



Evaluation Task Force

Guidance

EAF Phase 4 Guidance

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-accelerator-fund/eaf-phase-4-guidance>

1. Background information and aims

The Evaluation Task Force is pleased to invite proposals for a fourth round of the Evaluation Accelerator Fund (EAF). The aims of the fund are to:

- create actionable evidence in HM Government priority areas that informs public spending or policy decisions
- tackle evidence gaps in HM Government priority areas
- provide robust evidence of financial or efficiency savings from new policies, interventions, or innovative approaches to service delivery

The fund has a total value of up to £3.5 million for FY25-26. The final amount of funding available will be confirmed as part of the Cabinet Office's ongoing business planning process. The fund will be used to make grant awards.

2. Eligibility

There are three eligibility criteria.

a. Organisation status

Proposals must be from:

- Central government (e.g. UK Government departments, arms length bodies, and non-departmental public bodies)
- What Works Centres (WWCs)
- Charities or organisations whose activities are charitable, benevolent or philanthropic in nature (e.g. universities, non-profits, community interest companies)

b. Priority area

We are open to proposals that relate to at least one of the following HM Government priorities:

Missions

1. Kickstart economic growth
2. Build an NHS fit for the future
3. Safer streets
4. Break down the barriers to opportunity
5. Make Britain a clean energy superpower

Technology

Using technology in the public sector in order to digitise public service delivery, enhance productivity and improve outcomes.

Priority areas for Public Sector Reform (as outlined in [Autumn Budget 2024 \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024/autumn-budget-2024.html\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2024/autumn-budget-2024.html))

1. Health
2. Local government and devolution
3. Children's social care
4. SEND
5. Homelessness
6. Police
7. Prisons
8. Asylum
9. Defence
10. Transport
11. Civil Service

c. Benefits to England

Proposals from organisations that are not part of central government (e.g. most WWCs, all charities or other organisations) must directly or indirectly benefit England in whole or part. Your proposal will meet this criteria if a majority of participants in your proposed activity's sample are based in England.

3. Criteria for proposals

Funding is available for one-year projects which start in May 2025 and conclude by March 2026. All projects, with only a handful of exceptions, will be expected to produce findings that are shareable with the ETF and government partners by March 2026. It is acceptable if publication of findings follows soon after March 2026.

We are particularly interested in funding the following types of proposals, which will be favourably scored:

- Retrospective or long-term follow-up evaluations (e.g. quasi-experimental evaluations)
- Impact evaluations of public sector AI programmes or services

In general, we are open to proposals to deliver impact evaluations, and we have a preference for funding experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations.

We will consider funding proposals for longer-term pieces of work that do not produce findings by March 2026 as long as there is confirmed matched funding that can fund proposed activities beyond FY25-26. These proposals must demonstrate evidence of this matched funding commitment.

We will also consider proposals that will accelerate or unlock robust evaluations in the future years. These proposals must demonstrate clear pathways to future evaluation activities.

We will also favourably score proposals that:

- offer matched funding or allocate existing FTE to delivery of the work (matched funding can include financial support or FTEs to manage programmes of work)
- include an assessment of the value for money of the programme/intervention
- evaluate delivery of frontline services
- have an endorsement or letter of support from local partners or frontline decision makers

Proposals must clearly demonstrate that there is a credible and timely route for collecting or accessing data. Proposals that provide insufficient details about their data requirements will not be funded.

4. Delivery approach

Organisations can choose to manage the project in-house and/or commission to an external partner. Organisations will be responsible for commercial arrangements and commissioning external suppliers. Funding may also be used to pay for internal staff time or fixed-term contracts subject to approval from their relevant finance team.

5. How to bid

Proposals must be submitted to eaf@cabinetoffice.gov.uk by 25th April (6 pm local time). Your submission must consist of a proposal template (Word document) and financial case template (Excel document).

Please also include any relevant endorsements or letters of support from local partners or frontline decision makers – these are optional but welcome.

6. Assessment criteria

Proposals will be double-reviewed by the ETF. We will share details of recommended awards with senior HM Treasury and Cabinet Office officials before putting recommendations to a suitable Cabinet Office minister for approval.

Scoring criteria for proposals is as follows:

Section	Description	Weight
Strategic case	Boxes 1A-1D	40%
Delivery approach and methodology	Boxes 2A-2F	40%
Financial case	Boxes 3A-3G	20%

As highlighted in Section 3 of this guidance, proposals with the following elements will be more likely to be scored favourably:

- Retrospective or long-term follow-up evaluation (e.g. quasi-experimental evaluations), OR impact evaluation of public sector AI programmes or services
- Experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation

- Includes an assessment of the value for money of the programme/intervention
- Offers matched funding/allocates existing FTE to delivery of the work
- Evaluates delivery of frontline services
- Has an endorsement or letter of support from local partners or frontline decision makers

7. Planned timelines

Date (2025)	Activity
14 March, 24 March, 9 April	Drop-in information sessions open to prospective bidders. You may register for these on Eventbrite .
25 April	Proposals due by 6pm
mid-May	Funding decisions communicated, process to agree grant agreements/MOUs commences

8. Project monitoring

- We require, at a minimum, quarterly financial and programme reporting
- We will aim for this to be light touch where possible, and proportionate to the value/risk of funded projects
- ETF should be invited to any programme board meetings where applicable

9. Transparency

- There is a default expectation that evaluation reports supported by this funding will be published.
- Government departments, ALBs, NDPBs or WWCs should register their evaluation plans and findings on the Evaluation Registry.

- Research papers supported by this funding must be published in an ungated, publicly accessible manner (e.g. preprints or working papers). We are unfortunately not able to fund open access publication fees charged by academic journals, given these costs would in most cases arise after FY25-26.

10. Future engagement

You are welcome to contact eaf@cabinetoffice.gov.uk with any questions you have.

11. FAQs

What do you consider to be ‘evaluation’?

Research that attempts to understand whether something works or not and generates insight that can directly inform decision-making.

Is there a minimum or maximum amount of funding we can apply for?

No.

What support is available to help develop proposals?

We will hold a handful of virtual information sessions which you can sign up for on [Eventbrite \(https://www.eventbrite.com/e/evaluation-accelerator-fund-phase-4-drop-in-information-session-tickets-1234918407199?aff=oddtcreator\)](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/evaluation-accelerator-fund-phase-4-drop-in-information-session-tickets-1234918407199?aff=oddtcreator). We can be contacted with questions at eaf@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. We will try our best to respond to all messages promptly.

What kinds of things will you fund?

We will fund resources to deliver programmes of work, which can include funding for commissioned research and evaluation activity, or staff time to manage these programmes of activity (subject to approval from your relevant finance team).

Can we use the funding to pay for delivery of the intervention as well as the evaluation?

No, EAF funding can only be used for evaluation purposes. However, funding could be used for a project manager who will oversee both delivery and evaluation.

How much detail are you expecting in the proposals?

We have provided some guidance about the word limit for each section of the proposal template. We will expect to see more detail for larger, higher cost proposals.

Is there any flexibility on the length of projects/completion date of March 2026?

Findings should be shareable with the ETF by March 2026. It is acceptable if publication of findings follows soon after March 2026. (The exception to this is proposals for longer-term pieces of work with confirmed matched funding that will fund evaluation activities beyond FY25-26. These proposals must demonstrate evidence of matched funding.)

The finance section requires a budget and supporting narrative – which is scored?

We assess both the budget and supporting narrative and give proposals one score for this section – essentially, whether the proposal represents good value for money.

Should I include VAT in my financial costings?

Yes, your funding request must be inclusive of any VAT that your organisation is unable to recover from HMRC. You should exclude VAT your organisation is able to recover from HMRC.

I am based at a UK university. How does this funding compare to a typical UKRI or ESRC grant?

You are welcome to bid for full-buyouts (100% economic cost).

In terms of overheads, you can bid for funding to cover costs related to your project that are associated with a programme management office (e.g. an office that solely or mostly procures and manages research grants and awards).

However, funding cannot be used to cover ‘indirect supporting activities,’ i.e. those which support your project but are not undertaken exclusively for it, such as payroll, HR departments, etc. These are out of scope.

This is in line with [HM Treasury’s Consolidated Budget Guidance FY24-25](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f0a26d9812270011f61417/CBG_2024-25.pdf) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f0a26d9812270011f61417/CBG_2024-25.pdf) (specifically Appendix 2 to Annex C). This guidance outlines costs associated with delivering research and evaluation activity that are in scope for this funding.

Do you have similar funding opportunities?

No, but we encourage you to review our partners’ ESRC’s ‘responsive mode: secondary data analysis round two’ [funding call](https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/esrc-responsive-mode-secondary-data-analysis-round-two/). (<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/esrc-responsive-mode-secondary-data-analysis-round-two/>) This is currently open and has no closing date.

12. ONS Secure Research Service

The ONS Secure Research Service houses government administrative datasets that can be used to evaluate the impact of policies and programmes. You can review the current data catalogue [here](https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/requestingstatistics/secureresearchservice/discoversecureresearchdata) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/requestingstatistics/secureresearchservice/discoversecureresearchdata>).

13. Administrative Data Research UK: Using public sector data to evaluate public policy

ADR UK provides secure access to a growing collection of linked, de-identified administrative data which provide a rich resource for evaluation research, as it contains longitudinal information from large groups of people about their outcomes and experiences in different parts of their lives. This can enable research that evaluates how a policy or intervention in one area (such as education) might impact outcomes in another area (such as involvement with the criminal justice system) and provide a mechanism to track outcomes over the long term. More information about how to access these data can be found here: [How can I access data for research? - ADR UK](https://www.adruk.org/data-access/) (<https://www.adruk.org/data-access/>).

Administrative data is information created when people interact with public services, such as schools, the NHS, the courts or the benefits system, and are collated by government. This data is not created for research, but as a by-product of government services.

This wealth of data has the potential to create important knowledge, providing powerful insights into our society and pointing to areas where change is needed. Linking this data across different areas of public life allows us to see patterns which might otherwise be missed. [Watch a video to find out more](https://www.adruk.org/our-mission/administrative-data/) (<https://www.adruk.org/our-mission/administrative-data/>).

[Browse the ADR UK Data Catalogue](https://www.adruk.org/data-access/data-catalogue/) (<https://www.adruk.org/data-access/data-catalogue/>) for a sense of the administrative data available for evaluation research. This provides key information on the linked datasets available for research across the UK.

In particular, our [ADR UK Flagship datasets](https://www.adruk.org/data-access/flagship-datasets/) (<https://www.adruk.org/data-access/flagship-datasets/>) are some of our most important linked data assets

and all have publicly available documentation and other resources to support researchers. Additional support for researchers looking to use administrative data can also be found at ADR UK's [Learning Hub](https://www.adruk.org/learning-hub/getting-started-with-administrative-data/) (<https://www.adruk.org/learning-hub/getting-started-with-administrative-data/>).

Get inspired with two new research agendas: ADR UK have just published two new co-created researcher agendas which will align well with government ARIs and missions and showcase key opportunities for evaluating public policy. [Children at Risk of Poor Outcomes - ADR UK](https://www.adruk.org/learning-hub/user-groups-and-communities-1/adr-england-research-community-catalyst-children-at-risk-of-poor-outcomes/) (<https://www.adruk.org/learning-hub/user-groups-and-communities-1/adr-england-research-community-catalyst-children-at-risk-of-poor-outcomes/>) and [Youth Transitions - ADR UK](https://www.adruk.org/learning-hub/user-groups-and-communities-1/adr-england-research-community-catalyst-youth-transitions/) (<https://www.adruk.org/learning-hub/user-groups-and-communities-1/adr-england-research-community-catalyst-youth-transitions/>)

Some examples of evaluation using administrative data include:

[Understanding the Impact of Educational Interventions Beyond Test Scores](https://www.adruk.org/our-work/browse-all-projects/understanding-the-impact-of-educational-interventions-beyond-test-scores-372/) (<https://www.adruk.org/our-work/browse-all-projects/understanding-the-impact-of-educational-interventions-beyond-test-scores-372/>)

This project used linked data to establish whether programmes intended to boost children's educational attainment also have a positive impact on other related outcomes, such as a child's likelihood of dropping out of school.

[Evaluating the impact of alcohol minimum unit pricing on deaths and hospitalisations in Scotland](https://www.adruk.org/our-mission/our-impact/evaluating-the-impact-of-alcohol-minimum-unit-pricing-on-deaths-and-hospitalisations-in-scotland/) (<https://www.adruk.org/our-mission/our-impact/evaluating-the-impact-of-alcohol-minimum-unit-pricing-on-deaths-and-hospitalisations-in-scotland/>)

Researchers used administrative data to evaluate a policy designed to reduce deaths attributable to alcohol, providing important insights into its effectiveness for policymakers.

[The impact and prioritisation of careers guidance in Wales](https://www.adruk.org/news-publications/news-blogs/the-impact-and-prioritisation-of-careers-guidance-in-wales/) (<https://www.adruk.org/news-publications/news-blogs/the-impact-and-prioritisation-of-careers-guidance-in-wales/>)

This project examined the effectiveness of careers guidance in supporting pupils to participate in post compulsory education and training.