

STAG Technical Database

Section 16

Evaluation

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Transport Scotland

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## 16. Evaluation

The term Evaluation describes a detailed, one-off objective driven review or audit of a project's performance and includes:

- The development of an Evaluation Plan as part of a STAG study to outline how Evaluation will be undertaken post-implementation;
- Process Evaluation – this is carried out early in the life of a project, before its full effects are known and concentrates on whether input (activity) and output objectives are being/have been met;
- Outcome Evaluation – this is carried out once sufficient time has elapsed for the project to have delivered its principle outcomes, and assesses whether the outcome objectives have been achieved, and whether this has been done effectively and efficiently; and
- The development of an Evaluation Report based on the outputs from the process and Outcome Evaluation undertaken.

The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland require Evaluation to be undertaken and documented for any option for which it provides funding or approval.

### 16.1 Introduction

This section is concerned with Evaluation which considers how effectively a project has met the established policy directives. Whereas appraisal takes place prior to implementation and requires a comparison to be made between projected outcomes with the intervention and projected outcomes with a do-minimum scenario, Evaluation involves comparisons of the do-minimum with actual outcomes.

Evaluation is a specific post-implementation event designed to identify whether or not a project is performing as originally intended, whether, and to what extent, it is contributing to established policy directives and whether the implemented project continues to represent value for money. An Evaluation will use information gathered for Monitoring purposes but will also involve data gathering, analysis and detailed interpretation that is particular to the Evaluation itself.

Evaluation is always undertaken against indicators and targets derived from the Transport Planning Objectives, STAG Criteria and relevant established policy directives for a particular project and involves comparisons of the 'do-minimum' with actual outcomes. It is therefore important that, at the outset, Transport Planning Objectives are set within a framework that assists subsequent Evaluation.

### 16.2 Proposed Evaluation Plan

As part of a STAG study an Evaluation Plan should be developed to outline how Evaluation will be undertaken following implementation. It is expected the Evaluation Plan would consider the following:

- Process Evaluation – this is conducted at an early stage in the existence of a project and which is primarily concerned with how well the project has been implemented; this is also known as formative Evaluation; and
- Outcome Evaluation – this is conducted once the project has been in existence for a sufficient period to enable an examination to be undertaken of actual performance against identified targets.

During a STAG study, the term 'practitioners' was used to describe those planning, developing and appraising an option. At the Evaluation stage the term 'project manager'

is considered more appropriate and would be used to describe the manager who would adopt the Evaluation Plan outlined in the STAG Report.

### 16.2.1 Process Evaluation

Process Evaluation is concerned with implementation, and it is therefore necessary to establish a usable number of performance indicators and measures relevant to what is expected during implementation. These may be thought of as tests of good implementation practice.

Process Evaluation is particularly useful in the early stages of implementation when there is scope for amending a project to make it more efficient or effective. The precise point in time for such an Evaluation has to be judged carefully to ensure that initial problems have been addressed and resources are not being used ineffectively where a project is performing poorly.

There can be particular value in the undertaking of Process Evaluation to highlight issues such as project selection and planning, the application and funding process, the way in which funds are allocated and the management of the project at national and local levels.

Process Evaluation should also highlight issues for the future Outcome Evaluation, including the extent to which the information being produced by the Monitoring process is likely to be adequate for subsequent Outcome Evaluation.

### 16.2.2 Outcome Evaluation

Outcome Evaluation should look for clear and measurable outcomes from the project. The timing of an Outcome Evaluation needs to be carefully programmed. If undertaken too soon, final impacts may not have had time to “work through”, but if undertaken too late, resources will be wasted if the project is not efficient or effective.

Outcome Evaluations are intended to answer questions such as “what is the extent of the identified outcomes, and what were the costs of achieving this?”; And, where comparisons can be made with similar projects, “do these resources and outcomes together represent value for money?”

The process used in an Outcome Evaluation may be set out as a series of sequential steps, as follows:

- Definition of scope and purpose;
- Project rationale;
- Aims and objectives;
- Measures and indicators;
- Base case for comparison;
- Analysis and interpretation; and
- Reporting and recommendations.

### 16.3 Participation and Consultation

Stakeholders should be consulted during the development and implementation of the Evaluation Plan. The support and acceptance of the Evaluation Plan by Stakeholders is essential to ensure performance can be effectively evaluated and that the integrity of the process of STAG is maintained.

## 16.4 Reporting

The project manager would be expected to prepare an Evaluation Report based on the Evaluation Plan developed as part of the STAG study. An Evaluation Report will be required to take into account outputs from both the process and Outcome Evaluations undertaken.

The principal outputs forming the basis of the process Evaluation Report will generally include:

- A quantitative analysis of performance against the selected indicators and measures;
- A qualitative review of factors underlying performance such as the quality of management, the provision of information, geographic factors and political factors; and
- An interpretation of the above which offers comment on performance of the implementation of the project and draws lessons for on-going implementation and for the design, management and implementation of future projects.

The outcome Evaluation Report should set out and substantiate its findings on:

- Whether the project achieved its objectives, fully or partially;
- The reasons for any failures in meeting objectives and the consequences of failures;
- A statement of the costs of the project;
- A statement of those outputs and outcomes from the project which are assessed to be additional;
- Analysis of performance measures indicators; and
- Interpretation using the criteria of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity.

In summary, the Evaluation Report should show whether the project represents a good use of resources, whether value for money could be improved, and, if so, how best to achieve this.

For the purposes of the STAG Report it will only be necessary to provide detail of the proposed Evaluation Plan, outlining the scope and timing of the Evaluation to be undertaken together with an Evaluation Summary Table (EST) to be used to report outturn performance and impacts following implementation.