

Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

November 2023

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1. Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a critical component of an effective project performance management system, and an integral part of the Standard Operating Procedures for Programme Management established by Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership. Monitoring supports the effective tracking of a scheme or series of policy interventions ensuring that intended outputs are being achieved. Evaluation quantifies and assesses outcomes, including how schemes were delivered and whether the investment generated had the intended impact and ultimately delivered value for money. M&E forms a significant part of the policy feedback component to inform future policy development, priorities and budgets.

This document outlines management processes undertaken by Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, for all our capital investment, particularly focusing on monitoring and evaluation.

One of the key purposes of this monitoring and evaluation plan is to ensure that the key programme targets of Dorset LEP are recognised and delivered as a result of our investment both during (in terms of performance monitoring during delivery) and after project completion (in terms of the post-delivery outcomes). In particular, this document outlines the key processes how to:

- Maintain regular record of project delivery outputs and expenditure, and postdelivery outcomes
- Manage funded projects and risks arising
- Ensure that evaluation is undertaken to inform future programmes

This document is produced alongside our Local Assurance Framework which sets out Dorset LEP's approach to decision making, funding and programme management as well as the 2023 Decision Making and Due Diligence Policy.

While this document focuses on the process of reporting and evaluation of the Local Growth Fund Programme implemented from 2015/16 to 2020/21 and The Getting Building Fund implemented from 2020/21 to 2021/22, the information contained in this document is applicable to our Growing Places Fund Ioan programme as well.

This document provides guidance to the Dorset LEP programme management team in monitoring and evaluating funded projects, what objectives are intended to be achieved through monitoring and evaluation, and how this is undertaken.

This document is in line with government requirements for monitoring and evaluation of programmes as well as the Dorset LEP due diligence process which demonstrates transparency, accountability and efficient programme management.

The key priority for Dorset LEP is to conduct a consistent and reliable monitoring and evaluation process that reflects best practice across all Dorset LEP programmes.

2. Dorset LEP Background

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are entrusted with significant public funds to fulfil their role and are therefore subject to appropriate scrutiny in order to demonstrate transparent and robust stewardship of public resources. To demonstrate this, Dorset LEP published this document setting out how schemes are evaluated and monitored to achieve value for money.

LEPs are accountable to government through their relationship with the Department for Business and Trade and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and their cross-department Cities and Local Growth Unit. LEPs are subject to regular review by government to ensure they are fit for purpose, acting within the governance policies and sufficiently well-resourced to deliver their objectives and outcomes set by the programmes.

3. Programmes Background

3.1 Grant Funding

In 2013, Government announced Growth Deal funding for LEPs through the Local Growth Fund. Dorset LEP submitted its Strategic Economic Plan to bid for funding in 2014 and secured £98.4m.

Dorset LEP Local Growth Fund projects focus on:

- Enabling growth in key housing and employment sites
- Creating the right conditions for economic growth
- Supporting Dorset businesses
- Growing the Dorset skills base

In August 2020, Dorset LEP secured £11.8m as part of the Getting Building Fund through Government's £900 million package to support investment in local, shovel-ready infrastructure projects to stimulate jobs and support economic recovery across the country post Covid-19.

The funded projects have delivered an uplift in skills provision across Dorset, building on Dorset's existing specialisms in healthcare and the rural economy. Projects at the Port of Poole have prepared the port for the new trading environment after the end of the Transition Period, while investment in medical projects will facilitate research, medical innovation, and clinical practice enhancements. These projects align with the LEP's key priorities and supported the LEP area's recovery from Covid-19.

3.2 Loan Funding

Our Growing Places Fund (GPF) has provided short-term repayable loans to kick-start economic development projects across Dorset. From investment in business parks, centres and offices to rail crossings and broadband, the GPF loan supports projects that might otherwise have stalled or not got off the ground in the first place.

The original £9.4m fund allocated to Dorset, has generated £17.2m investment due to the 'evergreen' nature of the fund. The fund may also be used where businesses are unable to access alternative funding mechanisms for viable schemes that will deliver economic growth and support Dorset LEP's strategic objectives.

Detailed Local Growth Fund project descriptions and identified outcomes/outcomes are available on our <u>website</u>. The Programme Dashboard can be viewed on our <u>website</u>.

The full list of Getting Building Fund projects can also be found on our <u>website</u>. And the Growing Places Fund, can be found <u>here</u>.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation During Programme Delivery

Dorset LEP's monitoring and reporting of performance metrics are in line with the requirements set by the Cities and Local Growth Unit Guidance for Growth Deals Reporting as well as the best practices identified by the LEP Network. This enables Dorset LEP to effectively manage all programmes and to ensure government funding targets are met. Performance against these targets is monitored bi-annually for each project and subsequently reported to government. This ensures that the approved funding is leading to the delivery of jobs, homes, learners and other outputs. Performance on outputs and outcomes achievements is also reported to the Dorset LEP Board. The detailed approach of Dorset LEP's project monitoring process is described below.

1. The process of submitting a full business case requires applicants to clearly specify their approach to monitoring and evaluation. This forms an important part of an application. As part of the independent evaluation of a proposal, Dorset LEP will assess the suitability of the approach, giving consideration to processes that are proportionate to the value and scale of each scheme, whilst being affordable and representing value for money.

2. Dorset LEP specifies the monitoring metrics projects are required to report on and the frequency on which these reports are required. These are included in the legal funding agreement along with the arrangements for recovering funding where non-compliance occurs. The monitoring and evaluation tools used through Dorset LEP's programme management include:

Highlight Report

- A time-driven progress report that is used to provide the LEP Programme Management team with a summary of the stage status at intervals defined by the LEP. The Programme Management team uses the report to monitor stage and project progress.
- Risk and Issues Register
 - A document used as a risk management tool to fulfil regulatory compliance acting as a repository for all risks identified and includes additional information about each risk, e.g., nature of the risk, reference and owner, mitigation measures.
- Project programme
 - Designed to provide an overview of how and when objectives are to be achieved during a certain time in a project.
- Outputs and outcomes certificate
 - Allows the project partner to provide regular updates on the delivery of outputs and outcomes and to summarise all outputs and outcomes achieved within a financial year and provides an updated forecast for the remainder of the programme.

• End of Project Report and Value for Money Statement

- Evaluation methodologies and requirements are agreed with applicants within the legal funding agreement and are in accordance with Government guidance for reporting and monitoring. End of project reports are produced and reported to the LEP, following completion of each scheme and are published on the LEP's website. The end of project reports provide detailed evaluation and descriptions of how a project was implemented, whether it completed in line with planned expectations on time and budget, whether it has delivered all of the expected outputs and demonstrates the extent to which the assumed/ predicted impacts and benefits have been realised.
- Value for Money Statement is part of the end of project report. The LEP has robust arrangements in place to ensure value for money and effective delivery, through strong project and business case development, project prioritisation and independent business case appraisal. In addition, the Section 151 Officer is formally asked to review and comment in writing on value for money on all projects at least one week prior to the publication of the LEP Board meeting papers on the specific recommendations relating to the project funding and associated evidence. Upon project completion, the LEP requires all applicants to produce a value for money statement, as part of the project report, for each scheme. In carrying out the value for money assessment and completing the value for money statement, the LEP follows the best practice for capital programmes.

The monitoring is based around two types of metrics, as outlined below:

- **Core / required metrics** these are derived entirely from guidance Cities and Local Growth Unit Guidance for each programme and Data Submission examples (October 2017) which are attached in Annex 1. This covers key topics surrounding the project's expenditure and output delivery.
- Supplementary metrics these are collected on specific projects based on commitments identified in the original outline business case/ full business case and as approved by Dorset LEP.

3. In addition to the above monitoring literature, Dorset LEP programme office maintain a close working relationship with the contracted partner organisation/institution. Meetings are held regularly to discuss the supplied information and draw additional feedback on the delivery status of projects to ensure that projects are kept to time and budget, and that risks are managed effectively.

3a. Dorset LEP's governance structure provides delegated authority to the Finance, Audit & Corporate Risk Committee. The Committee has delegated powers regarding decision making over changes to projects within the programme. Any decision outside of the defined range is proposed for recommendation to the Dorset LEP Board. Please find the Committee's Terms of Reference on our <u>website</u>. 4. Reporting to the Dorset LEP Board is on an exception basis. Any exceptions must be reported to the Dorset LEP Board for decision. This is completed through exception and change requests as appropriate.

5. There are arrangements for the Dorset LEP Board to take decisions by written procedures provided in the Articles of Association, for instances where a decision cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting of the Dorset LEP Board.

6. Payment on all programme expenditure is made in arrears in quarterly instalments (or more frequently, where applicable), following receipt and detailed scrutiny of actual costs based on submitted invoices before drawdowns / financial payments are initiated. This enables Dorset LEP to mitigate against any risks associated with non-compliance with project delivery or monitoring arrangements.

7. In the event of non-compliance with the monitoring arrangements, the legal funding agreement clearly sets out the arrangements for recovering funding.

- In the event that the applicant has applied the funding for purposes outside the scope of this agreement, or in breach of it, Dorset LEP shall be entitled to demand that the applicant returns all or part of the funding within 21 days of receiving the demand for repayment.
- Dorset LEP may, in its sole discretion, acting reasonably, terminate the agreement and stop payment of the funding or reclaim payments already made if:
 - Any portion of the funding is used in breach of the agreement;
 - The applicant commits, or Dorset LEP reasonably suspects it has committed:
 - fraud against Dorset LEP or any third party
 - any offence under the Bribery Act 2010
 - any material financial mismanagement
- Dorset LEP reasonably considers that the applicant has not made satisfactory progress with the project or is carrying it out in a negligent manner or has failed to complete the project in the funding period
- The applicant provides Dorset LEP with any fraudulent, materially misleading or inaccurate information
- The applicant fails to provide critical project governance information
- The applicant fails to materially comply with any applicable laws that are material to the project
- The applicant changes the nature of its operations to an extent which Dorset LEP reasonably considers to be significant or prejudicial
- The applicant fails to complete the project for any reason
- Any director or employee or any person acting under the control or authority of the applicant has acted fraudulently or negligently which might have a detrimental effect on the project or does anything to bring Dorset LEP into disrepute
- The applicant ceases to operate for any reason or passes a resolution (or any court of competent jurisdiction makes an order) for the applicant to be wound up or dissolved
- An order for winding up is granted against the applicant.

- It is expected that any requirements made of the applicant under this agreement will be mirrored in the applicant's contractual arrangements with their sub-contractors.
- At the discretion of Dorset LEP any part of the funding shall be repaid which has either been misused in breach of this agreement, or if the applicant fails to provide adequate evidence of the application of the funding in compliance with the terms set out in this agreement.
- Should either the applicant or Dorset LEP cease to trade, they will notify the other party in writing that this agreement will terminate. Under these circumstances, both parties agree to give the other as much notice as is reasonable. In this instance obligations under this agreement will be novated to an appropriate successor body with the agreement of the other party.
- Dorset LEP may terminate this agreement with immediate effect by serving a written notice on the applicant if they have failed to remedy any breach of this agreement within 30 days of being served with a notice pointing out the breach and requiring its rectification.
- In the event of termination of this agreement before completion of the project, the applicant shall reimburse the full amount of funding provided up to the date of termination.
- The applicant's Chief Executive and Dorset LEP's Director, or their representatives, will agree termination arrangements.
- Termination shall not affect any liabilities or rights of either party existing at the time of termination.
- Any instances requiring the recovery of any funding must be formally reported to the Section 151 Officer and Dorset LEP Board.

5. Dorset LEP Outcome Monitoring Process Post Programme Delivery

Outcomes and the realisation of benefits are monitored bi-annually, in line with government reporting expectations and upon the completion of project delivery. In addition, in the middle and at the end of each financial year an Outcome Certificate is completed/updated and is also required at the grant agreement stage.

The Outcome Certificate summarises targets, outputs and outcomes achieved in the previous financial year and provides updated forecast for the subsequent years. The Certificate provides evidence of all outputs and outcomes achieved by each delivery partner. Additionally, it includes information on how each output and outcome is collected, baseline figures, source of the data and frequency of reporting. This provides further reassurance to Dorset LEP that each delivery partner has the required resources to secure sufficient evidence when reporting on the agreed outputs and outcomes.

Monitoring of successful delivery is carried out through the individual project monitoring documentation (i.e., Highlight repot), through governance structures and reported to the Dorset LEP Board (bi-monthly) and to government (bi-annually).

Dorset LEP is required to report on outputs and outcomes to government on bi-annual basis using a template provided by government. All government monitoring reports are approved by Dorset LEP Director, Section 151 Officer and Dorset LEP Chair before the final submission to government.

All data is collected from 2015/16 to 2024/25. It is not the intention of Dorset LEP to disproportionately monitor a funded project beyond what can be reasonably expected. The objective is to monitor project performance and good governance of public funding in order to demonstrate compliance with government reporting systems and capture outcomes and benefits realised within the local economy.

6. Programme Evaluation Plan

Programme evaluations serve to review the efficiency and effectiveness of projects in achieving their desired outcomes and impacts, during or after project completion. This allows the funder to recognise the success of a project in achieving its original objectives, ensure future projects can replicate and enhance on previously documented successes and lessons learned.

Dorset LEP will follow the government's principles below to achieve this:

- All evaluations should be proportionate to the investment and based on what is possible.
- The level of evaluation should be based on what will achieve the most comprehensive outcome, although the aspiration is that programmes should be evaluated counterfactually (what would have happened to the outcomes in the absence of the intervention). Where this is not feasible, lower thresholds of evaluation design can still be meaningful.
- A logic model and strong monitoring data will allow triangulation with other data towards a theory-based evaluation as a minimum.
- All evaluations should be grounded in the availability of high-quality data.
- It is better to focus on producing a small number of high-quality evaluations rather than to produce high coverage of the interventions by sacrificing evaluation quality.

Evaluations should be planned from the outset of the project and be proportionate to the size, value and scope of a project. Evaluations do not seek to duplicate monitoring information, or produce in-depth coverage where unnecessary, but instead seek to answer specified relevant questions about the success of a project.

Evaluations can be separated into distinct questions that aim to assess success of objectives of a project. Broadly, evaluation questions can be separated into one of four categories:

- **Process evaluation:** an assessment of what aspects of the project management contributed towards delivery of project outputs.
- **Theory-based evaluation**: how the intervention succeeded by testing the effectiveness of mechanisms that were expected to be the key drivers of impact.
- **Outcome evaluation**: whether outcomes moved in the desired direction and often includes contextual information to test non-project influences.
- Impact evaluation: whether the intervention had any impact on observed outcomes, providing a key component of assessment of both cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit.

Dorset LEP considers impact evaluations as particularly valuable due to the quality of information they bring (for example, they may help provide greater clarity on whether new jobs on an unlocked commercial site are the result of displacement from neighbouring areas), however they are often the most technically challenging and costly to implement.

6. 1 Outcome Evaluation Objectives

Dorset LEP aims to assess the success of its funding allocation on the basis of the outputs and outcomes through direct and indirect delivery and ensures that lessons learned are implemented for future local funding for economic growth.

Dorset LEP has set the following objectives for evaluating its programmes:

- Provide government with evidence on the effectiveness of delivery and value for money from programme interventions.
- Identify causal effect on planned outcomes and impacts. Evaluation should outline the expected outcomes of the programme and reasons, if any, for their nonachievement. Examples of these reasons include changes to the economic landscape, internal commercial reasons or changes in the needs of the marketplace.
- Identify lessons learned about what works, either to create desired impact on outcomes or to ensure efficient delivery of outputs.
- Provide the evidence base to influence future funding policy decisions.

6.2 Independent Evaluation

Dorset LEP is committed to produce specifically targeted project evaluation studies across its portfolio. These studies will be robust and will enable Dorset LEP to:

- Understand the impact of a specific (or group of) project/s
- Learn lessons from pilot/exploratory projects
- Build the evidence base on what works and why

The exact nature of these studies will be informed by the details of each project but may explore particular investment themes (e.g., sustainable transport, health, skills, innovation infrastructure), particular geographies (e.g., investment in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch geography). To ensure these evaluation studies are possible, Dorset LEP will ensure there is consistency in measuring success at individual project level.

Dorset LEP expects that minimally the following information is covered in project evaluations.

- Description. A summary of what will be delivered, the breakdown of costs, outcomes and outputs, and delivery timeframe (incl. wider context and reference to forecast output and outcome delivery).
- Logic model. A model that clearly illustrates how the following areas link together to form the project's intended impact on outputs and outcomes. A recommended approach would be to briefly detail how the following areas are linked in sequence:
 - Contextual conditions (i.e., existing economic conditions, e.g., a high youth employment etc.)
 - Key policy conditions (e.g., strategic fit with Dorset LEP objectives, or existing programmes and policy of external organisations)

- Project objectives and rationale
- Activities / what is being delivered
- o Outputs
- Intended outcomes and impacts (i.e., the policy and contextual conditions addressed)
- Monitoring requirements for the project. This section should serve two functions. Firstly, to clearly outline the metrics that will be reported to Dorset LEP on the project, and secondly to identify the required metrics and data that will be used to inform the project's evaluation.
- Implementation. Basic details on the resource and timing of an evaluation.
- Summary of analysis. What method(s) of evaluation will be applied, and what objectives will be tested. It is advisable to set out a series of questions that the evaluation is expected to test.

6.3 Dissemination

It is required in each project's funding agreement that any publicity or promotion is to be agreed in advance with Dorset LEP. It is expected that evaluation dissemination and communication of the key messages from evaluation form a part of this publicity and promotion.

Once completed, each evaluation will be promoted by Dorset LEP and hosted on the Dorset LEP website. The use of this information may be proportional to the scope of the project evaluated, or the topics of the evaluation. Outcome evaluation is expected to take longer but may be shared with the partners involved in similar projects where there is best practice and lessons learned from projects delivery.

6.4 Transparency in Communication

Dorset LEP is committed to communicate the ongoing outputs and outcomes of its programmes to the local community and stakeholders by reporting regularly and publicly on all programme projects, on their progress to implement the agreed outputs and outcomes, ensuring that local people understand how government money was invested, and what the benefits are for them and the area.

Annex 1 – Core Metrics

Name	Unit	Frequency	Definition	Evidence
Jobs created / safeguarded	FTE	Bi-annually & annually	The total number of newly created and safeguarded permanent full-time equivalent jobs as a direct result of the intervention at predetermined employment sites. Employment sites include occupied newly developed commercial premises, the premises of supported enterprises, and any FE space directly improved or constructed by the intervention. Created and safeguarded jobs exclude those created solely to deliver the intervention (e.g., construction). A job is deemed as permanent if it lasts at least a year.	 Examples of direct monitoring evidence may include: Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the job numbers created. Payroll information on the new jobs provided by the applicant. An anonymised list of the employees created or safeguarded and their hours of work, signed by the applicant. Information about salary level may be provided. Examples of indirect monitoring evidence may include: Based on common standards of employment rates per square metre of space/typical job densities. Information from an employer about numbers employed. High level business survey. Information in an evaluation report.
Housing Units Completed	No of houses	Bi-annually & annually	At the impact site, the number of completed housing units.	Examples
				 Monitoring form signed by the applicant,

			Complete refers to physical completion of the individual unit, or, in the case of flats, on physical completion of the block. Housing unit refers to one discrete housing unit (e.g., house, flat, live/work), regardless of size.	 confirming the numbers. This may be on council tax registration or builder's practical completion or sale. Local authority report confirming number of houses built linked to \$106 contributions (where possible, identify the relevant impact site). Information about addresses and the actual houses that are being reported as attributable. Confirmation from Homes England. Photographic evidence of new units.
Apprenticeships	No of apprentic eships	Bi-annually & annually	Number of apprenticeship positions created as a direct result of the intervention.	 Examples As reported by a college or employer as an apprenticeship or higher apprenticeship. Independent report setting out apprenticeships undertaken. Reported through quarterly/annual reviews. With clarity on additionality vs previous trend prior to intervention. Data from reports produced by college for other public reports/ Governing body; Signed off by the employer.
Skills: Area of new or improved learning/training floorspace (m2)	m2 Hectares Sqm	Bi-annually & annually	The amount of "new build" training/learning floorspace constructed. Figures to be provided following completion. The amount of training/learning floorspace refurbished to improve building condition and/or fitness for purpose. For FE Colleges, this should be by estate grading. Figures to be provided following completion.	 Examples Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the metrics. Independent report setting out floor space achieved.

				Photographic evidence of new floor space.
				 From scale plans and visual inspection on completion and tender documents.
				 Reported via post practical completion based on RICS reported figures.
Number of New Learners Assisted (in courses leading to a full qualification)	No of new learners	Bi-annually & annually	The number of new learners assisted as a direct result of the intervention, in courses leading to a full qualification.	 Examples Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the metrics.
				• full time learners only, by learner 'level' as defined in the SFA guidelines i.e., level 1/2/3/4.
				 Per year registrations or actual students in the building.
				 Individualised Learner records. Submission of skills monitoring annual data capture form due in April each year. This breaks down the Level of NVQ and subject and provides data on starts and completions.
				 Reported as part of the annual review process, in October each year post enrolment period and recorded on the template.
Length of Road Resurfaced	m/km miles	Bi-annually & annually	Length of road for which maintenance works have been completed this quarter (km).	 Examples Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the metrics.
				Photographic evidence of road.
				 From scale plans and visual inspection on completion.
				Reported via highways colleagues based on

				the agreed business case approved for the scheme.
Length of Newly Built Road	m/km miles	Bi-annually & annually	Length of road for which works have been completed and now open for public use (this quarter) (km).	 Examples Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the metrics. Photographic evidence of road. From scale plans and visual inspection on completion and tender documents. Reported via highways colleagues based on the agreed business case approved for the scheme.
New Cycle Ways	m/km miles	Bi-annually & annually	Length of cycle way for which works have been completed and now open for public use (km).	 Examples Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the metrics. From scale plans and visual inspection on completion and tender documents. Photographic evidence of cycleway. Reported via highways colleagues based on the agreed business case approved for the scheme.
Total non-LGF Expenditure	£	Bi-annually & annually	This is the total funding spent by the project delivery body on the project this quarter, excluding Local Growth Fund. Expenditure will include programme funds and any non LGF funds spent by the project delivery body e.g., the amount of non LGF money that road builders have spent in total on building the road.	 Examples Monitoring form signed by the applicant, confirming the spend. Letters from other funders that confirm their grant award to the project, particularly for large grants. Copies of invoices paid. Claim forms showing LGF and matched funding sources for costs incurred in preceding quarter. List of individual transactions. Quarterly Monitoring Reports are also another

				declaration of matched funds incurred and source of funds.
				 \$106 contributions recorded against the project account.
Of which Public	£	Bi-annually & annually	Please enter the proportion of Public Sector non- LGF expenditure this quarter.	Examples
				 See examples above
Of which Private	£	Bi-annually & annually	Please enter the proportion of Private Sector non-LGF expenditure this quarter.	Examples
				 See examples above
Of which Third Sector	£	Bi-annually & annually	Please enter the proportion of Third Sector non- LGF expenditure this quarter.	Examples
				 See examples above