The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Evaluation Strategy

May 2026

North East Mayoral Strategic Authority | Kim McGuinness North East Mayor

Contents

Executive Summary 3

1. Our Ambition 4

2. How we will deliver this 7

Executive Summary

Our ambition is to make evaluation an integral part of how we govern and deliver our five core Missions, reflecting the manifesto on which Mayor Kim McGuinness was elected as the first North East Mayor in May 2024. Evaluation informs decisions about which initiatives to continue, adapt, expand, or discontinue. It is woven into both the design and delivery phases, so that insight shapes project and programme development while they are live.

By embedding evaluation throughout the lifecycle of our interventions, we enable evidence to inform decisions at key stages, rather than being confined to the end of a project review. Evaluation helps us test assumptions, understand where risks are emerging and decide where we may need to make changes to our approach. This ensures we are both disciplined in delivery and responsive to evidence in a complex, place-based system. Our evaluation activities are designed to be proportionate and purposeful, tailored to the specific level of risk, scale, and funding associated with each intervention. We do not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach; instead, we match our evaluation approach to the context and significance of each programme or project.

Evaluation is embedded within our organisational frameworks, ensuring that evaluation plans and findings are considered at defined decision points. Findings have clear ownership and are reviewed through established governance routes, with actions aligned to our governance frameworks and strategic priorities.

Evaluation findings are shared widely and discussed openly to enable us to act on what we have learned. Lessons from individual studies are considered at a broader, organisational level. In this way insights inform not only the programme being evaluated, but, where relevant, share how and what we deliver across our wider portfolio, helping us refine our practice and improve effectiveness over time.

As such evaluation contributes to providing proportionate assurance, helping to demonstrate accountability across all levels of our organisation. This approach supports the Mayor and elected members in making informed decisions about priorities and investments across the region. We are committed to using evidence that reflects both measurable outcomes and data, the lived experiences of people we support, and the realities of the systems we seek to influence. This will contribute to evaluations that provide meaningful insights into what works, for whom and in what circumstances.

This document sets out our ambition for evaluation and our approach to how we will coordinate and strengthen evaluation across the organisation. It will be accompanied by an Evaluation Action Plan to outline how in the short term we start to make this ambition a reality.

1. Our Ambition

1.1 Why do we evaluate?

The primary purpose of evaluation is to provide credible evidence and insight that supports accountability for public investments and informs decisions about the design and delivery that supports our missions. As a Combined Authority, we evaluate to:

Enhance accountability

Demonstrate to our stakeholders including the Mayor, elected members, government, partners and the public, that we are delivering on our commitments.

Understand what works

Identify effective interventions and approaches and understand the factors that drive success or hinder progres.

Support decision-making

Provide meaningful evidence to inform strategic choices, investment decisions, policy and delivery decisions within our governance frameworks.

Promote inclusivity and fairness

Understand how benefits and impacts are distributed across communities, identify where interventions reduce inequalities while recognising any unintended negative effects.

Promote organisational learning

Ensure that we reflect on our decision making and delivery, and embed lessons learnt, and use evaluation to understand what works and who we can deliver the same or better outcomes more effectively with better value for money.

Evaluation becomes a practical tool for good governance and is disciplined in its intent, proportionate in its application and adaptive in response to evidence.

1.2 Our Strategic Objectives

To realise this ambition, we will:

Embed evaluation in planning and delivery

Use evaluation to strengthen evidence-based decision making and accountability

Use evaluation to build organisational learning for continuous improvement

By implementing an evaluation action plan, we will track our progress toward these objectives by assessing our evaluation activities, and requesting feedback from colleagues at appropriate touch points.

1.3 Our Principles

Our approach to evaluation is based on the following principles.

Strategic alignment

Evaluation is considered from the outset of programmes and investments via our Single Assurance Framework, and aligned with our missions and strategic frameworks via the Performance Management Framework and Risk Management Framework, as illustrated below.

Performance Management Framework	Single Assurance Framework	Risk Management Framework
Set out how we will achieve our missions. and measure our progress	How we assess the value for money and impact of the investments we make	How we approach risk management of implementing our missions and objectives

Evaluation Strategy

How we capture the outcome and impact of our investments and build upon lessons learnt

Local Evaluation Plans	Investment Fund Local Evaluation Framework	Other evaluation activity
Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework	Process and Impact evaluations	Process and Impact evaluations
Performance and impact reporting	Investment Fund Performance Packs	Interim and final evaluations
	Annual Review with MHCLG	Reporting and issemination of output

Proportionality

The scale and complexity of evaluation reflects the size, risk, duration and strategic importance of the intervention.

Credibility

The level of independence applied to evaluations is proportional to the scale, risk and significance of the intervention. Major and high-risk programmes may require external evaluation to ensure confidence and objectivity.

Participation and inclusivity

Stakeholders, including beneficiaries, are engaged where appropriate to ensure evaluations are relevant, fair and informed by lived experience.

Learning and improvement

Evaluation is a tool for organisational learning, and plays an important role in how lessons are learnt.

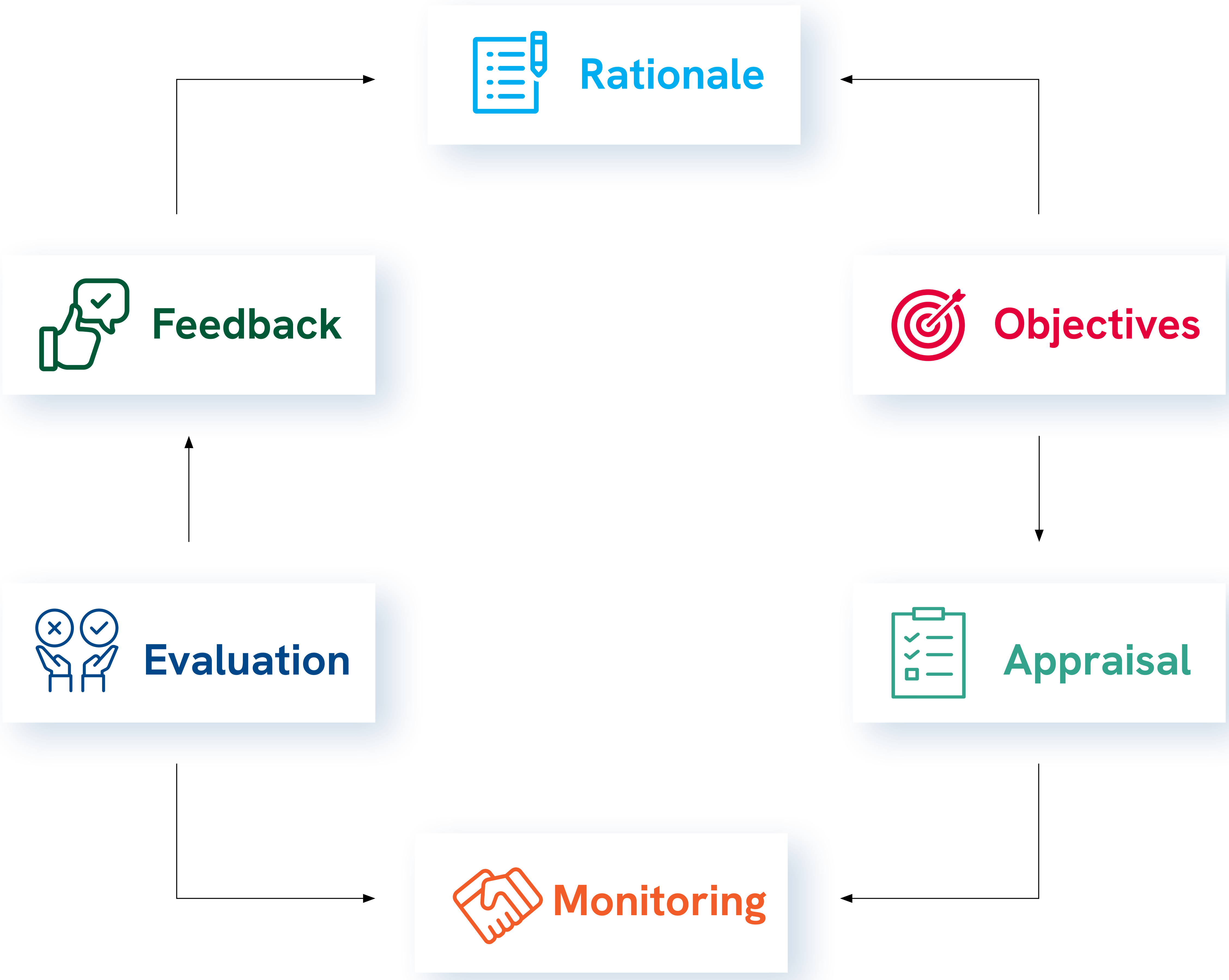
Further detail on rationale of these principles and explanation of strategic fit into existing frameworks are provided the appendix.

2. How we will deliver this

2.1 Our Approach

Our approach to evaluation is grounded in HM Treasury's Green Book guidance[1] and the Magenta Book's ROAMEF cycle[2], ensuring a clear and consistent framework which embeds evaluation through the project lifecycle.

This integrated, end-to-end process links the development of rationale and objectives with robust appraisal, systematic monitoring, and proportionate evaluation, culminating in structured feedback that informs future policy and delivery. By adopting this continuous improvement cycle, the Single Assurance Framework (SAF) acts as the primary vehicle for delivering evaluation, while the Performance Management Framework enables the Combined Authority to step back and assess progress and impact across its missions. As such, evidence is used to strengthen decision-making, enhance accountability, and support the effective delivery of our missions.



Magenta Book's ROAMEF cycle

1 Green Book review, 2020
2 HMT Magenta Book

2.2 Evaluation within Programme and Project delivery

Our ambition is for evaluation to be integrated into project and programme planning from the very outset, ensuring that it is not an afterthought but a core component of effective delivery.

At design stage:

- A clear theory of change and logic models will be developed
- Key outcomes and indicators will be defined
- Proportionate evaluation requirements will be agreed

For all major projects and programmes, an evaluation plan is required. This will set out:

- Clear objectives, articulate focused evaluation questions
- Data requirements and baselines
- Proposed approach
- Reporting and governance arrangements

Evaluation findings are then synthesised and analysed in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure they are accurate, relevant, and reflective of delivery on the ground.

Planning	Evaluation requirements are identified at the business case stage, with logic models and evaluation plans developed early.
Baseline and Monitoring	Baseline data is collected before implementation; ongoing monitoring tracks progress.
Evaluation Delivery	Evaluations are conducted according to agreed plans, using appropriate methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed).
Synthesis and Analysis	Findings are collaboratively reviewed with stakeholders to ensure relevance and accuracy.
Reporting and Dissemination	Results are communicated to internal and external audiences through reports, presentations, and other formats.
Learning cycle	Lessons learned are fed back into policy and practice, supporting continuous improvement.

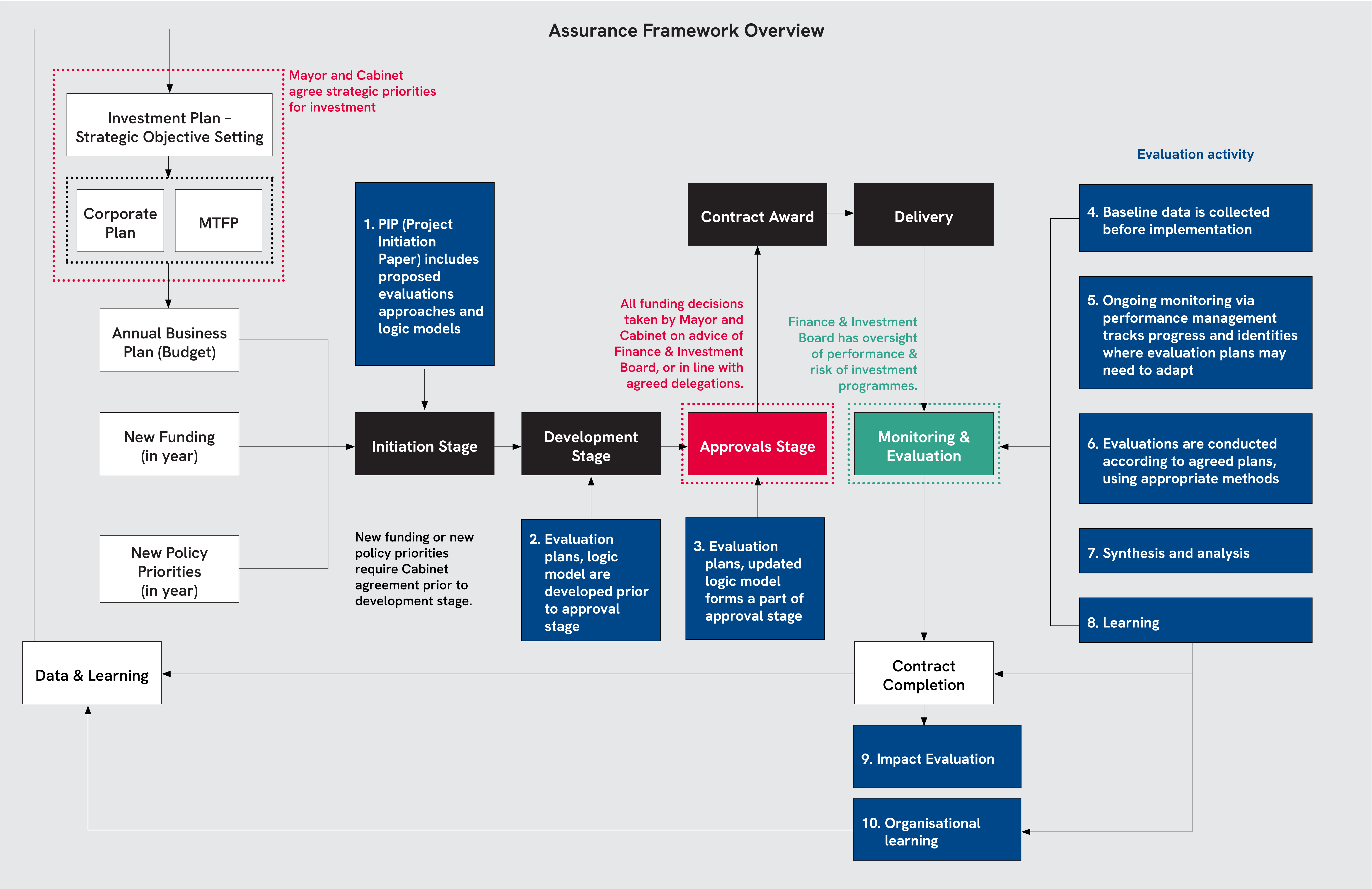
These insights are shared through a range of reporting and dissemination formats, including reports, presentations, and other communication channels for internal and external audiences.

Finally, lessons learned are fed back into policy and practice, ensuring that evaluation drives continuous improvement and strengthens future decision-making and delivery. By embedding evaluation in this way, the organisation ensures that learning, accountability, and continuous improvement are built into every stage of the project lifecycle.

Alongside individual programme evaluations, a more structured approach will be taken to share learning across the organisation. This will include developing accessible resources that allow colleagues to self-serve such as toolkits, digital resources, a thematic library of evaluation findings, including AI supporting colleagues to surface and translate insight when designing new policies or programmes. Opportunities to reflect on findings will also be created through workshops and a community of practice, led by the Evaluation team.

2.3 Governance and Accountability

Evaluation is embedded within the Single Assurance Framework, as illustrated below and Performance Management Framework.



Evaluation activity within Assurance Process

The central evaluation team within Data, Analysis and Insight (DAI) will be involved from the earliest stages of project or programme design to assist in developing an evaluation plan required for business cases. Early engagement allows for a proportionate approach to evaluation planning, taking into account the value, duration, strategic alignment, and delivery models of projects and programmes. Drawing on their expertise and understanding of the specific context, the team provides tailored advice to ensure that evaluation activities are aligned with the objectives, scale, and complexity of the intervention. We balance methodological rigor with practical considerations, collaborating closely with delivery teams to ensure that evaluation approaches are both effective and appropriate.

When business cases reach the approval stage as part of the SAF, the final evaluation plan will be submitted to the evaluation team for review and approval prior to advancing to the next phase. Once implementation begins, we will work alongside delivery partners to operationalise the plan by advising on suitable evaluation methodologies, supporting the commissioning of activities where necessary, and acting as a critical friend by providing constructive feedback on evaluation deliverables such as tools and reports.

As part of this governance approach, insights generated through evaluation will be systematically incorporated into reporting outputs received by Cabinet and the relevant Boards, including SLT, Technical Officers Group, Finance and Investment Board and Programme Advisory to shape delivery, strengthening transparency, supporting evidence-based decision-making, and reinforcing organisational accountability.

2.4 Roles and responsibilities

The text below outlines the Combined Authority key teams and describes their roles in evaluation.

Data, Insight and Analysis (DAI)

The team is responsible for the design, delivery and operationalisation of the Evaluation Strategy, and supporting, distinct components such as the Investment Fund Local Evaluation Framework. Key responsibilities of the team are:

- **Evaluation Leadership:** The team leads on embedding evaluation requirements at the initiation and development stages of projects and programmes, ensuring all interventions are underpinned by robust monitoring and evaluation.
- **Technical Expertise:** They provide technical input on theory of changes, logic models, data collection strategies, and options for independent evaluation.
- **Compliance:** The team ensures compliance with HM Treasury's Green Book principles and the SAF, working closely with the Programme Assurance Team and Finance and Investment.
- **Quality and Consistency:** They maintain consistency and quality in evaluation practice across the organisation, supporting programme leads and ensuring alignment with best practice standards.

Programme assurance (PAT)

Oversees the full lifecycle of Investment Fund interventions and Integrated Settlement, ensuring it meets the standards set out in the North East CA Single Assurance Framework. This includes undertaking technical appraisals on investment business cases, undertaking quarterly monitoring and claim payment.

For evaluation purposes, this team ensures that evaluation requirements are fully integrated into business case and investment approval processes. This includes securing the submission of evaluation plan as part of the business case, discussing the evaluation approach at project inception (including any required refinement), and sign posting partners to the central evaluation team and associated guidance. The team also ensures that evaluation activity is delivered in accordance with the agreed business case and that all relevant evidence is collected from delivery partners prior to the final release of funding.

Policy, Planning and Performance

The Combined Authority's central policy, planning, and performance functions provide the framework connecting long-term goals to day-to-day delivery.

For evaluation purposes this team ensures alignment between evaluation, reporting and performance frameworks through building upon insights and lessons learnt to inform decision-making. Evaluation findings will be captured and reported on within performance reporting cycles.

Programme Delivery

Programme and project teams, both internal and external, are responsible for embedding evaluation within delivery, gathering the necessary data, and engaging stakeholders throughout the process, with support from the DAI team. Steering Groups and Advisory Boards provide oversight and challenge, helping to shape and coproduce evaluation activity. External evaluators are commissioned where independent assessment is required, ensuring objectivity and credibility in the evaluation of major or complex interventions.

The Bloomberg i-Team

The Bloomberg i-Team is the Combined Authority's in-house innovation consultancy tasked with applying advanced research, behavioural science, computational modelling, and live test-and-learn methods to design, stress-test and implement solutions that accelerate the Mayor's top priorities. For evaluation purposes, this team will help shape how we do evaluation during project work through the Test, Learn and Grow approach, especially where projects align with the Innovation and PSR team's mandate, as well as considering ways to ensure that peoples lived experiences are reflected in our evaluation work.

2.5 Evaluation Delivery

Evaluations can be delivered internally or externally. Choosing the right approach balances cost, expertise, and the need for objectivity. Internal evaluations can be more agile and cost-effective, supporting rapid learning and improvement. External evaluations (i.e. commissioned evaluations) provide greater assurance to stakeholders, reduce the risk of bias, and are often required for major investments or where public scrutiny is high.

We apply a proportionate, tiered evaluation framework to ensure accountability, learning, and value for money across our investment portfolios. This will be considerate of the project and programmes value, duration, strategic fit and delivery model, to ensure evaluation approach balances rigour with practicality. Further details on a tiered approach are included in the appendix.

The central Evaluation Team will support project leads and delivery teams weigh the benefits of internal versus external evaluation, advising on the timing and scope of evaluation activity, and recommending the most suitable approaches to process, impact, and economic evaluation. By working collaboratively, the Evaluation Team helps ensure that evaluation activities are robust, relevant, and capable of generating actionable insights to inform decision-making and continuous improvement.

2.6 Systems and Evaluation

With increased evaluation activity there is a need to maintain a central register of evaluation to ensure visibility and coordination across the organisation.

Initially this will be managed through a structured tracking process, capturing key information such as scope, timelines, ownership and status. This will be managed by the central Evaluation team, working closely with colleagues across teams to align activity. Over time this will be integrated into a wider programme and performance management system to support more systematic tracking, reporting and oversight of evaluation activity.

2.7 Types of Evaluation

In planning stage a range of evaluation methodologies will be considered and tailored to the context and delivery. This is consistent with HM Treasury's Magenta and Green book and its lifecycle approach via ROAMEF.

Ex-Ante Evaluation

Ex-Ante Evaluation takes place at the design stage, before delivery begins. Its purpose is to strengthen early decision making by testing the rationale for intervention, to clarify objectives, understand available evidence and making assumption explicit. It aims to identify risks and evidence gaps early to reduce likelihood of ineffective design and increase credibility.

Process Evaluation

Process Evaluation examines how an intervention is implemented and delivered. It focuses on the delivery mechanisms, fidelity to the original design, participation rates, stakeholder engagement and operational challenges.

Process evaluation is crucial for understanding why an intervention did or did not achieve its intended outcomes. It helps us to identify best practices, areas for improvement, and lessons that can be applied to future projects. It provides assurance that public money is being used as intended and highlights opportunities to streamline or scale up successful approaches.

Impact Evaluation

Impact Evaluation assesses the effects of an intervention, what changed as a direct result of the programme or project. It seeks to attribute observed outcomes (both intended and unintended) to the intervention, distinguishing them from changes that would have happened anyway and wider impact of the intervention.

Impact evaluation provides robust evidence of effectiveness and helps us to justify continued or expanded investment, informs policy decisions, and demonstrates the value of local interventions in achieving strategic objectives. It is especially important for high-profile or innovative programmes where proof of impact is required.

Value for Money (Economic) Evaluation:

Value for Money (Economic) Evaluation determines whether the benefits justify the costs and compares alternatives beyond initial appraisal stage in the SAF.

Economic evaluation examines whether the benefits of an intervention justify the costs incurred. It compares the efficiency and effectiveness of different approaches, often using cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness analysis or social return on investment. VfM evaluation is essential for demonstrating stewardship of public funds and supporting transparent, evidence-based investment decisions. It helps prioritise resources, justify funding bids, and ensure that interventions deliver the greatest possible benefit for the available budget. Government and audit bodies increasingly expect clear VfM evidence for major programmes.

Long-term, complex projects and programmes require both interim and final evaluations to ensure they remain on track and to enable timely adjustments to delivery, based on evidence generated throughout the evaluation process. In contrast, short-term or more streamlined projects and programmes typically require only a final evaluation, as their shorter duration and narrower scope reduce the need for ongoing evaluative checkpoints.

2.8 Practical Tools and support

To achieve consistency and comparability across projects and programmes, we will use a set of standardised tools and templates:

- **Theory of change and Logic Models:** template and detailed guidance on the theory of change and logic model development. Logic models are visual representations of how interventions are expected to achieve their outcomes, providing a clear theory of change that aligns with PMF objectives.
- **Evaluation Plan Templates:** Standardised documents to guide the planning and delivery of evaluations.
- **Evaluation Specification Template:** including examples of evaluation questions to ensure a consistent framework for commissioning and comparability across evaluations
- **Glossary of evaluation terms:** A clear, easy-to-use list of common evaluation terms and definitions. It helps everyone involved in an evaluation use the same language and understand key concepts in a consistent way.
- **Outputs and outcomes guidance:** A central repository, aligned to performance reporting and monitoring, of agreed metrics and indicators for consistent measurement, that ensures that all evaluations measure success against common standards.
- **Data Collection Tools:** a menu of methodological approaches which can be applied to different evaluations including surveys, interviews, and focus groups.
- **Reporting Templates:** Standards templates for interim and final reports that allow evaluation findings to be easily integrated into performance reporting and Cabinet reports.
- **Guidance Documents:** Best practice guides, including on equality impact assessment, data protection, and dissemination, as well as on evaluability supporting project and programme teams on identifying the most appropriate evaluation approach.

In addition to the set of practical tools we will also:

- **Provide support to colleagues and partners:** Engage with national partners such as the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth to ensure training and learning opportunities are available to further strengthen organisational capability and confidence in evaluation
- **Communities of practice:** Facilitate a CA community of practice and engage with peer networks such as MCA Evaluation Network to support ongoing learning and sharing of best practice.

2.9 Transparency and Use of Evidence

Evaluation should be a catalyst for organisational learning. To achieve this, findings must be communicated openly and consistently across teams, partners, and stakeholders. Sharing insight, including what worked well and what didn't, supports transparency and informed decision-making. Transparency also helps create a culture where evidence is valued and lessons learned are actively applied to improve future delivery.

In order to share our knowledge, we will publish evaluation results on the North East Evidence Hub, and work with our Communication Team to share and disseminate evaluation insights across our wider networks. We will also arrange internal learning sessions and cross-team workshops. This will ensure that our learnings and insights are available to different audiences, both internal and external, and that they are understood and acted upon.

2.10 Continuous Feedback and Adaption

Establishing feedback loops ensures that evaluation findings and lessons learnt are captured, routinely discussed and acted upon. For example, this could include creating structured mechanisms such as action plans and lesson learnt sessions where insights from evaluations feed directly into quarterly performance reviews, Cabinet reports and programme boards.

These activities will focus on systematically embedding evaluation findings, and fostering a culture of reflective practice. By developing clear, time-bound action plans at all levels, the organisation ensures that recommendations are consistently tracked and implemented. Regular review meetings are scheduled to align evaluation discussions with performance management cycles, allowing leadership to respond promptly to emerging trends. Additionally, lessons learned sessions facilitate cross-team learning, ensuring that both successes and challenges from evaluations inform future delivery and resource allocation.

2.11 Collaboration and Co-Production

As reflected above, evaluation is a collective responsibility that relies on coordinated effort across teams, with partners and within our governance structures. It is a collaborative process involving programme delivery teams, partners and beneficiaries, with co-design and co-production ensuing evaluations are inclusive, relevant and actionable. Embedding this approach requires active participation across the whole organisation, with governance bodies providing oversight and challenge, and delivery teams integrating evaluation into day-to-day practice.

Furthermore, this strategy will be continually reviewed and strengthened through feedback and evolving best practice, reinforcing that effective evaluation is not a standalone task but a whole system commitment to learning, accountability and improvement.We will establish a cross-organisational Steering Group, to oversee development, monitor implementation, and ensure the Strategy is reviewed and updated annually in line with emerging priorities.

2.12 Summary

The Evaluation Strategy sets out a clear, consistent and mission-led approach to how the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority will understand the effectiveness, impact and value for money of its investments. It positions evaluation as an essential component of how we manage performance, ensuring a direct line of sight between our activity, outcomes and organisational priorities. Grounded in HM Treasury's Green Book and Magenta Book guidance, the strategy embeds evaluation throughout the project lifecycle, supporting evidence-based decision-making, strengthening accountability, and enabling us to learn what works as we deliver against our missions.

The document establishes a proportionate evaluation approach aligned to both the Single Assurance Framework and the Performance Management Framework, ensuring evaluations are appropriate to project scale, risk and complexity. It clarifies roles and responsibilities across the organisation, emphasising that evaluation is a shared endeavour. Supported by standardised tools, templates and feedback mechanisms, the strategy ensures evaluation insights inform Cabinet reporting, shape future delivery, and embed continuous improvement across the Combined Authority.

Appendix

1. Rationale for Evaluation Principles

Principle	Rationale
Strategic alignment	This ensures that evaluation activities are not an afterthought, but an integral part of programme and project design. By embedding evaluation from the beginning and linking it directly to the organisation's strategic frameworks and missions, we ensure that the evidence generated is relevant, timely, and directly informs decision-making. This alignment maximises the value of evaluation, supports the achievement of intended outcomes, and demonstrates to stakeholders, including Government, that public investments are being managed and assessed in line with agreed priorities. Below are further details of how evaluation aligns with our missions and frameworks
Proportionality	This ensures that evaluation resources are used efficiently and effectively. Not all interventions require the same level of scrutiny; smaller or lower-risk projects may only need light-touch evaluation or learning journey, while larger, more complex or innovative programmes warrant more comprehensive approaches. This principle prevents unnecessary burden on delivery teams, stakeholders and beneficiaries, avoids wasted resources, and ensures that evaluation efforts are commensurate with the potential impact and risk profile of each intervention. It also supports compliance with funder and statutory requirements without over-engineering the process.
Credibility	Major and high-risk programmes may require external, independent evaluation to ensure credibility and confidence whereas for smaller projects our central evaluation team acts as advisors, providing training and support for effective delivery of evaluation activity. For major types of programmes, independence is critical for building trust in evaluation findings. When evaluations are conducted by individuals or organisations who are not directly involved in delivery, it reduces the risk of bias, whether this is real or perceived. This impartiality enhances the credibility of the evidence produced, reassures stakeholders that findings are objective, and supports transparent decision-making.

Principle	Rationale
Participation and inclusivity	A participatory approach ensures that evaluation is not just done "to" people, but "with" them. Engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including those who are directly impacted by interventions, brings valuable perspectives, increases the relevance and quality of evaluation questions, and helps identify unintended consequences. Inclusive evaluation supports fairness, strengthens accountability, and ensures that the voices of underrepresented or marginalised groups are heard. This approach also fosters buy-in
Learning and improvement	While evaluation provides assurance to funders and the public, its value lies in driving continuous improvement. By systematically reflecting on what works, what doesn't, and why, we can adapt, innovate, and deliver better outcomes over time. Treating evaluation as a learning tool encourages openness, supports a culture of evidence-based decision-making, and helps avoid repeating mistakes. This principle ensures that evaluation is forward-looking and developmental, not simply a compliance exercise.

2. Alignment to our missions

Within 10 years, the North East CA will have made progress against the five key Missions set out in our Corporate Plan:

- The home of real opportunity
- A North East we are proud to call home
- Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all
- Home of the green energy revolution
- A welcoming home to global trade

It is important that through our delivery and evaluation activities we ensure clear alignment with the Combined Authority's five missions. These missions provide the strategic direction for all our work and underpin our approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation. Embedding the missions within this framework ensures that evidence generated through evaluation directly contributes to understanding our progress, strengthens accountability, and supports missioned decision-making across the organisation.

3. Integration with Strategic Frameworks

It is essential the evaluation strategy is fully aligned with our core strategic documents, including the Corporate Plan and key strategies such as the Local Growth Plan and Local Transport Plan. In addition, evaluation processes must be embedded within existing governance structures, notably the North East CA Single Assurance Framework and the Performance Management Framework, to ensure consistency and coherence across all organisational activity.

The Performance Management Framework is the cornerstone of organisational accountability and strategic delivery. It tracks progress against our missions, outputs and outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan and associated strategies. Approved in December 2025, it embeds our missions as the "golden thread" linking to the Corporate Plan, organisation-wide Delivery Plan and individual objectives. This ensures all activities and investments are aligned with strategic priorities and contribute to inclusive growth, sustainability and social outcomes.

Embedding evaluation within this framework ensures that:

- Evaluation informs performance reporting and vice versa, creating a feedback loop that strengthens decision-making.
- Evidence from evaluations complements high-level indicators tracked through the PMF, providing deeper insight into why change occurs, not just whether targets are met.
- Evaluation findings will feed into quarterly internal performance reports, twice-yearly Cabinet performance reports and the annual State of the Region report, ensuring greater transparency and credibility with our stakeholders.

Practically, we will consider evaluation at the same time as setting missions and delivery plans, meaning alignment of evaluation with PMF indicators and strategic priorities. For example, the PMF tracks employment outcomes and their related evaluation activity will explore how interventions contribute to those outcomes and what contextual factors influenced success.

The Single Assurance Framework provides the core governance structure through which the Combined Authority ensures that all investments are appraised, approved and delivered in a transparent, consistent and missioned manner. It sets the standards for robust scrutiny, value for money, and alignment with our five missions, embedding monitoring and evaluation throughout the project lifecycle.

By integrating assurance, performance reporting and evaluation, the SAF ensures that every intervention maintains a clear line of sight to our organisational priorities, strengthens accountability, and supports evidence-based decision-making. It also establishes the mechanisms through which local evaluation requirements are met, including the preparation of evidence for statutory review processes, ensuring the CA can demonstrate progress, impact and continuous improvement across its investment portfolio.

Investment Fund Local Evaluation Framework

The Local Evaluation Framework for the North East Investment Fund provides a structured-evidence-based approach to evaluating the progress and impact of our interventions.

It integrates regional strategic ambitions with governance and delivery mechanisms to ensure continuous learning, accountability and value for money in investment decisions.

It includes the legacy North of Tyne Investment and the current North East Investment Fund interventions. This document will be updated annually to support the Combined Authority with its Annual Conversation with MHCLG to unlock further devolution funding.

Integrated Settlement Local Evaluation Plans

The Integrated Settlement is a key element of the government's ambition to embed devolution into England's governance framework.

The transition to the Integrated Settlement will streamline funding and priorities under a single framework, reducing duplication and improving flexibility. This strategy will align to this new approach , ensuring all Integrated Settlement interventions are evaluated consistently against shared mission-led outcomes. We will develop local evaluation plans for each ES pillar to ensure we generate clear learning from the deployment of the Integrated Settlement, how it operates in practice, impact of delivery and how these insights can be used to iteratively strengthen our processes and improve delivery throughout the IS period.

The Outcomes Framework will complement this strategy by setting out a coherent system-wide set of indicators across themes such as skills, transport, housing, and net zero. This will provide a shared basis for performance reporting, evaluation, and strategic planning. Evaluation plans will be aligned to the outcomes agreed within the Framework. As the Outcomes Framework is expected to be reviewed and refreshed towards the end of the Integrated Settlement period, in preparation for the subsequent funding cycle, associated evaluation plans will be updated accordingly to maintain alignment and relevance and to ensure consistency between monitoring, evaluation and decision making.

Other Evaluation Activity

The Combined Authority's evaluation activity extends beyond core investment programmes to encompass a diverse range of funding streams and associated initiatives.

This includes the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer, which seeks to address barriers to employment and improve labour market participation; the Careers and Enterprise Company activity, designed to enhance careers education and employer engagement for young people; the Brownfield Housing Fund, which supports the regeneration of land for housing development; and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) extension, aimed at driving inclusive growth and community resilience. Each of these programmes is subject to proportionate evaluation to assess effectiveness, impact, and value for money, ensuring that lessons learned inform future delivery and strategic planning. By embedding evaluation across these varied streams, the Combined Authority demonstrates its commitment to evidence-based decision-making, transparency, and continuous improvement in achieving regional economic and social outcomes.

We will also actively engage with national evaluations, commissioned by Government departments, ensuring that delivery insights and lessons learnt at a local level are valuable to national decision making.

4. Tiered Evaluation Approach

We apply a proportionate, tiered evaluation framework to ensure accountability, learning, and value for money across our investment portfolios. This will be considerate of the project and programmes value, duration, strategic fit and delivery model, to ensure evaluation approach balances rigour with practicality. Initial considerations of a tiered approach includes the following:

Tier 1:
Light-Touch Internal Reflections

Tier 1 evaluations focus on delivery processes and the lessons learned throughout the course of a project. These reviews are typically led internally within the relevant business areas, with support provided by the central Evaluation Team. The primary aim is to generate swift, actionable insights that facilitate continuous improvement, all while minimising additional workload for project teams.

This approach is particularly suited to small-scale projects, generally with smaller budgets and short durations. Throughout the project, standardised templates and tools such as learning journeys and surveys to capture reflections and feedback will be used to maintain consistency and proportionate learnings.

Tier 2:
External Evaluations for Larger or Complex Projects

These evaluations examine delivery, impact, and value for money in greater detail. They require more resources and coordination to ensure methodological consistency and quality, in majority of cases involving independent evaluators. They will be commissioned by the project delivery team or external delivery partners, with coordinated support from the central Evaluation Team. This approach is particularly suited to larger scale or more complete projects, with medium to longer term durations.

Tier 3:
Programme or Portfolio Evaluations

These evaluations provide strategic evidence on outcomes, effectiveness and impact across multiple interventions.

They often employ theory-based and counterfactual approaches to assess contribution and impact at scale. In majority of cases, they are commissioned centrally by Evaluation Team and delivered with a strong support from policy and delivery teams. This approach is suited to strategically important, catalytic, higher value and longer duration programmes of delivery.

If you have any questions about our evaluation strategy, please contact:

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