The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (What Works Growth) aims to increase the cost-effectiveness of local growth policies by:

1. Improving the use of evidence in policy design and delivery
2. Supporting and delivering high quality impact evaluation
3. Filling gaps in our understanding of what works

What we do to meet our aims

Materials, events and support

1. Online evidence resources (toolkits, evidence reviews, briefings etc.)
2. Online evaluation resources (case studies, how-to guides etc.)
3. Evaluation workshops
4. Evaluation panel

Projects

5. Demonstrator projects
6. Special projects

Engagement activity

7. Central government engagement
8. Local outreach and public communications
9. Researcher engagement
10. Funders Group and User Panel engagement
Materials and events

We will maintain a range of high-quality evidence products and events covering topics of relevance to our audiences.

Evidence topics, 2021

- High streets
- Regeneration and levelling up
- Rail investments
- Public sector relocation
- Public procurement
- Outcomes for ethnic minorities and immigrants in selected local economic growth policy areas
- Business advice
- Sport and culture

Evidence lead: Head of Evidence

Projects

A series of ‘demonstrator projects’ will contribute to our activity supporting and delivering high quality impact evaluation. Lead: Head of Evidence

A series of ‘special projects’ will contribute to our activity engaging with and supporting local policymakers.

Lead: Head of Outreach
Engagement activity 1 - Central government engagement

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What we will do

To support our aims, our central government engagement work will:

1. Support and deliver more high-quality evaluation:
   - By identifying opportunities to deliver high-quality evaluation ourselves (for example, ‘legacy’ evaluations using administrative data).
   - By supporting more and better in-house, commissioned, or ‘delegated’ evaluation (for example, providing early advice to partners on evaluation).

2. Improve use of evidence in policy by providing timely and relevant advice and evidence (for example, bespoke evidence summaries).

3. Improve use of evidence in policy by supporting capacity-building on knowledge and use of evidence (for example, championing and supporting cross-government initiatives; providing direct capacity-building).

How we will increase impact

The impact that can be achieved with the work outlined above depends heavily on the context in which it is taking place. Acknowledging this, we have identified three priorities for increasing the impact of this work:

- Improve our understanding of Government needs and priorities
- Strategically increase the size and quality of our stakeholder networks
- Build our reputation as a useful source of advice and support
  - Invest time in high quality products which are easy to access, easy to use, timely, relevant and accurate
  - Raise awareness of WWG products and offer within Government
  - Demonstrate relevance and credibility through our products, communications, and personnel
- Encourage and support changes to government practices and processes which incentivise better use of evidence and evaluation
  - Build mechanisms for more engagement on evidence and evaluation

Lead: Head of Policy

Engagement activity 2 - Local outreach

A new Head of Outreach will be appointed in Autumn 2021 to develop a renewed package of local outreach activity.
Engagement activity 3 - Public communications

Objectives

The objective of our communications work is to support the organisation in achieving its aims for the period, which are:

- Improving the use of evidence in policy design and delivery
- Supporting and delivering high-quality impact evaluation
- Filling gaps in our understanding of what works

To do this in 2021-22, the communications team will:

1. Promote and publicise our work on evidence and evaluation so that it is widely accessible
2. Grow our network of policy professionals
3. Help maintain and build our reputation for expertise on evidence and evaluation
4. Provide advice and insight related to communications to help support the organisation’s wider activities

Audiences

Our main target audiences are:

- Local government decision-makers
- Local ‘practitioners’/delivery partners
- Central government decision-makers
- Other decision-makers and advisors
- Academics and researchers

Leads: Head of Outreach and Centre for Cities Director of Communications