The policing evaluation toolkit: project review checklists

Version 1.0

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Overview

About this document

These project review checklists have been developed to provide guidance to those reviewing project or programme specifications, or funding bids. The checklists aim to set out what you should be looking for in a project specification or bid to ensure that suitable plans have been made for a robust evaluation. The checklists can be read alongside the policing evaluation toolkit, which is designed to help practitioners and researchers ensure evaluations are designed in such a way that strong causal statements about effectiveness can be made. Three checklists have been developed and are described below:

1. The project quality checklist (PQC)

The project quality checklist (PQC) aims to help those without research training identify whether a proposed project or programme has been designed appropriately. The checklist will help you to assess the quality of evaluation plans attached to any proposed project or programme.

2. The project potential checklist (PPC)

The project potential checklist (PPC) aims to help those without research training understand the potential of a project or programme to generate evidence of effectiveness. The checklist will help you assess the likelihood that the proposed project or programme can be evaluated to assess its impact.

The project quality checklist and the project potential checklist can be used together or individually, depending on need. Ideally, they would be used in tandem and in the order presented here.

3. The system change checklist (SCC)

The system change checklist (SCC) aims to help those without research training understand the quality of a proposed system change project (such as the introduction of a new IT system). System change projects often lack suitable comparison and control groups. Comparisons and controls are key parts of robust evaluation design, meaning some system change programmes should be assessed against a different set of criteria.

The project quality checklist (PQC)

How to use the PQC

Using the checklist below requires a tick (either Yes or No) in response to each question.

A tick in a green box indicates that the project proposal demonstrates evidence of meeting a quality criterion. This should give you confidence about the specific area of the project plan to which the tick pertains.

A tick in an amber box indicates that you should exercise caution/seek further clarification from the project team.

A tick in a red box indicates that there may be serious flaws in the project plan and cause for concern. Clarification should be sought from the project team.

Caveat: while ticking one red box alone does not necessarily indicate that the project should not be funded, a substantial number of red ticks would indicate a cause for concern.

After each question the text in brackets refers you back to the most relevant part of the policing evaluation toolkit if you want to find out more about this specific quality criterion.

Part 1: Project overview

Questions in part one are applicable to any project. A red tick against any of these questions is cause for concern, and you should seek more information about the proposed activities.

	Overview of the project	Yes	No
1.	Is the problem that this project intends to address clearly described? ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11)		
2.	Is the problem really a problem? (Are there several valid, reliable pieces of evidence (eg, baseline data trends) to support the need for this project?) ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11)		

		Overview of the project	Yes	No
3.		Is it completely clear who this project will be focused on (the specific participants of the project)? ('Preparation Stage 1.3 Identifying and recruiting participants/selecting locations', p.14-15)	🟩	🟥
4.		Is the intervention (the tactic or policy) that will be used in the project clearly described? ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11)	🟩	🟥
5.		Does this project build on an existing evidence base – for example, existing force and partner data and/or academic research? ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11)	🟩	🟧
6.		Is the project likely to deliver social value in terms of costs (including opportunity costs), benefits and risks? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)	🟩	🟥

Part 2: Project design

Questions in part two should be answered by ticking relevant boxes and following the 'Go to' instructions in the RAG box. Some projects may use multiple approaches to measure their outcomes (eg, randomised evaluations, survey research, quasi-experimental projects, case studies), so you should work through all of the questions.

	Design of the project	**Yes**	**No**
1.	Is it clear how the outcomes of the project (attitudes, working hours etc.) will be measured? Do proposed measurement instruments actually measure the intended outcomes, and do they do so accurately and consistently? ('Preparation Stage 1.2 Identify the measures you will use', p.11-13)		
2.	Is the project about **the impact/effect of a specific tactic or policy** on a specific outcome (does it want to make a cause-and-effect claim?)? ('Preparation Stage 1.4 Generating a comparison group', p.15-17; 'Think 'EMMIE'', p. 24-25)	Go to Q.2a	Go to Q.3
2a.	Does the project team intend to randomise the participants or groups involved in the project? ('Preparation Stage 1.4 Generating a comparison group', p.17-20)	Go to Q.3	Go to Q.2b
2b.	Does the project team plan to compare data (eg, baseline and follow-up) collected from their participants with data from other similar people/settings (but without randomisation)? ('Preparation Stage 1.4 Generating a comparison group', p.22-23)	Go to Q.3	
3.	Is the project about the **process of implementing a tactic or policy** (ie, how it works)? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p. 24-25)	Go to Q.3a	Go to Q.4
3a.	Does the project team plan to collect baseline and follow-up qualitative data (eg, from interviews, focus groups, case studies) or survey data from participants? ('Implementation Stage 2.3 Process evaluation', p.26-28)	Go to Q.4	

	Design of the project	**Yes**	**No**
4.	Is the project about the **acceptability of a tactic or policy** (ie, does it seek to understand if people are willing and able to engage meaningfully with the tactic or policy)? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)	Go to Q.4a	Go to Q.6
4a.	Does the project team plan to collect baseline and follow-up qualitative data (eg, from interviews, focus groups, case studies) or survey data from participants? ('Implementation Stage 2.3 Process evaluation', p.26-28)	Go to Q.5	
5.	Is the project about the **cost-effectiveness of a tactic or policy**? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)	Go to Q.5a	Go to Q.6
5a.	Does the project team intend to randomise the participants or groups involved in the research? ('Preparation Stage 1.4 Generating a comparison group', p.17-20)	Go to Q.6b	Go to Q.7
5b.	Does the project team plan to compare baseline and follow-up data collected from their participants with data from other similar people or settings (but without randomisation)? ('Preparation Stage 1.4 Generating a comparison group', p.22-23)	Go to Q.7	
6.	Is the project about **user satisfaction with a tactic or policy** (ie, does it seek to understand the degree to which officers, staff, the public and other stakeholders are satisfied)? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)	Go to Q.6b	Go to Q.7
6b.	Does the project team plan to use baseline and follow-up qualitative data (eg, from interviews, focus groups, case studies) or survey data? ('Implementation Stage 2.3 Process evaluation', p.26-28)	Go to Q.7	
7.	Is there a clear plan for how the project team will retain participants (in order to prevent drop-out over time)? ('Involving stakeholders', p.15)	Got to Q.8	Go to Q.8

	Design of the project	Yes	No
8.	Does the number of participants proposed appear large enough to enable the claims the project seeks to make? (Larger samples tend to increase the security of findings)	Go to Q.9	Go to Q.9
9.	Does the analysis plan describe how data will be collected from all participants and how this data will be used in the analyses? ('Analysis and Reporting Stage 3.1 Analyse your data', p.30-31)	Go to Q.10	Go to Q.10
10.	Along with analysis immediately following the project, is there a plan for follow-up data collection and analysis (to see if the effects of the project remain or have washed out)? ('Implementation Stage 2.4 Conduct a post-test', p.28-29)	Go to Q.11	Go to Q.11
11.	Is there a clear plan for the publication of results from the project? ('Analysis and Reporting Stage 3.2 Reporting your results', p.31-33)		

Project potential checklist (PPC)

The PPC uses a red-amber-green rating system to determine one thing only: the potential of a project or programme to generate evidence of effectiveness.

Red = there is no potential for generating evidence of impact.

Amber = there may be some potential for generating evidence of impact.

Green = there is clear potential for generating evidence of impact.

After each question the text in brackets refers you back to the most relevant part of the policing evaluation toolkit if you want to find out more about this specific quality criterion.

	Item	Yes	No
1.	Does this project propose to build on a robust existing international evidence base (eg, systematic reviews of randomised control trials)? Is there a clear plan to generate evidence of impact which would address a 'gap' in the UK evidence base?		Go to Q.2
2.	If there is limited or no known evidence base, does the project plan show clear problem identification (with the use of a logic model/theory of change) and a research design to suggest strong potential for establishing impact and cost benefit? ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11; 'Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)		Go to Q.3
3.	Does the project build on evidence from a single study (or a small number of single studies), but is designed for scalability (has the potential for wider replication/national roll-out) and to learn about cost benefit? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)		Go to Q.4
4.	Does the project have limited potential for generating evidence of impact, but could add to the evidence base in terms of describing the nature and extent of a specific policing issue or the testing of a tactic or policy? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)		Go to Q.5

	Item	Yes	No
5.	Does the project have limited potential for generating evidence of impact, but could add to the evidence base in terms of describing how transformation programmes can be successfully implemented, for the benefit of other forces in the UK? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)		Go to Q.6
6.	Does the project have limited evidence potential in terms of generating evidence of impact, use of logic models or implementation learning for the UK, but would generate international examples of 'whole system' change (such as a case study/set of case studies)? ('System change projects', p.9)		Go to Q.7
7.	Does the project have limited potential for generating useful evidence at whole project/programme level, but contain a testable element which could add to the evidence base?		Go to Q.8
8.	Does the research show absence of potential for generating useful evidence of impact or of cost benefit? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)		N/A

System change checklist (SCC)

System change projects (such as the introduction of a new IT system) are successful when an effective tool is used by people with the appropriate training and skills. How system change projects are implemented is key, and this checklist is designed to help you think both about the system change, and how that change will be delivered to the people who will use the new system.

Ultimately, decisions about supporting system change projects must be made based on the best available evidence in tandem with informed professional judgement. As such, ticking the red boxes does not necessarily preclude a project from moving forward, but it does suggest clarification should be sought from project proposal authors. Please see page nine of the policing evaluation toolkit for more information and guidance on system change projects.

After each question the text in brackets refers you back to the most relevant part of the policing evaluation toolkit if you want to find out more about this specific quality criterion.

	Item	Yes	No
1.	Does the proposal clearly describe the problem (and those affected by it) that the project sets out to address? ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11)		
2.	Is there compelling evidence from a range of dependable sources provided to demonstrate that the problem in Q1. (above) is a real problem (not a perception of a problem)?		
3.	Does the proposal clearly describe a plausible response to the problem which appears likely to make improvements? ('Preparation Stage 1.1 Frame your evaluation question', p.10-11)		
4.	Does the proposal have a concise, comprehensible and step-by-step plan for implementing the project successfully? ('System change projects', p.9)		

	Item	Yes	No
4a.	Does the proposal identify the supporting factors (eg, training, time, staff buy-in) needed for the project to be implemented successfully by the intended users or stakeholders?		
5.	Does the proposal have a clear plan for monitoring the actual implementation of the project against the planned (intended) implementation? ('Implementation Stage 2.3 Process evaluation', p.26-28)		
6.	Is it clear how the success or failure of the project will be evaluated? ('Implementation Stage 2.3 Process evaluation', p.26-28)		
6a.	Is it clear what action will be taken on the basis of evidence of the project's success or failure (eg, stop and revise, rollout further)?		
7.	Is the project likely to deliver social value in terms of costs (including opportunity costs), benefits and risks? ('Think 'EMMIE'', p.24-25)		
8.	Is it clear how findings from the project (in terms of overall impact and learning about the implementation process) will be portable to other forces/contexts than that in which the project is to be tested?		