YEF project team guidance

Delivering a YEF funded project

Contents

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 that aims to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence – especially those aged between 10 and 14-years old.

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 an independent evaluator, and published on our website – www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk.

These outputs are equally important to us and the set-up stage involves setting up the project delivery and evaluation in such a way that the needs of both are balanced.

Establishing a good working relationship with the independent evaluator is critical to achieving the second output, as is committing sufficient time to both delivering the intervention and engaging with and supporting the requirements of the evaluation.

This guidance provides information on what project teams should expect after successfully receiving funding through our Stage 2 application process.

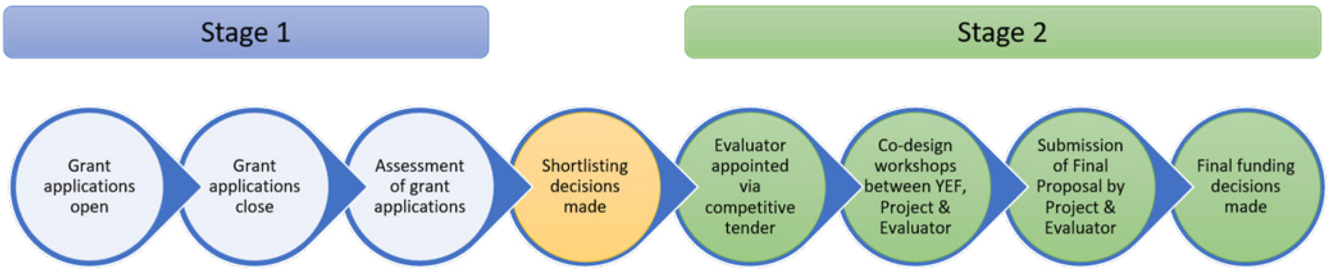
2. Themed grants rounds: process and timeline

This section provides an overview of the process and timeline of our themed grant rounds 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.

The two-stage application process

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

Figure 1. The YEF 'two-stage' grant application process



Stage 1: Grant application and assessment

The first stage involves the grant applicant completing an eligibility checklist and application form. Applications then go through several assessment stages and for some this will include an interview. Projects are then shortlisted at the end of Stage 1 based on YEF's funding criteria and initial approval by the YEF Grants and Evaluation Committee (GECo).

Stage 2: Evaluator appointment and set-up

Following the selection of promising projects, our Programme and Evaluation teams progress the project and its evaluation through the following stages:

- **Evaluator appointment:** our evaluation team designs the evaluation specification and commissions an evaluator through a competitive tendering process.
- **Co-design:** We then work closely with the project team and evaluator over several months to co-design and set-up the project plan, evaluation design and budget.
- **GECo sign-off:** The final proposal is submitted to GECo. If GECo awards funding, grant and evaluation agreements are put in place and an evaluation plan is published.

YEF governance

The final decision about what we fund and evaluate is taken by the YEF Board on the basis of the advice of the GECo and after the project and evaluation teams have submitted a final proposal.

Recommendations to the GECo are informed by the advice of our expert panel. The expert panel provides advice to our team to ensure that the work of the fund is informed by world-class expertise on youth offending and evaluation.

3. Overview of project delivery, reporting and data archiving

Following final funding decisions, the project and its evaluation progress through the following stages:

- **Project delivery:** There is usually a few months between the GECo approving the project and the project starting to allow for further planning, recruiting participants, delivering training and seeking ethical approval. The project team will then deliver the intervention and support the evaluators in carrying out the independent evaluation. Any challenges arising should be discussed with the Programme Manager as early as possible.

- **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 project team will also have the chance to comment on it. Following the review, the report will be published on our website – www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk.

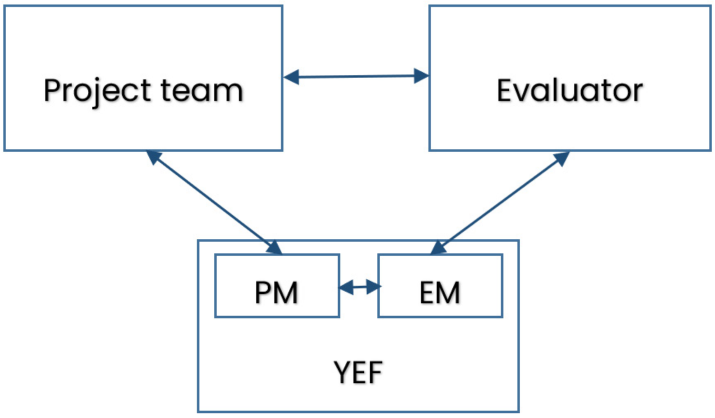
- **Data archiving:** At the end of the evaluation period (for pilot, efficacy and effectiveness studies) evaluators will securely transfer a single participant level dataset to the Department for Education. This dataset will need to contain: personal identifying data (e.g. name, gender, date of birth, 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. Links to all our guidance on the data archive can be found in section 6.

More detail is provided on each of these stages as well as roles and responsibilities in section 4.

4. Roles and responsibilities

For the project and evaluation to be successful the project team will need to have a strong working relationship with the evaluator and the YEF. 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 project team.

Figure 2. Communication between the project team, evaluator and the YEF



Below is a summary of the main responsibilities of each team. These are explained in more detail in the grant agreements:

The project team 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 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 evaluator will:

- Design the evaluation in collaboration with the project team and the YEF.
- Draft the evaluation and statistical analysis plans.
- Deliver the evaluation, including leading on data collection.
- Maintain a good relationship with the project team.
- Communicate challenges to the project team and the 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 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 project team.
- Support the evaluation design discussion during the set-up.
- Set up, manage and monitor the project grant.
- Provide support and mediate where challenges arise during project delivery.
- Support the project team during the reporting stage.

During the project set-up phase we'll work with the evaluator and project team to agree the details of how the project will be delivered, and the evaluation design. During the project delivery phase, it's expected that the project team and evaluator will work together without the need for our support.

If any issues arise during either phase that the project team and evaluator are unable to resolve, they should contact the PM. We're here to support and would rather know if things go wrong. We'll work with the project and evaluator to resolve things if possible. This will help to ensure the highest possible quality of project delivery and evaluation (see also Appendix A: Common challenges).

Further information

The following documents are available to download on our Resources for grantees webpage

- **Grantee-evaluator relationship policy** - our policy on the grantee-evaluator relationship, which will also be included in Schedule 3 of the Grant Agreement.
- **Glossary of evaluation terms** - common evaluation terms used in this guide.
- **Publication policy**

5. Project and evaluation delivery

Once the project and evaluation has been approved by the GECo and cleared by the evaluator's ethics panel, project teams can begin recruiting participants and delivering the project. The evaluation documents will usually have been published by the time project delivery starts, but there can sometimes be overlap with projects that have a particularly tight timeline.

Payments

Payments to projects are scheduled over the life of the project. We only make payments in line with the payment schedule included in the Grant Agreement.

If a payment is due and the preconditions for payment have been met, project teams should issue the YEF with a completed funding request form and relevant proof of spend. These documents should come from the lead organisation (the counterparty from the Grant Agreement). All payment requests and associated proof of spend[1] should be submitted via the YEF Community.

Project teams should use the monitoring form guidance to submit monitoring reports. These should be accompanied with appropriate supporting documentation, as specified in the preconditions for payment or agreed with the PM. Once the PM approves progress, our finance team will make a bank transfer.

If there has been a delay in achieving the preconditions for payment or completing the quarterly monitoring information, we may not be able to make the payment, so project teams should not submit a payment request until that point. We also encourage project teams to submit other useful outputs such as recruitment materials or examples of work where appropriate and possible.

If for any reason a precondition of payment is unlikely to be met, this should be discussed with the PM as soon as possible, and they can raise it with the EM if necessary. We would prefer to be made aware of any problems sooner rather than later, as this makes it more likely that we can find a resolution.

1 A letter on headed paper ratifying project spend for that period of time and signed by the relevant person(s) within the lead organisation. In most cases we will also want a PDF or Spreadsheet providing an overview of project payments made for the associated payment period

Variations

It's important that any variation to the project or evaluation is agreed with us. 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 When considering a variation request we'll take into account:

- **Project design** – the overall aims and the eligibility criteria for project participants should remain broadly the same. In addition, adaptations must be viable and sustainable and temporary or short-term project adaptions won't be funded.

- **Evaluation** – projects must be evaluated and where a project has to change we must still learn from it.

- **Budget**

- **Timescales**

- **Ethics** – the duty of care of children and young people taking part in YEF funded projects is paramount. Variations/adaptions must prevent harm and minimise disadvantage to children and young people in YEF funded projects.

Resolving challenges

Wherever possible, the PM and EM will work closely with the project team and evaluator to find a shared solution to any challenges that arise during the project delivery stage. Sometimes this may mean the project needs to be modified or the evaluation design changed. Occasionally, we will escalate the problem to the GECo for discussion and their decision will be final. If it is not possible to resolve a challenge, YEF funding for a project may need to be stopped. Further information is provided in clause 9 'Termination' in the grant agreement.

6. 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.

Evaluation reports

An evaluation report will be written on every project we fund. They're intended to 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.

The independent evaluator will submit their report to us following our evaluation template. Project teams will be asked to provide any comments or feedback on the report and, where possible, these comments will be incorporated into the final version. The report will be peer reviewed and published on our website. Project teams will be sent the final report prior to its publication. The final decision on the content and timing of evaluation report rests with the YEF.

Timeline

The time taken for the end of grant process will vary between projects. The sequence of events typically looks like:

1. Project is completed.
2. Evaluator submits initial draft report to the YEF (usually at least three months after last data collection).
3. Report is reviewed by the YEF and external experts (this is called 'peer review') and edited by the evaluator following their input.
4. Report is shared with project team for written comments.
5. The YEF and project team meet to discuss the report.
6. The YEF passes the project's comments to evaluator, who then makes further edits.
7. The YEF works with evaluator to ensure the report is as accessible as possible.
8. The YEF publishes the evaluation report (usually 12 months after end of project).

Data archive

Right now, we just don't know enough about the policies, programmes and approaches that successfully protect children from becoming involved in violence in the long-term. To find out what works, we need to understand the difference a project makes over time. That means we need to collect and store sensitive personal data so that we can follow the future progress of the children who've been supported by our projects. 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.

This will help researchers see how the projects we fund have changed young people's lives over the years that follow their participation. For our partners, this means that we'll need you to help us collect relevant information about the children you work with. We have robust systems and protocols to ensure we're keeping their information safe, from the point it's collected, to when it's accessed by future researchers. We use a secure data archive for all data. You can read more about it here. While the main responsibility for conducting research and storing personal information will be with the independent evaluators, it's important that you're happy to support them.

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 projects and evaluators here and our Data Protection Impact Assessment here.

What happens next?

We have developed a set of regranting principles from which we will make a judgement on whether to continue funding projects and evaluations beyond their original grant agreement. You can find further details about our regranting strategy here.

End of grant report

At the end of the project, we require submission of an End of Project report and a full set of accounts detailing final project expenditure against each budget line. We agree project budgets at the maximum likely expenditure so it is normal for there to be underspend against the agreed budget. This underspend must be returned to the YEF within 30 days of submitting the end of grant report.

7. Our approach to evaluation

Robust, independent evaluation is central to the our mission to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. This section explains in more detail some of our principles and expectations for the evaluations we commission. There's also a glossary of evaluation terms available here.

Principles of YEF evaluation

The existing UK evidence base on what we can do to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence is at an early stage. Our aim is to develop the evidence of what works. As such, every project we fund will be independently evaluated by a member of our Evaluator Panel. High-quality, yet proportionate evaluation, which provides real insight into the effectiveness of approaches to tackling serious violence is at the heart of our mission.

Our 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 project team as well as the YEF;
5. Be able to track change over time through long-term follow up.

The Early Intervention Foundation's (EIF) standards of evidence and 10 steps for evaluation success

EIF's standards of evidence

EIF's evidence standards are used to classify interventions and identify the ones that have been shown to improve one or more child outcomes. These evidence standards have heavily influenced our approach to evaluation, and projects are reviewed using these standards during the application process.[2]

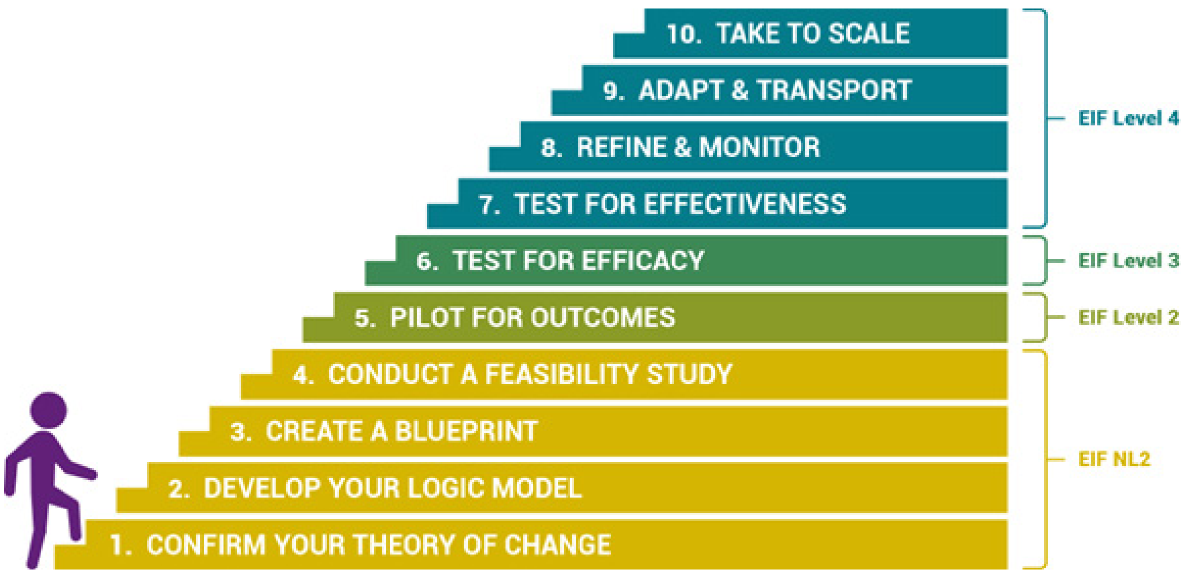
EIF's 10 steps for evaluation success

EIF's guide 10 steps for evaluation success breaks down the EIF evidence standards into a set of achievable evaluation steps that can be used to develop and establish an intervention's evidence (see Figure 4 for a visual representation)[3]. As with EIF's standards of evidence, the 10 steps guide has informed our approach to evaluation.

2 https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/eif-evidence-standards
3 https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/10-steps-for-evaluation-success

Ultimately, our goal 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 we fund will be at the stage of feasibility study, pilot, efficacy and effectiveness (steps 4, 5, 6 and 7).

Figure 4: EIF's 10 steps for evaluation success



Different types of YEF evaluation

Table 3 briefly summarises the main types of YEF evaluations, their purpose and features. More detail can be found in the evaluation glossary.

Table 3: Types of YEF evaluation

Design category	Purpose	When it would be appropriate	Common features
Feasibility	To test whether the project can achieve its intended outputs.	• When the project is at an early stage in its development, has undergone adaptations, or is being delivered in a different context. • When it would be useful to test evaluation/methodological decisions ahead of a more rigorous evaluation.	• Will investigate aspects of intervention feasibility such as implementation, recruitment, retention, reach and cost by tracking service usage.
Pilot	To investigate a project's potential for improving its intended child outcomes.	• When the project is feasible but has little prior evidence. • Ahead of an efficacy study to test aspects of the evaluation design.	• Will involve testing for outcomes and piloting outcome measures. • The majority of YEF pilots will involve a small scale experiment to test randomisation procedures and estimate likely effect.
Efficacy	To determine if an intervention works under ideal circumstances ("can this work?").	• When the project has promising, or preliminary, evidence. • When the project has evidence of efficacy in another context. • When the project is amenable to an efficacy evaluation (e.g. considering delivery capacity and the feasibility of different designs).	• Involves an estimate of impact using an experimental or quasi-experimental design; • Implementation and process evaluation (IPE) to understand causal mechanisms. • Ideal delivery, led closely by the developer, on a highly selected population.
Effectiveness	To determine if an intervention works in real-world circumstances ("does this work?").	• When a project has evidence from an efficacy evaluation that it can work under ideal circumstances. • When a project is ready to be delivered in a real-world setting (e.g. considering organisational capacity and readiness).	• Involves an estimate of impact using an experimental or quasi-experimental design. • IPE to understand delivery at scale. • Real world delivery on a representative population, and large sample size.

YEF outcome measurement

We're committed to measuring youth violence and offending both through self-report measures and the data archive.

The way a project is hypothesised to impact on offending and violence outcomes is described in a project's theory of change and logic model. Many projects will be intervening early with children and young people and aiming to address common factors that might influence the likelihood of later violence and offending, such as attitudes and behaviour.

We're therefore interested in measuring broader cognitive and behavioural outcomes for several reasons, including:

- They shed light on how the project works;
- To ensure it's possible to understand the short-term and intermediate outcomes of a project;
- As predictors of our ultimate goal (of preventing violence), wider behavioural outcomes provide early indications of the potential effectiveness of the activity we fund.

Choosing outcome measures

Project teams will work with evaluators and our team to choose appropriate outcome measures for the project. Our evaluations must be consistent with EIF's evidence standards, and - to meet the criteria for Level 2 - these measures must be reliable and valid, where:

- **validity** refers to the extent to which it measures what it claims to measure; and
- **reliability** refers to how stable, consistent, or reproducible a measure is.

In addition, to meet the criteria for Level 2, measurement tools must:

- **be standardised and validated independently** of the study and the methods for standardisation are published; and
- **capture the project's intended outcomes** and be appropriate for the population the project is working with, considering the age, culture and ability of participants.

<u>For an evaluation to meet EIF's evidence standards, scales and measures that are used must not be amended. This includes adding or deleting items, changing any wording or altering the order in which items are captured from participants.</u>

Core measures

Although each project will have its own outcomes, we require common measurement of outcomes wherever possible to ensure our evaluations are as comparable as possible and to maximise learning across the fund. For this reason, we have a set of reliable and valid core measures that will be used in every evaluation, but which may vary by grant round or theme. Examples of the core measures project teams may be required to use are:

- **The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire** (SDQ; Goodman, 1997[4]); and
- **The Self-Report Delinquency scale** (SRD; Smith & McVie, 2003[5])

We have separate guidance on each of these core measures and how they should be delivered.

How many outcomes?

It's important not to capture too many different outcomes for two main reasons. Firstly, the potential burden it places on participants and the associated risk that some may drop-out. Secondly, capturing many outcomes is seen as 'fishing' for outcomes, and is considered poor practice. For this reason, project teams will work with the evaluator and our team to agree one primary outcome and a small number of secondary outcomes that are closely aligned with the project's logic model and consider our core measures.

What if projects want to use a measure that is not one of the YEF's core measures?

This will need to be discussed with our team and the evaluator. It may be that project teams can use it alongside the measures we agree with the evaluator, if it is sufficiently reliable, valid and predictive of later violence and offending. However, this will need to be balanced against the risk of over-burdening participants and the question of how the results will be interpreted. Ultimately, the evaluator and ourselves need to approve the choice of outcome measures used in the project.

Delivering the outcome measures

The independent evaluator will usually lead on the delivery of the outcome measures. However, project teams will be expected to support the evaluator to ensure outcomes are captured from all participants, and will need to factor in sufficient time to do this.

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4 Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A research note. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 38, 581–586.
5 Smith DJ, McVie S. (2003). Theory and method in the Edinburgh study of youth transitions and crime. British Journal of Criminology, 43: 169–95

Evaluators will be expected to deliver, score and analyse the outcome measures in a consistent way to enable comparison of results across projects. They will also be expected to deliver, score and analyse the data 'blind' to determine whether a participant has received the treatment or not, as this is good practice and will reduce bias in the results (see definition of 'blinding' in the glossary of evaluation terms).

For more information about our outcome measures please visit our website.

8. Other things to be aware of

This section summarises some of the other aspects of our grants which is useful to know about.

Financial audit

We may ask projects to take part in a financial audit at any time. Furthermore, at the end of the grant, we expect projects to submit a financial account of monies spent, including any unspent funds that will then be returned to the YEF.

Our financial audits currently include:

- Review of management accounts and balance sheet
- Review of budgets
- Interview with the relevant organisation manager
- Review of financial controls such as bank reconciliations, number of signatories, payroll controls, etc.
- Review of controls on YEF restricted funds and grant milestones achieved.

Partnership working and external funding

The YEF was founded with a ten-year endowment of £200m from the Home Office with a clear expectation that additional external income would be leveraged as a result.

The Home Office has asked that we record all sources of funding for the projects we support to ensure their full value is captured. This includes any funding contributed to the project by the grantee and/or the grantee's funders.

Depending on the results of the project evaluation and the decisions of the GECo, we may also support those organisations looking to scale up their work in seeking financial support.

As a publicly funded charity, we communicate our work through a variety of media. We may, therefore, request that grantees provide us with images that can be used in our communications materials and/or quotes that enable us to communicate the work that we're funding. In addition, we may sometimes hold events for current and potential YEF supporters at which we may request grantee support.

Brand guidance

To read the YEF's brand guidance, please click here.

Appendix A – Common challenges

Below is a summary of some common challenges that arise during the delivery of YEF-funded projects. If grantees encounter any of them they should notify us and the evaluator as early as possible.

Not recruiting enough participants

The size of the project is carefully designed to answer the research questions. Therefore, recruiting and retaining the agreed number of participants is critical for the success of the project. If fewer than the agreed number of participants are recruited, then this will usually lead to a pro-rata reduction in the grant and an amendment to the payment schedule. 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 will be terminated.

Recruiting participants to a project that also involves an evaluation may be new to grantees. For this reason, it is really important that grantees work closely with the evaluator to agree a plan for communicating to participants the importance and value of both the intervention and the evaluation, and what both involve.

If grantees have already recruited, or are working with some potential participants, grantees will need to discuss with us and the evaluator whether they can be involved in the project. They might be able to be involved but only if they meet the eligibility criteria agreed with the evaluator, and also sign-up to be involved in the evaluation.

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 and more likely to drop-out than others. We would expect grantees 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' (see glossary of evaluation terms). 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's important that the timeline for collecting data and the responsibilities of the grantee and evaluator are made clear from the start. Measurement tools (such as surveys and interview guides) 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 order to deliver robust evidence of effectiveness, results from control participants or settings, and those that have not complied, are just as important as results from project participants. It's 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. If grantees fail to get some participants to complete outcome measures this is called 'attrition' (see glossary of evaluation terms)

Poor communication with the evaluator

Good communication and collaboration with the evaluator are essential throughout the project for it to be successful. Investing enough time to fully engage with the evaluation design and delivery will help. It's also important to carefully plan how grantees and evaluators 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 – Common documents to be developed with the evaluator

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	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.

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 us on:

programmes@youthendowmentfund.org.uk

YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

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This document was last updated in **July 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