

Requirements for Evaluating Sciencewise-ERC Projects

Sciencewise-ERC project funding is provided by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It is a condition of funding that projects are independently evaluated, and therefore proposals for delivery should include proposals for independent evaluation. This document provides detail on the aims and objectives for evaluating Sciencewise-ERC projects, as well as some key questions for evaluating public dialogue within Sciencewise-ERC, and some key principles for evaluation that need to be met in all circumstances. However, the ways in which any individual evaluation approaches these aims, objectives and questions and meets the basic principles, is not circumscribed, and innovation and experimentation is encouraged. This reflects that a key part of the Sciencewise-ERC mission is to encourage innovation and experimentation in the design, delivery and evaluation of public dialogue projects.

1. Aims and objectives for evaluating Sciencewise-ERC projects

Aim: The aim of evaluating Sciencewise-ERC projects is to contribute to the overall Sciencewise-ERC aim of creating excellence in public dialogue to inspire and inform better policy making in science and technology.

Objectives:

- Gather and present objective and robust evidence of activities, achievements and impacts to support Sciencewise-ERC work in increasing understanding and awareness of the value of public dialogue.
- Identify lessons from practice to support Sciencewise-ERC work in capacity building across Government, and the development of good practice in public dialogue.

2. The key questions in evaluating Sciencewise-ERC projects

The six key questions for evaluation are:

- has the dialogue met its objectives?

- has the dialogue met standards of good practice (Sciencewise-ERC principles)?
- have those involved been satisfied with the dialogue (value to them)?
- what difference/impact has the dialogue made?
- what was the balance overall of the costs and benefits of the dialogue
- what are the lessons for the future (what worked well and less well, and more widely)?

This will require both audit and learning approaches to evaluation, and the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

It is expected that independent evaluations of the Sciencewise-ERC projects will show whether and how the project has achieved the following:

- **How the purpose and objectives of the project have been met.** This will require a detailed analysis and assessment of activities (process and outputs) against

any stated and implied aims and objectives used to design and deliver the process and any targets set for the project.

- **Quality of process and products.** This will require a detailed description of the project process overall, as well as assessments of its achievements, including activities and products, against the Sciencewise-ERC principles (and others, if appropriate).

Analysis of activities and products is likely to include: descriptions and assessment of the policy context within which the project took place; the numbers and nature of people involved; whether the design was appropriate to the objectives; materials developed for the project; experts used (who and how involved); reports produced at various stages for participants and other audiences; publicity and media activities; opportunities or barriers etc. The analysis should demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of the process in enabling high quality public dialogue, and should include analysis of feedback from participants and others involved (eg experts, commissioners, stakeholders, delivery organisations).

- **Feedback** from all those involved on whether the process worked for them, and the benefits and value to them of taking part of the dialogue. Feedback is likely to be needed from policy makers, public participants, experts and other stakeholders, those commissioning, designing and delivering the dialogue
- **Impacts and influence.** Summarising the impacts and influence of the project (eg impacts on policy, those involved etc), recognising the long term nature of some impacts and the difficulties of showing direct cause and effect in policy decisions.
- **The balance of costs and benefits.** Some broad costs and any negative impacts, both internal staff costs, expenses of planning and running dialogue events (including online), written and published materials and consultancy fees. It will also be useful to consider costs of future policy

development and implementation that may be saved or reduced by undertaking dialogue (eg minimising future conflict), as well as benefits and positive impacts of dialogue for those involved and more widely (eg better policy, and better policy making). It is not expected that a detailed cost benefit analysis should or could be undertaken; but a broad view of the cost effectiveness will be required.

- **Lessons for the future.** These should be based on the findings from the evaluation and should, if possible, cover lessons for future practice, for future evaluations and for the future of public dialogue.

3. Principles for evaluating Sciencewise-ERC projects

It is expected that all evaluations of Sciencewise-ERC projects will conform to the following principles:

- **Starting early:** evaluation needs to be undertaken throughout the design and delivery of the project
- **Clarity:** of the purpose, scope, approach and limits of the evaluation
- **Rigour:** of method used for the evaluation
- **Appropriate level of participation:** of those involved in the process, to the extent appropriate to the evaluation approach
- **Proportionate:** with sufficient resources and in sufficient depth to meet evaluation objectives
- **Transparency:** the evaluation approach and process are explained to all stakeholders, and evaluation findings are published
- **Practicality:** data can be collected, assessed and reported on to budget and within timescale
- **Utility:** the evaluation process and reports of evaluation findings should be in a form that is useful for learning and to provide evidence of what works, impacts, and lessons
- **Independence:** from commissioners, funders, delivery team and participants
- **Credibility:** status / reputation of evaluator and/or evaluation process.