

Progress report on the Government Major Projects Evaluation Review Action Plan

Evaluation Task Force

May 2026

Introduction

The Government Major Project Portfolio (GMPP) is a collection of the government's most strategically important projects. Projects on the GMPP are independently scrutinised by the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA)¹ who provide advice and monitor delivery progress. Major projects range from railways, roads, schools, hospitals and housing, to energy, telecommunications, defence, IT and transformation programmes. At the time of publishing, the GMPP comprises 213 projects with a total cost of £996.3 billion². As set out in the Treasury Approvals Process guidance, evaluation is a requirement for all government major projects and programmes³.

In April 2025, the Evaluation Task Force (ETF), published a review of evaluation across the GMPP⁴. The review found that the coverage of major project evaluation had increased significantly since the initial review in 2019. Despite this progress, only 34% of all GMPP projects were found to have good quality evaluation plans in place, leaving the remaining two thirds (representing £456 billion in total cost) without good quality evaluation. The report included an action plan to address some of the key barriers to evaluation highlighted in the report. The action plan addressed four key areas:

- a. strengthening evaluation requirements and governance within HM Treasury (HMT), NISTA and departmental processes;
- b. strengthening evaluation capability across major project teams, NISTA and departments;
- c. embedding evaluation into project delivery, and;
- d. promoting the value of evaluation to key stakeholders.

All actions were due to be completed by March 2026. The ETF, HMT and NISTA agreed to deliver the action plan, working with government departments and major project teams.

A year on, this report reviews the progress that has been made, sets out next steps for ensuring the action plan is completed, and the ongoing commitments to improve the coverage and quality of major project evaluation.

Achievements

Significant progress has been made across all four areas of the action plan, including the following achievements.

¹ [National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority \(NISTA\)](#) (link last accessed 25th February 2025).

² [National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority \(NISTA\) Annual Report 2024/25](#) (Link last accessed 25th February 2025). By total cost we refer here to the 'whole life cost' of major projects, which is defined as the total cost of each project over its entire life, from planning and design through to delivery, ongoing maintenance and eventual closure.

³ [Treasury Approvals Process: For all projects and programmes](#). HM Treasury. April 2024

⁴ [Government Major Projects Evaluation Review](#). Evaluation Task Force, April 2025 (PDF 675 KB).

Requirements & Accountability - Strengthened requirements for robust evaluation of major projects are now set out in the Treasury Approvals Process guidance⁵, Managing Public Money⁶, Green Book⁷, Teal Book⁸, Magenta Book⁹, and Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) appointment letters.¹⁰ This has improved clarity about evaluation requirements and lines of accountability.

Transparency & Reporting - As per the guidance on publishing Business Cases¹¹, major projects must now publish their business cases, including their evaluation plans. The ETF launched the public Evaluation Registry¹², where major projects are required to upload any planned, ongoing or complete evaluations. NISTA has also implemented quarterly SRO reporting on evaluation requirements within their Government Reporting Integrated Platform (GRIP) process, and launched a dashboard including this data to monitor departmental and project-level performance, improving oversight of major project evaluation.

Capability building - The ETF published demonstrators¹³ of best practice evaluation plans for four major projects to support teams planning evaluations. The ETF has run several evaluation teach-ins across NISTA and the Project Delivery Profession with over 375 major project reviewers and 200 project delivery professionals. Major project teams have had priority access to the Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel¹⁴. Evaluation content is due to be added to the Major Project Leadership Academy (MPLA) and project delivery fast stream syllabus to ensure that civil servants at all grades are exposed to training on how to embed robust evaluation into delivery.

Promoting the value of evaluation - At the Government Evaluation Conference in April 2025, attended by over 400 evaluators, the ETF ran a session highlighting the importance of major project evaluation. We have also leveraged senior engagement from Conrad Smewing (Director General of Public Spending at HMT and Joint-Head of the Government Finance Function) and Cat Little (Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office) to promote the value of evaluation. In August 2025, Cat Little wrote to all major project SROs to update them on the findings of the review and remind them of their requirement to robustly evaluate their programmes.

⁵ [Treasury Approvals Process: For all projects and programmes](#). HM Treasury. Last updated 18 April 2024.

⁶ [Managing Public Money](#). HM Treasury. Last updated 12 June 2025.

⁷ [The Green Book and accompanying guidance](#). HM Treasury. Last updated 5 February 2026.

⁸ [The Teal Book](#). Government Project Delivery. 1 April 2025.

⁹ [The Magenta Book](#). HM Treasury and Evaluation Task Force. Last updated 9 July 2025.

¹⁰ [Template SRO appointment letter](#). Government Project Delivery. 21 September 2025.

¹¹ [Publishing Business Cases. Guidance for departments](#). HM Treasury. June 2025.

¹² [Evaluation Registry](#)

¹³ [Evaluation Demonstrators](#). Evaluation Task Force, Cabinet Office and Georgia Gould, OBE MP. 28 August 2025.

¹⁴ [The Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel](#). Evaluation Task Force and Modernisation and Reform. 29 December 2025.

Outstanding commitments and next steps

There are a range of ongoing commitments that NISTA and the ETF continue to work on to increase both the quantity and quality of evaluations being conducted across the GMPP. Detailed progress on the action plan is provided in Table 1.

Strengthening governance and scrutiny

Evaluation requirements for major projects have been strengthened, and improvements have been made to emphasise SRO accountability. To build on this progress, we will focus on enhancing evaluation governance and scrutiny. The following steps will ensure the development and delivery of high-quality evaluation plans and provide transparency on evaluation performance across the GMPP.

1. The ETF, with support from HMT, will ensure plans to improve major project evaluation are embedded in department governance, such as investment committees and approval boards, annual planning, and evaluation strategies (ongoing).
2. NISTA will continue to use data from GRIP and the Evaluation Registry to provide regular updates on major project evaluation and disseminate this to relevant stakeholders (ongoing).
3. NISTA, with support from the ETF, will embed evaluation into the new assurance framework and process for major projects (September 2026).
4. The ETF will lead on reviewing and publishing performance of major projects on evaluation across the GMPP with the next review planned for FY 2027/28 (ongoing).

Building system-wide capability

We have made a strong start in developing evaluation capability within the project delivery community. However, work will continue to ensure that every major project team has the necessary capacity and capability to deliver robust evaluation across the GMPP. The following actions will provide all major project teams and SROs with effective evaluation training and support. Additionally, these measures ensure that NISTA has the technical expertise to verify compliance with all evaluation requirements.

5. NISTA and the ETF will continue to work with departments to raise the profile of evaluation across the project delivery profession (ongoing).
6. NISTA, with support from the ETF, will ensure evaluation is embedded in the new Project Delivery Capability Framework and the project delivery training offer (TBC).
7. NISTA, with support from the ETF, will embed evaluation content into the MPLA curriculum to equip leaders with the knowledge and skills to oversee robust and proportionate evaluations (September 2026).
8. The ETF will work with departments to ensure there is a clear route to market for major project evaluations (September 2026).
9. The ETF will provide evaluation advice and support to high priority projects, including those on the GMPP and provide access to the Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel (ongoing).

10. The ETF will develop evaluation training specifically for non-technical audiences (September 2026).
11. NISTA and the ETF will review central evaluation capability requirements for ensuring quality major project evaluations (ongoing).

The ongoing collaboration between the ETF, HMT, and NISTA remains vital for promoting the value of robust evaluation. This partnership is essential to ensure continued commitment and tangible progress in expanding and enhancing evaluation coverage across the GMPP.

To ensure the government remains accountable for its evaluation commitments, the ETF will conduct a comprehensive follow-up review of major project performance. This process will culminate in a formal report by March 2028, providing a transparent audit of both evaluation coverage and the quality of evaluation practices across the GMPP.

Table 1: Progress on action plan

Objective	Actions	Key Deliverables	Status	Required next steps
To strengthen evaluation requirements and governance within HMT, NISTA and departmental processes	It is now a requirement within TAP guidance for all projects and programmes to have robust evaluation plans in place and log their evaluation plans and outputs in the Evaluation Task Force's Evaluation Registry.	TAP guidance	Complete	HMT and NISTA should ensure that these strengthened evaluation requirements are upheld.
	All programmes on the GMPP are now required to publish their business cases, including their plans for evaluation.	Guidance on publishing business cases		
	ETF and HMT have reviewed and updated evaluation requirements in Managing Public Money and the Green Book.	Managing Public Money Green Book		
	ETF has worked with the project delivery profession to publish a chapter in the Teal Book on how evaluation fits into the policy cycle.	Teal Book		
	NISTA now collects quarterly data from GMPP SROs to understand whether they are meeting their evaluation requirements. This data is collected via GRIP and is published for transparency as part of the NISTA annual report. NISTA is also developing an internal dashboard to support the dissemination of evaluation data to NISTA staff and departments.	NISTA Annual Report Dashboard 2025	Complete - adopted into Business As Usual (BAU)	NISTA should continue to collect and disseminate this data from major projects, quality assuring the quarterly returns using the Evaluation Registry.
	The ETF is working with NISTA on minor updates to their Gateway Workbooks ahead of a larger update in 2026/27.		Agreement to take forward in 2026/27 FY	NISTA, with support from the ETF, will embed evaluation into the new assurance framework and process for major projects (September 2026).
	The ETF continues to review departmental evaluation governance and identify cases where improvements may be needed within departmental evaluation governance, such as investment committees or approval boards.		Complete - adopted into BAU	The ETF will continue to review departmental evaluation governance.

Objective	Actions	Key Deliverables	Status	Required next steps
	The ETF will work with HMT to explore whether evaluation compliance should be part of the requirements for Accounting Officer Assessments and Annual Reports and Accounts. The ETF, with support from HMT, will ensure plans to improve major project evaluation are embedded in department strategies and annual planning.		Complete - adopted into BAU	The ETF will continue to work with HMT on this.
	The ETF will continue to review major project evaluation, with the next review planned for 2027, and the ETF will also provide insights on performance against evaluation requirements where appropriate to inform NAO reviews.		Complete - adopted into BAU	The ETF will continue to work with the NAO on this.
To strengthen evaluation capability across major project teams, NISTA and departments	The ETF launched the Evaluation Registry as a tool for teams to log and browse evaluations across government, allowing them to share good practice and findings.	The Government Evaluation Registry	Complete	N/A
	The ETF published five best practice examples of major project evaluation plans for projects which are typically regarded as challenging to evaluate. Demonstrators are available for four different types of major project.	A short guide for programme delivery teams Evaluation Demonstrators	Complete	
	ETAP has provided support to major project teams requiring expert evaluation advice. In August 2025, Catherine Little (Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office) wrote to all major project SROs to remind them of their requirement to evaluate and offer them priority access to ETAP for the following 6 months.	Evaluation and Trials Advice Panel (ETAP)	Complete - adopted into BAU	The ETF will continue to offer their ETAP service to major projects.
	The ETF has developed tailored evaluation training and resources for major project teams, including the publication of best practice demonstrators and updating the Teal Book guidance.		Complete - adopted into BAU	NISTA, with support from the ETF, should embed evaluation content into the project delivery training offer to support major project teams to deliver high quality evaluations.
	ETF will work with departments to ensure that they have a clear route to market for major project evaluations.		In progress	ETF will work with departments to deliver this (by September 2026).
	The ETF delivered training in January 2025 to over 175 NISTA assurance reviewers to help them to scrutinise the evaluation plans of major projects.		Complete	NISTA should consider increasing its in-house evaluation capabilities over time, so that it is better equipped to assure compliance with evaluation requirements for major projects.

Objective	Actions	Key Deliverables	Status	Required next steps
	The ETF is working with NISTA to develop evaluation content for relevant NISTA training and resources, including those for Senior Responsible Owners, such as the Major Projects Leadership Academy.		In progress	NISTA should consider increasing its in-house evaluation capabilities over time, so that it is better equipped to assure compliance with evaluation requirements for major projects.
	NISTA will build evaluation capability within their organisation to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to scrutinise major project evaluations within the assurance process.		Incomplete	NISTA and the ETF to review central evaluation capability requirements to ensure quality major project evaluations
	The ETF is working to ensure that evaluation capability building work in departments is suitably aligned to major projects. They will soon launch a new capability building programme with the Policy Profession and publish an updated version of the Magenta Book which includes an annex on Evaluation and Benefits Management.		In progress	The ETF should continue to consider major project teams in their capability building work across government.
To embed evaluation into project delivery	Major project teams are required to log their evaluation plans on the Evaluation Registry and upload published findings as these become available. Requirements for this are set out for SROs in the updated appointment letter.	GMPP SRO appointment letter	Complete - adopted into BAU	NISTA will continue to use data from GRIP and the Evaluation Registry to monitor compliance with evaluation requirements and disseminate this to relevant stakeholders.
	The ETF has agreed to support NISTA with ensuring evaluation is embedded into the next refresh of the Project Delivery Capability Framework and the project delivery training offer.		Agreement to take forward in 2026/27 FY	NISTA, with support from the ETF, should incorporate evaluation into the next update of the Project Delivery Capability Framework and the project delivery training offer.
	NISTA, with ETF support, included a new chapter in the Teal Book which sets out guidance for how to evaluate within the policy cycle.	Teal Book	Complete	N/A
	In September 2025, NISTA published updated appointment letters and guidance for Senior Responsible Owners of major projects which included their evaluation requirements.	GMPP SRO appointment letter	Complete	N/A
To promote the value of evaluation to	The ETF established a working group which met quarterly throughout 2025/26 to identify opportunities to promote evaluation for major projects and oversee the delivery of this action plan.		Complete	The ETF and NISTA should continue to promote the value of evaluation in order to improve evaluation coverage across the GMPP.

Objective	Actions	Key Deliverables	Status	Required next steps
key stakeholders	The ETF has disseminated the findings of the major project evaluation review with relevant departments and in cross-government forums. For example, the ETF presented the findings at the Government Evaluation Conference in April 2025 which had over 400 attendees.		Complete	
	The ETF has, and continues to, raise awareness about the importance of high quality evaluation.		Complete - adopted into BAU	The ETF and NISTA should continue to promote the value of evaluation in order to improve evaluation coverage across the GMPP.