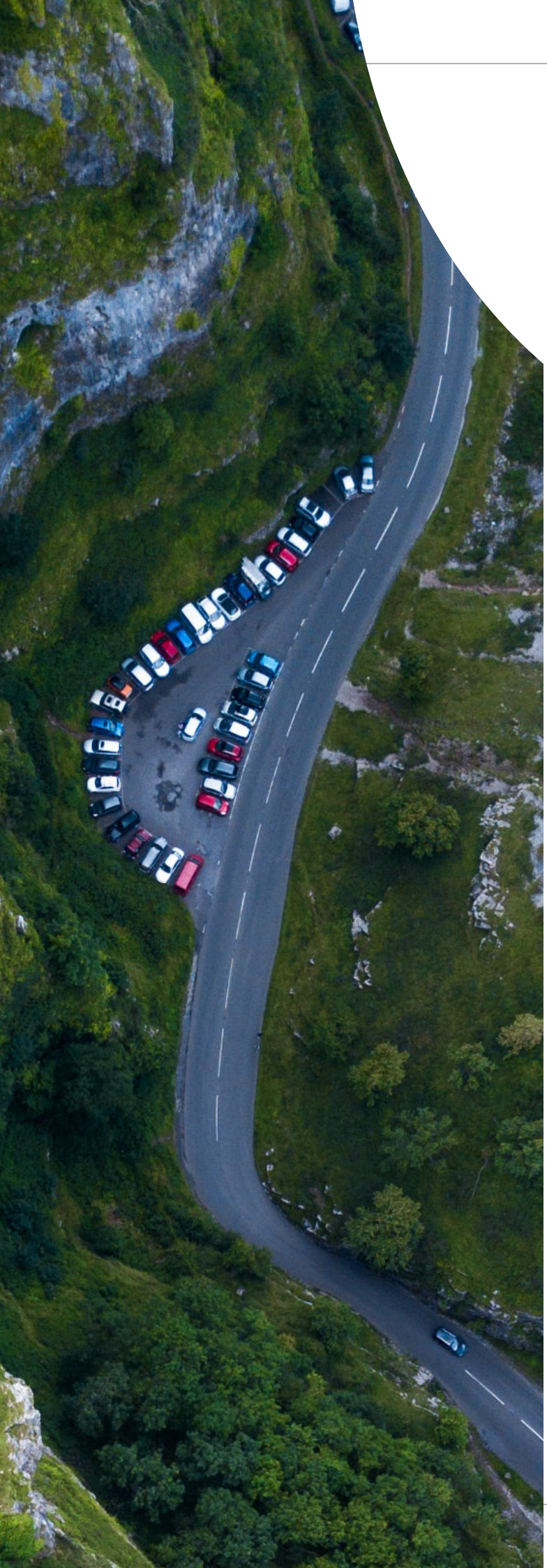
UK Research and Innovation

v1.0

UKRI Place Toolkit



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Introduction

UKRI invests public funds across the UK via studentships, research projects, knowledge exchange, research infrastructure, business innovation and many more. These investments are diverse and have hugely varied characteristics across the portfolio. Some are place-based, which means that they are driven by local impact and consultation with a geographic range of stakeholders. The Place Toolkit is an opportunity to build this kind of thinking into more of our activities where it is appropriate.

Until now, UKRI has not used place as a strategic consideration in programme definition or decision making. We appreciate that in some cases this will constitute a change to our ways of working and that colleagues may feel uncertain about how best to approach this. The aim of this toolkit is to support colleagues through this change and to provide guidance about when place should be considered.

The Place Toolkit is a suite of resources, advice and approaches that teams across UKRI can use to incorporate place into their programme or activity. The resources cover different programme stages from design to delivery and evaluation, as well as providing links to external publications and context-setting. This will help:

- A greater number of UKRI programmes reach a wider audience.
- A greater number of UKRI programmes incentivise applicants to consider the spatial aspects of the potential impacts of their research and innovation activities.
- The impacts or outcomes of UKRI-supported research and innovation activities reach wider and more diverse communities of users and adopters.
- UKRI advisory groups with expertise of a wider range of innovation ecosystems, broadening the advice UKRI and councils receive that informs decision making, programme priorities and strategy setting.

Principles for the UKRI Place Toolkit

The Place Toolkit should support teams across UKRI to:

1. **Design our programmes inclusively, so that geography does not impact applicants' ability to be successful for UKRI funding.**
2. **Consciously shape the R&D landscape through building capacity, and enhancing the growth of capabilities and clusters of research and innovation strengths.**
3. **Understand and evaluate the geographic distribution and impacts of our actions and investments.**

Why now?

In March 2022, UKRI published its first five-year strategy which outlines how the organisation will support the UK's world-class research and innovation system, fuel an innovation-led economy and society and drive up prosperity across the UK. One of the strategic objectives is:

'World class places – securing the UK's position as a globally leading research and innovation nation with outstanding institutions, infrastructures, sectors and clusters across the breadth of the country.'

R&D-active sectors are at the heart of high value job creation and economic growth. We want to grow capacity to perform R&I across the country, recognising that growth is strongest when the focus is on agglomeration, clustering and comparative strengths.

Incorporating changes to the way that we work as an organisation combined with some larger-scale principles will support us in living our Principles for change, and work towards a more diverse and connected system across academia, businesses and the public sector, built on strong engagement.

The UKRI strategy also includes an organisational objective to:

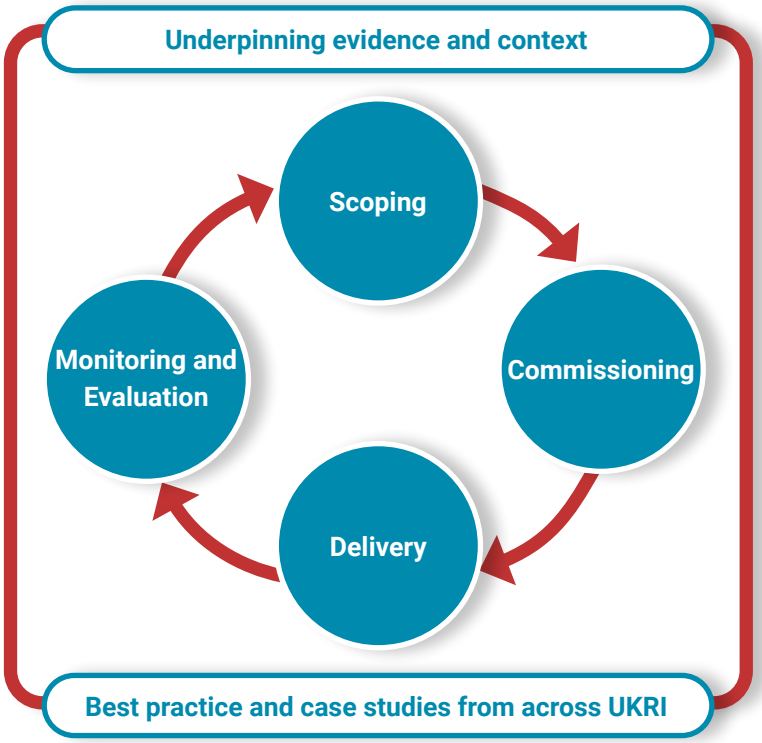
'Deliver economic, social, and cultural benefits from research and innovation to all of our citizens, including by developing research and innovation strengths across the UK in support of levelling up.'

Published in 2021, the Innovation Strategy, sets out how the UK will 'support businesses to innovate by making the most of the UK's research, development and innovation system'. One of the pillars of the Innovation Strategy – Institutions and Places – sets out how the UK should ensure that research, development and innovation institutions serve the whole of the UK. This included:

- Reviewing how major R&D funding bodies' core organisational objectives might change to help deliver the UK government's levelling up ambitions as well as to fund excellence, starting with UKRI.
- Reviewing how best to increase local engagement, and the regional presence, of major R&D funding bodies, and the influence that local, regional and national stakeholders have on UK-wide decision-making.
- Reviewing ways in which we can deliver stronger Place outcomes from current and future research and innovation programmes.
- Encouraging institutions such as PSREs, Catapults and universities and colleges to increase their local economic and societal impacts.
- Making place a factor in investment decisions for new research and innovation infrastructure and facilities.

Toolkit Structure

The Place Toolkit is segmented into the stages of a programme lifecycle. The 'tools' that sit below these phases can be used as appropriate for your programme. They are illustrated by examples of best practice or case studies from existing activities across UKRI and the councils. The context and evidence section helps access evidence on local research and innovation strengths, as well as information on UKRI and government priorities around place.



We have defined the stages of programmes as:

Scoping: gathering stakeholder input and developing the rationale for initiating a programme of work, with high-level aims and demonstrating its importance to gain in-principle approval for formal development work.

Commissioning: seeking senior approval based on the information from the scoping stage. This may involve a plan for implementation, including the desired inputs and outputs.

Delivery: implementing the plan set out in the commissioning stage. It could include how we communicate externally, call documentation, peer review/panel processes, and any funding decisions.

Monitoring and Evaluation: maintaining contact with award holders, evaluation, and formal reporting. This could include developing case studies or external communications and the publication of results.

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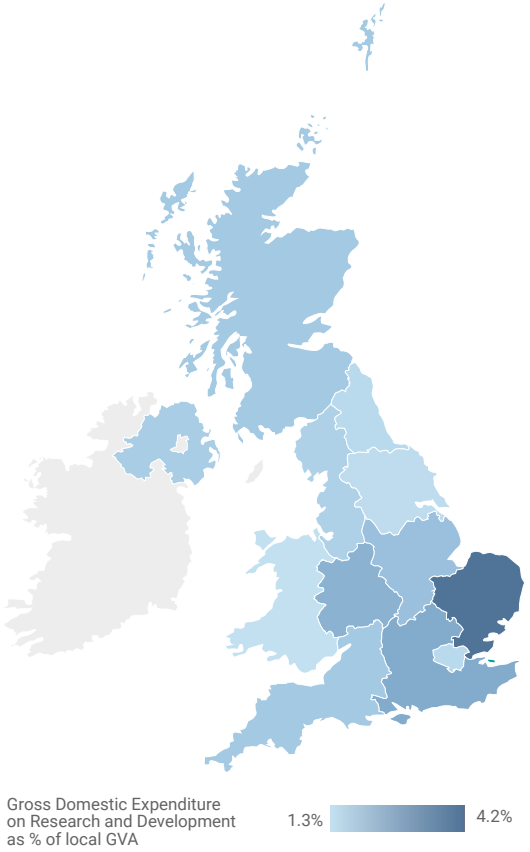
2. Consciously shape the R&D landscape through building capacity, and enhancing the growth of capabilities and clusters of research and innovation strengths.
3. Understand and evaluate the geographic distribution and impacts of our actions and investments distribution and impacts of our actions and investments.

Context

The current picture of R&D in the UK

The UK invests around 3% of GDP in research and development performed in the UK. In 2022, R&D expenditure reached over £70 billion[1]. Some of this is public, and distributed through UKRI or government departments such as the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Health and Social Care, and some is private, and spent by businesses that carry out R&D activities. Research and innovation activity is slightly concentrated in the 'Greater South East' (GSE), covering London and the East and South East of England. This area includes the 'golden triangle' of London, Oxford and Cambridge. Just over half of publicly funded and total R&D is performed in the GSE. In 2022, R&D performed in the GSE was worth £39 billion, around 55% of all R&D performed in the UK. Of all publicly funded R&D that year, around £7 billion (54%) was performed in the GSE[2].



UKRI and R&D across the UK

Over the years, the changing aims and objectives of UKRI and our predecessor organisations have contributed to shaping the way that our funding is geographically distributed around the UK. We should make changes to the way we work as an organisation in response to our new objective, and have set out our priorities in the UKRI Strategy.

The benefits of increasing diversity in the research base are well understood, and place is an aspect of diversity which is being brought into consideration for some of our funding instruments. This has the potential to enrich and strengthen our research and innovation base, and the UK economy, which will be of benefit to everyone in the longer term.

UKRI has in the past changed its processes to incorporate Impact, and more recently research environment into assessment criteria for grant proposals and REF. These changes have had positive impacts on the research and innovation base in the UK.

The purpose of this toolkit is to give colleagues resources, advice and approaches to incorporate place-based considerations into their programmes where this will deliver strategic benefit for the UK.

1 https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04223/SN04223.pdf
2 https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/researchanddevelopmentexpenditure/bulletins/ukgrossdomesticexpenditureonresearchanddevelopment/

FAQs

What is the purpose of the UKRI Place Toolkit?

The Place Toolkit is a suite of resources, advice and approaches to help teams across UKRI consider place more systematically across this breadth and depth of our activity. It should support the organisation to meet our strategic objective of enhancing the growth of capabilities and clusters of research and innovation excellence, and innovation ecosystems that build on regional strengths and enable local economic growth and social benefits.

My programme/activity is not place-focused, is the UKRI Place Toolkit appropriate for me?

The UKRI Place Toolkit is designed to be used across the range of UKRI programmes, from discovery research to studentships, and place-focused to place-agnostic programmes. The tools are flexible and can be used in manner that is the most appropriate to the specific needs and design of the programme you are running.

Is the UKRI Place Toolkit Mandatory?

The tools in the UKRI Place Toolkit are not mandatory. They are flexible and can be used in the way that best suits the specific aims of your programme.

Should the UKRI Place Toolkit be applied to only new programmes or can it be applied to existing programmes?

The UKRI Place Toolkit can be applied to new and existing programmes. The Toolkit has been developed with tools that are cross-cutting and can be applied to whole life cycle of a programme whether in the early stages or later stages. All of these tools can be selected and used in a manner that is appropriate to the programme.

Has accessibility been considered in the design of the UKRI Place Toolkit?

The Toolkit is being hosted on the Source, and is designed with the internal comms team in line with the Home Office designing for accessibility principles. As the Toolkit develops and we change the platform from Sharepoint, we expect to be able to do further work on its accessibility.

If you do have problems relating to the accessibility of the Toolkit, please do get in contact via the Place inbox: place@ukri.org and we will work to solve them as soon as possible.

How does the UKRI Place Toolkit apply to work we do with the devolved administrations?

Across UKRI there are strong links into the devolved governments and funding bodies which could and should form a central part of how the Toolkit is put into practice. Engaging with these stakeholders is important and their input is a part of diverse engagement throughout the lifecycle of a research and innovation programme.

When engaging with organisations or planning activities in the devolved nations, colleagues must carefully consider the landscape that we are operating in, where some aspects such as funding of higher education institutions are devolved, and others like research council funding are reserved. The governance of these funding streams varies in the different nations of the UK, and we must be sensitive to this. More information on the devolved and reserved funding landscape and R&D is available here.

For more support or advice and guidance on navigating the different structures and responsibilities, you can contact the Place inbox: place@ukri.org – it may also be useful to contact the relevant funding body.

What is the relationship between Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the UKRI Place Toolkit?

There is a clear link between EDI and Place. From the beginning the EDI Strategy team have been involved in the development of the Place Toolkit to ensure that it aligns with UKRI's EDI Strategy and supports the creation of a dynamic, diverse and inclusive system.

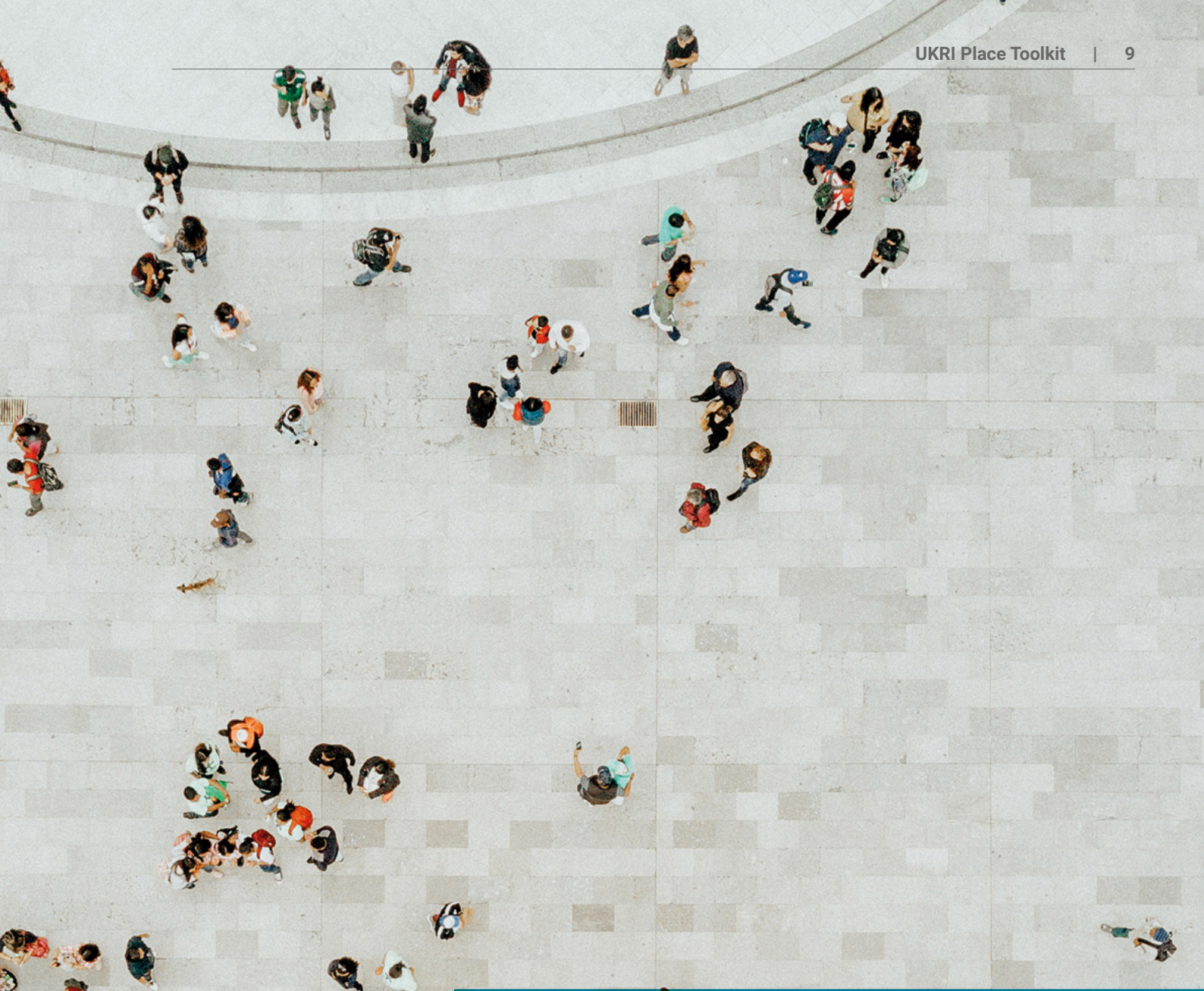
EDI is a strong consideration in some of the case studies included in the toolkit, and should always be a consideration at any stage of a UKRI programme.

What is the process for keeping the UKRI Place Toolkit up to date?

The toolkit will be a living document and will showcase what works and lessons learned across the councils. We are keen to hear about colleagues' experiences of working with the toolkit. If you would like to make suggestions on the toolkit, please direct them to the place@ukri.org inbox or through your council's representative on the Place Strategy Steering Group.

Where can I find out more information on the UKRI Place Toolkit?

If you want to have a discussion on the Toolkit and how to use it, please do email the UKRI Place inbox which is run by the Place Strategy Team: place@ukri.org, or your council's representative on the Place Strategy Steering Group.



Evidence and Analysis

In this section you will find links to some of the evidence, analysis and publications that inform the discussion and debate surrounding the place agenda. This includes mapping local strengths, UKRI infrastructure and spending data.

Publications and information from UKRI, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations

UKRI Strategy

UKRI's first five-year strategy outlines how the organisation will support the UK's world-class research and innovation system, fuel an innovation-led economy and society and drive up prosperity across the UK. One of the strategic objectives is 'Securing the UK's position as a globally leading research and innovation nation with outstanding institutions, infrastructures, sectors and clusters across the breadth of the country.' Priority 2.1 sits underneath this objective, and gives more detail on the organisation's aim to strengthen clusters and partnerships locally, nationally and globally.

UKRI Place Data Publication

To understand how UKRI funding is spread across the UK, and as part of our efforts to be transparent with the research community, UKRI publishes the regional distribution of our funding annually. The most recent publication was in 2024 and covers our spend across the organisation to the end of the 2021-22 financial year.

UKRI Infrastructure Portal

InfraPortal is a UKRI-funded website that contains information on hundreds of research and innovation infrastructures available to UK researchers and innovators. These include major equipment, resources such as collections, archives or scientific data, digital infrastructures, including data and computing systems, and communication networks.

BEIS/DSIT/Nesta place data tool

BEIS and Nesta have co-developed a research and development (R&D) spatial data tool, that allows users to access, visualise and compare indicators that show the scale of R&D systems at a subregional level. This may be particularly useful during the scoping/commissioning phases.

House of Commons Library: R&D Spending Briefing

The House of Commons Library has produced a useful briefing on how R&D and Innovation funding at a national level is distributed and performed across the UK.

Innovation Strategy

The Innovation Strategy was published in July 2021, incorporating work from the government's Place Advisory Group, and sets out the government's vision to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035.

10X Economy - an economic vision for a decade of innovation

Northern Ireland's 10X Economy strategy sets out how they aim to encourage greater collaboration and innovation to deliver a 10 times better economy. The strategy focuses on the core technologies and clusters where Northern Ireland can be a global leader within the next decade.

Innovation Wales Strategy

Innovation Wales sets out a direction of travel for Wales and its institutions. It builds on existing strategies, recognises the importance of innovation to their successful implementation, and sets a framework for future funding programmes.

Research and Innovation: The Vision for Wales – HEFCW

The HEFCW Vision for Wales sets out commitments and ambitions for the HE research and innovation sector in Wales, which in turn aim to secure Wales' position as a world-leading partner of research and innovation across the world. This was refreshed in February 2022 to recognise the changes in the external environment since its original publication in 2019.

Innovation Action Plan for Scotland

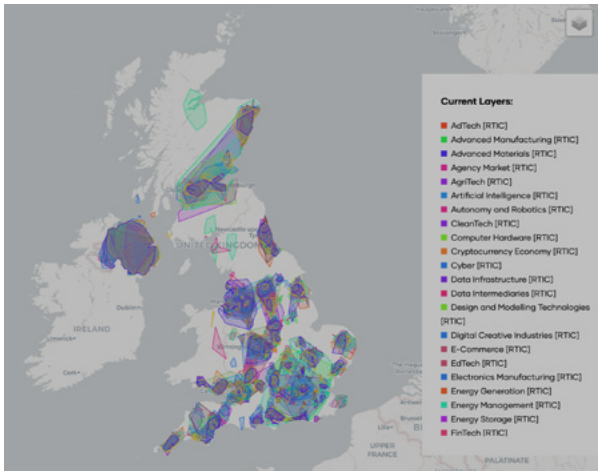
This sets out the plan to achieve the aim of Scotland being ranked in the top quartile of OECD countries for productivity, sustainability, equality and wellbeing. The plan highlights how a strong innovation performance will be critical to improving Scotland's long-term productivity growth and to enabling inclusive growth and the delivery of higher living standards for the people of Scotland.

Plan for Growth

'Build Back Better: our plan for growth' sets out the government's plans to support growth through investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation, published alongside the 2021 Budget.

Innovative clusters map

This map, published in 2023, is a picture to date of firm-level innovation activity across the UK, showing the geography, distribution and strength of clusters.



'Deliver economic, social, and cultural benefits from research and innovation to all of our citizens, including by developing research and innovation strengths across the UK.'

Alongside increasing investment in innovation across the country, BEIS will invest £100 million to pilot new Innovation Accelerators supporting three UK city regions to become major, globally competitive centres for research and innovation. The Accelerators will empower local areas by bringing together national and local government, industry and R&D institutions in a long-term partnership. The three pilot city regions are: Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, and Glasgow City Region.

Locally developed strategies

Local industrial strategies for English regions were produced in waves from 2017 to 2020. They are a useful tool for UKRI as they act as a bottom-up evidence base that can give us local insights into the sectoral and discipline strengths of different parts of the country, including their vision for strategic opportunities in the area.

Local industrial strategies were drawn up, led by local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and mayoral combined authorities in England, to join up and promote local economic policy with national funding streams and to establish new ways of working between national and local government, and the public and private sectors.

The rationale for places developing local industrial strategies was to:

- Ensure a long-term strategy for raising productivity in places, based on clear evidence and aligned to the national Industrial Strategy.
- Set out long-term, clearly defined priorities for how cities, towns and rural areas will maximise their contribution to UK productivity.
- Allow places to make the most of their distinctive strengths.
- Support better coordination of economic policy at the local level and ensure greater collaboration across boundaries.
- Inform local choices, prioritise local action and help to inform LEPs' approaches to any future local growth funding deployed through them.

The local industrial strategies and the LEPs cover regions of England. The devolved administrations have their own responses to the industrial strategy that we can use to access insights into their local economies and innovation systems. City and growth deals allow enabled cities and local partners to flex national policy to local criteria and priorities, fill in gaps in national provision to meet local needs, and to experiment with new programmes, policies and approaches agreed as part of negotiations to localise employment and skills.

City and growth deals cover specific regions in cities and their hinterlands, not the whole country, and there is no LEP-equivalent to refer to in the DAs, but the funding bodies are a useful place to start for more information. Follow these links for more information on city and growth deals in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Organisations across the UK

Throughout the design and delivery of R&D programmes, it is likely that you will need to take advice externally, or to reach into different parts of the UK to raise awareness of impact or funding opportunities. Stakeholder engagement and communications colleagues will be able to help here, but it would also be useful for you to consider contacting regional groups directly. The list below is not exhaustive, your contact could include:

GuildHE

GuildHE is a membership organisation representing the heads of higher education institutions – from some of the most recently designated universities and university colleges, specialist colleges and other bodies providing higher education programmes.

GW4

The GW4 Alliance is a consortium of four of the most research-intensive and innovative universities in the UK: Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter.

Invest NI

Invest NI's role is to grow the local economy by helping new and existing businesses to compete internationally, and by attracting new investment to Northern Ireland.

Learned Society of Wales

The Learned Society of Wales is the national academy for arts and sciences, with a fellowship that brings together experts from across all academic fields and beyond to promote research, inspire learning, and provide independent policy advice.

Mayoral Combined Authorities

Legal bodies set up to enable two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.The powers and funding devolved to combined authorities are set out in devolution deals agreed on an individual basis between local councils and central government[3].

MillionPlus

MillionPlus is the Association for Modern Universities in the UK, and the voice of 21st century higher education. It champions, promotes and raises awareness of the essential role played by modern universities in world-leading higher education.

Midlands Engine

The Midlands Engine is a pan-regional, apolitical partnership that convenes, connects and acts as a focal point to drive economic growth – for the greater benefit of its people, places and businesses.

N8 Research Partnership

The N8 Research Partnership is a collaboration of the eight most research intensive Universities in the North of England: Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York.

Northern Powerhouse

The Northern Powerhouse is the government's vision for a super-connected, globally competitive northern economy with a flourishing private sector, a highly-skilled population, and world-renowned civic and business leadership.

Royal Society of Edinburgh

The Royal Society of Edinburgh's public mission is the deployment of knowledge for public good, and to use the combined knowledge of a 1,600-strong fellowship to contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of Scotland and its people.

University Alliance

University Alliance is the voice of professional and technical universities, representing large to mid-sized universities working at the heart of their communities.

Yorkshire Universities

Yorkshire Universities is the regional voice for higher education in Yorkshire, and represents eleven universities and one specialist higher education institution.

Wales Innovation Network

The Wales Innovation Network is a collaborative initiative set up to strengthen research and innovation in Wales, 'owned' by Universities Wales.

Western Gateway

Western Gateway is the pan-regional partnership for

3 https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-online-hub/devolution-explained/combined-authorities

South Wales and Western England, made up of Local Authorities, a Combined Authority, City Regions, Local Enterprise Partnerships and governments (in Wales and Westminster).

Universities Scotland

Universities Scotland is the representative body of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions, developing policy on behalf of the university sector and campaigning publicly on higher education issues.

Research, innovation and place reading room

A number of academics and industry groups have written and researched the role of R&D in Place or in addressing the spatial inequalities in the UK. We will be updating this section with recent (and not so recent) publications or blogs that speak to the Place agenda. With any area of policy that is being developed, there is a range of viewpoints that do not always agree on the best way ahead, and it is important for us to keep abreast of this material as we develop our response to our new organisational objective.

Catching the wave: harnessing regional research and development to level up
HEPI

Levelling up to £22bn: research, innovation and business support
MillionPlus

Missing £4bn
Nesta

Regional Policy and R&D: evidence, experiments and expectations
HEPI

Resurgence of the Regions
Richard Jones

The Place to Be
Academy of Social Sciences

The Power of Place: Maximising local economic impacts of R&D investment in the UK
Campaign for Science and Engineering

Putting Universities in their Place
London School of Economics

The Power of 8
N8

Investing in UK R&D
The Royal Society

Make No Little Plans: Acting at scale or a fairer and stronger future
UK2070 Commission

UK Research and Innovation: A place-based shift?
Phil McCann

Scoping

The early scoping stage of programme development is when teams develop a rationale for initiating a programme, including the high-level aims and demonstrating its importance to gain in-principle approval for formal development work. This would usually involve gathering stakeholder input and developing the rationale for initiating a programme of work.

Ensuring that place is considered during scoping is important, to engage the right stakeholders and make the strongest case for the programme at the earliest stage. It can also help to rule in/out places and approaches, to better understand regional strengths, and to build collaborations between people, places and UKRI.

How can I consider place as part of my scoping in practice?

A ROAME statement is a short paper outlining your approach under the headings **R**ationale, **O**bjective, **A**ims, **M**ethod, and **E**valuation. This is based on the ROAMEF policy development framework set out in the HMT Green Book, and is used to clearly set out the strategic aims and of an activity. To consider Place as part of this scoping exercise, it would be useful to include a **P**lace section in your ROAME statement, and cover questions such as:

- Does your programme have the potential to lead to local socio-economic or health benefits?
- Does your programme aim to increase research and/or innovation capacity in a particular domain?
- Does delivery of your programme rely on rare or unique infrastructure?
- Does delivery of your programme rely on particular local government structures which may not be UK-wide?
- Would your programme result in the creation of new-to-the-UK capacity or infrastructure?
- Will your programme support collaboration between places?

How can I connect programme design choices to place impacts?

It may be useful to think about your programme's expected impacts on a local, regional, and national level, which could be economic, social or other measures. This could include thinking around how an investment builds on existing strengths, or how it could build local capability/capacity.

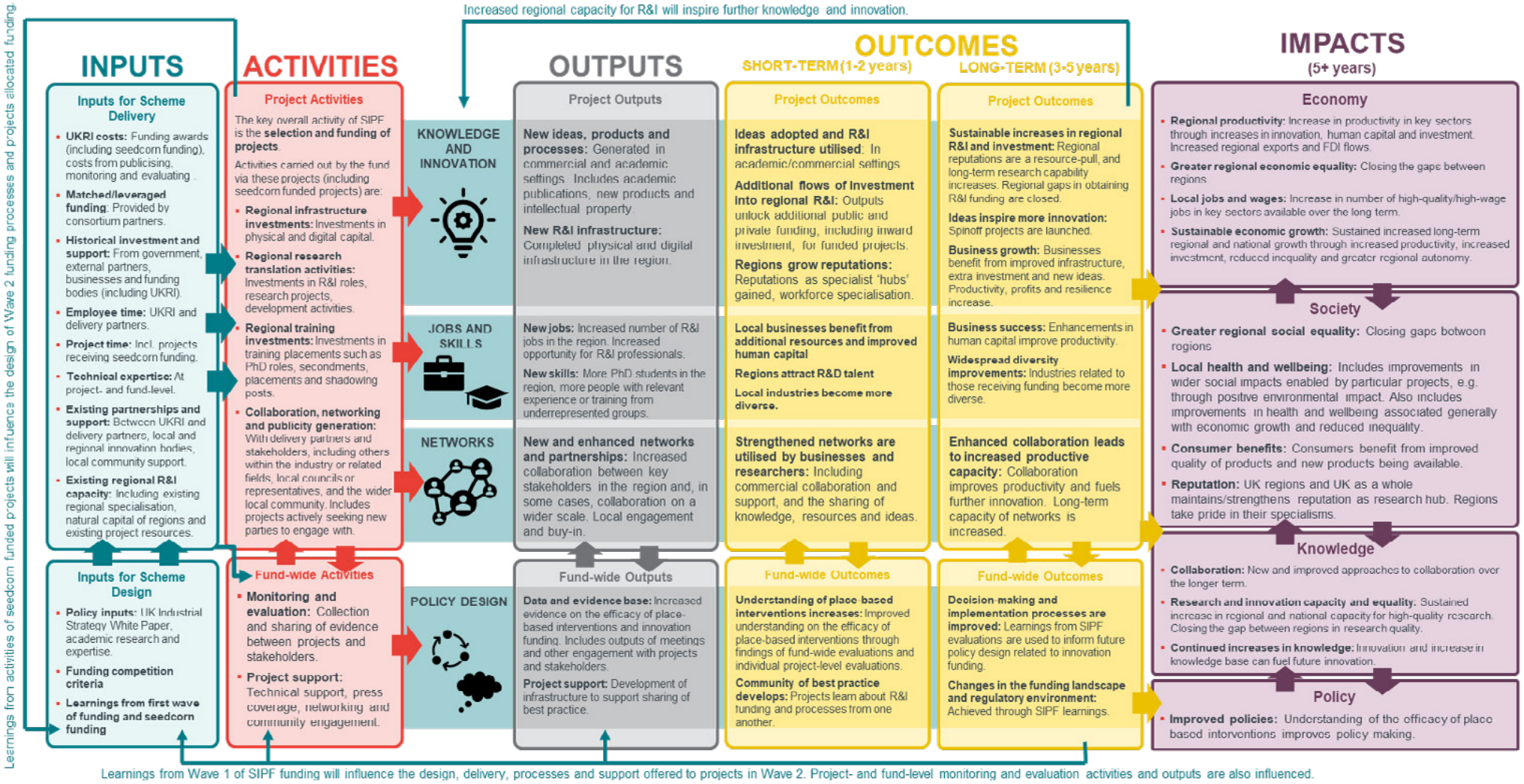
Building a logic model can allow you to think about how the design choices that affect the inputs of your programme could lead to a set of expected impacts. It can be referred to over the whole course of your programme, and is a useful tool for considering how you design a variety of its elements, especially aspects of monitoring and evaluation.

The logic model could help you consider place from an early stage, including how your inputs might affect where impacts or benefits will be felt and by which groups of people. The logic model will differ depending on the type of programme and the expected impacts.

The UKRI Strength in Places Fund (SIPF) is a programme that helps areas of the UK to build on existing strengths in research and innovation to deliver benefits for their local economy. It aims to support innovation-led regional growth and enhance local collaborations involving research and innovation.

There are two waves of SIPF in progress, and UKRI has allocated £314m to 12 projects across the UK. SIPF is delivered in partnership by Innovate UK and Research England.

The logic model used for the SIPF programme is below, which is a good example of considering place in a Place-focused programme. You can find more information on creating logic models or frameworks online, for example here.


Increased regional capacity for R&I will inspire further knowledge and innovation.
INPUTS
ACTIVITIES
OUTPUTS
OUTCOMES
SHORT-TERM (1-2 years)
LONG-TERM (3-5 years)
IMPACTS
(5+ years)
Inputs for Scheme Delivery
UKRI costs: Funding awards (including seedcorn funding), costs from publicising, monitoring and evaluating .
Matched/leveraged funding: Provided by consortium partners.
Historical investment and support: From government, external partners, businesses and funding bodies (including UKRI).
Employee time: UKRI and delivery partners.
Project time: Incl. projects receiving seedcorn funding.
Technical expertise: At project- and fund-level.
Existing partnerships and support: Between UKRI and delivery partners, local and regional innovation bodies, local community support.
Existing regional R&I capacity: Including existing regional specialisation, natural capital of regions and existing project resources.
Project Activities
The key overall activity of SIPF is the selection and funding of projects.
Activities carried out by the fund via these projects (including seedcorn funded projects) are:
Regional infrastructure investments: Investments in physical and digital capital.
Regional research translation activities: Investments in R&I roles, research projects, development activities.
Regional training investments: Investments in training placements such as PhD roles, secondments, placements and shadowing posts.
Collaboration, networking and publicity generation: With delivery partners and stakeholders, including others within the industry or related fields, local councils or representatives, and the wider local community. Includes projects actively seeking new parties to engage with.
KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION
JOBS AND SKILLS
NETWORKS
POLICY DESIGN
Project Outputs
New ideas, products and processes: Generated in commercial and academic settings. Includes academic publications, new products and intellectual property.
New R&I infrastructure: Completed physical and digital infrastructure in the region.
New jobs: Increased number of R&I jobs in the region. Increased opportunity for R&I professionals.
New skills: More PhD students in the region, more people with relevant experience or training from underrepresented groups.
New and enhanced networks and partnerships: Increased collaboration between key stakeholders in the region and, in some cases, collaboration on a wider scale. Local engagement and buy-in.
Project Outcomes
Ideas adopted and R&I infrastructure utilised: In academic/commercial settings
Additional flows of investment into regional R&I: Outputs unlock additional public and private funding, including inward investment, for funded projects.
Regions grow reputations: Reputations as specialist 'hubs' gained, workforce specialisation.
Local businesses benefit from additional resources and improved human capital
Regions attract R&D talent
Local industries become more diverse.
Strengthened networks are utilised by businesses and researchers: Including commercial collaboration and support, and the sharing of knowledge, resources and ideas.
Project Outcomes
Sustainable increases in regional R&I and investment: Regional reputations are a resource-pull, and long-term research capability increases. Regional gaps in obtaining R&I funding are closed.
Ideas inspire more innovation: Spinoff projects are launched.
Business growth: Businesses benefit from improved infrastructure, extra investment and new ideas. Productivity, profits and resilience increase.
Business success: Enhancements in human capital improve productivity.
Widespread diversity improvements: Industries related to those receiving funding become more diverse.
Enhanced collaboration leads to increased productive capacity: Collaboration improves productivity and fuels further innovation. Long-term capacity of networks is increased.
Economy
Regional productivity: Increase in productivity in key sectors through increases in innovation, human capital and investment. Increased regional exports and FDI flows.
Greater regional economic equality: Closing the gaps between regions.
Local jobs and wages: Increase in number of high-quality/high-wage jobs in key sectors available over the long term.
Sustainable economic growth: Sustained increased long-term regional and national growth through increased productivity, increased investment, reduced inequality and greater regional autonomy.
Society
Greater regional social equality: Closing gaps between regions
Local health and wellbeing: Includes improvements in wider social impacts enabled by particular projects, e.g. through positive environmental impact. Also includes improvements in health and wellbeing associated generally with economic growth and reduced inequality.
Consumer benefits: Consumers benefit from improved quality of products and new products being available.
Reputation: UK regions and UK as a whole maintains/strengthens reputation as research hub. Regions take pride in their specialisms.
Knowledge
Collaboration: New and improved approaches to collaboration over the longer term.
Research and innovation capacity and equality: Sustained increase in regional and national capacity for high-quality research. Closing the gap between regions in research quality.
Continued increases in knowledge: Innovation and increase in knowledge base can fuel future innovation.
Policy
Improved policies: Understanding of the efficacy of place based interventions improves policy making.
Inputs for Scheme Design
Policy inputs: UK Industrial Strategy White Paper, academic research and expertise.
Funding competition criteria
Learnings from first wave of funding and seedcorn funding
Fund-wide Activities
Monitoring and evaluation: Collection and sharing of evidence between projects and stakeholders.
Project support: Technical support, press coverage, networking and community engagement.
Fund-wide Outputs
Data and evidence base: Increased evidence on the efficacy of place-based interventions and innovation funding. Includes outputs of meetings and other engagement with projects and stakeholders.
Project support: Development of infrastructure to support sharing of best practice.
Fund-wide Outcomes
Understanding of place-based interventions increases: Improved understanding on the efficacy of place-based interventions through findings of fund-wide evaluations and individual project-level evaluations.
Community of best practice develops: Projects learn about R&I funding and processes from one another.
Fund-wide Outcomes
Decision-making and implementation processes are improved: Learnings from SIPF evaluations are used to inform future policy design related to innovation funding.
Changes in the funding landscape and regulatory environment: Achieved through SIPF learnings.
Learnings from activities of seedcorn funded projects will influence the design of Wave 2 funding processes and projects allocated funding.
Learnings from Wave 1 of SIPF funding will influence the design, delivery, processes and support offered to projects in Wave 2. Project- and fund-level monitoring and evaluation activities and outputs are also influenced.

Case studies

UK Prevention Research Partnership a £50 million multi-funder initiative, including support from MRC, EPSRC, ESRC and NERC, supporting novel research into the primary prevention of non-communicable diseases to improve population health and reduce health inequalities. All the projects funded by this programme bring together a broad range of stakeholders with an emphasis on getting prevention research into practice. For example the Systems science in Public Health and Health Economics Research (SIPHER) is a project developing systems-based economic evaluation methods and tools to provide a common basis on which to appraise the effectiveness and costs and benefits of policy measures implemented in different sectors. The project leads are partnering with Sheffield City Council, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Scottish Government to explore the differences between implementation systems for four policy priorities: housing, the promotion of mental wellbeing, inclusive economic growth, and adverse childhood experiences.

https://ukprp.org/about-us/

The Regional Impact from Science of the Environment (RISE) was an innovative mechanism designed to enable research organisations to develop ambitious, long-lasting and inclusive partnerships with businesses, policy bodies and other actors contributing to economic development specific to their location, to deliver regional impact from environmental science. Four projects worth £17 million have been funded. The first two projects, in the South West and Yorkshire, have attracted an estimated £62 million of additional investment to their regions to date as well as generating environmental and policy impacts.

https://nerc.ukri.org/innovation/activities/rise/

How can I consider place when engaging externally?

Diverse and wide engagement for inputs early in the design phase of a programme can help ensure our activities are as accessible as possible to a diverse range of appropriate stakeholders, from local policy experts to research and innovation leaders. This accessibility can create connections that lead to higher-quality research, better outputs and more impactful benefits.

Engaging widely could include:

- Engaging with local community organisations and policy stakeholders alongside the research and innovation community, and advertising transparently and widely for local and regional stakeholder input – see the Organisations across the UK section for more information.
- Using the network of expertise, insights and data from across UKRI (including our networks, campuses and engagement teams).

The Place Strategy Steering Group is a useful place to start here, and they will be able to highlight engagement teams across UKRI that may have useful information that is specific to the region, sector or discipline that you are working on.

Case studies

Considering place in external engagement

STFC Research and Innovation Campuses (Harwell and Daresbury)

Harwell and Daresbury STFC campuses have representatives from LEPs on their high-level steering boards. These boards bring together key partners across each campus and stakeholders in the region to support development and delivery of a joined-up vision and strategy for each site, with a particular focus on maximising the impact of the clusters associated with each location.

http://www.sci-techdaresbury.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Sci_Tech_Brochure_Skills_v3.pdf

British Geographical Survey (BGS) – Local Nature Partnership (LNP)

BGS is a board member of the Nottingham LNP and plays an active role in developing a Natural Capital Baseline Assessment for the region that is now used as a cornerstone for Local Authority Local and Strategic Development Plans. It has also helped to commission a study of the economic and environmental future of the area along the River Trent.

http://www.d2n2lep.org/News/win-win-for-economy-and-environment-says-new-vision-for-trent-valley.

How can I consider place when getting advice on my programme?

Getting advice from a group that has expertise and knowledge of a range of local research and innovation ecosystems can help build in their insights right from the beginning. This could include ensuring that a diverse range of members of our advisory networks are chosen for each project, but also signposting in our recruitment for these networks alongside EDI, for example:

Diverse representation within our advisory bodies is important to ensure we include a range of opinions and viewpoints in our decision making. Appointments to the advisory teams are made primarily on merit and we are keen to obtain greater diversity across the membership. We particularly encourage applications from women, from people who identify as an ethnic minority, people with a disability, and other groups who are currently under-represented. We welcome applications from people based in all regions and nations of the UK.

Case studies

Considering place in advisory boards

EPSRC Strategic Advisory teams

EPSRC Strategic Advisory Teams (SAT) are devised as a flexible resource, enabling heads of theme to obtain the strategic advice they need in a timely manner, drawing on a range of perspectives from across our key stakeholder groups. During 2020, EPSRC developed a Place strategy. As part of its development advice was received to consider how EPSRC accounts for Place on its advisory and governance structures. Since then EPSRC has embedded consideration of regional diversity into 2021 recruitment to its SATs (epsrc.ukri.org/about/governance/recruitment/membershipsab/).

A two-stage process is being used to select individuals. In the first stage EPSRC assesses candidates against the essential criteria on its person specification to create a shortlist of suitable candidates. In the second phase, vacancies are filled from the shortlist by considering:

- The balance of expertise across our SAT's
- EDI considerations such as gender and ethnicity balance
- The diversity of organisational affiliation across the UK's regions and nations

MRC Infrastructure and Capital Strategic Advisory Group

MRC recently set up a new Infrastructure and Capital Strategic Advisory Group which will report into MRC Council. This Group will advise on new large infrastructure projects and capital funding which could be located anywhere in the UK.

MRC advisory structures generally mirror the strengths and volumes of funding for the academic and clinical research community, which historically has had a bias towards the Greater South East.

One of the key considerations in setting up this new group was having representative views across the UK, in particular to be able to understand the challenges in regions with lower historic levels of investment in infrastructure and capital. Though this would not be appropriate for all advisory structures, MRC has managed to achieve representation across all nine English regions in addition to representation from Scotland and Wales.

Commissioning

The commissioning stage of programme development seeks senior approval based on the information from the scoping stage. This may involve a plan for implementation, including the desired inputs, outputs and impacts.

How could I identify and analyse the place impacts of my programme?

Local partners will be useful in getting external advice on the expected impacts that could occur in different places. Where possible colleagues should include them in the planning of how a programme could be implemented so that the Place impacts and overall R&D goals are maximised. There is also a range of evidence that you can draw on – the Evidence section of this toolkit may be a good place to start. Questions to consider when drawing on the evidence include:

- Are research and innovation strengths in this discipline/sector evenly distributed across the UK or focused in certain areas?
- Is the distribution of public and private funding similar?
- Does multidisciplinarity impact the overall geographical distribution of funding?
- Are there opportunities to build new capacity through partnerships?

For larger-scale projects, the recent updates to the Green Book guidance on business case appraisal says that even if place-based effects are not a primary aim of a programme, we should either quantify them or explain why they are not relevant. While such place-based analysis is not relevant to every programme, it may be useful to employ the guidance from the Green Book to identify where the expected impacts accrue.

Suggested questions to consider based on the Green Book guidance

- Do you expect impacts to differ significantly in different areas, or types of area (at any spatial scale)?
- If effects are significant what is a proportionate level of analysis and can this be built into monitoring and evaluation arrangements?
- Where impacts are significant, is the VFM of the intervention dependent on the successful delivery of other interventions in the relevant area/s?
- Where data is available at a spatial area level can this be presented graphically (for example, on a map)?
- In areas experiencing significantly different effects will any of the protected groups identified by the Equality Act or Families Act be significantly affected by the proposal?
- Are there likely to be unintended negative or positive collateral effects in the target area or within wider spatial area such as nearby travel to work areas?
- Where data is not available, can improvements be made to data collection to ensure that it can be provided in future?
- Where impacts are significant, to what extent does the intervention align with wider strategic objectives for the relevant area/s?
- What are the expected effects in the target area/s?
- Is there alignment with local plans and strategies?
- Are there interdependencies with other local or national interventions?

Delivery

During the delivery stage, the plan set out in the commissioning stage is implemented, subject to any changes required as part of the commissioning process. These tools support our external communications, call documentation, peer review/panel processes, and funding decisions.

How could I attract more regionally diverse applications to my programme?

Regional engagement and communications

When calls are live or in the pipeline, you should proactively share information about them to reach communities of eligible, capable businesses or researchers in a wider range of places – especially if you know from previous experience that there tend to be some parts of the country that yield fewer applications than others.

Communications colleagues can help with this using targeted social media promotion to businesses in specific areas. Your council's stakeholder engagement colleagues, especially if you have a regional engagement team, could also help by directly engaging with local stakeholders. By looking at the evidence on where there are local strengths in your sector/discipline, and the organisations across the UK section of this toolkit, you should be able to access contacts that can help you with advertising to organisations in more places.

For advice, contact the UKRI Place communications lead, or the relevant council communications business partner or ISCF communications lead.

Call documentation

We should include specific language and signposting in call documentation to attract applications from across the UK. This will depend on the approach to place, and whether the aim is a diverse spread of investments across the UK and investing in projects to have place-based outcomes. Examples are asking applicants/activities to:

- Indicate which regional clusters they will try to collaborate most closely with.
- Demonstrate how regional activity will contribute to broader national benefit.
- Be UK-wide, drawing on existing or developing, regional strengths.
- Involve a broad range of disciplines and non-academic stakeholders from the relevant sector.

With activities that are expected to generate place-based outcomes, call documentation could encourage specifically demonstrating what these outcomes are, potentially including:

- Local and regional economic growth, skills development, job creation or retention.
- Critical mass activities leading to increased private investment, including foreign direct investment, in a specific place.
- Contributions to cluster development through knowledge diffusion, supply chain development, SME growth, generation, or growth of spin outs, and so on.

Case study

Attracting locally facing applications

EPSRC FinTech NetworkPlus call

During 2019 EPSRC recruited a small regional engagement team to provide local insights to inform its national strategy. Since 2019 this team has expanded to cover seven territories across the UK including all the devolved administrations to deliver regional engagement. Adopting a sector perspective, EPSRC was able to gather intelligence on various FinTech clusters across the UK. One key insight was that generally there are low levels of industry/academic engagement across the UK. Aligning this insight with the interests of colleagues within EPSRC's core science themes and our business team has now led to a Network Plus call aimed at improving connectivity between academia and the FinTech sector. The following is taken from the call document and illustrates the approach being taken to build on our regional strengths to deliver national benefit through regional activity:

'The NetworkPlus should have a national focus, but also look to consider the needs of the local clusters. Collaborative networks should therefore strengthen connectivity and drive new potentially transformative academic contributions.

To facilitate this, the NetworkPlus should be open to engaging with all, and should not exclude partners (academic or business) based on their location.

We ask applicants to:

- Indicate which regional clusters they will try to collaborate most closely with.
- Demonstrate how regional activity will contribute to broader national benefit.

Networks will leverage and augment regional strengths to add competitive advantage to the UK, by acting as a platform for the broader national diffusion of research outcomes derived from the small-scale feasibility studies it supports.

In support of this ambition, applicants are asked to clearly articulate their approach to engaging and operating across scales (regional to national) and across multiple geographies in a structured and coherent way that enables benefits to be felt at both a regional and national level.'

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/build-research-communities-with-the-uk-financial-services-sector/

How could I build place into peer review?

At peer review, you could consider representation from universities that are less research-intensive, businesses, and civic bodies where appropriate, especially if these organisations map well against the geographical spread of appropriate discipline expertise. It is important that peer review is not biased against non-research-intensive universities and all eligible applicants have the opportunity to be considered fairly for all of our funding calls. If there are opportunities to recruit new members of the peer review college to support this aim, we should take these wherever possible.

If it is appropriate for your programme, you could advise the panel to consider the geographical portfolio of their selections at the funding stage alongside other portfolio considerations. There may be tradeoffs to consider based on how potential bids are scored, and this is something that should not impact on the overall ability of a programme to enhance the national capability, but we should consider where our funding is concentrated.

This should be signposted in call documentation so that it is clear for applicants, for example:

The funding panel will be asked to assess the applications against the criteria given in this document and make a recommendation about whether they should be considered for funding. In addition to considering the recommendations across the interview panels, [UKRI] will consider the coverage across the streams, across/within priority areas and of disciplines in the set of applications when making funding decisions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The following set of tools could be used in the in the M&E phase, which could include maintaining contact with award holders, evaluation, and formal reporting. This could include developing case studies or external communications and the publication of results. M&E should be considered holistically throughout the programme, from scoping right through to delivery.

How could I assess place impacts through monitoring and evaluation?

When considering Place in the monitoring and evaluation of our work, it is important to set out our aims and approaches up front where possible, so that funded organisations understand our data needs and expected impacts as the activity is underway. There are potential questions below that could support teams across UKRI to build place considerations into their M&E frameworks. These should link to the expected impacts set out in the commissioning stage, logic model or ROAME statement where possible.

Evaluation questions for assessing place impacts

Interventions that are place-focused with intended place impacts

With respect to the R&I system. To what extent, and how, has the intervention(s):

- Enhanced collaboration and knowledge exchange/ diffusion between local institutions, businesses and communities within, and outside of, the interventions, targeted geographies?
- Strengthened or increased existing or emerging R&I capabilities within the intended geographies?
- Strengthened collaborations and partnerships within, and outside of, the interventions, targeted geographies and if so how?
- Strengthened and/or supported local leadership within, and outside of, the interventions, targeted geographies and if so how?
- Funding and outputs enhanced the reputation of the targeted geographies, R&I. If not, why not?

With respect to the economy, to what extent and how has the intervention:

- Improved economic performance, within geographies? If so, was the improvement sustained? If not, why not?
- Contributed to closing gaps in economic performance across UK regions? If not, why not?
- Improved job prospects, in terms of the number, variety and profile of jobs available within the targeted geographies?
- Supported innovation-led regional growth and increased the competitiveness potential of business clusters to innovate within, and outside of, the interventions, defined geographies?
- Supported the adoption of new technologies within, and outside of, the interventions, targeted geographies?
- Economic impacts spilled over into areas outside the targeted geographies?

With respect to knowledge and societal impact to what extent, and how, has the intervention:

- Delivered knowledge and societal impact within the interventions, targeted geographies. If not, why not?
- Outputs improved the health, wellbeing and environment of individuals within, and outside of, the targeted geographies?
- Led to a spillover of outcomes (intended and unintended) and impact into other geographies?

With respect to UKRI place policy design and efficacy:

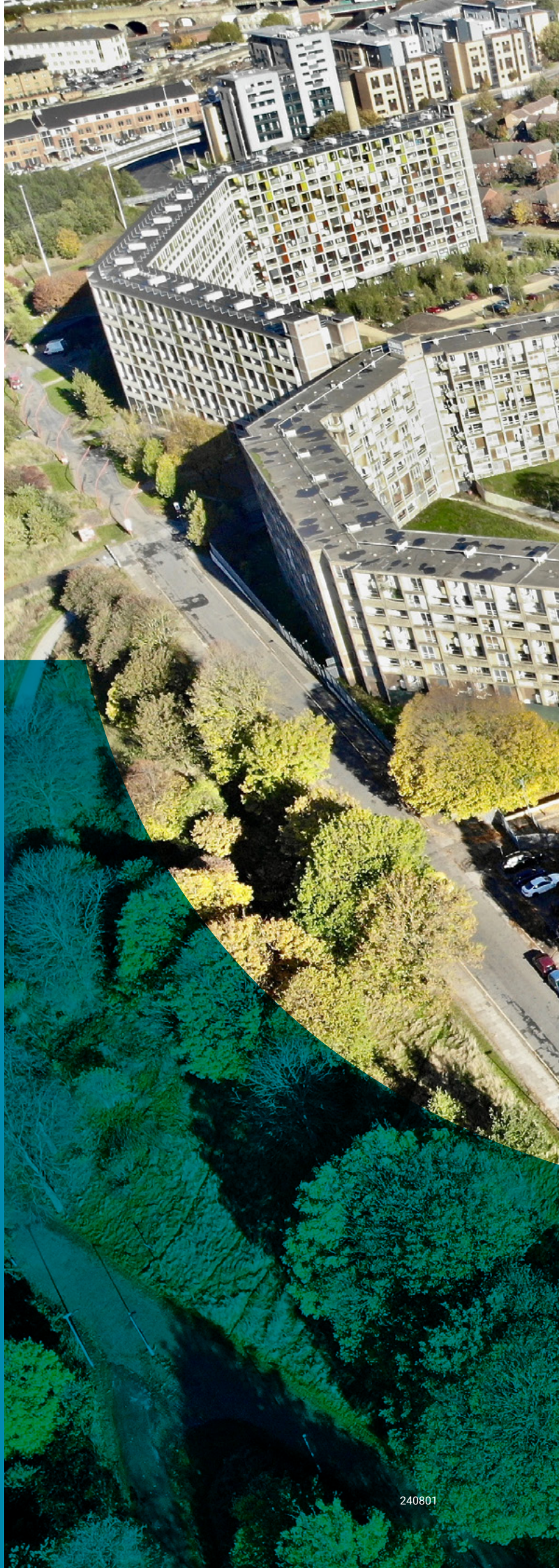
- To what extent, and how:
  - has the evidence base around the impact of locally targeted R&I spending in the UK been improved?
  - does the intervention interact with other R&I development strategies and/or investments within the targeted geographies?
- What characteristics of the targeted geographies have been significant in realising the successful R&I outcomes of the intervention?
- To what extent and how has the intervention,
  - impacted different areas/places or types of area/ place with respect to the economy, society, and knowledge generation? If not, why not?
- Where possible, the above questions should be considered, with respect to impacted geographies rather than targeted geographies.

How could I build place into programme evaluation?

There are a number of approaches that might be relevant depending on the type of activity that you need to evaluate and these could include:

- Commissioning external evaluations: When engaging external evaluators, we should consider their discipline expertise and track record, but also their specific knowledge of the research and innovation ecosystems in the geographical area both where the funded activity takes place and where the likely impacts of the activity are likely to be felt.
- Reporting on users/suppliers: You could request data on the geographical spread of users and suppliers to research and innovation infrastructures or for larger grants. STFC has an example of this at Diamond Light Source which examined the geographical distribution of suppliers which were concentrated in Greater Manchester and west Wales after the local Oxfordshire/Berkshire/Buckinghamshire area. STFC did a similar piece of analysis on the breakdown of industrial users across the UK, and there were 1,026 sessions locally alongside 1,381 from the rest of the UK.

This approach could be broadened to areas such as where infrastructure employees, supply chains, businesses that are engaged with, or participants in skills programmes are located – this should be done with caution though, as there are tradeoffs with bureaucracy and capacity and could create perverse incentives relating to reporting on users/suppliers as part of programme evaluation.



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