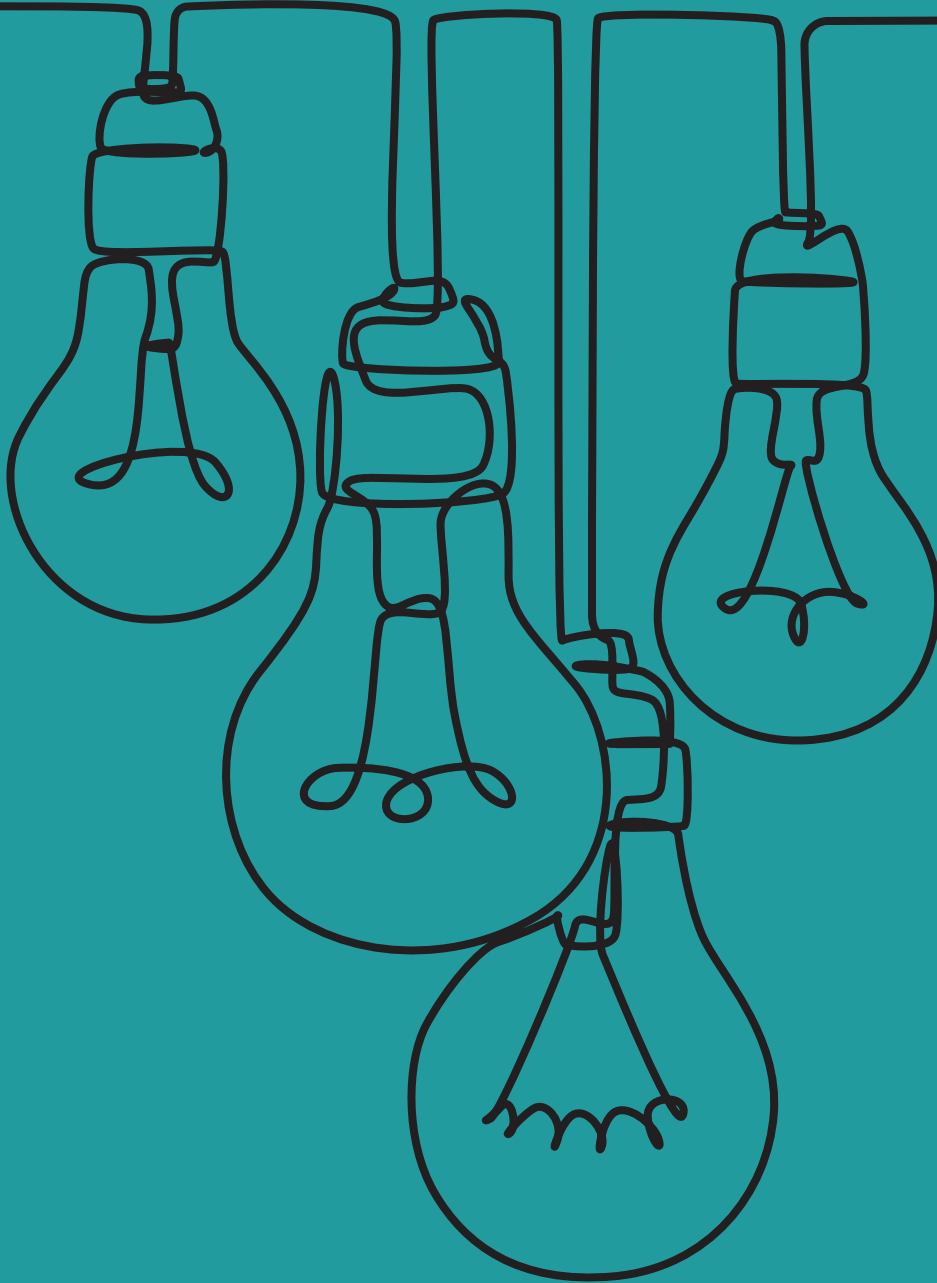




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



**WALES INNOVATES:
CREATING A STRONGER,
FAIRER, GREENER WALES:
SCOPING STUDY,
NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

Summary of the scoping study

Why this study was carried out

Welsh Government commissioned Miller Research to undertake this study to look at how the Innovation Strategy for Wales should be evaluated in future.

The Strategy brings together activity across four mission areas: Education, Economy, Health and Wellbeing, and Climate and Nature. It involves a wide range of organisations working in different ways and contexts. Because of this, Welsh Government wanted to develop an approach to evaluation that is realistic, proportionate and useful, rather than overly complex or burdensome.

This study does not assess performance. Instead, it focuses on how progress can be understood over time, including at Years 3 and 5 of the Strategy.

What the study involved

The study combined research and engagement with those involved in delivering the Strategy. This included:

- reviewing evidence on how innovation strategies are evaluated
- speaking to Welsh Government officials and delivery partners
- workshops to map how the Strategy is expected to lead to change
- reviewing what data is currently available
- developing and comparing different evaluation approaches that could be used for the evaluation.

In simple terms, the study looked at:

- what the Strategy is trying to achieve
- what evidence exists to show progress
- what kind of evaluation approach is practical and useful.

Who was involved

The study was carried out with input from:

- Welsh Government policy and analytical teams
- delivery partners across all four mission areas.

This helped ensure the proposed approach reflects how delivery works in practice, rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all model.

Key findings

The mission areas are at different starting points

The study found clear differences in the amount and type of evidence available across the four mission areas.

In some areas, particularly parts of the Economy mission, there is more data on activity. In others, including Education, parts of Health and Wellbeing, and Climate and Nature, the available evidence is more limited or less consistent.

Across all areas, there is generally more information on what has been done than on what has changed as a result.

This means a single, uniform approach to evaluation would not work well. Different parts of the Strategy will need different levels of evaluation at different times, depending on the maturity of delivery and the strength of the evidence base.

Focus on how the Strategy is helping to create change, not trying to prove it caused it

Innovation is complex and influenced by many different factors. Change often happens over long periods and involves multiple organisations.

Because of this, it is not realistic to show that the Strategy, or any single organisation, directly caused specific outcomes.

Instead, the evaluation should look at how the Strategy is helping to support change, alongside other factors. This means looking at:

- what changes are happening
- how Strategy activity may have helped
- whether the changes we can see match what the Strategy is trying to do.

For those responsible for delivering the Strategy, this means the approach is not based on unrealistic expectations of proving impact on your own.

Early signs of progress are important

In the early stages, progress is likely to be seen in:

- stronger collaboration and partnerships
- better coordination across organisations
- increased confidence and ability to innovate.

These changes are important, but they are not always captured in routine data. This means that case studies, examples from practice, and stakeholder insights will be an important part of the evaluation, alongside progress data.

The recommended approach

The study recommends a balanced approach, referred to as Method 3.

In practice, this means:

- looking across the whole Strategy at a high level to understand overall progress
- using a small set of measures to track early signs of change
- carrying out more detailed work in selected areas where this is most useful and feasible (Economy and Education mission areas)
- using case studies as a light-touch way to understand how change is happening in practice, particularly where data is limited (Health and Wellbeing, and Climate and Nature mission areas).

This approach avoids trying to evaluate everything in detail at once. Instead, it focuses on where evidence is strongest and where deeper understanding is most useful, while allowing the approach to develop over time as data improves.

Why this approach was chosen

Method 3 was recommended because it strikes a balance between insight and practicality.

In simple terms, this approach combines a light-touch, consistent view across the whole Strategy with more detailed work in selected areas. It involves:

- tracking a small set of indicators to understand overall progress
- gathering insight from those involved in delivery to understand what is changing
- using case studies to explore how change is happening in practice
- carrying out more in-depth analysis in a small number of areas where data and delivery are more developed

In practice, this means:

- looking across all four missions to understand whether the Strategy is being implemented as intended and whether early signs of change are emerging
- using a mix of measures, including activity, collaboration and early outcomes, to track direction of travel

- developing a small number of case studies to understand what is happening in real-world settings, including what is working, what is not, and why
- focusing more detailed evaluation in selected missions (particularly Economy and parts of Education), where there is stronger data and clearer delivery pathways

Case studies will follow a broadly consistent structure to allow comparison. At a high level, this includes understanding:

- what activity has taken place and who is involved
- what has changed as a result (for example behaviours, relationships or capability)
- what factors have helped or hindered progress
- how far the changes can reasonably be linked to the Strategy

This allows evaluation to focus on understanding what is working, for whom, and under what conditions, rather than trying to measure everything in detail at once.

It recognises that:

- data is stronger in some areas than others
- delivery arrangements vary across the missions
- some outcomes will take time to appear
- qualitative evidence and local context are important.

This makes it more realistic and manageable for both Welsh Government and delivery partners.

What this means for those responsible for delivering the Innovation Strategy

The study sets out a proposed evaluation approach that was designed to be practical and proportionate.

For those responsible for delivering the Innovation Strategy, this is likely to mean:

- clearer shared principles about what kinds of evidence are likely to be useful for future evaluation
- exploring, over time, whether it would be helpful and proportionate to record some activity or early outcomes more consistently
- contributing to a small number of shared progress indicators over time, with clear ownership for how these are collected, updated and validated
- taking part in some targeted case studies or deeper evaluation work

- a stronger focus on learning and using evidence to improve delivery over time.

It does not mean that all organisations or programmes will be subject to detailed evaluation.

The aim is to focus evaluation effort where it will be most useful, while keeping reporting demands proportionate.

Key next steps

The study identifies 5 recommendations for Welsh Government to put into practice.

1. Agree the overall approach

Confirm which evaluation method in the report will be taken forward, considering the balance between high-level and more detailed work.

2. Improve monitoring and the evidence base

Develop a clearer and more consistent approach to what information is recorded to track progress over time and improve access to existing data where possible. This should also include establishing clear ownership of each indicator and associated data collection process. For each measure, there should be defined responsibility for data collection, updating and validation, with named roles agreed across policy and analytical teams and relevant delivery partners. This will support consistency, accountability and continuity over time, particularly given the cross-cutting nature of the Strategy and involvement of multiple organisations.

3. Put the right support in place

To support the evaluation, ensure there are clear roles, good coordination across policy and analytical teams, and sufficient analytical capacity.

4. Focus early work where it is most feasible and will be most useful

Focus early evaluation activity on filling key evidence gaps, developing programme-level insight, and using targeted work such as case studies to support early learning and improvements to delivery.

5. Join up existing evidence

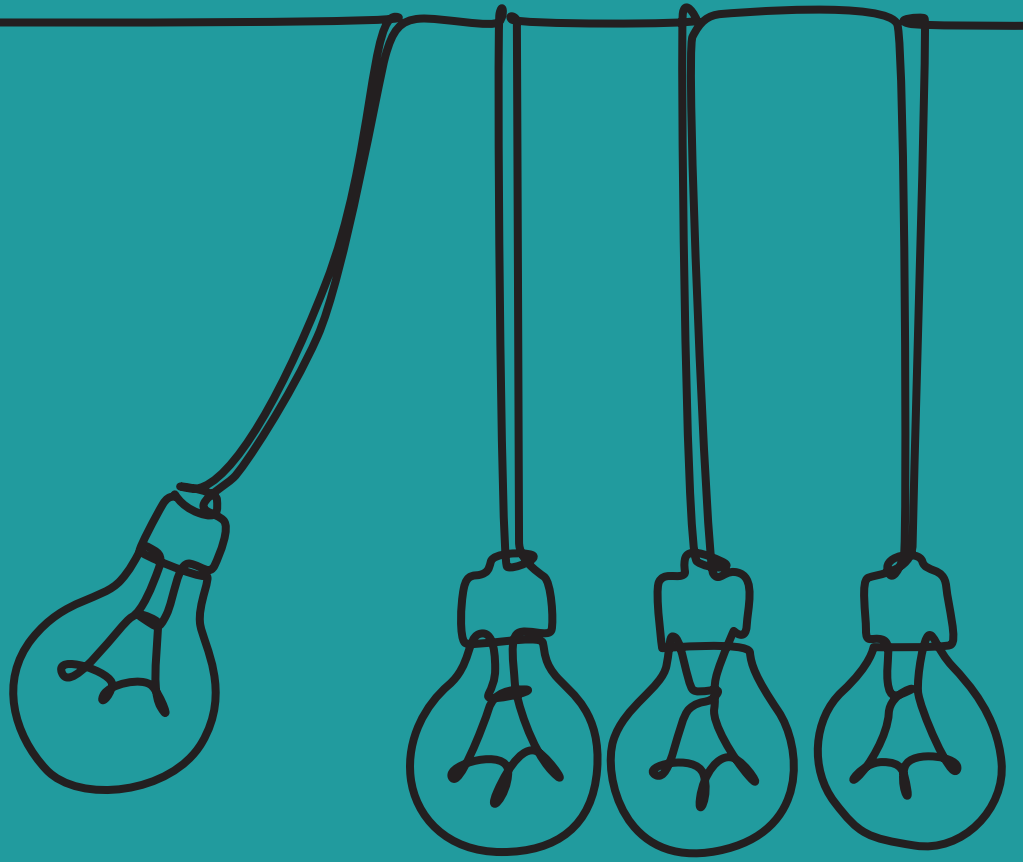
Better align existing monitoring and evaluation activity across policies and programmes, that are being delivered under the Strategy.

Overall message

The study shows that evaluation is possible, but it needs to reflect the complexity of innovation and the different starting points across the mission areas.

The recommended approach detailed in the report is proportionate, flexible and focused on learning. It is designed to help Welsh Government and delivery partners understand what is working, where progress is being made, and where more evidence is needed.

Over time, this should support both accountability and continuous improvement, while keeping the approach manageable for those involved in delivery.



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