

Evaluation and Learning

Our approach and
action plan 2022–2025

October 2022

Contents

- 3 Our ambitions**
- 4 How we'll work**
- 5 What's the plan**
- 12 How we will know we have been successful**
- 13 Get involved**
- 14 Appendix**
 - What we mean by evaluation and learning
 - How evaluation and learning can help us
 - The story so far

Our ambitions

Embed evaluation and learning

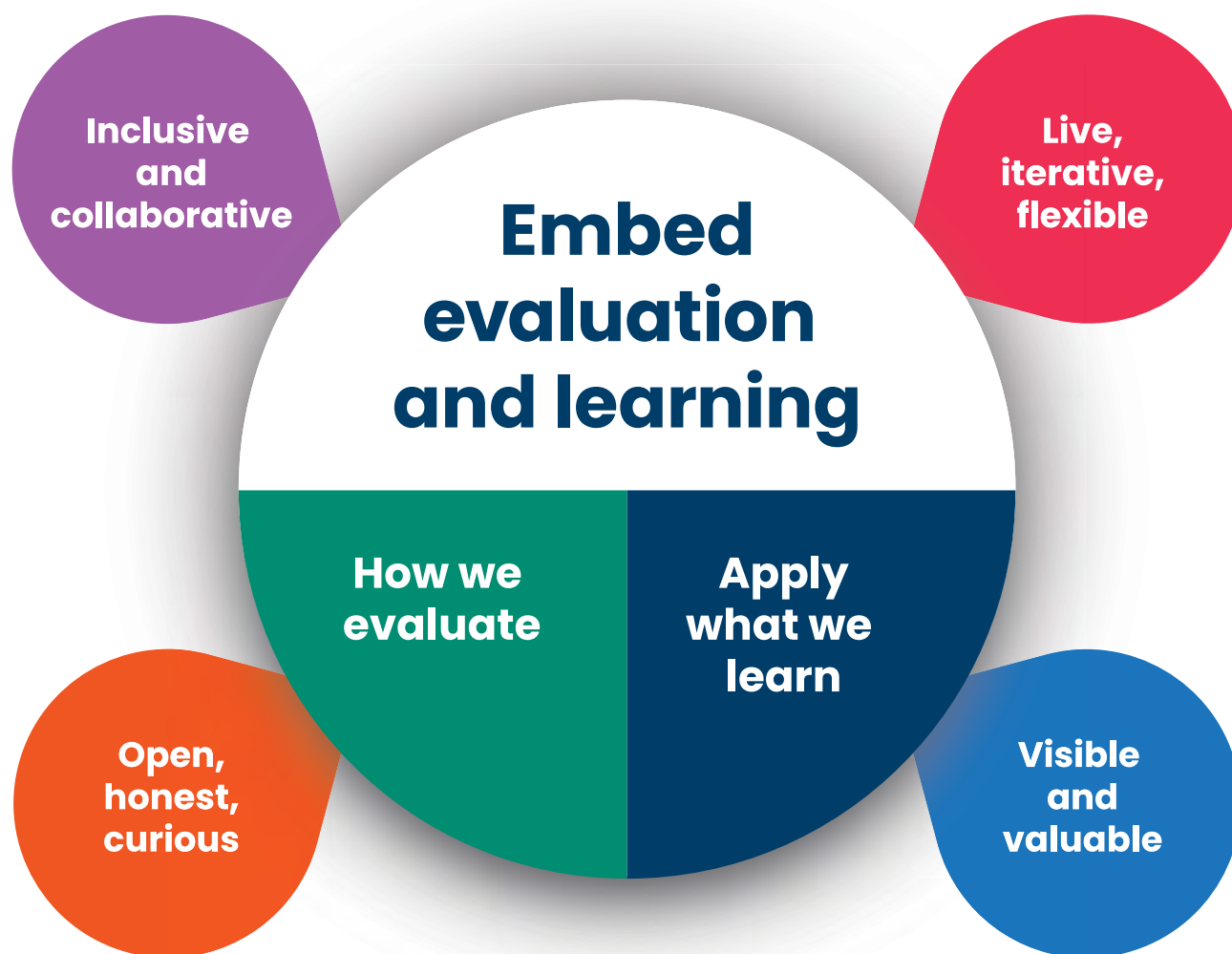
Working together to build the culture, leadership, capacity, capability and connections needed to make evaluation and learning a part of everything we do.

Improve how we evaluate

Using approaches that are tailored to context, meaningful and valuable to partners and communities, and balanced against a desire for greater consistency.

Apply what we learn

Having effective mechanisms to interpret, share and use what we learn from evaluation and other sources.



How we'll work

Inclusive and collaborative

Moving away from nationally determined 'top-down' approaches, towards greater community, partner and stakeholder involvement. Welcoming diversity of thought and reducing inequalities in evaluation.

Live, iterative and flexible

Reducing the focus on retrospective evaluation, moving towards approaches that support regular and timely reflection, learning and adaptation. Adapting delivery, by reviewing and updating evaluation and learning processes as we go.

Open, honest and curious

Replacing closed relationships with open interactions, where we share and learn from success and failure alike. We don't have all the answers, but we will keep asking questions – reflecting and learning from ourselves and others, improving and developing as we go.

Visible and valuable

Changing the perception of evaluation from something that 'has to' be done, towards recognising it as an essential part of how we work. Working together to champion the importance and use of evaluation and learning.

What's the plan

We have identified the following priority areas for improving how we work to achieve the ambitions of the evaluation and learning approach.

We need your ideas, skills, knowledge, and experience to help develop the approach, deliver the action plan, and improve evaluation and learning.

Together we can make changes that will benefit everyone, and drive broader cultural shifts across the sector.

We invite anyone with an interest in evaluation and learning to help us deliver it.

Explore the action plan areas to find out more, or contact us: se.evaluation@sportengland.org

Together we can

**Establish
the strategic
value**

of evaluation
and learning

**Embed
evaluation
and learning**

into
leadership and
how we work

**Improve
capability,
skills and
advocacy**

for evaluation
and learning

**Improve
support and
resources**

for evaluation
and learning

**Open up,
share and
use**

what we
learn

**Evaluate our
approach
and plan**

to learn and
improve

Establish the strategic value of evaluation and learning

To achieve the ambitions of Uniting the Movement and shape our activities, we will...

- Prioritise the value of evaluation and learning in our work to increase its role informing strategic decision making
- Publish a set of evaluation and learning priorities for Uniting the Movement
- Incorporate these priorities into our regular reporting and communication
- Collate learning summaries about these priorities
- Invite, support and fund research and evaluation proposals to generate additional understanding and evidence
- Agree the role of evaluation and learning in Sport England's five organisational success measures.

Evaluation and learning will be prioritised in our work and used more effectively to inform strategic decision making.

Embed evaluation and learning into leadership and how we work

To increase the understanding and support for evaluation and learning among senior leaders and embed it into new and established processes and roles, we will...

- Review literature and partner evidence on how to build senior leadership buy-in
 - Explore integrating evaluation and learning into leadership and management development programmes
 - Develop tools, resources and support to build buy-in (informed by prior actions)
 - Include evaluation and learning updates in Investment Committee and Board agendas (Sport England only)
 - Build in time for learning and reflection into funding agreements
 - Work with colleagues on how monitoring and evaluation data is collected in Sport England's new Investment Management System (Sport England only)
 - Create processes for reflection during (and at the end of) the delivery of every evaluation and use these to continually improve
 - Review and update how evaluation decisions and funding are integrated into Sport England's decision-making processes (Sport England only)
 - Integrate evaluation and learning requirements into job roles across Sport England (Sport England only).
- Leaders will encourage colleagues to use evaluation and learning, processes will be in place to support colleagues to do this.***

Improve capability, skills and advocacy for evaluation and learning

To improve evaluation and learning capability, knowledge and skills across Sport England and among our partners, we will...

- Develop and take forward plans for building colleagues' and partners' skills, knowledge and confidence in doing evaluation
- Identify and take forward the Sport England Evaluation and Learning Team training and development needs (Sport England only)
- Collate and promote external evaluation training providers and opportunities
- Build evaluation and learning into the Sport England new starter induction process (Sport England only)
- Build evaluation training and capacity funding into external evaluation contracts
- Compile findings and recommendations from a review of literature on the role of evaluation and learning champions
- Establish arrangements for accessing academic literature (Sport England only)
- Review literature on learning models, theories and approaches
- Scope out a plan to identify and trial evaluation and learning champions at different levels within Sport England and the sector.

The quality and use of evaluation and learning will improve because we will be better equipped. The evaluation and learning champions will lead to wider buy-in and enthusiasm.

Improve support and resources for evaluation and learning

To establish a systematic approach for evaluations, and provide a suite of self-service tools to support colleagues' and partners' needs, we will...

- Review the role and content of existing resources (including Sport England's Evaluation Framework and Question Bank)
- Update and publish new tools and resources
- Develop our understanding of approaches and methods for evaluating key Uniting the Movement ways of working e.g. collaboration, partnerships, system change, innovation
- Create guidance and processes for determining evaluation scale, design, commissioning and managing evaluations and learning priorities for Sport England investments
- Establish a standard way for the Sport England Evaluation and Learning team to manage, support and learn from live evaluations while reviewing and improving the quality of our live evaluations (Sport England only).

More consistent, co-ordinated and efficient support will enable colleagues and partners to be better equipped and clearer about what's needed.

Open up, share and use what we learn

To share what we are learning and develop more open and accessible communications, we will...

- Create a communications plan with a forward schedule of learning summaries, evaluation reports, and new tools and resources
- Share evaluation findings on the Insight Hub and Sport England website
- Make existing reports on the Sport England website more accessible (Sport England only)
- Explore setting up a dedicated mailing list of interested partners
- Learn from how other organisations have approached good communications
- Review practical ways and learning platforms that help us and partners to share and collaborate on learning.

Our work will be more accessible, shared and used by a wider audience, and a culture of learning will develop as opportunities to act on evaluation findings arise.

Evaluate our approach and action plan to learn and improve

To evaluate our published approach and action plan in a robust and timely manner, we will...

- Develop and implement our approach for evaluating this three-year action plan, informing iterative development of the plan and associated actions
- Apply similar ways of working to monitor and manage wider progress against our ten-year evaluation and learning approach.

We will continue to adapt and refine our approach, as we track our progress.

How we will know we have been successful

We want to understand what impact our approach and plan have had.

Our view and success will continue to develop and change as we progress through the work, therefore we expect our success measures to continue to evolve. Our current success measures include:

- Evaluation and learning are directly supporting Uniting the Movement
- New ways of working around evaluation and learning are embedded at Sport England
- We have a portfolio of evaluation and learning that is co-designed, contextually relevant and responsive
- We see a demonstrable improvement in the use of evaluation and learning at Sport England and among our partners
- We undertake regular reviews of the progress of the plan and monitor the impact our approach is having so that we can learn and improve.

Get involved

We hope this plan sparks ideas and starts conversations, because we can only achieve these ambitions and realise the true value of evaluation and learning by working together.

If you're interested in working with us, then we would love to hear from you.

You can contact us at:
se.evaluation@sportengland.org

Some ways you could get involved include:

- Sharing examples, case studies and best practice relevant to the actions in this plan
- Telling us about evaluation you're conducting and how you're using what you learn
- Expressing an interest to work with us directly on specific actions
- Sharing your ideas and experiences.

Appendix

- 15 What we mean by evaluation and learning**
- 16 How evaluation and learning can help us**
- 17 The story so far**

What we mean by evaluation and learning

The concepts of evaluation and learning can be understood and defined in many different ways. As a starting point, this resource defines them as:

Evaluation

The purposeful collection and use of data and information to understand, improve and show the value of a specific piece of work.

Learning

The various ways we generate, reflect on and apply the knowledge and insight gained from evaluation and other sources.

We hope these definitions can themselves generate useful discussion and reflection about the role of evaluation and learning.

How evaluation and learning can help us

Evaluation and learning about what is shaping and influencing physical activity in different contexts can help us navigate the complex work required to enable everyone to benefit from sport and physical activity.

This goes far beyond asking if an intervention is working, to explore a broad range of questions that are useful for decision making. Here are just some of the ways evaluation and learning can support the ambitions of Uniting the Movement:

- **Tackling inequalities in physical activity**
Listening and responding to new audiences; tracking diversity and inclusion; using what we learned during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic
- **Supporting innovation and new ways of working**
Testing, explaining and learning from new ideas
- **Meeting people where they're at**
Working with partners and communities to co-evaluate the success and value of investments; providing data of value to our partners
- **Showing why moving matters**
Identifying changes to health, wellbeing, community, economy and other outcomes
- **Building the movement**
Identifying and exploring the shifts in partnerships and connections
- **Being the change**
Recognising and demonstrating the strategic value of evaluation and learning.

The story so far

A new strategy calls for a new approach.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Jan 2021 | Uniting the Movement published Sport England's new ten-year strategy |
| | We spoke to partners and colleagues to hear how evaluation and learning could help them |
| Dec 2021 | Our approach to Evaluation and Learning for Uniting the Movement is published |
| | We spoke to partners and colleagues to develop, improve and prioritise the actions we'll take over the next three years |
| Oct 2022 | Our action plan for implementing our new approach is published. |