



# **Evaluation commissioning guidance**

**This document provides evaluation commissioning guidance for  
Youth Endowment Fund evaluators.**

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. YEF's approach to evaluation</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1    EIF standards of evidence	4
2.2    EIF's 10 steps for evaluation success	4
2.3    Principles of YEF evaluations	5
2.4    Types of YEF evaluation	6
2.5    YEF evaluation guidance, protocols and reporting templates	10
<b>3. Themed grants rounds: process and timeline</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1    The two-stage application process	12
3.2    Project delivery, reporting and data archiving	13
3.3    YEF governance	14
<b>4. Roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5. Evaluator appointment</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1    Introduction to YEF Evaluation (workshop)	18
5.2    Evaluation Specification	18
5.3    Commissioning an Evaluator	18
<b>6. Project and evaluation set-up</b>	<b>22</b>
6.1    Set-up meetings and workshops	22
6.2    Final proposal and budget	26
6.3    Project Evaluation Agreement	27
6.4    Published evaluation documents	28
6.5    Ethical review	28
<b>7. Project Delivery and Evaluation</b>	<b>29</b>
7.1    Invoices and activities	29
7.2    Resolving challenges	30
<b>8. Reporting</b>	<b>31</b>
8.1    Evaluation report	31
<b>9. Data archive</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>10. Re-granting</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix A – Common challenges</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix B – Evaluation proposal guidance</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix C – Full proposal guidance</b>	<b>39</b>

# 1. Introduction

The Youth Endowment Fund's (YEF) mission is to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

To do this we fund:

1. Promising projects which we hope will help to prevent young people aged 10-14<sup>1</sup> from becoming involved in violence; and
2. High-quality, independent evaluations of how effective the project is at achieving its intended outcome. The results from all projects will be described in an evaluation report, written by the independent evaluator, and published on the YEF's website.

These outputs are equally important to the YEF and the set-up stage involves setting up the project delivery and evaluation in such a way that the needs of both are balanced. A good working relationship between the grantee and evaluator is critical to achieving the second of these outputs.

This document aims to outline YEF's approach to evaluation and provide an overview of the timeline and different stages of YEF's themed grants rounds.

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<sup>1</sup> The Youth Endowment Fund's primary focus is on young people between the ages of 10-14 as this is where we believe we can have the biggest impact in terms of preventing youth crime and delinquency. However, for some grant rounds it might be appropriate to broaden the age range, and we will do this on a discretionary basis.

## 2. YEF's approach to evaluation

Robust, independent evaluation is central to the YEF's mission. In order to build the evidence base for what works in tackling youth violence, the YEF will commission evaluations of projects with the aim of reducing youth crime and violence. The YEF's approach to evaluation has been heavily influenced by one of its founding partners', the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), approach to evaluation, but with some differences. This section provides further background.

### 2.1 EIF standards of evidence

EIF has published evidence standards that are used to classify and identify projects that have been shown to improve one or more child outcomes. These evidence standards have heavily influenced the YEF's approach to evaluation and project applications are reviewed using these standards during the application process.



**Please visit the [EIF website](#) for further information about their evidence standards.**

### 2.2 EIF's 10 steps for evaluation success

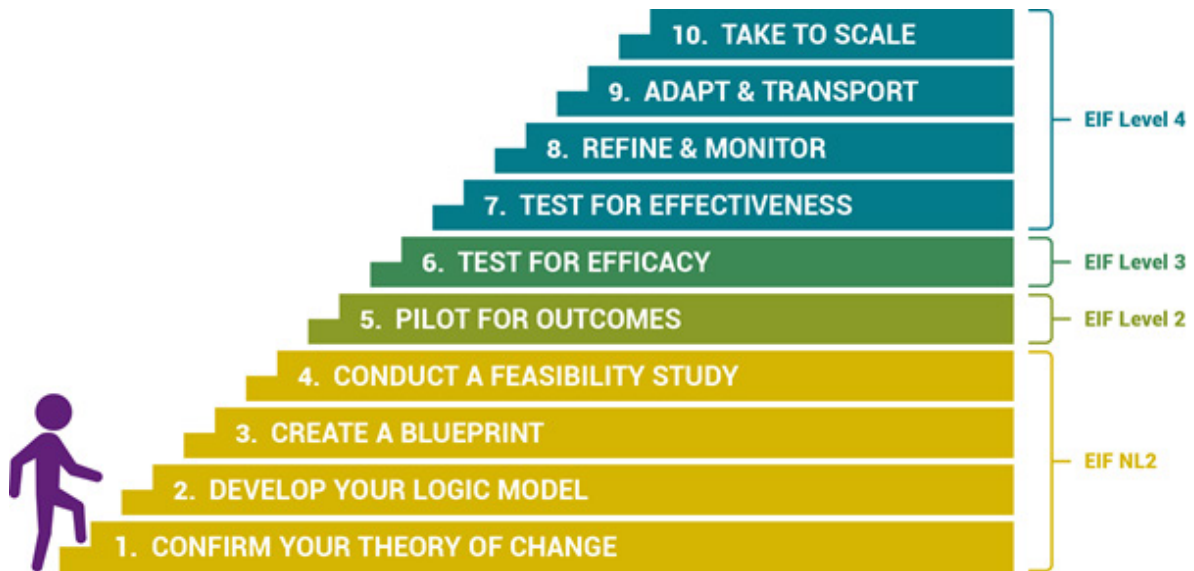
EIF has also published a guide, the 10 steps for evaluation success, that breaks down the EIF evidence standards into a set of achievable evaluation steps that can be used to develop and establish a project's evidence. As with EIF's standards of evidence, the 10 steps guide has informed our approach to evaluation.

Ultimately, the goal of the YEF is to take as many projects as possible to step 10, where they are being effectively delivered at scale. Projects funded by the YEF can enter at any point on the ladder, depending upon their existing evidence and scale. However, most projects will be at the stage of feasibility study, pilot, efficacy or effectiveness (steps 4, 5, 6 and 7). These are the main types of evaluation that YEF commissions.



**Please see the [EIF website](#) for further information about the 10 steps for evaluation success and Figure 1 on p5 for a visual representation.**

Figure 1. EIF's 10 steps for evaluation success



## 2.3 Principles of YEF evaluations

High-quality yet proportionate evaluation which provides real insight on the effectiveness of approaches to tackling serious violence is at the heart of YEF's mission.

YEF evaluations are underpinned by five principles:

1. Be as rigorous as possible whilst balancing the needs of high-quality delivery;
2. Provide insight on the potential of the project to improve child offending outcomes;
3. Be appropriate to the level of development of the project;
4. Be of value to the grantee as well as the YEF; and
5. Be able to track change over time through long-term follow up



## 2.4 Types of YEF evaluation

Table 1 (p7) sets out the four main types of YEF evaluation— **feasibility studies, pilots, efficacy and effectiveness evaluations**— and their features. There are two sections to the table:

1. **Project criteria (orange rows):** This describes the criteria that YEF might consider when deciding whether a project is ready for a feasibility study, pilot, efficacy or effectiveness study. These criteria can be applied flexibly and used to guide decision-making.
2. **Evaluation features (purple rows):** This describes the purpose and features of the evaluation that the YEF would expect to commission at each stage, including expectations regarding the design, study population and how the project would be delivered.

Not all projects will move through these four stages (feasibility, pilot, efficacy, effectiveness) in order. For example, if a pilot or efficacy study is not successful it may be necessary to return to the feasibility study or pilot stage. Even after a successful efficacy study, further development of the project may be required to take it to scale, so sometimes a small-scale feasibility study or pilot may be commissioned between efficacy and effectiveness to test aspects of the scalable model.



**Table 1. Feasibility study, pilot, efficacy or effectiveness evaluation?**

Criterion / feature	Feasibility study	Pilot	Efficacy study	Effectiveness study
<b>Project</b>				
<b>Scale of delivery</b>	The project has not been delivered previously in the UK or has only been delivered with a very small number of settings or participants <sup>2</sup> .	The project has been delivered with a small number of settings or participants.	The project has been delivered with more a medium number of settings or participants or has been successfully piloted by the YEF.	The project has been delivered with many settings or participants or has been through a successful YEF efficacy study.
<b>Experience and capacity of delivery team</b>	The delivery team have no experience of delivering projects of equivalent scale to a YEF pilot.  The delivery team do not currently have the organisational capacity to deliver a YEF pilot.	The delivery team have some experience of delivering projects equivalent in size to a YEF pilot.  There may be concerns about the delivery team's capacity to recruit to and deliver an efficacy trial.	The delivery team have the organisational capacity to deliver to the number of settings required in an efficacy trial.	The delivery team have the organisational capacity to deliver the project at scale to many settings or participants.
<b>Level of development</b> <sup>3</sup>	The project is not yet well specified. There are many aspects that require further testing and refinement.	The project is well specified but has never been evaluated in a pilot. There may be some aspects that require further refinement before an efficacy trial.	All project materials, resources and processes have been fully developed and are ready for trial.	A scalable model has been developed that is ready for trial. The pathways for scaling are documented. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These figures will vary depending upon the type of intervention, its setting and whether it is delivered to individuals or group.

<sup>3</sup> There are three key aspects to intervention specificity: What the intervention is? What the intervention is trying to achieve, and for whom? How the intervention is supposed to work? See also The Social Research Unit at Dartington's 'Design and Refine: Developing effective interventions for children and young people' available at <https://archive.dartington.org.uk/inc/uploads/Design-and-Refine-guide.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> There are four main pathways for scaling up impact: horizontal (more people or places), vertical (policy adoption), organisational (strengthening capacity) and functional (more activities), see: Perlman Robinson, J., Winthrop, R. & McGivney, E. (2016). Millions Learning: Scaling up quality education in developing countries. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, Centre for Universal Education.

Criterion / feature	Feasibility study	Pilot	Efficacy study	Effectiveness study
<b>Project</b>				
<b>Feasibility</b>	There are questions about the project's feasibility. These concerns might relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources required</li> <li>Acceptability</li> <li>Workload</li> </ul>	The project is feasible in the UK but there are doubts about the feasibility of an efficacy evaluation.	The project can feasibly be delivered within an efficacy evaluation.	The project can feasibly be delivered at scale in the UK.
<b>Evidence for the theory of change</b>	The evidence supporting the principles used to design the project may require some further development.	There is some evidence supporting the principles used to design the project.	The evidence supporting the principles used to design the project is strong.	The evidence supporting the principles used to design the project is very strong.
<b>Programme differentiation</b>	Some uncertainty whether the project is sufficiently distinct from usual practice.	The project is sufficiently distinct from usual practice.	The project is sufficiently distinct from usual practice.	The project is sufficiently distinct from usual practice.
<b>Evaluation</b>				
<b>Purpose</b>	To test whether the project is feasible and can achieve its intended outputs. To codify the project.	To test the project's evidence of promise for improving child outcomes and assess the feasibility of an efficacy study.	To test whether the project can work under ideal conditions ("can this work?").	To test whether the project works in real-world circumstances ("does this work?").
<b>Likely research questions</b>	Is it feasible to deliver the project in the UK? What is the optimal way of delivering the project to achieve its intended outputs?	Does the project show evidence of promise? Is there initial evidence to support the logic model? Is an efficacy study feasible?	Can the project work under ideal circumstances? How does the project work, for whom and under what conditions? Are there any unintended consequences?	Does the project work in real-world practice? What is the cost-effectiveness of the project?



Criterion / feature	Feasibility study	Pilot	Efficacy study	Effectiveness study
<b>Evaluation design</b>	Investigates aspects of project feasibility such as implementation, recruitment, retention, reach and cost using mixed-methods. Can involve rapid-cycle tests of different versions of the project.	Involves testing for outcomes and piloting outcome measures. All YEF pilot studies will involve a small scale RCT or QED to test evaluation procedures and estimate likely effect on outcomes.	Estimate of causal impact using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Implementation and process evaluation to understand causal mechanisms.	Estimate of causal impact using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Implementation and process evaluation to understand adaptation and fidelity as scale.
<b>Study population</b>	Will depend upon the research question. May be selected based on convenience initially.	Will depend upon the research questions, but likely to be similar to that for the efficacy study.	Highly selected and homogenous population, with several exclusion criteria.	Heterogeneous population with few to no exclusion criteria.
<b>Provider</b>	The developers.	Usually the original developers or and trained by the developers.	Highly experienced and trained, usually by the developers.	Representative usual providers, not usually trained by the developers.
<b>Project /comparison</b>	Developed during the feasibility study. Different versions may be tested. No comparison group.	Delivered as specified although some refinements may be made. Will involve a comparison group.	Strictly enforced and standardised. No concurrent projects.	Applied with flexibility.  May be tested against concurrent projects.

## 2.5 YEF evaluation guidance, protocols and reporting templates

YEF has developed, in partnership with our evaluator and Expert Panels and the Technical Advisory Group, a set of resources for evaluators.

YEF resources include guidance and templates developed by the YEF for its evaluators based on our experiences of designing, setting-up, implementing and reporting on evaluations. We have drawn on the experience of other What Works Centres where applicable. Evaluators are expected to adhere to the guidance and use the protocols, plans and reporting templates outlined below.

This guidance provides more detailed information on YEF's approach to evaluation. These pieces of guidance are summarised in the table below.

**Table 2. YEF evaluation guidance, protocols and reporting templates**

<b>YEF GUIDANCE</b>	
<b>Study guidance</b>	
YEF feasibility study guidance	This provides guidance on YEF's expectations of feasibility studies.
YEF pilot study guidance	This provides guidance on YEF's expectations of pilot studies.
YEF analysis guidance for efficacy and effectiveness trials	This outlines YEF's policy on statistical analysis and effect size calculations for RCTs.
<b>Measurement guidance</b>	
Outcome measurement guidance	This outlines YEF's expectations for outcome measurement.
Core measurement guidance: strengths and difficulties questionnaire	This provides guidance on the implementation and analysis of one of YEF's core measures: the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997).
Core measurement guidance: self-reported delinquency scale	This provides guidance on the implementation and analysis of one of YEF's core measures: the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale (The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, Smith et al., 2001).
<b>Data Archive guidance</b>	
<u>Youth Endowment Fund Data Archive - guide to how we'll use and protect your data</u>	Guidance for participants and explains how information will be collected, processed and stored.
<u>Data protection information and guidance for YEF evaluations - guidance for projects and evaluators</u>	A technical document that explains how participants' personal data should be processed as part of our evaluations, including obligations under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

<a href="#">Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) Data Archive</a>	A requirement from the Information Commissioner's Office for projects that process sensitive personal data. It explains how and why we'll collect data from the projects we fund. It also outlines the risks we've identified around data collection, processing and storage. And it explains what we'll do to address these risks.
<b>YEF PROTOCOLS AND PLANS</b>	
YEF feasibility study plan	This template should be used for feasibility studies.
YEF pilot study protocol	This template should be used for pilot studies (without a comparison group) <sup>5</sup> .
YEF pilot trial protocol	This template should be used for pilot trials.
YEF trial protocol for efficacy and effectiveness studies	This template should be used for RCTs (please note we are currently developing a study plan for QEDs).
YEF statistical analysis plan	This template should be used for RCTs.
<b>YEF REPORTING TEMPLATES</b>	
YEF feasibility study reporting template	This template should be used for feasibility study reports.
YEF pilot study reporting template	This template should be used for pilot study reports (without a comparison group) <sup>6</sup> .
YEF pilot trial reporting template	This template should be used for pilot trial reports.
YEF trial reporting template for efficacy and effectiveness evaluations	This template should be used for efficacy and effectiveness study reports.
<b>OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS</b>	
Evaluation reporting and publication policy	Sets out YEF's expectations around reporting, publications and authorship.
Policy on the grantee-evaluator relationship	Set's out YEF's expectations around the working relationship between grantees, evaluators and YEF.

<sup>5</sup> Evaluators are unlikely to need the pilot study protocol template if the evaluation was commissioned from 2021 onwards. The relevant template to use will be the YEF pilot trial template.

<sup>6</sup> Evaluators are unlikely to need the pilot study reporting template if the evaluation was commissioned from 2021 onwards. The relevant template to use will be the YEF pilot trial reporting template

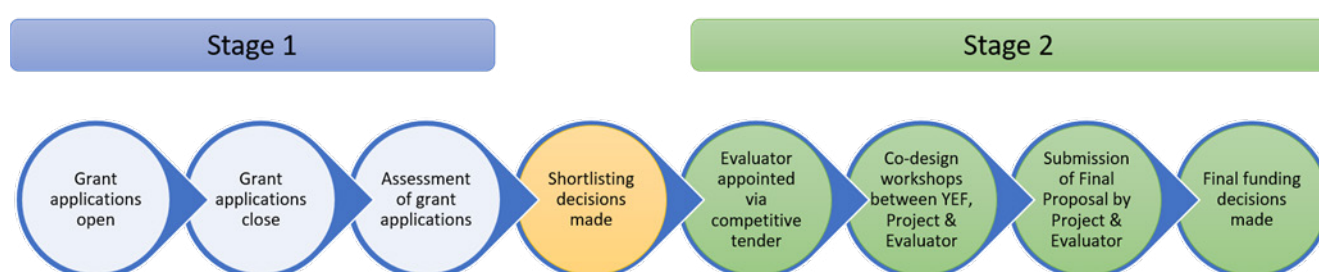
### 3. Themed grants rounds: process and timeline

The section provides an overview of the process and timeline of YEF themed grants round and the rest of this document provides further detail on each of these stages. Please visit our website for more information about [our funding themes](#).

#### 3.1 The two-stage application process

Our themed grants rounds follow the two-stage application process outlined below.

**Figure 2. The YEF 'two-stage' grant application process**



##### 3.1.1 Stage 1: Grant application and assessment

The first stage in the application process involves the grant applicant completing an application form and a discussion between the project team and YEF about the project. Projects are shortlisted at the end of Stage 1 based on YEF's funding criteria and are given initial approval by the YEF Grants and Evaluation Committee (GECO).

##### 3.1.2 Stage 2: evaluator appointment and set-up

Following the selection of promising projects that receive initial approval from the YEF Grants and Evaluation Committee (GECO), the YEF Programme and Evaluation teams progress the project and its evaluation through the following stages:

- **Evaluator appointment:** The YEF evaluation team designs the evaluation specification and commissions an evaluator through a competitive tendering process. Please see [section 5](#) of this document for more detail on the evaluator appointment
- **Set-up:** YEF then works closely with the project team and evaluator over several months to co-design and set-up the project and the evaluation. This leads to the final proposal which is then considered for funding by GECO. If GECO awards funding, grant and evaluation agreements are put in place and an evaluation plan is published. Please see [section 6](#) for further detail on the set-up phase.

## 3.2 Project delivery, reporting and data archiving

Following final funding decisions, the YEF Programmes and Evaluation teams progress the project and its evaluation through the following stages:

- **Project delivery and evaluation:** There is then usually a few months between GECos approving the project and the project starting to allow for further planning, recruitment, training and ethical approval. The grantee will then deliver the project and the evaluator will carry out the independent evaluation. Please see [section 7](#) for more information.
- **Evaluation reporting:** Once the project is completed, the evaluator will conduct data analysis and write up a report of the results. The report will then be peer reviewed and the grantee will also have the chance to comment on it. Following the review, the report will be published on YEF's website. YEF will produce guidance on the reporting and peer review process in due course. Please see [section 8](#) for more information.
- **Data archiving:** At the end of the evaluation period (for pilot, efficacy and effectiveness studies), evaluators will securely transfer a participant level dataset to the YEF data archive. This dataset will need to contain: personal identifying data (e.g. name, gender, date of birth, UPN, postcode), information on the intervention received, any characteristic or contextual information on project participants used by evaluators in generating results published in the evaluation report and the main pre-post-test outcome variables used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The data will be pseudonymised by the Department for Education before it reaches the data archive. Links to all our guidance on the data archive can be found in Table 2 in [section 2.5](#) and please see [section 9](#) and [our website](#) for more information.

More detail is provided on each of these stages and your role and responsibilities in the sections below.

**Note:** Projects will only be given final approval and sign-off at the second GECos meeting. If the GECos doesn't approve a project, it's usually because the grantee and evaluator haven't been able to agree on a high-quality evaluation design.



### 3.3 YEF governance

The final decision about what YEF funds and evaluates is taken by the YEF board on the basis of the advice of GEC<sub>o</sub> and after submission of the Final Proposal. The membership of GEC<sub>o</sub> must be diverse in age, gender and background as well as having a balance of appropriate expertise in grant making, assessing the evidence for project, evaluation and serious youth violence.

Recommendations to GEC<sub>o</sub> are informed by the advice of YEF's Expert Panel. The Expert Panel provides advice to the YEF team to ensure that the work of the Fund is informed by world-class expertise on youth offending and evaluation.



## Stages of a YEF grant and evaluation

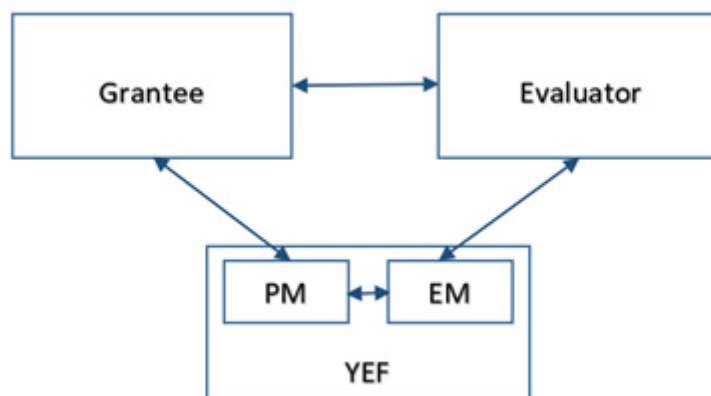
Stage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Varies	1	2	3	4
Application, short-listing and initial approval													
First GEC Co meeting													
Evaluator appointment													
Set-up meetings													
Second GEC Co meeting													
Project delivery and evaluation													
Reporting													
Archiving													

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

For the project and evaluation to be successful the evaluator will need to have a strong working relationship with the grantee and the YEF, so it's important to be clear about who is responsible for what at each stage. As shown in Figure 2, the YEF Evaluation Manager (EM) will be the main point of contact for the evaluator and the YEF Programme Manager (PM) will be the main point of contact for the grantee.

Below is a summary of the main responsibilities of each team:

**Figure 2. Communication between the evaluator, grantee and the YEF**



### The evaluator will:

- Design the evaluation in collaboration with the grantee and the YEF.
- Draft the evaluation protocol and statistical analysis plans.
- Deliver the evaluation, including leading on data collection.
- Maintain a good relationship with the grantee.
- Communicate challenges to the grantee and YEF as early as possible.
- Analyse the data and write-up the evaluation report including peer review.
- Transfer the project data to the YEF's data archive.

### The grantee will:

- Collaborate with the evaluator and the YEF during the set-up phase.
- Lead on the recruitment of participants with support from the evaluator (although the precise balance of roles and responsibilities may vary between projects).
- Deliver the project to a high standard.
- Collect regular monitoring data.
- Support the evaluation and communicate the requirements of the evaluation to your stakeholders.

- Maintain a good relationship with the evaluator.
- Communicate challenges to the evaluator and the YEF as early as possible. These challenges are an integral part of the learning process and will allow for improved delivery.
- Comment on the independent evaluation report within set parameters
- Agree to the use of YEF core measurement tools.
- Commit to maintaining consistent project delivery throughout the duration of the evaluation (i.e. the project cannot be changed half way through delivery).
- Not conduct their own evaluation of the project that will interfere with the independent evaluation.

### The Evaluation Manager (YEF) will:

- Appoint the independent evaluator.
- Be the main point of contact for the evaluator.
- Mediate the evaluation design discussion during set-up, including advising on the YEF's standards of evidence.
- Monitor the evaluation process.
- Provide support and mediate where challenges arise during project delivery.
- Review the evaluation and analysis plans, and the final report, before publication.

### The Programme Manager (YEF) will:

- Be the main point of contact for the grantee.
- Support the evaluation design discussion during the set-up.
- Set up, manage and monitor the grant.
- Provide support and mediate where challenges arise during project delivery.
- Support the grantee during the reporting stage.

During the project set-up phase the evaluator, grantee and the YEF will work together to agree the optimal project delivery and evaluation design. During the project delivery phase, it is expected that the evaluator and grantee will work together without the need for the YEF's support.



If any issues arise during either phase that you are unable to resolve with the grantee, please contact your EM. We are here to support and would rather know if things go wrong and work with you and the evaluator to resolve things if possible. This will help to ensure the highest possible quality of project delivery and evaluation (see also Appendix A).

## 5. Evaluator appointment

### 5.1 Introduction to YEF evaluation (workshop)

Before YEF begins the evaluator appointment and commissioning process, the YEF evaluation team will host a workshop to introduce YEF evaluation and the themed grant round to the YEF Evaluator Panel. This workshop aims to introduce evaluators to:

- YEF's way of working and processes;
- YEF's technical guidance;
- The data archive;
- The two-staged application process.

The workshop will also provide evaluators with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

### 5.2 Evaluation specification

Once YEF has agreed the shortlist of projects and GEC0 has given initial approval, the YEF evaluation team will create the evaluation specification. This includes high level details of the project, understanding of the existing evidence base, key information necessary to inform the evaluation design and YEF's expectation of the type of evaluation from EIF's 10 Steps Model. The type of evaluation is decided based on the theory of change and logic model for the project as well as the evidence for the project's outcomes of effectiveness. The evaluation team then sends the evaluation specification to members of the YEF evaluator Panel.

#### 5.2.1 Type of evaluation

In themed grants rounds, YEF will look to commission impact evaluations (i.e. efficacy and effectiveness evaluations) as well as feasibility and pilot evaluations where appropriate.

### 5.3 Commissioning an evaluator

An evaluation specification is sent to the Evaluator Panel and evaluators are invited to submit an expression of interest (EOI), which gives a high-level description of their proposed approach, the project team and their motivation. The YEF evaluation team then selects the top two or three teams who are invited to submit a full 5000-word proposal and following this an evaluator is appointed.

During the evaluator commissioning process, evaluators will also be invited to attend a workshop hosted by YEF that will introduce prospective evaluators to YEF's approach to evaluation.



The stages of evaluator appointment and approximate timings are summarised in the table below and further detail is provided in the following sections.

**Table 3. The YEF evaluation commissioning process**

Stage	Description	Usual timing (may vary by round)	Templates/ Guidance
ITT	The YEF evaluation team will send the evaluation specification to YEF's evaluator Panel and invite EOIs from evaluators	–	
EOIs	Interested evaluator Panel members submit a brief EOI of no more 750 words	Three weeks	
EOI Scoring	The YEF evaluation team will score EOIs	One-two weeks	EOI scoring criteria
YEF request full proposals	The YEF evaluation team will email 2-3 evaluators per project requesting they prepare a proposal	–	
Proposals	Evaluators draft proposals of no more than 5000 words	Four weeks	
Proposal scoring	The YEF evaluation team will score proposals	One-two weeks	
YEF inform evaluators of ITT outcome	The YEF evaluation team will inform evaluators of the ITT outcome	–	

### 5.3.1 Expression of interest and scoring

Interested evaluators should submit a brief EOI of no more than 750 words to the YEF evaluation team. The expression of interest phases and subsequent invitation to tender have been designed to streamline YEF's commissioning processes and the time and resources of the panel. We encourage evaluators to be focused and selective in the projects they choose to bid for. In general, we would discourage evaluators from submitting very similar EOIs for a lot of projects. We would recommend that you only apply for evaluations that closely align with your experience, expertise and interests and make the EOI as closely focused on the project as possible, rather than providing detailed background information on your organisation (as this information has already been provided at point of application to the panel).

The YEF evaluation team will score the EOIs based on the following criteria:

- Knowledge and experience of the research team (50%).
- Methodological considerations (50%).
- Approach to GPR compliance and data protection (this doesn't contribute to the overall score, but some reasonable discussion is required for success).
- Confirmation that the evaluator has shared, or will share, the Schedule of Work with relevant legal and contractual colleagues in advance of any work being awarded.

### 5.3.2 Full proposals and scoring

Following the EOI stage the evaluation team will invite 2-3 evaluators to submit a full evaluation proposal of no more than 5000 words.

The YEF evaluation team will score the proposals based on the following criteria:

- Capability and relevant experience of core project team (40%).
- Methodology and approach (50%)
- Value for money (10%)

If awarded the work, the evaluator will be paid in instalments based on the completion of activities to the satisfaction of YEF. As part of the value for money section, evaluators will be required to submit a draft payment schedule that outlines the evaluation phases, activities and associated costs as outlined in the table below.

**Table 4. Template grant payment schedule**

Phase	Description of activities during the phase	Target date	Amount
1			£
2			£
3			£
4			£
5	Example: Mobilisation, Recruitment, Final Report submitted, etc]		£
TOTAL			£

Although the timing and content of activities will need to be bespoke to each evaluation YEF does need to ensure that some activities can be monitored. Please see Table 5 for the activities evaluators should include for different types of evaluation. Please note that final activities will be agreed between the evaluator and the EM managing the evaluation.

**Table 5. Key activities to be included according to type of evaluation**

Please see Appendix B for guidance on the full evaluation proposal.

Type of evaluation	Key activities
Feasibility study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluator drafts feasibility study plan</li> <li>• Completion of fieldwork for feasibility study</li> <li>• Evaluator drafts evaluation report</li> <li>• Evaluator incorporates feedback and submits final, peer reviewed interim evaluation report</li> </ul>
Pilot study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluator drafts pilot trial protocol</li> <li>• Evaluator drafts information sheets and privacy notices</li> <li>• Completion of baseline data collection</li> <li>• Completion of all data collection</li> <li>• Evaluator drafts evaluation report</li> <li>• Evaluator incorporates feedback and submits final, peer reviewed report</li> <li>• Evaluator completes support for YEF publication process</li> <li>• Data archived</li> </ul>
Efficacy evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receipt of trial protocol/study plan</li> <li>• Evaluator drafts Statistical Analysis Plan for review</li> <li>• Evaluator drafts information sheets and privacy notices</li> <li>• Completion of baseline data collection</li> <li>• Completion of all data collection</li> <li>• Evaluator drafts evaluation report</li> <li>• Evaluator incorporates feedback and submits final, peer reviewed report</li> <li>• Evaluator completes support for YEF publication process</li> <li>• Data archived</li> </ul>

Most proposals are double scored and then moderated before a final decision is made. Sometimes the YEF Evaluation team may go back to the evaluators to ask for clarification or invite them to attend a follow-up meeting before making their final decision.

At the point at which an evaluator is appointed, an EM will be assigned to manage the evaluation set-up process. The EM will be the evaluator's point of contact at YEF. Similarly, each project is managed by a PM who will be the grantee's point of contact at YEF. Please see [section 4](#) for further information on roles and responsibilities.

The evaluator's proposal may be shared with the grantee, but with the caveat that the proposal was written on limited information and final evaluation design will be agreed during the set-up meetings.

## 6. Project and evaluation set-up

### 6.1 Set-up meetings and workshops

The evaluator will be expected to attend a series of set-up meetings and workshops with the grantee and YEF. A maximum of 2/3 people from the evaluator organisation should attend these meetings.

The exact number of set-up meetings and workshops required will vary from project to project, but we anticipate that in most cases a minimum of four meetings will be required. These meetings are summarised in the table below.

The structure of the following workshops can change in accordance with the needs of the specific grant round. Additional meetings may be required in some cases, and the evaluator and project team may arrange further meetings without YEF to support the development of the draft proposal.

**Table 6. Overview of the set-up meetings and workshops**

Meeting/Workshop	Purpose	Organised by	Attended by
YEF evaluation workshop	To provide a brief overview of YEF's approach to Evaluation and briefings for the projects selected for the grant round.	YEF	YEF Evaluators interested in conducting evaluations in the current grant round
<b>Co-design meeting 1:</b> Introduction to the project and evaluation	To provide the opportunity for the grantee and evaluator to meet and discuss the project activities and initial thoughts about the evaluation.	YEF	YEF Evaluator Project team
<b>Co-design meeting 2:</b> The evaluation design	To provide the opportunity for a more detailed discussion about the evaluation design (including randomisation, if relevant).	Evaluator	YEF Evaluator Project team
<b>Co-design meeting 3:</b> Preparing the draft proposal	To provide an opportunity to discuss timelines, project plans and preparing of documents for the draft proposal. Plans for the YEF data archive should also be discussed.	Evaluator	YEF Evaluator Project team

### 6.1.1 YEF evaluation workshop

This workshop will be hosted by YEF and attended by evaluators only. The purpose of this workshop is to provide a brief overview of YEF's approach to evaluation and to provide evaluators interested in bidding for projects in the grant round an opportunity to hear more about the selected projects. Evaluators will also be able to ask any questions they may have.

### 6.1.2 Co-design meeting 1: Introduction to the project and evaluation

The aim of this meeting is for the grantee and evaluator teams to meet and work together to understand fully what is being evaluated and agree the broad approach to evaluation, including aspects of the evaluation that influence the delivery and evaluation budgets. It will be hosted and organised by the YEF.

The evaluator should come prepared to provide an overview of their initial thoughts on the evaluation design and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different evaluation designs and options for outcome and implementation data collection.

The grantee will be expected to introduce and talk through the content of the project and how it is delivered, as well as the mechanisms for how it might impact on youth crime and violence outcomes.

Some of the meeting may be spent refining/developing the projects' theory of change and logic model<sup>5</sup>. We find that this is important for informing the discussion about the evaluation design.

The aims of this meeting are for the Grantee and Evaluator to:

- Have clarity on who the main contacts are within YEF, the project team, and the evaluation team.
- Have a shared understanding of what the project activities are and what support young people would receive without this project (often referred to as Business as Usual).
- Have a discussion and agree some of the main aspects of the evaluation e.g., the sample size, primary outcome, and control condition.

All parties should leave this meeting with a full understanding of what the project is and some initial thoughts as to how it will be evaluated.

In some cases, YEF may group similar projects together and appoint a single evaluator to evaluate all the projects together. The purpose is to enable grantees to learn from each other and to ensure limited resources on evaluation can be used to best effect.

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<sup>5</sup> More detail on what theory of change and a logic model are, including templates, can be found in [EIF's ten steps for evaluation success](#).



### **6.1.3 Co-design meeting 2: Evaluation design**

The second meeting provides the opportunity to discuss the evaluation design. This workshop should be organised by the evaluator with the grantee and PM and EM from YEF attending. The evaluator should come prepared to talk through the evaluation design in detail.

The aims of this meeting are for the grantee and evaluator to:

- Further develop plans for recruitment, randomisation (if applicable), data collection, implementation and process evaluation and data sharing.
- Have clarity on what information is collected for the evaluation, when, and by whom.
- A shared understanding of whether there is a decision point during the funding period, and the conditions of progression from one evaluation study to another.

### **6.1.4 Co-design meeting 3: Preparing the draft proposal**

This is the final meeting between all parties before the project and evaluation teams submit a draft proposal. The evaluator should come prepared with any remaining questions for the project team. By the end of this meeting, the project and evaluation teams should be clear on what is left to do to submit the draft proposal.

The aims of this meeting are for the grantee and evaluator to:

- Develop and agree a detailed timeline for the project and evaluation.
- Have a shared understanding of the YEF data archive process.
- Finalise project plans and documents for the draft proposal..

It is important to clarify different parties' roles and responsibilities and have a detailed communication plan so that the evaluator and grantee have clear lines of communicating with stakeholders. Table 7 summarises some common documents that will likely need to be developed with the grantee, following the meeting.

**Table 7. Common documents to be developed with the grantee**

Document	Description	Who?
Participant information sheets and withdrawal forms	Describing each participant's involvement in the project and evaluation.	Both teams, but usually the evaluator leads.
Memorandum of Understanding	Describing the roles and responsibilities of settings or Local Authorities that are involved in delivering the project.	Both teams, but usually the evaluator leads.
Privacy notice	Describing what will happen with all personal information processed during the project.	Both teams.
Data sharing agreement	Describing how data will be safely shared during the evaluation.	Both teams.
Communications plan	Documenting a detailed plan for communicating with all relevant stakeholders and participants.	Both teams
Monitoring data	Outlining what monitoring data will be collected, how, by who and how often.	Both teams
Ethics forms (please also see <a href="#">section 6.5</a> )	The evaluation design will need ethical approval.	Usually the evaluator uses their standard ethical review process. In some cases ethical approval from a third party must be sought.

## 6.2 Final proposal and budget

After the set-up meetings the evaluator and grantee will be expected to work together and submit a final proposal. This proposal will go the second GEC meeting for approval and will include:

- Overview of the project and project budget;
- Revised evaluation proposal and budget;
- Project and evaluation implementation plan.

In the first instance, grantees and evaluators should submit a draft Final Proposal. This will be reviewed by the PM and EM who will provide feedback on the proposal before the final version is submitted.

Please see Appendix C for further guidance on the final proposal.

### 6.2.1 Budget

The evaluator will be required to submit the following information for the evaluation:

1. A detailed budget using YEF's budget template;
2. A budget that communicates the costs per financial year.

### 6.2.2 Evaluation checklist

Upon submitting the draft Final Proposal, both the evaluator and grantee will be required to complete an 'Evaluation readiness checklist'. This is to ensure that both the evaluator and grantee have a full and shared understanding of the project and its evaluation and what will be required going forward.

## 6.3 Project Evaluation Agreement

Once the evaluation design and budget has been finalised and signed off by GECO the EM will create a Project Evaluation Agreement for the evaluation. The Project Evaluation Agreement includes key details (e.g. contract amount, start and end dates, report deadline) and conditions along with a payment schedule, which includes activities.

### 6.3.1 Contract amount and activities

Please note that YEF contract amounts are inclusive of VAT.

The evaluator will be paid in instalments based on the submission of a payment request for the corresponding instalment of the Grant Award, as detailed in the Grant Payment Schedule and if the activities planned for the period have been achieved to the satisfaction of YEF. Please see [section 5.3.2](#) for a template payment schedule and a list of the key activities that must be included for different evaluation designs.

### 6.3.2 Variations

It's important that any variation to the project or evaluation is agreed with YEF. In all cases a request to change or modify a project and/or evaluation must be discussed with the PM and EM to determine whether a variation is needed. Where a variation request is deemed appropriate, the project and/or evaluator will need to complete a variation request form that YEF will provide. When considering a variation request YEF will take into account:

- Project design – the overall aims or the fundamentals of project participants should remain broadly the same. In addition, adaptations must be viable and sustainable and temporary or short term project adaptations won't be funded
- Evaluation – project must be evaluated and where a project must change, we must still be able to learn from it.
- Budget
- Timescales
- Ethics – the duty of care of children and young people receiving YEF funded projects is paramount. Variations/adaption must prevent harm and minimise disadvantage to children and young people in YEF funded projects.

## 6.4 Published evaluation documents

These documents describe the agreed evaluation design and analysis and will be published on YEF's website. These documents will be drafted by the evaluator and the grantee will have the opportunity to comment. The necessary documents are summarised in the table below.

Document	Description	Timing
Protocol/study plan	Evaluators draft the protocol for pilot, efficacy and effectiveness evaluations or a study plan for feasibility studies using the YEF template. YEF reviews it and evaluators revise, then project team reviews it and evaluators revise, followed by publication on the YEF's website.	Usually within a month of agreement being signed
Statistical Analysis Plan (SAP)	SAPs are drafted by the evaluator, YEF then conducts a technical review and sends it for peer review. The evaluator responds to both YEF and peer reviewer comments. SAPs are only required for efficacy and effectiveness studies. Pilots do not require a SAP.	Usually within four months of contracting and after baseline data.

If the evaluation is an RCT the evaluator will be required to register it on the ISRCTN registry<sup>8</sup>.

## 6.5 Ethical review

YEF requires all of its funded evaluations to be conducted to a high ethical standard and we require all evaluators to have a robust ethical screening and review procedure. In some cases, ethical approval from a third party must be sought, for example for projects being implemented in NHS settings<sup>9</sup>. It will be important for the evaluator and grantee to work together to submit all the project documentation required, including those documents discussed at the second set-up meeting.

It is the evaluator's responsibility to work with the grantee to ensure they understand the ethical review process and have a clear understanding of what can and can't happen in terms of recruitment and delivery before the outcome of the ethical review is received.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.isrctn.com/>

<sup>9</sup> Research Ethics Service and Research Ethics Committees – Health Research Authority ([hra.nhs.uk](http://hra.nhs.uk))

## 7. Project delivery and evaluation

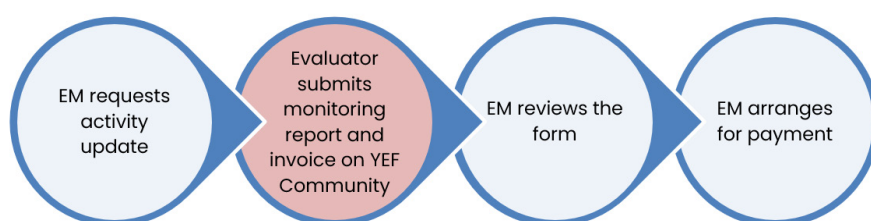
Once the project and evaluation has been approved by the GECO and cleared by the evaluator's ethics panel, project recruitment and delivery can begin. During the project delivery phase, the evaluator and grantee will be required to work closely together and without the YEF needing to be involved. If any challenges or other issues arise, however, these should be discussed with your EM as early as possible.

### 7.1 Invoices and activities

Payments to evaluators are scheduled over the life of the evaluation. YEF can only make payments in line with the payment schedule in the Project Evaluation Agreement, and if YEF is comfortable that activities have been completed.

Evaluators will be required to provide an activities update through YEF's evaluation monitoring process outlined in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3. YEF evaluation monitoring process**



If for any reason an activity target date is unlikely to be met, this should be discussed with your EM as soon as possible.

#### 7.1.2 Monitoring

In line with the dates outlined in the evaluation payment schedule, the evaluators will submit monitoring reports to YEF that detail progress made during the phase of work. Monitoring reports shall be submitted through the YEF Community Platform on a template provided by YEF.

When submitting the monitoring, evaluators will be required to report on 3 sections:

1. **Project status:** evaluators will be required to provide a risk rating (red/amber/green) for each of the timeline, budget and general issues and provide a 500 word narrative summary of the status of the project.
2. **Safeguarding:** if safeguarding incidents have occurred evaluators will be required to provide the number of level 1, level 2, level 3 and level 4 safeguarding incidents along with a narrative summary of the incidents.
3. **Update on upcoming work to be performed**



## 7.2 Resolving challenges

Wherever possible, the PM and EM will work closely with the grantee and evaluator to find a shared solution to any challenges that arise during the project delivery stage. Please see Appendix A for some common challenges that arise during the delivery of YEF projects. Sometimes the solution to challenges may mean that the project needs to be re-scoped or the evaluation design changed. Occasionally, we will escalate the problem to the GEC for discussion and their decision will be final. If it is not possible to resolve a challenge, sometimes a project may need to be stopped.



## 8. Reporting

After the project is completed the evaluator will analyse the data and write up an independent report of the results. The report will be peer reviewed and published on the YEF's website.

### 8.1 Evaluation report

An evaluation report will be written on every YEF funded project. The report should be accessible to a wide audience, including practitioners, policy makers, parents and carers, programme developers and researchers. As such, evaluation reports will wherever possible be written in plain, non-technical English.

Evaluators will submit their report to the YEF following YEF's evaluation template. Grantees will be asked to provide any comments or feedback on the report and, where possible, their comments will be incorporated into the final version. The final decision on the content and timing of the evaluation report rests with YEF.

The table below summarises YEF's reporting process and timeline.

Stage	Description	Timing	Templates/ Guidance
Draft submitted	Evaluator submits initial draft report to the YEF	-	YEF reporting template
YEF review	The YEF Evaluation team complete technical review based on the project protocol, SAP and current YEF guidance	About 2 weeks	
Evaluator responds	The evaluator updates the report based on YEF review	About 2 weeks	
Peer review	The YEF seeks two independent anonymous peer reviews	About 2 weeks	
Evaluator responds	Evaluator responds to peer review comments	About 2 weeks	
Report is shared with grantee	YEF shares the report with the grantee	About 2 weeks	

Stage	Description	Timing	Templates/ Guidance
Grantee provides comment	The grantee will provide comments, particularly on the project description, this may involve a meeting between YEF and the grantee to discuss the findings.	About 2 weeks	
Evaluator responds	YEF passes grantee's comments to evaluator, who then makes further edits	About 2 weeks	
Finalisation	The YEF works with evaluator to ensure the report is as accessible as possible.	About 2 weeks	
Publication	The YEF publishes the evaluation report (usually 12 months after end of project).	–	

## 9. Data archive

Right now, we just don't know enough about the policies, programmes and approaches that successfully protect children from becoming involved in crime. To make sure we can learn which approaches are most effective, we'll need to collect and store sensitive personal data so that we can follow-up on children's progress in the future. The long-term follow-up requires collecting, storing, and archiving data on participants so they can be followed up and their outcomes assessed against criminal justice records in future years.

At the end of the evaluation period (for pilot, efficacy and effectiveness studies), evaluators will securely transfer a participant level dataset to the YEF data archive. The dataset transferred by evaluators will need to contain:

- Personal identifying data (e.g. name, gender, date of birth, UPN, postcode);
- Information on the intervention received (e.g. assigned to treatment or control groups, date or timing of intervention, any assessment fidelity such as number of sessions completed etc);
- Any characteristic of contextual information on project participants used by evaluators in generating results published in the evaluation report; and
- The main pre-post-test outcome variables used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention

Personal identifying data will initially be transferred to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will match children to the records held in the National Pupil Database (NPD). Personal data will then be deleted and replaced with their unique Pupil Matching Reference number (PMR) held in the NPD. The DfE will then release the 'pseudonymised' data to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), where it will be held securely in the Secure Research Service (SRS). A separate project is currently underway between the DfE and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to link together the NPD and Police National Computer (PNC). This linked data will be made available via the SRS and it will be possible to link this data to the pseudonymised data on children held in the YEF archive. This will allow future evaluations to assess the long-term impact of YEF funded projects on education (e.g. truancy and exclusions, educational attainment etc.) and offending outcomes

There are many safeguards in place to protect this data and to ensure individuals' identities won't be known to those using the data. For more information on how this will work, please see our guidance for evaluators [here](#) and our Data Protection Impact Assessment [here](#).

## 10. Re-granting

YEF has a staged approach to evaluation and decisions about how and when projects and evaluation can move between stages are taken through our re-granting process.

Decisions about re-granting will likely consider the following aspects:

1. **Project implementation:** can the project be implemented as intended?
2. **Evaluation recruitment:** have enough numbers of young people been recruited?
3. **Measurement of findings:** can outcome data be collected and analysed? Is there evidence of promise?
4. **Grantee, YEF, evaluator relationship:** has the working relationship developed that could support moving to a larger and more complex study?

Other things that may be considered are capacity (can the grantee scale the approach further), context (is the project a priority for the YEF given the current policy and practice context) and commitment (has the project demonstrated a commitment to evaluation).

For points 1–3 above, the evaluator would be expected to develop detailed project specific progression criteria that would be used to inform YEF's decision about which projects to progress to the next phase.

## Appendix A – Common challenges

Below is a summary of some common challenges that arise during the delivery of YEF projects. If you encounter any of them, please notify the YEF as early as possible.

### Not recruiting enough participants

Recruiting and retaining the agreed number of participants is critical for the success of the project. If a project is under-recruiting to such a large extent that it will not yield any robust evaluation findings then it is likely that the grant, and therefore the evaluation, will be terminated.

It is really important to work closely with the grantee to agree a plan for communicating to participants the importance and value of both the project and the evaluation, and what both involves.

### Participants not complying with the project

During the usual delivery of the project some participants (e.g. young people or families) may be harder to engage with and more likely to drop-out than others. We would expect the grantee to do whatever they would usually do to keep these participants engaged in the project. During an efficacy study we would expect the grantee to do more than they might usually do to keep participants in the project, since here the project is being tested under 'ideal conditions'.

Even when participants drop-out, the evaluator will still analyse their outcomes data, because not doing so may introduce bias in their estimate and violate the principle of 'intent to treat'. For this reason, if participants drop-out of the project, we would expect grantees to still make every effort to work with the evaluator to collect data on their outcomes.

### Participants dropping out of the outcome measurement

Measuring young people's outcomes can be a challenging part of running a project and, in conjunction with the evaluator, needs careful planning. It is important that the timeline for collecting data and the responsibilities of the grantee and evaluator are made clear from the start. Instruments will usually be prepared and delivered by the evaluator, but the time needed to do this needs to be factored into grantees' project plans.

It is also important to appreciate that results are needed from all participants. Sometimes it can be more challenging to get results from control participants, or those that have not complied with the project. But in terms of delivery of robust evidence on effectiveness, results from control participants or settings, and those that have not complied, are just as important as results from project participants. It is important to ask participants to still take part in outcome measurement (or consent for their data to still be used in the case of projects using the Police National Computer) even if they drop out of the project.



### Poor communication with the grantee

Good communication and collaboration with the grantee are essential throughout the project for it to be successful. It is important to carefully plan how you will communicate with each other and all other stakeholders from the start to balance the needs of both the project and the evaluation.



## Appendix B – Evaluation proposal guidance

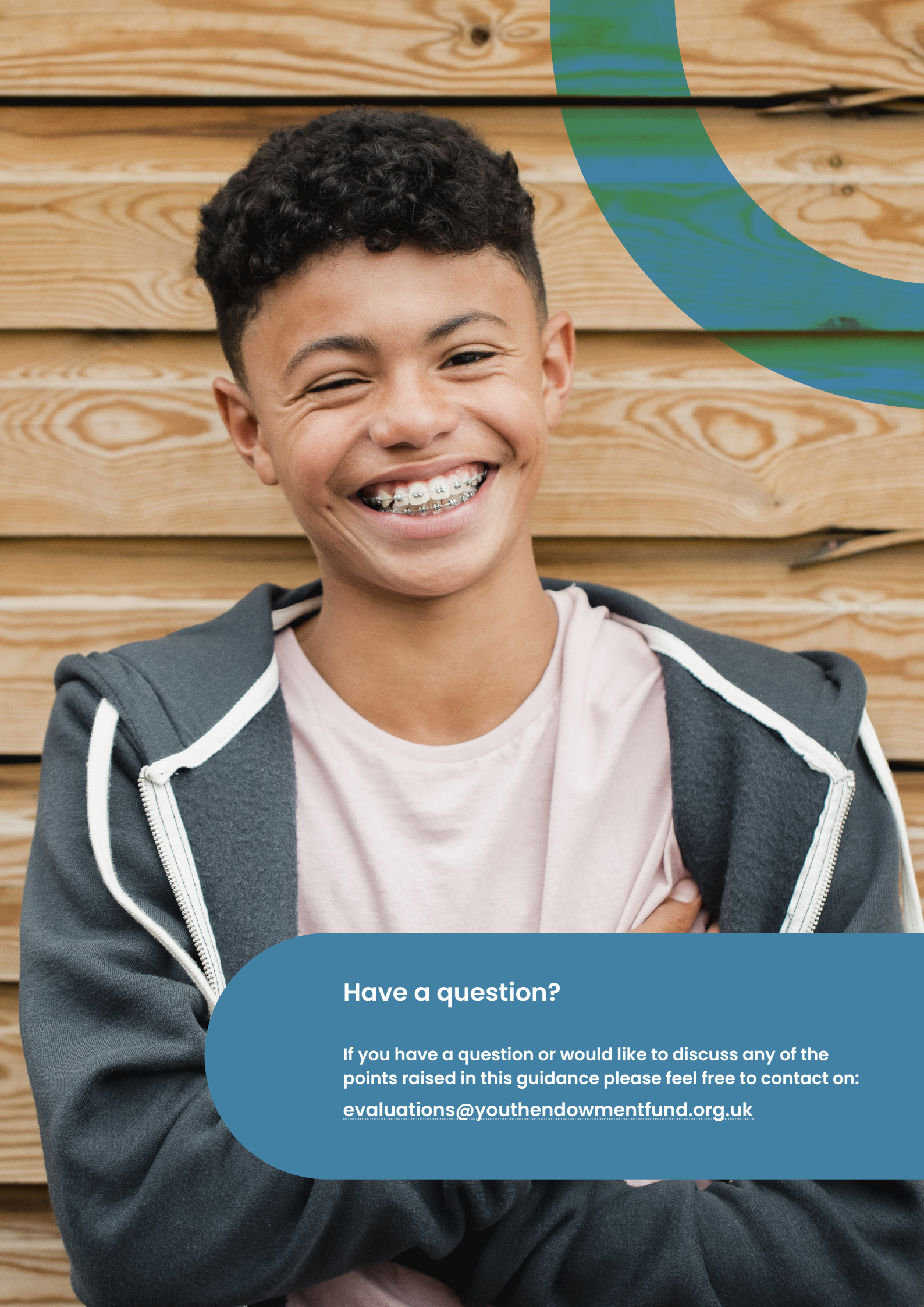
Section	Examples of things to consider
<b>Capability and relevant experience of the core project team (approx. 1500 words)</b>	
Overview of the proposed team and their track record of delivering similar evaluations using similar methods.	
Description of justification of the roles and responsibilities of the team members on the project.	
The team's track record of conducting qualitative and quantitative research with children and young people at risk of crime and youth violence.	
The team's understanding of the context and key topics relevant for the project.	
<b>Methodology and approach (approx. 3500 words)</b>	
The research objectives of the evaluation.	How the design considers the characteristics of the project, the target population and practical issues.
Sampling considerations.	Sampling procedures, justification of sample size, and relevant targets set relating to practitioner recruitment, retention, & training; participants recruitment, retention, reach & satisfaction).
Power calculations, the consistency between sampling and the proposed design, possibilities to consider design characteristics and assumptions.	
Proposed approach to data collection and, for pilot studies onwards, outcome measure (including quality, suitability & convenience).	A description of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including any proposed instruments (and where applicable their quality, suitability and convenience – i.e. are core measures included, are they convenient to collect, affordable, reduce burden on providers, validated by literature, validated for UK population, etc.).

Section	Examples of things to consider
Proposed approach to data analysis.	A description of the proposed techniques to analyse data to deliver against research aims and objectives (i.e. it includes and briefly describes how quantitative and qualitative data will be analysed and reported), ITT, missing data, non-compliance, sub-groups.
Key risks to project delivery and mitigation strategies.	How to deal with low recruitment, retention, attrition or cross contamination.
Proposed approach for collecting data on cost.	
Description of ethical issues raised by the evaluation approach and how these would be addressed (including mechanisms of seeking ethical approvals and the timeline for doing so).	
How the research design considers racial diversity and inclusion.	
Data protection safeguards and GDPR compliance relevant to the project and evaluation.	Legal bases for processing personal data and any special categories of personal data.
Any conflict of interest the team has with the evaluation.	
For pilot studies onwards, the quality and suitability of any Implementation and Process Evaluation.	Instruments, collection methods, sampling procedures, etc.
<b>Evaluation budget and timeline</b>	
Upload of evaluation budget in YEF's budget template.	
Total budget cost.	
Clear and detailed timeline for the project.	

## Appendix C – Full proposal guidance

Completed by?	Section	Examples of things to consider
Project team (grantee)	Overview of the project, project budget and template	
Evaluator	Evaluation proposal – see Appendix B for guidance	
Project team and evaluator	Project and evaluation implementation plan	
	Roles and responsibilities or project and evaluator team members.	A description of the agreed roles and responsibilities for recruiting young people into the project and into the evaluation and for administering the outcome measurement tools.
	How the project team and evaluator will ensure good communication between the two teams and YEF.	Project management.
	Explanation for any discrepancies between the sample size for the evaluation and the number of children and young people receiving the project.	The team's understanding and assumptions of any contexts in which young people would receive the project outside of the context of the evaluation.
	Upload of a Gantt chart that displays a clear and detailed timeline for the project and evaluation.	
	Description of the planned project activities that will take place before the completed ethical review.	Confirmation that young people cannot participate in the project or the evaluation until the review is complete.
	Description of the progression criteria YEF will use to inform decision making about future project and evaluation funding.	
	Upload of draft diagrams of the project's theory of change and logic model.	
	Overview of what has been decided and agreed in regards to the data archive and what still needs to be resolved.	Who will be responsible for collecting what data, who will be responsible for communicating the data archive to children and young people and their families, the legal GDPR basis for processing data, the data sharing agreements that will need to be in place to support the evaluation.





## Have a question?

If you have a question or would like to discuss any of the points raised in this guidance please feel free to contact on:  
[evaluations@youthendowmentfund.org.uk](mailto:evaluations@youthendowmentfund.org.uk)





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This document was last updated in **March 2022**.

We reserve the right to modify the guidance at any time, without prior notice.

The Youth Endowment Fund Charitable Trust

Registered Charity Number: 1185413