding programme?

The 2024/2025 academic year.

Our finalised evaluation question

'What is the impact of offering the programme on the number of girls aged 10-11 in English state schools selecting computing at GCSE level, compared to those who were not offered the programme, in the 2024/25 academic year?'

Sample: girls age 10-11 at English state schools who are offered the new programme

Outcome: select computing at GCSE level

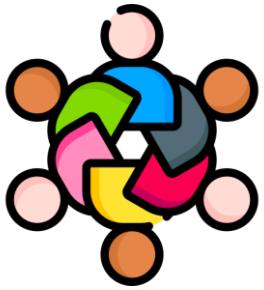
Comparator: girls who are not offered the programme

Timeframe: the 2024/2025 academic year

Identifying end users

Identify primary intended users

Involving key stakeholders helps to:

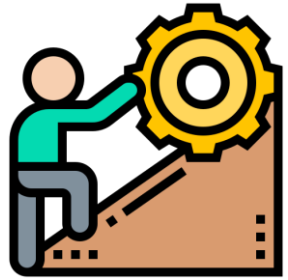


Bring in diverse perspectives

Clarify goals

Ensure the evaluation is used

Support the evaluation



Identify challenges

Activity: Have you worked on evaluations where stakeholder views were in conflict? How did you resolve this?

How to identify stakeholders and end users

Find those delivering a programme or impacted by it

Determine their level of influence

Prioritise based on their potential to effect change

Ask them:

- How could the evaluation contribute to the improvement of the project/programme?
- How could the evaluation contribute to decisions about the project/programme?
- What outcomes do they expect from the evaluation process?
- What would they expect to do differently because of this evaluation?

Activity: List out a set of stakeholders that you think might be relevant to consult for our coding programme.

Policy makers at DfE
Policy makers at DSIT
Policy makers at the GEO

Teachers/headteachers
Employers
Parents/carers
Education/ coding orgs

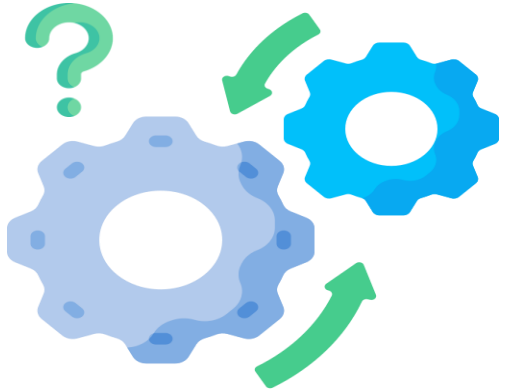
Choosing an evaluation method

Choosing an evaluation method

Before we can choose a method that works for our project, we first have to determine which category of evaluation our evaluation questions fit into.

Impact questions

OR



Process questions

OR

Value-for-money questions

Impact questions

- Focused on **outcomes**
- Tell you **the effect of something**
- Make a **comparison**

Example questions

- What effect is my programme or policy having?
- Are the people that the programme or policy is supposed to serve better off because of it?
- Do more people sign up for my programme if I change the recruitment materials?

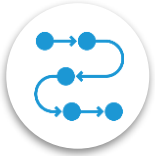
Pros

- ✓ Tell us whether a programme is effective or not
- ✓ More generalisable results

Cons

- × Can't explain *why* a programme does or doesn't work

Process questions



- ***What's* happening and *how***
- **Understanding programme outputs***

Example questions

- How is my programme currently operating? Does this match what was intended?
- Who is the programme or policy serving? Is this the intended audience?
- How do participants interact with the programme or policy? Is there any place they fall off?
- How much staff time is going into running the programme?

Pros

- ✓ Understand the range and diversity of experiences
- ✓ Tell us how prevalent or common an experience or barrier is
- ✓ Tell us why a programme worked (or didn't)
- ✓ More flexible and can adapt to suit changing circumstances

Cons

- × Can't tell us whether something worked

- Monitoring is sometimes referred to as process evaluation, because it focuses on the implementation process of a project. However, it only tracks progress towards programme goals and is not an evaluation method as it does not measure the extent to which these changes that are monitored are contributing to the outputs of a program.

Value-for-Money questions

- Focused on **cost effectiveness**
- Do the benefits of a programme justify the costs?

Example questions

- To what extent did the chosen delivery provide cost efficiencies compared to other options?
- Are we buying inputs of the appropriate quality at the right price?
- How well are the outputs produced by an intervention having the intended effect?

Pros

- ✓ Offer a comprehensive evaluation framework
- ✓ Ensure that funds are used where they can have the greatest impact
- ✓ Increase accountability and transparency in how public funds are used

Cons

- × Risk of oversimplifying complex programmes by reducing them to quantitative measures
- × Negative impact on innovation as novel approaches come with higher uncertainties
- × Risk of lacking stakeholder buy-in

Planning and managing your evaluation

Next steps: plan and manage your evaluation

A great evaluation plan will include…

A clear purpose

Evaluation questions & primary outcomes

Description of the **programme** being evaluated

The **evaluation method**

A description of the **data analysis plan**

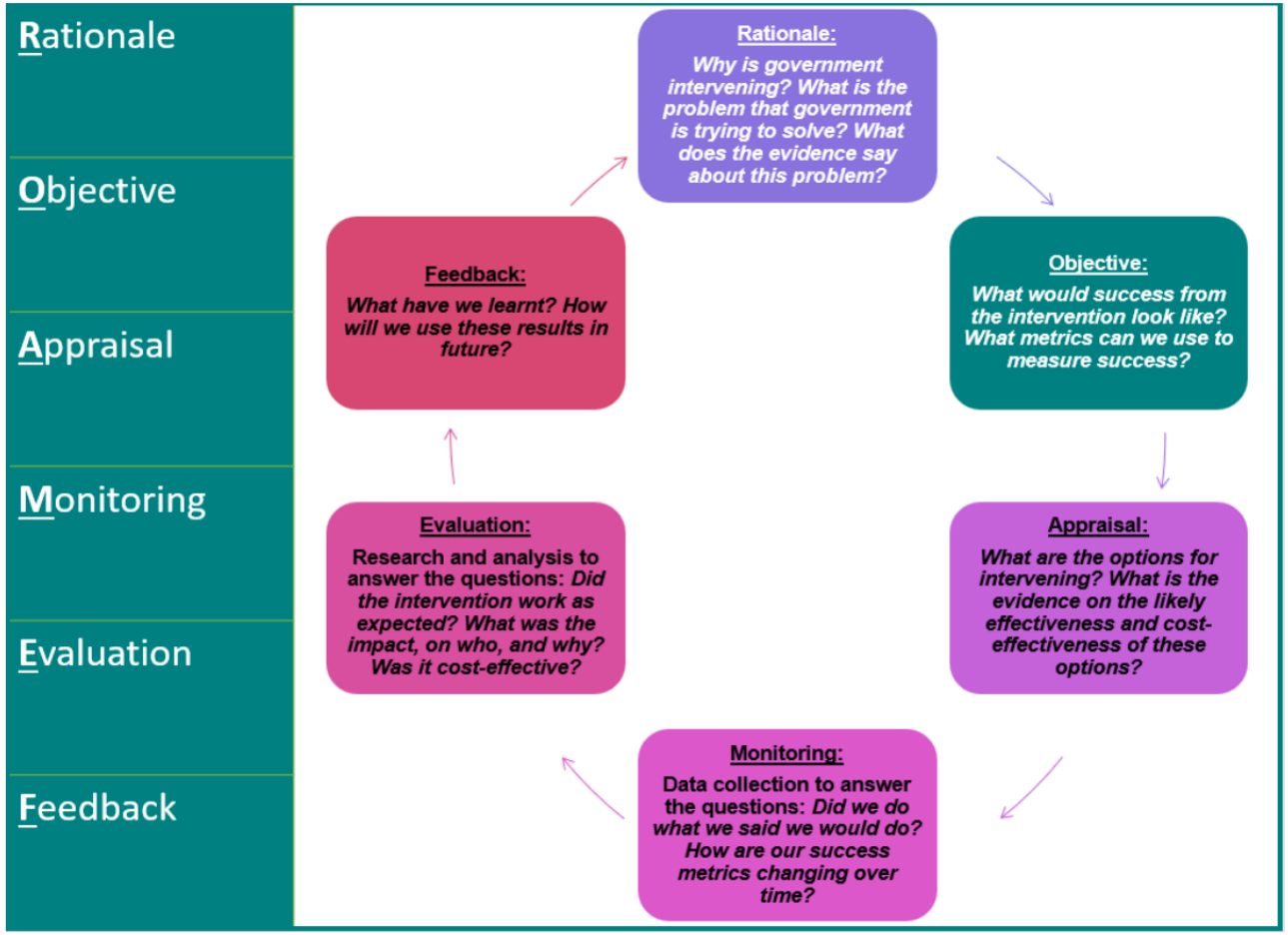
A description of the **ethical considerations**

A description of the **evaluation team**

A detailed **timeline and budget**

Advocating and application of learning evaluation

Using scoping skills across the policy lifecycle



Activity: How does what you have learned today fit into the ROAMEF cycle?

- Think about an upcoming or current evaluation or policy you are involved in. How can you apply your learning from this module to influence that work?
- What barriers exist? How do you push through? What people or resources can support you?
- Write an intention for how you will use this in your work in the next 1-2 months.

Summary

In this module, we have learnt:

- Why the scoping stage of an evaluation is important.
- The key components of the evaluation scoping stage.
- How to create measurable and clear research / evaluation questions (what you will / won't learn).
- How to define a sample (a group whose outcomes you are interested in and can collect data on)
- How to identify outcome measures (what we use to answer our evaluation questions).
- How to choose a comparator and develop a timeline.
- How to identify possible end users of the evaluation who have capacity to effect change.
- How to contrast different evaluation methods and advise on the methodological rigour and value different evaluation approaches.
- How to scope and commission evaluation that will provide actionable findings. You can be a stronger advocate for including evaluation across the policy cycle.

Further resources

Resource
EEF: Protocol, study plan and SAP templates
CDC: Evaluation plan template
Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel
The Magenta Book: Central Government guidance on evaluation
BIT: TESTS
The Green Book
EIF's 10 Steps for Evaluation Success