ADEPT LIVELABS

ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs

White Paper #3

May 2021

A new approach to Monitoring and Evaluation

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A NEW APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Introduction

The ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs Programme is a two-year, £22.9m project funded by the Department for Transport that will run until November 2021. Eight local authorities and their partners are working to develop new SMART approaches across communications, materials, energy solutions and mobility. As a government funded project, there is a requirement to demonstrate that the money allocated is being well-spent, delivering valuable learning and future tangible benefits to the highways sector.

A new approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the Live Labs programme of innovation was approved by the Commissioning Board. This paper describes the objectives, methodology and benefits of the process adopted, providing a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of similar initiatives.

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Based on academic research, industry best practice and client experience, Proving Services Ltd has developed sector-leading, research-based tools and processes for the evaluation of innovation and business change projects and programmes at all stages of the project lifecycle. This enables confident and informed decision-making and provides a prioritised focus for project performance improvement. The process is designed to deliver timely, accurate and useful assessments without unnecessary bureaucracy and cost.

The Proving evaluation framework is based on research into Benefits Realisation Management, undertaken by academics at Cranfield University School of Management. The research conclusions were developed into the Proving methodology and toolkit (Value Analyser) which has been used extensively by both the public and private sectors over the last 18 years, including:

- **Communications sector (Sky, EE and BBC) –** innovation and business change project portfolio reviews.
- **Data analysis and management (Office for National Statistics) –** deployment of Proving toolkit and methodology for major project gateway assessment.
- **Central government (Home Office, Ministry of Justice, MOD) –** major project, programme and portfolio reviews.
- **Local government (Future Highways Research and VfM Benchmarking Group) –** the evaluation of strategic programmes and Value for Money (VfM) performance of the highways sector and individual local authorities.

Live Labs evaluation and monitoring

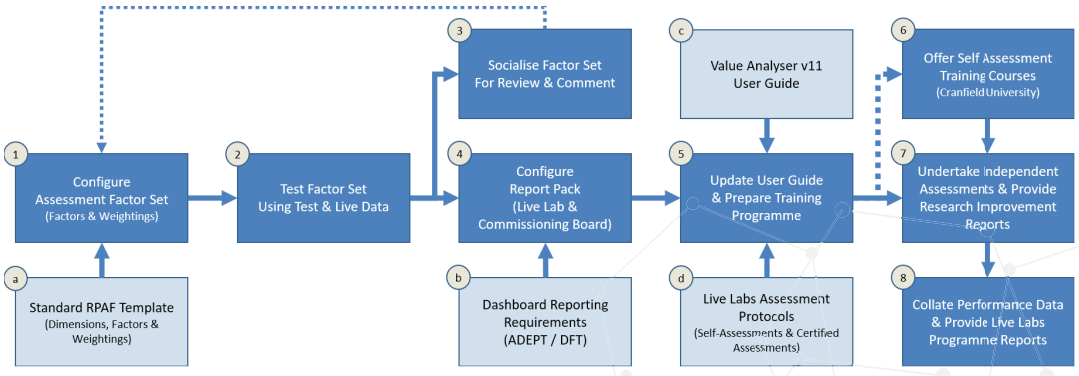
Proving Services were commissioned to perform the monitoring and evaluation role for the ADEPT Live Labs programme, assessing the progress and performance of each project over the two and half year investment period. This role had a number of key objectives:

1. To monitor performance and progress for each project at regular six-monthly interviews and report the findings to the Live Labs Commissioning Board.
2. To quickly identify where intervention and support by the Live Labs programme team is required.
3. To help ensure the Live Labs develop the necessary business and benefits cases to support the future deployment and funding of the innovations explored. This includes the identification the future service, social, economic and commercial opportunities derived from the research.
4. To help identify where synergies and improved collaboration across the programme may deliver improved outcomes and reduce any duplications of effort.
5. To help ensure the learning across the programme is fully captured. This includes areas such as procurement; the process of delivering innovation, partner selection and collaboration; and project management for innovation projects.

The approach to Live Labs evaluation

The approach to evaluating the Live Labs projects was designed to be light-touch and pragmatic, focusing on monitoring performance in achieving the stated objectives of the programme. This approach replaces the standard formal and detailed assessments typically required for government-funded projects, resulting in a process that is often bureaucratic and costly with an emphasis on the assessment of inputs (cost and resources) rather than the realisation of valuable outcomes.

Figure 1 provides a route map of the adopted Live Labs evaluation process.



* RPAF – Research Performance Assessment Framework

Stages 1-4 were critical in developing a weighted assessment factor suite that reflected the objectives, priorities and potential challenges of the Live Labs programme. The following evaluation factors were agreed.

Attractiveness

1. **Learning objectives clarity**
2. **Strategic alignment and contribution**
3. **Benefits analysis and certainty (including emerging dis-benefits)**
4. **Constraints (cost, timescales and resources) analysis and certainty**
5. **Scalability and flexibility of project**
6. **Consistency and coherence with the programme**
7. **Providers and partners (willingness, availability and technical readiness)**
8. **Stakeholder support and sponsorship**

Achievability

1. **Complexity (inherent risk management)** -
   scale, novelty, diversity, interdependencies and volatility
2. **Governance and accountability**
3. **Partner management**
4. **Resources competence and capacity**
5. **Communications strategy**
6. **Alternatives certainty**
7. **Future affordability, transferability and scalability**

As the Live Labs programme progressed, the factor set weightings were updated to reflect the changing priorities and focus. For example, in the early stages of the project, achievability was critical. As the project progressed, the delivery of benefits and the transferability of the innovation into the sector became increasingly important.

An independent baseline evaluation was conducted by Proving at the start of the programme and then repeated every six months. In between, the Live Labs were required to complete self-assessments using the same framework and factor set. These were collated and reviewed by Proving and the conclusions reported into the Commissioning Board. The Proving software toolkit, Value Analyser, was used to support the evaluation, capturing the scores and producing the required charts and reports.

The independent evaluations were completed through a review of all available documentation plus a workshop involving the Live Labs project team. Key partners and providers were also asked to participate, either in the workshop or through separate interviews.

Each evaluation factor was discussed in turn and the following assessment made:

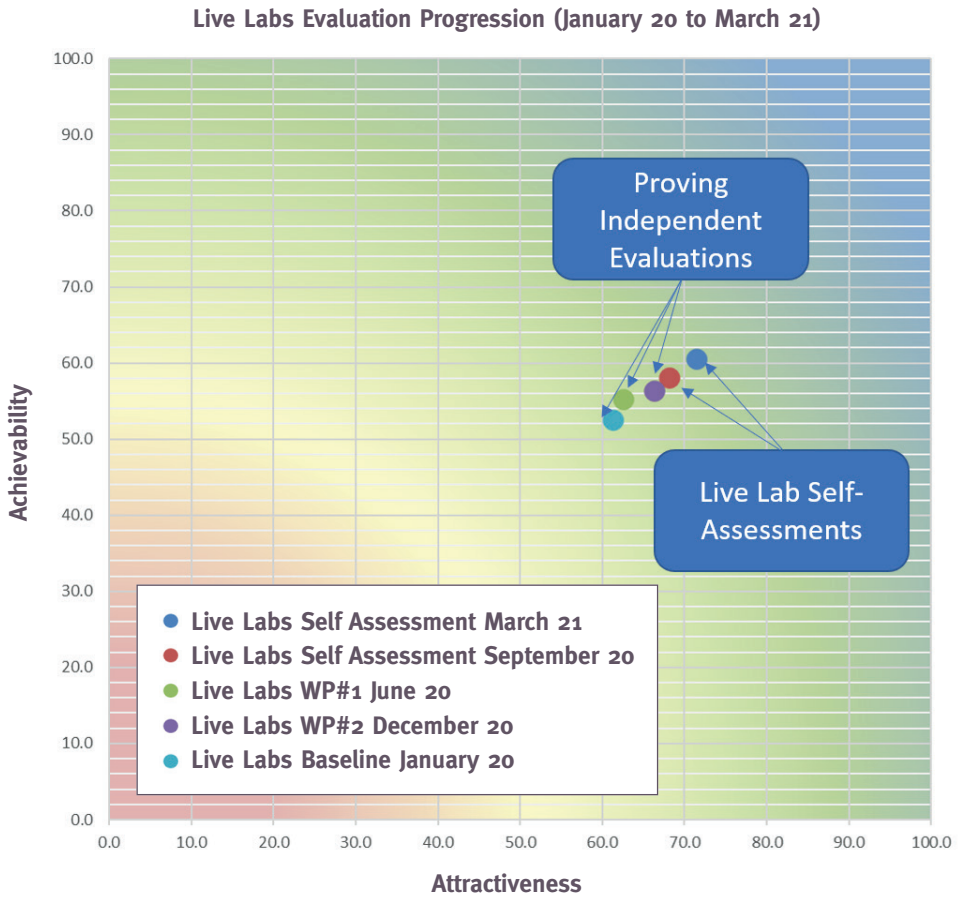
1. **Performance score** of the Live Lab, using the categories of ***Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Requires Improvement*** *and* ***Poor****.*
2. **Confidence** in the score, based on documentary evidence, past performance and agreement amongst workshop participants.
3. **Opportunity to improve**. Scale and nature of activity required to improve the performance score.

Comprehensive scoring guidance was developed to describe the categories (Excellent to Poor) for each factor. This ensured consistency in scoring between waypoint evaluations and self-assessments.

Following each waypoint evaluation a summary report was produced for each Live Lab. The respective projects were given visibility of the findings prior to a more detailed report being submitted to the Live Labs Commissioning Board. This provided the Live Lab with the opportunity to provide additional information and evidence and / or ask questions or challenge any of the conclusions reached by Proving.

The charts and reports produced from Value Analyser are designed to be clear and easy to follow. Figure 2 provides an example of a Live Lab Evaluation Progression Chart, combining Proving independent evaluations with the Live Lab self-assessments. A menu of charts and reports can be developed that meet the needs of each stakeholder group.

Figure 2: Example of Live Labs Evaluation Progression



Benefits of the approach

This approach to Project / Programme evaluation and monitoring has a number of proven benefits:

1. It provides a consistent, transparent and structured approach in evaluating performance across a programme of innovation, reflecting the characteristics of each project within the programme.

2. The evaluation produces a clear and useful prioritisation schedule, enabling the project to focus on those areas of lowest performance but greatest opportunity to improve.

Figure 3: Prioritised List of Project Improvements

ID	Dimension	Factor Name	Weighting	Score (Text)	Score	Confidence	Opportunity (Text)	Opportunity	Priority
209	Achievability	Risk & issues management	100	Requires Improvement [25]	25	50	Definitely [100]	100	21.9
220	Achievability	Public Communications	100	Requires Improvement [25]	25	75	Definitely [100]	100	20.3
110	Attractiveness	Scale, scope, longevity and confidence of benefits.	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
207	Achievability	Project management	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
221	Achievability	National & local press (reach and reaction)	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
226	Achievability	Design, development and delivery cost relative to the learning benefits.	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
227	Achievability	Future management and maintenance of residual research technologies.	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
218	Achievability	Internal Communications	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Probably [75]	75	11.7
219	Achievability	Partners Communications	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Probably [75]	75	11.7
114	Attractiveness	Analysis and management of costs	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
115	Attractiveness	Analysis and management of timescales	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Definitely [100]	100	15.6
222	Achievability	Other agencies	50	Requires Improvement [25]	25	75	Definitely [100]	100	10.2
111	Attractiveness	Analysis if NO benefits to be realised from individual research workstreams.	75	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Probably [75]	75	8.8
112	Attractiveness	Identification of any dis-benefits.	75	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Probably [75]	75	8.8
124	Attractiveness	Consistency with the other LiveLabs projects	75	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Probably [75]	75	8.8
213	Achievability	Partner collaboration, management & audit.	100	Good [75]	75	75	Probably [75]	75	8.2
106	Attractiveness	Research method assessment	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Possibly [50]	50	7.8
107	Attractiveness	Measures of project performance, including quality of learning	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Possibly [50]	50	7.8
108	Attractiveness	Sharing and disemmination of learning	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Possibly [50]	50	7.8
210	Achievability	Ownership & accountability	100	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Possibly [50]	50	7.8
117	Attractiveness	Scalability & Flexibility of Project	75	Satisfactory [50]	50	75	Possibly [50]	50	5.9

3. The process is designed to be constructive and helpful, contributing to the success of an innovation project. The respective teams are encouraged to be open and honest regarding any challenges or issues arising. Support and assistance is promptly provided by the Programme team.

4. The evaluation workshops provide an opportunity for the Live Lab project team and partners to discuss progress using a structured and objective framework. Debate and challenge between the participants can provide useful insight for both the assessor and the project team. This encourages collaborative behaviours and working.

Applicability for other innovation-related projects and initiatives

As demonstrated by the Proving client profile, the Proving methodology and Value Analyser toolkit can be applied to projects of all types **(Strategic, Key Operational, Support** and **High Potential - Research & Innovation)**, and projects from all different sectors. The dimensions of **Attractiveness** and **Achievability** apply to all projects. The factors can be tailored to reflect the priorities, challenges and constraints of each organisation and project type.

Once an innovation has completed the research phase and is being implemented and deployed more fully within the organisation, a Value for Money (VfM) assessment can be completed - again using Value Analyser. The process is the same but the evaluation dimensions and factors include the VfM criteria of **Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Strategic Value, Stakeholder Value** and **Sustainability**. The VfM framework will help assess the continued value of the innovation to the organisation and sector.

Summary of learnings

1. A flexible and light-touch approach to monitoring and evaluation that recognises the characteristics of an 'innovation' project and can be adapted to reflect the changing priorities as the project progresses through it lifecycle.
2. The approach reduces the need for administrative and time-consuming audits and form-filling, allowing the project team to focus on completing the research.
3. The focus of the evaluation is on the learning acquired, the transferability of that learning and the realisation of future benefits for the sector.
4. Defining and agreeing the performance scoring factor set is critical to the success of this approach. It must reflect the objectives, characteristics and constraints of the programme.
5. The approach is designed to be constructive and helpful, encouraging honest and open communication between programme governance and project delivery through a shared goal of achieving programme success.
6. Providers and partners are encouraged to participate in the evaluations, building trust and collaborative working.

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