

Audit Commission– Evaluation framework

Preparatory and set-up processes for the programme as a whole

	Success criteria	Indicator	Evidence source
1.	Shared understanding of the pathfinder programme and its aims	<p>Involved parties at all levels are able to articulate the aims of the programme, what they hope to achieve from it and how this will improve outcomes at a local level.</p> <p>Expectations are consistent between involved parties and across regions.</p> <p>Any changes to the approach over time, are communicated clearly and all parties understand why this has happened.</p>	<p>Background information including the pathfinder prospectus; minutes from pathfinder meetings</p> <p>Interviews at all levels – including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Government • Government Offices • Pathfinders – local authorities and their partners • Other stakeholders – LGA / IDeA
2.	Commitment and support for what the programme is trying to achieve	<p>Evidence of a ‘pathfinder spirit’, willingness on all sides to engage in open and exploratory conversations and to treat this as a genuine pathfinder or learning exercise.</p> <p>Local partners articulate genuine ‘buy-in’ to the programme.</p>	Interviews at all levels
3.	Effective programme management in place	<p>Evidence demonstrates and interviews confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear objectives • Clarity about roles, accountabilities, process and progress • Appropriate timetable and resources for overall programme and individual stages 	<p>Programme board terms of reference and minutes of meetings</p> <p>Project plan</p> <p>Progress reports</p>
4.	Clear, consistent and timely information, guidance and support provided throughout the programme	Accessible and effective systems exist for liaison and problem solving – both between government and pathfinders and between the pathfinders themselves.	<p>Interviews at all levels</p> <p>Evidence of regular communication between all parties</p>

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		<p>Central Government and Government Offices can evidence awareness of and response to areas of confusion or uncertainty.</p> <p>Pathfinders confirm that support from government is appropriate and does not include undue interference or over-prescription.</p>	<p>Background information, guidance and advice notes</p> <p>Progress reports, minutes of meetings</p>
5.	Learning shared across all levels throughout the process	<p>There is evidence that the process of setting up the programme and the individual pathfinders takes account of and builds on learning from earlier pilots and previous evaluations in this field.</p> <p>Mechanisms in place and used effectively to take maximum advantage of learning opportunities - all parties are clear of what these are.</p> <p>Learning from the programme is captured in a way which will make it transferable to others and there is evidence that parties are starting to share learning / good practice.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels – including other Government departments, LGA and IDeA</p> <p>Project initiation paperwork; programme board minutes</p> <p>Details of networking arrangements and their outputs – seminars and workshops</p> <p>Web-based guides developed by Defra</p> <p>Links to Rural Excellence programme</p>
6.	The process is replicable	<p>Levels of resources and capacity required are such that the process or aspects of it are replicable in other localities or in future years.</p> <p>Participants in the programme and other stakeholders such as ODPM and LGA support further rollout or mainstreaming of aspects of the pathfinder approach.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels – including stakeholders</p> <p>Project plans</p>

Setting up the individual pathfinders

	Success criteria	Indicator	Evidence source
7.	Business plans / partnerships agreements have been developed in an inclusive way	<p>Government Offices and pathfinders can demonstrate that the set-up processes have included engagement with a range of partners. This engagement enables all partners to understand how the pathfinder arrangements will be planned, consulted on, agreed and delivered.</p> <p>The business plan articulates a shared vision of what can be achieved for the local area, which is supported by partners.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels and across sectors, including, for example – Regional Development Agencies, voluntary and community sector, Natural England confederation, Rural Affairs Forums, private sector</p> <p>Meeting minutes</p> <p>Business plans / partnership agreements</p>
8.	The pathfinder plan includes clear and challenging outcomes and balances local and national priorities	<p>Outcomes are clearly stated and aimed at tackling social and economic disadvantage.</p> <p>There is a joint evidence base and priorities are based on an understanding of local needs.</p> <p>The plan articulates how the outcomes will be delivered and targets are stretching but realistic.</p>	<p>Interviews with local partners</p> <p>Business plan</p> <p>Statistical profiles of the area</p>
9.	The approach provides for new ways of tackling problems	<p>Interviewees are able to describe how they are working (or planning to work) in new or different ways. This is likely to include information about how funding and activity is being aligned and targeted on priorities.</p> <p>Partners demonstrate commitment to doing new or different things.</p> <p>There are protocols and procedures for conflict resolution.</p>	<p>Interviews with Government Offices and local partners</p> <p>Business plans / partnership agreements</p>
10.	The plan identifies links to other initiatives such as	Local partners are clear about links between this programme and LAAs (and LPSAs where appropriate),	Interviews with local partners

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	Local Area Agreements (LAAs), Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets and Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks (RRDF)	<p>and what can be achieved through these processes for the benefit of the local area.</p> <p>The business plan demonstrates how the pathfinder and LAA initiatives will be managed in an integrated and complementary way.</p> <p>The business plan clearly sets out how it will feed into the RRDF process, particularly in terms of identifying best practice and improving service delivery at the regional level.</p>	Business plan
11.	The business plan includes robust performance management arrangements.	<p>The plan includes agreed and measurable outcomes, indicators and targets.</p> <p>Accountabilities, monitoring, review and reporting procedures are clearly stated, including for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a reporting chain to monitor progress against targets – arrangements for identifying when performance is off trajectory – locally agreed steps to correct underperformance <p>Partners confirm their commitment to collecting data / info and holding each other to account.</p>	<p>Business plan and performance management arrangements</p> <p>Interviews with partners and Government Offices</p>
12.	The plan includes identification of the funding streams necessary to deliver agreed outcomes	<p>Research commissioned by Defra supports the pathfinders to understand funding available in their locality.</p> <p>The business plan demonstrates how funding can be brought together and better targeted to meet national and local priorities.</p>	<p>Business plans</p> <p>Funding streams analyses</p>
13.	Effective project management systems are	Responsibilities for decision-making and action are clearly stated and reflected in a partnership	Business plans, partnership agreements and risk logs

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	in place	<p>agreement.</p> <p>Appropriate and relevant levels of risk have been identified along with the steps to mitigate them.</p> <p>The pathfinder partnership has effective governance arrangements in place.</p>	Minutes of project board and project team meetings

Longer terms outcomes and impact

	Pathfinder outcome	Indicator	Evidence source
14.	Clearer targeting to address rural social and economic disadvantage through prioritisation of available resources	<p>All involved parties can explain the difference that the rural pathfinder programme has made in terms of rural delivery.</p> <p>Local partners can demonstrate real examples of targeting resources to meet local need and tackle disadvantage. They are able to demonstrate progress against the milestones and outcomes set in the business plans.</p>	<p>Interviews with local partners and service leads</p> <p>User / customer satisfaction evidence</p> <p>Progress reports to government</p> <p>Performance monitoring reports</p>
15.	Better, more joined-up rural delivery, leading to better outcomes for rural communities	<p>All involved parties can explain the difference that the rural pathfinder programme has made in terms of rural delivery.</p> <p>Local partners are able to demonstrate progress against the milestones and outcomes set in the business plans.</p> <p>Relevant service leads can demonstrate improvements in the delivery of services as a result of this. They can also give examples of where resources released are invested in service delivery.</p>	<p>Interviews with local partners and service leads</p> <p>User / customer satisfaction evidence</p> <p>Progress reports to government</p> <p>Performance monitoring reports</p>

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16.	Greater alignment and co-ordination of socio-economic, rural community and natural environment activity and funding to make service delivery more efficient and simpler for customers and ensure sustainable outcomes	<p>Analysis commissioned by Defra and also that carried out by local partners leads to greater shared knowledge of the funding streams and activities that exist within the local area.</p> <p>Partners can demonstrate how greater co-ordination of this activity and funding has led to less duplication and a reduction in overall costs compared with equivalent current processes.</p>	<p>Funding streams analyses</p> <p>Business plans, budget and resource plans</p> <p>Progress and performance monitoring reports</p> <p>Interviews with partners</p>
17.	Well defined and accountable roles for delivery that are understood by sponsors and customers	<p>Partners can explain how the roles and responsibilities outlined in the business plan are working in practice, and the difference this makes for customers.</p> <p>Interviewees can demonstrate that this has led to improved relationships – for example between government and local areas and between partners.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels and across sectors, including voluntary and community sector and private businesses</p> <p>Customer satisfaction feedback</p>
18.	Clearer linkage to wider public sector investment in rural areas with opportunities to maximise impact through co-ordination and more joined-up working between public agencies and the voluntary and community sectors	<p>Central Government can demonstrate a better understanding of local issues – and local partners confirm that this is the case.</p> <p>All involved parties have a better understanding of other agencies pressures, priorities and development needs.</p> <p>Partners can show how they have rationalised plans and activities.</p> <p>Partners can demonstrate how they have taken opportunities to improve co-ordination and what difference this has made.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels and across sectors</p> <p>Business plans</p> <p>Progress reports</p>
19.	Strengthening of community strategies and	There is evidence that the pathfinders have identified the linkages with existing sub-regional partnerships	Community strategy and other plans

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	other sub-regional plans to provide the direction and local ownership necessary to influence the spending plans of key agencies	<p>Plans are strengthened through a stronger evidence base and a clearer understanding of local need, which enable better prioritisation and targeting.</p> <p>There are clearer links between different plans, for example the pathfinder reflects the priorities in the Community Strategy.</p> <p>Partners confirm local ownership of strategies through greater involvement in planning and decision making.</p>	<p>Interviews with Government Offices and local partners</p> <p>Local plans / strategies</p>
20.	Support in the development of rural-specific (sectoral or geographic) or rural proofed targets that could be incorporated into Local Public Service Agreements	<p>Key indicators and targets are more clearly defined and understood at all levels and reflect rural-specific issues.</p> <p>Information is used more effectively – for example by rationalisation of indicators reporting the same thing in different ways.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels and across sectors</p> <p>Performance monitoring reports</p>
21.	Support in the development of Local Area Agreements that provide greater local flexibilities in funding and reporting for adopting performance improvements in rural delivery	<p>Partners and Government Offices can demonstrate how they have engaged with other bodies involved in the LAA process and how lessons from the pathfinders have informed the development of LAAs.</p> <p>Defra, ODPM and Government Offices work closely to define and address how rural issues fit with LAA aims.</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels and across sectors</p>
22.	Lessons from the pathfinders disseminated effectively across local government and processes in place to achieve mainstreaming of best practice	<p>Learning from the pathfinder process is shared across government and pathfinder / LAA authorities.</p> <p>There is evidence that lessons are being mainstreamed through Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks and within existing sub-regional partnerships (eg RDA local partnerships, LSPs and VCS consortia).</p>	<p>Interviews at all levels and across sectors</p> <p>Rural Excellence programme</p>

