Understanding the difference you make

An evaluation toolkit for adult learning and career change programmes

nesta

L&W

BACKGROUND AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The future of work is changing, providing opportunities for new careers and novel ways of working. Recent work by Nesta, Pearson and The Oxford Martin School predicts that approximately a fifth of workers are in occupations that are likely to shrink over the coming decade. Changes to the world of work will be driven by long-term trends such as technological and demographic change as well as the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future skills requirements will increasingly emphasise interpersonal, higher-order cognitive skills (such as fluency of ideas and active learning) and systems skills (such as judgement and decision making). The future workforce will need a combination of broad-based and specialised knowledge. There is currently limited evidence of 'what works' to support people to build these skills and support them into new careers.

This work has been developed by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) based on our experience as the evaluation partner on the Nesta and Department for Education CareerTech Challenge in 2020/21, a £5.75 million programme to encourage bold solutions to improve people's working lives and unlock employment opportunities for the future. L&W worked closely with 11 innovators to evaluate the effectiveness of the digital and online learning solutions in building career adaptability skills and learner motivation amongst people who are working in shrinking sectors and occupations. The evaluations developed will help to identify 'what works' to upskill and retrain those most at risk of losing employment. Working in collaboration with Nesta, L&W wants to build capacity to conduct rigorous, innovative and high-quality evaluations in adult learning, skills and employment.

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ABOUT LEARNING AND WORK INSTITUTE

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We research what works, develop new ways of thinking and implement new approaches. We want everyone to have an opportunity to realise their ambitions and potential in learning, work and throughout life. We believe a better skilled workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society. We want learning and work to count. To find out more visit www.learningandwork.org.uk

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ABOUT NESTA

We are Nesta. The UK's innovation agency for social good. We confront challenges that affect millions of people, from inequality and ill-health to the climate crisis.

We believe that innovation offers more potential now than ever before. We see opportunities to mobilise citizens and influence behaviour. Private and public capital that can be used more creatively. A wealth of data to mine.

And so we draw on these rich resources by bringing together diverse teams. Data scientists, designers and behavioural scientists. Practitioners, academics, entrepreneurs and people with lived experience.

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DESIGN

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This question bank has been developed in order to help you to identify questions focused on motivation to learn and career adaptability that can be included in participant questionnaires, as part of your impact evaluation.

Introduction

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit's primary purpose is to support delivery organisations, developers and providers in considering the best ways to evaluate **online interventions designed to help adults to build skills that enhance their careers** focussing on: motivation to **learn and career adaptability skills**.

However, evaluations should also involve collaboration with key stakeholders, including learners, practitioners (such as tutors or careers advisors) and the public. This toolkit will be useful for all of those involved in building the evidence base in adult learning and skills.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit provides advice on how to evaluate your intervention. Please note, this toolkit should be used as a starting point. Depending on the design and anticipated outcomes of your intervention, you may want to consider a wider range of approaches to gathering evidence of your intervention and its impact.

This toolkit provides a simple step-by-step guide to developing realistic, proportionate and high quality plans for your evaluation. The steps should help you to decide what, how and when to evaluate your online intervention.

The toolkit will take you through:

1. What evaluation is and why it is important
2. Guidance on how to develop your own Theory of Change
3. Guidance on how to design and deliver a process evaluation
4. Guidance on how to design and deliver an impact evaluation
5. Ethical considerations for your evaluation
6. Top tips on developing key findings and lessons learned

What is evaluation and why is it important?

Evaluation examines the actual implementation and outcomes of an intervention to assess whether the anticipated effects, costs and benefits were in fact realised.

Evaluation identifies what works, where problems arise, highlights good practice, identifies unintended consequences or unanticipated results and demonstrates value for money.

Every evaluation is unique, but there are four key stages:

There are different types of evaluation, for the purpose of this toolkit we use these definitions:

Process Evaluation

Assesses whether a project and its activities are being implemented as intended and in practice, what is working well / less well. Answers the question 'What can be learned from how the intervention was delivered?'

Impact Evaluation

Provides an objective assessment of what changes have occurred, the scale of those changes and the extent to which these can be attributed to the intervention. Answers the question 'What difference has an intervention made?'

Why is evaluation important in the context of adult learning?

Conducting an evaluation of your project is important for three key reasons:

- To generate evidence around 'what works' to enhance learner motivation and career adaptability through online approaches.
- To help you find out what is and is not effective.
- To help your future decision making as an organisation, as well as informing policy level change.

The power of evaluation – how it supports us to make big decisions about how we design and deliver policies and programmes

Back to Work Finland: Evaluation that identifies effective practice

An evaluation of a range of active labour market policies found that job rotation schemes in Finland get roughly 6 out of 10 displaced workers into jobs within three months – far outperforming other approaches used in the country. This is now one of Finland's policies in place to address economic restructuring and to assist people losing their job for economic reasons.

Behavioural nudges to support attendance in adult learning: Evaluation that identifies when an intervention does not work

After an initial promising pilot evaluation, an independent evaluation found that students who received motivational text messages or had study supporters did not, on average, have higher pass rates in GCSE re-sits.

Per Scholas: Evaluation that supports economic growth

Three years on from delivery, the US Per Scholas IT programme has been found to have 'large and growing' impacts on employment and earnings, with participant earnings $4,800 or 27 per cent higher on average than the control group. It has now been adopted across several other states in the US.

Further reading

- Better Evaluation: global collaboration to improve evaluation use and theory
- HM Treasury's Magenta Book: Central Government guidance on evaluation
- The Innovation Growth Lab Toolkit: A guide to build an understanding of how adopting an experimental approach can be used to make policies more effective
- For general guidance on using research evidence see this guide from The Alliance for Useful Evidence.
- For more examples of how evaluation can help non profit organisations, take a look at Evidence for Good from the Alliance for Useful Evidence, the Nesta Standards of Evidence and the Nesta Guidance for Evaluating Social Innovation to Create Lasting Change
- Nesta also has an Evidence & Experimentation practice team who are developing the future focus for Nesta's work in this area. You can contact them here

Guidance on how to develop your Theory of Change

What is a Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change sets out the relationship between the inputs and activities associated with your project and the outputs and outcomes which you hope to see as a result.

The theory of change can be summarised in a diagrammatic form which can be useful in several ways:

- Communicates rationale for your project
- Manages risks and identifies assumptions
- Improves understanding of your project and what it is trying to do
- Guides your evaluation activity

Developing a project Theory of Change supports organisations to set out how the activities they are delivering are directly connected to the change they expect to see. Developing a theory of change is often an iterative process and it may evolve over time as your understanding develops. It should be seen as a live document that you return to and adapt as you learn more about your programme.

What does a good Theory of Change look like?

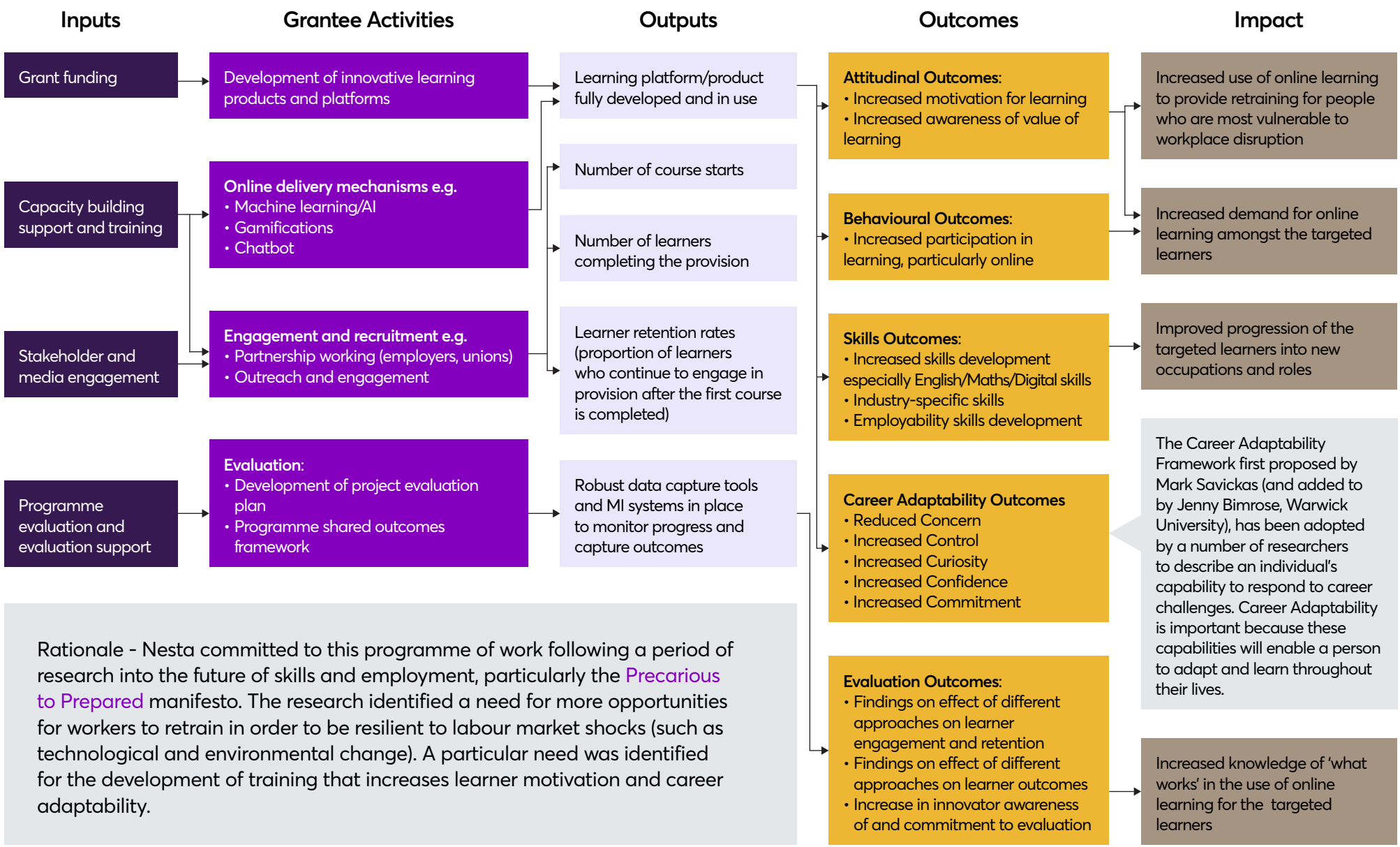
- Clear links between activities/outputs/outcomes (causal pathways)
- The Theory of Change aligns with the rationale and expected outcomes
- Outputs and outcomes are clear and measurable
- Consider the assumptions about the links you make between different factors (causal pathways)
- Consider the key risks for the project intervention

There are a number of ways to present a Theory of Change, the examples provided are just a starting point. Do consider how to visualise your Theory of Change and be as creative as you like!

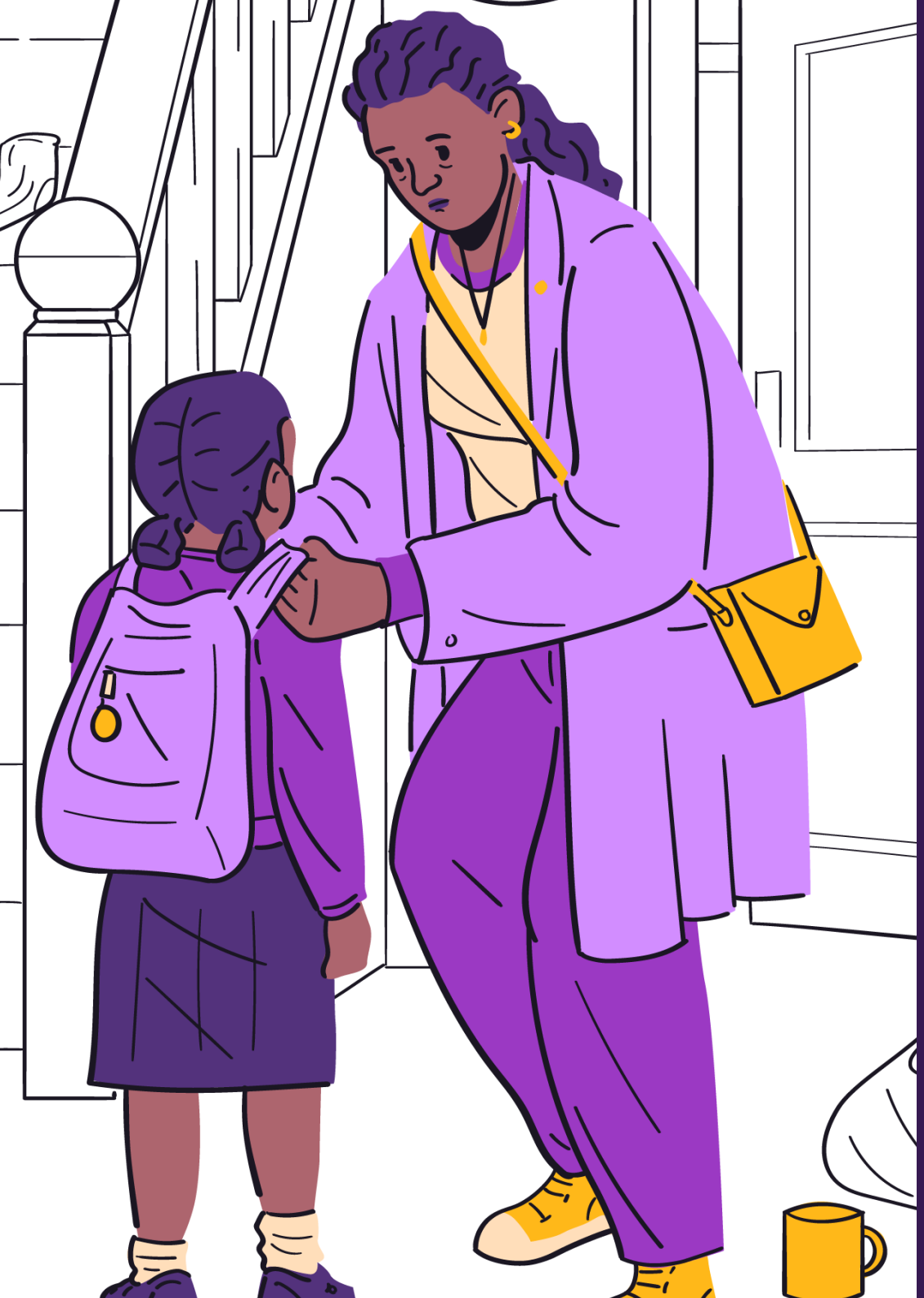
Further reading on Theory of Change

- Think NPC: Theory of Change in Ten Steps
- NCVO Knowhow: How To Build A Theory of Change

Programme Level Theory of Change for the CareerTech Challenge Fund



Rationale - Nesta committed to this programme of work following a period of research into the future of skills and employment, particularly the Precarious to Prepared manifesto. The research identified a need for more opportunities for workers to retrain in order to be resilient to labour market shocks (such as technological and environmental change). A particular need was identified for the development of training that increases learner motivation and career adaptability.



Guidance on how to design and deliver a process evaluation

What is Process Evaluation?

A process evaluation is focused on understanding key successes or challenges encountered in the delivery of the project and whether the project was delivered as intended.

The tools and resources presented in this section will help you to design and undertake your evaluation. As you design your process evaluation, think about creative ways you could conduct the evaluation that builds on existing mechanisms you have in place. We have included some example Process Evaluation questions later on in this chapter.

Why is process evaluation valuable to my organisation and project?

- It can help you to identify how and why new ways of working have been effective – and which of these practices you might want to roll out across your organisation

- It can help you to identify where ways of working have not worked so well so that you can build your knowledge and improve practices going forward

You should design and deliver a process evaluation to help you understand *why* you may be seeing certain outcomes improving, staying the same or getting worse.

Steps to developing your process evaluation

1. Decide which elements of your project to examine as part of your process evaluation.

This decision will be guided by the activities and outputs you have put in your Theory of Change. These include:

- Your marketing or recruitment strategy
- Your approach to recruiting and engaging learners
- Demographic characteristics of learners
- Partnerships with other organisations
- Context in which the project is delivered
- Project management arrangements
- Quality and intensity of the learning provision
- Staffing and training

2. Develop a set (3-4) of overarching questions that you want to answer through your process evaluation.

Typical generic questions include:

- What worked well and less well, and why?
- What could be improved?
- How has the context influenced delivery?

3. Identify and prepare the research tools you will use to collect information

There are different research tools you can use in your evaluation. Through these you can collect information such as **factual details** as well as **perceptions** of what worked well and less well in the project delivery.

See 'Evidence collection for your process evaluation'.

4. Decide who to involve

Process evaluations can collect information about the project delivery processes in different ways from different groups of people. You may wish to involve:

- Project delivery staff or volunteers
- Learners (project participants)
- Wider stakeholders, e.g. partner organisations; local context experts

5. Recruit learners

Getting learners' perspectives on your intervention is an important element of your process evaluation. There are effective ways of engaging them, and ethical considerations to take - see 'Recruiting learners – top tips' for guidance

6. Collect learner and output information using a monitoring table

Collecting information about your learners allows you to explore **what works for different groups of people**.

Collecting monitoring information allows you to get the right information for evaluating the elements of the project you have decided on. You can use a monitoring table to do this.

Recruiting learners for your evaluation – top tips

How do I identify learners to take part in the evaluation?

- You can recruit learners via an 'opt in' method whereby you contact them about the evaluation and ask them to opt in if they are interested. Alternatively, you can ask a gatekeeper (e.g. tutors, mentors, employers or other delivery staff) to identify learners who would be willing to take part.
- Use your monitoring information to select a range of learners based on their characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, employment type/sector and qualifications).
- Keep a record of who you have contacted and who has opted in.

How do I incentivise learners to take part in an interview or focus group?

- Highlight the value of taking part. Emphasise that their involvement will contribute to wider learning that will feed into a better, evidence-based understanding of how best to design online learning for adults like them so that future programmes of work can support people more effectively.
- Using a gatekeeper as a 'warm' contact can be an effective approach to recruitment.
- Advertise the opportunity via a range of mediums – for example on your website, social media or via text or email.
- Use clear and accessible language to encourage learners to take part. Reassure them that it is not a test and that there are no right or wrong answers.

How do I gain informed consent?

- Provide learners with information about the evaluation, its purpose and why you would like to talk to them before they take part in any formal activity with the evaluation.
- If you are planning to collect monitoring information, you must inform learners of this upon engagement so that they can opt in (or out) to you collecting information about them.

For more information about informed consent and other ethical considerations, please see Chapter 5: Ethical considerations for your evaluation.

Evidence collection for your process evaluation

You will need to **identify and develop research tools** to use to collect evidence for your process evaluation. Process evaluation commonly uses two types of research tools to gather information:

1. **One-to-one interviews or focus groups** with those delivering the project and those who take part (learners) to understand what worked well and less well about the project. For more information about interviews and focus groups, **see** 'Conducting interviews and discussion groups'.

2. **Output information** to understand whether processes such as recruitment, retention and completion have worked as expected. This will be collected using your **monitoring table**.

Through these you can collect evidence such as **factual details** as well as **perceptions** of what worked well and less well in the project delivery. It may also highlight any key aspects about the **context** of the intervention that affected project delivery.

In the table below, we have suggested the range of questions you may consider exploring with key participant groups across your process evaluation. This is a starting point and you should consider further topic areas you wish to explore with participants relevant to your evaluation aims.

Process Evaluation Questions

Topic area	Key questions	Who to ask	When
Your marketing and recruitment strategy	How has the process for marketing and recruiting to the project been working? Was the marketing and recruitment strategy delivered exactly as it was planned? What changes were required and why? How has the external advice and guidance on the marketing and recruitment strategy been put into practice? What worked well or less well?	Project staff	At the start, during and post-project delivery
	What aspects of the marketing and recruitment strategy worked well / less well to recruit learners into the project? E.g. targeting learners through existing partnerships with employers, targeting learners in existing course, using online communities, social media, etc.	Project staff and learners	At post-project delivery
Outreach and engagement of learners	How would the respondent describe the learners who have engaged with the project? E.g. demographics, skills level, employment status, sector, background, learning needs. Was this group as it was expected to be when the project was planned? If it differed, how and why?	Project staff	During and post-project delivery
	How has the mechanism of learning delivery influenced learners' initial experience of the project? E.g. chatbot function, learning app, online collaboration, machine learning. What worked well in engaging learners into the project? What worked less well? Were there any challenges keeping learners engaged with the project once they enrol? How does this differ by types of learners? What lessons have been learned about engaging learners into the project?	Project staff and learners	During and post-project delivery

Process Evaluation Questions (continued)

Topic area	Key questions	Who to ask	When
Project management arrangements, staffing and training	Were the inputs and activities specified in the Theory of Change the same as what was delivered? Did the project meet budgetary expectations, or were there unforeseen issues and hidden costs? Was the project managed and staffed as it was planned? What changes were required and why? Was any training provided for staff? By whom? How useful was it? Any additional training needed?	Project staff	During and post-project delivery
Model of learning delivery	Was the project delivered exactly as it was planned? What changes were required and why? Were there different variations to project delivery? What sort of variations were made? How did this affect delivery? Was the project delivered in the same way consistently (e.g. was each module delivered the same way)? Were the inputs and activities specified in the Theory of Change the same as what was delivered?	Project staff	During and post-project delivery
	How has the design/mechanism of learning delivery influenced learners' experience of the project? E.g. chatbot function, learning app, online collaboration, machine learning. Which aspects of delivery were most relevant and most valued? Was this different for different groups of learners? Which aspects caused difficulties among learners? Was this different for different groups of learners? What did learners and staff feel worked in delivering the project? What facilitated this? What did learners and staff feel worked less well in delivering the project? Why were these aspects less successful? Are there any changes that could be made to the delivery model?	Project staff and learners	At the start, during, and post-project delivery

Process Evaluation Questions (continued)

Topic area	Key questions	Who to ask	When
Partnership working	What partners have been involved in delivering the project? What was their role? E.g. designing the technology, communication, facilitating referrals to the project, co-creators. What's worked well? What were the key challenges? How could these be addressed? Could anything be improved about partnership working?	Project staff	At the start, during, and post-project delivery
Pathways to outcomes	What outcomes have been achieved through the project? What types of learners are achieving these outcomes (e.g. certain age group, sector, employment history)? Have there been any unintended outcomes amongst learners? What might act as facilitators and barriers to desired outcomes? How can barriers be overcome, and facilitators harnessed?	Project staff and learners	During and post-project delivery
Context in which the project is delivered	Are there any organisational factors influencing the project's delivery? To what extent do these act as facilitators or barriers to effective project delivery? Are there any wider contextual factors influencing the delivery of the intervention (e.g. national or local policy priorities, Coronavirus, labour market context)? In what ways have these factors influenced the project's delivery?	Project staff and learners	At the start, during, and post-project delivery
	Are there any external factors which have influenced learners' experience of the project?	Project staff and learners	During and post-project delivery

Process Evaluation Questions (continued)

Topic area	Key questions	Who to ask	When
Summary questions: strengths, weaknesses and lessons	Overall, how well has the project been going so far? To what extent has the project met its aims? How could it better meet these aims in the future? What are the key strengths of the project? What have been the main challenges? How have these been overcome? Do you think the project was delivered successfully? Why or why not? What would they change if they were to do the project again? What design and delivery factors would they consider if they were to scale up the intervention in the future?	Project staff and learners	During and post-project delivery

Research tools table[1]

Deciding the right tools to use for your process evaluation

The research tools summarised in this section are commonly used in process and outcome evaluations. When used in outcome evaluations, consistent data must also be collected for any comparison group. You should consider which of these tools might be suitable for your evaluation and participant groups.

Research tools	Description	Pros	Cons
Interviews and focus groups	Interviews enable in-depth exploration of the intervention with participants. Focus groups are useful to elicit views from a group of people rather than an individual.	Can be used to elicit views of individuals involved in an intervention. Can be used to collect in-depth insight about an intervention and shed light on patterns emerging in other pieces of evidence collected (such as quantitative monitoring data).	Can be resource intensive; requires time to conduct and analyse; does not provide numerical estimates; there may be risk of bias in the views collected.
Case studies	In-depth investigation of a person, group or event within its real-world context. Subjects are often purposely selected because they are unusual and reveal information. Often uses multiple sources of evidence and data collection methods. Can be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory.	Can capture real-life situations in depth and detail and help understand complex phenomena. Works well in combination with or supplementing other methods, such as surveys. Can be helpful for communicating to stakeholders what interventions have worked for organisations in certain contexts.	It is difficult to generalise findings to different contexts, situations or phenomena.

[1] HM Treasury (2020) Magenta Book: Central government guidance on evaluation

Research tools table (continued)

Research tools	Description	Pros	Cons
Surveys or questionnaires	Commonly used to collect information from a number of individuals, such as beneficiaries, or a large organisation with numerous members of staff. They can be administered face-to-face, by post, online, by telephone or as a handout.	An effective method of obtaining information from a large number of learners. Provides data suitable for statistical analysis that, if properly designed and conducted, can be generalised to the whole population of interest.	Less useful for providing in-depth insight into an intervention. There can be response-rate issues that decrease the quality of its findings.
Output and outcomes monitoring	Continuous measurement and performance review of an intervention. Monitoring plans are developed based on the Theory of Change to allow the tracking of the inputs, outputs and outcomes of an intervention. To minimise errors in the data collection and burden on staff it is advisable to design monitoring in collaboration with those who will collect information.	Can provide a relatively low cost and rapid method to identify if an intervention is being delivered and creating outputs as intended.	Can feel onerous for both learners and the staff (usually delivering an intervention) who collect it.

Collecting learner information

You will need to collect information about your learners (you may hear it referred to as **monitoring or management information**). This allows you to explore **who is taking part in your project**. Collecting this information can also support you – alongside other evaluation evidence – to understand what works for different groups of people. For example, if you work with adults of all ages it may be helpful to know whether your project outcomes work better for some age groups more than others. Characteristics you should consider collecting include:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Current employment status
- Employment sector
- Highest qualification level

If you do not already collect all or some of this information, see the Toolkit Questions for a list of recommended questions that can be included in learner questionnaires.

Conducting interviews and discussion groups

- Try to make the interview environment safe and private. Interviewees may want to share information that they would not want others to hear.
- Respect for interviewees' confidentiality and anonymity is paramount. This is especially important in the reporting phase, where interviewee names (and organisation names, where relevant) should not be included in the final report.
- Before starting the interview or focus group, you should double check that participants are still happy to take part. It should be made clear to participants that their involvement is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time. You should also explain that they don't have to answer any questions if they don't want to, and that they can end the interview/leave the group at any time without explanation.
- You should use a discussion or 'topic' guide to help aid the discussion. The discussion guide is a document that outlines the key issues and subtopics to be explored with participants. The Process Evaluation Questions section includes some example questions you may want to consider using in the discussion guide.
- As the interviewer or group facilitator, you should be as neutral as possible and seek out the interviewees' views about the project in a balanced way. Try to avoid asking 'leading' questions and start questions in an open way i.e. "*What difference, if any, did the project make to X?*" and "*Could you talk me through what you considered worked well about the project, if anything?*"
- With participant consent, you can record the interview or focus group as this will give you an accurate record of what is said. If this is not possible, you should write notes during the interview or discussion group so that you can capture the key points and use these notes to support your analysis.
- If you are conducting small group discussions, do consider carefully who you are inviting to the groups and ensure that the group mix is appropriate for the discussion. For example, having employers in the same discussion group as learners (i.e. employees) may influence certain individuals' contributions.

Conducting virtual discussion groups

If you are planning to conduct online or virtual interviews or focus groups, consider the following points:

- These methods assume that learners have access to hardware, good quality wifi and a private space, don't forget to check these things in advance and establish a plan to engage with those who may be digitally excluded.
- Groups should take place in real-time, no longer than 90 minutes.
- Give time for responses: typing an answer can take longer than saying one and not being able to see people's facial expressions may delay responses.
- It is recommended groups use a typed interface (as not everyone likes/has webcams and this can create 'tech barriers' on timings).
- Same (and additional) stimulus techniques can be used as in face-to-face groups: whiteboard functions, word clouds, quick polls, short films, pictures, screen shots, screen sharing, website checking. This level of interactivity helps maintain engagement but may require more prep time to ensure participants can use them comfortably.
- Direct messaging can be used for one-to-one follow-ups.
- It is recommended to have two people leading the focus group.

Avoiding bias in process evaluation

Project beneficiaries, colleagues, and wider stakeholders may be reluctant to criticise the project, especially when the evaluation is conducted by someone who is closely involved in the project. All respondents should be asked to express honest views and be assured that their responses will not have negative repercussions. It is useful to emphasise that their involvement will contribute to wider learning in the programme evaluation that will feed into a better, evidence-based understanding of 'what works' to engage and motivate individuals.

Example: Process evaluation of DigiSkill – an online basic skills course for retail workers, with one-to-one mentoring

DigiSkill delivered an online basic skills course with sector-specific content to 200 adults working in the retail sector. The provision included support from a one-to-one mentor who worked with employers as gatekeepers to incentivise take up. The process evaluation aimed to understand the extent to which the project was delivered according to the plan (as set out in the Theory of Change) and the key successes and challenges. The team developed three key research questions:

1. To what extent is online provision of basic skills effective?
2. What role do mentors play in adults' experience of online learning?
3. What role does employer engagement play in incentivising adults to take up learning?

To answer their evaluation questions, the DigiSkill project team conducted the following activities:

1. **Developed an evaluation plan** including completing a Theory of Change and a monitoring table.
2. **Collected participant and output information** on learner demographics, and engagement, retention, completion and attainment rates. This enabled the team to identify what worked for different groups of learners. The team gained informed consent via an opt in box when learners registered for the course.
3. **Conducted 15 phone interviews with learners** to get an in-depth understanding of how and why they chose to engage with the provision, their views and experiences of the course, the content and the mentor support, their perspectives of the benefits of the course and suggestions for improvements. The mentors and employers identified 15 learners who were willing to take part in the interviews.
4. **Conducted a focus group with 6-8 mentors** to explore their views and experiences of the online provision, their views of working with employers, what they felt worked well (e.g. regular sessions with the learner) and what the challenges were (e.g. lack of training), and suggestions for improvement.

Further reading on conducting process evaluations

- Public Health England Process Evaluation guidance
- Public Health England Evaluation Methods guidance
- National Institute for Health Research on process evaluation

Guidance on how to design and deliver an impact evaluation

What is Impact Evaluation?

Impact evaluation measures the short and medium-term changes that have been achieved as a result of your project. It seeks to identify whether your project has 'worked' or not. Impact evaluation helps us to make a judgment on how 'effective' something was, for example the effectiveness of online mentoring to raise adult learners' motivation.

Why is an impact evaluation valuable to my organisation and project?

An impact evaluation will provide transparent and robust evidence of the outcomes that have come about as a result of your project. It will also show you if a particular feature of your project does not have the desired or anticipated impact you expected. This supports a better understanding of 'what works' and can improve organisational decision making in the future.

Identifying outcomes

The example table below is designed to help you consider what outcomes or changes you expect to see as a result of your project. You may find it helpful to use this table to identify these alongside how and when you might measure whether you have achieved this change.

A good starting point is to review the outcomes you have identified in your Theory of Change. Your outcomes should be things that you can measure within the lifetime of the project.

What are outcomes?

Outcomes are the changes you would expect to see if your project is working. For projects focused on building career change skills, we might expect to see changes that fall under the following themes:

Career adaptability e.g. more confident and knowledgeable of suitable career pathway options.

Attitudinal e.g. increased motivation for learning or reduced anxiety around learning.

Behavioural e.g. increased participation in learning or progression in employment.

Skills e.g. improved basic skills or employability skills.

1. Develop a set of key questions you want answered

Typical impact evaluation questions include:

- Did the intervention work?
- What changes occurred as a result of the intervention?
- Have different groups been impacted in different ways, how and why?
- How has the context influenced outcomes?

2. Identify and prepare the tools you will use to collect information

You can use:

- **Questionnaires or output data** to collect quantitative information i.e. **numbers that can be measured**. For example, you can ask learners to rate on a scale of 1-5 how confident they feel about applying for new jobs. See 'When to collect information if you are using questionnaires' for more information. The Toolkit Question Sets section gives some example questions that you could use to help you identify which questions may be helpful. **You can also use or develop your own questions**.
- **Interviews and focus groups** to collect information that cannot readily be measured using numbers. For example, if you wanted to better understand any changes to learners' attitude to learning you may want to explore this through an interview or focus group.

Use the research tool table to help you decide.

3. Decide who to involve and recruit participants

There are effective ways of engaging learners in your outcome evaluation, and ethical considerations to take into account - see 'Recruiting learners – top tips' for guidance.

When to collect information if you are using questionnaires

The best time to collect information on outcomes varies depending on how the project is being delivered.

Asking learners to fill in a questionnaire **before and after** they engage with the project. This is strongly recommended. This will allow you to check whether anything has changed over the course of your project by comparing the two sets of questionnaires.

Only asking learners to fill in a questionnaire **after** they have engaged with the project. If you have limited or no contact with your learners before your project starts, it may be difficult to ask them to fill in a questionnaire before your engagement starts. Information collected after the project may still be helpful.

Ask learners to fill in a questionnaire **several weeks after** they have engaged with the project (in addition to before and after, if possible). Some changes you may hope to see may take a while to come about. It may therefore also be useful to ask learners to fill in a questionnaire sometime after your project ends. This may also help you to understand whether changes seen are lasting, or whether effects wear off over time.

Example: Before & After Delivery

Learners complete a questionnaire that asks questions about their attitude to learning before they engage with the provision (i.e. upon enrolment). They complete the same questionnaire a few weeks later after completing or disengaging with the course to see whether their attitudes have changed.

Example: After Delivery

It is not possible to ask learners to fill in a questionnaire at the beginning. Instead, the project team decides to ask the learners to fill in a questionnaire at the end of the learning period. They also conduct some qualitative interviews to explore participants' perceptions on what they think has or has not changed about their motivation to learn.

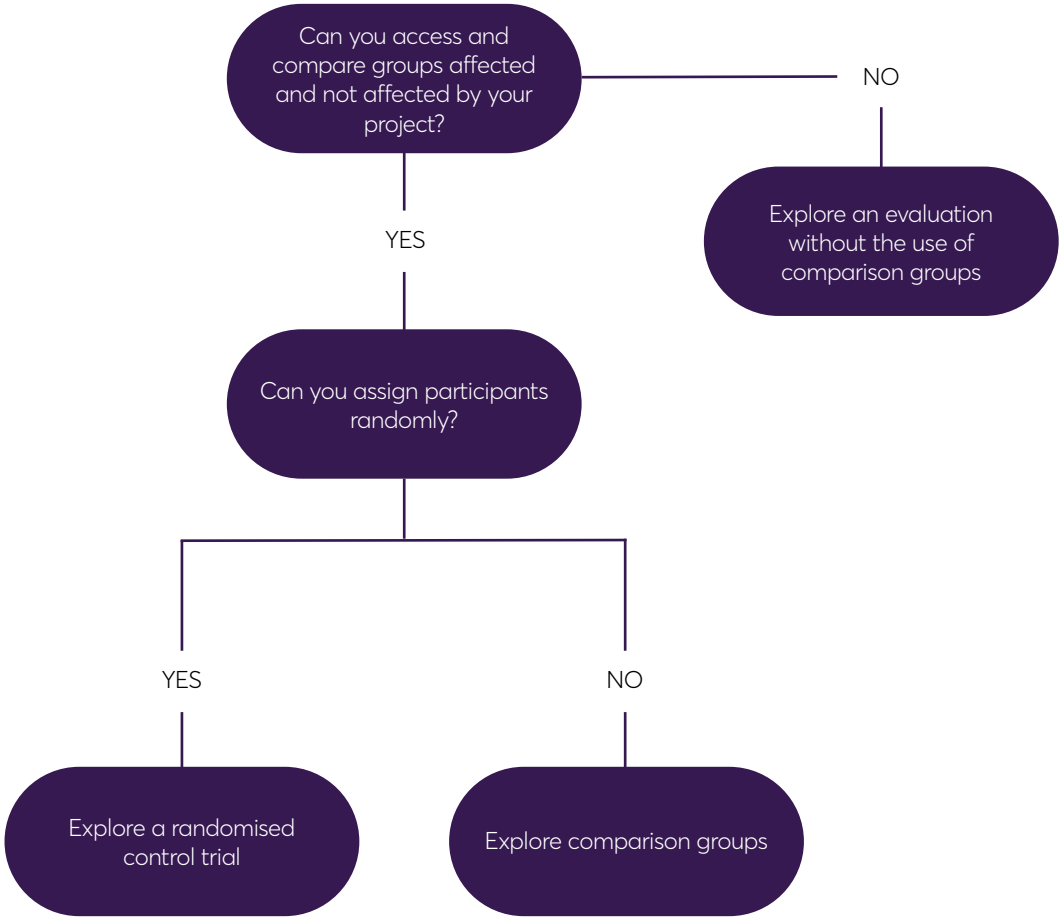
Example: Several Weeks After Delivery

The provision only lasts 15-20 hours but the project team thinks that the effects will be realised much later after learners put their learning into practice around a month after they participated. The project team decides to ask learners to fill in their questionnaire one month later, by email.

Potential for comparison groups

Some impact evaluations identify a group of people not taking part in the project who are similar to those who are participating in the project. This becomes a '**comparison group**'. By measuring outcomes from the comparison group as well as the intervention group (i.e. your project) you can identify the **change that might have happened without your project**. Being able to randomly allocate eligible participants into a 'control' or comparison group and the intervention group will strengthen your causal evidence base.

Your project design may lend itself to using comparison groups and you should explore this further if you can. The section and the decision tree[2] should help you to start thinking about this. Please note that the use of comparison groups can increase the resource and capacity required for your evaluation.



[2] Adapted from HM Treasury Magenta Book (2020)

Identifying a comparison group

Here are some ways you could identify a comparison group from your existing delivery practices:

Will your project have a **waiting list** i.e. engage some people first and others later?	→	Consider using people on the waiting list for the comparison group. This is called **phased intervention**.
Will your project allow for **different levels of engagement or differentiation** i.e. some participants completing the whole course, and others doing one module?	→	Consider using people who only access one module as a comparison group.
Do you have a **business as usual cohort** i.e. learners who are engaged in your standard provision offer?	→	Consider using people who access the business as usual or 'standard' course as a comparison group.

Example: TechLearn - Improving adults' motivation to learn online

TechLearn aimed to improve adults' motivation to learn online.

Learners enrolled on one of two interactive online learning courses – one in July and one in August. **All learners** completed a short questionnaire before the July course started, asking about their attitudes to and experiences of learning.

At the end of the July course, both groups were asked to repeat the questionnaire. By doing this, the August cohort could act as a comparison group for those who did the course in July because they had not yet done the course.

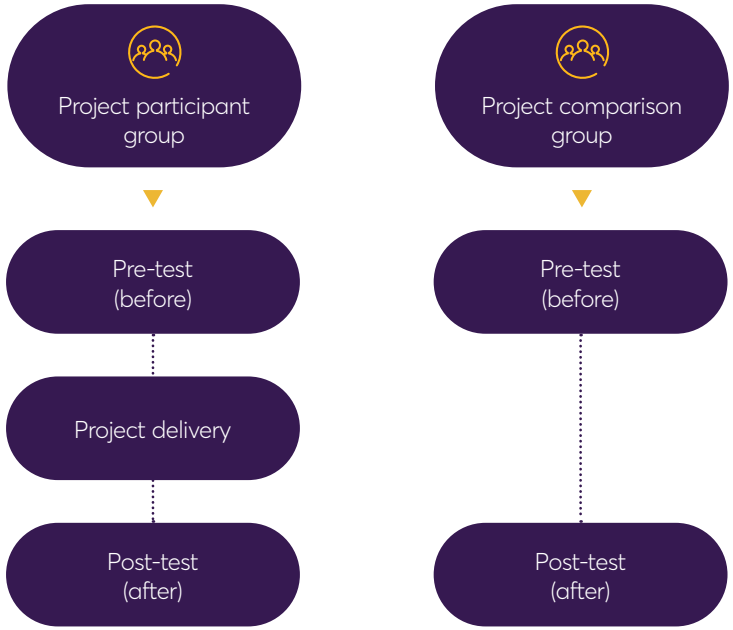
Whilst the July course was being delivered, a national educational campaign about learning online and its benefits took place, including adverts on social media and TV. **This meant that both groups felt more motivated to engage in online learning**. Without the comparison group, it would have been difficult to know how much of the increased motivation of the July learners was due to TechLearn, and how much would have happened anyway.

By looking at the results of the second questionnaire, it was found that those who had completed the July course had greater improvement in motivation to learn online than those that were still waiting to take part in August. This suggests that TechLearn improved learners' motivation over and above what would have happened anyway.

Collecting information on the comparison group

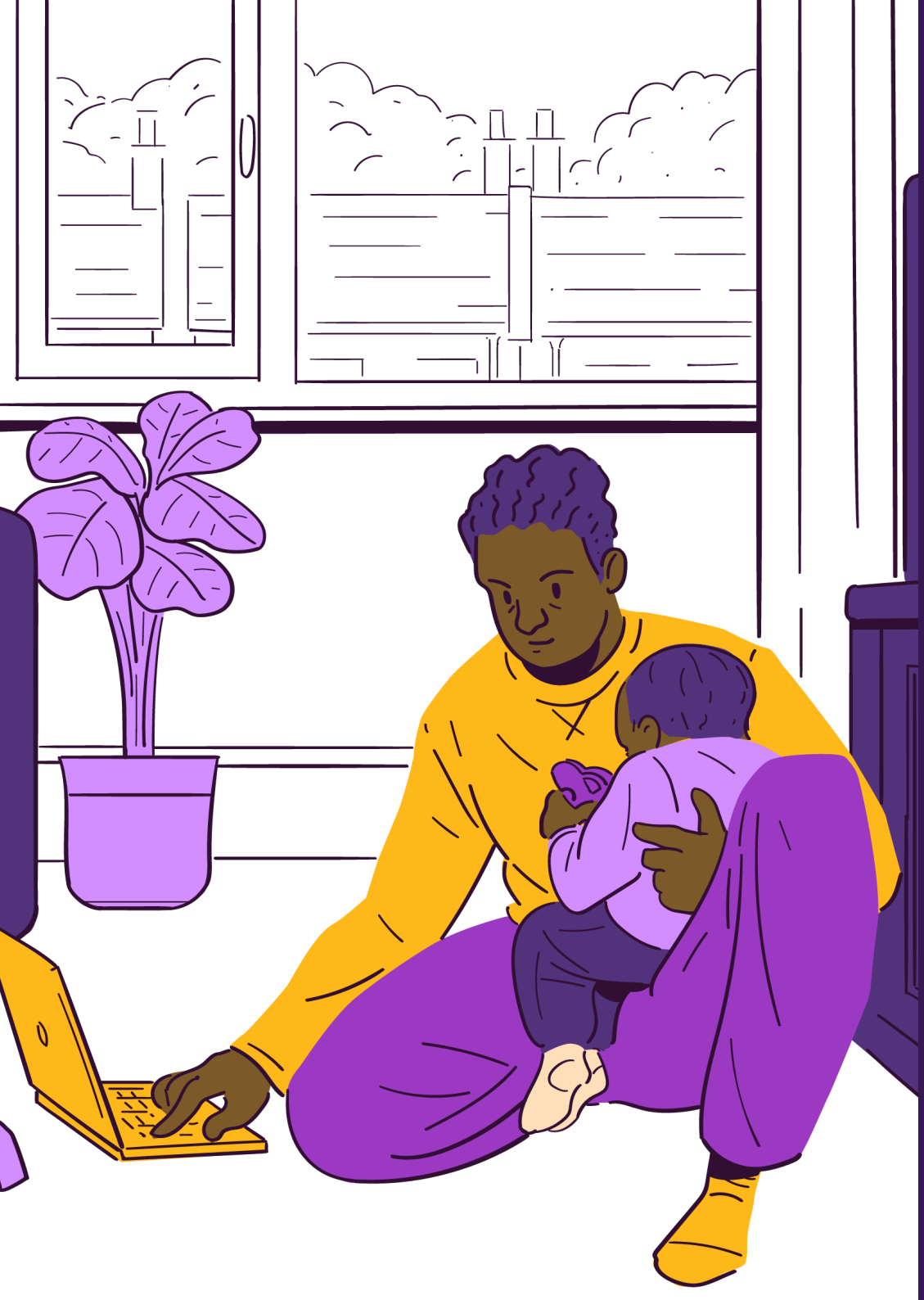
Once you have identified a potential comparison group, you can plan how and when to collect information about the outcomes you are interested in. You should collect the information using the same questionnaires and at the same time (as far as possible) as with the learners engaged with the project.

This figure illustrates the ideal points to ask people to complete questionnaires. If possible, you could also ask people to complete questionnaires again at a later stage to see if the effects of your project are lasting.



Further reading on conducting outcome evaluations

- Innovation Growth Lab's Experimentation Toolkit
- The Education Endowment Foundation: 'Measuring impact: from monitoring to evaluation'
- UNICEF's video on outcome evaluations
- Dera's outcome evaluation guidance and practical examples
- The Experimenter's Inventory from Alliance for Useful Evidence



Ethical considerations for your evaluation

Ethical Considerations

As an evaluator you have a responsibility to work ethically. This is important so that the participants in your research are protected from undue harm. Consider the following points when designing and undertaking your evaluation:

Voluntary participation: Participants (learners, delivery staff, other stakeholders) must be given the choice to take part in the evaluation (i.e. answer questionnaires or taking part in interviews and discussion groups) and should be allowed to withdraw their involvement at any time. Participants should not feel pressured to answer in a certain way.

Informed consent: You should explain clearly the purpose of collecting the information you need for the evaluation, so participants can make an informed choice about whether they are happy to take part.

Safeguarding vulnerable adults: Anyone undertaking research with vulnerable adults must have an up-to-date DBS check.

Confidentiality: You should reassure participants that all information they share will be reported anonymously to protect their privacy and ensure there are processes in place to protect personal information. For example, anonymising quotes used in reporting.

Preventing harm to participants: It is important to avoid causing any undue harm to participants taking part in your evaluation. For example, questionnaires should try not include any questions that may upset participants. In situations where participants do become upset, the project must have safeguarding provisions and processes in place to signpost the participant to someone who can help.

Further reading on ethical considerations

- The Social Research Association ethical guidance
- The Economic and Social Research Council's website

Risks

It is important to consider and keep a record of any potential issues or risks to your organisation, the project and participants when delivering your evaluation. It is important to build in regular (i.e. bi-weekly) reviews of your risks as part of your project delivery. You should identify:

- **What each risk is**. For example, the evaluation is not able to recruit learners.
- **How you will mitigate against each risk**. For example, careful and collaborative planning of the evaluation, onboarding gatekeepers as early as possible in the evaluation and developing a range of recruitment and engagement approaches well suited to the target group.
- **The risk rating** of high, medium or low depending on the likelihood of the risk happening and the impact if it did happen. The risk ratings should be monitored and updated as necessary throughout the lifetime of the evaluation.

When recording the anticipated risks, consider the following areas in which they may occur:

- Timing and project management
- Engagement with research participants / accessing data
- Staff capacity and absence
- Safeguarding sensitive data and GDPR

Top tips on developing key findings and lessons learned

Analysis and reporting on what works

There are a variety of ways to present your findings and you should ensure that analysis is approached in a systematic and transparent way to provide credibility. This section includes a range of advice on how to approach the analysis and reporting stage of your evaluation.

Quantitative analysis

Information gathered that is numerical, or that can be counted, requires quantitative analysis. Refer to the Toolkit Question Sets section for more in-depth guidance about how to conduct quantitative analysis. In your evaluation, you might want to analyse the following:

- Information collected about learners to present **findings on outputs** such as rates of engagement and rates of completion.
- Information collected through pre and post questionnaires to present **findings on outcomes**. For example, the number of learners who reported increased motivation to learn or increased ability in basic skills.

Further reading on quantitative analysis

- NCVO provides clear and easy to read information on how to conduct quantitative analysis
- Public Health England provides clear information on when and how to conduct quantitative analysis for an evaluation

Qualitative analysis

Analysing information or data gathered through qualitative methods (interviews and focus groups) is called qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis can be conducted in different ways, but a good approach is as follows:

1. Read through interview notes or transcripts and familiarise yourself with the data you have collected.

2. Use the outcomes identified in your Theory of Change to create a thematic analysis grid, which will help you organise the data into themes or groups.

3. Go through each set of notes or transcript thoroughly to identify information that fits into the themes you have created and populate your grid.

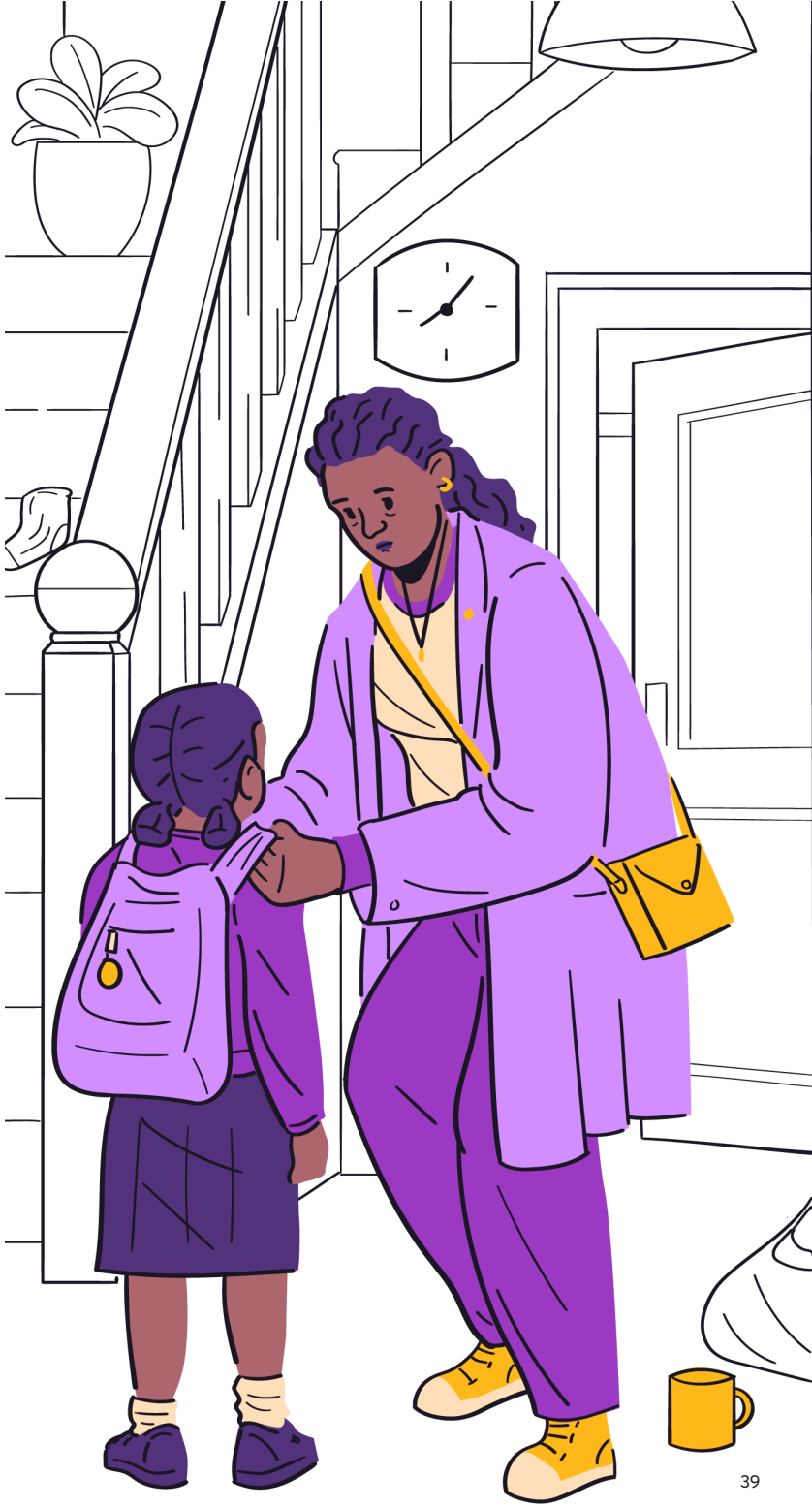
4. As you do this, unexpected themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly – may emerge. You can add these to your analysis grid.

In this way, qualitative analysis goes beyond merely summarising data, to drawing out underlying themes that provide in-depth insight into an issue.

Further reading on thematic qualitative analysis

- Public Health England provides clear information on when and how to conduct thematic analysis

- NCVO provides useful information on the stages of qualitative thematic analysis



How to report findings

Reporting enables us to draw out lessons learned about 'what works' about the design and delivery of your intervention (i.e. mechanisms for learning), and 'what works' to generate positive outcomes for learners. We can then share these lessons with external audiences to generate knowledge and learning.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to reporting your findings. The following are key elements to a good quality report:

- Using a clear style and writing in plain English – you can find advice in 'How to write reports in Plain English', which you can download from the Plain English Campaign website.
- Writing a clear and concise executive summary that presents the key findings from the evaluation
- Describing what is being evaluated and why
- Setting out the research questions
- Explaining the steps and activities used to answer the questions
- Presenting findings supported by credible evidence in response to the questions
- Presenting data in an unbiased, clear way
- Acknowledging any limitations of the evaluation
- Drawing conclusions and lessons learned about findings
- Proposing concrete and usable recommendations derived from conclusions and lessons learned
- Tailoring report findings to the needs of different audiences - demonstrating how the findings relate to specific audiences' areas of interest can improve the usability of findings. If you have comms or marketing professionals working in your organisation, get them involved early in developing approaches to disseminating findings and translating these for different audiences.

Depending on the selection of questions included in your questionnaire, most of your findings are likely to be in the form of:

- Participant demographic information
- The number of people who agree or disagree[3] with statements
- Overall scores for specific measures
- The number of people completing certain outcomes[4]

[3] Or equivalents, such as having confidence or not having confidence in a statement
[4] For example, the number completing the course or participating in additional courses

When reporting findings, it will normally be useful to report both numbers and percentages; although you should only use percentages if you have at least 100 results. For example, you could calculate:

- The percentage of participants who agree or strongly agree with a statement, the percentage who are neutral and the percentage who disagree or strongly disagree. For an example of what this could look like, see Table 1 (page 42).
- The percentage of people who complete an outcome (the completion rate). For an example of what this could look like, see Table 2 (page 42).
- The percentage of people with each overall score (or the percentage in different score ranges). For an example of what this could look like, see Table 3 (page 42).
- Where you have overall scores, it may also be useful to calculate average scores across your participants.

You should consider breaking down findings by participant characteristics. This will enable you to analyse whether your project has a different impact for different groups. For example, you could calculate the completion rate per age group, or the percentage of each gender who agree or disagree with a statement (for an example of how this could be presented, see Table 2 - page 42). However, before doing so you should ensure that no participants are identifiable through such breakdowns – for example, if you only have a small number of people in a particular category. In addition, you should be aware that breakdowns may not be reliable if you only have a small sample size. You should consider presenting your findings with a mixture of tables and charts. Tables can be a useful way to summarise detailed information, whereas charts can help readers to quickly engage with key findings. If using pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, consider using charts to display before and after findings side-by-side. For examples of the types of charts you could use, see Figures 1 and 2 (page 43).

How to display data for reports

Table 1: Learning anxiety questions

Statement	Agree/strongly agree (%)	Neutral	Disagree/strongly disagree (%)
I do not consider myself ready to learn something new	30%	20%	50%
I have no desire to participate in learning	22%	18%	60%
I don't enjoy learning	35%	12%	53%
The thought of learning something new makes me anxious	20%	20%	60%
I am often anxious when learning	25%	50%	25%

Base: all participants, n = 200

Table 2: Completion rate by age group

Age group	Completion rate
25-34	57%
35-44	69%
45-54	50%
55-65	52%

Base: all participants, n = 300

Table 3: Range of overall attitude to learning score

Score	Percentage of participants
9-17	20%
18-26	45%
27-35	35%

Base: all participants, n = 300

How to display data for reports - continued

Figure 1: Continuing my education would make me feel better about myself

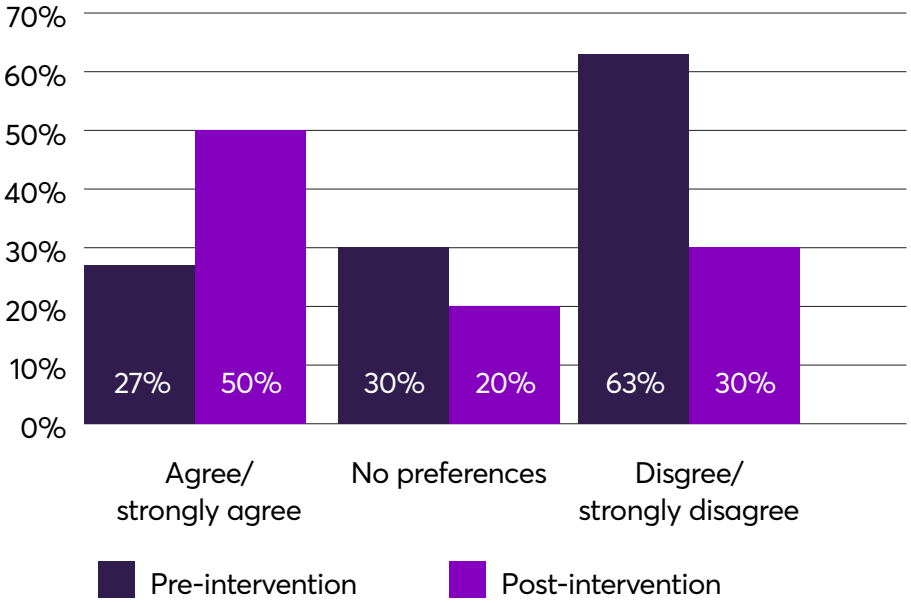
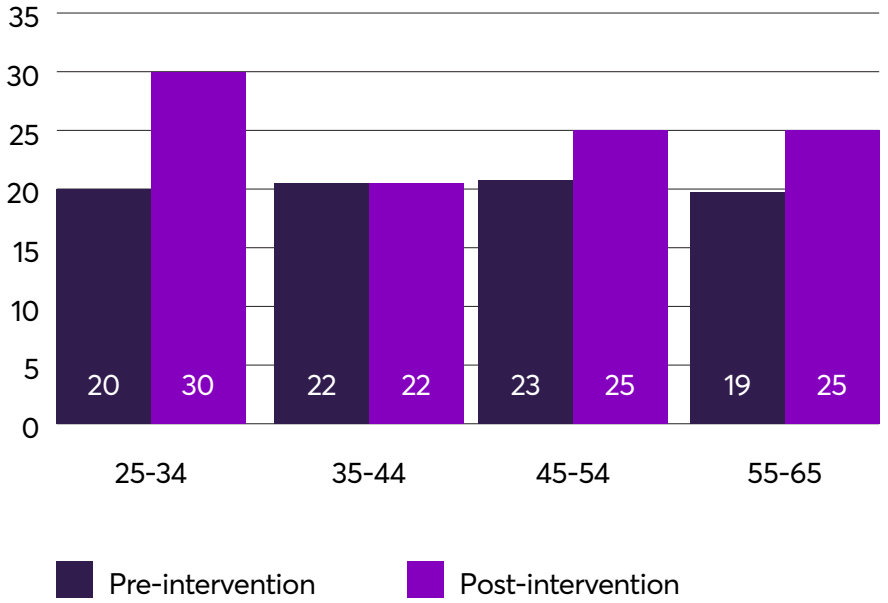


Figure 2: Self-control and belief - average score by age group



Further reading on reporting

- Better Evaluation's guide to presenting data
- NCVO guidance on how to write an evaluation report

Question Bank Tool

Question bank tool

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Shared outcomes table 47
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Toolkit questions set

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Career commitment questions 65
User engagement questions 66
Participation in learning questions 67
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Digital skills questions 69
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How to use this question bank

This question bank has been developed in order to help you identify questions focused on motivation to learn and career adaptability, which can be included in participant questionnaires, as part of your impact evaluation.

Most of the questions included in the toolkit have been validated. This means that they have been tested to ensure that they robustly and accurately measure their intended outcomes. For a number of outcomes where validated tools could not be identified, bespoke questions have been developed by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) for the question bank.

The outcomes we have identified as part of the question bank are not an exhaustive list of all changes you will expect to see from your project. Therefore you may wish to develop bespoke questions and use qualitative approaches to support you to identify if outcomes have been realised.

The questions you select from the question bank should be integrated into a questionnaire for participants to complete. Including questions pre- and post-intervention allows you to identify a baseline for participants, in order to assess changes that have occurred after completing your project.

How to select questions from the question bank

The following table identifies the most common shared outcomes based on learner motivation and career adaptability, with links to questions designed to measure them. Outcomes are grouped under **attitudinal**, **behavioural** and **skills-based** themes.

- **Attitudinal** outcomes relate to thoughts, feelings, perceptions and mindsets.
- **Behavioural** outcomes relate to actions, activities and strategies.
- **Skills** outcomes relate to abilities in different areas.

You should consider which of the shared outcomes align with what your project may achieve, as identified in your Theory of Change.

Once identified, most questions in the toolkit can be copied and pasted directly into a participant questionnaire. Since not all outcomes can be measured by survey questions, we have also recommended how some outcomes could be collected as part of your standard participant data collection / monitoring information.

Evidence collection for your outcomes can also be taken from existing data that you will be monitoring as part of the project, such as course completion rates. Combining this 'hard' outcomes data with self-reported data from surveys can help to provide a fuller picture of the impact of your project, enabling a comparison between participants' activities, performance and perceptions.

Participant Characteristics

The question bank also includes a set of questions to capture participant demographic information. Including these in your questionnaire will enable you to analyse whether your project has a different impact for different groups.

Shared outcomes tables

Attitudinal	Behavioural	Skills
Increase in confidence. This includes confidence in everyday life and confidence in gaining employment **Questions:** • Confidence in gaining employment questions • Self-control and belief questions	**High course completion rates** **Questions:** • Course completion measure	**Digital skills** **Questions:** • Digital skills questions
Improvements to attitudes and motivation towards learning. This includes reduced anxiety around learning and an increased readiness to learn. **Questions:** • Attitudes towards learning questions • Readiness to learn questions • Learning anxiety questions	**Improvements to career adaptability behaviours.** This includes both resilience in the labour market (e.g. when applying for jobs, also known as career commitment) and being open to exploring career options (career curiosity). **Questions:** • Career adaptability questions • Career commitment questions	**Employability skills.** For example, leadership, personal development and team working. **Questions:** • Employability skills questions
Improvements to career adaptability attitudes. This includes motivation for adapting to changes (career control) and perception of transferable skills (career confidence) **Questions:** • Career adaptability questions • Self-control and belief questions	**High rate of engagement with the course.** **Questions:** • User engagement questions	
Increased confidence to engage with digital learning. **Questions:** • Confidence in digital learning measure	**Increased participation in learning.** This includes, for example, progression onto a further learning course. **Questions:** • Participation in learning questions	
Improved emotional wellbeing. This includes both mental and physical wellbeing. **Questions:** • Mental wellbeing questions • Wellbeing and life satisfaction questions	**High rate of career progression.** This includes, for example, progressing into another job, increased salary, becoming more secure at work or achieving specific career goals. **Questions:** • Progression in employment questions	

Further guidance on how to use questions

Use of partial question sets

You may wish to use only part of a set of questions in your questionnaire, for example in order to cut down its length or if you consider certain questions to be inappropriate for your project.

In this situation, we would still recommend that you use the full set of questions per outcome as outlined in the question bank. If questions are cut, there is a risk that certain aspects of an outcome will not be measured.

Length of questionnaire

We recommend a maximum length of 15 minutes (dependent on the length of participant involvement in your project). Before using your questionnaire with participants, it is important to test it for both accuracy and length. You can do this by asking members of your team and wider organisation to complete it, record the length of time taken to do so and to feed back any issues. You should also check their responses to make sure it is being filled out correctly. To keep the questionnaire to a maximum of 15 minutes, you may need to prioritise which outcomes you measure via the questionnaire and explore alternative methods (such as qualitative research) to measure other outcomes.

Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

We recommend that you ask participants to complete both pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. Including the same questions before and after your intervention allows you to identify a baseline for participants, in order to assess changes that have occurred after completing your project. It is important for pre- and post-intervention questionnaires to be completed by the same participants. All questions in this toolkit are suitable for use in pre- and post-intervention questionnaires unless otherwise stated.

Introductory text

Your questionnaire should contain some introductory text to explain to participants the information you are collecting and why you are doing so. You should also explain any specific instructions for completing the questionnaire and reassure participants about confidentiality. Some example introductory text is given below.

We are asking everyone who is taking part in our programme to complete a short survey. We would like to ask you some questions to help us to understand how taking part in the programme has made a difference to you. The survey contains questions about different aspects of your work, life and skills to see where you may have experienced benefits or changes from taking part.

Your involvement in this survey is entirely voluntary/optional, but we would very much appreciate your input.

The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete, and should be completed in one sitting. We will use your response to explore and demonstrate the impact of our work. Your response will remain confidential, with any findings shared or published from this survey remaining strictly anonymous.

Participant Characteristics

If you don't already collect participant demographic information, we strongly suggest including a set of questions in your questionnaire to do so. This will enable you to analyse whether your project has a different impact for different groups.

The following questions are based on categories used by the Office for National Statistics and represent the cohort for the CareerTech Challenge Fund. You do not need to use all of them if not applicable to your participant group (for example, if all of your participants are in the same sector or age group). You can also modify categories if more appropriate for your participant group.

Characteristic	Question
Age	What age were you on your last birthday? ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-65
Gender	What is your sex? ☐ Male ☐ Female
Ethnicity	What is your ethnic group? **White** ☐ English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British ☐ Irish ☐ Gypsy or Irish Traveller ☐ Any other White background **Mixed/multiple ethnic groups** ☐ White and Black Caribbean ☐ White and Black African ☐ White and Asian ☐ Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background **Asian/ Asian British** ☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Chinese ☐ Any other Asian background **Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British** ☐ African ☐ Caribbean ☐ Any other Black/ African/ Caribbean background **Other ethnic group** ☐ Arab ☐ Any other ethnic group
Employment type	Would you consider yourself to be ☐ Employed ☐ Self-employed
Employment sector	What sector would you consider your employer to be in? ☐ Agriculture, forestry & fishing ☐ Mining, energy & water supply ☐ Manufacturing ☐ Construction ☐ Wholesale, retail & repair of motor vehicles ☐ Transportation & storage ☐ Accommodation & food services ☐ Information & communication ☐ Financial & insurance activities ☐ Real estate activities ☐ Professional, scientific & technical activities ☐ Administrative & support service activities ☐ Public admin & defence; social security ☐ Education ☐ Human health & social work activities ☐ Other services
Qualifications	What is your highest qualification level? ☐ Higher education below degree level ☐ A level or equivalent ☐ Trade apprenticeship or vocational qualification ☐ GCSE grades A-C or equivalent ☐ Other qualifications ☐ No qualifications

Toolkit Question Sets

Confidence in gaining employment questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to increase participants' confidence, particularly their confidence in gaining employment. The questions have been previously developed by L&W[5], and have been used in several national government surveys.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all six questions, in order to cover all aspects of confidence in gaining employment.

For the first four questions, choosing 'agree' or 'strongly agree' shows a higher level of confidence. This is also shown by choosing 'confident' or 'completely confident' for the last two questions.

To analyse the results of the first four questions, you can combine separately for each question the number of participants who agreed/strongly agreed, disagreed/strongly disagreed or had no preference.

To analyse the results of the last two questions, you can combine separately for each question the number of participants who were confident/completely confident, not confident/not at all confident or didn't know.

Please select how much you agree, or how confident you are, with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No preference	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Having almost any type of paid work is better than not working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The thought of being in paid work is better than not working	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am confident that I can find a job that suits me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would be a happier, more fulfilled person if I was in paid work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Not at all confident	**Not confident**	**Confident**	**Completely confident**	**Don't Know**
You can do well in job interviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
You can cope with rejections and knock backs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[5] Social Metrics Report

Self-control and belief questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to increase participants' confidence. The questions were developed by Jerusalem & Schwarzer[6], and measure self-control and belief – a key component of confidence.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all 10 questions, in order to cover all aspects of self-control and belief. For each question, deciding that the statement is more true indicates a higher level of self-control and belief. To analyse the results, assign a 1 to each answer of 'not at all true', a 2 to each 'hardly true', a 3 to each 'moderately true' and a 4 to each 'exactly true'. Add up the total to generate an overall score for each participant. The higher the score, the higher the overall level of self-control and belief.

Please select how true you consider each statement to be for you.

	Not at all true	Hardly true	Moderately true	Extactly true
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	☐	☐	☐	☐
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	☐	☐	☐	☐

[6] Questions are from the General Self-Efficacy Scale, available here

Attitudes towards learning questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' attitudes and motivations to learning. These questions were developed by Blunt & Yang[7], and measure attitudes to adult learning.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all nine questions, in order to cover all aspects of attitudes to adult learning. For the first four questions, choosing 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' shows a more positive attitude towards adult learning. For the last five questions, a more positive attitude is shown by choosing 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. To analyse the results, you can combine separately for each question the number of participants who agreed/strongly agreed, disagreed/strongly disagreed or had no preference.

An overall score for each participant can also be calculated. To do this, assign a number to each answer. For the first four questions, assign a 1 to 'strongly agree', a 2 to 'agree', a 3 to 'no preference', a 4 to 'disagree' and a 5 to 'strongly disagree'. For the last five questions, reverse this by assigning a 5 to 'strongly agree', a 4 to 'agree', a 3 to 'no preference', a 2 to 'disagree' and a 1 to 'strongly disagree'. Add up the total score for each participant. The higher the score, the more positive the overall attitude to adult learning.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No preference	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Adult education is mostly for people with little else to do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I dislike studying.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Successful people do not need continuing education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I do not like teachers and classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Money spent on continuing education for employees is money well spent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Continuing my education would make me feel better about myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy educational activities that allow me to learn with others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Continuing education is an important way to help people cope with changes in their lives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Continuing education helps people make better use of their lives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[7] Questions are from the Revised Adult Attitudes Toward Adult and Continuing Education Scale, available here.

Readiness to learn questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' attitudes and motivations to learning. They are included in the large-scale international PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) survey[8], and measure motivation and readiness to learn.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all six questions, in order to cover all aspects of readiness to learn.

For each question, agreeing with the statement to a higher extent indicates a greater readiness to learn.

To analyse the results, assign a 1 to each answer of 'not at all', a 2 to each 'very little', a 3 to each 'to some extent', a 4 to each 'to a high extent' and a 5 to each 'to a very high extent'. Add up the total to generate an overall readiness to learn score for each participant. The higher the score, the higher the overall readiness to learn.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	To a high extent	To a very high extent
When I hear or read about new ideas, I try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like learning new things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I come across something new, I try to relate it to what I already know.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to get to the bottom of difficult things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to figure out how different ideas fit together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I don't understand something, I look for additional information to make it clearer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[8] Questions are from the Readiness to Learn Scale, available here

Learning anxiety questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' attitudes and motivations to learning, particularly in relation to learning anxiety and reluctance to learn. This is a bespoke set of questions developed by L&W.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all five questions, in order to cover all aspects of learning anxiety and reluctance.

For each question, a more positive attitude is shown by choosing 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.

To analyse the results, you can combine separately for each question the number of participants who agreed/strongly agreed, disagreed/strongly disagreed or had no preference.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No preference	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I do not consider myself ready to learn something new	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have no desire to participate in learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I don't enjoy learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The thought of learning something new makes me anxious	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am often anxious when learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Career adaptability questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions are likely to be useful to most projects, as they measure career adaptability. The questions were developed by Savickas & Porfeli[9], and include four sets of questions (sub-scales) which measure career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. The questions contain four sub-scales. The first six questions measure career concern, the second six career control, the third six career curiosity and the fourth six career confidence.

It is not necessary to include all four sub-scales in your questionnaire, only those which are relevant to your project. If you are including a sub-scale in your questionnaire, you must include all six questions which make it up.

Each sub-scale should be analysed separately. For each, assign a 5 to 'strongest', a 4 to 'very strong', a 3 to 'strong', a 2 to 'somewhat strong' and a 1 to 'not strong'. Add up the total to generate an overall score for each sub-scale for each participant. The higher the score, the higher the career adaptability.

[9] Questions are from the Career Adaptability Scale, available here

Different people use different strengths to build their careers. No one is good at everything, each of us emphasises some strengths more than others. Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities using the scale below.

	Strongest	Very strong	Strong	Somewhat strong	Not strong
Career concern					
Thinking about what my future will be like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Realising that today's choices shape my future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparing for the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Becoming aware of the educational and vocational choices that I must make	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning how to achieve my goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerned about my career	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career control					
Keeping upbeat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making decisions by myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking responsibility for my actions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sticking up for my beliefs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Counting on myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doing what's right for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Career adaptability questions continued

	Strongest	Very strong	Strong	Somewhat strong	Not strong
Career curiosity					
Exploring my surroundings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Looking for opportunities to grow as a person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Investigating options before making a choice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Observing different ways of doing things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Probing deeply into questions I have	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Becoming curious about new opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career confidence					
Performing tasks efficiently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking care to do things well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning new skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working up to my ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overcoming obstacles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Solving problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Short-form career adaptability questions

If you need to reduce the length of your questionnaire, you may wish to use the short-form of the career adaptability questions. These have not been as extensively tested as the long version, but have been found to give similar results. Questions can be included in your questionnaire and analysed in the same way as the long version. Your evaluation manager will be able to advise on which set of questions is best for your questionnaire.

	Strongest	Very strong	Strong	Somewhat strong	Not strong
Career concern					
Thinking about what my future will be like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparing for the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Becoming aware of the educational and vocational choices that I must make	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career control					
Making decisions by myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking responsibility for my actions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Counting on myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career curiosity					
Looking for opportunities to grow as a person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Investigating options before making a choice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Observing different ways of doing things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career confidence					
Taking care to do things well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning new skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working up to my ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Confidence in digital learning measure

When should you use this measure?

This measure may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' confidence in engaging with digital learning. This measure contains two parts. Firstly, a bespoke set of participant questions developed by L&W. Secondly, some suggestions on proxy outcomes that can be directly measured.

In addition to these questions, you should consider measuring participants' attendance on the course, or engagement with course materials or resources. For example, it may be useful to record attendance rates at each session of the course, or the number of resources participants access. In combination with results from the questionnaire, high levels of attendance or engagement with course materials can help you to evidence confidence in digital learning.

How to use this measure

The initial five questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all five questions, in order to cover all aspects of confidence in digital learning. For each of the initial five questions, a higher level of confidence is shown by choosing 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. Increased levels of attendance and engagement are good proxy measures of increased confidence with digital learning. To analyse the results of the initial five questions, you can combine separately for each question the number of participants who agreed/strongly agreed, disagreed/strongly disagreed or had no preference.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No preference	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I know how to find appropriate digital learning courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to access and use digital learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy learning digitally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am likely to continue using digital learning in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am likely to increase my use of digital learning in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Mental wellbeing questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' emotional wellbeing. The questions are well established[10], and used in a variety of settings.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all seven questions, in order to cover all aspects of mental health and wellbeing.

For each question, considering the statement to be true for more of the time indicates a greater level of mental health and wellbeing.

To analyse the results, assign a 1 to each answer of 'none of the time', a 2 to each 'rarely', a 3 to each 'some of the time', a 4 to each 'often' and a 5 to each 'all of the time'. Add up the total to generate an overall score for each participant.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been feeling useful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been feeling relaxed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been dealing with problems well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been thinking clearly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been feeling close to other people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[10] Questions are from the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, and are available here

Wellbeing and life satisfaction questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' emotional wellbeing. The questions have been developed by the Office for National Statistics[11], and are used in national surveys to measure personal wellbeing and life satisfaction.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. It is important to include all four questions, in order to cover all aspects of personal wellbeing.

For each question, the higher the score chosen the higher the level of personal wellbeing.

To analyse the results, simply record each participant's score for each question.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Not at all									Completely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
On a scale where 0 is "not at all anxious" and 10 is "completely anxious", overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[11] Questions are from ONS Wellbeing questions, and are available here

Course completion measure

When should you use this measure?

This measure may be useful if your project aims include course completion or drop-out rates.

Specific data to collect will be dependent on how your project is set up. You may wish to record some or all of the following:

- The number of people who complete the course
- The number of people who withdraw from the course
- The number of people who attend each session
- The number of people who use each resource
- The length of time taken to complete the course

How to use this measure

It is likely that analysis will involve the calculation of percentages of participants e.g. the percentage of participants who have completed the course.

Career commitment questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve participants' career commitment as an aspect of their career adaptability. This is a bespoke set of questions developed by L&W.

How to use these questions

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. If possible, the final three questions should only be asked of those who answer 'yes' in the first question. If this is not possible, data should only be included in the analysis if the first answer is yes.

To analyse the results, simply record each participant's response for each question.

Please answer the following

Are you currently considering changing jobs	☐ Yes	☐ No
In the last X weeks/months, roughly how many job searches have you done?		
In the last X weeks/months, roughly how many job applications have you submitted?		
Have you been offered a new job in the last X weeks/months?	☐ Yes	☐ No

User engagement questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims include learner engagement. This is a bespoke set of questions developed by L&W. The questions are in two parts. Firstly, a set of statements to which participants are asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with. Secondly, a set of open-ended questions to gain participants' wider views.

It is important to note that these questions should only be asked in a post-intervention questionnaire. Wording can be altered to increase relevance to your project.

How to use these questions

All questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire.

For each of the initial five questions, a higher level of engagement is shown by choosing 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

To analyse the results of the initial five questions, you can combine separately for each question the number of participants who agreed/strongly agreed, disagreed/strongly disagreed or had no preference.

The last two questions are open-ended. To analyse, responses should be read and grouped into different themes.

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	To a high extent	To a very high extent
I have enjoyed using the digital learning tool	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would like to use a similar digital learning tool in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The project content is relevant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have enjoyed learning the project content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would like to learn about similar project content in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please describe your favourite part of the project					
Please describe anything that made it difficult to participate in the project					

Participation in learning questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims include participation in learning. This is a bespoke set of questions developed by L&W. The questions are in two parts. Firstly, a set of questions asking about participants' experience of learning after joining the project. Secondly, an open-ended question to gain further detail.

It is important to note that these questions should only be asked in a post-intervention questionnaire.

How to use these questions

All questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire.

To analyse the results of the first four questions, simply record each participant's response for each question. The last question is open-ended. To analyse, responses should be read and grouped into different themes.

After joining the project, have you:

Considered participating in any additional learning activities	☐ Yes	☐ No
Looked for information about additional learning activities	☐ Yes	☐ No
Enrolled on any additional learning activities	☐ Yes	☐ No
Been in contact with any learning providers	☐ Yes	☐ No
If you have answered yes to any of the above, please give further details		

Progression in employment questions

When should you use these questions?

These questions may be useful if your project aims include employment progression. This is a bespoke set of questions developed by L&W. The questions are in two parts. Firstly, a set of questions asking about participants' experience of employment progression after joining the project. Secondly, an open-ended question to gain further detail.

It is important to note that these questions should only be asked in a post-questionnaire.

How to use these questions

All questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire.

To analyse the results of the first six questions, simply record each participant's response for each question. The last question is open-ended. To analyse, responses should be read and grouped into different themes.

After joining the project, have you:

Felt more secure in your current job	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Achieved any specific career goals	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Taken on more responsibilities at work	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Gained a promotion at work	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Moved into a new job at the same level in your current sector	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Moved into a better paid or more highly skilled job in your current sector	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Moved into a new job at the same level in a different sector	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know
Moved into a better paid or more highly skilled job in a different sector	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Don't Know

Digital skills questions

When should you use this measure?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve digital skills. The questions were developed by LSE[12], and measure digital skills across five different areas: operational, information navigation, social, creative and mobile.

How to use this measure

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. The questions cover five areas of digital skills. The first five questions measure operational skills, the second five information navigation skills, the third five social skills, the fourth five creative skills and the final three questions mobile skills.

For all but the second set of five questions (information navigation skills), considering the statement to be more true indicates a greater level of digital skills. For information navigation skills the reverse is the case.

It is not necessary to include all five areas in your questionnaire, only those which are relevant to your project.

If you are including an area in your questionnaire, you must include all questions which make it up.

Each area should be analysed separately. For all but the second set of questions (information navigation skills), assign a 1 to 'not at all true of me', a 2 to 'not very true of me', a 3 to 'neither true nor untrue of me', a 4 to 'mostly true of me' and a 5 to 'very true of me'. For information navigation skills, reverse this and assign a 5 to 'not at all true of me', a 4 to 'not very true of me', a 3 to 'neither true nor untrue of me', a 2 to 'mostly true of me' and a 1 to 'very true of me'.

Calculate the average score for each area for each participant. The higher the score, the greater the level of digital skills.

[12] Questions are from the Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes Measure, and are available here

Please select how true each of the following statements are for you.

	Not at all true of me	Not very true of me	Neither true nor untrue of me	Mostly true of me	Very true of me
Operational skills					
I know how to open downloaded files	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to download/save a photo I found online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to use shortcut keys (e.g. CTRL-C for copy, CTRL-S for save)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to open a new tab in my browser	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to bookmark a website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information navigation skills					
I know which information I should and shouldn't share online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know when I should and shouldn't share information online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am careful to make my comments and behaviours appropriate to the situation I find myself in online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to change who I share content with (e.g. friends, friends of friends or public)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to remove friends from my contact lists	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Digital Skills questions continued

	Not at all true of me	Not very true of me	Neither true nor untrue of me	Mostly true of me	Very true of me
Creative skills					
I know how to create something new from existing online images, music or video	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to make basic changes to the content that others have produced	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to design a website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know which different types of licences apply to online content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would feel confident putting video content I have created online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobile skills					
I know how to install apps on a mobile device	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to download apps to my mobile device	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know how to keep track of the costs of mobile app use	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Employability skills questions

When should you use this measure?

These questions may be useful if your project aims to improve employability skills. The questions were developed by Llinares-Insa. Gonzalez-Navarro et al.[13], and measure employability skills across three different areas: behaviours to protect employment, risks to employment and self-learning in employment.

How to use this measure

These questions can be copied and pasted directly into a questionnaire. The questions cover three areas of employability skills. The first set of questions cover behaviours to protect employment, the second risks to employment and the third self-learning in employment.

For the first and third set of questions (behaviours to protect employment and self-learning in employment), choosing 'agree' or 'strongly agree' shows a higher level of employability skills. For the second set of questions (risks in employment), choosing 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' shows a higher level of employability skills.

It is not necessary to include all three areas in your questionnaire, only those which are relevant to your project. If you are including an area in your questionnaire, you must include all questions which make it up.

Each area should be analysed separately. For the first and third set of questions (behaviours to protect employment and self-learning in employment) assign a 5 to 'strongly agree', a 4 to 'agree', a 3 to 'neither agree nor disagree', a 2 to 'disagree' and a 1 to 'strongly disagree'. For the second set of questions (risks to employment), reverse this and assign a 5 to 'strongly disagree', a 4 to 'disagree', a 3 to 'neither agree nor disagree', a 2 to 'agree' and a 1 to 'strongly agree'.

Calculate the average score for each area for each participant. The higher the score, the greater the level of employability skills.

[13] Questions are from the Employability Appraisal Scale, and are available here

Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Behaviours to protect employment					
I achieve what I set out to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are different from other people's	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Once I decide what to do I am focused on it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can design a good plan of action when I have to do something important related to my studies or my work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get involved in what I do, and I am enthusiastic about the tasks I undertake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For me, it is more important to feel good about myself than to receive the approval of others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I consider myself effective in my work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am responsible for my actions and decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am a practical person. I know what I have to do and I do it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can organise my time to make the most of it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am persistent and tenacious. I finish what I start	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I consider myself a person with initiative for beginning tasks, making decisions, or solving problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Employability skills questions continued

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Risks to employment					
I get bored with doing day-to-day activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a tendency to change activities during the day without a specific reason	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I do not persevere when I have to perform a long and difficult task	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a tendency to leave things until the last minute	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I have to do an activity I take a long time to get going	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have problems organising the things I have to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Risks to employment					
When I need to know something at work I usually ask or ask to be taught	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to learn new things about my work even if it's about small details	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I view changes as an opportunity to learn, and not as a difficulty	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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