

Northern

'Evaluation, learning and change
in the public sector'





Include, Engage, Share...



Northern

Using hindsight effectively

Dr Janice Mcmillan, John Fenwick
Northumbria University



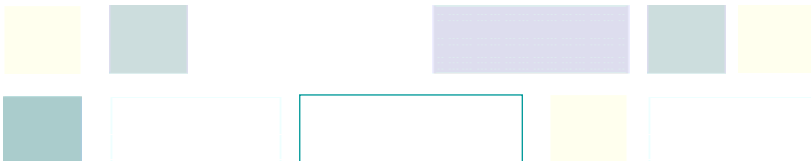
Some Questions

- 1) How do public service organisations typically learn?
- 2) Why do public organisations fail to learn?
- 3) Should we shift the focus from organisational learning to organisational amnesia?
- 4) Does the public organisation learn or merely comply?
- 5) Is learning dangerous?



Our Recent Research

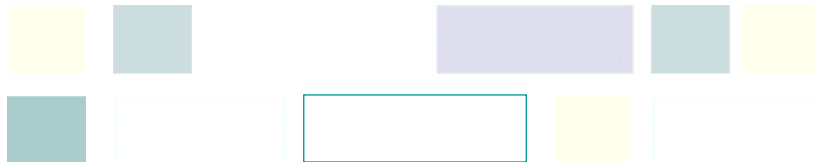
- Issues of organisational learning amongst senior public managers (2005-6)
- Leadership and local political management (2001-6)
- Reorganising English local government (2007)



1 How Do Public Service Organisations Typically Learn?

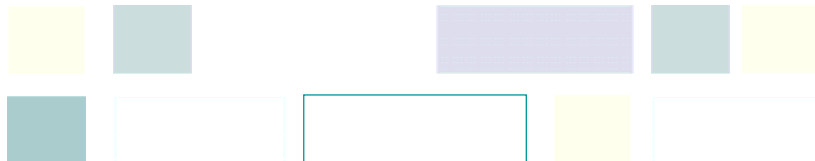
- ‘Different sorts of knowledge’ and perceived legitimacy: does difference become hierarchy?
- Sources of learning: when does information become learning?
- Context: the salience of public bureaucracy
- The myth of empowerment
- A ‘continuing voyage of self-discovery...’

- Culture, structure, status and hierarchy...
- The 'knowledge management structure' (Walczak, 2005)
- Culture (political, generational...)
- Status
- Informal networks and gender
- Belligerent males... 'tolerance of underperformance' within unreconstructed paternalism
- Power and hierarchy



2 Why Do Public Organisations Fail to Learn?

- A recurring theme in organisational research
- Real and perceived barriers include organisational structure, individual power and legislative requirements
- ‘Fear, blame and caution’
- Gender as a barrier and an influence:
 - access to individual learning
 - old boys’ network: buddy language
 - journeys to culture
- ‘Bad’ learning? ‘...brings baggage to the organisation... that just gets bigger and heavier and gets in the way’

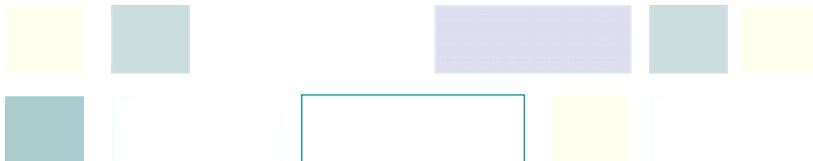


3 Organisational Learning and Organisational Amnesia: Just Another Groundhog Day?

- Decentralisation and localism
- Listening to the public: do me a favour, Gov'
- Strategic regionalism
- Policy transfer and policy failure
- Structures and cultures
- Individual leadership and British political values
- The failed idea of elected regional government - finding salvation through more reorganisation?

4 Learning or Compliance?

- Learning to comply:
 - in knowledge capture avoidance of risk
 - ‘unlearning’ in transformational processes
- Complying to learn:
 - ‘forced’ learning through ‘false’ partnerships
 - learning is journey and destination – but “what can you do with it”?
 - comply first and learn later? Learning cannot be measured as an outcome of compliance



5 Is Learning Dangerous?

- Government prescription defines which learning is valued
- Learning and unlearning

Specific problems of 'gendered' learning in public sector management:

- Indirect and seen as negative
- Avoidance of gender assumptions in learning
- Is de-gendering desirable?
- Dualisms (and not only those of gender) do have a role as a basis of understanding learning in public sector organisations



So what's the problem? Some unfashionable observations...

- Organisations find it difficult to reconcile individual learning with organisational control: and public organisations find it especially difficult
- Networks and partnerships may limit rather than extend learning, under new forms of regulation
- Not all learning is good
- Compliance is not synonymous with learning
- External learning is not in itself a 'positive'
- Internal learning is undervalued
- Organisations often don't know how to learn



*Assessing impact and the importance of
Strategic Added Value*

Tom Foster of York Consulting



York Consulting – Who are we?

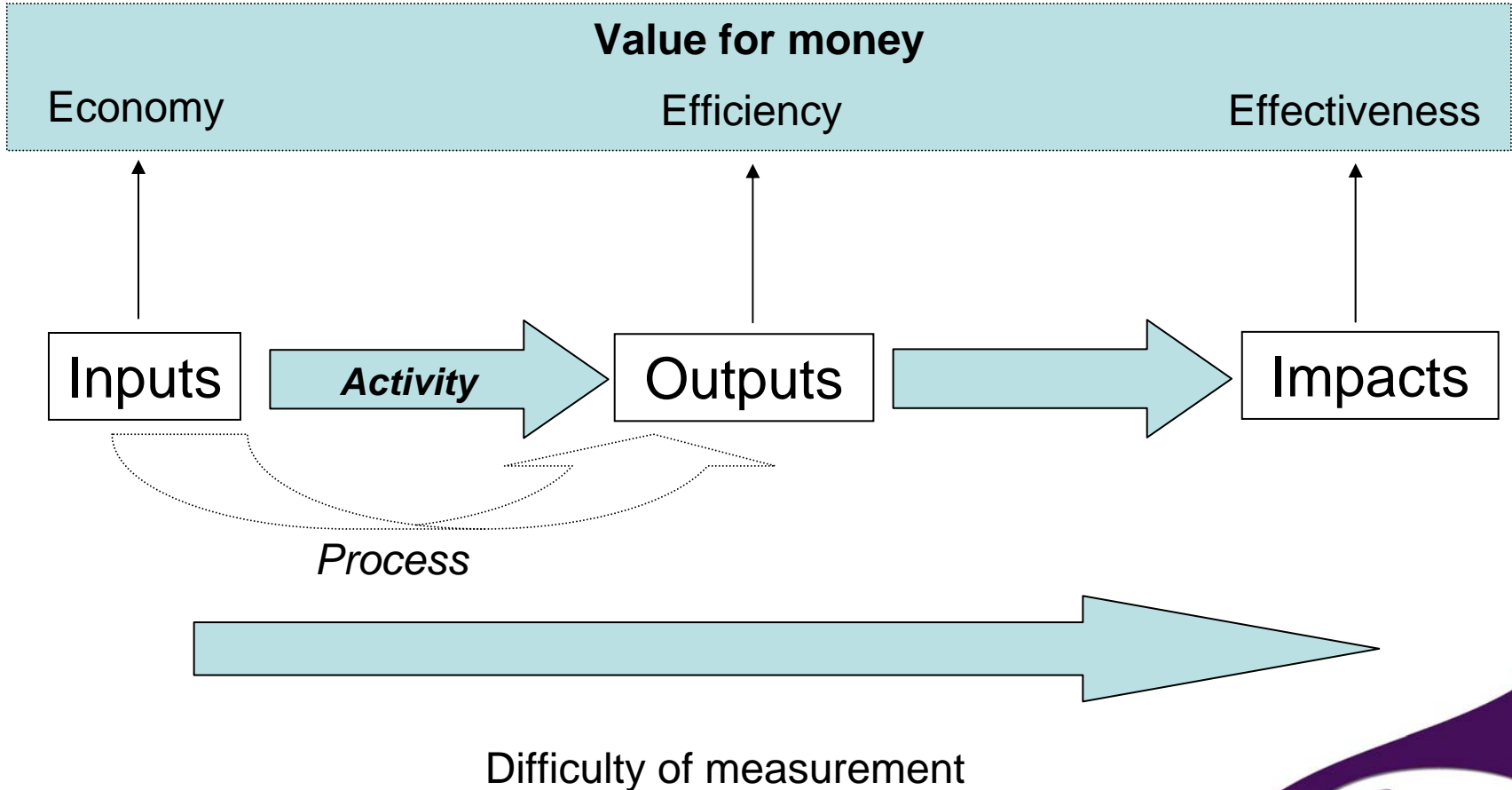
- Medium sized skills and economic development consultancy
- Based in Leeds and Edinburgh, but serving national markets
- Key sectors include:
 - » Regeneration and economic development
 - » Learning and Skills
 - » Education and young people
- Key clients include:
 - » Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG);
 - » Department for Children Schools and Families
 - » RDAs such as One Northeast
 - » Local authorities



A quick overview of the talk

- Brief reminder on evaluation basics
 - A review on the challenges of understanding impact
 - The use of qualitative tools to understand impact
 - Some thoughts on best practice when doing this
 - Wrap up and questions.
-
- Focus of examples will be Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
 - » This is who we work with and know best
 - » Necessarily an economic focus
 - » Hopefully some generalised lessons/thoughts
 - Will be a private sector perspective on evaluation, working to tight timescales and sometimes limited budgets
 - Should last 20 minutes with time for questions

A basic evaluation model



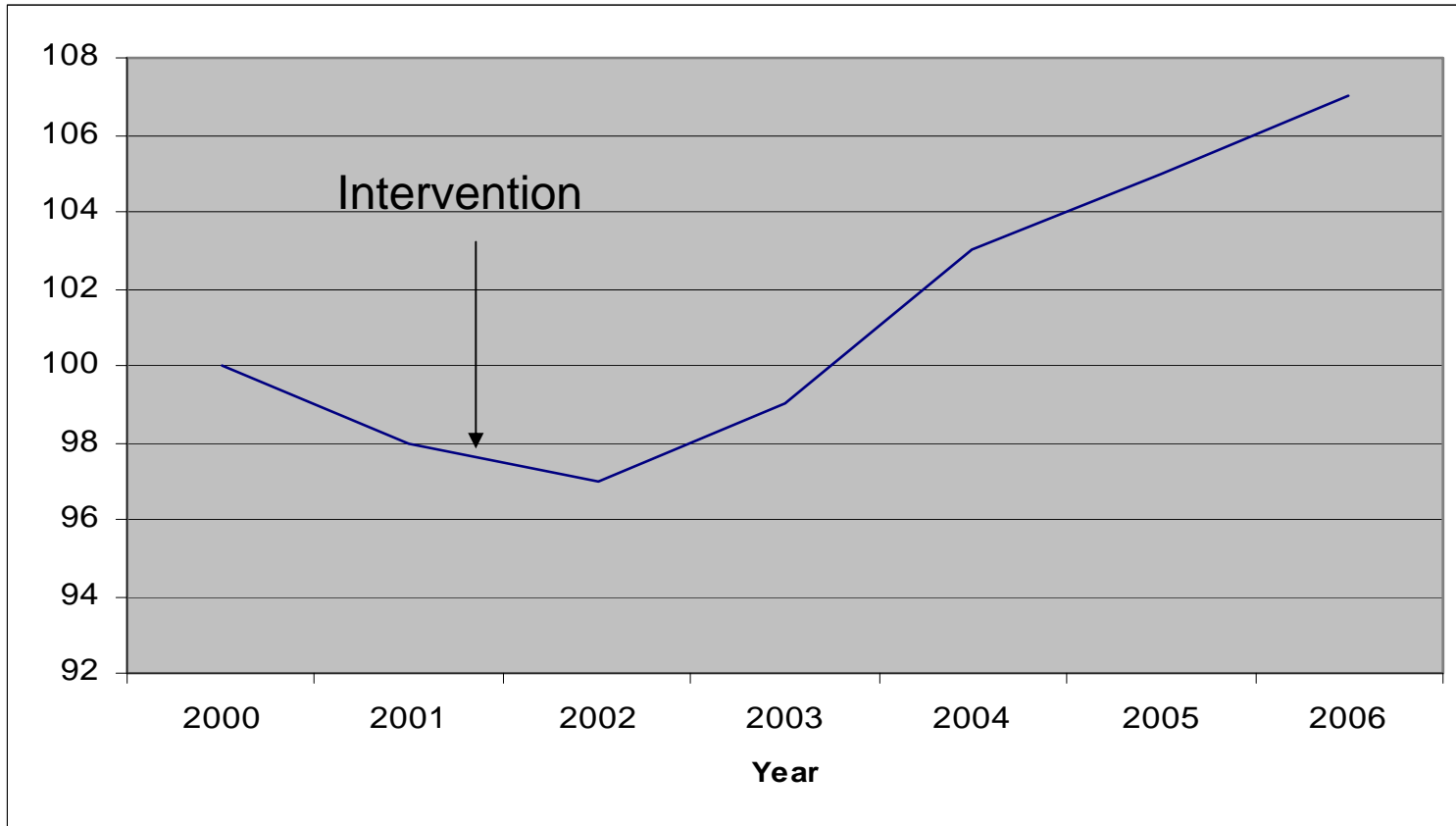


Measuring impact, the holy grail of evaluation

- Measuring inputs & outputs and understanding process relatively straight forward
- However, significant challenges for evaluators in trying to understand impact
- We work in economic development, so people like to talk about impact in data terms:
 - » Regional development agencies
 - Raising regional GVA levels
 - » “The Northern Way”
 - Closing the North–South GVA output gap
 - » Neighbourhood Renewal
 - “Narrowing the gap”
- Some of the challenges in understanding impact from data:
 - » Correlation and causation
 - » The economist’s lag
 - » Attribution of impact

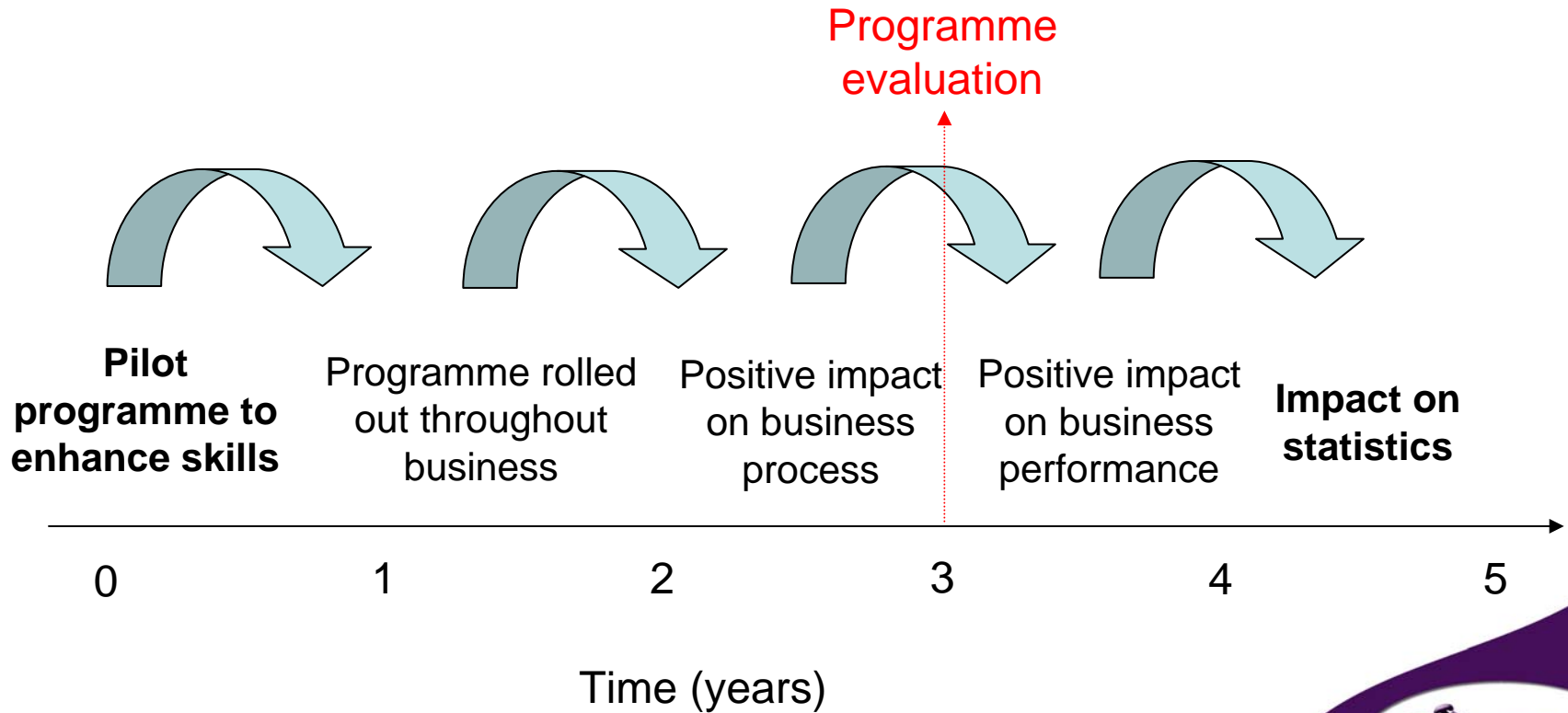


Post hoc, ergo propter hoc



The economist's lag

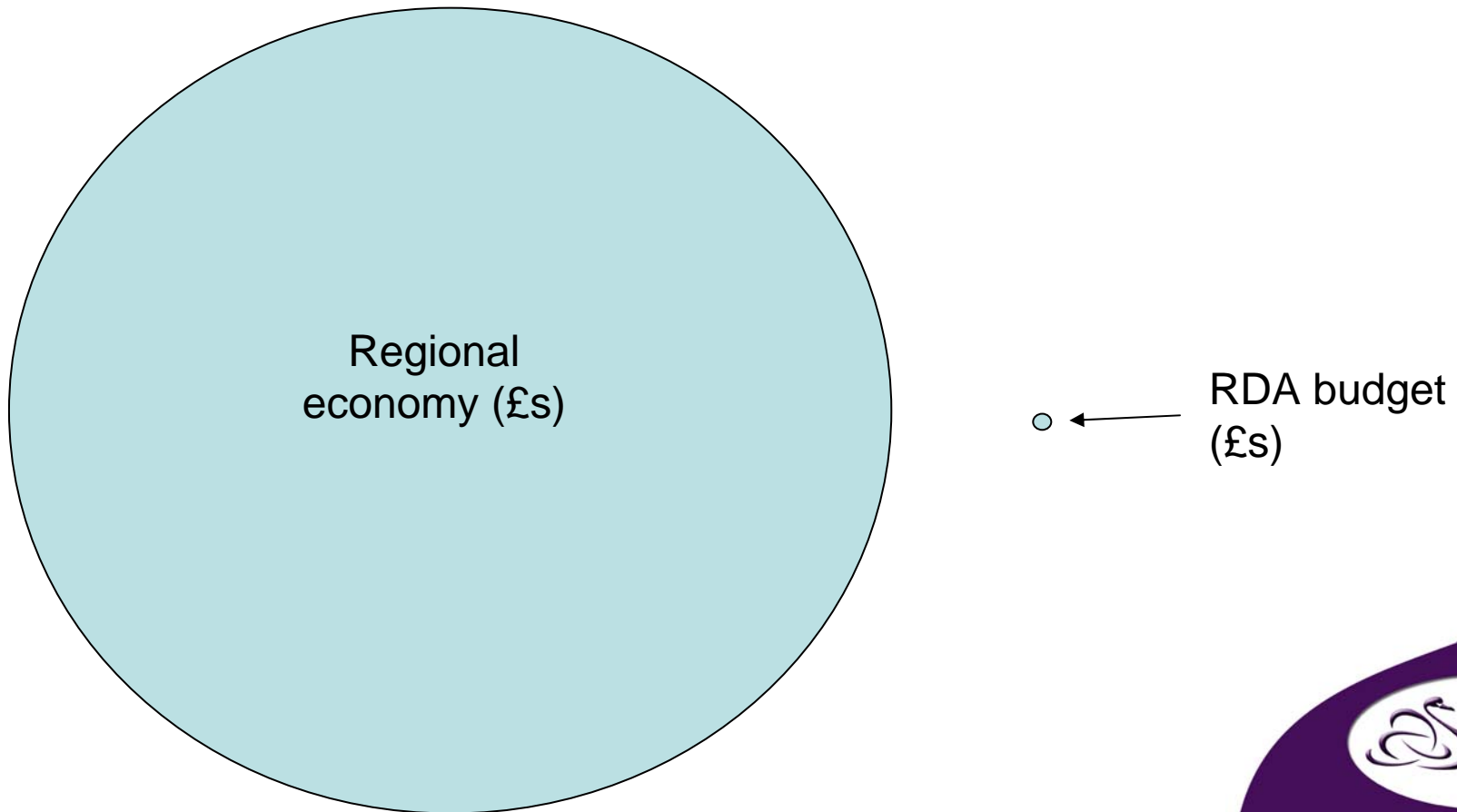
“An economist’s lag is a politician’s nightmare” – George Schultz,
US Treasury Secretary





Attribution of impact can be difficult

*“Difficulties in imputing causality hamper understanding (of impact)” –
RDA Impact Framework*





The importance of qualitative assessments

- The RDA impact framework notes that:

“The impact of RDAs can only be fully understood if their contribution to wider outcomes is taken into account”

- So, given this, and based on the revised remit for the RDAs the concept of Strategic Added Value (SAV) was developed
- Examples of Strategic Added Value include:
 - » Strategic leadership
 - » Strategic influence and partnership working
 - » Leverage (time and money)
 - » Partnership working/synergy
 - » Engagement





How do we measure Strategic Added Value?

- Some challenges to measuring and understanding SAV
 - » Definitional challenge – what actually is SAV?
 - » No uniform approach to measurement – often tacked on the end of evaluations
 - » Largely, SAV can't be measured, empirically, so hard to make like for like comparisons
 - » It's a subjective measure, often based on opinion
- A variety of qualitative methods to help understanding SAV
 - » Face to face consultations
 - » Focus groups
 - » Workshops
 - » Document/data review
- Incentive for consultants to think much harder about how to understand and measure SAV effectively



Measuring SAV effectively

- Key factors in understanding/measuring SAV:
 - » Triangulation of methods – do different research methods give us the same messages?
 - » Triangulation of data sources – do different stakeholders give us the same messages?
 - » Consideration of additionality/deadweight – what would have happened anyway?
 - » Speaking to the right people – what do business people on the ground think, for example?
 - » Are we looking to measure SAV effects at the right time?
- These are just some outline thoughts, there will be plenty of other considerations

Take home messages

- Measuring impact is challenging, but we have to do it
- There are difficulties with understanding the impact of government spend from top down data sources
- So, the use of qualitative concepts to measure impact, such as SAV, are increasingly important
- It's an emerging field for economic development consultants, with plenty of scope for improvement

Thanks for listening.

Any questions, comments or ideas?

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Coffee and a Danish?





Meeting the practical demands of programme evaluation

Kerry Aldred of ONE North East,
and Neil Shaw of EKOS Consulting



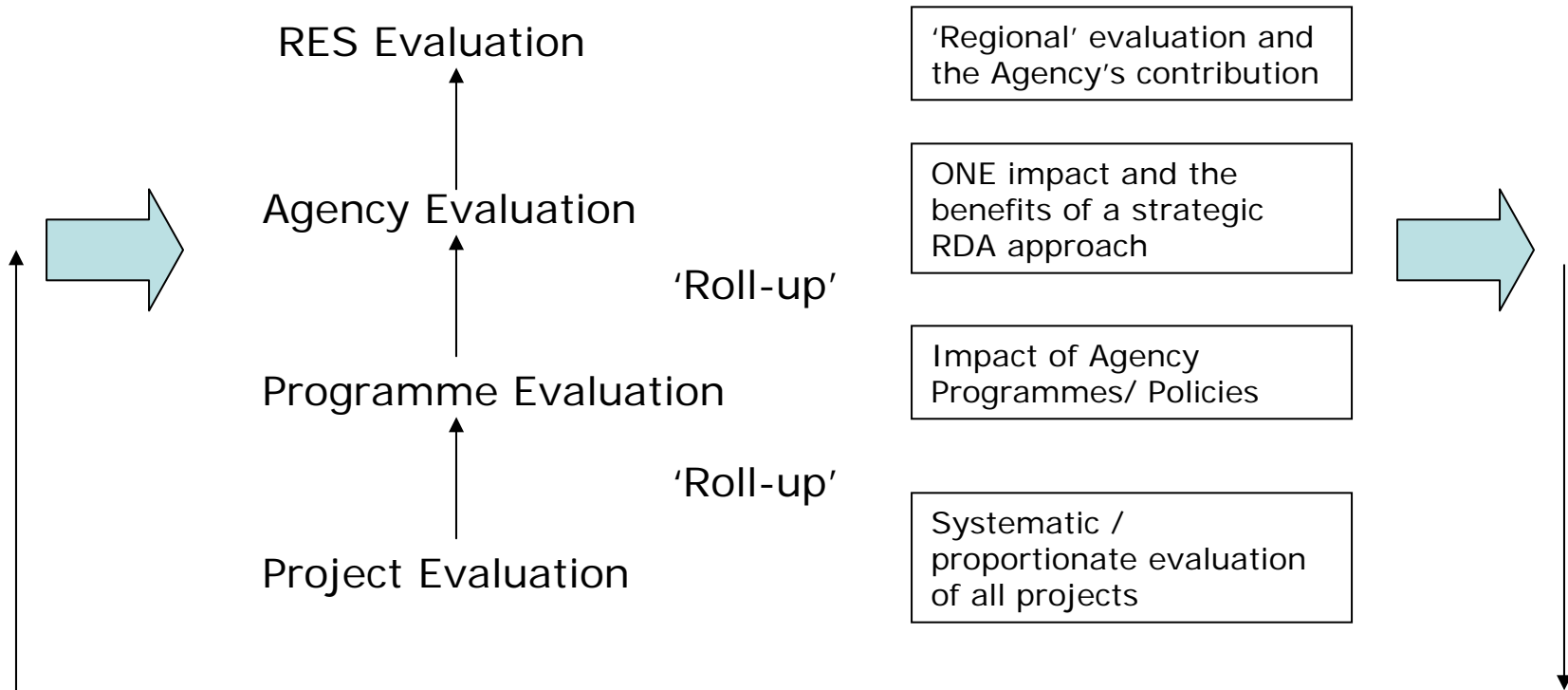
Purpose in Life

- One NorthEast needs to understand what contribution it has made and what difference has been made to the region
 - **RES Challenges**
 - Increase GVA per capita from 80% to 90% national average
 - Create between 18,000 and 22,000 net new businesses
 - Provide employment for between 61,000 and 73,000 more people above current levels

ONE Programme Structure

| 3 key priorities | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Business | | | People | | | Place | | | | |
| 10 programmes | | | | | | | | | | |
| Innovation, Industry & Science | Business | Enterprise | Leadership | Skills & Higher Education | Economic Inclusion | Physical Regeneration | Culture & Tourism | Rural & Environment | Promoting the Region | |
| 30 activities | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategy for Success | Business Support | Future Entrepreneurs | Regional Leadership | Graduates & Productivity Regional | Economic Inclusion | Urban Regeneration Companies | Cultural & Creative Infrastructure | Rural | Regional Image Strategy | |
| Design & Product Innovation | Business Investment & Finance | Start up Support | RES Implementation | Employer Skills Offer | Worklessness | Regeneration Initiatives | Regional Tourism Infrastructure | Environment | Tourism Marketing | |
| Newcastle Science City | Manufacturing & Productivity | Attracting Entrepreneurs | | Skills for Priority Sectors | | Transport & Planning | | | | |
| | Sector Development | | | Business & Young People | | Regional Housing Strategy | | | | |
| | ICT & E-Business | | | Skills & Higher Education Infrastructure | | | | | | |
| Northern Way | | | | | | | | | | |

One NorthEast Approach to Evaluation



Defining a Programme

Programmes are distinct from projects:

- Projects are more attuned to outputs, whereas for programmes the main objectives are outcomes
- There should be an additional benefit through delivery of a programme
- ‘Strategic Added Value’ is very important at programme level

Focusing on what matters

Impact Question

What impact have RDA interventions had in improving their regions' and UK economic and competitiveness and in securing sustainable economic development, regeneration and business growth in the region? What lessons can be learned and applied?

| RDA funding & activities | Projects | Programmes / Themes | Regional |
|--|--|--|---|
| What is the pattern of RDA spend, activities and leverage? | What are the gross and net outputs from RDA funded projects and what can be said about their outcomes – individually and collectively? | What has the RDA achieved through its programmes (with partners as appropriate) in meeting RES objectives? | How far have the regions moved towards meeting the RES objectives? What has been the impact of the RDA in contributing to the RES objectives? |

Learning Questions

Which interventions work best and under what circumstances? What is the added value of working through programmes? How can we improve the effectiveness of RDA spend?

Evaluation Approach

- Encouraged thinking is moving to outcome & impact focus – monitoring is not everything!
- Logic chains are the basis to link what we do with what we achieve
- Theory of change approach to evaluation

A Standard Approach

Programme evaluation core questions include:

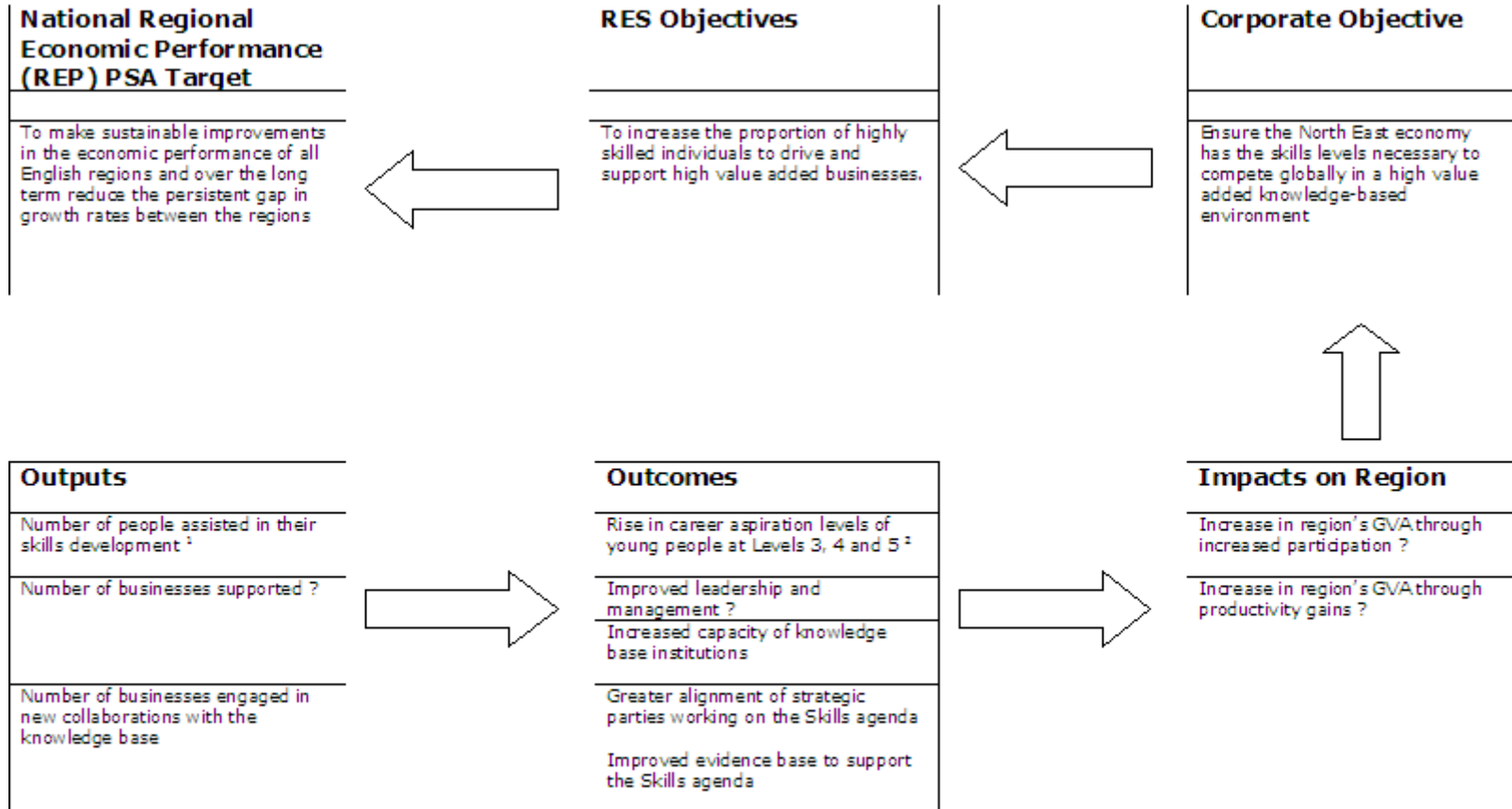
- What was the rationale/evidence base for the programme (review the logic chain)?
- What **net** economic impact has the programme achieved?
- What is the nature and scope of SAV for the programme?
- What are the lessons that can be drawn from the programme to date?

How we are getting there

- Bottom up - making evaluation an integral part of projects from development to delivery
- Training on evaluation across the Agency
- Performance Frameworks
- A timetable of commissioning for programme evaluation: programme and consultant working together

A Performance Framework

Skills



¹ In Strategically Important Sectors - Process Industries; Healthcare & Health Sciences; Energy & Environmental Technologies; Digital & Creative Industries; Automotive; Knowledge Intensive Business Services; Defence & Marine; Tourism & Hospitality; Food and Drink Industries

² Young people – People aged below 19, and then 19 to 25 for higher level skills

Putting it into Practice

The Regional Skills Partnership Evaluation

We would succeed if we could:

- Highlight successes and opportunities for the management team
- Illustrate effective partnership working and potential
- Demonstrate impact of RSP's work and ways to ensure attribution in future
- Provide a forward action plan

Putting it into Practice

Evaluation Overview

- First evaluation of an RSP! National interest...
- 2 important strands
 - Effectiveness of management team
 - Impact of the RSP
- How far have RSP objectives been realised
- Relationships between Partners and their relative contributions
- Determine outcomes and impact

SAV themes

- “RDAs are in a natural position to lead and coordinate discussions with partners and to influence the design and delivery of government policy and programmes through working with Departments. RDAs are increasingly active in non-project activities that do not produce traditional outputs, and so capturing this ‘**catalytic**’ and ‘**influencing**’ role is essential to full monitoring of RDA performance.. the RDAs will report on the extent to which their activities contribute to each aspect of the PSA target on a **quantitative** and **qualitative** basis as part of their contribution to Strategic Added Value (SAV).”

RDA CORPORATE PLANS FOR 2005-08 TASKING FRAMEWORK

SAV for this project

- Use three types/measures:
 - Strategic/catalytic activity
 - Increasing co-ordination, alignment and partnership
 - Improving intelligence, influencing and awareness raising

Putting it into Practice

Role of Management Team (1)

- Desk Research
- Management Team perspective
- Executive Partners' perspective
- Wider Stakeholders
- Best practice
- Second interview with Management

Putting it into Practice

Impact of the RSP (2)

- Desk research existing resources
- Analysis
- Consultation/validation
- Report
- Action Plan

Putting it into Practice

Issues

- Management Review in 3 weeks!
- Performance Expectations and Documentation
- Defined Expectations of RSP additional to partners
- Attribution of outcomes
- Monitoring and management of progress/outputs/outcomes
- Rapidly changing policy environment – Leitch!

Putting it into Practice

Pragmatic Approach to Method/Reporting

- Qualitative and 'Distance Travelled' approach to Management Team performance
- Comparators with other RSP approaches
- Establish context of overall progress in NE
- Establish RSP strategies and actions
- Look for attribution of 'RSP' tasks/activities
- Look for 'evidence' of impact from partnership and from Partnership

Putting it into Practice

Results:

- Can't do without the team as a 'pole' for the RSP, even if role changes
- Evidence of Partnership development through RSP
- Can't determine direct impact - attribution
- Evidence of influence
- Contributes to SAV aims

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New thinking
Paul Sutherland of think M.





Your thoughts?...

The use of online research

think M.

Making ripples





Do you believe
on-line research is a
vital part of the
research toolset
today?...

Yes...

88%

think M.

Making ripples



What percentage of
your research
involves on-line
methodology?...

60% said...

< 10%

think M.

Making ripples



Methods you have used in support of developing or evaluating public services?...

DIY survey with 3rd party software...
38%

None...
33%

Professionally hosted survey ...
29%

Blogs/ Retained panels
13%

Focus groups/ think tanks...
8%

think M.

Making ripples





Which methods do you think are appropriate for testing online public services?...

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Professionally hosted survey ... | 73% |
| Blogs/ community response sites... | 54% |
| Retained/ managed panels ... | 50% |
| On-line focus groups | 46% |
| DIY survey... | 34% |

think M.

Making ripples



Perceptual barriers?...

think M.

Making ripples



Practical for
accessing
perceptions of older
public service
users?...

think M.

Relevant...

50%

Making ripples



What do you think are the two main barriers?...

Lack of experience/ awareness...
58%

Accessing the right sample...
58%

Concerns of quality of the results ...
42%

Data security
15%

Cost...
8%

think M.

Making ripples





Fresh thinking...

think M.

Making ripples





accessing
perceptions of older
public service
users?...

Relevant...

50%

think M.

Making ripples





Did you know?...

Lack of experience/ awareness...
58%

Accessing the right sample...
58%

Concerns of quality of the
results ...
42%

Data security
15%

Cost...
8%

think M.

Making ripples





think M.

Your ideas are welcome....



....Paul@think-M.co.uk

think marketing

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Close & thanks

