Planning and Managing Evaluations

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

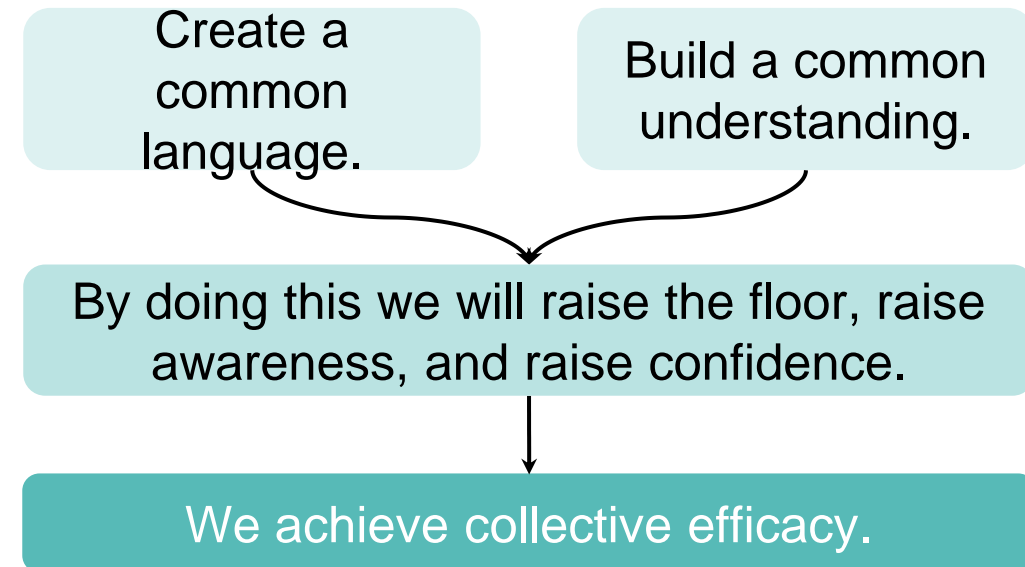**Module 6:** Impact Evaluation - Quasi-Experimental Designs

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.

Create a common language.

Build a common understanding.

By doing this we will raise the floor, raise awareness, and raise confidence.

We achieve collective efficacy.

Module 9: Overview of Content

- [Learning outcomes](#)

- [Planning your evaluation](#)

- [Costing your evaluation](#)

- [Managing risks](#)

- [Sourcing capability](#)

- [Managing an 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 compose ITTs that help suppliers respond accurately and demonstrate their suitability to deliver an evaluation

- I can identify routes to source capability needed to deliver evaluation projects

- I can plan feasible timelines for an evaluation project

- I can create scoring criteria to objectively assess supplier responses

- I can advise on the budget and resourcing impact of various evaluation methods

- I can collaborate with teams and/or suppliers to ensure evaluation projects are delivered successfully

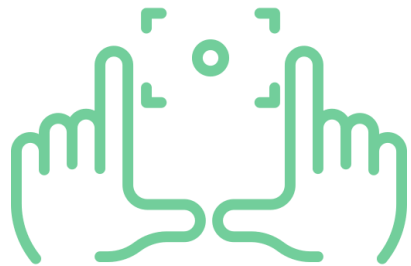- I can identify and mitigate risks to delivery

- I can monitor supplier performance and question decisions as needed
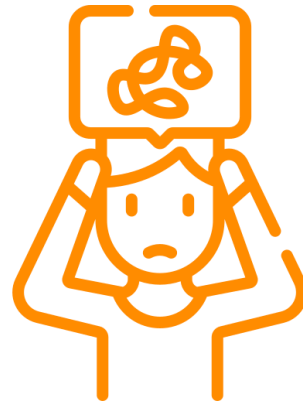
Planning your evaluation

Why do we need to plan?

Planning and managing an evaluation properly is *essential to getting an actionable output that can contribute to decision-making in your department*.

Brilliant scoping

+

Poor planning

or

Poor delivery

=

Unreliable insights for policy making

Planning an evaluation: key steps

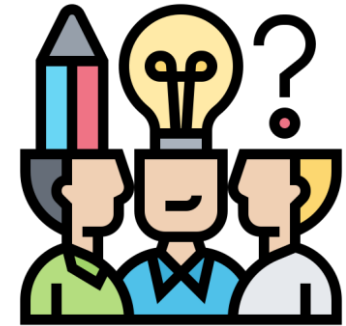Plan with implementation, delivery and policy teams.

Identifying skills needed

Planning a feasible timeline

Identifying risk

Estimating budget and sourcing a delivery team

Identify the skills needed to deliver an evaluation project

Activity: Imagine you are running the following evaluation (based on an MoJ case study).

- You are evaluating the impact of a psychological intervention on offending in one women's prison.
- The participants begin the task 6-8 weeks prior to their release, and complete follow-up psychometric tests 1 week prior to release.
- Your main outcome of interest is the rate of reoffending in the year after release.
- You want to conduct both an impact and process evaluation of this programme.

List the skills and people with those skills that you would need on your team.

Project Manager
Evaluation specialist (e.g. RCT or IPE specialist)
Data expertise
Legal expertise

Identify the skills needed to deliver an evaluation project

Project manager
- General understanding of evaluation methods and risks to timely delivery
- Ability/clearance to act quickly to make decisions required to mitigate issues evaluations could encounter in the field
- Highly organised with a clear line of communication to senior sponsors
- Ability to build strong relationships with other stakeholders
- Understanding of how 'things work' in the context in question

Evaluation lead
- Training/extensive experience in evaluation methods ranging from RCTs, non-experimental evaluations and mixed methods
- Can oversee and supervise the evaluation team
- Experience in conveying technical results in an accessible way
- Ability to make/sign-off decisions on evaluation design and understand tradeoffs

Quantitative analyst
- Ability to design impact evaluation and draft the Evaluation Protocol
- Can design data collection instruments, clean and analyse data, conduct the analysis
- Can interpret analysis and write up the findings

Case study: In an MOJ prison evaluation the team said that *"The main key to our success was the on site project manager. He was driven to enable the success of the implementation, and to support the women involved in the trial. He was also a well-respected officer at the prison."*

Identify the skills needed to deliver an evaluation project
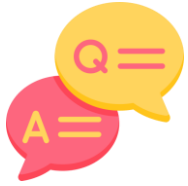
Qualitative analysts

- Ability to design qualitative evaluation and draft Evaluation Protocol
- Can design qualitative materials, collect data, analyse data, and conduct analysis
- Can interpret analysis and write up the findings
- (If needed) has experience conducting research with vulnerable groups, with research ethics, or security clearance

Quality assurance

- Someone outside the project team
- Sufficient expertise to assess quality

Legal/data support

- Experience with GDPR so the evaluation can access, use and store the data required

Case study: MoJ Prison programme

- Given the population of study and the context, the MOJ team also included an external psychologist who monitored the evaluation
- Consider QA from an expert with a background in running research in prisons to QA approach and analysis.
- Consider legal review of collecting and storing sensitive data from prisoners
- Consider ethics review of evaluation materials

Identify the skills needed to deliver an evaluation project

If you're sourcing these skills externally, look at **years of experience** running evaluations rather than titles, they can vary widely across organisations.

Plan a feasible timeline

Use a project planning tool like a Gantt chart

Work backwards from any key dates

Key things to think about

1 Programme **milestones**

2 **Political or departmental decisions** the work will inform

3 The **duration** of the programme

4 How long it will take to achieve the **sample** needed

5 Anything unique to your policy area with relevance for **timelines**
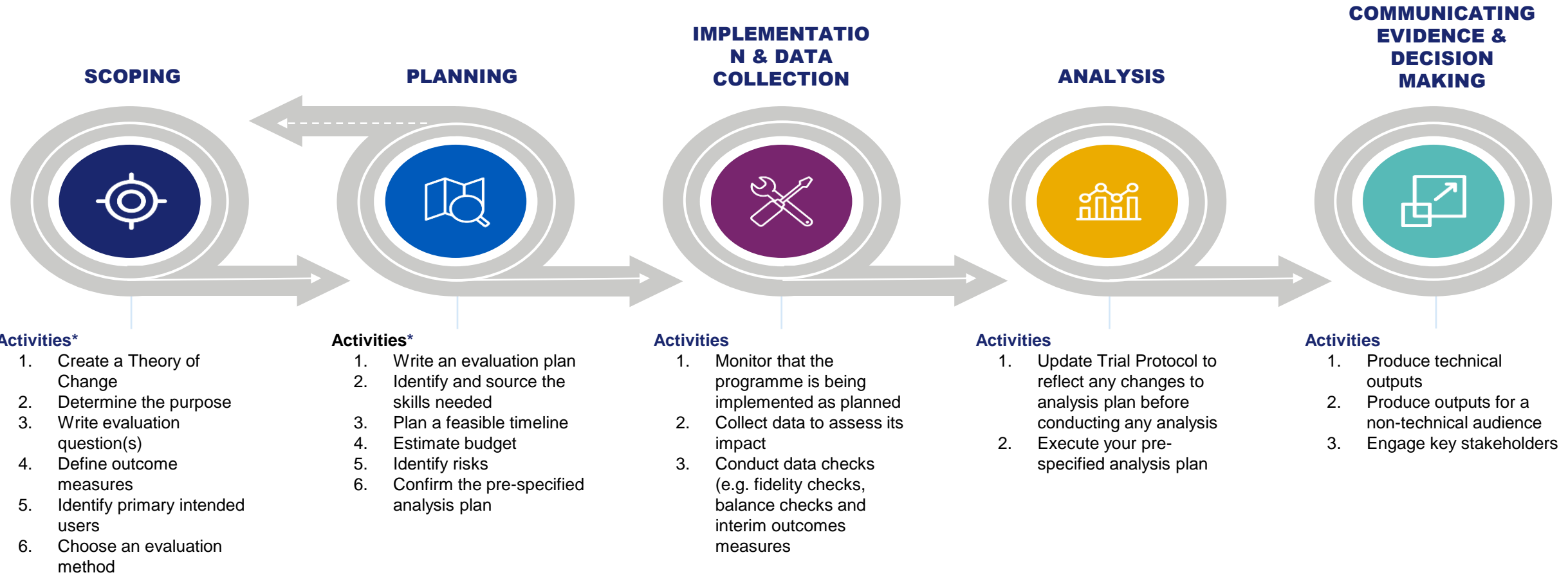
Plan a feasible timeline

Case study: Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (HMRC)
- The evaluation was a **constant moving picture** due to policy changes that were made in response to the pandemic.
- This meant a **more pragmatic approach** to evaluation had to be adopted.
- The evaluation team had to **adapt their approach** during the planning phases, and it was important to identify how to provide the **most robust findings** given these constraints.

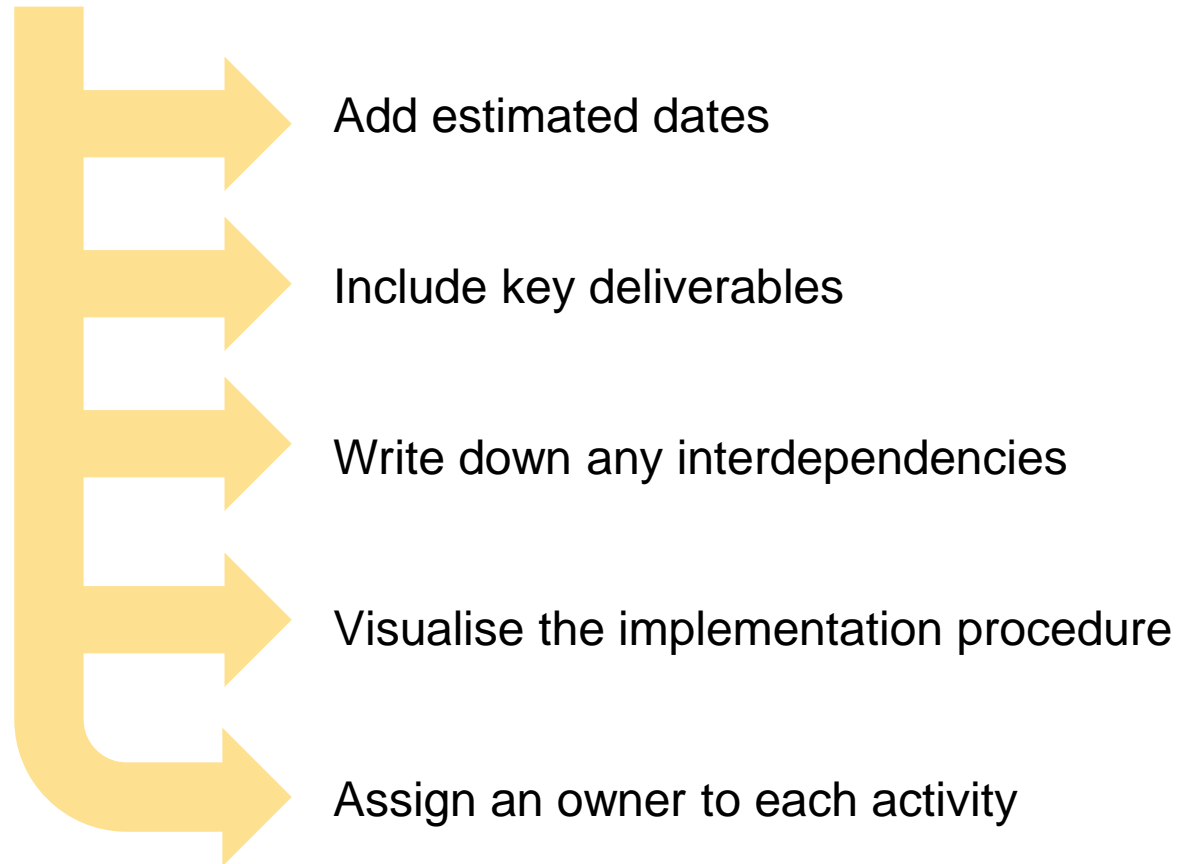# Determine the key project activities and deliverables

Stages

SCOPING

PLANNING

IMPLEMENTATION & DATA COLLECTION

ANALYSIS

COMMUNICATING EVIDENCE & DECISION MAKING

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

Activities*
1. Write an evaluation plan
2. Identify and source the skills needed
3. Plan a feasible timeline
4. Estimate budget
5. Identify risks
6. Confirm the pre-specified analysis plan

Activities
1. Monitor that the programme is being implemented as planned
2. Collect data to assess its impact
3. Conduct data checks (e.g. fidelity checks, balance checks and interim outcomes measures

Activities
1. Update Trial Protocol to reflect any changes to analysis plan before conducting any analysis
2. Execute your pre-specified analysis plan

Activities
1. Produce technical outputs
2. Produce outputs for a non-technical audience
3. Engage key stakeholders

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

Determine the key project activities and deliverables

Populate your plan for **each activity** at **each stage** of your evaluation.

Add estimated dates

Include key deliverables

Write down any interdependencies

Visualise the implementation procedure

Assign an owner to each activity

Remember optimism bias!

Activity: Plan a feasible timeline

Activity: You are evaluating the impact of a psychological intervention on offending in one women's prison.
- **The participants begin the task 6-8 weeks prior to their release, and complete follow-up psychometric tests 1 week prior to release**
- **Your main outcome of interest is the rate of reoffending in the year after release**
- **You want to conduct both an RCT and an IPE of this intervention**

List some of the things that may influence the timeline of your case study project. What might cause delays?

Common causes of delays

Data access

Who holds the relevant reoffending data, and how will you get access?

Can you link this data to individual women in treatment and control conditions?

When and how regularly is the data made available, and how does this impact on timelines?

Ethics and safeguarding

What processes will you need in place for visiting the prison and interviewing women?

Do these processes need to be reviewed by an ethics committee?

What will your consent process be?

External sign-off

Do you need sign-off from teams at the prison?
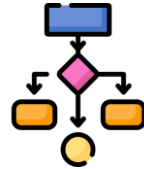
What information do they need?

Recruiting participants

Could attrition from the trial be an issue?

Create an evaluation plan

Gantt **Process diagram** **Risks** **Analysis strategy** **Trial design**

Possible Result	Decision
Programme has no effect	● Stop implementation ● Consider piloting other alternative to shift our outcome of interest
Programme has a backfire effect	● Stop implementation immediately ● Assess IPE to understand where the backfire may have come from ● Consider piloting other alternative to shift our outcome of interest
Programme significantly improves outcome of interest	● Continue implementation ● Begin preparations to scale

Costing your evaluation

Estimating the cost of your evaluation

Two main types of costs

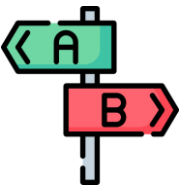Staff time

Expenses

Criteria to estimate staff time

Length of the evaluation

The MoJ evaluation will take over a year, because the outcome measure is captured a year after release.

Data collection

Sensitive data on reoffending will take time and might have restricted access requirements.

For an impact evaluation: QED or RCT?

Here we are conducting a simple RCT in one prison, meaning that the analysis component of the evaluation may be simpler than if we had to conduct a QED.

What type of qualitative work will you do and how much?

Because the MoJ IPE will be conducted with a vulnerable group, it will require more budget than simpler evaluations.

What type of outputs will you need?

Always try to create a technical report as well as a policy relevant summary and visualisation of the findings.

Will you need to complete an ethics review or access data held externally?

Evaluations which do not need this will be less costly.

Typical additional expenses

Data collection costs

Compensation for research participants

Transcription services for interviews and focus groups

Ethics approval processes or legal fees

Managing risks

Common risks to evaluation programmes

Budget overruns

The MoJ evaluation may have high levels of participants dropping out, extending the trial.

Force majeure

A change to sentencing laws in the UK could mean that participants are released from prison earlier than expected, and cannot complete the programme.
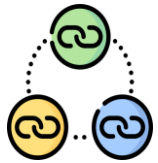
Machinery of government changes

A new Minister may want to completely change the programme focus.

How to identify and mitigate risks to delivery

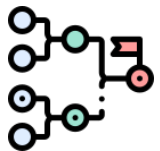Use your programme planning documents to:
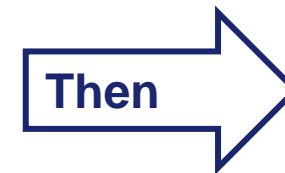
1. Review key internal dependencies

2. Review key external dependencies

3. Determine whether there is enough time for QA and other processes

4. Use your ToC to identify programme-level risks

Then

5. Create a risk register with R A G rating

How to identify and mitigate risks to delivery

Run a premortem session. Invite outside observers and people who have run similar evaluations before.

Some questions to ask:

- How will we know we failed?

- What did we do OR not do that caused us to fail?

- What got in the way of delivery?

- What incorrect assumptions did we make?

- Who knew we would fail?

- Who is surprised or sad that we failed?

- Who is glad that we failed?

Sourcing capability

Sourcing capability to deliver your evaluation project

Internal evaluation   **External evaluation**   **Mix**

1. Do you have the necessary skills to conduct the evaluation to a high standard?

2. Do you have capacity?

3. How much budget do you have?

4. Do you need your evaluation to be independent?

Sourcing capability to deliver your evaluation project

If you decide that your evaluation cannot be delivered in-house, then you will need to **source a supplier to deliver it for you**.

1. Discuss with your procurement team

2. Understand key procurement routes

3. Search on Contracts Finder for potential suppliers

4. Ask the ETF's evaluation trial and advice panel

Writing ITTs

In working with your procurement team, you'll need to write an ITT to brief potential suppliers and solicit responses.

A checklist of things to **keep in mind** when writing your ITT:

✓ **Clarity** is helpful: *Set out clearly what you want your suppliers to respond to*

✓ Run a pre-ITT **briefing event**

✓ Make sure your ITT is **proportional** to the size of the evaluation

✓ Remember internal **reviews** and sign-off

Key information to request from potential suppliers

An understanding of how the supplier will approach the evaluation, key strengths and weaknesses of their approach. *Think carefully about how much you want to constrain responses.*

Their experience in the topic area and type of evaluation

The level and type of reporting required

An outline of back-up evaluation options and risk management strategies

Data processing and ethics requirements

BONUS

If a policy team is soliciting service providers to run the programme, try to incorporate elements needed for the evaluation into programme ITTs.

Writing well specified ITT questions

Question asking suppliers which the methodology they would use for an evaluation

✅ Well specified question

Describe full details of the research methodology (including data collection and analysis methods) and how this will meet the listed aims and objectives. This should include details of:
- number and type of fieldwork components
- research design
- suitable sampling approach and frame
- contact procedures and how these will be designed to maximise participation rates
- practicalities of researching in a probation/police setting and with people receiving IOM
- how you intend to refine and test any materials to ensure they will meet the research aims and objectives effectively
- understanding of wider operational context and pressures, including probation unification, COVID-19 recovery and resourcing

❌ Less well specified

We want to understand if a campaign to encourage people to save more into their pensions has worked. How would you evaluate this programme?

Writing well specified ITT questions

Question asking suppliers to describe how they would collect data

✅ Well specified question

- We expect that we will have access to data from the following sources (Gov linked database), which could be used to assess the primary outcomes of the trial. Acquisition of this data would be overseen by us but creation of a data sharing agreement would need to be led by the supplier.
- We would also like the supplier to recruit and run a survey with ~500 participants to monitor their experience of taking part in the intervention. This sample should be reasonably representative of the overall target population (e.g. in terms of age, gender, ethnicity).
- Please outline how you would approach this, including potential risks and timeline implications.

❌ Less well specified

Please describe the process for how you will collect data. Some internal data is available but other data will need to be collected by the supplier to measure participant experience of the evaluation.

Writing well specified ITT questions

Question asking suppliers to describe how they would conduct a process evaluation.

✅ **Well specified question**

- We want our process evaluation to help us understand how effectively the intervention was delivered.
- We anticipate that this would require ~20-30 one-on-one interviews and 5-8 focus groups with ~10 participants each but we are open to alternative approaches. We are particularly interested in learning how disadvantaged groups - i.e.. people living in the 20% most deprived areas, as defined by the English indices of deprivation 2019 dataset - may have experienced the intervention. However, we are open to suggestions on an alternative measure of deprivation.
- Please outline how you would conduct this, including your methods and rationale

❌ **Less well specified**

- We want our process evaluation to help us understand how effectively the intervention was delivered.
- We are particularly interested in learning how disadvantaged groups may have experienced the intervention. Please outline how you would conduct this, including your methods and rationale.

Assessing supplier responses

Before you publish your ITT, you need to include the scoring criteria and weights for your questions.
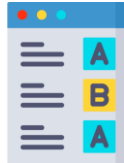
Sample scoring criteria

- Typical weights in ITT put an 80% weight on the technical response provided by the potential supplier, and 20% on the price quoted
- Technical responses are often broken down into:
  - (i) an explanation of the methodology (20-30%)
  - (ii) the staff who will work on the project and their experience (25-30%)
  - (iii) a project plan and key risks (15-30%)
  - (iv) social value questions (10%)
- Price can be, but does not have to be, weighted by the cheapest bid and be assigned 20% weight

Score the tender

- Form a team with different backgrounds
- Make sure to include a procurement and an evaluation expert

# Case study: Assessing MoJ evaluation bid responses

Has the evaluation been properly scoped?
- Does the supplier demonstrate a clear understanding of the issue and evaluation purpose?
- Have they proposed an appropriate, robust research method?

Identify the skills needed to deliver an evaluation project
- Have they worked in prisons and/or with vulnerable populations before?
- Have they run RCTs and IPEs before?
- Is there a balance of senior and junior researchers and experience?
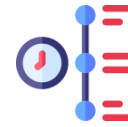
Plan a feasible timeline
- Have they grasped the key project activities and proposed suitable deliverables?
- Does their response reflect an awareness of what might affect the timeline?

Estimating the cost
- Have they included a budget and approach for data collection?

Identifying risks
- Have they outlined a set of risks to the project, with appropriate mitigations?

Managing an evaluation

Now comes the exciting part: kick off your evaluation!
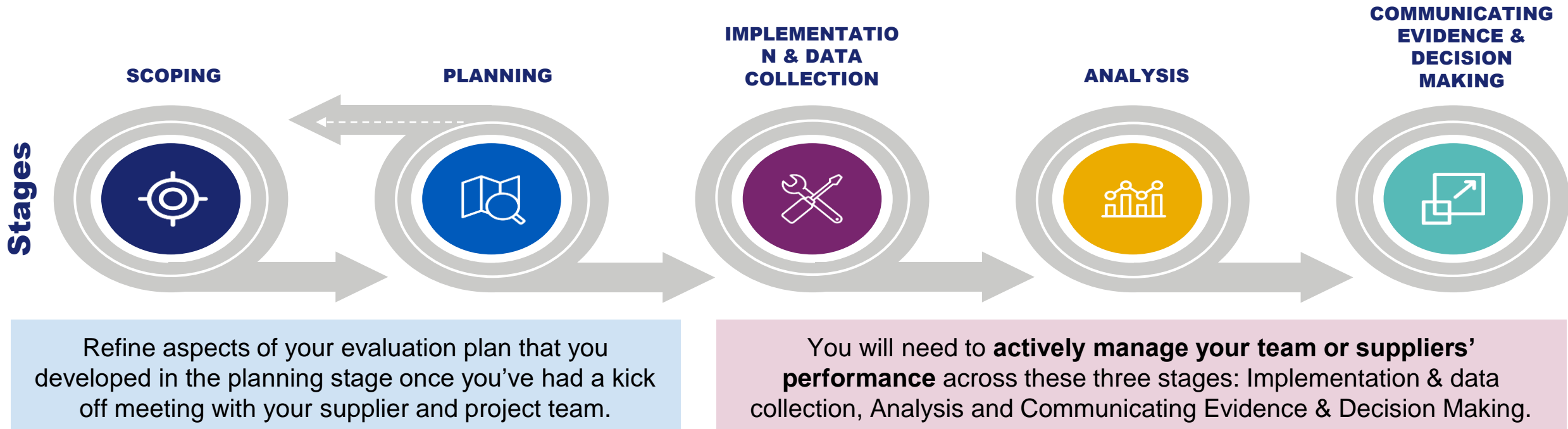
Key **kick-off activities** include:

1. Confirm project aims and scope

2. Confirm roles and responsibilities

3. Confirm project timelines

4. Cover any preferred ways of working

5. Confirm cadence and method of evaluation updates

6. Have a 'getting to know you' session to break the ice

If you're using an external supplier, some of these steps this stage will be informed by your contract agreement. But remember you want to start to build a relationship with mutual trust within your team or with your supplier. Strong evaluations have teams which can share concerns and collaboratively solve problems that arise.

HIGH
QUALITY

Managing an evaluation

Once you have kicked off the project you will need to actively manage your team or suppliers' performance across all stages of the evaluation.

Stages

SCOPING

PLANNING

IMPLEMENTATION & DATA COLLECTION

ANALYSIS

COMMUNICATING EVIDENCE & DECISION MAKING

Refine aspects of your evaluation plan that you developed in the planning stage once you've had a kick off meeting with your supplier and project team.

You will need to **actively manage your team or suppliers' performance** across these three stages: Implementation & data collection, Analysis and Communicating Evidence & Decision Making.

Implementation and data collection stage

The aim is to **change as little as possible**, sticking to your original plan.

Document agreed changes
and their rationale in writing

+

Assess if any changes affect
the quality of the evaluation

Case study: In the prison evaluation example, imagine the following two scenarios:
- The implementation team were not able to randomise but instead gave the treatment only to the prisoners who they thought would benefit the most
  - ➢ *Impact: This will affect your impact analysis strategy*
- You can only interview women who were enthusiastic enough to proactively leave onward contact details with the evaluation team.
  - ➢ *Impact: This limits what your IPE can tell you about disengaged participants, or those who did not find the programme beneficial*

Implementation and data collection stage

Be mindful of your scope
Revisit your Theory of Change and Evaluation Protocol regularly. If you have an external supplier, expanding scope may require compromises

Give constructive feedback
Everyone wants to run a good evaluation, so try to work collaboratively to solve problems

Case study: HMCTS Reform
"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."

Managing an evaluation - Analysis stage

Storyboard meeting: Before analysis begins, hold a meeting to storyboard the output.

Reviewing reporting: Complete your own internal QA processes or ask your supplier to confirm their QA processes.

Case study (Covid Job Retention Scheme). "*Before putting pen to paper, make sure you get a detailed bullet-pointed skeleton of the evaluation agreed with seniors.*

Rather than just listing the main components of each chapter, make sure it captures the planned key narrative/takeaway for each chapter, as well as the caveats, risks etc. This will save you a lot of time and pain later on."

Communicating evidence and decision making stage

Congratulations, you've run a great evaluation! But there are still key things you need to manage to ensure your results are disseminated and used effectively in decision making.

Ensure your team write a short note or slide deck to communicate findings to non-technical audiences and senior stakeholders

Encourage your team to develop infographics and graphs to engage your audience

Monitoring performance

Activity: What are some common team or supplier performance issues you have come up against when managing evaluations?

Monitoring performance

When monitoring an evaluation being conducted by an external supplier, you should:

✓ Ensure clear project **scope**

✓ Have your **own analytical expertise** in place

✓ Have frequent **check-ins**

✓ **Over-communicate**

✓ Keep clear **records** of your decisions

Example supplier scope clarifications:
"You say that the analysis will need to be conducted using a dataset owned by a different department - will you be responsible for procuring that, or do you expect us to do it?"

"For the IPE stage, you requested ~50 interviews: we don't think we would have the capacity to deliver that many within the current original timelines. Can we reduce the number or extend the timeline?"

Addressing performance issues

If, despite diligent planning at the outset by both sides, you experience performance issues from your external supplier, you can:

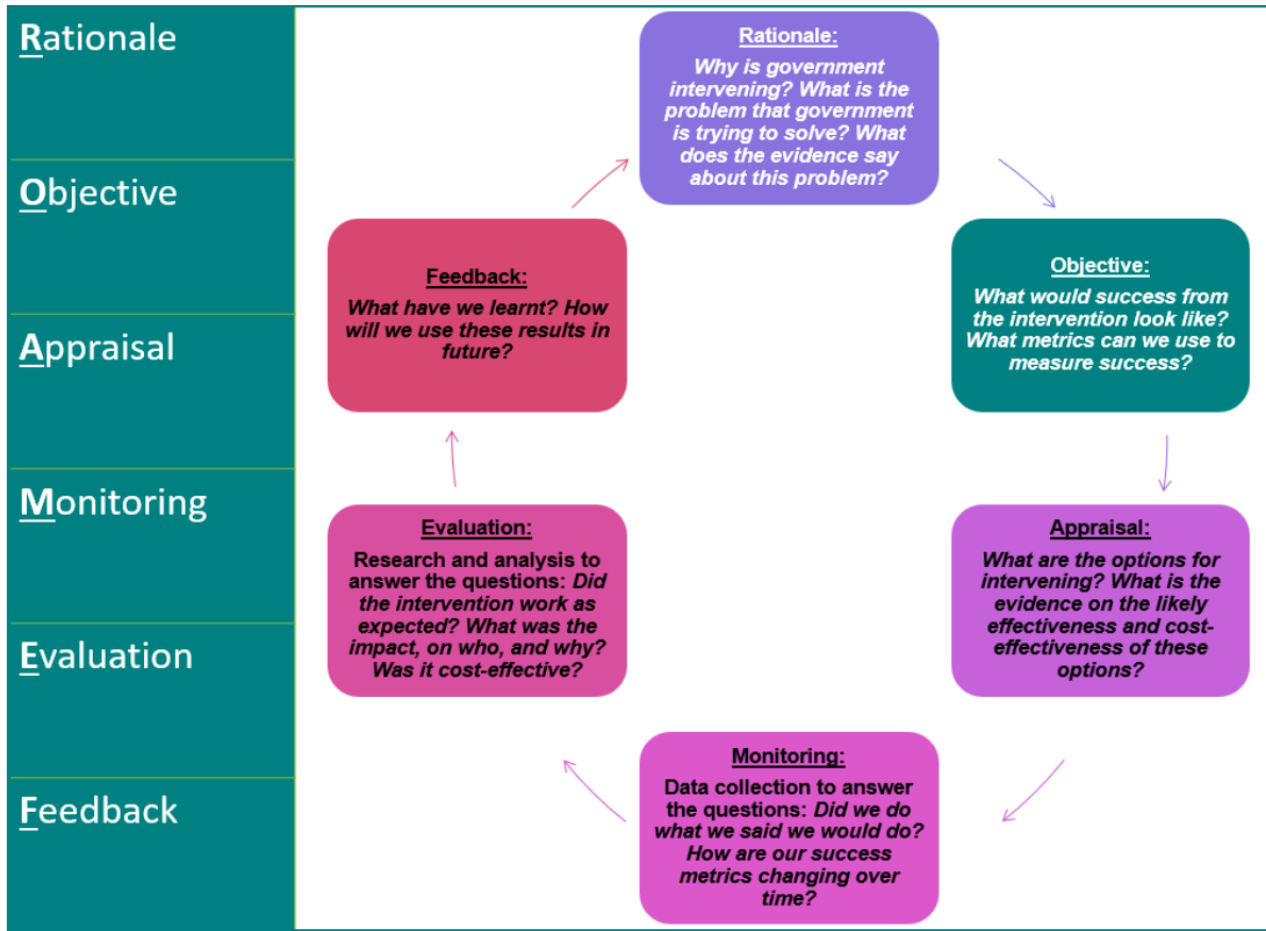Request a **meeting** with the supplier to raise and discuss these issues

Be **clear** about the nature of the problem

Focus on finding a **constructive** path forward

Advocacy and application of learning

Using planning and management 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:

- The importance of planning and managing an evaluation properly to getting an actionable output.
- The key steps of evaluation planning: i) identify the skills you need; ii) plan a feasible timeline; iii) identify risks; iv) estimate budget and source an evaluation delivery team.
- Common causes of delays.
- The main costs affecting your overall budget: staff time and expenses.
- Common risks to evaluation programmes and how to identify and mitigate them.
- Key consideration for sourcing evaluation capability and how to identify routes to source capability needed to deliver evaluation projects.
- How to compose ITTs that help suppliers respond accurately and demonstrate their suitability to deliver an evaluation, incl. create scoring criteria to objectively assess supplier responses.
- How to collaborate with teams and/or suppliers and monitor performance to ensure evaluation projects are delivered successfully.

Further resources

Resource
Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel
The Magenta Book: Central Government guidance on evaluation
ETF: Resources for evaluating policy in government
BIT: TESTS
EEF: Protocol, study plan and SAP templates
The Green Book
Performing a project premortem