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Covid-19 Business Support Meta-Evaluation

Final report

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Acronyms

Scheme name	Abbreviation used in report
Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund	ERF
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	CJRS
Covid-19 Loans Guarantee Schemes	- LGS - Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBLS) - Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) - Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS)
Culture Recovery Fund	CRF
Film and TV Production Restart Scheme	Film and TV Production Restart Scheme
Future Fund	FF
Historic England Heritage Stimulus Fund	HSF
Live Events Reinsurance Scheme	Live Events Reinsurance Scheme
Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Scheme	Local Authority Grant Scheme
National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund	HEF
Recovery Loan Scheme	RLS
Self-Employment Income Support Scheme	SEISS
Sport Survival Package	Sports Survival Package
Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme	TCRS
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy meta-evaluation	BEIS meta-evaluation
Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act	CIGA

Executive Summary

Introduction

Ecorys was commissioned by HM Treasury (HMT) in late 2024 to undertake a meta-evaluation of the evaluations of HMT Covid-19 business support schemes. The purpose was to address questions about the impact and effectiveness of HMT's Covid-19 Business Support during the peak period for the UK Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020 to March 2022). This period coincides with when widespread non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), e.g., social distancing and self-isolation policies, were in place. The evidence from this meta-evaluation is part of HMT's work to capture and distil lessons from the experience of supporting businesses through the pandemic. It focuses on effectiveness of, and lessons learned from, co-ordination of activity, delivery of schemes and the overarching reach and coverage of the business support offer.

In the context of significant uncertainty and disruption to the UK economy as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, HMT worked closely with other government departments and third parties to develop support schemes for workers and businesses, to tackle issues relating to potential unemployment and business failure. This meta-evaluation synthesises the evidence from 15 broad schemes (with some of these including multiple funds/cohorts within them) which HMT was involved in designing. Schemes introduced various initiatives, including the provision of loans and/or grants to businesses, reinsurance, compensation-based insurance, and temporary introductions of legal measures. Most schemes in this meta-evaluation launched in 2020, varying in length from several months to multiple years.

The meta-evaluation method involved developing a coding framework based on the evaluation questions (see Chapter 1); reviewing 22 evaluation reports, extracting data into the coding framework and thematically analysing the data; a broader review of evidence to contextualise the findings of the meta-evaluation; and fact-finding and validation of findings with Senior Civil Servants (n=21) involved in administering the schemes.

Findings

Delivery

Reflective of the uncertain and rapidly evolving context, and the need to respond to varying health restrictions over time, the government's strategy for business support was articulated through various statements made at different points during the pandemic, outlining the major business needs at that point, and the support that was going to be provided to help address these needs. Departments developed their strategies and objectives in alignment with central direction and messaging.

All schemes' evaluations noted a clear rationale for their development (although the evaluation of the Covid-19 Loans Guarantee Schemes noted that BBLS was launched without clearly defined aims and objectives beyond providing finance to SMEs quickly)[1] which included: addressing the immediate economic impact of Covid-19 restrictions, by maintaining jobs and protecting cashflow; addressing gaps in provision of support; and providing sector-specific support. Later schemes (such as the Recovery Loan Scheme) were designed to support businesses to reopen in a context of eased restrictions. Impact evaluations of the schemes generally found positive

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[1] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

impacts of schemes on **business survival** (with estimations of schemes preventing insolvency ranging from around 4% (Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme) to 20% (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) of recipient businesses. Similar, positive impacts on **jobs safeguarded** were observed, with millions of jobs safeguarded via schemes such as the CJRS, Loan Guarantee Scheme, Local Authority Business Support Grant Schemes and Culture Recovery Fund).

Common themes from the delivery of business support included successes in:

▶ The rapid mobilisation and delivery (including the fast speed of payments, efficiency and clarity of schemes), which helped to mitigate the immediate financial impact of Covid-19.

▶ The accessibility and consistency of application processes. This included positive feedback on the simplicity of application processes to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy; a view that application processes were generally proportionate; and that schemes adapted their application processes over time to make improvements based on feedback.

▶ Schemes being adaptable and flexible, with evidence of schemes being responsive to needs over time, making changes (to improve targeting, engagement, efficiency), and utilising continuous feedback to do so.

▶ Tailored support for specific business types, specifically in the sector-specific schemes.

Different challenges were experienced across the schemes. These included:

▶ Inefficiencies of systems or operations. In some cases, (such as the Local Authority Grant Scheme) establishing systems and infrastructure for processing applications, managing grants/loans and reviewing fraud risks led to a duplication of costs and reliance on ineffective manual systems, based on the expectation that the pandemic would be short lived.

▶ Some of the early schemes (for example in Cohort One of the Local Authority Grant Scheme) were established without formal application and due diligence processes. Whilst this was a deliberate design decision, to ensure funding could be mobilised quickly, this did lead to challenges, including - in some instances - high rates of irregular payments early on.

▶ There were also challenges with financial and administrative burdens. For example, some stakeholders consulted for some evaluations (mainly relating to schemes in the culture sector) criticised the late mobilisation of schemes or that they were launched at the wrong time when there was less demand from businesses. Furthermore, there was evidence that some applicants of the Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme could also face administrative burdens and overburdensome/complex reporting requirements, with cost reimbursements not covering the additional administrative costs resulting from these complex data reporting requirements.

▶ There were also challenges relating to information accessibility, with some businesses (especially smaller ones) struggling to access some of the information that they needed for evidencing their claims.

▶ In scheme administration, expertise within the teams was also sometimes a challenge, as well as a lack of suitable infrastructure (such as data, software) supporting scheme administration, leading to inefficient delivery.

Fraud and error were anticipated in scheme design phases and factored into risk management and mitigation planning. Overall, when looking across all schemes, the extent of error and fraud was not always reported on in the evaluations reviewed. This is because at the time of the evaluation, it was often too soon to fully assess the extent of fraud, and/or assessing the extent of fraud was not in the remit of the evaluations because of parallel

activity occurring (e.g. National Audit Office investigation). Since evaluation reports were published, the Government continued to update regularly on error and fraud in the major Covid-19 schemes.[2]

Where error and fraud were noted, reports of instances of error and fraud were mainly concentrated in the earlier schemes (where compromises were purposefully made in checks/due diligence to ensure speed of delivery). Evaluations reported that these risks were accepted by ministers / policy officials at the time. Other schemes' evaluations noted no major instances of fraud and error (e.g. Recovery Loan Scheme, Culture Recovery Fund, Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme).

Various anti-fraud measures were built into schemes to improve financial rigour, such as requiring applicants to demonstrate evidence of need and using independent data validators and auditors to deliver assurance programmes.

Coordination

Central collaboration between the Cabinet Office, HMT and other government departments for early schemes like the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Local Authority Grant Scheme, ensured that they were complementary. In some cases, this worked well. For example, the HMT and HMRC partnership was highlighted as being effective and supporting successful delivery in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.[3] In other cases, rapid deployment hindered detailed coordination between schemes during implementation and delivery. However, the design of later schemes built on the learning, processes, systems, and gaps from earlier schemes.

Where there had been less co-ordination in design, there was some duplication / overlapping scope and coverage of schemes, leading to the reduction in uptake of some schemes, along with some underspend initially. Greater co-ordination led to smoother delivery and helped enhance the additionality of schemes.

Reflections on overall business response offer

According to evaluations, the business support schemes generally reached their intended recipients, providing crucial support to those most affected by Covid-19.

However, there were some geographical and sectoral variances in reach, generally reflecting pre-existing conditions and levels of need.

The meta-evaluation found that smaller businesses tended to experience more challenges or barriers to accessing funds. This was because larger organisations were reported to have more capacity to apply for funding and had the financial expertise to provide the required documentation.

It was not possible to assess the extent to which businesses led by people with protected characteristics were reached by schemes, as data collection on this was patchy and inconsistent. However, there was evidence of some schemes building diversity considerations into their decision-making processes.

Where it was reported on, there was mixed evidence of reach across different population groups. While some noted equitable access of schemes relative to total population (e.g. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme), others noted limited evidence that actions taken to ensure equitable reach resulted in equitable reach (e.g. in the Sports Survival Package and Future Fund).

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[2] For example, see: Error and fraud in the COVID-19 schemes: methodology and approach (an update for 2023) - GOV.UK
[3] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

Overall, there is a sense across the evaluations that the type of schemes adopted were appropriate, however it is worth noting that the evaluations did not typically explicitly explore the appropriateness of the overarching scheme type (i.e. whether a specific type of grant scheme was the most appropriate approach or whether it could have operated equally or better as a loan scheme). There was evidence that the feasibility of different scheme types was considered and assessed during the design stage, to help ensure that an appropriate scheme type was implemented, and that certain options were ruled out.

Data was essential for informing HMT's overall business support response, in terms of identifying where challenges were, what they were and who they were affecting. It was equally necessary for the delivery of business support schemes and administering schemes to mitigate against risks of fraud and error (e.g. verifying claims by linking with existing government data), as well as the evaluation of schemes. The evaluations of schemes included in this meta-evaluation often noted how access to good quality, up-to-date data was a key enabler for successful implementation and delivery. However, a lack of access or availability of data was a barrier for informing targeting and determining eligibility criteria. Similarly, a lack of data from scheme monitoring also led to challenges in some schemes' evaluation, particularly in terms of it being possible to adequately report on scheme reach, make comparisons with other schemes, and establish samples of scheme participants to participate in evaluation research.

Key learning for future emergency responses

The meta-evaluation identified a number of key considerations for supporting better preparedness for future emergency response schemes:

- **The importance of better preparedness on what policy levers can be used in such emergency situations.** It was noted in several evaluations, including the BEIS meta-evaluation[4], that more planning was needed to understand what could be done in contexts where macro-economic impacts were much greater than a typical recession.

- **There is a need for improved data availability about the composition of businesses** (primarily in the culture sector) **and up-to-date information on the financial standing of organisations**, to enable better and more informed targeting of resources in future, as well as to help inform scheme design.

- **Centralised co-ordination to ensure broad complementarity, especially to support at-pace working, was essential.** In future, more communication of design details and a centralised approach to sharing learning from schemes could be useful to aid join-up in design.

- **There were strong benefits in involving industry experts in the design of schemes** to ensure that scheme design reflected the needs of target businesses, and that schemes could be mobilised quickly.

- **Future schemes should incorporate learning about potential fraud and error risks** and tips on how to minimise errors and fraudulent activity, be clear about scheme audit requirements (to ensure sufficient supporting evidence is being collected), and be transparent about any expected changes to aid compliant lending. Information sharing should be prioritised to help raise awareness and improve fraud risk management capacity.

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[4] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation

1.0   Introduction

This section outlines the purpose of the meta-evaluation of HM Treasury's (HMT) Covid-19 Business Support, provides an overview of HMT Business Support provision, describes the meta-evaluation methodology and limitations, and outlines the structure for the rest of the report.

1.1   Purpose of the meta-evaluation

In late 2024, HM Treasury (HMT) commissioned Ecorys to undertake a meta-evaluation of the evaluations of HMT Covid-19 business support schemes to address questions about the impact and effectiveness of HMT's Covid-19 Business Support during the peak period for the UK Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020 to March 2022). This period coincides with when widespread non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), e.g., social distancing and self-isolation policies, were in place. The evidence from this meta-evaluation is part of HMT's work to capture and distil lessons from the experience of supporting businesses through the pandemic.

The meta-evaluation sought to address the evaluation questions set out in Table 1. The relevant chapter of this report is also included in the table.

Table 1: Evaluation questions and respective report chapter

Evaluation question	Report chapter
▶ Was there a clear overarching strategy to the HMG business support? Did this impact on the success of interventions in meeting their objectives? For example, did businesses understand what schemes they were eligible for, and which were most appropriate to their circumstances? ▶ What were the common themes from delivery of business support? What worked well and what could have been better for businesses? Did (and how did) this vary across different business types? ▶ Are there cross-cutting lessons to be learnt on managing fraud risk? Does this change when trying to ensure both access and speed of delivery? ▶ What could be improved in delivery response next time?	Chapter 2
▶ How coordinated was the design of interventions? How did this impact on the success of interventions in meeting their objectives? ▶ How coordinated was the delivery of interventions? How did this impact on the success of interventions in meeting their objectives?	Chapter 3
▶ Does evidence from previous evaluations suggest any significant regional or sector variance in delivery?	Chapter 4

> ▶ Did HMG strike an appropriate balance between grants and loans, in balancing the objectives of supporting businesses and minimising the impact on the public finances?
>
> ▶ To what extent was access to relevant data a constraint in the design, delivery and evaluation of support?
>
> ▶ What gaps were left by the collective response? Were there common themes to these gaps (e.g., sectors, regions, equalities impacts)?

1.2   Covid-19 Business Support

Context for Covid-19 Business Support

The Covid-19 pandemic was one of the most significant shocks to the UK economy in the post-war period. There was huge loss of life[5], significant disruption to activity to curb the spread of the virus, and subsequently, substantial economic impacts. The nature of the economic shock was unprecedented, in terms of:

▶ Gross Domestic Product (GDP): in 2020, the UK GDP fell by around 9.3%.

▶ Borrowing: Across the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22, the Government borrowed an additional £330 billion.

▶ Government direction: in terms of Government telling many businesses to not operate to limit the spread of the virus.

In the context of much uncertainty during the initial stages of the pandemic, HMT worked closely with the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to use its newly-developed surveys and statistics (e.g. Business Impacts and Conditions Survey); used new measures of activity, often from private sector data; learned from other countries on how the economic impact may evolve; and engaged with economists across the world to think through possible implications.[6] Using this information, it responded rapidly to develop – in partnership with other UK government departments and third parties - support schemes for workers and businesses, to tackle issues relating to unemployment and business failure.

Table 2 sets out the business support schemes, that HMT was involved in the design of, that are in scope for the meta-evaluation. Overall, 15 broad schemes were in scope for the evaluation, although some of these schemes (e.g. the Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Scheme) included multiple funds. Table 2 outlines the broad schemes in scope for the evaluation, and the type of funding/intervention that they offered (i.e. loans, grants, a mix of loans and grants, and other types). More details on the schemes can be found in Annex 1.

Table 2: Business Support Schemes in scope for the meta-evaluation

Loans	Grants	Loans & grants	Other

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[5] Up to end December 2022, 177,180 people died within 28 days of a positive SARS-CoV-2 test, representing a crude mortality rate of 313 per 100,000. (Source: UK Health Security Agency. 2023. *Covid-19 confirmed deaths in England (to 31 December 2022): report*)
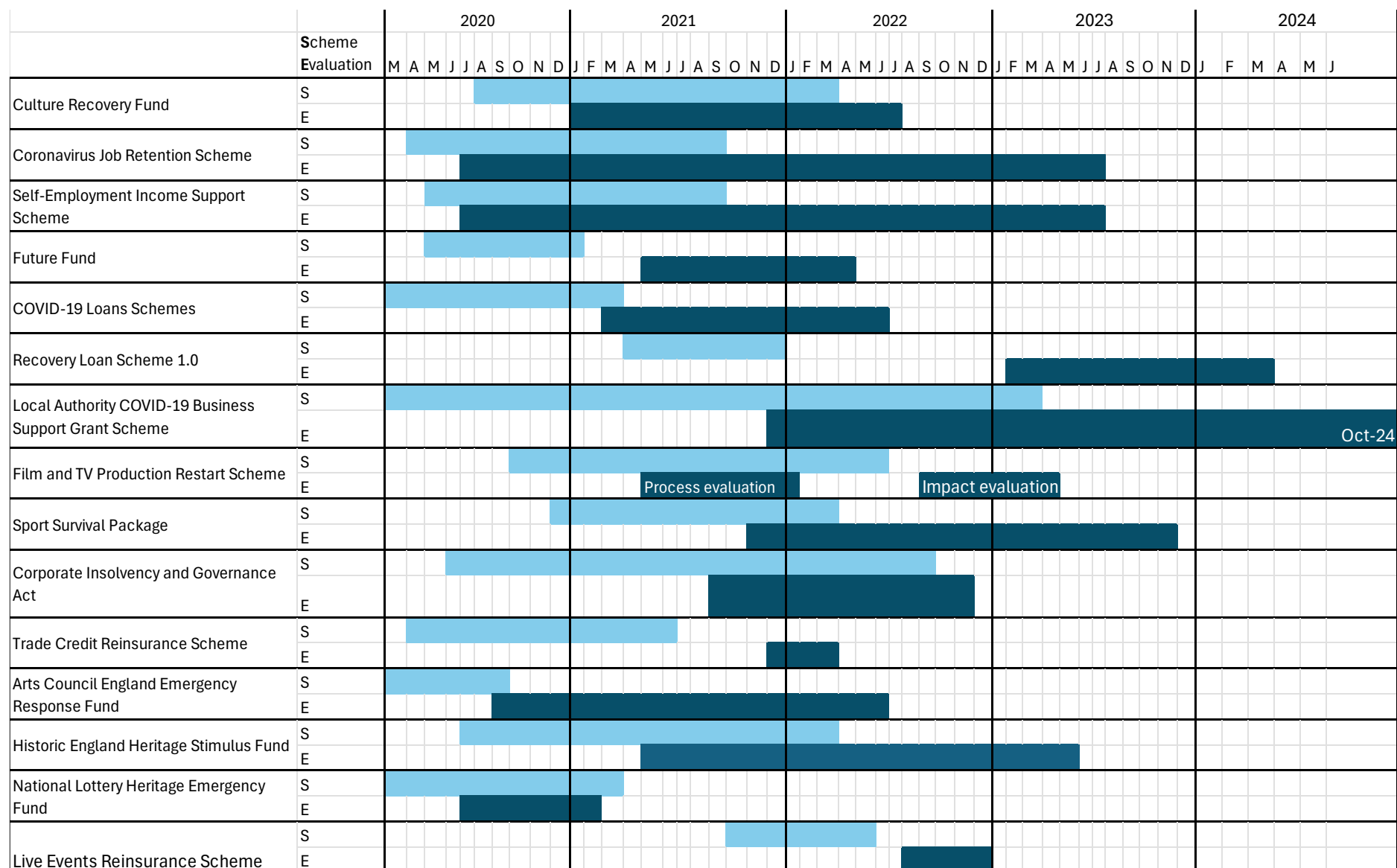[6] ibid

► Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Scheme (including 3 schemes - Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme) ► Future Fund ► Recovery Loan Scheme[7]	► Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ► Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (including 5 waves of grant) ► Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Scheme (including 8 funds across three cohorts) ► Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund (including 4 funds) ► Heritage Stimulus Fund ► Heritage Emergency Fund	► Culture Recovery Fund (including 3 rounds of funding) ► Sports Survival Package	► Film and TV Production Restart Scheme (compensation-based insurance style scheme) ► Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (legal measures to support businesses facing financial distress during and after COVID) ► Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme (Government-backed reinsurance programme) ► Live Events Reinsurance Scheme (Government-backed reinsurance programme).

Figure 1 provides an overview of the timeline of the implementation of the schemes in scope for this evaluation, along with the timescales of their respective evaluations. Overall, most evaluations started towards the end of the delivery of the schemes, with most evaluation activity occurring in 2021 and 2022.[8]

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[7] This scheme later developed into the Growth Guarantee Scheme, to support access to finance for UK smaller businesses looking to invest and grow.
[8] Exact evaluation timescales are not known for all cases. For independent evaluations, dates were ascertained from mentions in reports, or from Contracts Finder data. Start dates for CJRS and SEISS are unknown as these evaluations were conducted internally (with some research externally commissioned). End dates reflect the dates that evaluations were published.

Figure 1: Timescales of schemes and their evaluations

Scheme / Evaluation	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

Months header: M A M J J A S O N D | J F M A M J J A S O N D | J F M A M J J A S O N D | J F M A M J J A S O N D | J F M A M J

Schemes (S = Scheme, E = Evaluation):

- Culture Recovery Fund
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme
- Future Fund
- COVID-19 Loans Schemes
- Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0
- Local Authority COVID-19 Business Support Grant Scheme (Oct-24)
- Film and TV Production Restart Scheme (Process evaluation; Impact evaluation)
- Sport Survival Package
- Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act
- Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme
- Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund
- Historic England Heritage Stimulus Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund
- Live Events Reinsurance Scheme

Note: there were two, separately-commissioned evaluations of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme; one process evaluation, and one impact evaluation.

1.3   Methodology

To address the evaluation questions, and given the short timescales for the project (c. 4 months), the meta-evaluation utilised a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) approach to reviewing the evaluations. The methodology involved:

▶ **Development of a coding framework:** A coding framework was developed, based on the evaluation questions set out above. This involved using evaluation indicators to code data from evaluations. As the review progressed, several iterations of the coding framework were developed, to include further indicators that researchers had identified whilst reviewing reports. The coding framework also included information about each scheme, along with a review of the methods used in each evaluation, to assess the strength of evidence.

▶ **Evaluation review:** Overall, 22 evaluations were reviewed across the 15 business support schemes in scope for the meta-evaluation. Full details of the evaluations are in Annex 2. Some schemes (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), Future Fund (FF), Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Scheme (LGS), Film and TV Restart Scheme, Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (CIGA)) had 2 reports (interim and final). The BEIS Covid-19 Meta-evaluation was also reviewed as part of the meta-evaluation. This meta-evaluation covered several BEIS-funded schemes in scope for the current meta-evaluation, including the Local Authority Grant Scheme, Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme (TCRS), LGS, FF, Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) and CIGA.[9] Data from the evaluations was first extracted and mapped to the relevant indicators. Once all data was extracted for all indicators, we undertook a thematic analysis, identifying common themes emerging across the indicators.

▶ **Broader context review:** Alongside the evaluation of documents, to help contextualise the findings of the meta-evaluation, wider policy announcements (including Budget and policy documents) made over the peak period (March 2020 – March 2022) were reviewed.

▶ **Fact-finding and validation with Senior Civil Servants (SCSs):** To complement the meta-evaluation and address any major gaps in the evidence, the meta-evaluation team asked follow-up questions to several SCSs via email or interview, along with a validation workshop held in April 2025 (with 21 attendees, representing 5 departments) where the key findings of the meta-evaluation were presented and sense-checked.

1.3.1   Limitations

There are several limitations to consider when reading the report:

▶ Some SCSs involved in the delivery of the schemes had moved on at the time of conducting this meta-evaluation, so it was not possible to follow up on gaps in relation to design or delivery of some schemes. The validation workshop held aimed to sense check the findings with other SCS engaged more widely in business support schemes at the time.

▶ The evaluations reviewed as part of this meta-evaluation were generally high-quality, building on a breadth of quantitative and qualitative data to assess the delivery and effectiveness of interventions. However, given variation in evaluation budgets, timescales, scopes / topic areas of interest for commissioners, there was naturally variation in the coverage of evaluations, and therefore varying evidence relating to specific

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[9] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation).

indicators selected for this meta-evaluation. Throughout the report, we have reflected on the strength of evidence regarding the themes highlighted, to aid the reader in interpreting the evidence.

1.4 Report structure

The rest of this report is structured as follows:

▶ **Chapter 2** reflects on the delivery of business support schemes, discussing the clarity of the overarching approach to business support and drawing out the common findings on what worked well and less well in delivery (including approaches to, and effectiveness of, managing fraud risk), and highlights the learning for future schemes.

▶ **Chapter 3** focuses on coordination, considering the extent to which the design and delivery of the business support schemes overall was coordinated, and discussing the implications for businesses.

▶ **Chapter 4** steps back and looks at the overarching business support response, considering the extent to which schemes reached their target audiences, identifying any gaps left by the response, and considers whether HMG struck an appropriate balance between the offer of grants and loans.

▶ **Chapter 5** presents the conclusions of the meta-evaluation and summarises the main considerations for supporting businesses in future crises.

2.0 Learning from delivery

This chapter focuses on findings relating to the government's overarching approach to business support, common themes from the delivery of business support, successes and challenges. It then sets out the cross-cutting lessons to shape future delivery and specific principles to help to manage the risk of fraud.

2.1 Overarching approach to HMG's Business Support

Reflecting the uncertain and rapidly changing context of public health policy (and its subsequent impacts on the economic context), there were a range of announcements made by the government (accompanied by guidance documents such as business fact sheets[10]), at different points during the pandemic, outlining the major business needs at that point, and support that was going to be provided to help address these needs. Table 3 below summarises the evolution of Covid-19 business support over the period March 2020 – March 2022. Stakeholders consulted as part of this meta-evaluation noted that central government departments had internal strategies and objectives for their Covid-19 response, which reflected messaging in the key policy announcements set out in Table 3. For example, the BEIS meta-evaluation noted that BEIS' overarching objectives for its Covid-19 response were set out in the Department's Outcome Delivery Plan.[11]

Table 3: Covid-19 Business Support strategy over time

Date	Key challenges noted	Strategic vision for schemes
March 2020[12]	▶ Covid-19 outbreak created short-term uncertainty, particularly in terms of the scale of impact. The March 2020 Budget noted that economic impact was likely to be temporary.	Measures implemented to support businesses experiencing increased costs or disruptions to cashflow. ▶ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS):** temporary scheme, launched in March 2020, to support businesses to access bank lending and overdrafts, providing lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan to maintain their confidence to continue lending to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). ▶ **Local Authority Grant scheme:** funding for small businesses delivered via local authorities (LAs) in England that would not benefit from the business rates retail

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[10] For example, see a fact sheet for the LA business grants: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-economic-support-package
[11] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[12] HMT. (2020). Budget 2020.

		discount also announced in the March 2020 Budget.
July 2020[13] (covering activity launched since March 2020)	Disruption at a greater scale and more impactful than first anticipated: ▶ Reduction in spending both in terms of retail (down 23% from February) and social consumption[14] (fallen by up to 80%). ▶ Reduction in businesses' capacity to produce services or goods (with ¼ of businesses ceasing trading during the peak of lockdown). ▶ Reduction in working hours and demand for new workers.	Government actions were at an unprecedented scale, with several additional schemes launched since March 2020 to address cashflow pressures and support people whose employment was affected: ▶ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) (designed in March and launched in April and May 2020 respectively):** vital support to support employed and self-employed people (respectively) through the initial phase of the pandemic. ▶ Loan Guarantee Schemes (LGS) (including CBILS) to help businesses through the initial phase of Covid-19: ▶ **Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILs):** scheme launched in April 2020 to support large businesses needing to respond to cashflow pressures. ▶ **Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLS):** launched in May 2020, providing small-scale loans for small businesses that often had not borrowed before, with 100% government guarantee to help maintain lender confidence to lend to the smallest businesses. ▶ **Future Fund (FF):** launched in April 2020, providing larger-scale loans requiring matched funding from private investors. ▶ **Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme (TCRS):** launched in May 2020, to promote trade by providing UK businesses that are eligible with cover against counterparty default. ▶ **Culture Recovery Fund (CRF):** launched in August 2020, providing emergency grants and loan funding to arts and cultural

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[13] HMT. (2020). [A Plan for Jobs 2020.](#)
[14] Social consumption refers to spending on restaurants, travel and entertainment.

		organisations to provide a lifeline to organisations hit hard by Covid-19.
		▶ **Local Authority Grant Scheme** launched the Small Business Grant Fund, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, and the Discretionary Grant Fund (set up to support businesses that are ineligible for grants).
September 2020[15]	▶ Shifted focus on adapting to 'new normal' alongside protecting jobs and livelihoods. ▶ Winter resurgence of Covid-19 necessitated more government measures (e.g. introduction of tier system)[16] to combat the spread, placing additional constraints on businesses. This added complexity to the approach to business support, with businesses in different areas subject to varying restrictions depending on the tier they were in.	The government introduced a package of targeted measures to help enable businesses to protect jobs and manage their finances in the face of ongoing uncertainty and reduced demand: ▶ **Extension to the SEISS** lasting from November to April 2021, to support those still facing reduced demand due to Covid-19. ▶ **Job Support Scheme** to support viable UK employers that face lower demand due to Covid-19, from November 2020 (although this scheme was withdrawn before being launched[17]). ▶ **Extensions to the LGS** and changes to the terms of repayment for BBLS and CBILS, to help relieve pressure on businesses' finances and cashflow.
December 2020[18]	Reflected a significant and sustained economic impact of Covid-19, particularly with the winter resurgence.	Government actions continued to aim to support business growth during uncertainty, alongside helping ensure businesses could meet the challenges posed by Covid-19. ▶ Extension to funding of the LGS into financial year 2021-2022. ▶ Additional funding (via Local Authority Grant Scheme) for local authorities to make backdated grants for businesses affected by restrictions on socialising (e.g. hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses). Introduction of 'Additional

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[15] HMT. (2020). Winter Economy Plan.
[16] See: Covid-19 local alert levels: Three-tier system for England - House of Lords Library
[17] See: [Withdrawn] Check if you can claim the Job Support Scheme - GOV.UK
[18] HMT. (2020). Spending Review 2020.

		Restrictions' grant, with £1.1 billion of funding deployed to councils.
March 2021[19]	The Budget 2021 noted that the medium-term outlook for public finances improved, and that focus was turning towards the easing of social distancing rules and reopening of the economy.[20]	Government business support actions aimed to continue to provide protections to businesses and individuals affected by the restrictions, as well as provide support to businesses restarting activity where possible (e.g. by targeting support and interventions to businesses most in need and tapering support off for those less in need). Extension to CJRS and SEISS to September 2021, although tapering off the level of support (for example by requiring employer contributions for CJRS and a SEISS grant of 80% of three months' average trading profits). ▶ Introduction of **Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) in April 2021**, with a guarantee of 80% for lenders to provide confidence to continue financing UK businesses. ▶ Extension of CRF to support national and local organisations as the sector recovered. ▶ Extension of the **Film and TV Production Restart Scheme** to December 2021 to support the UK screen production industry. ▶ Continued support for the Sport Recovery Package (including **Sports Survival Package**) to continue supporting major spectator sports. ▶ Introduction of a Taxpayer Protection Taskforce to combat fraud in business support packages such as CJRS and SEISS.
September 2021		Introduction of **Live Events Reinsurance Scheme** providing insurance to cover costs incurred if live events were legally unable to take place due to Covid-19 social distancing measures[21].

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[19] HMT. (2021). Budget 2021: Protecting the jobs and livelihoods of the British people
[20] HMG. (2021). Covid-19 RESPONSE − SPRING 2021
[21] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).

October 2021[22]	Strong recovery in labour market although substantial rise in commodity and raw material prices, and high energy prices.	Measures focused on supporting businesses to invest and grow as they recover from the pandemic. Extension of RLS to June 2022, to help maintain lender confidence to invest in SMEs, although with a change in terms to reduce the government guarantee by 10 percentage points.

Evaluations did not often explicitly note that schemes were being developed in relation to a broader HMG strategic response to business support. Evaluations indicated that business needs changed over time, depending on the changing health and lockdown restrictions (e.g. introduction of a tier system)[23] and effects on specific sectors, and often strategic objectives outlined in schemes' evaluations reflected central government messaging outlined in Table 3. However, most evaluations just noted the aims of the schemes in addressing the specific issues affecting the target businesses, rather than the aims of schemes fitting into an overarching HMG response.

All schemes' evaluations noted a clear rationale for their development, although the evaluation of the LGS noted that BBLS was launched without clearly defined aims and objectives beyond providing finance to SMEs quickly.[24] According to stakeholders involved, this is a reflection of the BBLS being the third of the early Covid-19 loan guarantee schemes, and so was developed in response to events on the ground; the delay in advancing loans quickly under the previous CBILS scheme; and approaches taken at the time in other jurisdictions facing similar challenges and developing similar interventions.

Alongside addressing the immediate economic impact of the Covid-19 restrictions by maintaining jobs and protecting cashflow (as were the core strategic aims outlined in the evaluations of CJRS, SEISS, LGS, Local Authority Grant Scheme), schemes addressed gaps in market provision for specific business types and/or sectors and supported other sector-specific interventions:

- ▶ **Gaps in market provision:** some business support schemes were developed to address gaps in provision, where government intervention was necessary to prevent the collapse of certain industries. For example, the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, Live Events Reinsurance Scheme, and Trade Credit Reinsurance Schemes, were developed in response to market failures in insurance, where insurers were pulling out of the markets and not providing coverage for losses related to Covid-19.

- ▶ **Sector-specific interventions:** some sectors, such as the cultural and sports sectors, experienced dramatic impacts of Covid-19. For example, the CRF was established to address the risk that without government support, a significant proportion of cultural organisations would go into administration by the end of 2020.[25] The heritage sector lost all visitor and earned income due to lockdown measures, leading to the creation of the Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) to keep heritage organisations afloat.[26]

Earlier schemes (e.g. CJRS, SEISS, LGS and Local Authority Grant Scheme) were designed to mitigate the immediate economic impacts of Covid-19, including maintaining businesses' cash flow and supporting job

[22] HMT. (2021). Budget 2021: Protecting the jobs and livelihoods of the British people
[23] See: Covid-19 local alert levels: Three-tier system for England - House of Lords Library
[24] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[25] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[26] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.

security (by enabling employers to continue employing staff, or by supporting continuation of self-employed businesses)**.**

Later schemes were developed – or existing schemes were updated - to 'ready' businesses to re-open in a context of eased restrictions. For example, to support businesses to make adaptations to provision, or ensure compliance with restrictions. This was the case in schemes such as the RLS, later rounds of CRF, and later rounds of the Local Authority Grant Scheme.

There is some evidence to indicate that later schemes / rounds of schemes were designed to support wider government growth policies. For example, the CRF 2 was designed to link with the 'Building Back Better' policy (which aimed to stimulate people going out and spending) by focusing on supporting organisations to produce work and activity.[27] The Heritage Fund's Heritage Stimulus Fund (HSF) was designed to support the Levelling Up agenda, alongside protecting jobs and ensuring the continuation of repair and maintenance projects throughout the pandemic.[28]

Given these broad aims of the business support schemes, evaluations typically measured and reported on outcomes and impacts relating to business survival rates, and jobs safeguarded. These impacts are summarised in Table 4, to provide context to the findings of the rest of this report.

Table 4: Key impact findings

Impact area	Key findings
Business survival	Evaluations of the larger-scale schemes indicated overall positive impacts on improving the survival of businesses: ▶ The CRF evaluation's indicative modelling based on the positive impacts of the programme on organisations' financial health suggests that the scheme may help 15-20% of funded organisations to avoid failure in the next 2 years.[29] ▶ Around 12% of RLS borrowers reported that they would have been fairly or very likely to have ceased trading if not for the scheme.[30] ▶ The Local Authority Grant Scheme was estimated to have reduced the overall closure rate of businesses from 8% to 5% (i.e. up to 21,000 workplaces).[31] ▶ The SEISS helped businesses to continue trading in the short-term.[32] ▶ An estimated 5.0%-6.5% of BBLS and 4.0%-4.7% of CBILS/CLBILS borrowers between April 2020 and March 2021 may have been prevented from closure due to the schemes.[33]

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[27] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[28] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.
[29] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[30] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.
[31] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[32] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme final evaluation.
[33] London Economics., and Ipsos (2023). Year 2 Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

	▶ The CJRS evaluation indicated that 20% of employers (c. 250,000) would have closed permanently without the scheme.[34] ▶ Up to 26% of the clubs receiving grants and loans over £10,000 could have become insolvent without the Sports Survival Package.[35]
Jobs safeguarded	Most impact evaluations indicated that the schemes had positive impacts on safeguarding jobs: ▶ The CRF evaluation estimated around 6,700 jobs within the cultural sector had been safeguarded by 2021.[36] ▶ It was estimated that the Local Authority Grant Schemes programme may have safeguarded around 300,000 direct jobs.[37] ▶ An estimated 0.7m total extra jobs could have been lost among BBLS and CBILS/CLBILS borrowers in the first year of the pandemic without the schemes.[38] ▶ The CJRS was estimated to have directly protected around 4 million jobs.[39] ▶ The HEF was estimated to have supported between 2,422 and 3,094 jobs (although some of these were supported by CJRS too).[40] ▶ Around 33% of those in the heritage construction sector accessing funding through the scheme were able to retain staff who would have been made redundant or put on furlough.[41]

2.2   Overall scheme delivery

Overall, there were some commonalities reported on the successes of scheme administration and delivery across the meta-evaluation data. Key successes included rapid mobilisation and delivering at pace, the adaptability of schemes to respond to emerging challenges, and the accessibility of application processes.

▶ **Rapid mobilisation and delivery:** Mobilising large-scale schemes at pace was a key success reported in evaluations of the CJRS, Local Authority Grant Scheme, SEISS, BBLS and Art Council England's Emergency Response Fund (ERF). The speed of payments was highly praised across multiple evaluations, with many businesses expressing satisfaction with the efficiency and clarity of the schemes. The quick

[34] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[35] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[36] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[37] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[38] London Economics., and Ipsos (2023). Year 2 Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.
[39] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[40] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.
[41] Ortus Research. (2023). Executive Summary of the Process and Impacts evaluation of Historic England's Heritage Stimulus Fund.

response was important to mitigate the financial impact of the pandemic and ensured that businesses could continue operating despite challenging economic climates.

▶ **Accessibility and consistency of application processes:** Structured application processes ensured consistency of application evaluation and assessments. Accessible application processes ensured schemes were easily understandable. Having good quality and easily digestible documentation was reported to support application process effectiveness (see section 2.2.2).

▶ **Adaptability and flexibility:** Adaptations and flexibility in the schemes were also beneficial. The ability to make changes over time, such as introducing flexible furlough and employer contributions in the CJRS, encouraged businesses to bring employees back to work. In other cases, new roles and processes improved engagement and efficiency, and continuous feedback and adjustments helped accelerate lending decisions. This adaptability was key for maintaining the effectiveness of the schemes as the situation evolved. Some scheme administrators (for example, HMRC) received continuous feedback that was used to update and improve guidance and communications.

▶ **Tailored support for specific business types:** Having tailored support for specific business types was another area that worked well. Different business types benefited from tailored support and adaptations. For example, hiring external consultant support provided strategic development workshops and mentoring.[42] The proactive approach of Sport England in the Sports Survival Package, and the adaptation of existing Heritage Fund schemes provided valuable support to specific business types, ensuring that a range of needs were met.

Positive feedback on scheme implementation was another common theme. Businesses and stakeholders generally viewed the governance and implementation of the schemes positively. Accredited lenders were reported to adapt well to new processes and regular feedback allowed for improvements in guidance and customer communications. The proactive approach of organisations ensured awareness and access to funding opportunities. Less common themes of success included implementing reasonable fee structures or charges, as well as the dedication and strong work ethic of teams.

However, several factors contributed to issues with the delivery of Covid-19 business support schemes, that hindered effectiveness and created challenges for both delivery organisations and businesses. These included:

▶ **Inefficiencies of systems or operations:** In some cases, establishing systems and infrastructure for processing applications, managing grants/loans and reviewing fraud risks led to a duplication of costs and reliance on ineffective manual systems, based on the expectation that the pandemic would be short lived. For example, Cohort One of the Local Authority Grant Scheme was established without formal application and due diligence processes, in some instances resulting in high rates of irregular payments early on.[43]

▶ **Financial and administrative burdens:** In several of the smaller, sector-specific schemes, the evaluations noted a lack of funding timeliness, with late mobilisation of schemes and/or businesses waiting a long time to receive funding, sometimes making the support seasonally inappropriate (for example, for those in cultural arts sectors[44] and for the Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme[45]). Delivery organisations experienced variability in accreditation time for lenders, and fewer lenders were interested in delivering certain types of

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[42] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.
[43] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[44] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).
[45] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.

schemes due to unfamiliar design features such as capped interest rates.[46] Applicants could also face administrative burdens and overburdensome/complex reporting requirements, with cost reimbursements not covering the additional administrative costs resulting from these complex data reporting requirements.[47]

While lesser common themes in the data, the following points detail further design and implementation challenges:

▶ **Lack of expertise and infrastructure:** In some cases, stakeholders were required to assume roles outside of their experience and expertise, sometimes without appropriate infrastructure (data, software, tools) in place leading to inefficient delivery. For example, local authorities (LAs) were delivery partners for the Local Authority Grants Scheme, taking a role as distributors of funds and operating at a greater scale than they typically would have. The evaluation of the scheme noted that staff within local authorities did not always have the skillsets needed to administer the funds, with staff brought in from a range of areas, *"some with relevant skills, and some less-well-suited."*[48]

▶ **Changes to scheme design within delivery:** Introducing in-flight changes could create confusion for grant recipients. For example, the final evaluation of the CJRS indicated that flexible furlough was positive for employers but made it difficult for some employees to separate work from personal time, as they could be called in to work at any time.[49]

2.2.1 Communications and outreach

Effective communication and outreach were key for the successful delivery of business support schemes. Evaluations of schemes indicated that awareness raising of support amongst sectors was mostly effective. Lack of awareness of the schemes was rarely given as a reason for not accessing support programmes in surveys undertaken of business populations. Awareness was achieved through a few key mechanisms:

▶ **Initial public and/or high profile announcements:** Public announcements by the government significantly boosted awareness of the major economic response programmes. Some lenders reported that there was no need to market loan guarantee schemes due to high profile announcements made by politicians (for example, the weekly Covid-19 briefings). Channelling grants through established major organisations in the sector supported awareness raising and identified urgent projects to be prioritised. For example, Sport England administered grants for the Government Sport Survival Package and the Historic England Heritage Stimulus Fund channelled funding rounds through major heritage organisations.

▶ **Direct communications:** Extensive direct communications with businesses and eligible populations were key to success. For example, LAs made significant efforts to raise awareness of grant schemes among their local business populations, deploying all reasonable mechanisms at their disposal to reach 'hard to reach' groups (specific groups referenced in evaluations were people with mental health conditions and domestic abuse victim/survivors).[50] Word-of-mouth awareness raising in the private sector was also reportedly effective, such as businesses being alerted to the availability of support by accountants or direct telephone

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[46] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[47] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.
[48] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report (p41).
[49] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[50] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

marketing. Having direct access to support personnel, where queries could be raised about applications, also supported effective delivery.

▶ **Clear messaging:** Few issues were raised by businesses in evaluations regarding the clarity of communications around schemes, such as eligibility rules and guidance. Clear messaging ensured that businesses understood how to access the support available to them. Clarity of guidance and communications about the objectives of funds, eligibility criteria, required documents, terms and conditions were key for success.

Overall, the proactive and comprehensive approach to communications and outreach ensured that businesses were informed about the support available and supported the success of business support schemes (see Box 1).

Box 1: Enablers of supporting awareness of schemes

Awareness of schemes: Awareness of the Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Schemes reached 85 per cent of SMEs by the end of 2020, while 75 per cent were aware of the Future Fund.[51]

Key mechanisms to support the awareness of schemes, beyond political announcements, included:
- ▶ Webinars or videos hosted on YouTube to explain schemes and claims process
- ▶ Communications campaigns across multimedia platforms
- ▶ Marketing toolkits, videos, infographics, eligibility checkers, social media posts

Despite the key successes noted, 11 evaluations reported communications and outreach challenges including:

▶ **A lack of proactive and clear communication:** In some instances, such as the CRF, due to the speed of launching the schemes, only ad hoc support was provided to applicants[52] and there were some miscommunications about eligibility criteria, which was unhelpful for some businesses.[53] The evaluations of the LGS[54] and the Local Authority Grant Scheme[55] noted that businesses could face challenges understanding their eligibility, sometimes due to a lag between public announcements and publication of guidance. For the CRF and LGS, scheme administrators / lenders sometimes needed to advise applicants before official guidance to inform their approach was published. This could result in miscommunication or the need to request more information from applicants afterwards, creating frustration amongst applicants.[56] This also suggests that the initial communication failed to gather all necessary details, leading to additional administrative burden and delays. Additionally, a lack of targeted outreach to smaller and specialised organisations in the Sports Survival Package, indicated that certain segments of the intended population may have been unaware of available support.[57]

▶ **Delayed or insufficient responses:** Several evaluations noted challenges with the communications with businesses. For example, the evaluation of SEISS reported challenges with the third grant of the scheme launching earlier than planned, resulting in there being insufficient numbers of staff to respond to calls and

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[51] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation

[52] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.

[53] National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report

[54] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment

[55] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[56] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[57] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

enquiries and slow or late communications, which was unhelpful to applicants.[58] A small set of evaluations (e.g. for the Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme and the Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund) reported that some businesses found some scheme communications insufficient, described in one evaluation as "unhelpful" or "abrasive."[59]

2.2.2   Application processes and decision making

Successful application processes were underpinned by several key factors, including the accessibility of application processes, the responsiveness of scheme administrators or lenders and continuous efforts to adapt and improve.

▶ **Accessibility of application processes:** As previously noted (see Section 2.1) the simplicity of application process (avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy) supported businesses to make applications easily and at pace. Evaluations highlighted that early schemes, such as the LGS, CJRS and SEISS, had straightforward and proportionate application processes, which were effective. Evidence suggested that using practices and processes that were akin to 'business-as-usual' ways of working helped to ensure accessibility. Businesses praised schemes where eligibility criteria were easy to understand, appropriate, and supported by eligibility checker tools.[60]

▶ **Responsiveness of administrators / lenders:** Success factors of schemes included having 'good' levels of engagement between administrators and applicants, and readily available advice and information.

▶ **Continuous improvement and adaptability:** Using learning from previous rounds to improve guidance could support scheme success (for example, in the CRF and RLS). For example, schemes made adjustments to increase the speed of decisions on lending and widen access during following feedback.

Alongside success factors for applications, factors that supported successful decision making included the:

▶ **Quality of recommendations to schemes' decision-making boards**: In some schemes, decisions about applications were put to schemes' boards or steering groups for approval. The evaluations of CRF and Film and TV Production Restart Production Scheme noted that providing high quality recommendations to the schemes' decision making boards supported successful delivery. High quality recommendations drew on sector awareness. For example, effective approaches included providing data driven insights using financial modelling about a scheme's exposure,[61] or, information about the cultural significance of grants for projects.[62]

▶ **Complementary skills of involved professionals:** The complement of professionals' skills on decision making boards, and involving those with commercial experience, could support effective decision making.[63]

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[58] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.
[59] SQW. (2022). Evaluation of Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund (ERF).
[60] For example, the SEISS (see: HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.)
[61] RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.
[62] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[63] ibid

Box 2: Use of financial criteria for application assessments

> **Robust and consistent use of financial criteria in the BEIS Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Scheme:** Robust and consistent use of financial criteria was helpful for the success of schemes because it ensured that the support was directed towards businesses that genuinely needed it.[64]

Challenges with application processes varied depending on the length of application forms, mode of application process, level of automation and speed at which decisions were made. The main challenges included:

▶ **Time consuming application processes and overburdensome evidencing requirements:** evaluations of sector-specific schemes were more likely than non-sector specific schemes to highlight challenges relating to lengthy and complex application processes. For example, the CRF's evaluation found that the majority of applicants responding to the survey found that the process was time-consuming and difficult, particularly for applicants with limited experience of applying for public funding.[65] Similarly, private sector organisations applying to the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme also found applications more challenging than commercial applications.[66] The evaluation of the CJRS found that applicants applying online tended to be more satisfied than those applying by telephone, as the online application process was viewed to be simpler. However, the evaluation also noted that the more complex cases generally required telephone applications, so that applicants could speak to a representative at HMRC. Therefore it may have been the complexity of their case, rather than the application process itself, that affected their negative perceptions.[67]

▶ **Lack of clarity or complexity of eligibility criteria initially (leaving some populations ineligible who were in need):** in some cases, such as the CJRS and Local Authority Grant Schemes, some uncertainty about eligibility was experienced by businesses initially. For example, the CJRS evaluation noted that employers felt that the guidance provided did not cover all employer circumstances (such as staff working part-time or flexibly) sufficiently.[68] The first cohort of the Local Authority Grant Schemes was determined by the business rates system, which was seen to lead to issues of equity (e.g. some businesses being excluded), although the discretionary grant fund was established to address such gaps.[69] However, one evaluation noted that unsuccessful applicants could tend to be more negative than successful applicants.[70] In terms of decision making, challenges were more common for schemes that did not have automated systems. Common challenges included delays to decision-making (e.g. CRF, Film and TV Production Restart Scheme and the CBILS/CLBILS (compared to BBLS))[71], and a lack of transparency about processes for making decisions (an issue for CRF rounds 1 and 2, which was rectified for Round 3)[72].

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[64] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[65] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[66] RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.
[67] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[68] ibid
[69] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[70] SQW. (2022). Evaluation of Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund (ERF).
[71] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report. And RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.
[72] ibid

2.2.3   Governance and management

Evaluations detailed successes of governance structures and processes, which included providing specialist advice and expertise, and facilitating stakeholder collaboration. Successes of scheme management included implementing new and bespoke management mechanisms, and continued monitoring and performance management of operations.

- ▶ **Specialist advice and expertise:** Most schemes' evaluations highlighted collaborative working with experts both internal to government departments/agencies and external, to support design and delivery:

    - ▷ **Engaging external experts** (for example, as a panel) helped schemes such as the SEISS to develop legislation, guidance, communications to support scheme design and delivery.[73] Some schemes, such as the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, the FF, and the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme) had externally-contracted delivery agents, responsible for overseeing the implementation and delivery of schemes. Evaluations of these schemes noted that these agents brought specialist infrastructure (e.g. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) had the facilities to process the applications for the FF)[74] and capacity, that the government did not have.

    - ▷ The larger-scale schemes, including SEISS and CJRS, benefitted from **strong internal collaboration**. In both schemes, HMT and HMRC set up structures and partnerships with specialist technical, analytical and project delivery knowledge (e.g. IT, compliance, legal, policy teams)[75], which also supported effectiveness. While a more minor theme, scheme administrators could find it helpful to have expert advice on 'politically delicate' matters[76] and related messaging.

- ▶ **Stakeholder collaboration:** Across multiple schemes, such as CRF, LGS, FF and Sports Survival Package, evaluations reported the use of programme steering groups / boards, which comprised of experts across and external to government. Having a range of external and internal stakeholders involved in governance, including those with good relationships across the sector, could support success. Governance structures were helpful to facilitate collaboration across stakeholders administering or managing grants or loans (for example, in the CRF, Local Authority Grant Scheme, LGS and FF). Collaboration was made successful by ensuring all stakeholders' roles were clear, governance was well balanced where each partner had a clear role,[77][78] and members could meet more regularly to discuss arising issues where required.

Several factors were reported on the successes of scheme management, including:

- ▶ **Implementing new management mechanisms:** The CJRS employed a hub and spoke model that enabled services to be designed in parallel and sped up delivery. In this case, the Central hub was a core team coordinating different areas of the business, driving activity forward and managing the flow of decision making. Spokes were essential delivery partners from different areas of the business, such as IT or compliance.[79] In another case, third party delivery agents were appointed where capacity was stretched. For example, local authorities and PwC were brought on as delivery agents on the Local Authority Grant

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[73] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.
[74] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.
[75] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation. And HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[76] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.
[77] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.
[78] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).
[79] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.

Scheme[80] and Future Fund[81] respectively, when central government capacity was stretched. In other cases, bringing in relationship managers could positively affect scheme implementation, supporting engagement with stakeholders and forming consensus with lenders.

▶ **Continuous monitoring and performance management:** Having rigorous performance management systems and continuous monitoring supported the success of schemes. Schemes shared aggregate data with stakeholders to ensure oversight of performance, legal compliance and adherence to scheme rules. The LGS used a proforma to request information from lenders, to check lending was compliant with agreements, understand payment recovery rates. This data could be used to inform data dashboards that supported monitoring and performance management.[82] The CJRS and SEISS schemes benefited from HMRC's customer support model, systems and processes, which enabled HMRC to track performance and improve its processes.[83]

Overall, only 7 evaluations reported on challenges related to the governance and management of Covid-19 business support schemes. Challenges were typically scheme-specific, rather than being common across all schemes. The main challenges detailed were:

▶ **Insufficient data quality:** In two of the early schemes – Local Authority Grant Scheme and LGS – evaluations highlighted that systems and processes had not been implemented from the outset to support good quality data collection. For example, the ex-post validation process for grants revealed that many local authorities lacked sufficient supporting evidence and the quality of information available was lower than anticipated.[84] This resulted in a backlog of assurance and reconciliation work. This was compounded by staffing challenges, including difficulties hiring skilled individuals and the need for extended working hours.[85] These operational burdens likely impacted the efficient management and oversight of the scheme. The British Business Bank (BBB) monitoring team also faced communication issues and instances of erroneous data entry.[86] These issues suggest potential weaknesses in early governance and data management processes.

▶ **Infrastructure limitations:** For example, the manual submission of data, coupled with an increased application volume during the LGS, presented a significant challenge. To address some of these issues, the British Business Bank introduced a new Application Programming Interface (API) system. However, some lenders reportedly struggled to implement this new system which was a barrier for efficient data management and processing.[87]

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[80] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[81] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.

[82] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[83] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

[84] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[85] ibid

[86] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[87] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

▶ **Transparency and delays:** Regarding the Sports Survival Package, stakeholders highlighted concerns regarding a lack of transparency in funding allocation and experienced delays in approvals, particularly in early phases.[88]

▶ **Governance alignment:** In the Sports Survival Package, the secondary model distributors experienced challenges aligning governance structures with the processes established by Sport England. This scheme's evaluation highlighted the complexities that can arise when multiple organisations with differing governance frameworks are involved in the delivery of support schemes.[89]

2.2.4   Spending of funding and claims

Overall, many evaluations noted that the majority of dispersed funds were used for their intended purpose which was a key success. While only 7 evaluations noted findings on successes related to the spending of funding and claims, key themes identified included the fast pace of payments, businesses being able to use funding in a diverse range of ways, and using industry experience to support claim decisions and scheme implementation:

▶ **Speed of payments:** Evaluations indicated that paying applicants within a timely manner and setting performance targets to do so contributed to the effectiveness of the schemes. For example, for the CJRS, HMRC set a performance target of paying applicants within six days of making a claim which was made for 99 per cent of claims between opening date and October 2020. This was reported to have alleviated employers' anxiety and uncertainty about their financial situation.[90] The ability to apply for smaller amounts of funding could also be considered a positive aspect of the application (claims) process for organisations in the heritage sector.[91] The ability to claim smaller amounts of money was useful for businesses that required cashflow support to help them survive. This included businesses facing acute financial distress due to trading restrictions, as well as those needing funds for daily operating costs or adaptive investments to respond to the pandemic.

▶ **Diversity of ways to use funding:** The review found that the diversity in how recipients could use the funding supported a range of positive outcomes such as businesses surviving, fostering creativity, and facilitating engagement with networks. The common uses of funding, such as providing working capital and financial security through the LGS, were also effective. Loans were generally used to fund operational costs or boost reserves/shock resilience. The ability of finances to keep businesses viable was a key success. Covering immediate costs with the funding created space for organisations to consider longer term strategies. For existing grants, the flexibility to change the approved purpose or delivery timelines was a valuable aspect of how funding could be used. Grant increases were also used to support existing grants to deliver, and grants, in general, supported workforce stability and continuity of grassroots initiatives.

▶ **Using industry experience:** The application of industry experience to claims was also considered a strength because it enabled schemes to be more aware of and responsive to the needs of businesses. Industry experience provided insights into the challenges and requirements of different sectors and helped schemes to tailor implementation appropriately. For example, the LGS design involved engagement with

[88] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[89] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[90] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[91] Ortus Research. (2023). Executive Summary of the Process and Impacts evaluation of Historic England's Heritage Stimulus Fund.

the financial sector and regulators to develop a scheme that lenders were willing to offer and that could be feasibly and rapidly implemented.[92]

Only 8 evaluations reported challenges related to the spending of funding and claims and there was limited overlap of themes overall.

In schemes with clear stipulations for funding spend, some challenges were identified. For example, some organisations in receipt of CRF and Heritage Stimulus Fund funding faced difficulties due to the **short timescales to spend grants**,[93] although funding periods were extended across multiple schemes / funds.

Some applicants reported **confusion or errors** with submitting bank details into administrative systems and automated budget requirements,[94] or desired more post-decision support.[95]

In other types of schemes, challenges related to the terms and conditions of the grants or loans. For example, the evaluation of Sports Survival Package reported that the **complexity of loan agreements** was challenging both to administer, as well as challenging to understand for those receiving them. Extended processing times for larger awards and financial management challenges required additional support. The claims process was seen as too rigid by some organisations.[96] Other challenges highlighted included **understanding claims processes and eligible losses or exclusions**.[97]

2.3 Fraud risk management approaches and effectiveness

2.3.1 If and how fraud was a problem

Fraud and error were anticipated in scheme design phases and factored into risk management and mitigation planning. Overall, when looking across all schemes, the extent of error and fraud was not always reported on in evaluations (due to not enough time elapsing to assess it). Where it was, instances of error and fraud were mainly concentrated in the earlier schemes (where compromises were made in checks/due diligence to ensure speed of delivery). Where reported, **fraud occurred less frequently than expected** and was not a significant problem within or across sectors, even for schemes such as CJRS, where there was a concern that the scheme would be at high risk of being targeted by serious organised crime groups[98]. Fraudulent activity was reported by fewer than half of the evaluations reviewed; data were not collected as part of the BBLS evaluation owing to the parallel National Audit Office investigation[99]; fraud was not a problem according to consultation evidence provided by the TCRS evaluation; and was not relevant in the case of the CIGA.

▶ **Shared fraud and error issues:** There were instances of fraud and error underestimation at the time of evaluations' reporting. The nature of fraud and error commonly evidenced included **irregular payments**,

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[92] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[93] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report. And Ortus Research. (2023). Executive Summary of the Process and Impacts evaluation of Historic England's Heritage Stimulus Fund.

[94] SQW. (2022). Evaluation of Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund (ERF).

[95] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

[96] ibid

[97] RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.

[98] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

[99] It should be noted that the Government has aggregated and published quarterly data on the performance of the Covid loan schemes including BBLS and lender flags for fraud. Please see: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-loan-guarantee-schemes-repayment-data-december-2024/covid-19-loan-guarantee-schemes-performance-data-as-at-31-december-2024--2#:~:text=As%20at%2031%20December%202024%2C%20the%20government%20guarantee%20

mistaken issuing of loans, **claiming, overclaiming** and **fraudulent loans**, in part due to schemes' lack of flexibility at the start.

▶ Irregular payments were **more common in the earlier phases of schemes** and often reduced as adjustments or improvements were made to payment infrastructure. For example, the CJRS final evaluation noted that error and fraud rates were highest in the first phase of the scheme in terms of employers claiming furlough for employees who were working. When the scheme introduced flexible furlough, it meant that furloughed employees were able to work some hours which may contributed to the overall reduction in prevalence of fraudulent claims for this particular fraud risk[100]. Further, the BEIS meta-evaluation highlighted instances of irregular payments in the earlier phases of BBLS and the Local Authority Grant Scheme. However, the estimates on the extent of fraud were not yet finalised at the time of the review.[101] Although, there were exemptions such as SEISS where the error and fraud rate increased over time, due to efforts made to increase the targeting of the scheme to those most in need of support, and the subsequent possibility of claims which errantly or fraudulently bypassed this targeting. In particular, the introduction of the Reasonable Belief Test (RBT), from the third grant onwards, required claimants to declare they reasonably believed the reduced activity due to Covid-19 would significantly lower their profits compared to normal results[102].

▶ **Limited evidence of fraud:** Several evaluations concluded there was limited evidence of fraudulent activity (for example, CRF) or that low fraud estimates were proven broadly accurate (for example, RLS).

▷ *"The Fund was generally well executed in relation to its aims, particularly in achieving a low level of fraud and misadministration."* (Ecorys; BOP Consulting; Ipsos Mori (2022) Cultural Recovery Fund Evaluation p101)

▷ *"No fraud risks, that were not in the original business case, were highlighted by lenders or stakeholders."* (London Economics and Ipsos (2024) Recovery Loan Scheme Evaluation p45)

2.3.2 Managing fraud risk

This subsection discusses what worked well and what worked less well for managing fraud risk. Schemes incorporated a wide range of compliance measures and quality assurance processes to limit fraud, which were generally effective according to the evaluations. Methods that helped to manage fraud well involved aspects like thorough application processes, evidenced-based business cases, demonstrable high levels of financial rigour, and application reviews (via triaged manual and bank checks).

▶ **Proactive fraud risk management:** Various anti-fraud measures were built into schemes to improve financial rigour. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme evaluation highlighted the potential implications of schemes not requiring business cases. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme did not consider applicants' fit with strategic objectives and lacked robust due diligence procedures which led the evaluators to conclude there were risks of fraudulent claims and payments made in error[103]. Notably, BEIS sought ministerial direction in relation to the high fraud risk that came from the rapid mobilisation and limited counter fraud measures implemented during the early stages of the Local Authority Grant Scheme and the Bounce Back

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[100] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[101] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[102] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme final evaluation.
[103] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).

Loan Scheme. These risks were accepted considering it was a priority to ensure support reached businesses rapidly[104].

▶ **Building mechanisms to prevent fraud** from the outset was a key approach taken by HMT and HMRC for CJRS and SEISS. This was important to manage the need to distribute funds as quickly as possible, whilst mitigating fraud risk. For example, preventative measures on the CJRS included requiring claimants to already be registered on HMRC's payroll / PAYE system and pre-payment checks.[105] Since the start of compliance activity for the SEISS, and up to the point of evaluation reporting, HMRC recovered and prevented a loss of over £466 million, with ongoing efforts[106]. Error and fraud were effectively managed on the SEISS scheme in part by using self-assessment tax returns already held by HMRC[107] In CBILS and CLBILS, preventative actions included requiring lenders to undertake their 'business as usual' checks to prevent fraud (so fraud risk was expected to be commensurate with commercial lending).[108] Counter-fraud measures adopted in BBLS included self-certification measures to speed up lending decisions and widen access to schemes[109] later supported by the introduction of the National Investigation Service (NATIS) (see below) to detect instances of fraud within lenders' portfolios.

▶ Other forms of risk management involved the use of **independent data validators and auditors** which interviewed stakeholders welcomed, **compliance promotion** (for example, CJRS introduced an honesty declaration in the online claims form and calculator[110]) and **requiring employers to write to employees to inform them they were on furlough**. Identifying fraudulent claims from furloughed staff especially did however prove difficult and resource intensive. The evaluation evidence for CRF, the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme and the LGS indicated that auditing was appropriate and proportionate. An example of auditing is provided in Box 3[111]. Another form of risk management was a peer review process built into the design of Sports Survival Package that helped to validate decisions and reduce the likelihood of fraudulent claims being approved[112].

Box 3: Sample auditing: Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0

BBB commissioned three independent professional risk services firms to deliver an audit assurance programme covering all accredited lenders, using the same approach as the Covid-19 LGS. Audits took place each year, for three years and involved examining a sample of lenders. This covered:

"a lender's practices for administration of the schemes, and sample scheme-supported facilities throughout their lifecycle to check the lender is appropriately following the scheme rules. The topics which the audit has covered have altered between years, and these topics are proposed and agreed by the programme boards in the audit plans"[113]

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[104] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[105] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[106] HMRC., and HMT.(2023). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme final evaluation.
[107] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[108] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[109] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[110] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[111] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.
[112] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[113] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0. (p43)

- **Introducing additional checks and assurances including post-event assurance:** Schemes with more limited counter fraud measures (for example self-certification in BBLS) at the start often saw elevated rates of fraud and error. In most cases, however, rates of fraud and error reduced over time due to improvements in processes. For example, building on the application requirements, CBILs and CLBILs introduced 13 **extra counter-fraud measures** under Prevention (for example, eligibility criteria, pre-payment checks, 72-hour risk assessment window), Detection and Enforcement / Recovery categories[114].

- In other cases, an **extra layer of scrutiny and due diligence** was added to governance structures, especially for larger grants and loans. DCMS instigated a Cultural Recovery Board to further review larger grants and loans to help mitigate against fraud and provide more detailed advice on loan investments[115], and the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme delivery partner automatically audited any claim of over £1 million.[116] Box 4 illustrates one instance of irregular payments being reduced. Additional assurance processes typically helped to reduce fraud, especially for larger grants and loans. Across the schemes, a range of other checks including minimum loan thresholds, bank checks, document assessments, and internet searches were introduced to check firms were still trading.

Box 4: Irregular payments: Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) estimated that £1.1bn of payments (just under five percent) were associated with irregular payments, with 83 percent of this related to error rather than fraud. Ninety percent of these losses arose from Cohort One schemes largely due to the rapid mobilisation of the grant schemes, which deliberately launched without formal application and due diligence processes. BEIS accounting office sought Ministerial Direction for the expenditure. Levels of irregular payments were then substantially reduced; the evaluation highlighted that £12.9m of these payments had been recovered by February 2022 (with a further £6m referred to DBT to consider for further investigation), rising to £20.9m by May 2023.[117]

However, there were some less effective factors to mitigate fraud. Evaluations noted that there was a balance to be struck between the speed of scheme roll out and assurances, with several challenges highlighted:

- **Increased complexity led to opportunistic fraud:** The introduction of new measures to enabled improved targeting of schemes (to those most in need) inevitably made the claims process more complex which sometimes led to a higher error and fraud rate. For example, the SEISS introduced a Financial Impact Declaration (FID) for the fifth grant. This required claimants to determine the extent to which their trading profits had reduced as a result of Covid-19. This then determined which out of two grant levels they would qualify for. This may have led to an increase in opportunistic fraud with the most likely estimate of error and fraud increasing by 4.5% during this period. The evaluation noted that this increase may have been because HMRC had no data to verify the figure provided by applicants, until applicants' next tax return was filed (in 2022).[118] Similarly, while the prevalence of fraudulent furlough claims under the CJRS reduced over time as the eligibility criteria and claim amounts changed/ became more flexible, this introduced more scope for error from risks other than employers claiming for employees who were working.

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[114] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[115] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[116] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).
[117] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report. P7
[118] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

▶ **Structural, legal and capacity barriers were hard to overcome:** Initial capacity to manage fraud risk was limited by factors including the urgency with which ministers sought to roll out BBLS, to overcome the delays in the advancing of loans to the real economy. This limited initial counter fraud measures, which in the case of BBLS were developed in the weeks and months that followed[119]. Time and costs to reclaim funds proved to be resource heavy, due to high numbers of claims to investigate. For instance, reconciling payments under the Local Authority Grant Scheme took more than a year for a team of 20 subcontractors to complete[120]. Additional challenges such as lenders facing regulatory and legal barriers to using data for fraud detection, differing levels of willingness among lenders to use data provided by fraud modelling exercises, and managing the resource intensive nature of audits were evidenced.

2.3.3   Cost recovery

The evidence for cost recovering processes was based on just 7 scheme evaluations. **Establishing agreed processes/mechanisms for recovering costs** was essential. In-built cost recovery arrangements or introducing these later as part of additional quality assurance processes helped to reduce the incidence of irregular payments through several schemes. There were a few scheme-specific approaches (e.g., for the fourth and fifth SEISS grants, HMRC was given additional powers to recover overpayments[121]). Other notable broadly effective processes highlighted in evaluations included:

▶ **Legislative support for overall recovery**: Legislation, such as the Finance Act of July 2020 further supported organisations to identify and recover costs, demonstrating the importance of legislative power to mobilise organisations and targeted investment to support resourcing of counter-fraud activities. The Finance Act granted HMRC the authority to begin compliance activities for the CJRS and recover overpaid funds using a data-driven approach. Up to March 2023, HMRC had prevented or recovered over £1.4 billion worth of grants across HMRC-administered Covid-19 schemes[122](CJRS, SEISS and Eat Out to Help Out).

▶ **Taxpayer Protection Taskforce:** In March 2021, the government invested £100 million to establish the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce, which aimed to identify and recover overpaid CJRS grants and other Covid-19 support funds[123]. The Taxpayer Protection Taskforce (TPT) alone recovered £256.1 million of overpaid CJRS grants up to March 2023, in addition to £518.8 million recovered before the taskforce was established[124].

▶ **Voluntary repayment:** through which employers and claimants were encouraged to voluntarily repay funds in the case of incorrect claims via HMRC's online repayment portal[125].

▶ **Insolvency Service and NATIS**: Both services have carried out enforcement activities, although they faced challenges with resources and administration. Stakeholder interviews suggested that the recovery

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[119] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[120] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[121] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme final evaluation.

[122] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.

[123] Ibid

[124] Ibid

[125] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

processes were working as expected, however a full assessment of the impact of debt recovery processes was the focus of a subsequent evaluation stage[126].

▶ **Expanded and sustained compliance mechanisms:** The British Business Bank and BEIS expanded their counter-fraud functions and collaborated with the Government Counter Fraud function and NATIS to support fraud detection, enforcement, and recovery. Even after the closure of Covid-19 support schemes that HMRC delivered, compliance activities have continued using the full range of HMRC's civil and criminal powers to tackle abuse and recover funds[127].

2.4 Covid-19 Lessons learnt from delivery

The review highlighted several key lessons in the delivery of business support schemes, which included::

▶ **Preparedness, streamlined processes, and data availability** were key for ensuring effective and timely responses. Enhancing infrastructure, increasing internal capacity, and leveraging technology for real-time information were essential steps in adapting to the rapidly changing environment. The larger-scale schemes such as CJRS and SEISS could be mobilised quickly because the government already had data (e.g. PAYE, Self-Assessment returns) that applications could be checked against. Improved data quality and availability could also support quick mobilisation, implementation of fraud and error prevention activities, better reporting processes and performance management of schemes.

▶ **There is a clear need for strong, clear, effective communications and transparency**, including the timeliness of announcements, targeted information sharing in appropriate forums for intended audiences and recipients, including support and outreach to specific groups that may be harder to reach.

▶ **Collaboration between government, industry bodies, and stakeholders, with close working relationships with industry experts** played a significant role in the successful delivery of support schemes. Having access to industry experts to advise on aspects of scheme design helped to facilitate timely development. Using government influence to support market solutions further enhanced scheme effectiveness.

▶ **Light touch systems and increased internal capacity** were necessary to manage the high volume of applications. Clear communication and guidelines on application processes were important for success, so too were accessible scheme designs and administrative systems. This included providing definitive lists of required documentation, advance notice of scheme changes, and clarity of eligibility from the outset and throughout the process. Simple guidance and direct support for applicants were also important.

▶ **Overall, more scenario planning and infrastructure development** could support actors to be better equipped to respond to future crises.

In relation to fraud and error risk management:

▶ A **robust and proactive fraud risk strategy** should be embedded in scheme design. It should consider preventative measures that can be built into scheme design from the outset (such as ensuring verification checks against existing government data records (e.g. as was the case in CJRS and SEISS, and utilising

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[126] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

existing due diligence procedures where possible (as lenders in the CLBILS/CBILS schemes did), to enable rapid mobilisation of schemes.

▶ Linked to a risk strategy, governance structures for managing fraud risk should be clear from the outset so that those involved can dedicate sufficient resources to these processes, such as being involved in time intensive audit procedures alongside existing workloads. As shown by the BBLS review, where strategies were unclear, it was difficult for lenders to know how to manage or escalate potential fraud issues[128].

▶ The **early phases of grant delivery** must be used to **identify and monitor the incidence and nature of fraud** to help shape the introduction of any new or additional governance and compensatory measures. The information could be used to help prioritise any necessary prioritisation of case reviews. A proactive risk strategy should include an **agreed process for recovering costs post-payment** to reduce any arising errors or fraudulent activities. This would allow schemes to balance having the flexibility to issue payments rapidly with the option of recovering or later mitigating incidents.

▶ In addition to clear communications on scheme announcements, **transparent communication about the risk of potential compliance actions, scheme requirements and how any changes might impact applicants were also necessary for reducing fraud risk and errors**. Future schemes should incorporate learning about potential fraud risks and tips on how to minimise errors and fraudulent activity, be clear about scheme audit requirements (to ensure sufficient supporting evidence is being collected), and any expected changes (for example, the shift from EU to UK State Aid legislation during the design of RLS) to aid compliant lending. Information sharing should be prioritised to help raise awareness and improve fraud risk management capacity.

▶ **Greater personalisation of approaches to employer engagement and cost recovery should be considered**, evidenced for example by the CJRS interim evaluation when HMRC had targeted and wrote to approximately 27,000 employees by November 2020 asking them to review their claims. Based on CJRS employer qualitative research, some employers had ignored the letter due to a perceived lack of personalisation, incorrectly assuming that the letter had been sent out to everyone.[129]

These principles and lessons learned ought to be considered and accounted for as far as possible - even when trying to ensure broad access to and speedy delivery of schemes.

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[128] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[129] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

3.0 Coordination of design and delivery

This chapter considers how coordinated the design and delivery of schemes was, and explores the extent to which coordination of design and delivery helped schemes to meet their objectives.

3.1 Extent of coordination of design

While, as noted in Chapter 2, there was limited reference to an overarching HMG business support response in evaluations, there was evidence to suggest that there was **some coordination in the design of schemes, albeit limited by short timescales for design and delivery. However, later schemes benefitted from the learning of earlier schemes.**

3.1.1 Coordination across schemes

The meta-evaluation considered the evidence of coordination across the business support schemes. Below summarises the key themes identified, relating to the coordination across schemes:

▶ **There was clear evidence of collaboration across government departments, external agencies and industry to support the design of interventions.** Major response schemes, launched early on (i.e. in March 2020), such as CJRS, SEISS, LGS and Local Authority Grant Scheme, were developed centrally, through collaboration between Cabinet Office and HMT, and other departments as relevant, such as HMRC (for CJRS and SEISS), and BEIS (for LGS and the Local Authority Grant Scheme).[130] This approach ensured that the earlier schemes were complementary in terms of their scope and offer. For example, the Local Authority Grant Scheme was developed to support businesses with non-wage-related obligations, to complement the CJRS, which supported employers with wage-related costs. It also provided an alternative form of liquidity support (i.e. grants) for small businesses to the BBLS, which offered loan financing.[131] The SEISS evaluation noted that SEISS was developed to support the self-employed population, as the CJRS focused on the employed population.[132] Both schemes were developed in parallel, with the same senior leadership teams for both schemes across HMRC and HMT, that oversaw operational teams' efforts to develop similar rules for the schemes as far as possible. The SEISS evaluation noted that the operational team engaged with those working on the CJRS to learn from their experiences.[133] The SEISS evaluation also noted this influenced the design of its processes, as the *"system for claiming, paying out and recording the grants had to be as simple as possible to ensure both the SEISS and the CJRS could be delivered and the systems maintained alongside each other."*[134]

▶ **Despite broad complementarity of the major, early schemes, and close working across Government, there was limited evidence of coordination between the schemes once the details were being designed. Some teams were not aware of the developments being made with other business support schemes, thus limiting the join-up between the schemes. This was due to the need for rapid**

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[130] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation

[131] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[132] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

[133] Ibid

[134] Ibid, p14

mobilisation and deployment of funding/financing to keep businesses afloat.[135] For example, the evaluation of the LGS noted *that "policy officials within BEIS and BBB reported that they were not aware of any considerations of possible complementarities between, or duplication of, other schemes in the development of BBLS, CBILS, and CLBILS as they were being developed in parallel and at pace (although it was reported that these were considered within HMT)."*[136] Similarly, the evaluations of the Local Authority Grants Scheme and TCRS indicated that the schemes did not incorporate considerations from the other schemes in their design.[137] For example, the TCRS evaluation noted that complementarity with other schemes was not identified during the design phase, and ultimately, many of the users of the scheme were also supported by CJRS, CBILS and BBILS. Stakeholders felt that the broad scope of other schemes was the reason why the claims for TCRS were less than expected.[138]

▶ **The design of later schemes built on the learning, processes, systems, and gaps from earlier schemes.** In terms of **addressing gaps**, the evaluation of the CRF noted that the scheme was designed specifically to provide support to organisations that had exhausted all other funding options. In addition, it noted that the self-employed were not eligible for the CRF because it had been considered that the self-employed were covered by the SEISS.[139] Similarly, the Film and TV Restart Scheme evaluation noted that the scheme was developed to support organisations that had struggled to access support through other Covid-19 business support schemes[140] (e.g. production crews or freelancers, often employed on short-term contracts, may not have been eligible for CJRS or SEISS).

▶ In terms of **building on learning**, several later schemes were designed based on learning from earlier schemes. For example, the RLS design built on the learning from the CBILS scheme, in terms of its lender training and documentation, ensuring a simplified approach to the 'Undertaking in Difficulty' test[141] and maintaining a requirement that personal guarantees would not be permitted for lending below £250,000, to ensure that smaller businesses would be able to access the scheme.[142] The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme used a similar approach to the TCRS' management and governance structure based on learning that this had worked well, and utilised learning from the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme to implement an approach to ensuring internal assurances.[143]

▶ In addition, **several schemes were refined over time**, based on data about businesses' use of different business support schemes and where there might be gaps. For example, the first round of the Local Authority Grants Scheme used the business rates system to define eligibility criteria (i.e. those ineligible for business rates, as outlined in Table 3 in Chapter 2, and therefore could not access loans via other schemes, would be eligible for a grant for the first round of grants). However, the evaluation noted that this led to some

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[135] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[136] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.(p52)

[137] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[138] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.

[139] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.

[140] RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.

[141] This was an assessment of whether a business faced insolvency, defined as: accumulated losses greater than half their capital; entered into (or fulfilled the criteria to be put into) collective insolvency proceedings; previously received rescue aid or restructuring aid; fallen below the required solvency ratios for the previous two years (see footnote 14 in: London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0).

[142] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.

[143] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).

eligibility gaps (e.g. those operating out of non-fixed premises). For later rounds, a discretionary element was established for LAs to be able to consider these nuances in eligibility when awarding grants.[144]

3.1.2   Other coordination activity

The meta-evaluation identified coordination activity within the context of the design of individual schemes, in terms of trying to align the business support responses with existing processes, systems, and approaches. This type of coordination was important for informing the design of schemes, to ensure that they would be fit-for-purpose and meet the needs of target businesses. Below summarises the key themes identified, relating to the coordination of design activity:

▶ **Mixed ability to build on previous business support scheme designs:** given the unprecedented scale of the challenges facing businesses at the start of the pandemic, and the nature of the pandemic requiring the government to order businesses to curtail their activity, policy teams working on the major early schemes (CJRS, SEISS, LGS, Local Authority Grants Scheme) mostly had to design new schemes from scratch, relying on the experience and knowledge of previous crisis planning (e.g. 'No Deal' Brexit). The BEIS Covid-19 meta-evaluation, which covered a number of schemes, noted that there was limited planning regarding policy levers that could be used in national emergencies (with greater macroeconomic impacts than typical recessions), in many cases, which meant that many schemes had to be developed from 'first principles'.[145] However, for some of the business support schemes there was some coordination with previous activity, such as the Emergency Grass Roots Music Venue Fund (part of CRF), which benefitted from being able to use systems and processes that the fund distributor, Arts Council England, used for a prior grant scheme. This meant the fund could be designed very quickly (within a month).[146] Similarly, the Sports Survival Package evaluation noted that the design was built of the design of the Sports Winter Survival Package and the Rugby League Loan Scheme.[147]

▶ **Consultation with stakeholders:** a strong theme across the evaluations reviewed was that the design of many of the schemes was informed through varying levels of consultation. Overall, evaluations reflected that this consultation activity worked well, with the main challenges relating to some perceptions of underrepresentation of some business types during the consultation phase,[148] or that consultation feedback was not appropriately reflected in final programme design.[149] Overall, the significant level of consultation indicates a clear attempt at coordination and collaboration with stakeholder to develop schemes:

▷ **HMG consultations and collaboration** – for several schemes, policy teams responsible for scheme design consulted with other Government departments and teams, as required, to inform design. For example, the evaluation of the TCRS noted that consultation was undertaken between BEIS and HMT to inform the design, with the evaluation noting that *"stakeholders were sufficiently and adequately involved in all stages of the scheme design".*[150] Other scheme evaluations also noted that collaboration between departments facilitated the quick design and development phases required, including the LGS

[144] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[145] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[146] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[147] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[148] Ibid
[149] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).
[150] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.

and Future Fund, which had good collaboration between HMT, BEIS and the British Business Bank to design the terms and conditions of the schemes.[151]

▷ **Consultation with industry –** across most schemes, consultation with industry and sector stakeholders was undertaken to inform how the design of schemes would work in practice, fit with existing systems and processes, and meet the needs of target businesses. For example, the evaluation of the LGS noted strong involvement of lenders during the design phase to help ensure alignment with the existing operational systems and resources of the potential lenders.[152] The CJRS design phase involved engagement with expert panels (such as employers, accountants) to test different design ideas relating to the claims process system.[153] Several other scheme evaluations, e.g. Heritage Stimulus Fund and Future Fund, noted there was widespread consultation to inform the design, although the impacts of these consultations were not noted.

▷ **International consultation** – there was also some evidence of coordination of schemes with activity occurring internationally. For example, the LGS design phase included conversations with other national governments that had designed similar schemes (for example in Germany and Switzerland), with OECD and with different embassies overseas. This helped to inform scheme design in lieu of the policy teams involved being able to do a thorough review of existing schemes.[154] In addition, the CJRS design drew on examples of international income support schemes, such as the German Kurzarbeit Scheme, which helped to inform decision-making about the level of support that employers would be able claim for via the scheme.[155]

3.2   Extent of coordination in delivery

Overall, across the meta-evaluation, there was limited evidence suggesting that the delivery of business support schemes was formally coordinated. Instead, evaluations often noted how approaches to coordinate activity established during the design phase (e.g. collaboration across departments, using learning from other schemes) continued, as relevant, throughout delivery. The main themes were:

▶ **Utilising links between the schemes:** the RLS evaluation highlighted the coordination of delivery between the RLS and CBILS regarding lender accreditation. British Business Bank developed a 'fast-tracked' system for RLS, where CBILS lenders applying for RLS would have their information uploaded to RLS, to reduce the administrative burden. This resulted in the accreditation process being much quicker than lenders' experiences on all schemes within the Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Schemes.[156]

▶ **Collaboration between departments:** continuing the theme of collaboration between departments to support the design of the schemes, across several evaluations there was evidence of this collaborative approach continuing throughout delivery. For example, the evaluation of the CJRS noted that the close working between HMRC and HMT helped to ensure successful delivery of the scheme, whereby it used a 'central hub' to coordinate activity, with 'spoke' teams, representing key aspects of delivery, e.g. IT or compliance, which was a different way of working for the departments and was thought to have been

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[151] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.

[152] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[153] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

[154] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[155] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

[156] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.

important in supporting ongoing delivery of the scheme.[157] HMRC and HMT staff working on CJRS also engaged with other government departments throughout, to assess the performance of CJRS in relation to the evolving policy context, and to consider if changes were required to address need.[158]

▶ **Collaboration with external partners:** In some schemes, evaluations noted the benefits of ongoing co-ordination between central government and external partners. For example, the evaluation of the Local Authority Grant Scheme highlighted that local authorities were selected as the delivery agents for the scheme due to their existing knowledge of, and relationships with, the businesses in their area, as well as their capacity to deliver when central government had deployed substantial resources to other schemes such as CJRS. However, the evaluation also noted that this required significant additional resource from local authorities to deliver.[159]

3.3 Impact of coordination

Overall, there was some evidence across the evaluations on how coordination (or a lack of) between business support schemes during design and delivery affected the ability of schemes to meet their objectives. Where this was reported, the evidence was mixed, with both positive and negative outcomes noted. The main themes identified are below, although it should be noted that most of these occurred in only a few schemes, rather being common across all schemes:

▶ **Duplication:** There was evidence across several scheme evaluations that overlapping scope and coverage of schemes led to the reduction in the uptake of some schemes. This was partly a result of HMT wanting to limit gaps in support, but in most cases, the extent of overlap was not identified until after schemes were in delivery. For example, as noted in Section 3.1.1, owing to the speed required for design, the TCRS design phase did not explore interactions with other business support interventions. The BEIS meta-evaluation also noted that there may have been some duplication of support for businesses or a reduced need for certain intervention as needs had been addressed through other schemes.[160]

▶ **Underspend:** Overlap, in some cases, led to less spend on schemes (either initially, or overall) than anticipated. For example, the levels of claims made on the TCRS were lower than anticipated, because fewer businesses defaulted on their payments than expected (with the evaluation noting this was due to mitigating effects from other government schemes, that helped maintain businesses' cashflow). This meant that the scheme performed better financially than expected.[161] For the CRF, the evaluation noted that the first round of CRF had an underspend of £300 million. This was in part because the CJRS and CBILS covered a substantial amount of the costs of cultural organisations during the lockdown periods (thus not requiring as much CRF Round 1 funding for covering the costs of maintaining financial sustainability and recovery). However, this underspend was used for the second round of CRF, to help organisations with producing work and activity, in the context of adapting to ongoing uncertainty and Covid-19 restrictions.[162]

▶ **Smoother delivery:** As noted, several schemes were able to take learning from the delivery of earlier schemes to refine their design of the scheme. For example, the RLS drew on learning from CBILS about the lender accreditation process, designing the documentation to take into account issues identified (and subsequently addressed) in the CBILS documentation. The evaluation concluded that this approach helped

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[157] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[158] Ibid
[159] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[160] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[161] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.
[162] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.

ensure that the accreditation process was robust, and had been successful as no lender had been removed from the scheme at the time of reporting.[163]

▶ **Additionality:** Some schemes were designed to address sector-specific challenges, to ensure the survival of organisations when other funding sources had been exhausted. This included the CRF (for cultural organisations) and the Sports Survival Package (for sports organisations). Evidence from the evaluations of these schemes indicates that this design decision to build on – rather than duplicate – existing provision, was largely successful in ensuring funding went to organisations most in need. For example, the CRF evaluation noted that the scheme was reasonably effective in ensuring funding had gone to organisations that had exhausted other funding options, with about 80% of funds awarded representing additional income to the recipients.[164] Around three quarters (76%) of Sports Survival Package recipients had accessed support via other schemes, but were still facing financial difficulties when Sports Survival Package funding became available. Where organisations had not used other schemes, it was due to eligibility issues and perceived barriers to taking on loans.[165]

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[163] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.
[164] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[165] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

4.0 Reflections on overall business response offer

This section reflects on the overall business support offer, discussing the reach of schemes, appropriateness of scheme types, overall access to data, and any gaps in the overall response offer.

4.1 Reach of schemes

Overall, **evaluations generally indicated that the business support schemes reached who they intended to,** providing crucial support to those most affected by Covid-19. By design, while schemes had eligibility criteria for applicants, most schemes did not have targets for reaching specific types of organisation, across certain geographies, or led by specific groups. To provide a better understanding of the overall reach of the business response scheme, and gaps in the offer, the meta-evaluation explore reach in relation geography, business sector, business size, and type and leadership composition. Overall, it found:

- that many schemes had a broadly equitable geographic reach, with most variances reflecting differences in pre-existing infrastructure and concentration of organisations;

- sector variations appeared to be in line with sectoral variations in the need for support;

- there was generally a good distribution of reach across businesses of different sizes, but smaller organisations tended to experience more challenges or barriers to accessing funds, due to issues relating to capacity to develop applications or lack of suitability of some schemes;

- most evaluations did not note any major variations in reach to different business types, although some self-employed individuals may have been excluded early on;

- there was relatively limited, and patchy, data on uptake of schemes by organisations majority-led by people with protected characteristics, meaning it is difficult to assess overall reach to these groups across the business support offer.

4.1.1 Geographical variance

The schemes that had broadly equitable geographical reach (relative to expectations) were the Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS)[166]; Film and TV Production Restart Scheme[167] [168], Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)[169]; Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Schemes[170]; Sport Survival Package[171] and Historic England Heritage Stimulus Fund (HSF)[172].

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[166] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.

[167] RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.

[168] Nordicity., and Saffery Champness LLP. (2023). Impact Evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.

[169] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

[170] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[171] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

[172] Ortus Research. (2023). Executive Summary of the Process and Impacts evaluation of Historic England's Heritage Stimulus Fund.

The evaluations report on geographical variance to different degrees and at different levels (e.g. nations, regions). **Where information was available on geographical variances, differences in some cases appeared to reflect differences in infrastructure:**

▶ **Uneven distribution of cultural infrastructure:** there was an uneven distribution of the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF)[173]; and the Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund (ERF)[174] with areas with more cultural venues and organizations receiving more support. The majority of CRF funding was allocated outside of London.

▶ **Geographical concentration of the film and TV industry:** the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme[175] saw a larger proportion of the scheme went to regions such as London and the South East reflecting the greater concentration of the film and TV industry in these areas. Having said that, the scheme was less concentrated in London than initially anticipated, and the authors concluded that the scheme had good regional impact.

▶ **Accessibility in rural areas:** whilst no explicit geographical variations in access to funding were reported in the Sports Survival Package evaluation, it was noted that some sports organisations in rural areas struggled more with outreach and application processes compared to urban-based clubs[176]. Similarly, the Local Authority Grant Scheme evaluation reported that a small number of businesses and stakeholders pointed out that given that most scheme information and the application process was in digital format, there was a risk that those living rurally with possible poor internet connection may have been disadvantaged[177].

▶ **Covid-19 restrictions and support:** the employment take up of the CJRS varied between nations with Wales having a significantly higher take up compared to the overall UK average and Northern Ireland have lower than the average. The authors suggest this may have been due to differences in Covid-19 restrictions and the types of other economic support being made available. This was corroborated by the finding that employers reported that as restrictions relaxed and business demand increased, this influenced the level of reliance on CJRS[178].

There was however a key instance whereby the **scheme structure itself led to geographical variation:**

▶ **Discretionary elements in programme design**: The Local Authority Grant Schemes programme involved a package of different schemes. For some of the schemes, once receiving funding from central government, local authorities (LAs) then had some discretion as to how they allocated funding. Giving the discretion to local authorities to allocate funding was to help increase the ability to address gaps and variation in access to the existing schemes within the programme. However, the authors report that LAs took different decisions on what types of businesses could qualify for support (e.g. taxi drivers and people working from home), which may have caused both perceived and possible actual inequities between LAs. For instance, LAs made different decisions with regards to allocating funds to taxi drivers and those working from home leading to "confusion, frustration, and complaints from businesses".[179]

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[173] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[174] SQW. (2022). Evaluation of Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund (ERF).
[175] Nordicity., and Saffery Champness LLP. (2023). Impact Evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.
[176] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[177] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[178] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[179] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report. (p37)

4.1.2   Sector variance

Overall, sector variations reported appear to be in line with the varying level of need for the schemes between sectors. Reason for differing needs were due to, for example, the sector being more likely to be affected by restrictions, at greater risk due to the pandemic, or because the sector dominated the target population of the scheme:

▶ **Impact of restrictions:** Both the RLS 1.0 evaluation[180] and CJRS evaluation[181] [182] reported a proportionally higher uptake from sectors that were more greatly affected by Covid-19 restrictions such as retail, accommodation and food services. Similarly, the ERF evaluation found that theatres received the most funding, and film and libraries the least and suggested that this reflected the relative impact experienced by these sectors but also linked to the size of these sectors in terms of the number of individuals and organisations[183] (see also "sector composition" bullet point below). Lending under the Covid-19 LGS was moderately correlated with the level of the economic shock induced by Covid-19 on a sector, with sectors like wholesale, retail, accommodation and food service activities, and construction receiving the most support.[184]

▶ **Level of risk:** A significant proportion of Film and TV Production Restart Scheme went towards high-end television productions. This was deemed to be because of their relative greater risk of being shut down (e.g. larger crews) and therefore greater need for the scheme.[185]

▶ **Sector composition:** The construction sector had the highest uptake for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), followed by transportation and storage, and then "other service activities" such as cleaning and beauty treatments. This was proportionate to the sector make-up of the self-employed population.[186] Heritage sectors like places of worship received more awards from the National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) due to their number and the level of need.[187]

▶ **Timing of scheme:** The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme launched after Summer 2021 and at a time when concern over Covid-19 had reportedly lessened. This meant that it missed the timing of many live music events, but did align with the scheduling of major sporting events for which coverage (by value) was highest. Nevertheless, business-to-business conferences and live music events had the highest coverage (by number of events) in line with demand being strongest from amongst these organisers[188].

Box 5: How scheme design influenced sector variances

There were a few instances where the **scheme design influenced sector variances:**

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[180] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.
[181] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[182] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[183] SQW. (2022). Evaluation of Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund (ERF).
[184] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[185] Nordicity., and Saffery Champness LLP. (2023). Impact Evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.
[186] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.
[187] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.
[188] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).

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▶ **Discretionary elements in programme design**: As mentioned in section 4.1.1, some of the Local Authority Grant Schemes allowed some LA discretion. This led to LA level differences in eligibility for taxi drivers and those working from home for instance.[189]

▶ **Scheme eligibility:** The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme evaluation suggests that the scheme may have been most suitable for very large-scale annual events. The scheme was not designed for theatres for instance as it only covered one-off events whereas theatre shows typically run across multiple dates.[190]

▶ **Scheme target groups:** The Sports Survival Package sought to focus on sports that were most affected by spectator restrictions. This meant that professional spectator sports generating a revenue mostly benefited from the support in comparison to smaller community sports clubs and those not generating a revenue.[191]

4.1.3   Business size variance

The uptake of the business support schemes by different sized businesses varied between schemes. **Whilst smaller businesses tended to be the majority within non sector-specific loan-based support schemes, larger businesses appeared to have an advantage in securing funding for the more sector/industry specific schemes.**

Smaller businesses accessing loan-based support schemes:

▶ The Future Fund (FF) evaluation found that most borrowers were Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with an average employment size of 24 employees.[192]

▶ Smaller employers had a higher take-up of the CJRS at an employment level with over half of employments put on furlough between March and June 2020 compared with 21% of employments from large organisations[193].

▶ The LGS aimed to cater to businesses of different sizes; the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Schemes (CLBILS/CBILS) were designed for larger businesses with over £45m annual turnover, and the evaluation noted that CBILS/CLBILS borrowers were generally larger enterprises. Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBLS) borrowers within the evaluation sample tended to be micro-businesses, in line with the scheme being designed for smaller businesses seeking loans up to £50,000.[194]

For a number of schemes, larger organisations had an advantage in securing funding:

Scheme priorities:

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[189] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

[190] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).

[191] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

[192] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.

[193] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

[194] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

▶ Though not an eligibility criteria or explicit target group, the HEF evaluation found that organisations with either low (<£10k) or high (>£100k) amounts of reserves were less likely to be awarded a grant, compared to those with medium levels of reserves (£10k-£100k). The authors suggests that this may have been done to allocate funds to those that would most benefit as opposed to those that may not have been financially viable or that did not have a significant need.[195]

Scheme application process:

▶ For a number of schemes, larger organisations were better placed to apply and were more successful in securing funding as they had the resources to complete applications accurately and efficiently. Smaller businesses and volunteer-led organisations struggled with the complexity of the application process, due to lacking the financial / fundraising expertise to provide the required documentation.

▶ The Sports Survival Package, for instance, had a single application approach irrespective of business/organisation type which disadvantaged smaller, independent and/or volunteer organisations and clubs that struggled more with the process such as knowing what documentation to include in their application. This compared to larger commercial organisations that were more likely to have the resources and infrastructure and documentation to more smoothly navigate the application process. These challenges reportedly led to delays and incomplete submissions for smaller organisations. Resources also included larger organisations reportedly having pre-existing financial relationships with governing bodies, which facilitated faster decision-making processes.[196]

▶ The CRF evaluation reports that organisations felt that when it came to applying for funding, *"…the level of professional advice that was being utilised by others, either contracted directly or via membership of a proactive trade body, created an uneven playing field for those who could not afford / could not access this type of support."* This particularly disadvantaged smaller organisations.[197]

4.1.4   Business Type

Most evaluations did not report on any major variations in experiences among different types of organisations (i.e. different legal entities), and, on the whole, the central coordination of the design of the overall support package (i.e. of large-scale funds such as CJRS, SEISS, LGS and Local Authority Grant Schemes), noted in Chapter 3, meant that different broad groups (e.g. the employed, self-employed, businesses affected and not affected by business rate changes) were considered in the response from the outset. However, the evaluations revealed some challenges and technicalities that meant some business types experienced schemes in different ways.

▶ **Exclusion of some of the self-employed, initially:** As noted in Chapter 3, the evaluation of the CRF highlighted that scheme designers assumed that SEISS covered the self-employed population, so this population was not eligible for CRF.[198] However, as described further in Section 4.3, no data availability meant that some of the self-employed population (i.e. that started trading in the financial year 2019-2020) were not eligible for SEISS in the first grant round.[199] While this was addressed in later grant rounds, and

[195] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.
[196] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[197] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report. (p94)
[198] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[199] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

for specific subsectors (e.g. via the Film and TV Restart Scheme), this gap could have negatively impacted some self-employed individuals.

▶ **Differing experiences of programmes:** in some of the evaluations, it was noted that some types of organisation may have had certain experiences, but no common groupings of organisation 'type' were used so it is difficult to draw conclusions across the business support offer. For example, with reference to experiences of application processes, the CRF noted that commercial organisations tended to find the application process more difficult because they were relatively unfamiliar with applying for public funds.[200] The RLS evaluation noted that alternative lenders (such as social lenders) – compared to banks – were more likely to have higher interest rates because the businesses applying to them were more likely to have been unable to access loans from commercial banks (because they were at more risk of default).[201]

4.1.5   Protected characteristics

The extent of reporting on schemes' reach to businesses majority-led by people with protected characteristics (e.g. disabled people, LGBTQI+ people, people from an ethnic minority background) varied considerably. Around half of evaluations reviewed did not report on reach or experience of these groups of businesses. However, some evaluations explored the consideration of diversity within the design of the scheme, and some were able to report on uptake of the schemes from businesses led by different groups.

▶ **Building diversity considerations into decision-making:** there was variation in how far schemes built diversity considerations into decision-making. For example, the Film and TV Restart scheme's guidelines required that the registered production companies complied with various societal commitments (e.g. Ensuring national living wage) and considered increasing diversity, reducing bullying, harassment and racism, publish diversity targets[202]. The FF tried to reach under-represented entrepreneurs through bringing on a broad range of investors,[203] and Sports Survival Package also aimed to address inequalities in sport (e.g. among women and girls, grassroots participation, participation by ethnic minorities, disabled people).[204] In contrast, some stakeholders involved in the CRF noted, and expressed some regret, that it did not build diversity into the core criteria of decision making processes.[205]

▶ **Mixed evidence of reach:** several schemes' evaluations reported equitable access of schemes relative to total populations. Similarly, the BEIS meta-evaluation noted that where examined, the evaluations indicated that the ownership profile of businesses (in terms of leadership by gender and ethnic minority groups), broadly aligned with that of the wider population, and that implementation arrangements were not seen to create barriers to participation for some groups.[206] For example, the CJRS evaluation highlighted that men and women benefitted relatively equally, and that there were no statistically significant differences in use of the scheme by different ethnic groups (except for 'other ethnic groups'[207]) or by disabled individuals,[208] (for whom usage of the scheme appeared to be slightly lower). The SEISS evaluation reported that most claims were made by men (71%), reflecting the overall composition of the self-employed population.[209] While the evaluation report did not provide details of other groups, a statistical bulletin for the SEISS was referenced,

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[200] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[201] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.
[202] Nordicity., and Saffery Champness LLP. (2023). Impact Evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.
[203] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.
[204] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[205] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[206] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[207] This refers to people outside the people outside the 'White', 'Asian/Asian British', and 'Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British' groups.
[208] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[209] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

which reported on take up by individuals by age of claimants.[210] However, some evaluations noted that efforts made to diversify access to schemes might not have translated into more equitable reach; for example some stakeholders working on FF were sceptical on the extent to which diversifying its lenders worked in reaching different groups.[211] Similarly, while Sports Survival Package aimed to address inequalities in sports, there was limited evidence that businesses that were majority-led by people with protected characteristics were prioritised in funding.[212]

4.2   Appropriateness of the scheme type

As noted in the introduction, the Covid-19 business support response provided grant and loan cashflow support, and some reinsurance products. Overall, there is a sense across the evaluations that the type of schemes adopted were appropriate, however it is worth noting that the evaluations did not typically explicitly explore the appropriateness of the overarching scheme type (i.e. whether a specific type of grant scheme was the most appropriate approach or whether it could have operated equally or better as a loan scheme for example). Rather, the evaluations tend to focus more on if/how schemes complemented other business support schemes, or the specific mechanics of the design.

- ▶ **Feasibility testing:** The evidence indicates that the feasibility of different scheme types was considered and assessed during the design stage. This helped to ensure that an appropriate scheme type was implemented with certain options being ruled out through this process. For example, the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, considered a reinsurance model as a potential option to support independent production companies affected by Covid-19. However, this was deemed unviable due to high costs and the complexity of EU State Aid processes.[213] Similarly, loan guarantee schemes were identified as the preferred approach over other options such as subsidies or participation programmes when designing various loan schemes[214] based on the recognition that the main constraint to lending at the time was the lack of risk appetite from lenders.[215] HMT stakeholders engaged in this meta-evaluation also noted that broader decisions about the availability of loans and grants were based on considerations about the extent to which the government considered that businesses would be able to repay funding.

- ▶ **Examples of appropriateness of schemes:** FF operated a Convertible Loan Agreement (CLA) meaning the lender could convert their loan into equity in the company at later stage. Within a CLA, the valuation of the company is typically done when the loan is being converted into equity. This compares to a direct equity investment where the valuation would be done at the time. The evaluation of FF found that most lead investors (78%) agreed that the CLA structure helped to facilitate company valuations during the pandemic compared to if it had been equity investment. This was because valuing companies during such economic uncertainty would have been challenging. Most (57%) also preferred the CLA structure over a co-investment alongside government structured as equity. Further, the FF evaluation suggested the scheme was seen as successful in addressing the immediate market need for funding.[216] The TCRS evaluation saw consensus across those involved that the choice of a reinsurance scheme was the "simplest and most effective

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[210] HMRC. (2021). Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics: December 2021.
[211] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.
[212] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[213] RSM Consulting. (2022). Process Evaluation of the Film & TV Production Restart Scheme: Final evaluation report.
[214] the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme
[215] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[216] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.

approach".[217] HEF recipients were generally satisfied with nature of the grant types offered as it gave them the flexibility they needed. For instance, funding was allocated to the organisation rather than the project and there was flexibility offered to pre-existing grants to change its purposes in light of changing priorities during the pandemic.[218]

Overall, evaluations did not note any major **challenges with scheme type**, although there was some learning on what could be improved, in some cases:

- ▶ **Small demand for broader range of funding instruments:** The approaches taken were generally seen as being appropriate by participants of the schemes though in the case of the CRF there was a demand for a broader range of funding instruments and more flexibility in funding types beyond the grants and loans offered, for instance a working capital facility.[219]

- ▶ **Improvements to technicalities of schemes:** Whilst a reinsurance scheme in and of itself was not flagged as being inappropriate, in the case of the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme, the premium was felt to be too high particularly for event organisers with lower profit margins.[220] This reflects the challenges faced by design teams to balance the need for the scheme to be appropriate for the businesses, as well as matching the risk appetite of insurers (or lenders in the case of loans) and minimising risk to public finances and doing so at pace. It was also recognised that the scheme could not be typically used by theatre as it only covered one-off events whereas theatre shows typically run across multiple dates.

As noted, evaluations did not tend to reflect on the use of loans or grants over other funding types, and overall it appears that the balance was generally right, given no major gaps were identified. BEIS' meta evaluation found **little difference in the effectiveness of loans and grants for businesses**, so reflected that loans could have been better value for money.[221] However, it should be noted that a loans-based approach would not have been appropriate for all schemes. For instance, the Sport Survival Package offered grants to grassroots organisations and loans to professional sports clubs. The Sports Survival Package evaluation found that this balance of grants and loans on offer was viewed to be appropriate by some participants.[222]

4.3   Access to data

As noted, **data was essential for informing HMT's overall business support response, in terms of identifying where challenges were, what they were and who they were affecting. It was equally necessary for the delivery and evaluation of business support schemes, and the evaluations of schemes noted how access to good quality, up-to-date data was a key enabler for successful implementation and delivery. However, evaluations also emphasised how a lack of access or availability of data was a barrier for informing targeting and determining eligibility criteria, and highlighted key learning on what could be improved in future responses.** The subsections below summarise the enablers and barriers, and data gaps, in each of these areas, across the business response programme.

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[217] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report. (p41)
[218] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.
[219] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[220] Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).
[221] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[222] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

4.3.1   Design

Overall, most evaluations reflecting on data access during design noted that the schemes were generally affected by a lack of data availability to inform scheme design. The common issues were:

- **Challenges in estimating number or value of grants or loans:** with a lack of adequate up-to-date data on aspects like businesses' financial performance, in some cases it was difficult for scheme designers to accurately model expected numbers or value of grants. For example, in the SEISS scheme, the evaluation noted that due to a lack of real-time information on the self-employed population, the initial grants were paid on a lump sum basis, using generosity levels commensurate with the CJRS, rather than making adjustments to reflect business performance.[223] However, as data became available, later SEISS grants could be refined, using stricter eligibility criteria,[224] underlining the benefits of up-to-date data in making best use of funding. A similar challenge was highlighted in the Sports Survival Package evaluation, which noted that the varying quality or availability of data made it challenging to estimate funding needs. This may have led to the level of funding awarded being lower than originally estimated.[225]

- **Limited availability of sector-specific information:** in several of the scheme evaluations (e.g. CRF, LGS, and HEF), authors noted limitations in the level of information available about the target businesses. In designing the LGS, a lack of real-time information meant that it was not possible to understand in which sectors there was most need for loans.[226] While it was not reported to have significantly impacted design, the CRF evaluation noted limitations with the data that government had about the cultural sector, beyond its usual grant recipients (e.g. limited information on numbers of organisations per sub-sector, their financial needs, and their role within the cultural sector supply chain).[227] Some schemes implemented surveys to inform their design. For example, Heritage Fund conducted a survey with heritage sector organisations to better understand the specific impacts of Covid-19 restrictions on heritage organisations, which then informed the design of the HEF.[228]

- **Difficulties in knowing where to target and direct support:** a theme emerging from the schemes focusing on particular sectors (e.g. CRF (cultural organisations) and Sports Survival Package (sports)) was a lack of historic data on organisations within the sector, which affected decisions about where and who to direct support to.

- **Lack of data for determining eligibility:** For the larger schemes, such as CJRS and SEISS, the priority was to deliver funding quickly whilst minimising fraud, which was done through determining eligibility of businesses through matching with existing records in HMRC's data.[229] While this was beneficial in many respects (see the next paragraph), limitations with data availability could impact eligibility. For example, in the SEISS, a lack of real-time data resulted in the exclusion of eligibility of individuals with new businesses not being able to be assessed (i.e. for those who started trading in the financial year 2019-2020). However, these individuals were brought into the scheme once the data became available.

However, there were some cases where access to existing data was a key enabler for success. For example, the CJRS evaluation noted that the scheme benefitted from HMRC's Real Time Information (RTI) on the Pay As Your Earn (PAYE) scheme, which was key in developing eligibility criteria for the scheme, building in compliance checks

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[223] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

[224] Ibid

[225] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.

[226] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.

[227] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.

[228] Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.

[229] For example, see: HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.

to the system, and for estimating the potential take-up, costs and deliverability of the scheme.[230] This was essential for ensuring that funds could be released at pace whilst mitigating against fraud/abuse. Similarly, the TCRS evaluation concluded the scheme had made good use of available data (e.g. lessons from the 2008 financial crisis, international comparisons, an Association of British Insurers' analysis of commercially sensitive insurer data) and noted no gaps in existing data during the design phase.[231]

4.3.2   Delivery

There were few common themes from the evidence on how data availability affected the delivery of schemes, as many schemes' evaluations noted quite specific examples about data availability and access. The themes discussed below were therefore not widespread, but represent the varying experiences across the schemes:

▶ **Limited data to target schemes more:** a theme from the larger schemes' evaluations (CJRS and SEISS) was that data availability also affected the extent to which the schemes could be more targeted. For example, the CJRS evaluation noted that limitations in existing turnover data, and challenges in defining sectors, meant that it would not be possible to target funding more without risking excluding customers truly in need of support. Following an options assessment by HMT and HMRC, a tapering of support (rather than more sector targeting) was implemented.[232]

▶ **Importance of adequate monitoring systems:** There were variations across schemes in terms of how effectively monitoring of grants / loans had been carried out to ensure good quality data on delivery.

▷ **Effective systems:** The evidence indicated that some schemes had centralised data providing an overview of progress. For the SEISS and CJRS, HMRC implemented a customer support model, systems and processes, which enabled it to track various performance metrics relating to supporting customers and claims. This enabled the department to track performance and improve its processes (as noted in Chapter 2, this enabled continuous improvement).[233] The evaluation of RLS noted that the lenders were required to share their data with the British Business Bank about their lending portfolio. This served a dual purpose: helping the British Business Bank to ensure that lenders were complying with their lending agreements, and also for updating wider governance/steering groups on progress, costs and future costs. The evaluation indicated that stakeholders involved were satisfied with the data available.[234] The Film and TV Production Restart Scheme benefitted from a dashboard that was updated with Key Performance Indicator (KPI) information on a weekly basis, which helped inform ongoing progress of the scheme.[235]

▷ **In contrast, given the need for schemes to be set-up and delivered at pace, in some cases monitoring systems were insufficient.** For example, the first cohort of the Local Authority Grant Scheme was set up without a requirement for local authorities to share data on which businesses received grants, meaning there was no centrally-held data for the funder, BEIS, making it difficult to assess fund distribution.[236] The BEIS Covid-19 meta-evaluation highlighted that the scheme was launched without a platform that could enable lenders to see if an applicant had already borrowed from

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[230] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation.
[231] London Economics. (2023). Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.
[232] HMRC., and HMT. (2023).   The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.
[233] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.
[234] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.
[235] Nordicity., and Saffery Champness LLP. (2023). Impact Evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.
[236] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.

another scheme (accessing multiple guaranteed loans was not permitted). This was implemented a month into delivery but had some impacts in terms of increasing scheme costs.[237]

▶ **Challenges with accessing data:** the Sports Survival Package evaluation highlighted uneven experiences of applicants and recipients in terms of accessing the data that they needed for the application process and monitoring. For example, the evaluation noted that many applicants lacked financial data required for the application, which made the process time-consuming for them. In addition, some of the clubs accessing funding found it difficult to predict their financial forecasts due to uncertainty, which affected their ability to provide accurate monitoring data.[238]

4.3.3   Evaluation

The aforementioned challenges relating to access to, and availability of, data during the design and delivery stage generally had implications for the evaluation of schemes. Most commonly:

▶ **Missing data:** While some evaluations (such as SEISS and CJRS) benefitted from substantial management information about the schemes, missing data was a challenge across multiple evaluations, meaning it was not possible for evaluations to report consistently on aspects such as reach of schemes. For example, the CRF lacked complete data on organisational type, meaning it was difficult to assess if organisational type affected success at all.[239] As noted in the previous section, the lack of centrally-held data on businesses accessing grants via the first cohort of the Local Authority Grant Scheme meant it was not possible to assess the characteristics of businesses benefitting from the scheme.[240] The LGS evaluation noted there was no data available for applicants that were declined for funding, meaning it was difficult to fully assess if there were inequities in access to the scheme.[241]

▶ **Limited data for comparability:** as many of the business support schemes and their evaluations were delivered concurrently, it was sometimes difficult for evaluators to benchmark performance of schemes. For example, the CRF evaluation provided an early estimate of cost-effectiveness but noted that there was limited published data about other schemes to judge the relative cost-effectiveness of the CRF.[242]

▶ **Availability of data:** due to challenges with centrally-held data and lack of complete contact information, the Local Authority Grant Scheme evaluation experienced challenges with establishing samples to survey.[243] At the time of reporting, the FF evaluation had limitations in the extent of data for its process evaluation.[244] The evaluation of the HSF noted that monitoring plans should have been developed before the launch of the scheme to ensure that beneficiaries were aware of monitoring requirements, so that they could support the process.[245]

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[237] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation
[238] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.
[239] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[240] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[241] London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment.
[242] Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.
[243] Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.
[244] RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report.
[245] Ortus Research. (2023). Executive Summary of the Process and Impacts evaluation of Historic England's Heritage Stimulus Fund.

5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The government's strategy for business support was articulated through various statements made at different points during the pandemic. These outlined the major business needs at that point, and the support that was going to be provided to help address these needs. Departments developed their strategies and objectives in alignment with central direction and messaging.

Nearly all schemes' evaluations noted a clear rationale for their development. Alongside addressing the immediate economic impact of the Covid-19 restrictions via maintaining jobs and protecting cashflow (for earlier schemes), schemes addressed market failures for specific products and supported other sector-specific interventions.

Evaluations highlighted a range of positive learning from delivery of the Covid-19 business support schemes.

The **rapid response** to the needs of business including communications and the speed of payments was noted as being positive across multiple evaluations, with evidence that businesses were satisfied with the efficiency of schemes. This rapid response was crucial to mitigate the financial impact of Covid-19 and ensured that businesses could continue operating.

Structured application processes were considered to be clear and proportionate and supported the consistency of assessments. Accessible application processes were understandable, with easily digestible documentation supporting effectiveness. Regular feedback contributed to ongoing improvements in guidance and communications.

The adaptation of schemes over time was found to be positive, as evidenced by various evaluations. Changes, such as the introduction of flexible furlough options and employer contributions within the CJRS, motivated businesses to reintegrate employees. Continuous feedback and gradual adjustments facilitated quicker lending decisions and improved guidance.

The **availability of support for various types of business was found to be positive**. For instance, providing access to sector-specific business advice within schemes, and modification of existing Heritage Fund schemes provided crucial support to relevant businesses.

Businesses and stakeholders generally viewed the governance and implementation of the schemes positively and the adaption of accredited lenders to new processes was also identified as a major positive theme.

Evaluations highlighted a range of challenges related to delivery, however these varied across schemes:

Especially for some of the earlier schemes, the requirement to develop new support systems quickly resulted in redundant costs and dependence on **inefficient manual processes**. To ensure funding could be mobilised quickly, this did lead to challenges, including some of the initial programmes were implemented with limitations in their application and due diligence procedures, leading to elevated rates of irregular payments. Such limitations were addressed retroactively.

The evaluations identified some challenges related to the **way schemes were designed**. In some cases, businesses faced higher costs and funding delays. Some delivery organisations experienced irregular accreditation schedules for lenders and noted a decreased interest from lenders in participating in certain programmes due to a lack of familiarity with the schemes' design.

The evaluations highlight **key lessons learned about managing fraud risk** when implementing the Covid-19 business support schemes. Fraud and error were identified in risk management plans. Where reported on in the evaluations, instances of error and fraud were mainly concentrated in the earlier schemes (where compromises were made in checks/due diligence to ensure speed of delivery – a risk accepted by ministers at the time). While fraud did occur in later schemes, it was less common than anticipated and did not significantly affect most sectors. Instances of fraud mostly reduced over time with adjustments to schemes, although for some schemes, new measures implemented to help improve targeting (e.g. self-certification) led to increases in error and fraud. Effective mitigation measures included linking claims to existing (verified) government data (as in CJRS and SEISS) and using independent checks. Post-event assurance measures were particularly beneficial for larger grants and loans, though they introduced complexity that sometimes led to opportunistic fraud. Balancing the speed of scheme roll-out with thorough fraud risk management was a key theme.

Most evaluations noted that **scheme design was frequently adversely affected by a lack of different types of data**. Common challenges identified in evaluations included difficulties estimating or calibrating the required number or value of grants or loans due to inadequate up-to-date data on businesses' financial performance. Difficulties in knowing where to target and direct support were highlighted, including for some sector-focused schemes. However, there were **some cases where access to existing data was a clear enabler for success**, such as the CJRS evaluation which benefitted from HMRC's Real Time Information (RTI) on the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) scheme and the Self-Assessment Tax Return data, which SEISS was able to utilise. Having access to such data from the outset enabled fast deployment of funds because claims could be matched to existing government data, helping to mitigate against fraud risks.

Evaluations reported **mixed findings regarding the extent and quality of data during delivery**, including monitoring systems. Strong systems and processes for tracking scheme performance for CJRS and SEISS enabled good quality data that could inform ongoing delivery and evaluation. The British Business Bank's requirement for lenders to share lending portfolio data ensured compliance and progress tracking effectively. However, the Local Authority Grant Scheme initially lacked a requirement for local authorities to share grant recipient data. Applicants for the Sports Survival Package faced challenges in providing requested data in application forms.

The design of **some interventions displayed some central coordination at the scheme level to ensure broad complementarity**. Central collaboration between the Cabinet Office, HMT and other government departments for early schemes like CJRS, SEISS and the Local Authority Grant Scheme, ensured that they were complementary. However, rapid deployment sometimes hindered detailed coordination between schemes during delivery.

Duplication reduced uptake of scheme support in some cases, as seen with the TCRS that overlooked interactions with other support, and some underspend initially (e.g. in the CRF). Conversely, **smoother delivery occurred when refining designs based on previous schemes**, like RLS improving its lender accreditation process by learning from CBILS documentation issues. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme used a similar approach to the TCRS's management and governance structure based on learning that this had worked well. Evaluations found that schemes tailored to specific sectors that were introduced later at built on existing provision had high levels of additionality.

Businesses generally understood which schemes were suitable for them, aided by webinars, videos, communication campaigns, eligibility checkers and social media. Effective messaging helped businesses access support, though there were some issues with miscommunication about eligibility criteria.

Business support **schemes were found to have generally reached their intended recipients** and provided crucial help to those most affected by Covid-19. Where evaluations identified geographical and sectoral differences in reach these were typically influenced by factors unrelated to the schemes' design, such as the geographical profile of businesses in supported sectors, the profile of risk and impact across sectors (i.e, higher coverage of

those affected by lockdown) and varying lockdown approaches across the UK which influenced take up of some schemes. Some evaluations reported that certain types of businesses faced more difficulties accessing some funds due to pre-established factors such as the difficulties with application processes or smaller businesses and IT connectivity for those in rural areas. Due to inconsistencies in data collection, it is not feasible to evaluate the representation of businesses operated by individuals with protected characteristics, beyond the limited observations made for individual schemes. In a few cases, scheme design directly influenced regional and sectoral disparities in coverage including the Local Authority Grant Scheme allowed local authorities to exercise discretion in fund allocation, which resulted in inconsistencies in eligibility criteria. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme which was only accessible for one-off events rather than theatres and Sport Survival Package which had a design which was considered to be unfavourable to smaller community-based organisations.

5.2 Learning for future emergency response schemes

Overall, the meta-evaluation identified several key lessons learned to better prepare - and, if needed, to replicate – for future emergency response schemes. These are summarised below:

▶ **Greater emergency planning:** The Covid-19 business response was closely related to changing health restrictions (affecting how and which businesses could be open or closed), meaning some elements of the business support response were hard to predict and plan for. However, several evaluations, including the LGS evaluation and BEIS meta-evaluation, noted a need for improved planning on which policy levers to utilise in an emergency context, where macro-economic impacts were much greater than a typical recession.[246] [247]

▶ **Improved availability of timely and robust data:** Given the benefits of access to real-time PAYE information in informing the CJRS, it would be beneficial for there to be improved data for other groups, including the self-employed, or for data on financial health of businesses. For example, the SEISS evaluation noted that having real-time data for the self-employed population could help with targeting, reduction of deadweight and supporting better inclusion of groups in future interventions.[248] [249] Similarly, the Covid-19 Loans Guarantee Schemes evaluation noted that *"putting in place mechanisms to gather real-time data on the financial health of businesses could provide critical information to inform decision making in future crises, for example using the information to identify which sectors / groups of businesses would be most impacted by the pandemic and targeting the response accordingly."*[250] As noted throughout the evaluation, access to such data from the outset of designing business support response schemes could enable more rapid mobilisation whilst guarding against fraud risk.

▶ **Improved availability of sector data:** Alongside real-time data, specific sectors – e.g. the culture sector – could benefit from having more granular data on the businesses within the sectors, providing information such as the number of businesses per sub-sector and their size. Whilst this might not be possible for all sectors (depending on the nature of businesses and their supply chains), where it is possible, having access to this data would help inform the design of schemes in the future, in terms of how best to target emergency business support.

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[246] Ibid;

[247] Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation

[248] HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.

[249] HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme final evaluation.

[250]London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment. (p135)

► **Centralised co-ordination:** The evidence indicates that the early business response schemes benefitted from central co-ordination to ensure that schemes, with broad complementarity, could be developed simultaneously and at pace. This was necessary for helping to mitigate against the early impacts. Such an approach should be developed in future, although with greater communication of the particular details (e.g. eligibility criteria) of individual schemes across scheme developers, to help ensure full coverage of target businesses and to reduce issues around overlapping scope of schemes. A more centralised approach could be used to help share the learning from schemes to inform the development of other schemes (e.g. to address emerging gaps).

► **Industry collaboration:** A key strength in the design and delivery of the LGS was the collaborative approach that government departments took with industry representatives and relevant experts such as those from the FCA, Bank of England and British Business Bank, during the design and delivery of schemes. This was important for ensuring that scheme design reflected the needs of target businesses. Support from external organisations also helped in some cases where government departments lacked the specific knowledge or expertise in the product being developed. This type of collaboration was important for ensuring appropriate schemes could be developed at pace.

► **Management of fraud and error risks (irregular payments):** Future schemes should incorporate learning about potential fraud and error risks and tips on how to minimise errors and fraudulent activity, be clear about scheme audit requirements (to ensure sufficient supporting evidence is being collected), and be transparent about any expected changes to aid compliant lending. Information sharing should be prioritised to help raise awareness and improve fraud risk management capacity.

Annex 1: Scheme details

Table A1 below provides an overview of the schemes in scope for the evaluation. It covers the aims, target groups and funding/intervention structure.

Table A1: Scheme overview

Scheme	Aims	Target group(s)	Funding / intervention structure
Culture Recovery Fund	The CRF was announced by DCMS on 5 July 2020 as a £1.57 billion support package12 designed to respond to the challenging circumstances outlined above. The overall aim of the Fund was to support the survival and reopening of cultural and heritage organisations at risk of insolvency in the financial year 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Delivered through a combination of grants and loans, CRF sought to provide support to a breadth of organisations within the sector, including museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, nightclubs, theatres, arts centres, archives, and heritage sites, as well as supply-chain businesses. Through this, CRF sought to indirectly support those operating within the wider cultural ecosystem.	Cultural organisations based in England, that could demonstrate that they functioned within a defined list of artforms and disciplines noted within ALBs' sub-programme guidance.	Three rounds of funding: Grants - (£1,172,389,994 overall). funding for revenue support (£1,007,501,262) and some funding for capital grants (£164,888,732) Loans - (£254,048,000) - repayable up to 20 years, with most carrying an interest rate of 2% and up to a 4-year repayment holiday

	Originally intended as a single round of emergency funding, the CRF evolved to span three rounds (CRF 1, 2 and 3), and grew in size to encompass a further £300 million of support in the financial year 2021-2022. The aims of the Fund evolved in response to the evolving needs of the sector resulting from the sustained challenges presented by the pandemic.		
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	The primary goal of the CJRS was to protect jobs (by maintaining the link between employers and employers), help resumption of activity once restrictions were lifted, and prevent widespread unemployment resulting from the pandemic.	The scheme was open to all UK payroll entities with employees who had stopped working due to the pandemic. These entities included businesses, charities, recruitment agencies/public authorities, and covered employees on any type of contract. In July 2020, the government introduced flexible furlough, which enabled employers to bring employees back part-time while continuing to claim grants for unworked hours.	The scheme initially offered employers the opportunity to apply for a grant to fund the wages of employees on furlough, up to 80% of usual wages and capped at £2,500 per month. Later changes were introduced: July 2020 – flexible furlough was introduced, which allowed employees to return to work for any amount of time while employers could still claim for the hours not worked. August 2020 – employers could no longer claim associated costs (i.e. National Insurance contributions and pension contributions) September 2020 – employers were required to contribute 10% of usual pay in respect of any hours not worked, rising to 20% in October. November 2020 – the government's contribution was extended back to 80% and subsequently extended until June 2021 in response to the increase in non-pharmaceutical interventions. Summer 2021 – support was tapered, with employers contributing 10% in July, increasing to 20% in August, with the scheme closing in September 2021.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme	The primary objective of the SEISS was to support self-employed individuals whose businesses had been adversely affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The goal was to enable self-employed people to remain in business, and provide support broadly equivalent to the CJRS.	Individuals who were declared as self employed	The SEISS was delivered as a series of 5 grants available between May 2020 and September 2021, that self-employed individuals could claim based on their Self Assessment tax records. It was delivered at pace, with the first grant opening for applications on 13 May 2020. The scheme aimed to support those most reliant on self-employed income by setting criteria based on annual trading profits and the share of income from self-employment.
Future Fund	The main objective of the Future Fund was to increase the supply of finance to potentially viable UK equity backed companies that would otherwise have problems raising finance, or been underfunded, due to adverse market conditions.	The Future Fund was open to UK companies that had previously raised at least £250k in equity from third party investors in previous funding rounds in the last five years. The eligibility criteria were expanded on 30 June 2020 to include businesses that contribute significantly to the UK economy but do not have their parent company based in the UK.	The main objective of the Future Fund was to increase the supply of finance to potentially viable UK equity backed companies that would otherwise have problems raising finance, or been underfunded, due to adverse market conditions.
COVID-19 Loans Schemes	The overarching aims of the Schemes were to offer support to businesses experiencing disruptions to their cashflow and losses in	BBLS: This scheme was designed for small businesses with	BBLS: Loans were 100% guaranteed by the government to encourage lenders to provide quick and easy funding for small businesses. Borrowers were subject to a flat 2.5% interest rate after an initial 12-month interest-free period.

	revenue due to the Covid-19 outbreak.	turnovers under £5 million. CBILS: This scheme was aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises with turnovers up to £45 million. CLBILS: This scheme targeted larger businesses with turnovers above £45 million.	The scheme allowed borrowers to request payment holidays or extend the repayment period up to ten years . CBILS: The government provided an 80% guarantee to lenders on eligible loans. Borrowers could access interest-free loans for the first 12 months, after which regular commercial terms applied. This scheme was designed for medium-sized businesses, allowing for larger loans with structured repayments. CLBILS: Similar to CBILS, the government guaranteed 80% of the loan value. However, this scheme catered to larger businesses, providing substantial loans to cover significant operational costs. Interest rates and repayment terms varied, reflecting the bespoke nature of the funding.
Recovery Loan Scheme	RLS 1.0 was designed to provide government-backed loan guarantees to ensure that viable businesses could access finance despite ongoing economic uncertainty.	The scheme was aimed at SMEs that were financially viable but needed additional support due to the economic impact of Covid-19.	The funding structure followed a lender-led approach, meaning accredited lenders assessed and approved loan applications under pre-set eligibility criteria. The British Business Bank (BBB) accredited 84 lenders to deliver the scheme, including banks, alternative finance providers, and specialist lenders Loan values were capped at £10 million per business with no turnover restrictions. The government guarantee covered 80% of lender losses, but businesses remained responsible for repaying 100% of the loan.

			Lenders were required to apply a commercial interest rate, with an average Annual Equivalent Rate (AER) above 6%, significantly higher than traditional commercial lending rates
Local Authority COVID-19 Business Support Grant Scheme	One of the largest interventions made to protect the economy against the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (behind the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) It aimed to provide cashflow support to small businesses adversely affected by nonpharmaceutical interventions introduced to contain the outbreak of COVID-19.	Small businesses facing the most significant restrictions	Eight grant schemes administered by local authorities - operating at different times between March 2020 and March 2022 (pg5) Cohort One schemes: Developed and delivered in response to the first national lockdown and closed at the end of June 2020. 1a. Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF): support small business to continue trading. Eligibility criteria were based on the rateable value of premises (up to £15,000) 1b. Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF): targeted specifically at the sectors most at risk. Eligibility criteria were based on the rateable value of premises (up to £51,000). 2. Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADF): Local authorities had discretion to set eligibility criteria (though firms had to be ineligible for SBGF or RHLGF). Cohort Two schemes: Delivered in response to local restrictions and later national restrictions introduced in late 2020 and 2021. Introduced to help businesses affected by tighter restrictions introduced at the local and national level between July 2020 and July 2021. 3a. Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) 3b. Additional Restrictions Grants(ARG) 3c. Christmas Support Payment (CSP)

			4. Restart Grants (RSG): support businesses with costs attached to reopening. The scheme launched in April 2021 and closed in December 2021. 5. Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG): support businesses most affected by the emergence of the Omicron variant. Businesses offering in-person services from fixed rate-paying premises in the hospitality, leisure, and accommodation sectors. The scheme was launched in January 2022 and closed in March 2022
Film and TV Production Restart Scheme	The scheme is primarily aimed at independent UK production companies that are unable to bear costs associated with Covid-19 disruption on their own.	UK independent production companies who are unable to cover the costs of the risks associated of producing film/tv during Covid-19.	Compensation based insurance style scheme. Production companies paid a fee to join the scheme and could apply for compensation to cover financial losses caused by Covid-19-related delays or cancellations during production.
Sport Survival Package	The primary aim was to prevent club insolvency and ensure the survival of sports organisations that relied heavily on matchday revenue. It also sought to safeguard investment in grassroots and women's sports.	Professional and semi-professional sports clubs National Governing Bodies (NGBs) Leagues and competitions Grassroots and community sports organisations Women's sports teams and organisations	A package of measures to support the sports sector, including loans and grants.

		Spectator sports impacted by COVID-19 restrictions Sports with high reliance on matchday revenue (e.g. Rugby Union, Rugby League, Football, Horse Racing) Clubs at risk of insolvency due to the pandemic	
Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act	These measures aimed to help struggling companies restructure, manage creditor pressure, and remain operational.	Financially distressed companies struggling due to COVID-19-related disruptions. Large and medium-sized businesses that required restructuring mechanisms to manage debt. SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) in need of temporary protection from creditors. Company directors and insolvency practitioners responsible for implementing rescue plans.	This scheme was not a financial funding programme but instead introduced legal mechanisms to assist companies in financial distress.

		Creditors and suppliers affected by the new restrictions on debt recovery and contract termination.	
Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme		Policyholders of the UK Tax Credit Insurances.	Reinsuring 90% of the value of in-scope TCI claims of insurers, up to £3 billion.
Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund	The fund was created to support creative practitioners and organisations affected by COVID-19 lockdown measures. It aimed to alleviate immediate financial pressures and enable the continuation of creative activities.	Freelance creative practitioners who generated more than 50% of their income from freelance work. Arts organisations outside ACE's National Portfolio that focused on ACE-supported artforms. National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Creative People and Places (CPP) lead organisations. Museums and libraries that relied on public engagement. Freelancers and subcontractors working in the creative sector	3 funds: - £20 million for individual practitioners - £50 million for organisations outside of ACE's National Portfolio - £90 million for National Portfolio Organisations and Creative People and Places lead organisations.

Historic England Heritage Stimulus Fund	The fund aimed to prevent the further deterioration of heritage assets that would have otherwise gone unrepaired due to financial constraints caused by the pandemic.	The fund supported heritage organisations, local authorities, private property owners, businesses, charities, and places of worship.	Covid-19 Emergency Heritage at Risk Response Fund: Up to £25k per project. Grants for Programmes of Major Works: Ranged from £1m - £10m (Round 1) and £1m - £7m (Round 2) Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk and Major Repairs for Heritage at Risk: No minimum or maximum funding cap
National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund	The Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) was established to help heritage organisations remain financially stable during COVID-19.	Heritage organisations impacted by COVID-19. Grantees of previous National Lottery Heritage Fund projects. Organisations managing cultural and natural heritage sites. Organisations at risk of financial distress due to the pandemic.	It provided emergency grants to cover operating costs, staff salaries, and urgent maintenance, ranging from between £3000 and £250,000.
Live Events Reinsurance Scheme	The objectives were to: provide confidence to events organisers to plan events to the end of Summer 2022; offer a time-limited product to avoid permanently affecting market behaviour; and deliver an acceptable level of overall risk exposure and potential cost to the Exchequer.	Live events organisers.	The scheme provided insurance to event organisers to cover costs incurred if events were legally unable to take place due to local, regional or national measures imposed to manage further outbreaks of Covid-19.

Table A2: Evaluations reviewed and their methodologies

Scheme	Evaluation(s)	Methods used
Culture Recovery Fund	Ecorys., Ipsos UK., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2022). Evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund: Final Report.	Mixed-methods approach: ▶ 53 Theory-based case studies (30 with organisations supported under CRF 1 and CRF 2, 18 with CRF 3. 5 case studies with declined applicants) ▶ Telephone survey of 925 organisations (successful (n=679) and declined (n=246)) that applied for support for CRF 1 and CRF 2. Response rate of 29%. ▶ Online survey of 885 applicants (successful (n=809) and declined (n=73)). 48% response rate. ▶ Interviews with 56 stakeholders ▶ Document review (29 documents)
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme interim evaluation. HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme final evaluation.	Quantitative research (externally commissioned): ▶ Telephone survey with employers and agents (such as accountants): a probability sample of 5,244 Users (of the grant), 1,816 non-users (eligible but did not apply for the grant) and 1,161 agents who had applied for the CJRS on behalf of an employer. ▶ Survey focused on the March to October 2020 period and ran between 18 November 2020 and 5 February 2021 ▶ First wave employer online survey: conducted in April 2020 and surveyed over 1,000 employers. This survey included questions on levels of awareness of the CJRS, how employers were preparing for the scheme and their views of the government's communications about the scheme. Sample drawn from a drawn from a large commercial database. ▶ Second employer online survey: took place in May 2020 and surveyed over 3,500 employers. This survey examined the customer experience of applying for the CJRS and awareness of

future changes to the scheme. Sample drawn from a drawn from a large commercial database.

▶ Employee online survey: conducted in April 2020. Over 1,000 employees were surveyed and were drawn from Ipsos' Online Access Panel with quotas and weighting set to reflect the profile of the UK population. Screening questions were used to confirm respondents were paid through Pay as You Earn and therefore potentially eligible for the CJRS. Weighting was applied to ensure the data reflected the profile of the UK population in terms of age, gender and region.

Qualitative research (externally commissioned):

▶ Qualitative research with employers: in-depth telephone interviews or online video calls with 73 CJRS Users and 13 Non-Users. This research covered employers' experiences of the CJRS and early impacts of the scheme.

▶ In-depth interviews with 40 organisations that applied for the CJRS and 15 tax agents who supported organisations to do so

Internal analysis:

▶ Interviews conducted with 36 HMT and HMRC staff

▶ Analysis of HMRC management information and CJRS data; including HMRC contact performance data.

In some places, findings are also supplemented with evidence from external data sources to provide context or comparison with HMRC data, and to give added confidence to the robustness of the evaluation's findings.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme	HMRC., and HMT. (2022). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme interim evaluation.	▶ Analysis of management information and Income Tax Self Assessment data. ▶ Online survey of a representative sample of 7,311 SEISS claimants (random sample, final data weighted to ensure reflective of overall SEISS claimant population) (conducted by Ipsos between August and September 2020).

	HMRC., and HMT. (2023). The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme final evaluation.	▶ 55 in-depth interviews: 40 customers who had applied for SEISS grants and 15 tax agents who had supported 1 or more clients with SEISS applications (not statistically representative: purposive sample to include key groups) (conducted by Ipsos between September and October 2020). ▶ 35 in-depth interviews with HMT and HMRC staff (no sampling method clarification) (conducted by Government Social Researchers from HMRC's Knowledge, Analysis and Intelligence Directorate between October 2021 and March 2022).
Future Fund	RSM., and British Business Bank. (2022). Future Fund Early Assessment Report. RSM., and British Business Bank. (2023). Year 2 – Future Fund Early Assessment Report - update	Year 1 Future Fund evaluation: Mixed-methods approach: ▶ 1. Desk research, secondary data analysis and modelling; ▶ 2. Stakeholder interviews; ▶ 3. Surveys of: CLA funded businesses & recipients; applicants (applied but didn't receive finance); non-applicants (eligible firms that didn't apply to the scheme); lead investors; ▶ 4. Case study interviews with all group of stakeholders listed above. ▶ There is also an MI data analysis which provides a summary of Future Fund CLA funded businesses. ▶ Early assessment methodology is separate and included: ▶ 1. Scoping interviews with BEIS, HMT and the Bank; ▶ 2. Desk research; ▶ 3. TOC and evaluation framework; ▶ 4. Mapping other schemes used by Future Fund companies; ▶ 5. Comparing Fund beneficiaries with counterfactual (CLA applicants and non-applicants); ▶ 6. Surveys / interviews; ▶ 7 Econometric difference-in-difference modelling on company investment

			Year 2 Future Fund evaluation:
			▶ Identified a counterfactual group of firms and the use of a propensity score matching technique for a like-for-like comparison of business performance (p6). Completed the analysis with case study interviews of 6 firms. Firm-level data was used to compare KPIs (turnover, business survival, export, fundraising, business valuation) between portfolio firms // counterfactual group. IDBR used to obtain turnover and employment data (p21). IDBR and Beauhurst datasets were combined. PSM was then performed to create a comparison group that matched the intervention group.
			▶ Five distinct stages for the data analysis: 1. Data identification and sourcing; 2. Data frame development; 3. Hypothesis testing; 4. Modelling; 5. Data analysis on the modelled data set.
COVID-19 Loans Schemes		London Economics., and Ipsos. (2022). Evaluation of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Process evaluation and early impact assessment. London Economics., and Ipsos (2023). Year	Year 1: Mixed-methods approach:
			▶ Quantitative Survey, primarily conducted by telephone, with 978 borrowers and 1,171 non-borrowers.
			▶ (The cooperation rate was 48% for borrowers and 29% for non-borrowers.
			▶ (Interviews with 42 businesses: 17 BBLS, 16 CBILS, and one CLBILS borrower, alongside eight businesses that did not receive loans under one of the Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Schemes.
			▶ Stakeholder consultations with 36 stakeholders involved in the scheme design and delivery (from the British Business Bank, BEIS, and HM Treasury) and 19 delegated lenders involved in scheme delivery, and wider business groups.
			▶ Programme documentation review (i.e. describing how the schemes had been designed, adapted or scheme guidance).
			▶ Management information review.

		▶ Secondary datasets, e.g. company accounts captured by FAME, the British Business Bank's SME Finance survey, BVA BDRC's SME Finance Monitor and surveys exploring business confidence. Year 2: Mixed-methods approach: Impact Evaluation: ▶ Quantitative survey (again, telephone interviews were the primary data collection method but also online option) of 440 borrowers and 521 non-borrowers from 18 August to14 October 2022. Of the 440 borrowers, BBLS borrowers = 242, CBILS borrowers =189, CLBILS borrowers= 9. The cooperation rate was 79% for Borrowers and 55% for Non-borrowers (increase on first year is largely due to cooperation of recontacted sample). ▶ Secondary Data analysis of sources including the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) and the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS). ▶ Econometric approaches/models in the impact evaluation, which used propensity score matching (PSM). ▶ Secondary Data analysis of sources including the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) and the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) - and triangulation of self-reported data. Process Evaluation: ▶ Programme documentation and data review ▶ Evidence review (A review of wider published evidence) ▶ 9 Depth interviews with stakeholders ▶ 6 Depth interviews with accredited lenders
Recovery Loan Scheme	London Economics., and Ipsos. (2024). Evaluation of	For the process evaluation, methods used were: ▶ Review of programme documentation relating to how schemes were designed, the scheme guidance, and agreements entered into between lenders and the Guarantor.

	Recovery Loan Scheme 1.0.	▶ Review of MI data on scheme portfolio and lenders. ▶ Secondary datasets - from BBB's SME Finance Survey, Bank of England data ▶ Interviews with 11 stakeholders involved in scheme design and delivery. For the impact evaluation: ▶ 478 businesses completed a mixed-mode survey (telephone and online); 242 interviews were with RLS borrowers, and 236 were with non-borrowers. ▶ Interviews with lenders ▶ Analysis of MI data from BBB
Local Authority COVID-19 Business Support Grant Scheme	Ipsos UK., Steer Economic Development., and Barrett, G. (2024). Evaluation of the Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grant Schemes: Final Report.	Mixed methods approach: 1. Scoping: review of programme documentation and monitoring information, and consultations with officials and local authorities involved in the design and the delivery of the programme 2. Data collection: Monitoring data analysis ▶ Depth interviews: 34 local authorities (chosen to provide broadly representative coverage in terms of levels of spending and urban density and a mixture of across England's regions, with one outlying authority selected purposively owing to its unique ▶ characteristics) and five national stakeholders (including officials from DBT, DLUHC, and industry bodies representing key sectors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic) ▶ Business survey (primarily telephone): businesses that did and did not receive grants. Businesses from 67 local authorities targeted. 3,206 responses (2,405 received grant, 693 did not receive, and 108 were unsure); 18% response rate (adjusted for unusable contact details and ineligible respondents) ▶ 5 local case studies: selected from the pool of 40 local authorities participating in the consultation exercise. Local stakeholders with an external view on the implementation and impact of the schemes (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships or Chambers of Commerce) and

interviews with 17 businesses benefitting from the programme skewed to OHLG grant beneficiaries as not covered through quantitative evaluation.

▶ Analysis of secondary data sources: to support further assessment of the impacts of the grant schemes on employment levels, turnover, and business survival rates.

3. Econometric analysis: to estimate causal effects

▶ Survey evidence, administrative data and Eligibility criteria were each used separately to compare firms awarded grants and firms that did not receive grants sharing similar pre-pandemic characteristics.

▶ Spatial analysis: to account for possible spillovers arising from the preservation of businesses or how far any workers displaced may have been able take up employment opportunities elsewhere, a series of spatial analyses examining the relationship between the share of potentially eligible businesses awarded grants and overall employment and unemployment levels and numbers of workplaces within local authorities was undertaken to explore net local impacts.

Film and TV Production Restart Scheme	RSM. (2022). Process evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme. Nordicity., and Saffery Champness LLP. (2023). Impact Evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.	Process evaluation: ▶ Desk research - included review of scheme documents and scheme monitoring data ▶ Interviews (Phase 1) (n=15) - scheme designers (n=8); those responsible for scheme oversight/management (n=5); those responsible for scheme delivery. ▶ Online survey (n=100); Successful applicants (n=89); unsuccessful applicants (n=5); those who chose not to apply to the scheme (n=6). Response rate of about 10%. ▶ Interviews (Phase 2) (n=12); Broadcasters (n=4); financiers (n=3); unsuccessful applicants (n=4) and Marsh (n=1). Impact evaluation: ▶ Desk research and data compilation - e.g. production data on budgets, type of production, filming locations and number of cast and crew involved in each production.

		▶ Interviews with 32 producers or other stakeholders: 10 producers, 1 producer that did not apply, 2 industry bodies, 3 broadcasters, 5 film/TV financiers, 3 insurance industry representatives, 8 scheme steering board members. ▶ Online survey of producers - 71 respondents out of 430 (16% RR) ▶ Case studies of the scheme ▶ Economic impact modelling
Sport Survival Package	Ecorys., Ipsos UK., Barrett, G., and Wilson, R. (2023). Evaluation of Sport Survival Package: Final Report.	▶ Desk research – Reviewed programme data covering loan and grant awards by sport segments and monitoring data on the financial situations of supported organisations post-funding. ▶ Telephone survey (n=163) – Conducted in three phases Pilot 1, 2 and Main phase. Sports Survival Package grant and loan sport club recipients with awards over £10,000. ▶ Online survey (n=364) – Conducted in two parts: ▶ Longer survey (n=133) for Sports Survival Package grant and loan recipients with awards over £10,000 - shorter survey (n=231) for Sports Survival Package grant recipients with awards under £10,000. 24% response rate. ▶ Case studies (n=40) – In-depth, theory-based case studies including desk research (application files and monitoring reviews), 90-minute virtual workshops with recipient representatives, and 30–45-minute qualitative interviews. ▶ Stakeholder interviews (n=25) Structured interviews with Sport England Strategic and Project Leads, Independent Board representatives, DCMS Evaluation and Policy leads, Sport England delivery partners, NGBs or sport representatives receiving direct funding, and secondary model distributors. ▶ Value for Money (VfM) assessment, utilised programme and monitoring data, telephone survey results, case studies, process strand interviews, and secondary data.

Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act	[Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 - Interim Report March 2022](#) [Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 - Final Evaluation Report November 2022](#)	Mixed methods approach (1. Introduction) ▶ Total of 55 interviews had been conducted: 25 with IPs (13 in Stage One and 12 in Stage Two); 20 with lawyers (14 in Stage One and 6 in Stage Two); and 10 interviews with trade associations or government agencies (6 in Stage One and 4 in Stage Two). ▶ The views of trade bodies were obtained by way of roundtable discussions with their members with the questions being based upon the questions used in the semi-structured interviews. ▶ Two case studies, one on RP and one on Moratorium both selected due to unique interest
Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme	London Economics. (2023). [Evaluation of the Trade Credit Reinsurance (TCR) scheme: Process and interim impact evaluation – Final report.](#)	▶ Desk based research / document review. ▶ Scoping consultation. ▶ Stakeholder consultations: Semi-structured interviews, online over video, up to 2 hours. Evaluation FW informed the topics of the interview. 4 main stakeholders: Government / Delivery partners / Insurance Industry Stakeholders / Business Stakeholders. ▶ Survey of policyholders: Random sample of 600 businesses for all the 11,456 that held trade credit insurance policies with insurers during the scheme's period. ▶ Monitoring data: Insurers submitted data on a monthly/quarterly basis to the scheme to monitor its effectiveness. Monthly records of in-scope policies and details about the insured within the policy file. ▶ The interim impact evaluation: 1. Hypothetical scenario modelling; 2. Insurer's likely actions in the absence of the TCR scheme. Data used: 5 stakeholder consultations with insurers; 600 businesses in policyholder survey; monitoring data provided by insurers.
Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund	SQW. (2022). [Evaluation of Arts Council England's Emergency](#)	▶ Structured qualitative online survey with a sample of 126 applicants (98 successful applicants and organisations, and 28 unsuccessful applicants). Survey software was used to code the data, and analysis in excel used to capture the frequency of key responses.

	Response Fund (ERF).	
Historic England Heritage Stimulus Fund	Ortus Research. (2023). Executive Summary of the Process and Impacts evaluation of Historic England's Heritage Stimulus Fund.	Methodology not stated explicitly for the process evaluation, only the longitudinal evaluation. Over 150 grantees were surveyed.
National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund	Renaisi. (2021). National Lottery Heritage Fund: Heritage Emergency Fund Evaluation Final Report.	Methods included: ▶ Interviews (22 with staff at the Fund; 5 interviews with ROSS consultants (who provided support to The Fund and grantees; 47 interviews with organisations receiving support through the Fund via HEF 1 and HEF 2; 8 interviews with previous grantees of the fund, who did not apply to HEF; 5 interviews with unsuccessful applicants) ▶ 2 open meetings with HEF grantees (facilitated by Renaisi team); ▶ Review of internal and external documentation; ▶ Quantitative analysis of application data; ▶ 6 case studies of grantees receiving support through HEF; ▶ Learning diary for Investment Managers and Engagement Managers at the fund to capture their reflections and learning ▶ Quantitative analysis of an online survey completed by 360 HEF grantees at the end of their grants. All fieldwork was done virtually.

Live Events Reinsurance Scheme	Ipsos UK., Ecorys., BOP Consulting., and Barrett, G. (2023). Live Events Reinsurance Scheme: Process evaluation. (unpublished).	▶ Semi-structured interviews, with live events organisers (3), and non-participating organisers (3), steering board members and the Central Team within DCMS (5), participating (5) and non participating insurers (1) and industry association (1), live events sector stakeholders (5) and the delivery partner (2). ▶ Analysis of monitoring information collected by the delivery partner from participating insurers. ▶ Document review involving an analysis of series of relevant documents accessed for the scoping work. ▶ Synthesis, triangulation of reporting (thematic, and considering where evidence is consistent, contradictory of otherwise)
Local Authority Covid-19 Business Support Grants Scheme; Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme; Covid-19 Loan Guarantee Scheme; Future Fund; Recovery Loan Scheme; Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act.	Ipsos UK., Technopolis., and Barrett, G. (2024). BEIS Covid-19 Response: Meta Evaluation. .	▶ Development of evaluation framework for BEIS' COVID-19 response including ToC and evaluation questions ▶ Literature review: evaluation evidence was mapped against the evaluation questions comprising a thematic analysis of process evaluation findings and an aggregative synthesis of the findings of impact evaluations and reflections on the strength of the underpinning methodologies. ▶ Context review: findings of the review were contextualised through a broader analysis of the socio-economic outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic including a synthetic control group analysis involving comparisons between UK and similar advanced economies ▶ 31 depth interviews with SMEs across a variety of sectors and exposure to trading restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic covering both businesses that benefitted from COVID-19 response programmes and businesses that did not.

Source: Methodologies of the respective evaluation reports listed.