

PROJECT TITLE	Evaluation of the “Building a global evidence ecosystem for teaching” project
DEVELOPER (INSTITUTION)	Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)
EVALUATOR (INSTITUTION)	NatCen Social Research
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)	Fatima Husain
STUDY PLAN AUTHOR(S)	Fatima Husain, Berenice Scandone and Phoebe Averill

Study plan version history

VERSION	DATE	REASON FOR REVISION
1.0	31 July 2019	N/A (original version)

Intervention

Data from English and international education systems demonstrate that attainment gaps exist between the academic performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and between more and less effective schools. Since its establishment in 2011, the EEF has built, through the commissioning of evidence reviews, pilot evaluations, and randomised controlled trials, a vast repository of evidence on interventions designed to improve professional practice in schools and raise attainment of the most disadvantaged children and pupils. Alongside evidence generation activities, the EEF links the evidence to practice by communicating results to educators, so that the best evidence informed decisions can be made to support disadvantaged pupils and close the attainment gap.

Whilst initially set-up to help close the attainment gaps in English schools, in response to significant interest the EEF set up a number of international Partnerships and has now embarked on an ambitious project to expand its reach and impact globally. With support from the BHP Foundation, the EEF has set up Partnership¹ arrangements with organisations (charities and government departments) across jurisdictions, who will be developing their own local evidence ecosystem, to support evidence generation and use to improve teaching. This initiative's goal is to raise attainment and improve the skills base of children and young people aged 3-18 so that they are better prepared for the world of work and further study. The high level aims of the initiative are to:

- Improve educational decision-making;
- Engage the teaching workforce globally as active participants and researchers into their own professional practice;
- Enhance the global evidence base that is relevant for teachers;
- Enhance transparency of educational decision-making;
- Improve learning and development outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people;
- Empower educational leaders to use data and evidence.

The EEF will provide advice and support to Partners to build a 'Global Evidence Ecosystem' for teaching. Each Partner is envisaged to deliver work across the following domains of activity:

- Making better use of existing evidence
- Generating new evidence
- Turning evidence into practice.

This evaluation will focus on the five Partnerships so far established by EEF. The EEF will be working with these Partners on one or more of the three core domains of activity. These Partners are:

- Social Ventures Australia (Australia);
- SUMMA (Latin America and the Caribbean);
- Education Scotland (Scotland);

¹ In this study plan, the following terminology will be used throughout:

- Partner (upper case) – the organisation typically within a jurisdiction that the EEF is working with to develop the jurisdiction specific ecosystem.
- Partnership (upper case) – the formalised relationship between a Partner and the EEF.
- jurisdictions (lower case) – countries or other areas that Partners 'represent'.
- partnerships (lower case) – formal or informal partnerships in Partner jurisdictions or more globally.
- The evidence ecosystem comprises the collection of partnerships and networks formed within Partner jurisdictions (local evidence ecosystem) and globally (global evidence ecosystem or global network).

- La Caixa (Spain);
- Queen Rania Foundation (Jordan).

There is expected to be a high degree of variation and adaptation in delivery of the work programme for each domain which will be guided by the contextual considerations in each jurisdiction. It is expected that although Partners will be drawing on the work domains and activities of the EEF in England, local contextualisation will help to embed the work programme in each jurisdiction, and the collective efforts across jurisdictions and the global networks they form beyond it will comprise the global evidence ecosystem.

The programme of work is expected to benefit direct and indirect target groups, as follows:

- *Directly*: policy-makers, educational settings, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders, across each jurisdiction, who influence or make decisions about education and funding.
- *Indirectly*: the attainment, skills and life chances, of children and young people aged 3-18.

Research questions

The research questions will aim to capture the development and maturity of the programme across the specified domains of activity in each Partner jurisdiction, and the project's influence on creating, strengthening and sustaining a global evidence ecosystem for teaching.

Development of the local evidence ecosystem

- Have the activity domains been implemented as planned?
- Which domains are more/better developed?
- What activities have been implemented for each domain
- What has been achieved in terms of progress towards stated outcomes? Who has been involved?
- What challenges were encountered? How were these addressed?
- What additional work is planned?
- How has the project influenced the use of evidence:
 - in decision-making by teachers, school leaders, and policy-makers?
 - to change practice by teachers and school leaders?
 - in policy-making by local and national government and other agencies?
- What were the barriers and facilitators to influencing the use of evidence:
 - in decision-making by teachers, school leaders, and policy-makers?
 - to change practice by teachers and school leads?
 - in policy-making by local and national government and other agencies?
- To what extent is evidence used in decision making by teachers, school leaders and policy makers?
- To what extent are the key stakeholders in the Partner jurisdictions able to:
 - make better use of existing evidence?
 - generate new evidence?
 - turn evidence into practice?

Formation and sustainability of a global evidence ecosystem

- How is learning and good practice in strengthening the global evidence base being shared in each jurisdiction and across jurisdictions?
- What are each Partner's contributions to the creation of a global evidence ecosystem for teaching? What contacts have been made? What is the nature and strength of communications with global contacts?
- What efforts are being made to sustain the global evidence ecosystem in the longer-term?

Methods

The research design will develop an integrated programme theory for all Partners, employing 'outcome harvesting' as an overarching evaluation approach to collect evidence of change.

Outcome harvesting is guided by an agreed programme theory or rationale for an initiative. It is particularly suited for studying complex programme contexts and helps to identify and make sense of outcomes within programme complexity. Moreover, the approach helps to glean information on how an initiative contributes to a given set of outcomes and to identify and record change². Outcome mapping will be used as the overarching approach to structure and guide the application of our data collection methods. Our adapted outcome harvesting approach will:

- Develop overall and Partner-specific logic models
- Develop outcome descriptions drawing on the logic models and in consultation with Partners
- Gather the views of individuals independent of the Partner organisation and Partnership arrangements, who are knowledgeable about the outcome(s) and how they were achieved, to evidence progress and change
- Analyse and interpret findings using the overall and Partner-specific logic models.

Through its use of outcome harvesting, the evaluation will aim to establish the contribution of the project to outcomes.

Our research activities will include a rapid review of Partner organisations' documents and qualitative data collection methods which are well-suited to exploring complex, deep-rooted topics such as influencing, decision-making and engagement with evidence. Qualitative methods also offer a level of flexibility that will allow the evaluation to be responsive to the initiative as it develops in each jurisdiction.

Recruitment

Prior to involvement of the evaluation team at NatCen, the EEF had set up Partnerships with five organisations who have agreed to work with the EEF on one or more of the three domains, which aims to use evidence to improve teaching and raise attainment. Each jurisdiction will nominate an appropriate single point of contact (SPOC) to be the main channel of communication between NatCen and each Partner. The SPOC will complete the outcome harvesting returns and facilitate recruitment for the in-depth interviews at each time point. This person will help to identify relevant stakeholders and will contact potential interview participants to explain the purpose of the interview and to gather permission to share their contact details with NatCen.

² Wilson-Grau, R. and Britt, H. (2012) Outcome Harvesting. The Ford Foundation.

All potential participants will be provided with an information leaflet prior to taking part in an interview. This will contain the contact details of the research team, giving them the opportunity to contact NatCen with any questions they may have before deciding to take part.

The SPOC will securely share with NatCen (via NatCen's FTP server) the names and contact details of those who have consented to take part.

Participants will be reminded prior to the interview that their participation is voluntary and that they can choose not to answer a given question or to stop the interview at any point. They will also be informed of their right to withdraw interview data from the study at any point until report write-up. Participants will be given the research team's contact details should they have any questions or wish to withdraw from the study after participation.

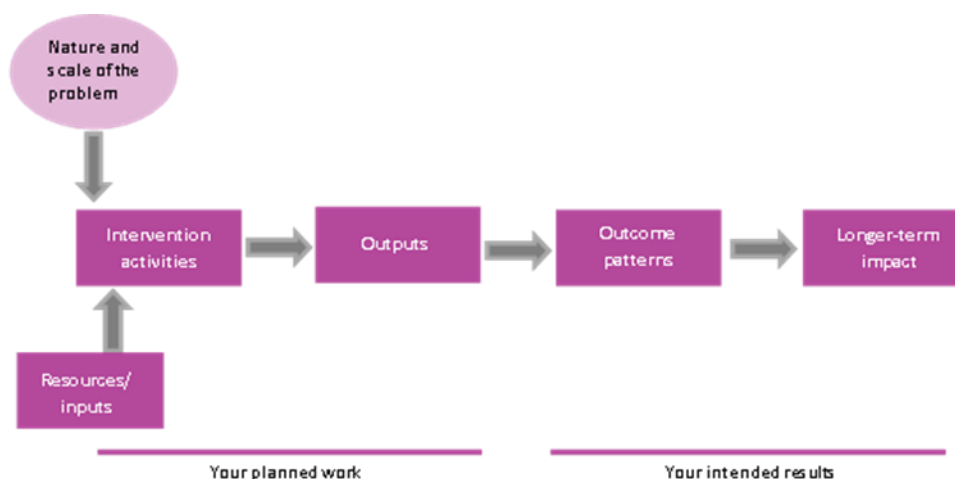
Data collection

Logic model development:

At the start of the study, we will develop a detailed logic model for the initiative. The approach undertaken will be to set out the EEF's rationale and outcomes for the initiative to form a high-level logic model. Subsequently, jurisdiction-specific logic models will be developed in collaboration with each Partner. By undertaking this approach, we will be able to describe in detail how the Partner in each jurisdiction expects to work on one or more of the three domains, using evidence to improve attainment of disadvantaged children and young people, and the outcomes they expect to achieve.

The series of jurisdiction-specific logic models will be linked together by the high-level objectives set out by EEF. We will use the high-level logic model developed with EEF as the basis to understand and describe the rationale for the ecosystem in each jurisdiction. Our approach will be underpinned by the Kellogg Foundation's logic model development approach, setting out the five core programme components as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The five core components of an initiative:



The first step in fully understanding and describing the logic model will be **a meeting with key EEF stakeholders using the principles of an IDeA workshop** to review and refine (if needed) the provisional logic model included in the evaluation brief.

This will be followed by a **review of any available documentation from each jurisdiction** about the set up and functioning of the local ecosystem. Based on insights from the EEF, correspondence with jurisdictions, and a document review, we will populate a logic model template for each jurisdiction.

This pre-populated provisional logic model will be shared with each jurisdiction and refined in direct communication with the key contact in the jurisdiction. This will involve an ***in-depth discussion via telephone or skype*** and email communication thereafter. This discussion will cover expected outcomes, the local context for evidence generation and consumption as well as the range of stakeholders who are likely to be involved in the functioning of the ecosystem and the wider evidence network beyond it.

The information gathered will be synthesised to set out a framework which comprises a set of logic models – a high-level EEF logic model and jurisdiction specific logic models as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. High-level and embedded logic models for each jurisdiction



Partner workshop:

To supplement the logic model work, attendance at a two-day event hosted by EEF in London to bring together all stakeholders will help to build consensus on shared outcomes and start the process of building relationships across the ecosystem. We will hold face-to-face meetings with a representative from each Partnership to explain the evaluation data collection processes and conduct an interview to gather data on the initial set-up of domain level activities.

Recording progress towards outcomes:

Using the agreed logic models and information on expected programme outcomes, we will use an 'outcome harvesting' template (see Appendix A for an example template) Each Partner will be asked to use the template to describe the expected outcomes and record the activities, and achievements they believe demonstrate progress towards the stated outcomes. The template categories will be:

- **The outcome(s):** taken from the logic model;
- **Progress towards stated outcome(s):** this will include a description of the observable changes in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies and/or practices of relevant individuals and sectors (for example, evaluators, policy-makers, school leaders, teachers), which show progress towards the stated outcome.;
- **Contribution to achieving outcome(s):** a description of how the Partner organisation, other organisations/institutions in their jurisdiction and EEF have contributed to achieving these changes.

- **Measurement:** in this section organisations would indicate the data sources that would best demonstrate the progress made.
- **Key challenges:** Partners can indicate any challenges that may have hindered progress and actions undertaken to address these.

To collect this information, a standardised template will be circulated to each jurisdiction at three points in time, aligned with reporting requirements. Partners will also be given the opportunity to add new or emerging outcomes to blank templates if the scope and nature of the Partnership and its achievements changes over time.

In-depth interviews:

After we have carried out analysis of the ‘outcome harvesting returns’, we will conduct in-depth interviews on an annual basis. Each year our sampling approach will vary and will be determined by the information provided on who was involved in the annual outcome harvesting ‘returns’ and the areas where change has been achieved. These interviews will focus on verifying or cross-checking reported progress and exploring emerging challenges.

Around 5-6 interviews will be conducted per jurisdiction per year. However, the split of interviews may vary based on the type, number and scope of activities delivered within each jurisdiction, and on the number of organisations involved. For each data collection period, we will conduct a total of 30 interviews.

Programme debriefs with EEF:

Throughout the lifecycle of the study, NatCen will facilitate two ‘intensive programme debriefs’ involving EEF staff. During these sessions, we will discuss how EEF staff are contributing to the on-going development of each Partnership, and gather their perceptions on the delivery, in each jurisdiction, of the four domains of activity. EEF’s views on the challenges and facilitators to progress in each jurisdiction will also be gathered. The notes from both debriefs will be collated and included in our analysis and reporting.

Data analysis

Analysis of ‘outcome harvesting’ returns:

The completed ‘outcome harvesting’ templates will be analysed to assess both implementation of the range of activities set out in the logic model and progress towards stated outcomes. ‘Harvests’ will be analysed thematically using NatCen’s Framework approach, a matrix where information from completed forms is summarised by Partner and outcomes. By implementing this systematic approach and conducting analysis by outcome, we will examine progress in each Partnership, explore consistency across jurisdictions, assess change over time, compare progress across common outcomes, and identify adaptations and contextual change that may have influenced delivery and success of the ecosystem.

Analysis of in-depth interviews:

Interviews will be recorded and professionally transcribed. Using the NatCen’s Framework approach, transcribed data will be summarised and coded in two ways:

- thematically, for components related to implementation, and
- by outcome, as evidence of progress towards, or contribution to, stated outcomes.

The summarised data will be accompanied by verbatim quotes as appropriate. These summaries and quotes will be linked to verbatim transcript data for cross-referencing, quality assurance checks, and transparency. Once all transcripts have been coded, analysis will be carried out by theme, outcome and respondent type. In addition, coded data will be collated

by jurisdiction.

Synthesis analysis:

We will use the Partnership-specific and overall logic models along with the three 'outcome harvests', stakeholder interview data, and notes from programme debriefs with EEF, for our analysis. Our approach to triangulating and synthesising data will also be informed by the set of logic models and the synthesised evidence will be used to report on the development and progress of each Partnership as well as how local changes collectively contribute to EEF's programme goals of building a global evidence ecosystem for teaching.

Synthesis of data across the multiple domains of work will generate learning and insights comparatively and longitudinally, examining changes in each jurisdiction as well as across jurisdictions. Analysis will provide:

- An initial baseline appraisal of outcomes and progress
- A description of the implementation of the partnership model and its functioning including the facilitators and challenges to evidence use, and lessons learned
- A longitudinal assessment of progress towards stated outcomes based on individual jurisdiction logic models. This will include a review of the logic model
- A comparative assessment of progress towards any outcomes that are common across jurisdictions
- A thematic comparison of implementation across jurisdictions drawing out differences and similarities
- An assessment of the sustainability of Partnership models in jurisdictions.

At ecosystem (initiative) level, the synthesis analysis will bring together jurisdiction level analytical insights to provide a commentary on progress / contribution towards the high-level evidence use outcomes across the ecosystem initiative as a whole. The overarching logic model will be used as a basis for the commentary.

Ethics and registration

NatCen has a robust ethics governance procedure. Proposed research projects are reviewed by the NatCen Research Ethics Committee (REC). The committee consists primarily of senior NatCen staff. The REC procedure is designed to provide ethical advice and guidance, and to ensure that all research undertaken by NatCen is ethically sound and meets the ethical standards of government and other funders. The process provides reassurance to potential research participants and, where relevant, to gatekeepers through whom they are approached.

NatCen's Research Ethics Committee (REC) reviewed and approved the research proposal for this study on 1st May 2019.

Data protection

GDPR

For the purpose of the project, NatCen are the data controller and are therefore responsible for determining the lawful basis for processing data. The lawful basis for processing data in this study is 'legitimate interest'. Both NatCen and EEF are data processors on this study and will ensure that all data sharing and processing will comply with data protection legislation. We will issue a privacy notice to all concerned parties and publish it on the

study's webpage. All data will be securely deleted within one year of project completion.

Personnel

Key EEF contacts for the evaluation:

Dr Triin Edovald (Head of International Evaluation)

Stephen Fraser (Director, International Partnerships)

Maisie Monroe (International Manager)

The NatCen team:

The evaluation will be led by staff in the Children and Families team at NatCen:

Dr Fatima Husain (Director) – Project Lead

Dr Berenice Scandone (Senior Researcher) – Day-to-day Project Manager

Phoebe Averill (Researcher) – Day-to-day project support

Dr Ruxandra Comanaru (Research Director) – Providing support in Spanish

Risks

NatCen has a strong understanding of the key project-specific risks from our experience of delivering multiple similar projects. We have developed a draft Risk Register outlining likelihood and impact ratings (Low; Medium; High), evidence-based mitigations and contingencies to manage the risks effectively.

Risk	Likelihood / Impact	Mitigation / Contingency
Lack of success in gaining access to stakeholders	Likelihood: Low Impact: High	Owner: Fatima Husain Identification of a key contact in each Partnership to support the research and facilitate access to stakeholders; Close collaboration with EEF if we struggle to engage Partner staff.
Unable to deliver within required timetable	Likelihood: High Impact: High	Owner: Fatima Husain Strong communication between NatCen and EEF to agree a timetable with key milestones and dependencies; Detailed project plan closely monitored by experienced project lead throughout; As a contingency we can review the timetable with EEF at key points in the project to proactively identify any potential problems and the redistribution of resources to address them.
Staffing changes during	Likelihood: Medium	Owner: Fatima Husain

Risk	Likelihood / Impact	Mitigation / Contingency
project impacting ability to deliver	Impact: Low	<p>Use of comprehensive resource planning tool to book researcher time in advance and provide instant overview of availability;</p> <p>Large team of experienced researchers to draw on if availability unexpectedly changes, so that suitable replacements can be made;</p> <p>Project documents and key emails saved in shared team folder so no loss of information if a team member is unavailable;</p> <p>Documented handover procedures including briefings.</p>
Lack of capacity/ resource constraints	Likelihood: Low Impact: High	<p>Owner: Fatima Husain</p> <p>Project resource allocation informed by current/forecast commitments across all projects – involves a continuous monitoring of capacity of staff resources.</p>
Outputs do not meet EEF needs	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	<p>Owner: Fatima Husain</p> <p>Project delivery governed by quality management system and procedures;</p> <p>Close communication with EEF throughout the project to ensure approach will meet requirements;</p> <p>Outputs delivered with sufficient time for comments and in compliance with EEF's reporting timeframe.</p>
Failure to meet data security requirements	Likelihood: Low Impact: High	<p>Owner: Fatima Husain and NatCen Information Security Manager</p> <p>ISO27001 certification and robust organisation-wide approach to implementing GDPR requirements including a nominated data protection officer, staff training, encrypted equipment and audit programme;</p> <p>Contract specific data security plan and data collection tools in place and agreed by EEF prior to contract start date.</p>

Timeline

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
March – June 2019	Logic model development (high-level logic model)	NatCen, EEF
May – July 2019	Logic model development (jurisdiction-specific logic models)	NatCen, Partners
July - Sept 2019	Outcome harvesting (wave 1)	NatCen
Oct 2019	Attend Partners' Workshop and conduct partner interviews	NatCen
Oct 2019 – March 2020	Conduct interviews (wave 1)	NatCen

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
Feb 2020	Annual progress report (28 February 2020)	NatCen
June – July 2020	Baseline evaluation report (26 June 2020)	NatCen
Jan – Jun 2021	Outcome harvesting (wave 2)	NatCen
Feb 2021	Annual progress report (26 February 2021)	NatCen
Oct – Dec 2021	Conduct interviews (wave 2)	NatCen
Oct – Dec 2021	First project debrief with EEF	NatCen, EEF
Feb 2022	Annual progress report (18 February 2022)	NatCen
Feb 2022	Draft Mid-term evaluation report (18 February 2022)	NatCen
Oct 2022 – Mar 2023	Outcome harvesting (wave 3)	NatCen
Feb 2023	Annual progress report (26 February 2023)	NatCen
Apr 2023	Final Mid-term evaluation report (1 April 2023)	
Apr – Dec 2023	Conduct interviews (wave 3)	NatCen
Oct – Dec 2023	Second project debrief with EEF	NatCen, EEF
Dec 2023	Draft Final evaluation report (22 December 2023)	NatCen
Dec 2023 – Mar 2024	Revisions to the draft Final evaluation report (4 rounds of revisions) and submission of the Final evaluation report for publication	NatCen

Appendix A. Outcome Harvesting template

OUTCOME

Increase in the generation of new (robust) evidence

PROGRESS TOWARDS STATED OUTCOME: Describe briefly the observable changes in: behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies and/or practices of relevant groups. These can be individuals, organisations, or institutions (for example evaluators, school leaders, teachers, schools, government departments). Consider: who changed what, and when and where the change took place.

Since the establishment of the Partnership between [organisation] and EEF, in [year]:

- Organisation X has started conducting 2 new RCTs and 1 quasi-experimental study: [name projects and start / expected publication dates]*
- Organisation Y has started conducting 1 new RCT: [name projects and start / expected publication dates]*

CONTRIBUTION: Please indicate the **contribution** that has been made by your organisation, your local partners and/or EEF. Concretely, what did they **DO** to influence this change?

We have contributed by sourcing and securing matched funding from [name of organisation], setting in place a commissioning process and are providing on-going support to evaluators.

EEF has contributed by: providing direct funding and facilitating matched funding through the Global Trials Fund. They provided ad-hoc assistance and coaching to [organisation] staff [include names and roles] throughout trial [name of trial] which was experiencing some difficulties.

MEASUREMENT: What would be the best way to measure these contributions? Think about administrative data sources, documentation, and primary data collection, e.g. interviews.

*Trial registrations on [link to website]- so far [x] have been registered;
the evaluation protocols have been published on [organisation] website;
interviews with evaluation managers on on-going progress with evaluations,
developers [include organisations names], and evaluators [include organisations names].*

Key challenges: Describe any challenges encountered and how these are being or could be addressed. Examples are: keeping schools in trials (minimising attrition), challenges in engaging government policy makers.

The main challenge has been signing up enough schools to take part. To address this we are allowing more time for recruitment and taking a school-to-school approach, where schools that are willing to take part reach out to new schools or schools that are unwilling to take part.