

NMIS

National Manufacturing
Institute Scotland

Evaluation's growing role in Government Decision Making

CECAN Event: 4 June 2024

Siobhan Campbell

Chief Strategy and Commercial Officer NMIS

nmis.scot



Past, Present and Future



Past

The Cross Government Evaluation Groups (CGEG)'s mission was to improve the **supply, demand** and **use** of evaluation evidence in government decision making

Supply

- Magenta Book
- Quality of **government analysis community**
- Quality of **external evaluation community**
- **Policy community's** understanding

Demand

- A stick: consequences
- Departmental budgets
- Departmental demand: appropriate location of responsibility

Use

- Not something that sits on a shelf
- Active part of policy development / delivery
- Aligned with benefits management



Past: CECAN / Magenta Book

CECAN

- Founded in 2016
- On the back of government and ESRC acknowledging the challenges around evaluation
- Need for methodological development
- Need for more academic involvement
- Need to be able to tackle the complexity inherent in policy development
- Particular interest amongst 'nexus' departments: food, energy, water, environment

Magenta Book

- First published in 2011
- Primary reference for government decision-makers on monitoring and evaluation
- Updated in 2020, to include methodological updates and be more user-friendly
- Targets government evaluators / decision-makers
- CECAN-authored supplementary guidance on *Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation*
- Capabilities framework



Past: scrutiny and challenge

NAO (2021)

- Only 8% of government major project spend is being robustly evaluated
- 64% has no evaluation at all
- 7/16 Directors of Analysis considered demand an issue
- 10/16 Directors of Analysis thought learning was not embedded in departments

PAC (2022)

- *“It is unacceptable that so much government spending is not evaluated”*
- *“It is too difficult for Parliament and the public to find information about departments’ models or evaluations”*
- *“Departments are falling short of requirements on transparency and publication of evaluation findings”*

PAC response (2022)

- “HM Treasury should work with the Cabinet Office to publish a tracker with details of evaluations including their planned publication date, and explanations from departments where publication is delayed or withheld”. Accepted, target Summer 23
- HM Treasury should set up a formal process for routinely tracking and following up on spending review settlement conditions relating to evaluation. HM Treasury should set out the range of interventions it will use if departments fail to meet the conditions. Accepted, Target Nov 22



Present

Evaluation Task Force (ETF)

What Works Networks

Cross Government
Evaluation Group (CGEG)

Analysis Function

Trials Advice Panel

Chief Scientific Advisers

Government Social
Research (GSR)

Departmental Directors of
Analysis

“To put robust evaluation evidence at the heart of government decision-making so HM Government can have confidence the money it spends is delivering better outcomes for the public, and delivers value for money”

Increase the **effectiveness** of
government decision-making

Increase the **efficiency** of
government decision-making

Ensure decisions /
investments are improving
people’s lives



Present: ETF's Theory of Change



Inputs

c.£950k investment 2021-22 covering 15 FTE. 2022 + investment still TBC

£15m 2022-2025 for the Evaluation Accelerator Fund

What Works Trial Advice Panel (TAP) and What Works National Adviser

Senior level governance and oversight



Activities

Build relationships with key stakeholders across HMG including the policy, analytical and finance community

Advise and support departments on design and delivery of robust, proportionate evaluations

Set up and deliver ETF support services (e.g Timebank, TAP)

Fund evaluations via the Evaluation Accelerator

Deliver 'Policy that Works' conference

Embed evaluation requirements in department reporting mechanisms and processes (e.g. Outcome Delivery Plans)

Rapid scrutiny of evaluation plans attached to business cases submitted to HMT spending teams

Challenge departments on evaluation activity via ministerial engagement e.g. challenge panels

Develop and deliver a What Works Network (WWN) strategy

Manage and promote the WWN and relevant outputs across government

Create an ETF website to encourage publication of data, evaluation plans and evaluation results

Develop data sharing project and requirements

Support and advice



Outputs

Advice to departments on improving robustness of evaluation plans

Advice to departments on building experimental and quasi-experimental methods into evaluation designs

Advice to departments on commissioning evaluation

Evaluation publication

Advice and sign off on evaluation plans for innovation funds

Feedback to HMT spending teams on evaluation design and findings

Conditions on funding decisions following scrutiny of evaluation plans accompanying business cases

Conditions on department-wide evaluation arrangements attached to fiscal events

Assessments of departmental performance on evaluation

ETF website and public register of evaluation plan summaries, trial protocols, data and results

Escalation of data sharing/publication barriers to No.10 and HMT



(Intermediate) Outcomes

Increased number of spending and operational decisions made by departments considering evidence

Increased number of spending decisions made by Spending Teams considering evidence

Increased scale and quality of evaluations (with a focus on experimental approaches) across HMG

Improved transparency of evaluation plans, data, and results

Improved evaluation culture across HMG



Impacts

Increased effectiveness and efficiency of government spending

Challenge

Quality

Funding conditions

Transparency

Escalation route

Future

Evaluation academy

Evaluation registry

Ministerial engagement



“It’s just what we do”

Routine publication

Proportion of major projects evaluated



Future

Supply

- Magenta Book
- Quality of **government analysis community**
- Quality of **external evaluation community**
- Training, support and expertise available

Demand

- ECT offering both support and challenge
- Well trained civil servants
- Prioritisation (major projects)

Use

- Spending provisional on evaluation evidence
- Key part of programme delivery
- Quality evaluation produced
- Integrated with benefits management



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