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European Regional  
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# Yorkshire & Humber ERDF Competitiveness Programme 2007-2013

## Evaluation Strategy

<b>Title:</b>	Evaluation Strategy (previously Evaluation Plan)				
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## 1. Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets out how evaluation will be used within the Yorkshire & the Humber ERDF Programme 2007-2013 to: inform improvements to the strategy, implementation and management of the Programme; and report on the achievements and impacts of the Programme.

## 2. Background

This strategy is in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of the European Commission. Specifically Article 47 which states that:

*'1. Evaluations shall aim to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from the Funds and the strategy and implementation of operational programmes with respect to the specific structural problems affecting the Member States and regions concerned, while taking account of the objective of sustainable development and of the relevant Community legislation concerning environmental impact and strategic environmental assessment.*

*2. Evaluations may be of a strategic nature in order to examine the evolution of a programme or group of programmes in relation to Community and national priorities, or of an operational nature in order to support the monitoring of an operational programme. Evaluations shall be carried out before, during and after the programming period.'*

In accordance with the above, the aim of evaluating the Programme is to improve the performance and hence the impact of the Programme over time with reference to the structural problems in the region identified in the Operational Programme.

Evaluation is a valuable learning tool and is vital for the ERDF Programme to:

- Showcase the effectiveness of the Programme to stakeholders including funders; evidence is needed to show that value for money is being achieved
- Ensure that lessons are learnt from ERDF investments for the ongoing development of ERDF projects and to maximise the impact of the ERDF Programme

This strategy complies with the 'Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods' working document and has been developed to comply with the four principles that govern on-going evaluation set out by Regulation 1083/2006:

- Proportionality
- Independence
- Partnership
- Transparency

The first version of this strategy (formerly known as the Evaluation Plan) was discussed and agreed by the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) on 24th November 2008. An updated version was presented to the PMC and approved on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

This version is an update following the transfer of the ERDF team from Yorkshire Forward to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Amendments are to reflect changes in organisational structures and operations. The core approach, methodology and focus of the strategy is unchanged.

### 3. Introduction

The Evaluation Strategy takes a staged approach to the ERDF Programme evaluation in which the implementation processes are assessed earlier in the lifetime of the Programme and impacts are assessed at a later stage through an ongoing strategic level evaluation, supported by robust project level evaluation.

The aim is to continually follow the implementation and delivery of the Programme, and changes in its external environment, in order to better understand and analyse progress towards longer-term impacts, as well as to recommend remedial actions if necessary.

### 4. Strategic Level Evaluation Programme

A rolling plan of independent evaluation has been commissioned for the ongoing strategic evaluation up to the end of 2015. The strategic evaluation has two core objectives:

- To assess the performance and hence the impact of the programme over time with reference to the structural problems in the region identified in the Yorkshire and Humber Operational Programme.
- To advise partners on changes needed to the delivery and management of the programme as it evolves over time.

#### Strategic Evaluation Scope

The strategic evaluation investigates and comments upon the following dimensions of the Programme:

Strategic Evaluation Scope	
Evaluation Element	Evaluation Focus
Assessing performance and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Four Priorities and 13 underpinning Objectives.</li><li>• Two agreed Cross Cutting Themes (CCTs).</li><li>• Two sub-regions (i.e. the phasing-in area of South Yorkshire and the Rest of the Region) and specific Areas of Deprivation (under Priority Three).</li></ul>
Interaction between programme design and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programme design: exploring the achievability and appropriateness of the objectives and priorities within the Programme.</li><li>• Implementation: investigating whether the approach to delivery has maximised the Programme's potential, and assessing: the systems put in place by the management team to govern the process of investing in and managing the</li></ul>

	supported projects; and the capacities and competencies available to support effective administration.
<b>Management processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project development: looking how Programme objectives have been used to draw forward good quality, high impact initiatives.</li> <li>• Investment decision making: to understand how the formal stages and requirements of the ERDF fund have contributed to achievements.</li> <li>• Project oversight: identifying how the Programme ensures projects maximise their achievements and respond to emergent challenges once they are up and running.</li> </ul>

The strategic evaluation has been split into a series of phases, including reports for the ERDF Evaluation Steering Group, the LMC and wider partners as appropriate. As the focus of the Programme evolves over time, so too will that of the strategic evaluation.

The phases of work which are summarised below:

**Framework Development** - This has been undertaken and established the broad overall approach of the evaluation and explored the role which the design of the Programme and the systems put in place to manage it might have on subsequent impacts, including reviews of pre-contract project development processes and an assessment of early contracted projects.

**Performance & Deliverability Review** - This has been undertaken and included an assessment of progress made by the programme in securing contracted investments and outputs. This review built on the Phase 1 assessment of early performance, complemented with a future facing review of match-funding and a detailed update of the economic and strategic context.

**Mid-Term Impact Evaluation** - This has been undertaken and will report to the LMC on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011. The report includes: a review of progress against financial and indicator targets and associated early impacts; assessment of likely future impacts based on contracted projects looking at whether the Programme is on course to meet overall targets; and recommendations on targeting of un-committed resources, changes to targets and how future governance and management structures should operate.

**Final Impact Evaluation** – To be completed during the second half of 2015. A sample of final project level evaluations to be undertaken and a final strategic impact evaluation. This will bring together all strands of the research including performance data, project level evaluation findings and qualitative consultations with partners, culminating in a comprehensive dissemination programme and a final report assessing all the key dimensions of the Programme.

The evaluation will be informed by a streamlined reporting approach which brings Priority and CCT analyses into a single integrated output. The key messages for each

Programme Priority and geography and the CCTs will be drawn out, and reports and analysis will be tailored to the variety of evaluation audiences. The evaluation will include updates and commentaries on progress and commitments with advice on meeting targets, fulfilling strategic objectives and responding to changing economic and financial circumstances.

### Measuring Programme Impact

The strategic evaluation needs to provide quantitative estimates of net additional impact at the level of each Priority and the overall programme for:

- **Core indicators:** net additional GVA; net additional safeguarded GVA; net additional new businesses created; net additional new jobs created; net additional jobs safeguarded, at the level of:
  - Individual ERDF Programme Objective, Priority and for the whole Programme
  - Individual Yorkshire and Humber supra-local areas and for the whole region
  - The targeted areas of deprivation under Priority 3
- **CCT indicators:** Individual cross-cutting themes (CCTs) of equality and diversity and environmental sustainability.

In accordance with European Commission requirements, total programme impacts will be based on total programme investment (i.e. ERDF plus match funding), and the strategic evaluation will attribute impacts to other funding sources (public and private).

The strategic evaluation will measure impact across the Programme Priorities and the spatial geographies using project monitoring data and impact estimates as they become available. Data will be collected through evaluation pro-formas.

## 5. ERDF Project Level Evaluation Approach

ERDF project level evaluations are necessary to ensure that lessons are learnt for the ongoing development of ERDF projects, to maximise the impact of the ERDF Programme and to demonstrate impact. ERDF project level evaluations can therefore be split into the following two categories:

- **Interim Process Evaluations.** These are concerned with how the project is being delivered and provide recommendations for any remedial action. These evaluations will deal with issues such as whether the project is meeting its objectives; whether the delivery mechanisms for the project have been effective; whether the environment in which the project is operating has changed; and provide estimates of expected impact.
- **Final Impact Evaluations.** These address the question of what the net economic, environmental, social and geographical impacts of the project are to date and what they are expected to be in the future in order to determine if the project has been value for money. The evaluations will also highlight examples of best practice.

Project level evaluations should be in proportion to the scale and resources of the Operational Programme or potential risk. In practice:

- **Projects under £3m ERDF:** these projects will be internally evaluated by the grant recipient through a Project Learning Review (PLR).
- **Projects over £3m ERDF:** these projects will be externally evaluated and it is encouraged that an interim and final evaluation be conducted.

### **Project Learning Reviews (PLRs) – for projects under £3m ERDF**

These projects will be internally evaluated by the grant recipient through a Project Learning Review (PLR).

**Interim project level evaluations** - The Grant Recipient is expected to undertake an interim PLR during the ERDF project at a time when there has been enough activity for the PLR to be meaningful, yet early enough in project delivery for any remedial action to be taken.

A pro-forma for the PLR can be obtained from the ERDF website and the pro-forma must be completed and returned to the ERDF Project Manager.

**Final project level evaluations** - The Grant Recipient is expected to undertake a PLR during the last quarter of ERDF spend.

A pro-forma for the PLR can be obtained from the ERDF website and the pro-forma must be completed and returned to the ERDF Project Manager.

### **External Evaluations – for projects over £3m ERDF**

These projects will be externally evaluated and it is encouraged that an interim and final evaluation be conducted.

A full evaluation plan detailing the number of evaluation phases (interim/final), key evaluation tasks, outputs, timing and budget must be developed in conjunction with the ERDF Project Manager and the Grant Recipient and included in the contract. An example plan is in Appendix 2.

#### **Interim project level evaluations**

If appropriate (in terms of proportionality and resources), the Grant Recipient is encouraged to undertake an interim external evaluation during the ERDF project at a time when there has been enough activity for the evaluation to be meaningful, yet early enough in project delivery for any remedial action to be taken.

The evaluation will be commissioned by the Grant Recipient and the evaluation brief will detail all phases to be conducted (interim and final). The process for commissioning the evaluation can be found in Appendix 3 and an example evaluation brief can be found in Appendix 4.

A pro-forma for the external evaluation can be obtained from the ERDF website and the pro-forma must be completed for each phase and returned to the ERDF Project Manager.

If it has been agreed by the Grant Recipient for the finalised report to be made publicly available then this must also be sent to the ERDF Project Manager.

If it is more appropriate to only undertake a final evaluation in the last quarter of ERDF spend, then an interim PLR must be undertaken.

A pro-forma for the PLR can be obtained from the ERDF website and the pro-forma must be completed and returned to the ERDF Project Manager.

**Final project level evaluations:** If appropriate (in terms of proportionality and resources), the Grant Recipient is encouraged to undertake a final external evaluation during the last quarter of ERDF spend.

The evaluation will be commissioned by the Grant Recipient and the evaluation brief will detail all phases to be conducted (interim and final). The process for commissioning the evaluation can be found in Appendix 3 and an example evaluation brief can be found in Appendix 4.

A pro-forma for the external evaluation can be obtained from the ERDF website and the pro-forma must be completed for each phase and returned to the ERDF Project Manager.

If it has been agreed by the Grant Recipient for the finalised report to be made publicly available then this must also be sent to the ERDF Project Manager. This is standard practice for final evaluation reports.

If it is more appropriate to only undertake an interim external evaluation, then a final PLR must be undertaken.

A pro-forma for the PLR can be obtained from the ERDF website and the pro-forma must be completed and returned to the ERDF Project Manager.

It is expected that final project level evaluations will be undertaken on a sample of projects which are representative of each Programme Priority, geography and the CCTs as part of the strategic level evaluation.

## **6. Evaluation Management**

This Evaluation Strategy is overseen by the ERDF Evaluation Steering Group (ESG), a sub-committee of the Local Management Committee. THE ESG membership will cover a range of partners including representatives from the higher education sector, the voluntary & community sectors and local geographic partners.

The Steering Group will meet quarterly to discuss strategic evaluation reports, the analysis of project level evaluations and to agree recommendations for the LMC.

## **7. Resources**

This Evaluation Strategy will be managed by the ERDF Programme Delivery Team. This includes:

- Supporting the Evaluation Steering Group
- Advising project managers on developing appropriate project level evaluation workplans and providing appropriate guidance for undertaking Project Learning Reviews, commissioning external evaluations and completing the evaluation pro-forma

- Managing the strategic level evaluation
- Analysing and communicating evaluation evidence from the project level evaluation pro-formas
- Dissemination of evaluation findings to stakeholders and partners

A budget of £500,000 from Technical Assistance has been set aside for the ongoing strategic level evaluation. Budgets for interim project level evaluations will be identified within project expenditure.