



Process evaluation of the Accelerator Fund pipeline delivered in 2021–22

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Suzanne Straw and Mark Boylan





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For more information about the EEF or this report please contact:



Education Endowment Foundation
5th Floor, Millbank Tower

21–24 Millbank

SW1P 4QP



info@eefoundation.org.uk



www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk



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About the evaluator

This evaluation was undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Sheffield Institute of Education (SloE) at Sheffield Hallam University. Suzanne Straw (NFER) and Mark Boylan (SloE) were co-Principal Investigators. Suzanne Straw took over as co-Principal Investigator from Julie Nelson when she was seconded to EEF. Other core team members who conducted the evaluation were: Roland Marden and Juliet Sizmur (NFER) and Josephine Booth, Eleanor Byrne and Nicolas Moore (SloE). Kelly Kettlewell and Caroline Stanford were NFER research associates responsible for supporting with the interviews and data analysis for the Capability Building and School Support strands and with the survey administration.

Suzanne Straw, Research Director, NFER: [*s.straw@nfer.ac.uk*](mailto:s.straw@nfer.ac.uk)

Mark Boylan, Co-Head of Research and Innovation, Sheffield Institute of Education: [*m.s.boylan@shu.ac.uk*](mailto:m.s.boylan@shu.ac.uk)

Glossary

Accelerator Fund (AF): the Department for Education (DfE)'s 'Accelerator Fund' (AF) aims to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and both address the barriers schools experience in taking up well-evidenced numeracy and literacy programmes and incentivise schools to access the programmes.

Accelerator Fund Pipeline: DfE-funded EEF activity in three Regional School Commissioner (RSC) regions - (the North of England; the East Midlands and Humber; and the West Midlands).

Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW): a framework of interconnected models to support behavioural diagnosis informed intervention design.

'Business as usual': term used to refer to normal practice in the context of evaluations.

Capability Building: a strand of the Accelerator Fund focused on strengthening the structural features associated with large-scale delivery of a programme, such as programme infrastructure, internal systems, delivery models or market-related features such as product marketing and communications.

Early-Stage Programme Development: a strand of the Accelerator Fund focused on innovation by supporting the design, development and early formative evaluation of a small number of school-based programmes with EEF and external partner support.

Efficacy trial: a test as to whether an intervention can work under developer-led conditions in a number of schools, or early years/post-16 settings, usually 50+; a quantitative impact evaluation is used to assess the impact of the intervention on student outcomes, including attainment. An implementation and process evaluation is used to understand how different aspects of the intervention and its implementation can contribute to successful outcomes. An indicative cost of the intervention is also calculated.

Effectiveness trial: a test of a scalable model of an intervention under everyday conditions (where the developer cannot be closely involved in delivery because of the scale) in a large number of schools, or early years/post-16 settings, usually 100+ across at least three different geographical regions; a quantitative impact evaluation is used to assess the impact of the intervention on student outcomes, including attainment. An implementation and process evaluation is used to identify the challenges for delivery at this scale. The cost of the intervention at this scale is also calculated.

Pilot studies: conducted in a small number of schools, or early years/post-16 settings (e.g., three or more), where a programme is at an early or exploratory stage of development; evaluated through qualitative research to develop and refine the approach and test its feasibility in schools, nurseries or colleges. Initial, indicative data is collected to assess its potential to raise attainment.

Randomised controlled trial (RCT): experimental form of impact evaluation in which one group, chosen at random, experiences the programme or intervention, and a control group that does not experience the programme or intervention is also chosen at random from the same eligible population.

Rapid Cycle and Development Testing (RCDT): a five-step approach to the development of innovations developed by Dartington Associates.

Research Schools (RSs): a network of schools which are supported by, and work with, the EEF to support the use of evidence to improve teaching in schools.

Scale-up: refers to programmes which have been shown to work when rigorously trialled, and have the capacity to deliver at scale, and be expanded to work across a bigger area, delivering to a large number of schools, or early years/post-16 settings. Scale-up projects target 100 or more settings.

Scaling: scaling has two meanings: (1) a strand of the Accelerator Fund pipeline focused on four programmes to support delivery at scale – this differs from how programme development is conceptualised in business-as-usual activity, where the focus is on the nature of the trial as effectiveness or efficacy; (2) a general process during the evidence-generation process, where programmes increase in scope and reach.

School Support: a strand of the Accelerator Fund pipeline encouraging evidence use through short continuing professional development (CPD) courses delivered by Research Schools.

Stage: a stage in programme development. Prior to the AF-funded pipeline activity, EEF-funded activity at four stages: pilot, efficacy, effectiveness and scale-up. As part of AF activity, EEF additionally supported early-stage programme development.

Strand: a sub-division for AF pipeline evaluation activity. Four of these strands map to EEF AF-pipeline stages, with the fifth strand being evaluation of the innovation in School Support.

Trials: a strand of the Accelerator Fund Pipeline using usual EEF protocols for trials but focused on three regions.

What Works Centre: Government-designated and funded institution that creates, shares and uses high-quality evidence to support decision making.

Executive summary

About the Accelerator Fund (AF) pipeline

With funding from the Department for Education's Accelerator Fund (AF), during 2021–22 the EEF expanded its activities with the aim of strengthening the development of its pipeline of evidence-based numeracy and literacy programmes and supporting more schools to use evidence in their practice.

The AF funding supported activities targeted within three specific Regional School Commissioner (RSC) regions particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic: the North of England; the East Midlands and Humber; and the West Midlands. The AF pipeline comprised five activities referred to in the report as 'strands'. Four strands focused on evidence generation whilst the fifth focused on evidence-use promotion. Two strands were innovations, whilst three were a refinement/development of existing EEF activity. Further details are provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overview of AF pipeline activities

Evidence generation	Early-Stage Programme Development: development of thematic programmes at an early stage	New design, delivery and formative evaluation of programmes led by Research Schools (RSs), supported by EEF and external partners	Innovation
	Capability Building: effective interventions supported to develop further (potentially in preparation for extending the scope and reach of the intervention)	New support provided by external partners	
Promoting evidence use	Trials: promising interventions undergoing efficacy/effectiveness trials	Conduct of trials aligning with EEF usual activity but concentrated recruitment in target regions	Refinement/development of existing EEF activity
	Scaling¹: effective interventions supported to scale	Expansion of usual activity via funding/support for programme scaling at various stages in the pipeline with a focus on the target regions	
	School Support: training for schools to improve awareness of the EEF's work and signposting to evidence-based programmes	New continuing professional development (CPD) offers led by RSs (a light-touch version of EEF's usual regional school offer)	

About the evaluation

During 2022, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Sheffield Institute of Education (SloE) at Sheffield Hallam University completed a formative process evaluation of EEF's AF pipeline. The aim of the evaluation was to understand the promise, feasibility and scalability of the AF pipeline and gain insights which EEF could draw on in developing its work in this area. The evaluation was not able to assess the impact of activities on schools and pupils; however, where appropriate, it aimed to gauge the extent to which AF pipeline activity was beginning to influence schools' decisions to use evidence-based programmes, or their likelihood of doing so in the future.

The evaluation included small-scale evaluations of each strand and an overarching fund-level evaluation. The strand-level evaluations included: the development of detailed theories of change (ToC); and interviews with EEF staff, partners supporting programme deliverers, and programme deliverers themselves. Most strands were not at a stage where consultations with schools were appropriate, with the exception of School Support which included teacher focus groups. A total of 88 interviews were undertaken, with eight teachers consulted via focus group for School Support.

¹ Note that, in the context of AF-funded activity, scaling refers to the evidence-generation process where programmes increase in scope and reach. Within the scaling strand of the AF pipeline, there are 'scaling projects' which are programme projects moving from efficacy to effectiveness trials, which are distinct from 'scale-up' projects, which are projects that have been evaluated at an effectiveness trial and are being scaled further or nationally.

The strand findings fed into the fund-level evaluation which also included: an evidence scan; a survey of schools in the AF regions which had and had not engaged in AF pipeline activities; and drawing on EEF management information (MI).

The school survey sought to explore schools' perceptions of the relative importance of different sources of information in decision making and their awareness and degree of usage of EEF resources and programmes. The survey was administered with 6,831 state-funded schools in the three regions and achieved responses from 671 schools (10%). Twenty-three per cent were AF schools and the remainder were non-AF schools.

Summary of findings

RQ1: How was the AF pipeline developed, supported and implemented? Was this with fidelity to intentions?

Recruitment

- Four strands involved recruiting schools – Early-Stage Programme Development, Trials, Scaling and School Support. All reached their targets. There were some challenges in the early stages, for example due to schools being in challenging circumstances and still impacted by Covid-19. In addition, the short recruitment timescale was a particular challenge for projects. Primary schools proved easier to engage.
- Programme developers who were interviewed reported that EEF and DfE recruitment support had proved beneficial. This included brokering introductions and promoting opportunities on their website and via social media.
- The School Support strand included a recruitment hub approach. A recruitment hub led by an RS was set up in each of the three regions to coordinate the recruitment of schools. The hubs took on logistical responsibilities (e.g., managing school bookings), with local RSs who were delivering the strand being responsible for managing communication with schools. This worked well where there was a clarity on respective roles and effective communication, as it took the administrative burden off RSs delivering training.

Implementation

- All of the strands were implemented with fidelity to intentions and to expected timescales.
- Programme developers, partners and EEF interviewees reported a range of key factors which had supported implementation. They included:
 - EEF and partner support which was tailored to programme teams' needs and was flexible
 - partners' (who were supporting programme teams) expertise and prior experience of providing support and tried and tested training, models and tools which were adapted to educational settings
 - programme teams' enthusiasm, experience in programme delivery and established reputation
 - close collaboration between EEF, partners and programme teams, with a focus on discussion and peer learning amongst programme staff and partner/programme team co-production of training and resources
 - programme features, including: programmes linking closely to schools' priorities; short interventions which were more manageable for schools (e.g., 13 weeks); light-touch training; practical 'takeaways'; and blended delivery which allowed for flexible engagement.
- Key barriers to implementation reported by interviewees were: the tight AF timescale, lack of programme staff time and capacity, support for programme teams not being pitched at need and stage of development, and lack of school commitment and time to engage.

RQ2: What progress did the AF pipeline make towards its intended short-term outcomes (school awareness, acceptance and take-up of evidence-based programmes)?

- Survey findings suggested that the AF pipeline was well aligned with schools' needs and priorities. In addition, schools consulted about their engagement in School Support reported that they decided to participate because the training offered an opportunity to strengthen their use of evidence in decision making through 'light-touch' training.
- Survey findings suggested that schools were generally highly satisfied with the AF-pipeline strands, with over three-quarters reporting that they were 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied. In addition, schools participating in School Support were positive about the training, including the resources, practical take-aways and break-out sessions. EEF's own satisfaction data was also very positive.
- Despite having been engaged with EEF for a shorter period, the survey findings suggest AF schools were more aware of EEF activities and had higher levels of participation than non-AF schools.

RQ3: What progress did the AF pipeline make towards its intended medium-term outcomes (indicative impact on school behaviour/decision making)?

- School Support was the only strand in which schools were consulted on changes in behaviour/decision making and in which indications of medium-term outcomes could be explored.
- Focus group data suggested that School Support training had increased participants' understanding of the tiered planning model (looking at teaching, targeted academic support, and wider strategies) and of EEF's toolkit, guidance reports, programmes and opportunities, and they were more likely to go to EEF and to use evidence-based programmes in the future. Furthermore, some schools were already starting to put learning into practice, for example by updating policies, feeding learning into School Development Plans, and running staff meetings with a focus on quality first teaching.

RQ4: How effective is the AF pipeline model?

- The AF pipeline included two successful innovations in EEF's evidence-generation pipeline:
 - an approach to early-stage programme development implemented with nine research schools as programme developers
 - a systematic approach to capability building which supported scaling of four programmes
 - in addition, the focused recruitment to trials in three regions was largely undertaken successfully.
- The EEF implemented a new approach to supporting schools' engagement with evidence through a light-touch training programme.
- The AF pipeline also led to learning on key enablers and barriers to recruitment and implementation which have been highlighted in the implementation section above and in the additional findings below.

Additional findings

- Where interview and monitoring data indicated that recruitment was successful, programme teams had: an existing reputation and well-established school networks, and also drew on intermediaries' networks (such as RSCs and Local Authorities); used a broad range of recruitment strategies; developed well-pitched and clear marketing materials; and had an offering that attracted schools, such as programmes to support Covid-19 catch-up in numeracy and literacy.
- There could be further development and formalisation of EEF's role in programme team needs analysis and brokerage of support.
- The AF pipeline led to a range of other outcomes for those involved in supporting and driving delivery. This included an increase in EEF skills and expertise in supporting the development and implementation of programmes and in programme teams' capacities.
- The evaluation resulted in a more developed five-stage evidence-generation pipeline which includes early-stage development as an additional stage and capability building and scaling as activities that can take place at any stage of the pipeline.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis that, overall, the AF-funded activity was successful and indicates that the EEF evidence-generation pipeline already has considerable strengths.

- It is recommended that EEF develops a more formalised **needs analysis** framework across the pipeline as a whole, with relevant criteria varying across pipeline stages so that capability building, and scaling support, is effectively targeted. This recommendation is informed by the EEF's work in the AF pipeline with programme developers across different pipeline stages responding to different programme and programme-team needs.
- The EEF has established criteria for granting and re-granting programmes at different stages of the evidence pipeline. The AF pipeline has increased knowledge about capability and scaling needs of programmes and programme teams. This can inform future **refinement of granting criteria**. Evaluation teams may also benefit from **making criteria more transparent and explicit**, as this was raised by some in relation to understanding programme classification. Clearer and more transparent criteria may then support movement of programmes through the pipeline.
- EEF might place more emphasis on **brokering** external expertise and input on the specific evidence base for programme development to supplement that of programme managers and subject specialists. This may be most beneficial for early-stage programmes, particularly where innovations have not directly arisen from the developer's own prior research.
- Notably, four of the eight programme teams receiving capability support benefited from support focused on training or professional development approaches. **For programmes that are scaling and involve professional development or training, external expertise on effective 'train the trainer', cascade and online or hybrid professional development models may be beneficial.** In the AF pipeline, early-stage programme development was led by RSs, who already have professional development expertise. However, this may not be the case for other developers – again pointing to the potential benefits of external expertise in this area.
- The EEF should consider **developing and systemising brokerage** to embed support for capability building in usual EEF activity. This could include assessment of partners' expertise and offers to ensure they meet the needs of programme teams, and to identify the timeliness of support – an issue identified in relation to the capability support activity. Further, it is important that support is effectively targeted at programmes delivering in educational rather than other settings, as this was raised as an issue by early-stage programme developers. In particular, the EEF is developing tailored approaches and materials to support early-stage programmes, and the evaluation findings support this approach. This may also support coherence and alignment with other EEF tools and processes, for example supporting ToC models devised for early-stage programmes being further developed when/if programmes progress to pilot or trial stages.
- Due to the short timescale of the evaluation, firm conclusions cannot be made about the flow of programmes through the pipeline and connected issues. In future, any development of the early-stage programme or capability support would particularly benefit from **internal or external formative evaluation or in-depth monitoring and quality assurance**.

1 Introduction and background

This report presents the findings of a formative process evaluation of EEF’s Accelerator Fund (AF) pipeline. The evaluation was undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Sheffield Institute of Education (SloE) at Sheffield Hallam University during 2022.

Throughout the academic year 2021–22, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) expanded its activities, with the aim of strengthening the development of its pipeline of evidence-based numeracy and literacy programmes and supporting more schools to use evidence in their practice. This was informed by independent reviews of EEF activity and EEF reflection on their evidence-generation activity (see Section 2.2 for further details). These activities align with the EEF’s mission to break the link between family income and educational achievement.

The work was supported through the Department for Education (DfE)’s ‘Accelerator Fund’ (AF). This fund supports recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, in this instance, by targeting three poorly affected Regional School Commissioner (RSC) regions²: the North of England; the East Midlands and Humber; and the West Midlands. The AF funding supported:

- schools in these areas to use evidence-based numeracy and literacy programmes to aid their recovery, by enhancing the EEF’s usual pipeline activities during the school year 2021–22.
- a range of EEF-funded activity from early-stage programme development, through to implementation at scale,
- strengthened EEF development and implementation processes.
- a customised approach to supporting schools in the three regions to use evidence to improve numeracy and literacy outcomes in the context of Covid-19 recovery.

For brevity, from this point onwards, we refer to all AF-funded activity as ‘the AF pipeline’. It is worth noting that the AF was expanded beyond the first year of delivery and this second iteration of AF (AF2) was funded for 2022-25.

The AF pipeline comprised five activities referred to in the report as strands. Figure 2 provides a brief overview of each activity and its relationship to existing EEF activities (see Section 2.1 for a description of EEF business-as-usual activities). Further details on the AF pipeline and the content and delivery of the five strands are presented in section 4 and the strand Theories of Change (ToC) can be found in Appendix B.

It is worth noting that this was a formative evaluation and so the report does not follow EEF’s usual trials report structure. In addition, the report focuses more on the ‘new’ activities and the lessons learned to support EEF to incorporate these new elements into its evidence-generation work. This includes Early-Stage Programme Development and Capability Building.

Figure 2: Overview of the five strands of AF pipeline activities

Evidence generation	Early-Stage Programme Development: development of thematic programmes at an early stage	New design, delivery and formative evaluation of programmes led by RSs, supported by EEF and external partners	Innovation
	Capability Building: effective interventions supported to develop further (potentially in preparation for extending the scope and reach of the intervention)	New support provided by external partners	
	Trials: promising interventions undergoing efficacy/effectiveness trials	Conduct of trials aligning with EEF usual activity but concentrated recruitment in target regions	Refinement/development of existing EEF activity
	Scaling: effective interventions supported to scale	Expansion of usual activity via funding/support for programme scaling at various stages in the pipeline with a focus on the target regions	
Promoting evidence use	School Support: training for schools to improve awareness of the EEF’s work and signposting to evidence-based programmes	New continuing professional development (CPD) offers led by RSs (a light-touch version of EEF’s usual regional school offer)	

² Reports published by the DfE on pupils’ learning progress from spring 2020 to summer 2021. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupils-progress-in-the-2020-to-2022-academic-years?msckid=96438878b58d11eca9571d88dc833986>

2 EEF evidence generation and the AF pipeline

2.1 The EEF's evidence-generation pipeline in the context of its wider mission

EEF's history and mission³

The EEF was founded in 2011 as an independent charity, supported by a grant to the Sutton Trust and partners, with a mission to support evidence use to improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged socio-economically. It aims to raise the attainment of 2 to 19-year-olds, thereby 'breaking the link between family income and educational achievement'.⁴

Originally, the EEF was envisaged to have a 15-year life span, but now its mission has been extended to at least 2032. The EEF was endowed with a founding grant of £125 million from the Department for Education and subsequently secured additional investment, enabling it to award over £200 million in supporting the development, delivery and evaluation of programmes over its lifespan. The DfE re-endowed EEF with a further £137 million in July 2022 to secure its future for at least the next 10 years.

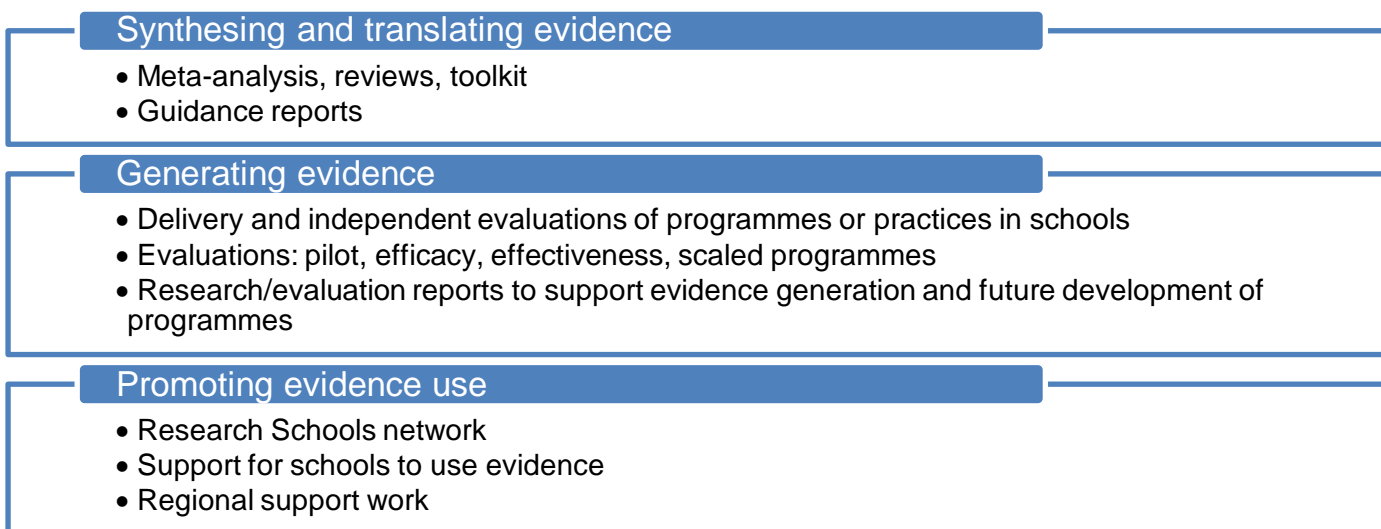
The EEF is independent of government, but has a close working relationship with the DfE, as well as other government departments. In 2013, the EEF and the Sutton Trust were jointly designated by the Government as the What Works Centre (WWC) for Education, which is part of a wider WWC network. Common across the WWC network is promoting evidence based on impact evaluations (particularly randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews).

Since its foundation, the EEF has developed three areas of activity to further its aims:

- **synthesising and translating evidence** into forms accessible to school leaders, teachers and others in the educational sector
- **generating evidence** of what works to improve teaching and learning by funding independent evaluations of programmes with potential, generally through RCTs and other quasi-experimental designs (QEDs)
- **promoting evidence use** and supporting educational institutions and professionals to make use of evidence.

These aims and related activity are presented in Figure 3. Note that the three areas of activity interconnect and are mutually supportive. For example, scaled programmes are an important aspect of promotion of evidence use as well as generating evidence at scale.

Figure 3: EEF aims and activity



³ The description of the EEF history summarises a longer description in Edovald and Neville (2021) Working Out What Works: The Case of the Education Endowment Foundation in England, *ECNU Review of Education*, Vol. 4(1), 46–64.

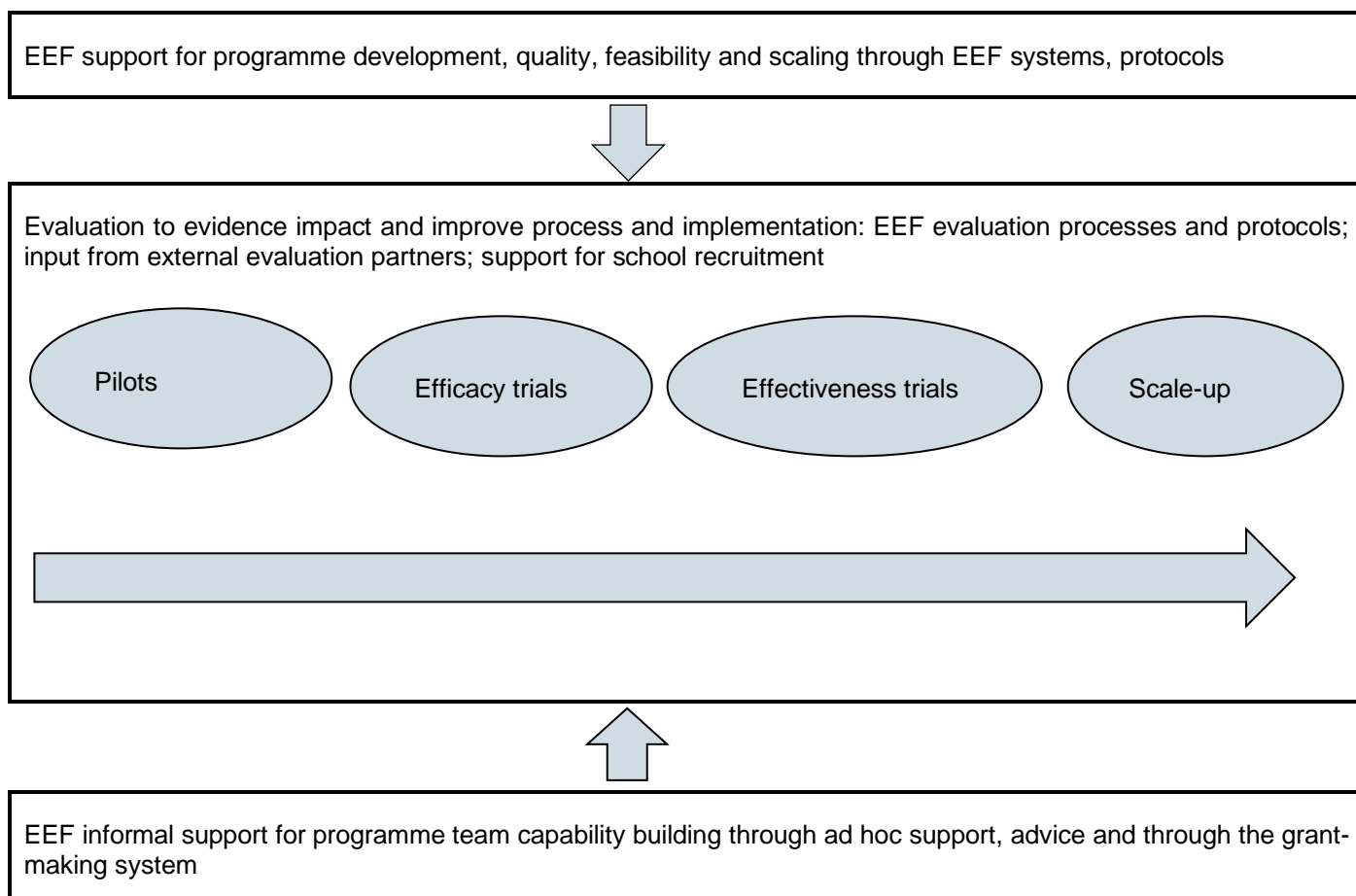
⁴ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>

Four out of five strands of the evaluated AF-funded activities focused on evidence generation and the fifth on promoting evidence use. Thus, in the following two sections, we focus on describing EEF’s work on evidence generation and how the AF pipeline work differs from EEF’s business-as-usual activity, in relation to this area of work.

EEF evidence-generation pipeline

The EEF’s evidence-generation activities are sequenced in terms of programme size and evaluation aims – hence the EEF refers to them as a pipeline⁵ – and are supported through grants for programme developers. EEF have referred to these as stages. This is represented in Figure 4. In evidence generation in other contexts, such as healthcare, the focus is usually on three stages of programme development – efficacy, effectiveness and at scale. Prior to efficacy trials, early evidence generation tends to be undertaken separately from programme development and implementation. However, two other UK WWCs identify a pre-pilot stage of feasibility studies⁶ – the Early Intervention Foundation and the WWC for Children’s Social Care.⁷

Figure 4: Current EEF evidence generation – ‘business-as-usual’



Pilots

Programmes that have some initial evidence indicating potential to improve learners’ attainment, but have not been independently evaluated to demonstrate a causal relationship, are supported as either pilot projects (20 grants, 2014–

⁵ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/evaluation/process-and-people/pipeline-of-eef-trials>

⁶ <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/10-steps-for-evaluation-success> and https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Evaluation-Pipeline_v1.0.pdf

⁷ These two WWCs are merging; <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/blog/early-intervention-foundation-and-what-works-for-childrens-social-care-announce-decision-to-merge/#:~:text=Early%20Intervention%20Foundation%20and%20What%20Works%20for%20Children%E2%80%99s,covering%20both%20early%20intervention%20and%20children%E2%80%99s%20social%20care.>

19)⁸ or efficacy trials (41 grants, 2014–19). Pilot studies are conducted in a small number of settings with programmes at an early or exploratory stage of development, and are evaluated primarily through qualitative research to develop and refine the approach and test its feasibility. Initial indicative data may be collected to assess the potential for impact on attainment.

Efficacy trials

Efficacy trials test whether a programme works when led by the programme team in a larger number of settings (usually 50+) using RCT methodologies. A quantitative impact evaluation is used to assess the impact of the intervention on student outcomes, including attainment. An implementation and process evaluation is used to understand how different aspects of the intervention and its implementation contribute to outcomes.

Effectiveness trials

Previously evaluated programmes that demonstrate positive impact on learners' outcomes are further evaluated to establish potential for cost-effective delivery at scale, whilst maintaining impact. Most EEF trials in this category are effectiveness trials (41 grants, 2014–19). These test the intervention under everyday scalable conditions in a large number of settings, usually 100+ across at least three different geographical regions and with the developer less directly involved in delivery. Effectiveness trials are evaluated in similar ways to efficacy trials.

Scale-up

'Scale-up' occurs when a programme which has been shown to work when rigorously trialled, and has the capacity to deliver at scale, is expanded to work across a bigger area delivering to a large number of schools or early years/post-16 settings. By 2021, the EEF has supported three programmes to scale nationally – Magic Breakfast, the Nuffield Early Language Intervention and the National Tutoring Programme.

Support for programme quality and team capability

Throughout the EEF pipeline, programme development, implementation and evaluation are supported by approximately 20 detailed and extensive guidance documents, protocols and templates covering activities from set-up, recruitment, evaluation design, implementation, ethics and data-handling analysis, and reporting. These documents support consistency across EEF evaluations and, although focused on programme evaluation, are arguably important ways by which the EEF supports programme quality, feasibility and scaling. For example, the use of the protocols and frameworks for project inception supports programme teams to more clearly articulate the programme activities, supports manualisation, and makes explicit programme theory.

'Scaling' is used as distinct from 'scale-up' and has two meanings: (1) it refers to increasing the size and reach of a programme relative to previous implementation; (2) in the context of the AF pipeline, it also refers to a specific strand of funded activity. Prior to the AF pipeline, support for developing programme team capability and programme models was more ad hoc through advice and, in some cases, specific support in terms of grants awarded to programme teams.

Promoting evidence use and school support

The EEF promotes evidence use principally through seven regional leads and, since 2016, support for a network of 28 RSs and 10 Associate RSs. RSs support the use of evidence to improve teaching in schools. They develop networks of schools and teachers in their local areas to support evidence-informed teaching, and the use of evidence-informed programmes and practices. They do this through regular communication and events and providing training and professional development for senior leaders and teachers.

⁸ Frequency of type of grant in this section is from Demack *et al.* (2021) Review of EEF trials: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/evaluation/eef-evaluation-reports-and-research-papers/syntheses-of-eef-evaluations/review-of-eef-projects>

2.2 Rationale for, and visualisation of, the AF pipeline

Rationale for the AF pipeline

The AF pipeline has two interlinked aims that have shaped activity across the five strands, as detailed below.

The DfE's 'Accelerator Fund' (AF) aimed to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and both address the barriers schools experience in taking up well-evidenced programmes and incentivise schools to access the programmes. In EEF AF activity, a particular focus was targeting three affected RSC regions: the North of England; the East Midlands and Humber; and the West Midlands. AF activity supported schools in these areas to use evidence-based numeracy and literacy programmes to aid their recovery. The DfE identified the three regions based on their research on the impact of Covid-19.⁹ Exploring targeted support in specific regions aligned with EEF's general identification of differences in regional take-up and participation in their business-as-usual activities, and built on previous regional campaigns to promote school engagement, for example around evidence-informed teaching assistant (TA) practice.

In relation to regional activities, the aim was to:

- foster a culture/behaviour change around schools' spending of their funding and ensure there is a quality supply of programmes that settings can confidently and easily access
- support the development of suppliers of evidence-based practice, with the capacity to deliver in the three regions
- accelerate learning in numeracy and literacy.

Central to the EEF mission is an aim to improve education through evidence-informed practice, particularly in relation to classroom teaching. The EEF views programmes as a vital part of this because they are a strong mechanism for changing teaching practice, as well as providing additional support for disadvantaged children. Thus, ensuring a greater proportion of (the significant) school spending on programmes is directed towards proven approaches rather than un-evidenced approaches is seen as a key lever. However, a fundamental pre-requisite for this is a sufficient supply of proven programmes for all schools in all areas to be able to select. At present, this is not the case. Ensuring a sufficient number of evidenced-based programmes with capacity and reach is necessary to support this goal. The AF pipeline activity was intended to contribute to this aim.

Additionally, an in-depth quantitative review of EEF projects (Demack *et al.*, 2021) confirmed that, for EEF-funded trials up to 2019, the overall mean effect size for trials was small (0.04 for primary and 0.01 for secondary). This suggested the need to increase the quality of programmes. In addition, a qualitative study of the scaling of trials from efficacy to effectiveness (Maxwell *et al.*, 2021) identified the need and scope for a more systematic and evidence-based approach to supporting developers to scale-up their interventions and to develop capability to do so.

Following these studies and EEF's reflection of its activity, three potential ways to increase the supply of effective evidence-based programmes were identified:

- increase the number and quality of programmes entering the pipeline by developing a support for early-stage programmes focused on feasibility
- improve support for scaling of programmes to progress through the pipeline by increasing scope and reach with the aim of progressing to the scale-up stage
- improve support for building capability of programme teams to deliver at scale.

Thus, the AF pipeline builds on the EEF's business-as-usual model, with the aims to maximise the supply and take-up of effective evidence-based programmes.

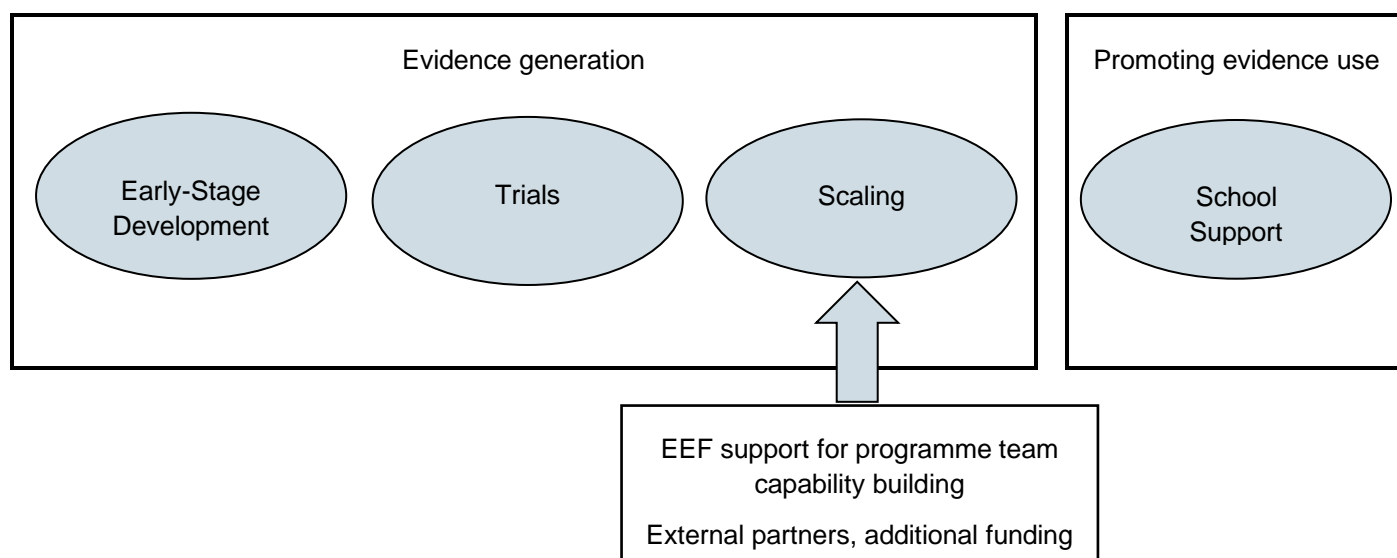
Visualising the AF pipeline

The five strands of the AF comprised: Early-Stage Programme Development, Trials, Scaling, Capability Building and School Support. Figure 5 illustrates how four of these sit within the pipeline. School Support sits outside as a way of

⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1062286/Understanding_progress_in_the_2020_to_2021_academic_year_Findings_from_the_summer_term_and_summary_of_all_previous_findings.pdf

supporting schools to engage more with evidence in decision making. In the AF pipeline, no pilots were included because the aim was to accelerate outcomes in numeracy and literacy, and so preference was given to funding programmes for which there was greater existing evidence of potential impact on learning – that is, programmes that were already at the trial stage¹⁰. Thus, Figure 5 has some elements found in the EEF business-as-usual evidence-generation pipeline, prior to the AF activity, but is not a model of a pipeline of the AF strands of activity.

Figure 5: The AF pipeline strands



2.3 AF pipeline recruitment targets

Estimates suggest that there are approximately 6,831 primary, secondary and all-through state-funded schools across the three regions (1,721 in the North of England; 2,566 in the East Midlands and Humber; and 2,544 in the West Midlands). Of these, EEF anticipated that the funding would support 1,245–1,755 schools in total, to engage with one or more AF pipeline strands. The aim was for the vast majority (>80%) of the schools supported by the AF funding to be located within the three specified regions. The school recruitment targets for each strand are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: School recruitment targets for AF strands

Strand	Target end December 2021 (schools recruited)	Target end March 2022 (schools recruited)	Target end July 2022 (schools recruited)
Early-Stage Programme Development		75–125	75–125
Trials ¹¹	200–300	300–450	470–630
Scaling		150–200	300–400
Capability Building	N/A	N/A	N/A
School Support		200–300	400–600
TOTAL schools	200–300	800–1,200	1,245–1,755

¹⁰The subsequent AF pipeline (AF2) does contain pilots.

¹¹ This strand includes efficacy and effectiveness trials. Efficacy trials recruited mainly from the 3 RSC regions, and effectiveness trials recruited nationally. The target was to recruit 270–330 schools for efficacy trials and 200–300 for effectiveness trials.

2.4 About the AF strands of work

This section provides an overview of the aims, planned delivery and timescales of each of the five strands of the AF pipeline. Four strands are presented in an order that reflects the different stages of the evidence-generation pipeline (see Figure 3), with Strand 5, ‘School Support’, additional activity focused on school take-up of evidence-based programmes. A Theory of Change (ToC) can be found in Appendix B that outlines how the activities within each strand link to EEF’s aims and mission. This was developed as part of the evaluation.

Early-Stage Programme Development

Aim

As noted above, EEF identified a need to support early-stage education programmes to improve the flow and quality of programmes for pilot evaluation and efficacy trials.

As an innovation in EEF activity, Early-Stage Programme Development activity had two aims:

- creating and enacting an approach to early-stage programme development involving support from EEF and external partners
- supporting the design, development and early formative evaluation of a small number of school-based programmes.

Planned delivery and timescale

This strand adopted an exploratory approach to addressing this need. It aimed to build and develop EEF’s expertise and to support further learning, particularly about the potential benefits of external support using two models:

- Rapid Cycle and Development Testing model (RCDT) developed by Dartington Service Design Lab (‘Dartington’)
- Behaviour Change Wheel based on the Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW), developed and used by Centre for Behaviour Change at University College London (UCL) (‘CBC’).

This partner support was targeted at nine RSs, which acted as programme developers, each developing a single programme that addressed an identified gap in programme availability. RSs were selected because they were an existing pool of potential developers who were already connected to the EEF. Dartington supported all nine RSs, with CBC providing additional support to two which were identified by EEF as having greater capability to extend their application of learning by using both models and receiving two sets of support input to the development of their programmes.

Dartington ran core workshops for all nine RSs to support use of the RCDT model and, together with the EEF, supported the RSs to develop the programmes’ ToC. It also supported action learning focused on implementation as well as early evaluation of programme implementation and design through drop-in clinics on data analysis and evaluation and leading on reflection discussion. UCL ran workshops for two RSs based on the BCW approach, again supported by EEF staff. EEF and the external partners were aware that the models to be used (RCDT and BCW) were likely to be unfamiliar to education-based developers. The RCDT model, in particular, core to constructing a ToC, was developed by Dartington for use in other contexts. Thus, it was anticipated that some translation and brokerage by EEF would be needed.

The EEF’s Head of Dissemination and Impact and two Early Pipeline Development Leads provided most of the support to the RSs for programme development. The engagement with Dartington helped build EEF’s capacity to provide support. Early Pipeline Development Lead was a new role introduced to support this area of EEF activity.

Activities ran from October 2021 to October 2022. This included recruitment of the external partners and RSs. In terms of RS programmes being designed or refined, implemented and internally evaluated, this took place between February and July 2022. RS programme activities were completed in June/–July, but feedback activities with Dartington completed in October.

Trials

Aim

These strand activities were similar to existing EEF trials and can be regarded as business-as-usual in many respects.

Through this strand's activity, it was expected that:

- around 470–630 schools would be involved in a trial of a promising or evidence-informed programme (270–330 schools for efficacy trials and 200–300 for effectiveness trials)
- there would be increased awareness of EEF trials in schools in the three regions
- more pupils would receive evidence-informed programmes in the AF three regions (this was a longer term objective, beyond the initial AF pipeline funding).

Planned delivery and timescale

The Trials strand included evaluations of six programmes, four at efficacy and two at effectiveness. A long list of effectiveness trials was identified in August 2021. Two were selected from this list based on a set of criteria, including topic area (language/literacy or numeracy), efficacy trial results, cost effectiveness, and ability to deliver, at least partly, in the three regions, along with intelligence from evaluation and programme managers.

Similarly, the four efficacy trials were selected from a long list. Selection criteria were in part the same as for the effectiveness trials. However, these were programmes that had suffered a negative impact because of the Covid-19 pandemic and, as a result, did not have robust outcome data, but the associated implementation and process evaluation (IPE) report or data indicated that there were no major issues with delivery. The AF timeframe would cover set-up and recruitment for these trials.

The two effectiveness trials (Improving Working Memory and Arithmetic; and Children's University) were funded using a mix of EEF and DfE AF funding, as both of these trials had already begun at the time of the AF funding and had recruited nationally. Improving Working Memory was due to complete implementation at the end of 2021–22, with Children's University being complete by the end of the 2022–23 school year.

The four programmes selected for efficacy trials were: Learning Language and Loving It; Pupil-Assisted Learning Strategies; English Mastery; and the 5Rs Approach to GCSE Maths Resits. New evaluators were commissioned for the efficacy re-trials, with set-up and IDEA meetings occurring before the start of the strand evaluation. Further details on the six programmes within the Trials strand can be found in the study plan [here](#).

During the AF pipeline evaluation period, the following activities took place for the efficacy trials:

- school recruitment for four efficacy trials
- publication of re-trial protocols for two of the new evaluations (English Mastery & 5Rs)
- randomisation (either before the end of the 2021–22 academic year, or early in the 2022–23 academic year).

Thus, strand outputs during the evaluation period included the production of protocols for AF re-trials and recruitment of schools. Following this evaluation, the implementation and evaluation of the four programmes was expected to take place.

The efficacy trials aimed to:

- commission delivery and evaluations of up to four programmes that had shown evidence of promise in raising pupil attainment
- produce evaluation reports with new evidence on the effectiveness of the programmes and lessons learned
- increase availability of programmes ready for scale or further refinement.

In addition, the effectiveness trials aimed to:

- commission delivery and evaluations of up to two programmes that had shown evidence of raising pupil attainment in previous EEF trials

- produce evaluation reports with new evidence on the effectiveness of the programmes and lessons learned
- increase availability of programmes ready for scale or further refinement.

Scaling

Aim

This strand aimed to support four programmes to scale: one delivered as a full ‘scale-up’ project and three as scaling projects, where developers were supported in preparing their interventions for effectiveness trials by, for example, hybrid training delivery formative evaluation and receiving capability building help from external organisations.

Planned delivery and timescale

The EEF commissioned delivery of four programmes that had shown evidence of raising pupil attainment from previous EEF trials. For three of these, EEF provided support to scale the programme through funding and support in recruitment of approximately 100 schools to each. These were: 1stClass@Number; Reciprocal Reading; and Switch-on Reading. One programme was delivered more fully at scale – ‘a scale-up’ project: Embedding Formative Assessment (EFA). For all of these projects, EEF subsidised the programme cost at around 70%, to support school take-up of these evidence-based programmes in the three target areas.

The aims for this strand include:

- to support refinement of programmes to enable further scaling in the future and so aid progression towards the scale-up stage
- to provide concurrent support for programmes to scale further whilst maintaining quality (capability building)
- to increase the awareness of delivery teams and the EEF about important implementation factors for scaling under different contexts (scale-up project).

The scaling stage was somewhat exploratory: to support the delivery at scale ahead of an effectiveness evaluation, enabling delivery teams to work through logistical issues, including those related to delivering in the hybrid format favoured by schools due to the pandemic.

All four scaling projects were also supported by the Capability Building strand (described below). Some formative evaluation of the capability building work of individual programmes was embedded to explore effectiveness; however, programme impact will not be independently evaluated for any of the scaling programmes. For EFA, an IPE was commissioned to understand the scaling mechanisms. Further details on the four programmes within the Scaling strand can be in the study plan [here](#).

EFA (scale-up), Reciprocal Reading and Switch-on Reading (both scaling) were all recruiting over the evaluation period, as well as working with capacity-building partners on various aspects of their programmes. All four programmes recruited and started delivery by the end of July 2022.

Capability Building

Aim

This strand aimed to help programmes to build and strengthen the structural features associated with large-scale delivery of a programme. These features might include programme infrastructure such as internal systems or delivery models or market-related features such as product marketing and communications. The objective of this work was to better equip the programmes to deliver at scale and meet the needs of schools.

Planned delivery and timescale

Programmes that had shown signs of effectiveness at an early stage were provided with tailored support to strengthen their capacity to deliver at a wider level. Capability building supported both the supply and demand side of EEF’s pipeline of quality programmes to schools: improving supply by ensuring programmes had the infrastructure to deliver effectively and at scale and stimulating demand by making programmes more accessible to schools through improved marketing and communications.

Eight programmes that had all been the subject of previous EEF trials were selected to receive capability building under the AF pipeline. They were 1stClass@Number, Embedding Formative Assessment (EFA), Mathematical Reasoning,

Reciprocal Reading, Stop and Think, Switch-On Reading, Thinking Doing Talking Science and Learning Language and Loving It.¹² Through their knowledge of these programmes, including lessons from previous trial results, EEF identified a capability issue that could be effectively addressed with support and determined how this work could be best delivered. Depending on the type of work required, programmes were given direct funding and/or assigned a capability building partner to work with. Three partners were selected via an open tender to provide this capability partner support: the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI), and Pedroza Communications.

Five of the eight programmes received a direct grant for work and similarly seven of the eight programmes received support from one or more of the partner organisations, which included a short-term evaluation by an external partner. A work plan was created for each programme with planned activities and objectives for the six-month period of support (February–July 2022). Table 2 provides details of capability support provided for programmes.

Table 2: Capability support

Name of project	AF1 capability building work
1stClass@Number	Partner (Pedroza): Review marketing approach and build marketing skills of central team and providers Partner (BIT): Investigate impact on subgroups of children, investigate school perceptions of programme
Reciprocal Reading	Direct grant: Develop and test the train-the-trainer model Partner (CEI): Support to develop train-the-trainer model and QA systems, options for pathway to scale
Switch-On Reading	Direct grant: Improve online training and support model, conduct training for trainers, improve resources Partner (CEI): Support with online training model, evaluation of hybrid training model, QA system
Embedding Formative Assessment	Partner (BIT): Support with school recruitment and mentor recruitment, improve monitoring system
Stop and Think	Direct grant: Develop online version of the software
Thinking Doing Talking Science	Partner (Pedroza): Develop marketing capability of team, develop materials, create marketing plans Partner (CEI): Develop options for pathways to scale, develop business models for 1–2 options
Mathematical Reasoning	Direct grant: Develop online version of programme, including training materials Partner (Pedroza): Investigate position in market and pricing models, build marketing capability in team
Learning Language and Loving It	Direct grant: Pilot new hybrid online/in-person training method Extra evaluation support (NatCen, as extension of efficacy trial evaluation): Evaluate new hybrid online/in-person training method

The aim was to complete the objectives outlined in each programme’s work plan by August 2022. The completion of this work was intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- improve the skills and understanding of factors relevant to delivering at scale for programme teams
- develop the programme structure or delivery model to improve capacity to deliver at scale while maintaining programme effectiveness

¹² Four Capability Building projects were also supported through the Scaling strand: 1stClass@Number, Reciprocal Reading, Switch-On Reading, Embedding Formative Assessment (EFA).

- improve programme content to increase the likelihood of the programme having a positive impact on pupils.

Activities ran from January until August 2022. After project set-up, capability building work started in February and for most programmes continued until the end of July. For two of the eight programmes receiving support, work was completed in August.

School Support

Aim

This strand aimed to support schools to better access and make effective choices around participating in trials and subsidised programmes. This was achieved by engaging schools which had limited prior engagement with EEF and RS and provide school leaders with training on how research can be used to inform school decision making. The objective was for attendees to apply their learning within school, leading to increased use of evidence in planning and teaching.

Planned delivery and timescale

This strand provided training to leaders in schools to support them in making more use of evidence to support decision making and school improvement planning. Two versions of the ‘Supporting Recovery’ training were offered: a short ‘taster’ twilight course and the full six-module training programme. The training was especially developed for the strand. The twilight course provided an introduction on how to critically assess issues and identify solutions. The training programme focused on evidence-based decision making within the context of Covid-19 educational recovery. As part of the sessions, participants were introduced to EEF’s resources and training, with the aim of them engaging further with these in the future.

The 17 RSs and Associate RSs in the three target regions were all involved in delivering this strand. This included three of the 17 RSs acting as recruitment hubs, one in each of the three regions. Ten of the RSs delivered twilights (four delivering as one consortium, two delivering as one consortium and four delivering individually) and all 17 delivered the training programme. RSs attended ‘train the trainer’ sessions and were given opportunities to observe training delivery prior to delivering training themselves.

The aim was to recruit schools that had not previously engaged with EEF with a target to reach 400–600 schools in total, with 400–600 engaging with the twilights and around 400 engaging with the training programme (with some overlap). As a minimum, the strand aimed to engage 400 schools in at least one twilight session or one module of the training programme.

Recruitment began at the end of November 2021, with twilight delivery starting in January 2022 and the training programme running from March 2022. The strand was completed by the end of the 2021–22 academic year.

3 About the evaluation

3.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

The evaluation was informed by:

1. two DfE aims for the use of the AF:
 - to foster a culture/behaviour change around the use of evidence in schools' spending
 - to ensure there is a quality supply of well-evidenced programmes that settings can confidently and easily access.
2. EEF's aims to understand the promise, feasibility and scalability of the AF pipeline and gain insights which EEF can draw on in developing its work in this area.

The evaluation did not set out to assess the impact of activities on schools and pupils; however, where appropriate, it aimed to gauge the extent to which AF pipeline activity was beginning to influence schools' decisions to use evidence-based programmes, or their likelihood of doing so in the future.

The evaluation was structured into six parts – an overarching evaluation, and strand evaluations for each of the five AF pipeline strands. The overarching evaluation had one key aim – to consolidate data from each AF strand and provide an overall picture of the capability of the AF pipeline to meet its desired outcomes. The specific outcomes were as follows:

- i. **process-level outcomes:** improved EEF development, support and implementation processes
- ii. **school-level outcomes:** enhanced school awareness, acceptance and take-up of evidence-based programmes, allowing for the fact that there would be variation in the extent to which this outcome was feasible according to the strand of pipeline activity
- iii. **learning ('design')-level outcomes:** enhanced learning for the EEF about process effectiveness and activities that need to be refined to improve performance across EEF's wider work (with particular regard to new processes such as early-stage programme development work and capability building).

Evaluation findings of the five strands fed into the overarching evaluation, with the latter also comprising a survey of AF and non-AF schools in the three regions.

The evaluation was conducted in tandem with the development of the AF pipeline, including of elements that were particularly new for the EEF, such as early-stage programme development, scaling and capability building. As a result, the evaluation team drew learning from EEF's strand teams as the AF pipeline developed. Thus, the overall approach taken was one of formative, developmental evaluation, particularly in relation to the newer aspects.

3.2 Research questions for the overarching evaluation

The evaluation had three core research questions (RQs) for the overarching evaluation, with several sub-questions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Overarching evaluation research questions

Research question	Overarching question	Sub-questions
RQ1	How was the AF pipeline developed, supported and implemented? Was this with fidelity to intentions?	RQ1.1: Overall, were strands developed, supported and implemented as intended and did strands progress as expected? RQ1.2: What factors helped or hindered the delivery of strands? Which of these were common or specific to individual strands?
RQ2	What progress did the AF pipeline make towards its intended short-term outcomes (school awareness, acceptance and take-up of evidence-based programmes)?	RQ2.1: How many schools in AF regions signed up to EEF programmes or used EEF resources? To what extent was there variation across, and between, the three AF regions? RQ2.2: What were schools' reasons for getting involved or not getting involved? What might encourage non-engaging schools to get involved? To what extent did this vary by strand? RQ2.3: How did schools in the AF regions respond to EEF programmes and resources? How beneficial did they find the process, and the programmes/resources/training? To what extent did this vary by strand?
RQ3	What progress did the AF pipeline make towards its intended medium-term outcomes (indicative impact on school behaviour/decision making)?	RQ3.1: What indications are there that AF-funded activity is beginning to influence schools' decisions to use evidence-based programmes, or may do so in the future? RQ3.2: What common and/or strand-specific factors contributed to this?
RQ4	How effective is the AF pipeline model?	RQ4.1: Does the model support its objectives to improve the uptake of evidence-based programmes, and schools' decisions to use evidence-based programmes? RQ4.2: How effectively do the different strands build on or link with each other? Are there any tensions or weak progression points? RQ4.3: To what extent is cohesion between strands an important factor in supporting future progress on the pipeline and improving school uptake of programmes? What mechanisms (e.g., capability building or external ToC development support) enable or hinder effective cohesion? RQ4.4: What lessons are there for the usual EEF pipeline model in relation to improving the quality and impact of funded programmes?

Additionally, research questions were formulated for each AF strand. For further details on the strand-level research questions and evaluation activity, please refer to the study plan which can be found: [here](#)

3.3 Evaluation activities and methods

The overarching evaluation primarily involved synthesising evidence gathered through the strand evaluations, rather than collecting data itself. It was supported by an evidence scan of evidence generation and knowledge mobilisation systems in education internationally, and, in the UK, other WWCs. However, there was a discrete school survey, which gathered data from participating¹³ and non-participating schools in the three regions. Table 4 maps the research questions and the methods used to answer them.

¹³ All schools involved in any of the AF pipeline strands, or in more than one strand.

Table 4: Mapping of research questions and methods aiming to answer them

Research method	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4
Theory of Change (ToC) development	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evidence scan				✓
School survey		✓	✓	
Strand qualitative interview data	✓	✓	✓	✓
EEF management information (MI)	✓	✓	✓	

Further details on each of the evaluation activities are provided in the sections below.

Theory of Change (ToC) development

Prior to beginning the evaluation, the EEF teams developed draft ToC models for each strand of the pipeline. These were in the form of logic models (Coldwell and Maxwell, 2018) – see the study plan [here](#) for the original models. Three workshops with EEF staff took place to understand individual strand ToC models and to develop an understanding of the overall change intentions for the AF pipeline activity as a whole. These meetings informed the development of the models of EEF systems, the AF pipeline system, and a possible future system, that are included in the evaluation report. A meeting during the inception of the evaluation ensured identification of AF-funded activities, expected outputs and outcomes, and contextual influences. This informed the design of data collection activities and analysis of data. In addition, meetings with EEF strand teams supported refining and developing strand ToC models as logic models. Following refinement of strand theory of change models, a cross-strand analysis led to the identification of a model of ‘elements’ important to implementation and/or the achievement of outcomes. Change mechanisms occur through and/or within these elements. A distinction was made between generic elements – cross-strand categories applicable to multiple strands (e.g., EEF support for recruitment) and strand-specific elements related to only one or some strands. A later cross-strand meeting focused on the ToC models as whole, timed at the end of evaluation data collection, which supported refinement of the ToC models and interpretation of data and analysis. Please see Appendix A for a model of the elements of support provided as part of the AF pipeline, and Appendix B for the strand ToCs, including implementation pathways, elements of activity and associated mechanisms/assumptions and contextual influences.

Evidence scan

An evidence scan was undertaken of selected sources that critiqued, or developed, theoretical or practical evidence and knowledge mobilisation systems. This background scan provided general insights and supported ToC development, evaluation activity and interpretation of findings, particularly in relation to assessing effectiveness of the AF pipeline model and informing formative findings for further developments. A focus on evidence generation and knowledge mobilisation systems was relevant to EEF’s approach to both the development of the evidence-generation pipeline and promotion of evidence use. An initial list of 20+ sources was identified, based on team members’ existing knowledge and searches to identify further resources. These were considered for review following an initial reading. Twelve were selected, with eight of these focused on whole-evidence systems, and the other four were included to address key issues of early-stage programme development in the AF pipeline (see Appendix D for evidence sources and more detail on identification and selection).

School survey

The overarching evaluation survey, administered both online and on paper, contained two banks of questions:

- the first set aimed to explore the relative importance of different sources of information in school leaders’ decision making (including, but not limited to, evidence-based sources)
- the second focused on school leaders’ awareness, and degrees of ‘use’, of EEF resources, opportunities and programmes.

The survey was administered with the 6,831 state-funded schools in the three target regions and was sent to one individual in each school. In non-AF schools, this was generally a senior leader, and, in AF schools, it was the key contact for the school and could be a literacy or numeracy coordinator, for example. The target was for a 10% response rate, which was achieved. Responses provided were anonymous.

Of the 671 schools in which a staff member completed the survey, 23% (154) were AF schools¹⁴ and 77% (517) were non-AF schools.

Overall, the proportion of primary schools responding to the survey was a little lower within the three regions and the secondary proportion was a little higher. There were similar proportions of primary and secondary schools within the AF and non-AF achieved samples. Table 5 provides further details on the survey responses by setting type.

Table 5: Survey responses by setting type

	Number of responses	Percentage of overall sample	Percentage within three regions
Primary	528	79%	83%
Secondary	135	20%	16%
All-through	5	1%	1%
16 plus	2	0%	0%
No data	1	0%	0%
Total	671	100%	100%

Schools in the survey sample were distributed fairly evenly across the regions and the proportion of survey responses from schools in the three regions generally mirrored the actual proportions of schools within the regions. Table 6 provides further details on the regional spread of survey responses.

Table 6: Responses by RSC region

	Responses received	Total schools in region	Response rate	Percentage of overall achieved responses in region	Percentage of actual schools in region
East Midlands and the Humber	261	2,566	10%	39%	38%
North of England	181	1,721	11%	27%	25%
West Midlands	229	2,544	9%	34%	37%
Total	671	6,831	10%	100%	100%

However, within the AF and non-AF survey samples, there were some regional differences (see Table 31 in Appendix C). A larger percentage of AF than non-AF schools were located in the North of England (35% as opposed to 25%), with a higher percentage of non-AF schools being based in the West Midlands (36% as opposed to 29%) and the East Midlands and the Humber (40% as opposed to 36%).

It is also worth noting that comparing the AF survey sample to the overall AF population shows that schools in the North of England were over-represented in the survey sample (35% as opposed to 29% in the total AF population) and schools

¹⁴ AF schools were defined as all schools involved in any of the AF pipeline strands, or in more than one strand. This information was provided by EEF.

in the West Midlands were under-represented (29% as opposed to 35%), with the East Midlands percentage of 36% being the same in the AF survey sample and the AF population.

Further details on the survey sample can be found in Appendix C.

Qualitative data collection at strand-level

Qualitative data were collected through individual virtual/telephone interviews as part of all the strand evaluations. These were primarily conducted by the NFER and SloE strand leads, sometimes with support from other researchers or NFER research associates. The interviews were conducted with staff and organisations involved in delivering, or supporting the delivery, of each strand. As appropriate to the strand, interviews were completed with the EEF team, programme leads/developers, partners, RS leads and evaluators. In some cases, interviews with organisations/staff were undertaken twice to gain an understanding of progress over time. Sampling was not required for these interviews as they incorporated all of those involved with strand development and delivery to enable a complete picture to be obtained and to explore consensus and any differences in opinion.

School Support was the only strand which included consultations with schools, and these were undertaken via three online focus groups which included eight teachers in total out of 491 teachers who attended the training programmes. An initial and reminder invitation to the focus group was sent by email to all who had attended the training programmes prior to mid-June. All those who accepted the invitation were included in the focus groups. The sample was not intended to be representative of the total population but illustrative of a range of experiences. Focus groups were conducted online and were independent of training sessions.

Table 7 provides details of the interviews completed for each strand, as well as the total number of interviewees undertaken where the same person was interviewed more than once.

Table 7: Number of interviewees and interviews conducted by strand

	EEF team ¹⁵	Programme leads/ developers	Partners	RS leads	Evaluators	Schools	Total interviewees	Total interviews
Early-Stage Programme Development	2	2	2 (1 twice)	9 (all twice)			15	25
Trials	6	6	–	–	6		18	18
Scaling	4	4	–	–	1		9	9
Capability Building	2	8 (all twice)	3				13	21
School Support	2		2 (recruitment hubs)	11		8 (via 3 focus groups)	23	23

Interview schedules for the different stakeholders were designed to include common questions, both across each stakeholder type and across strands, to ensure consistency and quality in data collection. They also included bespoke questions that were tailored to the specific strand and its unique ToC, and were informed by the model of elements derived from the ToC development (see above and Appendix A). The questions focused on the strands' progress in recruitment and implementation – including what had worked well or otherwise and what improvements were needed – and perceived outcomes for programme teams, partners and EEF. The focus group schedule for teachers involved in School Support included questions on their experience of the training, levels of satisfaction and outcomes.

¹⁵ EEF strand leads, Head of Dissemination and Impact, AF programme managers, evaluation managers and regional programme managers and leads.

All the interviews were recorded after gaining the consent of the interviewee (see Section 3.5) and were written up into a framework based around the research questions. A common analysis frame was devised, which was linked to the core research questions. This was then used by strand leads to develop specific analysis frames for each set of interviewees. This allowed for strand-specific analysis of bespoke questions whilst supporting thematic analysis across the strands.

The qualitative findings of each individual strand were collated into a strand presentation then presented to EEF and combined with MI on recruitment provided by EEF (and EEF school satisfaction data for the School Support strand). The presentations also included final strand ToCs developed by strand leads, including the identification of elements important to change processes. For further details on the strand evaluations, please see the study plan [here](#).

Synthesis of data for overarching evaluation

The qualitative data from the strand-level presentations, alongside EEF's MI on recruitment (and school satisfaction for School Support), was synthesised as part of the overarching evaluation. The overarching evaluation also included analysis of the strand ToCs, to align them and draw out common elements, mechanisms and contextual factors. In addition, the overarching evaluation incorporated analysis of the survey data. As the survey was targeted at schools and only the School Support strand gathered data directly from schools, the survey primarily gathered additional data to that gathered as part of the strand data collection. However, for School Support, the survey data was triangulated with qualitative data from the focus groups, where appropriate.

3.4 Timeline

All of the strand data collection took place between April and July 2022. In terms of the timelines for the overarching evaluation:

- initial ToC development activity took place in February–March 2022
- the scan of evidence was completed in March–April 2022
- the survey was administered in June–July 2022
- the ToC overarching evaluation workshop took place at the end of July 2022
- strand findings, overarching evaluation key findings and survey findings were presented to EEF in September 2022.

3.5 Ethical review

NFER and SloE, separately, followed their organisational procedures to ensure all research activity was ethically reviewed, appropriate to their policies. As EEF was the commissioning body, EEF staff were not treated as research participants for the purposes of ethics and consent.

Processes for data collection from non-EEF participants were subject to NFER ethics review and/or SloE ethics review, depending on which organisation's staff were collecting and analysing data. All participants in the evaluation were provided with information on the study and a privacy notice (specifying all the purposes of data processing, retention periods and parties with access to the data) and consent was sought for participation. Participants were able to withdraw from data processing with instructions provided in the privacy notice on how to do this. Further information is included in the study plan [here](#).

3.6 Data protection

NFER/SloE ensured all work streams were compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Both organisations have ISO27001 and Cyber Essentials Plus certifications and registration with the Information Commissioner's Office.

The DfE and EEF were joint data controllers, with overarching responsibility for the AF programme. NFER and SloE were independent data controllers with responsibility for the evaluation. They made decisions about how and what personal data was used, in accordance with the purposes set by the DfE and EEF.

NFER identified GDPR Article 6 (f) 'legitimate interests' as the legal basis for processing data. The evaluation fulfilled NFER's core business purposes of undertaking research, evaluation and information activities and had broad societal benefits by contributing to improving the educational experience of children and young people. SloE identified GDPR Article 6 (e) 'public task' as its legal basis for processing of personal data in the course of the evaluation.

The evaluation did not involve the collection or handling of special category personal data.

Apart from Early-Stage Programme Development, strand data collection, analysis and reporting were the responsibility of either NFER or SloE. A data-sharing agreement was in place for data which needed to be shared. Where data was the responsibility of both organisations, it was passworded and transferred via an NFER secure portal, in which data is encrypted in transit. Specifically, this included Early-Stage Programme Development data collection, as this was undertaken jointly by NFER and SloE, as well drafts of the ToCs, presentations and report drafts. Data was stored by each organisation on secure systems and was classified according to level of sensitivity. Interview data was anonymised, and access was limited to research staff working on the strand. Data on interviewees taking part was passworded.

All qualitative data and the quantitative survey data collected as part of the evaluation will be deleted within a year of collection.

DfE were kept informed of the progress of the evaluation and were involved with developing the research questions. They were consulted on key decisions for the evaluation and were invited to review and provide feedback on key outputs, including the study plan, research instruments, ToC and the report.

Further information can be found in the study plan [here](#).

3.7 EEF and evaluation teams

Details of the EEF, NFER and SloE staff and evaluation teams are included in Table 8.

Table 8: EEF and evaluation teams

	Overarching evaluation	Early-Stage Programme Development	Trials	Scaling	Capability Building	School Support
NFER	Suzanne Straw (Co-PI) Gemma Schwendel (Survey analysis) Kelly Kettlewell (Research Associate – survey administration) Ben Styles (Adviser)	Juliet Sizmur (Strand co-lead) Caroline Stanford (Research Associate)			Roland Marden (Strand lead) Caroline Stanford (Research Associate)	Roland Marden (Strand lead) Kelly Kettlewell (Research Associate)
SloE	Mark Boylan (Co-PI) Mike Coldwell (Adviser)	Mark Boylan (Strand co-lead) Nick Moore (Researcher)	Josephine Booth (Strand lead) Eleanor Byrne (Researcher)	Josephine Booth (Strand lead) Eleanor Byrne (Researcher)		
EEF	Celeste Cheung (Senior Evaluation Manager)	Mia Travers-Hayward (Early Pipeline Development Lead)	Iggy Rhodes Amy Clark	Iggy Rhodes Amy Clark	Ben Simuyandi (Programme Manager)	Emma Price (Regional Programme Manager)

	Overarching evaluation	Early-Stage Programme Development	Trials	Scaling	Capability Building	School Support
	<p>Amy Clark (Senior Programme Manager)</p> <p>Iggy Rhodes (Head of Programmes)</p> <p>Stu Mathers (Head of Dissemination and Impact)</p>	<p>Sarah Dobie (Early Pipeline Development Lead)</p> <p>Stu Mathers</p>	<p>Celeste Cheung</p>	<p>Celeste Cheung</p>	<p>Amy Clark</p> <p>Rachael Morris (Evaluation Manager)</p>	<p>Stu Mathers</p>

4 Findings

4.1 Implementation and process evaluation findings

The summary below presents the implementation and process evaluation key findings.

Summary of findings for RQ1

RQ1: How was the AF pipeline developed, supported and implemented? Was this with fidelity to intentions?

RQ1.1: Overall, were strands developed, supported and implemented as intended and did strands progress as expected?

- All strands were developed and implemented as intended and with fidelity to intentions.

RQ1.2: What factors helped or hindered the delivery of strands? Which of these were common or specific to individual strands?

- There were some common factors which supported and were a barrier to recruitment and implementation.
- Factors which supported recruitment included:
 - a dedicated recruitment team
 - a broad range of well-pitched marketing strategies
 - drawing on existing networks/contacts
 - support from intermediaries with local contacts and reputation
 - offering high-quality provision
 - support from EEF/DfE with promotion and materials.
- Factors which were a barrier to recruitment included:
 - the tight AF timescale
 - restrictions to recruitment within the three regions
 - lack of contacts
 - insufficient capability
 - confusion over roles and responsibilities when more than one organisation was involved
 - EEF support coming too late and not reaching the audience effectively enough for some projects
 - Covid-19 impacts on school capacity and ability to engage.
- Factors which supported implementation included:
 - EEF: existing relationships with programme teams; effective identification of need; ongoing, tailored and flexible support; named contact undertaking ongoing monitoring and support
 - Partners: prior experience of delivery; appropriate staffing and capacity; tried and tested support and models; close collaboration with programme teams; understanding of infrastructure challenges for delivery at scale
 - Programme teams' enthusiasm for working with EEF; experience of, and reputation for, delivery, forward planning and allocation of appropriate resources
 - Support focused on programme teams: expertise of those providing support; collaboration between partners, EEF and programme team; central support whilst allowing for local tailoring of provision and resources; opportunities for discussion and peer learning; train the trainer
- Factors which were a barrier to implementation included:
 - AF and programme related: tight AF timescales; RS working outside their regions; lack of programme team time and capacity; lack of clarity on aims and goals; insufficient tailoring of support; support not aligned with programme teams' stage of development

- School-related: low capacity, lack of senior leader commitment, impacts of Covid-19, placing lower value on free provision.

Progress to recruitment targets (RQ2.1)

As can be seen in Table 9, all of the four strands which recruited schools over-reached their targets. In addition, for the AF overall, nearly double the number of discrete schools targeted were recruited.

Table 9: Achievement of school recruitment targets by strand

	Target no. of schools	Actual no. of schools	Percentage of target achieved
Early-Stage Programme Development	75	90	120%
Trials	470	779	166%
Scaling	300	306	102%
Capability Building	–	–	–
School Support	400	501	125%
Total discrete schools ¹⁶	845	1546	183%

In terms of school phase, the proportions of different types of schools engaged generally aligned with the proportion for the three regions. Around three-quarters (74%) were primary schools which aligned with the regional proportion in the three regions and 16% were secondary schools which was slightly above the regional percentage of 14%. For further details, see Table 10.

Table 10: Engagement in survey by school phase

Phase	Number engaged in AF pipeline	Percentage of schools in each phase engaged in AF pipeline	Regional percentage of schools by phase as a comparator
Nursery	79	5%	2%
Primary	1148	74%	74%
Secondary	246	16%	14%
All-through	12	1%	0.4%
16 plus	35	2%	0.3%
Special	16	1%	5%
Alternative provision/other	10	1%	0.8%
Not applicable	0	0%	3.5%

¹⁶ Some schools took part in more than one strand.

The proportions of Pupil Premium pupils were also aligned with the three-region proportion: around half had less than 24% and half 24% and above Pupil Premium proportions.

Recruitment progress of AF strands (RQ1.1 and RQ1.2)

This section explores how recruitment progressed for each of the four strands which recruited schools during the evaluation (this excluded Capability Building).

Early-Stage Programme Development

Summary: Recruitment for Early-Stage Programme Development was largely straightforward, utilising existing networks.

What recruitment methods were used?

RSs had pre-existing contacts through their multi-academy trust (MAT) networks, local hubs and links with primary settings, which they drew on to recruit schools by contacting them directly. RSs outside the three target regions were assisted and supported by the EEF and the Regional RS network.

What worked well?

Because of the relatively small number of schools and the relatively small demand on schools to participate, recruitment was not particularly challenging, with schools recruited on time and as intended. EEF support during the recruitment phase – such as brokering introductions to other RSs (that might support recruitment) and with MATs – was beneficial. Having a clear programme description that set out expectations, involvement and time commitments and funding for schools was also seen as a crucial element for successful recruitment. Primary schools proved easier to engage than secondary schools. Although the reasons for this difference are not clear, speculatively this may be due to the particular nature of the programmes and the foci of the interventions, or composition of the regional networks that were central to recruitment, or the relationship between these two factors.

What worked less well? What should be changed next time?

Areas which worked less well, and which should be considered in the future included: the need for a longer recruitment lead-in time; not trying to recruit immediately before the Easter holiday for a summer start; and earlier advice and support from EEF on recruiting schools.

Trials

Summary: Although the Trials strand over-recruited overall, this did not mean that all the programmes found recruitment easy. The two effectiveness trials – Children’s University and Improving Working Memory – had recruited nationally before they were brought into the AF. Two of the efficacy trials – The 5Rs efficacy trial and English Mastery – were experiencing recruitment challenges at the time of interviews (in April–May 2022). As a result, the 5Rs efficacy trial deadline was extended from April to August and was able to count individual college campuses as separate institutions and split the trial over two years. English Mastery was also able to recruit nationally for 50% of target schools, and also split the trial over two years. EEF recruitment support, for example, running recruitment webinars, was perceived to be valuable in increasing sign-up, as was further subsidising trial costs. Learning Language and Loving it and Pupil Assisted Learning had recruited well at the time of interview and were confident of hitting their respective targets.

Primary schools proved easier to engage to Trials than secondary schools, with the perception that this was due to a larger pool of primary schools, primary programmes being more targeted (secondary programmes tended to be whole-school and longer term), and secondary schools being more affected by the ongoing impact of Covid-19.

What recruitment methods were used?

Both DfE and EEF played a more active role in AF recruitment than was the case prior to the AF pipeline. EEF support included producing and disseminating an AF recruitment brochure and other resources including videos, mailouts to schools, extra social media activity, and an EEF-led webinar to secondary schools supporting recruitment to trials. DfE support included featuring projects in DfE newsletters. EEF emailed schools about projects directly and promoted the projects via social media, including Twitter. EEF also ran a webinar which focused on four secondary projects (two of these were efficacy trials – English Mastery and 5Rs), where developers were able to promote and talk about their

programmes. In addition, developers tended to use their existing contacts and networks to recruit schools to their programme.

What worked well?

Recruitment was challenging for some efficacy projects. However, EEF team members felt that developers having dedicated recruitment staff with adequate time was important to successful recruitment. Similarly, those projects which were experienced in school recruitment and had their own networks found recruitment easier:

'They have one key member of their delivery team who's been working there for I think maybe almost 10 years. She really knows their systems, was really great at recruitment, a really active person with recruitment and obviously very used to doing that. I think, you know, she was really crucial like her understanding of the programme but also of the way to recruit schools was really critical and really helped us a lot I think.' (EEF team member)

Developers appreciated EEF and DfE's support with recruitment and the broad nature of this, as described above. In addition, the flexibility displayed around recruitment in terms of numbers and geography (i.e., moving outside of the three target regions) and their facilitation of introductions (e.g., to RSCs/local authorities (LAs)) was thought to have been very important. Reducing the programme costs to schools was viewed positively by developers.

Learning Language and Loving It targeted LAs which were geographically close in order to build a 'cluster' programme. In addition, this project was already well known and delivered by respected professionals such as speech therapists, and therefore seen by EEF as having an advantage. The developers of the 5Rs programme felt that the reputation of the programme helped with recruitment, as did using Twitter. Other developers felt that their programme's content was appealing to schools post-Covid (e.g., the mental health focus of Children's University, and Learning Language and Loving It's language focus).

Also effective were:

- taking a simple approach to sign-up, for example, one-click enrolment
- offering a range of dates/times for workshops
- incentivising participation through offering quick payments for cover for workshop attendance.

What worked less well?

There was some concern from developers about what they perceived as a short timeframe for recruitment. However, for some, this was extended but not always as much as the developers would have liked. Similarly, it was felt that starting recruitment earlier would have made it easier.

As already noted, recruitment was challenging for the efficacy trials; the regions selected for the AF were already hard to reach, with high levels of social disadvantage, which was further exacerbated by Covid-19. This meant that costs to schools of participating in programmes continued to be a barrier for schools despite these being reduced as part of the AF. EEF staff also noted that recruitment in certain disadvantaged areas was particularly difficult (for all strands) as the market was saturated with lots of other programmes, such as Opportunity Areas.

EEF team members commented that it was more challenging to recruit to interventions focusing on the whole curriculum as opposed to programmes which were more targeted and shorter due to teacher capacity required and the ongoing effects of Covid-19:

'English Mastery, which you've referenced, is a really kind of large whole-school curriculum programme. There's a really big decision for a school to make that choice compared to, you know, doing a targeted intervention with four pupils for 10 weeks. You know, that's a lot more business as usual.' (EEF team member)

'Obviously, like absence was just through the roof and schools just under so much pressure and so signing up to a whole-school curriculum programme for next academic year just wasn't on the priority list.' (EEF team member)

Programme evaluators for this strand shared several observations on set-up issues which impacted on the timing of, and time available for, recruitment:

- it had been hard to gain ethical approvals in the timescale for the AF-funded recruitment
- there were contract issues related to the AF, which were exacerbated by a lack of clarity from EEF around why changes to previous contracts were needed and why EEF and DfE became independent joint data controllers for AF evaluations.

Due to under-recruitment and the time-limited nature of the AF, the evaluation design of two of the four trials changed to recruit over a two-year period. Outside of the AF, it is possible that these trials may have been postponed or cancelled altogether. There was some concern from evaluators that this relaxation of recruitment criteria to meet targets might lead to compromised evaluation design.

What should be changed next time?

Overall, recruitment to the four efficacy trials was challenging, but much of this was related to the situation with Covid-19 in schools, staff being stretched, and budgets not being finalised. As a result, EEF flexibility around recruitment in terms of targets and geography was received by programme teams very positively. Programme teams also welcomed the reduction in costs for schools and EEF's direct support in recruiting schools via social media, websites, emails, newsletters and the webinar. This is something that could be built upon in the future, potentially by having a longer lead in time.

Scaling

Summary: Like the Trials strand, although Scaling projects over-recruited overall, this did not mean that they found recruitment straightforward. Embedding Formative Assessment developers felt that the two-year nature of the programme was off-putting to schools and that the proposed recruitment window was too short. At the time of the interviews (April–May 2022), they had recruited just 21 schools from a target of 150. Similarly, Switch-On Reading was struggling to recruit at the time of interview (30 schools out of a target of 100). The programme would have liked to begin recruitment earlier but had issues with capacity, their existing reach, training needs of delivery staff and restrictions in the developer's working context. Both of the programmes that struggled to recruit were promoted by EEF's webinar, which increased recruitment. 1stClass@Number felt that recruitment was rushed but were able to over-recruit. Reciprocal Reading had met their target at the time of interview.

For similar reasons to Trials, primary schools proved easier to recruit than secondary schools.

What recruitment methods were used?

As noted for the previous Trials strand, EEF played a more active role in AF recruitment than would usually be the case. The same support for recruitment was offered by DfE and EEF, as outlined above.

What worked well?

There was a common perception that the programme topics for the scale-up and scaling projects were appealing to schools, namely, Covid-19 catch-up in numeracy and literacy. In addition, the recruitment support from DfE and EEF was well received, as was the reduction in programme costs for schools.

Recruitment was seen to be more effective where programme developers were well connected, for example having key contacts in schools and the support of intermediary organisations such as the Primary Heads Association, and LAs. Those programme teams which had had previous successful experiences in recruiting schools, and were able to communicate the benefits of their programme effectively to schools, were perceived to have been more successful.

It was noted that programmes that offered high-quality training for TAs in line with good practice were appealing to schools, particularly when funded:

'I think we wouldn't have got the numbers of schools from these areas if we hadn't had the Accelerator Fund.' (Programme developer team)

What worked less well?

Despite the perceived need for programmes of this nature, three out of four projects in this strand experienced challenges in recruitment, which were seen to be because of the context in which schools were operating, or because

of several programme-related issues. For example, for some developers, recruitment difficulties were seen to be partly due to time pressure, with the recruitment period being too short and starting too late. Recruitment was also perceived as being more difficult when projects were limited to the three regions specified. A lack of contacts in a particular area also made recruitment difficult:

'I suppose the other thing is that, because of the regions, so we have no, I've got no contacts. It's about contacts, really, isn't it, networking? And I've got no contacts in Cumbria for example, which is one of the regions ... So if you haven't [the networks there is nothing to get you] ... in, apart from just blanket messaging people, which we know doesn't work.' (Programme team member)

School-related challenges were common in terms of recruitment. Programme teams noted that uncertainty was an issue for schools, with some feeling that two-year projects were too long a commitment post-Covid. Schools were also facing challenging circumstances – a lack of money, time, and senior leader commitment. As one project developer noted:

'The current context in schools is very, very challenging.' (Programme developer)

Two of the programme developers were very stretched – one had multiple streams of work on their EEF trial and, regarding the other, the trial was only part of their job. This meant that there was limited time for both of them to move the projects forward.

It was felt by one project that there was not enough communication between developers and EEF staff supporting school communications. Another programme developer felt that the recruitment support could have come earlier and was not substantial enough:

'If [the support] could have come earlier, it would have helped more and given schools more time to think properly, whereas their [EEF] support came at the end. So, perhaps for the later schools it was a knee jerk reaction: we must fill this in and get it back quickly – and they didn't really think it through as much.' (Programme developer)

This was thought to be because of delays in confirming whether funding was available; once the funding was secured, the support (e.g., webinars, AF brochures, social media – see Trials section for more detail) was felt to be *'brilliant'*.

As noted in Section 2.4 (*Trials*), recruitment in certain disadvantaged areas was particularly difficult, as the market was saturated with lots of other programmes.

What should be changed next time?

As noted in the previous section, the support given by EEF and DfE for recruitment and the flexibility shown by EEF were much appreciated by developers and this approach should be built upon. EEF recruitment support was appreciated and seen as helpful and this should continue where appropriate. Early conversations with developers should include any anticipated issues around recruitment (e.g., the developer having limited geographical reach, or limited networks/contacts) and recruitment strategies, and the support that developers might need from EEF.

Two efficacy trial developers were overcommitted and low on time – EEF should be wary of over-asking developers in a restricted timeframe.

Some developers felt that there needed to be longer timeframes for recruitment, feeling that they would have liked to start recruiting earlier or that the window was too short. The continued impact of Covid-19 was felt to have been an issue here, with staff shortages in schools, and schools taking longer to finalise budgets, and therefore to decide how best to spend funds. The focus on recruitment in the commissioning regions was also felt to have imposed limitations (i.e., developers competing for schools). It is suggested that EEF work with developers to establish appropriate timescales for recruitment and to be flexible with these as recruitment efforts progress.

School Support

Summary: Recruitment of participants for the School Support strand started in the spring term and continued into the summer term. Recruitment for the training programme was generally good, with 703 individuals signing up over this period. Recruitment for the twilight sessions was slow initially. The decision was therefore taken to open up twilight sessions to teachers as well as senior leaders to improve recruitment, which proved effective, with 491 individuals

signing up for these sessions. Overall, individuals from a total of 501 schools attended either training. The training attracted more participants from primary schools than secondary schools, with 552 participants from primary and 142 participants from secondary.

What recruitment methods were used?

A recruitment hub led by an RS was set up in each region to coordinate the recruitment of schools. Due to capacity issues, one hub was unable to continue, and its role was undertaken centrally by EEF. A dual recruitment approach was intended, with hubs undertaking logistical responsibilities (e.g., managing bookings made by schools), and local RSs managing communication with schools.

What worked well?

The recruitment hubs taking the administrative recruitment role reduced the burden on RSs delivering training, and allowed them to focus on outreach to schools. With hubs managing course bookings, RSs were able to focus on communicating with schools. This played to the strengths of RSs and is likely to have increased recruitment.

Recruitment hubs and RSs were satisfied with the support they received from EEF including the booking system managed by the hubs, marketing templates and promotional materials. Promotional materials were perceived to be well pitched to the target audience and were effective in attracting less-engaged schools:

'When I read about the training, it looked like it would be really useful for our school: a practical introduction on how to use evidence to improve teaching.' (Training participant)

The offer of free support also facilitated sign-up.

RSs and LAs were effective in engaging schools by using their reputation and local influence to encourage sign-up. They forwarded promotional materials to schools and advertised the programme as an opportunity through newsletters:

'With the hub managing bookings, we were able to focus on communicating with schools. That's our strength, so this approach generally worked well.' (RS team member)

What worked less well?

Where communication between the hub and RSs was not effective, their respective responsibilities sometimes became blurred, leading to misunderstandings and less productive collaboration.

The project timescales led to recruitment being rushed and beginning before:

- the respective roles and responsibilities of RS and the recruitment hub had been established, which led to some confusion and lack of coordination
- recruitment hubs had been given details of which LAs to target, which led to some not correctly targeting schools and retrospective work to link schools to LAs
- training content had been finalised, which meant that an opportunity was missed to tailor messages.

In addition, RSs found it more challenging to recruit schools out of their area with whom they did not have previous contacts and who did not feel the programme applied to them.

What should be changed next time?

Key areas for development arising from the evaluation data are to ensure that:

- information needed to support recruitment has been supplied in advance of recruitment commencing (e.g., LAs to target, the content of training) to support targeting and messaging
- recruitment hub and RS roles and responsibilities are clear from the outset and establish a clear process for coordinating recruitment.

Key factors which supported or were a barrier to school recruitment (RQ1.1 and RQ1.2)

Looking across the strands, several factors supported or were a barrier to strands' recruitment of schools as highlighted in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11: Factors which supported school recruitment

Topic of support and incentives	Approaches	Support from EEF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 catch-up and support for numeracy and literacy were an 'easy sell' as they appealed to schools • Subsidised programme fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated recruitment team and/or key contact with appropriate experience, understanding of schools and sufficient time/capacity to effectively recruit • Use of a broad range of recruitment strategies, including promotion of programmes in EEF/DfE newsletters, social media, webpages, and online seminar • Simple approaches to sign-up, for example one-click enrolment • Offering a range of dates/times for workshops/training and quick payments for cover • Drawing on existing networks/contacts and prior understanding of schools, for example RS existing networks • The model of a recruitment hub (used in School Support) supported by RSs' own recruitment, which allowed for large-scale recruitment and worked effectively when there were clearly defined roles and effective and regular communication between the hub and RSs • Drawing on support from intermediaries - for example, RSCs/LAs/MATs sending recruitment materials and promoting projects to schools directly which was considered more effective than 'cold' mailouts from programme teams and which built trust in the project • RS using their local reputation and contacts to network with schools and effectively advertise the training • Clear well-pitched marketing materials explaining the purpose of training, its benefits and the time commitment required. • Offering high-quality training/support provided by experienced professionals with an established reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EEF existing reputation amongst schools which built trust • The recruitment support of EEF (and DfE), for example promoting opportunities on their website and via social media (Twitter), an online seminar and recruitment emails, in addition to more active support, for example facilitating introductions to RSCs and LAs • EEF flexibility within reason in terms of: extending recruitment period; extending recruitment beyond the three regions, reducing the target; broadening inclusion criteria • Provision of high-quality recruitment materials that explain the programme and its relevance to schools.

Table 12: Factors which were a barrier to school recruitment

Programme-related	Developer/provider-related	EEF support-related	School-related
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tight timescale for recruitment and implementation, with some suggesting a rolling programme or starting recruitment before Christmas might have been beneficial • Restrictions on recruitment to be within the three regions, which meant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme teams' lack of contacts within certain geographical areas/out of their usual area • Lack of capacity – other pressures • Although the recruitment hub approach (School Support) had its strengths, there were 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional lack of ongoing communication between programme teams and the EEF staff supporting school communications • EEF support coming too late and not reaching the audience effectively enough for some projects (e.g., 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools, especially those in hard-to-reach areas, struggling to commit to projects post-Covid, particularly where a whole curriculum/long-term commitment (e.g., two years) was required. This could be due to leadership challenges, staffing, time and budget constraints • Schools' Covid-related absences impacting on capacity and decision making

Programme-related	Developer/provider-related	EEF support-related	School-related
some schools which were interested had to be turned down	challenges when there was confusion over roles and lack of communication, and where hubs contacted schools outside of their region who felt the programme did not apply to them	perceptions of: EEF having limited reach in some regions, lack of clarity about programmes on EEF website, the recruitment online seminar being rushed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools looking to CPD within their MATs (For Trials), schools not wanting to be randomised to the control condition School year variations (e.g., relating to the Easter break) Some areas already 'saturated' by training offered to schools (impacting on all strands recruiting schools)

Implementation progress of AF strands (RQ1.1. and RQ1.2)

All of the AF pipeline strands were implemented as planned and to expected timescales and with fidelity to the strand and AF pipeline intentions. Further details by strand are provided below.

Early-Stage Programme Development

What worked well?

All development teams reported achieving their goals, with very few issues or barriers to the design and implementation of their programme. Support activities focused primarily on developing programme ToC models and evaluation designs. All training events had at least one attendee from each RS, sometimes two.

The ToC planning models and other partner tools were found to be useful by a number of participants although there were also some mixed views (see below).

Several interviewees acknowledged that the workshops had been effective in facilitating thorough, deep thinking about programme design and planning, the ToC, implementation and evaluation. Some reported that the workshops had guided them through the programme planning process in a rigorous and systematic way, enabling them to develop their understanding of the different stages and the links between them:

'I would never have necessarily done the Theory of Change beforehand. I would have just gone straight into developing the programme and developing the material. So that was really good, to sort of focus your attention and drill down into what, what you really wanted to achieve.' (Programme lead, RS 5)

'I think it's made sure that we've done things when they need to be done in a very stressful and busy environment when there's lots of other things going on. I think that it has helped our knowledge of, you know, what a Theory of Change is, or how to form a good research question ... I think the learning involved in that has been really important and, if we didn't have that, I don't think we would be in the place we are now.' (Programme lead, RS 7)

Peer support and discussion were identified by all as the most valuable parts of the external partner workshops, as well as being able to review others' resources such as ToCs:

'What was really useful was talking to other Research Schools and hearing their approaches to fluency and what extra bits they were putting in their programme design. And I think we've all contributed really practical ideas to each other in that way in terms of getting buy in and doing everything we can to avoid schools dropping out, either through, you know, lack of SLT [senior leadership team] support or not fully understanding the programme.' (Programme lead, RS 1)

'Those sessions where we were with people working on similar themed programmes was really useful because we were able to challenge each other's ideas and ask questions, you know, those difficult questions, because we're all in the Research School network together. We had that freedom to do that. I think it really challenged our thinking. So that helped me to sort of shape the programme.' (Programme lead, RS 5)

'I did value seeing other people's materials and so on... The fact that they were all kind of like on shared drives ... I found that quite useful, just seeing how other people were approaching things.' (Programme lead, RS 9)

EEF support was also valued:

'I felt very well supported, there were really good materials for MoUs [memorandums of understanding], writing of programme descriptions, a literature review at the start ... What was so good was it was so human, very understanding, getting the balance right between being supportive without being suffocating.' (Programme lead, RS 6)

The flexibility of EEF and partner support was also beneficial. For example, one RS appreciated EEF's:

'responsiveness to requests for extra resources to produce a handbook and the balance of email and face-to-face support' (Programme lead, RS 6).

In general, RSs benefitted from the combination of both EEF and partner support, with EEF support enhancing partner support by providing tailored coaching support as a follow up to sessions. In addition, EEF were very conscious of not over-burdening programme teams and schools:

'I think we had to be very mindful that we're working with schools or people who are working in schools and so they are time starved all the time, and so we wanted to make it as easy for them to manage the commitment as possible.' (Early-Stage Programme Development EEF staff member)

One of the teams reported just how valuable and unusual the whole learning package was to programme developers, who would not have been exposed to such intensive professional development in other contexts:

'That opportunity to stop and really reflect and critically analyse stuff. And it's hard work, and it's challenging, but actually it's only going to make us better and potentially have a better impact on everything we do. So, I think that, again, it's that opportunity to have had that professional development that we just wouldn't get from anywhere else. There's ... nothing else that we could access that would be of this scale and of this value for us professionally ...' (Programme team member, RS 7)

What worked less well?

There was initial confusion amongst several RSs regarding the aim of the Early-Stage Programme Development project, with some being unclear that the goal was to assess programme feasibility and potential rather than evaluate impact. As this was a view of a number of the RSs, this indicates that there is a strong association between EEF activity and impact evaluation in the RS network. This is understandable, given the importance of impact evaluation in EEF's evidence-generation activity and in promotion of evidence use. This suggests the need to extend an understanding of criteria in formative evaluation during early-stage programme development.

In addition, there was a large variation in RSs' prior knowledge and needs related to ToCs, evaluation or implementation, and level of previous development of the specific programme. The core workshops focusing on the use of the RCDT model were intended to address RS needs and to support development of programme ToCs. However, as a result of differing knowledge and needs, a number of interviewees initially felt the content of the core workshops was too theoretical and complex, particularly for participants who were less experienced in the research methodologies:

'If the idea is to roll this out to schools that don't have a research lead, I think you would have a huge attrition rate.' (Programme team member, RS 4)

In addition, comments were also made regarding the workshop content being too abstract and the models not being easily applied to a school context:

'Because they are talking about implementation and Theory of Change in the abstract, rather than in the specific, sometimes the analogies they used ... I didn't feel that I really knew what they were talking about in a school context.' (Programme lead, RS 4)

Note that, in relation to the relationship of the core workshops and school contexts, it was anticipated both by workshop facilitators and EEF that the models used in the workshops and their immediate connection to school contexts could be

an issue (see Section 2.4.). For some participants, a lack of effective pitching and tailoring impacted on the usefulness of core workshops, with one RS reporting that, as a result, the main benefit of the workshops was:

'protected time to work on the programme design' (Programme lead, RS 6).

In addition, similar feedback was provided regarding RCDT resources and tools not being fully relevant to school contexts or helpful for developing programme content in education.

Some issues were also identified around timing and sequencing of activities to meet needs in a timely way. For example, the majority of interviewees reported that the timing of the workshops did not align with the stages of programme development. For example, one interviewee noted that the team had already completed a lot of work on their ToC prior to gaining input from the partner. Another commented:

'It would have been really nice to develop the programme design first, or almost in parallel with the Theory of Change and the evaluation tools. As it was, we developed the Theory of Change and evaluation tools first and then developed the programme, which sort of felt like developing an assessment before you've developed your curriculum.' (Programme lead, RS 1)

Others suggested that too much time was given to the theory at the start of the project and that the support could have been more evenly spread across the timeframe of the strand:

'We focused such a lot on the theory and then suddenly it was "right recruit, write the materials"' (Programme lead, RS 4)

Limited timescale affected implementation plans and some RSs faced challenges working with schools outside of their area (e.g., communication, varying term times, understanding local context).

What could be changed next time?

RS leads made a number of suggestions regarding possible areas for development:

- greater clarity on what is meant by evaluation at this stage of programme development and that the focus is on evaluation of programme design and implementation rather than on programme impact
- given the above point, more focus on the development of programme content prior to designing the evaluation of the early programme.

The EEF provided programme developers with a summary of evidence related to the focus of their programme. One RS lead commented favourably on this. However, they felt it lacked sufficient detail. The RS lead in question extended the evidence summary by undertaking a further review of evidence. They noted that others developing programmes might need support to do extended evidence reviews in this way, and suggested that the EEF might better leverage its network of experts to provide more in-depth evidence briefs focused on specific programme content.

The following suggestions are informed by external partner input, discussions with the EEF team or the evaluation team reflections:

- there is potential for additional needs analysis of RS capability and level of programme development to enable more effective design and tailoring of content and delivery of support, this might involve earlier one-to-one support, for example to undertake a needs analysis and begin planning
- different models of implementation could be considered, for example shorter cycles of design, testing and evaluation and/or involvement of an increasing number of schools over time
- there should be increased clarity on the aim/balance between capacity building and direct input to programme development
- EEF could increase clarity on the contribution of EEF and partners including whether partners are offering professional development, coaching or consultancy.

Trials

The two effectiveness trials were already ongoing by the time the AF started. Improving Working Memory ended with the 2021–22 school year, with Children’s University due to be completed by the end of the 2022–23 school year. The four efficacy trials were recruiting over the course of the evaluation, so implementation findings on these projects are not included here.

What worked well?

The EEF has established approaches for the set-up and management of trials that have been developed and improved over a number of cycles. Thus, evaluation findings reflect this and provide a ‘snapshot’ of the strengths of EEF usual management of trials.

Developers felt that the ongoing dialogue with EEF before the AF was launched had helped them to ‘kick start’ their programme. As one developer noted:

‘It [the start-up] was a very straightforward process, because it was all the same personnel involved and ... obviously there was a lead in time to run in the research trial ... where we could still communicate online and it was a very supportive process throughout ... we’ve been in, in dialogue with EEF a lot more in the last year or so than ever before.’ (Programme team member)

It was also noted that the more frequent communications and meetings with EEF were a valued feature of the AF work, resulting in a perception that EEF was very responsive and supportive. Multiple ToC workshops were also well received:

‘In terms of EEF, there’s a huge amount of support there as well in terms of our risks and concerns, and quite often they do have good suggestions on how to deal with some things ... You know, if you’ve got schools that aren’t engaged – do I continue to engage with them or do I see them as withdrawal and their [EEF’s] advice has been very good in that sense.’ (Programme team member)

Developers also reported that EEF’s flexibility had been very helpful in terms of budget, reducing the costs of programmes to schools and recruitment (as reported earlier).

EEF team members were very positive about developers who were perceived as responsive and agile to change. Existing collaborative relationships and good communications between EEF, developers and the evaluators were also felt to be beneficial:

‘It’s good to have the support of EEF and also [the evaluator] are very good partners in terms of advising about how we meet and ensure that the evaluation is going to be effective as possible as well. So, I think it’s kind of working quite well collaborating and working in partnership with everyone really.’ (Programme team member)

Flexible delivery of the intervention was felt to be advantageous, positively impacting on engagement:

‘Flexibility is huge as well ... for example, in the pilot¹⁷ we’ve got a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday programme and then we encourage people to stick to one programme. However, due to illness or capacity issues in the setting, they can switch to say a different programme that week or do a catch-up virtually. So, that’s why we’ve had such great high attendance rates as well.’ (Programme team member)

Where evaluators had already worked with a developer – on a Covid-impacted trial for example – this meant that they were already familiar with the intervention, which was seen as beneficial:

‘I think it’s really important that the evaluation team know the programme. It normally takes them some time to familiarise themselves with the nitty gritty of the nature of the programme, which we don’t have this time. And so, I really appreciate that because they did the IPE the last time. Now we can build up on a new IPE not repeating the same questions ... taking a lesson learned and then either reviewing what we need to re-examine in this trial or just building up on the pre-existing knowledge.’ (EEF team member)

¹⁷ The developer is referring here to a different approach to the intervention training that took place as part of the AF.

Similarly, developers with previous trials experience were also more familiar with the concepts and processes of evaluations, and the IPEs from Covid-impacted trials were very useful for all stakeholders moving forward. EEF guidance documentation was noted to be very useful.

In addition, developers noted that EEF has a high profile and good reputation with schools and being part of trials was seen as positive for many. Developers having adequate staffing in place and a dedicated recruitment team was also viewed as important by EEF teams.

Delivering in schools using a mixed mode approach of online and in-person sessions was perceived to be working well, giving schools welcomed flexibility in terms of their engagement:

'[for workshop 2] We had 100% attendance, which was amazing ... workshop 3 now, we've still got 99% attendance for the workshops and 96% attendance for the video. So, it's going really well and that's a mixture of in-person and virtual delivery.' (Programme team member)

What worked less well?

Covid-19 continued to have an impact on both recruitment (reported earlier) and delivery, with schools stretched which, in turn, impacted on both implementation and engagement, and possibly led to attrition. This also meant that schools were slow to respond and carry out tasks such as uploading data, and that these risks and issues were underestimated:

'I was kind of hammering home [in a meeting with EEF] this message that some of the schools that I know locally and that I'm involved in, you know were on their kind of third or fourth round of staff and children having Covid.' (Programme team member)

Programme teams were also stretched at times, with Covid-19 exacerbating this, as staff absences caused issues with delivery. Some developers and evaluators felt that there had been a greater burden of administration and legal issues involved with taking part in the AF, and that there had not been clarity from EEF as to why this additional administration was necessary for AF-funded activity. In addition, findings from the IPEs affected by Covid-19 were also not always shared in a timely way, which impacted on drawing upon prior learning. And, in some cases, protocols were developed and published later than considered ideal; however, this was considered to be partly Covid-related:

'The question we've had in relation to those causal links and mechanisms, those mediators for effectiveness actually came up quite late in the process as we were really looking at things.' (EEF team member)

What could be changed next time?

As noted previously, this strand of work was very much perceived as 'business as usual' by EEF, particularly in terms of the two effectiveness trials. As a result, the processes and practices already in place seemed to be working well, albeit in a compressed timeframe and with some additional administration burden. However, due to their reported benefits, increased levels of EEF support and communication should be continued, around both recruitment and programme implementation. This includes meetings between developers, evaluators and EEF to be held regularly, as well as multiple ToC workshops, if appropriate and felt to be helpful.

Scaling

As described above, four programmes had shown evidence of raising pupil attainment from previous EEF trials and received support for scaling or delivery at scale ahead of an effectiveness evaluation. This enabled delivery teams to work through logistical issues, including those related to delivering in the hybrid format favoured by schools following the pandemic. Programmes were also funded to offer programmes at a subsidised rate so more schools could benefit.

What worked well?

Ongoing conversations between EEF staff and developers before AF commissioning meant that programme developers were already bought into the process and were keen to work with EEF and move their programmes forward. Following that, flexible support from EEF that was 'tailored' to each project was beneficial, as the projects varied. Regular meetings between EEF, developers and evaluators were seen as very important during implementation. Ongoing collaborative relationships between developers and evaluators worked well, particularly where evaluators had experience of scale-

ups. It was seen as advantageous that some programmes were established and trusted interventions, led by experienced and knowledgeable staff.

In terms of programme implementation, EEF staff believed that shorter interventions (e.g., 13 weeks) were perceived more favourably by schools than whole-school interventions which would require much more school staff time and commitment.

Additionally, the importance of having a network for delivery, as well as effective recruitment, was identified by EEF as important as a characteristic of programme teams moving towards scaling:

'They ... already have a network of providers who can deliver the intervention. It didn't take much effort to persuade them to be involved. And, as you said they could, they recruited quite quickly, which is not the same for some other projects. So, I think they were really in a good position.' (EEF team member)

What worked less well?

Two of the developers had very limited time for their programme. One comprised a small team which was running two separate strands of the programme simultaneously. Regarding the other, the programme was only part of the staff member's role, meaning that other priorities made running the programme a challenge, and this was further complicated by bureaucracy at their place of work. The developer noted:

'Our capacity is limited because my role is an [name of subject] consultant within the County Council, so ... [name of project] isn't everything I do. So, I don't have capacity to deliver, refine it.' (Programme team member)

One of the programmes required trainers to have existing training in an intervention, which limited the available pool of people able to deliver.

One developer felt that the capability building support would have been more useful earlier on in the set-up process; it was of limited use when it was provided late. The developer noted:

'The report that they [consultants] wrote [on train-the-trainer models] ... that just came too late ... That support would have been useful in the set-up [stage of the] programme, which was last autumn.' (Programme team member)

In addition, one programme was subject to ongoing change and development which, as a result of limited capacity, was not necessarily being recorded. An EEF team member noted that the programme's ToC was:

'A living activity that is not being documented ... the delivery model that exists now isn't recorded anywhere.' (EEF team member)

What could be changed next time?

The differing nature and support needs of these programmes means that it is difficult to generalise across them in terms of what might be improved. The support given by EEF was tailored to each project.

In addition, the developers had differing abilities and working contexts, which impacted upon their capacity to recruit and deliver what was necessary. While EEF did facilitate a tailored approach to supporting these programmes, this should be further developed and targeted.

Two programme developers were overcommitted and low on time – in future, EEF should be wary of over-asking of developers in a restricted timeframe.

Capability Building

What worked well?

Capability Building was implemented as intended, with workplans for all eight projects completed.¹⁸ Seven of the eight programmes receiving support were assigned to partner organisations. As noted earlier, five programmes were given a direct grant to fund some infrastructure development. Work plans were designed in collaboration with EEF, partner organisations and programmes, and work was conducted with supervision from EEF.

A range of factors supported effective implementation, as detailed below.

EEF played an important role in: identifying promising programmes and programme teams and their areas for development; recruiting partners and matching them to programme teams to support their development; and providing ongoing support and monitoring. Having one key EEF contact per programme was an effective strategy.

Strong relationships were developed between EEF, programme teams and partners, which were supported by regular meetings and communication. This developed 'buy in' from programme teams and helped progress the work.

A key strength of work undertaken by partner organisations was the 'co-production' approach used in their work with programme teams. Partner organisations worked closely with programmes to understand their needs and identify possible solutions to challenges being faced. Programme teams welcomed the opportunity to draw on the experience of the partner and consider their options and felt in control of decisions made:

'We formed a good relationship with [partner organisation]. They understood the programme and came up with some good ideas on how we can improve our training model.' (Programme team member)

'Our approach working with programmes was to equip them to make decisions on next steps. The aim was always to put them in the driving seat about making changes.' (Partner organisation team member)

'EEF made a good initial assessment of the needs of the programme. We then worked closely with programme team members to get a detailed understanding.' (Partner organisation team member)

In terms of partner support, cyclical processes to development such as trial, feedback, respond also proved effective. In addition, Capability Building partner workshops informed scaled delivery and the market positioning of programme teams' offer.

What worked less well?

The six-month AF timescale was very tight to fulfil strand objectives. It meant that some outcomes were plans or resources intended for use beyond the duration of the project. There was no mechanism in place to monitor these plans or the use of new resources going forward.

Another area which worked less well was partner support not always aligning with the programme's stage of development, for example, it was provided in advance or after an activity had taken place.

On occasion, programme teams were not able to allocate sufficient time and resources to work with the partner organisation on capability building work. This meant that more limited progress was made than had been expected.

What could be changed next time?

An EEF team member suggested that EEF systems assessing the 'promise' of programmes to deliver at scale and their area of deficit to enable effective matching to support could be more rigorous and systematic (e.g., using a repository of evidence tracking structural capacities of programmes and challenges encountered).

Partner organisations made a number of suggestions for improvements, including:

¹⁸ Four projects also received support as part of Scaling.

- EEF accountability could go beyond project duration to encourage full implementation of plans (e.g., requesting that programmes provide an update on progress six months after the end of the project)
- EEF could consider adopting a business ‘incubator’ support model to programmes providing infrastructure support at all stages of development
- if more than one partner is working with a programme team, they should coordinate activities and agree timelines in advance.

Observations from the evaluation team included:

- partners should be supported to develop clearer action plans at the outset, and agree time and resources needed with programme teams
- programme teams should gain commitment from senior staff and commit to cascading learning and embedding new approaches.

School Support

What worked well?

The train-the-trainer model was perceived to be very effective in preparing RSs to deliver the twilights and training programme, and enabling RSs to observe training delivery prior to delivering training themselves was also good preparation. However, although the basic content was developed centrally, the training benefitted from RSs having autonomy in terms of delivery method and the tailoring of content to their schools, for example, including local examples and adapting content based on schools’ prior knowledge:

‘We adapted the training slides to reflect the local situation and also to speak to the particular interests of participants. This worked really well and made the sessions engaging.’ (RS trainer)

The twilight course was a total of three hours and the full training programme lasted nine hours. Most of those who signed up opted for the full training programme. Both courses used a ‘light’ approach, without any between-lesson tasks. This worked well and was particularly appropriate with the intense demands on schools during the Covid-19 period. The training content was focused on practical ‘takeaways’ that senior leaders could use to take actions back to school. This was a popular feature of the course, that highlighted its value to participants and led to immediate actions in a number of cases. Schools also found the breakout sessions (when attended by more than three participants) useful and the resources of high quality.

Schools taking part in focus groups were satisfied with the training, which echoed high levels of satisfaction reported in EEF’s own data:

‘The training was high quality and was very practical in its focus. It reminded me to be realistic about what I could get done – that it was better to do less things well than a lot of things poorly.’ (School Support participant)

What worked less well?

Similar to other strands, the tight timescale was a challenge in implementation and a longer lead-in time would have been beneficial and meant that content could have been finalised before recruitment started.

Although the offer of free training supported sign-up, in some cases it was perceived to negatively impact on attendance. RS reported that participants felt less invested in the course because it was free, which resulted in it being more prone to attrition:

‘Attendance was often quite low in the latter stages of the course. I think people felt less obliged to attend because their school hadn’t paid for it.’ (RS trainer)

In terms of the content of the training, a small number of RSs felt that it tried to cover too much, which led to some areas being covered more superficially; others felt that aims and objectives could be tightened up. One of the RSs’ roles in delivering the training was to signpost schools to EEF resources. In many cases this worked well, but some trainers felt that they were ‘bombarding’ schools with too much information, which meant they ‘shut down’.

What could be changed next time?

RSs suggested a number of aspects which could be changed should a similar project be developed and delivered in the future including:

- allow for a longer lead-in time
- allow longer for content development prior to recruitment starting
- consider charging schools a minimal amount for the training, which is returned on course completion
- if the training is offered free of charge, only offer the full training programme.

Key factors which supported or were a barrier to implementation (RQ1.1 and RQ1.2)

Looking across the strands, several factors supported or were a barrier to strands' effective programme implementation, which are highlighted in Tables 13 and 14. Of key benefit was effective collaboration between the range of stakeholders involved in implementation including EEF, external partners and programme teams.

Table 13: Factors which supported implementation

EEF support	Partner support	Programme teams	Programme delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relationships (e.g., with programme teams and partners) • Early conversations with programme teams which allowed for a swift start (e.g., for Trials) • Support tailored to need and flexible • Named EEF contact who communicated/met with assigned partner or programme team regularly, which supported buy-in and progression of the work • Effective identification of programme teams' needs, matching to partner with the required expertise • Close ongoing support and monitoring, including troubleshooting issues and bottlenecks to facilitate progress • Formal monitoring of workplan which encouraged sense of accountability from programme teams • Clear marketing materials explaining the purpose of the training and its relevance to schools • EEF reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior experience of delivering programmes (or evaluator knowledge of programmes or EEF pipeline) • Tried and tested training/support, models and tools • Flexibility • Co-production approach between partner and programme • Understanding of market challenges for programmes offering interventions for schools • Understanding of infrastructure challenges for programmes delivering at scale • Appropriate staffing and capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiasm for working with EEF • Longevity and experience in programme delivery and established reputation • Forward planning and allocation of time/resources to activities 	<p>Support focused on programme/programme team development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close collaboration between EEF, partners and programme teams, for example in terms of co-production of training content and resources • EEF direction and support combined with autonomy of programmes to develop training and resources to meet local needs and contexts • Focus on discussion and peer learning (e.g., via facilitating peer support and breakout sessions) • Delivery via an existing and experienced network • Train the trainer approach and observations to develop skills, expertise and confidence prior to training delivery <p>Delivery to schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short interventions (e.g., 13 weeks) projects were more appealing to schools • High-quality content and resources • 'Light-touch' training which appealed to 'novice' schools with little knowledge of evidence-based decision making and practice • Practical 'takeaways' in training encouraged schools to take immediate action • Mixed-mode delivery of training in Trials minimised time commitment and allowed for flexible engagement • The offer of free training supported initial engagement but could have a negative impact on retention

Table 14: Factors which were a barrier to implementation

Funding-related	Programme-team related	Programme-related	School-related
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tight AF timescale was a key factor that hindered the implementation of all strands The focus on three regions led to some RSs facing issues working with schools outside of their area (e.g., in terms of communications and understanding school contexts) Contracting and legal issues which could delay delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of programme team time and capacity due to other commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where there was large variation in programme teams' starting points and this was not effectively assessed and considered, support provided was less well pitched and tailored to need Lack of clarity on the aims of the strand could lead to early misunderstanding of the outcome goals (e.g., RSs' lack of clarity on the goals of the workshops in Early-Stage Programme Development) The timing of support not being aligned with the project's stage of development (e.g., provided too early or too late) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low school capacity and time to engage, staff absence (e.g., due to Covid) Lack of senior leader commitment, which is key to sustainability Regions difficult to get traction in/typically harder to reach, high areas of socioeconomic disadvantage experienced greater Covid-19 impact Free training could lead to schools placing less value on it and higher attrition in the later stages

4.2 Outcomes

The summary below presents the key findings relating to outcomes.

Summary of findings for RQs 2 and 3
<p>RQ2: What progress did the AF pipeline make towards its intended short-term outcomes (school awareness, acceptance and take-up of evidence-based programmes)?</p> <p><i>RQ2.1: How many schools in AF regions signed up to EEF programmes or used EEF resources? To what extent was there variation across, and between, the three AF regions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All strands achieved their recruitment targets and engaged schools across the three regions to differing degrees. Between the five strands, 22% of the total schools in the North were recruited; 19% of the school population in the East Midlands & Humber; and 18.5% of the West Midlands school population. <p><i>RQ2.2: What were schools' reasons for getting involved or not getting involved? What might encourage non-engaging schools to get involved? To what extent did this vary by strand?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey data suggested that key reasons for schools engaging were because the AF activities aligned with their school priorities and would benefit their school. They also saw EEF/RS as a trusted source of evidence. Survey data suggested that non-AF schools did not engage because they had not been approached, were too busy or did not know how to get involved. Key ways that EEF could engage more schools would be to keep the commitment manageable, communicate effectively about opportunities and offers, and simplify the sign-up process. <p><i>RQ2.3: How did schools in the AF regions respond to EEF programmes and resources? How beneficial did they find the process, and the programmes/resources/training? To what extent did this vary by strand?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools were generally highly satisfied with the processes of being involved in AF pipeline strands. The survey samples by strand were too small to make confident comparisons at this level of granularity. The eight schools consulted about their involvement in School Support were very positive about the trainers and training content, with data corresponding to EEF's very positive internal satisfaction data. <p>RQ3: What progress did the AF pipeline make towards its intended medium-term outcomes (indicative impact on school behaviour/decision making)?</p>

RQ3.1: What indications are there that AF-funded activity is beginning to influence schools' decisions to use evidence-based programmes, or may do so in the future?

- Although we were not able to assess the direct impact of schools' involvement in AF strands, we found that, despite having been engaged with EEF for a shorter period, AF schools were more aware of EEF activities and had higher levels of participation than non-AF schools. There were no differences between AF and non-AF schools in terms of the extent to which evidence informed their decision making. Strand samples were too small to make comparisons.
- In terms of influence on schools' decision making, School Support was the only strand in which schools were consulted. The findings here suggested that schools' understanding of the tiered model had increased and that they were actioning change based on this learning. Schools were also reportedly more likely to use evidence-based programmes in the future and had a greater understanding of EEF's resources. In addition, there were examples of schools putting learning into practice by updating policies, feeding learning into School Development Plans and running meetings with a focus on quality first teaching.

RQ3.2: What common and/or strand-specific factors contributed to this?

- This question cannot be answered at this stage as data was only gathered for the School Support strand. This is an area for exploration in the future.

Were there any additional outcomes?

- The evaluation found that there was a range of other outcomes for EEF, partners and programme teams in terms of increased confidence, skills and expertise in supporting the development and implementation of these types of programmes.

This section presents data on the perceived outcomes of the AF pipeline strands. It draws on the findings from qualitative interviews undertaken for each strand which were reported in presentations to EEF staff, and an overarching survey of AF and non-AF schools in the three target regions. The survey explored AF schools' reasons for engaging with the AF pipeline, non-AF schools' reasons for not engaging and both types of schools' views on what EEF could do to engage more schools. As mentioned previously, for all of the strands apart from School Support, the survey gathered additional data to that gathered as part of the strand data collection, which did not incorporate interviews with schools. However, for School Support, the survey complemented the data collected via the teacher focus groups. The survey questions and responses are provided in Appendix C.

Schools' reasons for engaging and not engaging (RQ2.2)

As background, around a third of AF schools responding to the survey (34%) had taken part in an EEF research trial, with just under a quarter (22%) having taken part in an EEF/RS CPD programme 'Supporting Recovery', and around a sixth having taken part in an EEF scale-up/subsidised programme or an EEF/RS Early-Stage Development Programme (both 17%).

The survey findings suggested that the AF pipeline was well aligned with schools' needs and priorities. Of the AF schools responding to the survey, over four-fifths reported that they had become involved in AF activities because they aligned with their school priorities (84%) and over three-quarters (78%) reported that they engaged as they felt involvement would be of benefit to their school. Over half were influenced because they saw EEF/RS as a trusted source of evidence (60%), or believed it was important to engage in CPD led by experts in the area (55%), or wanted to learn about evidence-informed practices (52%). Prior existing relationships with their local RS and LA also influenced a quarter of schools' engagement (24%). Further details are provided in Table 15.

Table 15: AF schools' reasons for engaging in AF pipeline activities

	N	Percentage
The activity/activities are relevant to my school's priorities (e.g., to support pupil progress)	85	84%
We believe the activity will be of benefit to our school	79	78%
The EEF/RS are a trusted source of evidence and learning	61	60%
We believe it is important to engage in CPD led by experts in the area	33*	55%
We want to learn about evidence-informed practices	53	52%
We want to contribute to building the evidence base	33	33%
We have prior experience of working with EEF/RS	24	24%

N = 101; * N = 60¹⁹

All of the schools interviewed about their participation in the School Support strand reported that they had engaged because the training offered an opportunity to strengthen their use of evidence in decision making. In addition, they found the 'light-touch' training offer – which was free of charge with no tasks required between sessions – attractive and manageable, despite the ongoing pressures caused by Covid:

'The training offered a quick and practical way of improving teaching. We don't have much experience of using research and this course offered a useful introduction that we could quickly apply at our school.' (School Support participant)

Prior existing relationships with local RS also influenced sign-up:

'We just got an e-mail from [local RS] ... I recognised the name of the person who was leading it because she led the other module and she was very good. So, she attracted me to it as she was delivering the training.' (School Support participant)

The survey found that, where non-AF schools had not engaged in EEF or RS activities, this tended to be because they had not been approached to take part (38%), they were too busy (35%), or they did not know how to get involved (34%).

Key ways that AF and non-AF schools responding to the survey felt that EEF could engage more schools would be to keep the commitment manageable (56%), communicate effectively about opportunities and offers (45%), and simplify the sign-up process (37%).

School satisfaction (RQ2.3)

Schools were generally highly satisfied with the AF pipeline strands. AF schools responding to the survey were happy with the processes of being involved in strand activities, with over three-quarters (77%) reporting that they were 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied with these processes. The strand sample sizes were too small to confidently make comparisons between them, although they are shown in Appendix C.

School Support was the only strand where delivery was at a suitable stage to contact schools, with eight schools taking part in focus groups. Their feedback on the training content was positive, as was EEF's own internal satisfaction data,

¹⁹ This option was only presented to a particular sub-group of respondents: only those from AF schools who had reported that they had participated in the EEF RS CPD programme 'Supporting Recovery'.

in which respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with training content and the expertise of deliverers. Elements that School Support schools particularly valued were the resources and practical takeaways and the break-out sessions where there were more than four participants:

'... the resources are for subject leaders, for middle leaders and for senior leadership, I think that these resources are fabulous, and I think more and more people need to know about them so on the front line as well as the manager.' (School Support participant)

'The training really made me think about how to improve the quality of teaching. I've already introduced some changes at my school.' (School Support participant)

'The trainer used lots of real-life examples which made it engaging. The discussions we had in the break-out sessions were always lively and interesting.' (School Support participant)

Outcomes for schools

Awareness of, and engagement with, EEF opportunities (RQ2.3)

Despite having been engaged with EEF for a shorter period, AF schools were more aware of EEF activities and had higher levels of participation than non-AF schools.

A comparison of AF and non-AF school survey responses showed that, as might be expected since the AF targeted schools that had not typically engaged with the EEF, AF schools had been engaged with EEF for a shorter period: a quarter of AF schools (24%) compared to 11% of non-AF schools had been engaged with EEF for less than one year.

The survey was not able to assess the direct impact of involvement in the AF pipeline strands on schools. However, it is interesting to note that, despite being engaged with EEF for less time:

- a significantly²⁰ larger proportion of AF schools were aware of guidance reports, taking part in EEF trials or programme evaluation, RS activities (e.g., CPD programmes), and scale-up/subsidised programmes, compared to non-AF schools. However, differences in awareness with regard to RS activities may be due to the fact that AF schools were often recruited through RS networks and had existing relationships
- a significantly larger proportion of AF schools had participated in RS activities (e.g., CPD programmes), an EEF trial or programme evaluation, or a scale-up/subsidised programme compared to non-AF schools. Again, differences in participation in RS activities between AF and non-AF schools may relate to the fact that AF schools were often recruited through RS networks and had existing relationships. Non-AF schools were significantly more likely than AF schools to have not taken part in any of these activities (34% as opposed to 10%).

The survey also aimed to explore how schools use evidence in general. All schools were asked what had influenced a decision they had made in the past two years to introduce an approach to improve teaching and learning, and support pupils' academic progress. Interestingly, teachers' own experience/the experience of other teachers/schools and summaries and guidance based on research (e.g., EEF's) were rated highest and deemed equally important, with 85% and 84% respectively rating them as 'extremely' or 'very' important. It is also interesting to note that summaries/guidance based on research (e.g., EEF's) were often viewed as more important than academic articles or reports (with 84% versus 74% reporting them to be 'extremely' or 'very' important). 'Indirect' routes to evidence-use promotion (e.g., guidance from DfE, Ofsted and exam boards; and guidance from MATs or LAs) were also important for some schools, with 53% and 43% respectively rating these sources as 'extremely' or 'very' important. Responses from AF and non-AF schools were broadly similar and differences between the groups were not necessarily expected. Further details are provided in Table 16.

²⁰ A chi-squared test was used. All *p*-values were <0.01.

Table 16: What has influenced a decision you have made in the past two years to introduce an approach to improve teaching and learning and support pupils' academic progress? Those responding 'extremely' or 'very' important, AF and non-AF schools

	n/N	Percentage
My own experience/the experience of other teachers or schools	566 / 669	85%
Summaries and guidance based on research (e.g., EEF's)	565 / 670	84%
Academic research articles or reports	493 / 664	74%
Research-informed CPD led by my school/trust/LA or an external provider	491 / 667	74%
Research conducted by me or other teachers	403 / 667	60%
Other CPD led by my school/trust/LA or an external provider	388 / 668	58%
Guidance from the DfE, Ofsted or exam boards	355 / 664	53%
Guidance from my MAT or LA	282 / 654	43%

N = 671 unique respondents. Not all respondents provided a response to every option.

Influence on school behaviour/decision making/future behaviour (RQ3.1 and RQ3.2)

Involvement in School Support training increased schools' understanding of EEF's resources and activities and their likely future engagement. Some were already actioning change based on learning.

Data from School Support focus groups suggested that the training had increased participants' knowledge and understanding of the tiered planning model (looking at teaching, targeted academic support, and wider strategies), and some were actioning school change based on this learning. Schools were also reportedly more likely to use evidence-based programmes in the future (though some were already aware of their benefits through engaging with evidence through other channels). Participants had greater understanding of EEF's toolkit, guidance reports, programmes and opportunities and reported that they were more likely to go to EEF in the future. Furthermore, some schools were already starting to put learning from the training into practice, for example, by updating policies, feeding learning into School Development Plans and running staff meetings with a focus on quality first teaching:

'It made us reflect as a school on – do our staff know what quality first teaching is? ... So, we had a staff meeting, which was feedback to writing moderation, and a huge part of that was on quality first teaching and what that looks like with regards to diagnostic assessment and retrieval practice.' (School Support participant)

'We have just written a new marking feedback policy and we used the toolkit and the research from the toolkit as the basis for writing our policy. And in my staff meeting following up from a writing moderation I shared I think three different parts of the toolkit.' (School Support participant)

'For us, we're actually using the implementation model more in writing our School Development Plan, So, we're actually changing the format of our School Development Plan in line with EEF models and using the effective professional development guide as well.' (School Support participant)

Other outcomes (not explicitly related to the overarching evaluation RQs)

Outcomes for EEF

Involvement in the AF pipeline increased EEF's systems for, and skills and expertise in, supporting the development and implementation of programmes.

EEF interviewees reported that involvement in the AF pipeline had led to a range of outcomes for EEF systems and expertise. For example, staff had further developed their understanding and skills in relation to:

- marketing and designing training for less-engaged schools (School Support)
- supporting the development of programme ToCs (Early-Stage Programme Development particularly)
- the ways in which EEF can support developers recruit and the most effective ways of doing this (Trials and Scaling)
- which programmes might get the best uptake in relation to the current situation (e.g., shorter intervention vs. longer term, whole school interventions) (Trials and Scaling)
- coaching and consultancy work with programme teams to support implementation (Early-Stage Programme Development)
- management of early-stage processes (e.g., identifying programmes/programme teams' areas for development; identifying partners; and matching programme teams to partners who can provide the required support) (Capability Building).

Selected quotes to illustrate these points include:

'It was very much a learning experience for everyone involved, which I think was the intention.' (Early-Stage Programme Development EEF staff member)

'Our conversations with Research Schools identified where there are recurrent questions that come up, where they need some extra support. So, a lot of it has been responsive, but I think in the future we're going to try and make that a bit more Proactive, providing what they need given what we've learned from this first cycle.' (Early-Stage Programme Development EEF staff member)

'... the Supporting Recovery training programme was an opportunity for us to test out ways we could get involvement of previously unengaged schools. The 'light touch' approach had some success in appealing to these schools.' (School Support EEF staff member)

'Our role in recruitment, which we think will kind of expand a bit more and so as part of that process there will be a kind of big lessons learned of the Accelerator Fund [around] extra recruitment support' (Trials and Scaling EEF team member)

'The EEF team had limited previous experience in supporting capacity building. But this project has definitely developed our knowledge in this area.' (Capability Building EEF staff member)

Outcomes for programme teams

Likewise, involvement in the AF pipeline had improved many programme teams' skills and expertise in programme development and implementation.

Involvement in the AF pipeline had led to programme teams gaining:

- increased confidence in programme/training development and delivery (Early-Stage Programme Development, Capacity Building and School Support)
- improved understanding of ToCs, evaluation and implementation (Early-Stage Programme Development and Capacity Building)
- improved capacity to develop and implement programmes effectively (Early-Stage Programme Development, Capacity Building)
- experience of drawing on IPE findings from previous Covid-impacted trials (Trials)
- recognition that the demand for certain 'types' of programmes has changed since Covid-19, and adaptations are needed (Scaling)
- increased understanding of how to target communications (Trials and Scaling)
- improved infrastructure (e.g., development of delivery systems; staff confidence and capacity to deliver at scale); knowledge/consideration of barriers/challenges to effective implementation and identification of practical solutions (e.g., marketing positioning of offers); and resources (e.g., marketing materials) (Capability Building).

Although a number of Early-Stage Programme Developers reported some early reservations, particularly regarding the theoretical content and timing of the ToC workshops, by the end of their programme delivery almost all agreed they had learnt a lot and gained increased confidence in project development and delivery:

'I think I've got a huge amount of learning. I think it's been really helpful and learning that I'm taking forwards in terms of careful planning of evaluation and careful project planning because that investment of time at the beginning has meant that actually programme delivery has been pretty smooth, pretty plain sailing.' (Early-Stage Programme Development, programme team member, RS 1)

'I would feel much more confident now about doing further projects sort of at a bigger scale out of area.' (Early-Stage Programme Development, programme lead, RS 1)

In many cases, learning was being embedded in programme teams' routine practice, for example, improvement in marketing materials and improved systems in Capability Building:

'From a marketing point of view, the automation point of view, the moving elements online, I think the shifts we've made this year have been really incredible.' (Capability Building programme team member)

'We are very well placed in terms of the upscale. Now we have the systems in place ... There are still things that are on the bucket list of things we'd like to do and things we'd like to improve, but I think our processes are in place ... It's been absolutely invaluable, and it's given us the confidence to scale it up to the next level, to the trial.' (Capability Building programme team member)

'... the project funded a new delivery platform which is really key to the next stage of development for the programme.' (Capability Building programme leader)

'... We really had little knowledge in this area. Working with [the partner organisation] helped us understand how we could market the programme in a way that makes sense to schools. This will be really invaluable to us.' (Capability Building team member).

In addition, for Capability Building projects, strengthened knowledge of business development was likely to help programmes to be developed and sustained in coming years.

Outcomes for programme implementation

Overall, the AF pipeline led to:

- nine early-stage programmes which were successfully developed and implemented
- the implementation of two effectiveness and four efficacy trials
- support for one scale-up and three scaling projects
- thorough capability building, strengthened organisational/delivery structures for eight evidence-based programmes
- the development and implementation of a short training programme to encourage less-engaged schools to use evidence in their decision making supported by a train-the-trainer programme for RS leads.

5 The effectiveness of the AF pipeline model and learning for EEF (RQs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4)

Summary of findings for RQ4

RQ4 How effective is the AF pipeline model?

RQ4.1: Does the model support its objectives to improve the uptake of evidence-based programmes, and schools' decisions to use evidence-based programmes?

- Successful implementation indicates the model supported the uptake of evidence-based programmes, as noted in Section 4.2 (*Outcomes*), supported by the survey data.

RQ4.2: How effectively do the different strands build on or link with each other? Are there any tensions or weak progression points?

- Given the timescale of the AF pipeline, drawing conclusions about the link between different strands, tensions and progression would be based on inference rather than examining flow through the pipeline, and therefore has not been possible. This would be particularly challenging in regard to the relationship between pilots as a link between early-stage programmes and efficacy trials, given that the pilot stage did not feature in the AF pipeline (as no pilots were identified as suitable for commissioning in relation to the AF-funding aims).
- Giving greater attention to capability building and scaling as activities relevant across all stages of the pipeline, rather than to some stages of the pipeline, may clarify the nature of this activity and also enhance support for programme development.
- Tentatively, there are indications that the relationship between strands would be strengthened by considering needs analysis for programmes and programme teams in a systematic way across the evidence-generation pipeline.
- Needs analysis, in turn, would support the capability building and scaling across the pipeline.
- Evaluators suggested the need for greater clarification and distinction of the criteria for grants for effectiveness rather than efficacy trials.

RQ4.3: To what extent is cohesion between strands an important factor in supporting future progress on the pipeline and improving school uptake of programmes? What mechanisms (for example capability building or external ToC development support) enable or hinder effective cohesion?

- The timescale of the evaluation means that it is not possible to make firm conclusions about cohesion as a factor in supporting progress.
- However, EEF teams and processes are key to supporting cohesion, for example, when engaging support from external partners.
- Cohesion may be supported by enhancing the brokering aspects of EEF support.

RQ4.4: What lessons are there for the usual EEF pipeline model in relation to improving the quality and impact of funded programmes?

- The key lessons from the AF pipeline activity were: (1) the value and possibility of extending the evidence-generation pipeline by the inclusion of early-stage development support; and (2) capability building as a focused activity.
- The AF pipeline made particular use of external support partners, and this highlighted the value of both needs analysis and brokering as key EEF activities.
- Informed by the AF pipeline evaluation, the model of a more developed pipeline (e.g., Figure 5) may be useful as a means for informing potential grantees, evaluators and other stakeholders about EEF's evidence-generation activity.
- A regional campaign to support school engagement was largely successful; this built on learning from previous regional scale-up campaigns but demonstrated the possibility of focused regional intervention across a range of activities.

This section focuses on the fourth aim of the evaluation, relating to learning for the EEF about process effectiveness and activities that need to be refined to improve performance across EEF’s wider work. It is split into four parts:

- 5.1 A conceptual model for elements across the AF evidence-generation pipeline; this is informed by the strand ToC models
- 5.2 Learning for future AF and similar activity; this is based on synthesis of earlier findings
- 5.3 A consideration of two key issues particularly relevant to early-stage programme development and capability building – needs analysis and brokerage; this is informed by the synthesis of findings supplemented by insights from the evidence scan about scaling of programmes
- 5.4 Possibilities for further development of evidence-generation activity within the wider EEF system; this is informed by evaluation findings and draws on the evidence scan.

5.1 A conceptual model of elements across the AF evidence-generation pipeline

As described in Section 3.3 (*ToC development*), through review of strand ToC models we identified elements that support programme development and delivery. In Table 17, these are further categorised as a model. This model may support learning across evidence-generation pipeline activity, and is less applicable to the School Support strand.

Table 17: Model of elements across the evidence-generation pipeline

EEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning and selection processes and protocols • Support for effective recruitment strategies • Implementation processes, support, protocols and tools including those for monitoring • Brokering support on evidence-informed practice to inform programme development and refinement • Additional financial resource for capability building or development • Coaching/individual support • Support for train-the-trainer model • Commissioning external evaluation
External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners’ workshops/training • Partners’ tools and models • Partners’ one-to-one or group support/coaching • External evaluators’ experience, systems and processes
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme quality
Programme team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team experience of programme implementation • Quality assurance processes

This model is focused on AF evidence-generation activities. In relation to School Support (evidence-use promotion), other categories were important – for example, the light-touch training model to influence schools’ use of evidence in their decision making.

This model – or an adaptation of it – may have value in:

- supporting learning and development across the evidence-generation pipeline, transfer of learning across EEF teams, and alignment of teams’ work, including by giving insight into aspects recipients of support found most useful like tailored and individualised support, timely communication, and collaborative approaches

- identifying design features or desirable criteria for particular elements. For example, the EEF has very well-established criteria for appointment of external evaluators and what capabilities they need. However, as would be expected for a new area of development, this is less well developed in relation to external support partners
- considering elements that are not currently found in some stages but could be extended to others, for example additional financial resource for capability building might be considered for programme teams with a programme at an earlier stage of development than featured in the AF pipeline.

5.2 The effectiveness of the AF pipeline model

Review of the effectiveness of the AF pipeline model

In considering the effectiveness of the AF pipeline model, interpretation of findings is limited by the relatively short timescale of AF activity and so it is not possible to draw firm conclusions as to the extent to which the pipeline model is effective in moving programmes through the pipeline, or the coherence of the stages in supporting pipeline progression and evidence generation. However, two successful innovations were made in the AF pipeline, as compared to the usual EEF evidence-generation model. First, an approach to early-stage programme development was successfully implemented with nine RSs as programme developers. Second, a systematic approach to capability building was undertaken which supported scaling of four programmes. Further, focused recruitment to trials and scale-up programmes in three regions was largely undertaken successfully. Evidence generation aside, the EEF also implemented a new approach to supporting schools’ engagement with evidence with a common programme across the RS in the region.

Learning for EEF about enablers and barriers to effective evidence generation

The implementation of the five AF pipeline strands has resulted in a range of useful learning for EEF on the factors that either enable or are a barrier to the effective implementation of evidence-generation activity. Table 18 draws together this learning. The School Support training subsidy was identified as potentially having a mixed effect, with free training attracting schools that might otherwise not engage, but also leading to low attendance/attrition due to it being perceived to have less value than paid-for provision, and because dropping out did not incur any cost.

Table 18: Enablers and barriers mapped to elements of evidence-generation activity

	Enabler	Barrier
EEF support	<p>Expertise in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diagnosing programme and programme teams’ needs/issues to be addressed • supporting recruitment (e.g., centralised booking systems, promotional activities, marketing materials) • implementation (e.g., developing training content, resources/tools, running train-the-trainer sessions and training observations, supporting trials) • identifying partners with required expertise to support programme teams and matching • facilitating relationships between partners and programme teams • evaluation – (e.g., provision of guidance documents for evaluators) <p>Ability to troubleshoot and quickly resolve issues encountered in relationships between partners and programmes.</p> <p>Allocating a key contact who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertakes regular monitoring and check-ins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of expertise on business development and infrastructure requirements for scaled delivery makes diagnostic assessment of needs difficult • Insufficient communication on time commitment/resources needed for programmes to progress workplans

	Enabler	Barrier
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides written and oral feedback • is flexible (e.g., in terms of budget, recruitment, delivery structure and evaluation) • is responsive to need 	
External partners	<p>Expertise and prior programme experience (e.g., in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting organisational and strategic change • using effective models/tools • providing tailored/bespoke/individualised support <p>Expertise in supporting business development</p> <p>Using co-production approach to working with programmes</p> <p>Appropriate evaluation expertise, systems and processes, adhering to EEF guidance/frameworks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where programme needs/areas for development are not robustly assessed, partner support can be less effectively tailored to need • Partner support is less effective when it is not provided at the right time/stage of development • Partners' lack of capacity impacts effectiveness
Programme delivery teams	<p>Key enablers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • previous and strong working relationship with EEF providing a solid foundation for programme delivery • expertise and reputation for programme development and implementation • senior level buy-in, staff capacity and commitment and allocation of necessary time and resources • existing school/other recruitment networks • dedicated/skilled recruitment staff with adequate time, a broad range of targeted strategies and understanding of schools • existing knowledge of area of focus (e.g., ToCs, programme design and implementation, evaluation) • team approach to delivery • responsiveness, flexibility and willingness to make adaptations to provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme teams' competing priorities/commitments and lack of capacity and strong buy-in from senior leaders to ensure widespread commitment to workplans

	Enabler	Barrier
Programme factors	<p>Provision of support for programme teams by EEF partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality provision/training in line with good practice delivered by respected professionals • Tailored/individualised and iterative support to programme teams (e.g., coaching, consultancy, drop-in sessions) • Co-production approach (e.g., EEF, partner and programme team) to developing content and resources with scope for local adaptation • Partner support including facilitating opportunities for programme teams to network and share learning where they had shared focus/goals • Focus on designing programmes that are feasible and scalable <p>Programmes delivered to schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to existing school/EEF priorities (e.g., Covid-19 recovery) • Manageable timeframe (2 years may be too long) • Blended delivery so staff do not need to leave settings as regularly • Drawing on learning from previous effective evaluations 	<p>AF-related</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short timeframe leads to rushed set-up, recruitment and delivery and insufficient time to see implementation of learning and realisation of outcomes • Administrative and legal issues <p>Provision of support to programme teams by EEF partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners' delivery support lack of/poor communication of objectives and intended outcomes • Timing of support for programme development not aligned with current need/stage of development • Content of materials too general (i.e., not tailored with relevant examples) <p>Programmes being delivered to schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on longer term and whole-curriculum change as opposed to shorter term and targeted interventions are harder to sell to schools

5.3 Needs analysis and brokerage

In this section, two potential areas for improvement of EEF support for evidence-generation activities are considered: needs analysis and brokerage. As noted above, EEF activity was the key element for successful implementation across all strands with considerable explicit and tacit knowledge embedded in the processes, protocols, tools and artefacts that EEF uses.

Needs analysis

In both the Early-Stage Programme Development and Capability Building strands, needs analysis was built into strand activity. In the case of Early-Stage Development, this happened as part of recruitment with two RSs with greater experience selected to receive additional input on the Behaviour Change Wheel. During the programme, support was tailored according to the programme team and programme needs. In the Capability Building strand, each programme team benefitted from a unique blend of support from combinations of external support partners and different forms of EEF support. Tailoring and adaptation of support was beneficial for programme teams.

The EEF has established criteria for making decisions on making grants for pilot and efficacy trials and criteria for regranting for effectiveness and scale-up. In developing support for Early-Stage Programme Development, similarly, criteria were developed to select programmes for support and to assess outcomes. In addition to formal criteria-based processes, EEF programme management and evaluation management teams engage informally in programme team needs analysis for efficacy and effectiveness trials – particularly around recruitment. This needs analysis aspect could be extended and further codified. Thus, there may be scope for further formalisation of needs analysis. Such needs analysis would align with, but potentially extend, grant and re-granting criteria to formalise identification of programme and programme team potential. We suggest developing a framework of relevant factors varying across stages with some being more or less relevant depending on stage. Needs analysis for scaling and capability building would also support assessment for programme and teams' entry into the pipeline at a stage appropriate for a programme and

developer/programme team and movement from one stage to the next (or movement out of the pipeline). The movement from early stage to pilot will be a current area for progress in this area.

Formalising such needs analysis might, in turn, lead to refinement of criteria for grants and re-grants for efficacy and effectiveness trials. Evaluators raised the question about what level of evidence is required to move from efficacy to effectiveness – the same question could apply to other linkages between pipeline stages.

Formalising these criteria could be done in a way that reflects EEF's adaptive, agile and flexible approach to decision making and includes factors that influence EEF decisions. For example, the potential to take advantage of or secure additional funding, or alignment with strategic priorities (government's and/or EEFs). A more formal approach to assessment of a programme and programme team characteristics that may not be fully included in grant criteria would have potential benefits. For example, in terms of a programme entering the pipeline at the most appropriate stage of its development with support needs for programme and programme team capability needs already identified. In addition, where grants are not made, a more formal needs analysis process would enhance the clarity of feedback to applications.

The following set of factors are offered as a starting point for needs analysis for scaling and capability building and to then enhance criteria for progression through the pipeline:

- programme quality – current and potential quality
- evidence of promise
- acceptability
- feasibility for the proposed pipeline stage and future feasibility and scaling potential
- programme team capability (key criteria being capability to deliver in relation to the stage but also potential for capability building in the future)
- significance – the potential impact of the programme in relation to the EEF mission
- strategic fit with government priorities
- funding potential at scale – directly by educational settings, government or other funders.

Some of the factors will relate closely to existing criteria for grants and regranting, such as evidence of impact and cost-effectiveness. Others may formalise currently implicit or tacit considerations in grant criteria.

Brokerage

Brokerage is a central concept for understanding evidence and knowledge mobilisation but has been less of a focus for understanding evidence-generation processes (Malin and Brown, 2019). However, to embed EEF support for capability building in usual EEF activity, developing and systematising brokerage may be helpful. The AF pipeline activity highlighted two aspects of EEF activity as brokerage. First, for Early-Stage Programme Development, EEF provided a summary of evidence related to the content of early-stage programmes –for the AF-funded activity, this was on literacy and numeracy. One RS programme lead suggested that this could be extended and EEF might broker external expertise and input on the evidence base for such programme development with this tailored to specific content of individual programmes. Potential pools of expertise could be found in the EEF evaluation panel and from teams who have contributed evidence synthesis and guidance reports, as well as in the RS network where programme developers need support in translating research and evidence into educational contexts.

Building on this, for programmes at a later stage of development, the brokering of evidence on effective CPD, including in relation to specific CPD mechanisms (Sims *et al.*, 2021) may be important to support scaling. For example, in moving from efficacy to the effectiveness stage by definition of the trial stage, a programme team cannot be involved directly in the delivery. If CPD is important to the programme ToC, this may require adaptation in the approach to CPD for teachers and/or TAs – for example, from an on-site to off-site delivery model or to include a remote learning component. It is also likely to require the adoption of a 'train the trainer' model or professional development for the programme CPD leads. This points to specialist knowledge and experience that EEF may need to access externally. This may include from programme teams who have previously successfully scaled their programmes.

More generally, brokerage increases in importance with an increased use of external support partners to support team capability building. This is particularly the case where partners may be less familiar with the educational settings that are the focus of EEF support for evidence generation and use. In extending the pipeline, EEF colleagues developed additional knowledge and extended skills through brokering between developers and partners.

5.4 Further development of evidence-generation activity

In developing an evidence-generation pipeline that includes early-stage programme development, the EEF can potentially draw on the approaches of other What Work Centres and similar evidence champions approaches as reference points (NESTA – National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), and the WWC for Children’s Social Care – as noted above, the latter two are merging). One specific area where learning from these reference points may be applicable relates to the timing of different stages of the pipeline and particularly early-stage programme development as a feasibility stage. As support for early-stage programmes develops, it may be beneficial to differentiate support by identifying differences in (1) the level of programme development and (2) programme team capability. For example, the EIF suggests a four-step approach to undertaking a feasibility study, potentially in a single site, prior to an early pilot equivalent to the EEF early-stage programme development in the AF pipeline. This suggests that there may be different sub-steps that could be considered within early-stage programme support.²¹

The pipeline may be enhanced by a clearer sense of a distinction between scaling (related to programme design) and capability building (related to developer and programme team capabilities). These two features are interconnected but differentiating between them may bring closer focus to the relationship between these two factors at different points of programme development. For example, increase in scale requires more and/or different programme team capabilities. It is likely that external partner support for capability building would be most appropriate once evidence of efficacy is established. However, it might be considered an option in earlier stages.

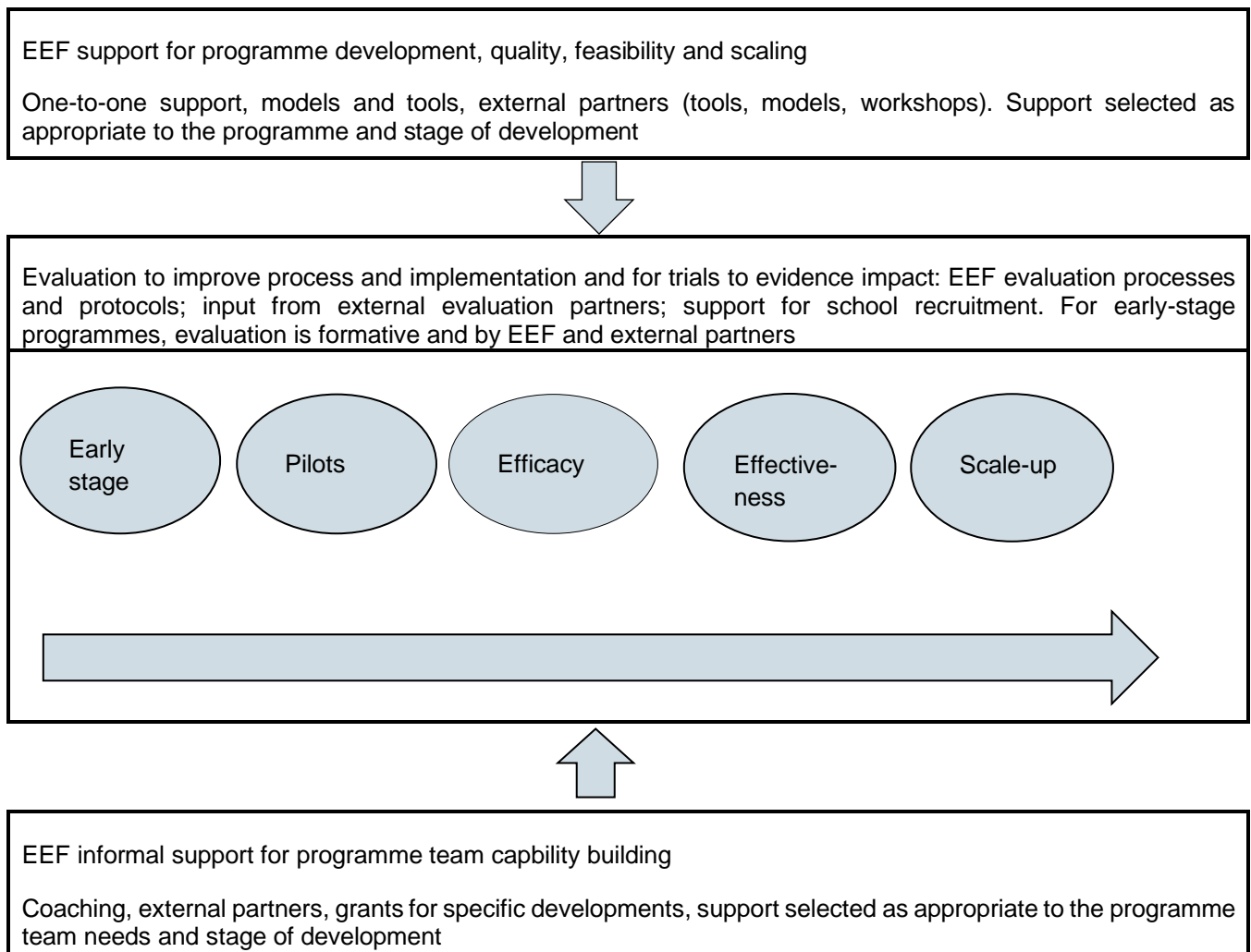
From the AF pipeline activity, EEF has demonstrated the value of providing specific grants for programme development, such as grants to move training online to support scale or make programme improvements identified from a prior evaluation.

A model for a future evidence-generation pipeline is represented in Figure 6. Key differences between this and the previous business-as-usual model (Figure 4) are:

- the additional early-stage phase before pilots
- extended EEF support for programme development though a more targeted approach suitable to any and all pipeline stages
- supplementing informal support for capability building with formalised approaches through coaching and external partners support, and, as with programme development, having this potentially available at all pipeline stages.

²¹ After the evaluation, EEF have invited applications for funding for both ‘innovation’ and ‘development’ grants to support early-stage development: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/apply-for-funding/grant-funding-round-autumn-2022>

Figure 6: A future pipeline as five stages



Further research needed

As noted, in the timescale of the evaluation, firm conclusions cannot be made about the flow of programmes through the pipeline and connected issues. Any development of the early-stage programme development or capability support would particularly benefit from internal or external formative evaluation or in-depth monitoring and quality assurance.

Similarly, internal or external evaluation would support testing of developments in criteria focused on the suitability of programmes for different levels of support at different pipeline stages and in relation to programme and programme team development.

6 Conclusion

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) expanded its activities during the academic year 2021–22, principally in three regions in England – the North; the East Midlands & the Humber; and the West Midlands. The work was supported through the Department for Education (DfE)’s ‘Accelerator Fund’ (AF). The AF funding encouraged schools in these areas to use evidence-based numeracy and literacy programmes to aid their recovery by enhancing the EEF’s usual evidence-generation pipeline and school support activities. The funding included five strands of EEF-funded activity from early-stage programme development, additional trials of evidence programmes in the regions, including support for four programmes implementing at scale, and support for programme team capability building. It also included a new RS-delivered approach to supporting schools to use evidence to improve numeracy and literacy outcomes.

This formative evaluation aimed to provide insights which EEF can draw on in developing its work in this area by examining process-level, school-level and learning ‘design’-level outcomes. Evaluation findings of the five AF pipeline strands of activity informed the overarching evaluation, with the latter also comprising a survey of AF and non-AF schools in the three regions.

Key findings

Key findings of the evaluation are highlighted below.

Process outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All strands were developed and implemented as intended and with fidelity to intentions. • Recruitment was supported by previously tested approaches with additional support in the three regions, including national promotion by EEF and DfE, and drawing on the networks of local intermediaries such as RSC and LAs. • Implementation was supported by EEF expertise and activity, programme team enthusiasm and experience, and targeted support for programme team capability building and programme development and delivery. Implementation was hindered by the short timescale, the need, at times, for more tailored and focused support and a range of school-level factors such as school awareness and capacity to engage.
School outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All strands achieved their recruitment targets – though some faced challenges – and engaged schools across the three regions to differing degrees. School engagement varied according to alignment of programmes with school needs, prior relationships of trust and commitment, and awareness of opportunities. • Key ways that EEF could engage more schools would be to keep the commitment manageable, communicate effectively about opportunities and offers, and simplify the sign-up process. • Findings from the School Support strand suggested that schools’ understanding of the evidence models had increased, they were more likely to use evidence-based programmes in the future, and they had a greater understanding of EEF’s resources. In addition, there were examples of schools putting learning into practice. • The evaluation found that there was a range of other outcomes for EEF, partners and programme teams in terms of increased confidence, skills and expertise in supporting the development and implementation of these types of programmes.
Learning (‘design’) outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful implementation indicated the model supported the uptake of evidence-based programmes. • The key lessons from the AF pipeline activity were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the value and possibility of extending the evidence-generation pipeline by the inclusion of early-stage development support ○ capability building as a focused activity ○ the value of considering capability building and scaling as activities across the pipeline ○ clarifying ways to enhance support for programme development. • Tentatively, there are indications that the relationship between strands would be strengthened by considering needs analysis for programmes and programme teams in a systematic way across the evidence-generation pipeline. Evaluators suggested the need for greater clarification of the regranting criteria for effectiveness, in comparison with criteria for efficacy trials’ grants.

- Needs analysis, in turn, would support the capability building and scaling across the pipeline.
- EEF teams and processes are key to supporting cohesion, for example, when engaging support from external partners.
- Cohesion may be supported by enhancing the brokering aspects of EEF support.
- The AF pipeline made particular use of external support partners, and this highlighted the value of both needs analysis and brokering as key EEF activities.
- A model of a more developed evidence-generation pipeline was developed as a result of the AF pipeline evaluation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis that, overall, the AF-funded activity was successful, and indicates that the EEF evidence-generation pipeline already has considerable strengths.

- It is recommended that EEF develops a more formalised **needs analysis** framework across the pipeline as a whole, with relevant criteria varying across pipeline stages so that capability building, and scaling support, is effectively targeted. This recommendation is informed by the EEF's work in the AF pipeline with programme developers across different pipeline stages responding to different programme and programme team needs.
- The EEF has established criteria for granting programmes at different stages of the evidence pipeline. The AF pipeline has increased knowledge about capability and scaling needs of programmes and programme teams. This can inform future **refinement of granting criteria**. Evaluation teams may also benefit from **making criteria more transparent and explicit**, as this was raised by some in relation to understanding programme classification. Clearer and more transparent criteria may then support movement of programmes through the pipeline.
- EEF might place more emphasis on **brokering** external expertise and input on the specific evidence base for programme development to supplement that of programme managers and subject specialists. This may be most beneficial for early-stage programmes, particularly where innovations have not directly arisen from the developer's own prior research.
- Notably, four of the eight programme teams receiving capability support benefited from support focused on training or professional development approaches. **For programmes that are scaling and involve professional development or training, external expertise on effective 'train the trainer', cascade and online or hybrid professional development models may be beneficial.** In the AF pipeline, early-stage programme development was led by RSs, who already have professional development expertise. However, this may not be the case for other developers – again pointing to the potential benefits of external expertise in this area.
- The EEF should consider **developing and systemising brokerage** to embed support for capability building in usual EEF activity. This could include assessment of partners' expertise and offers to ensure they meet the needs of programme teams, and to identify the timeliness of support – an issue identified in relation to the capability support activity. Further, it is important that support is effectively targeted at programmes delivering in educational rather than other settings, as this was raised as an issue by early-stage programme developers. In particular, the EEF is developing tailored approaches and materials to support early-stage programmes and the evaluation findings support this approach. This may also support coherence and alignment with other EEF tools and processes, for example supporting ToC models devised for early-stage programmes being further developed when/if programmes progress to pilot or trial stages.
- Due to the short timescale of the evaluation, firm conclusions cannot be made about the flow of programmes through the pipeline and connected issues. In future, any development of the early-stage programme or capability support would particularly benefit from **internal or external formative evaluation or in-depth monitoring and quality assurance**.

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Appendix A: Model of elements across the AF pipeline

Table 19: Model of elements across AF pipeline

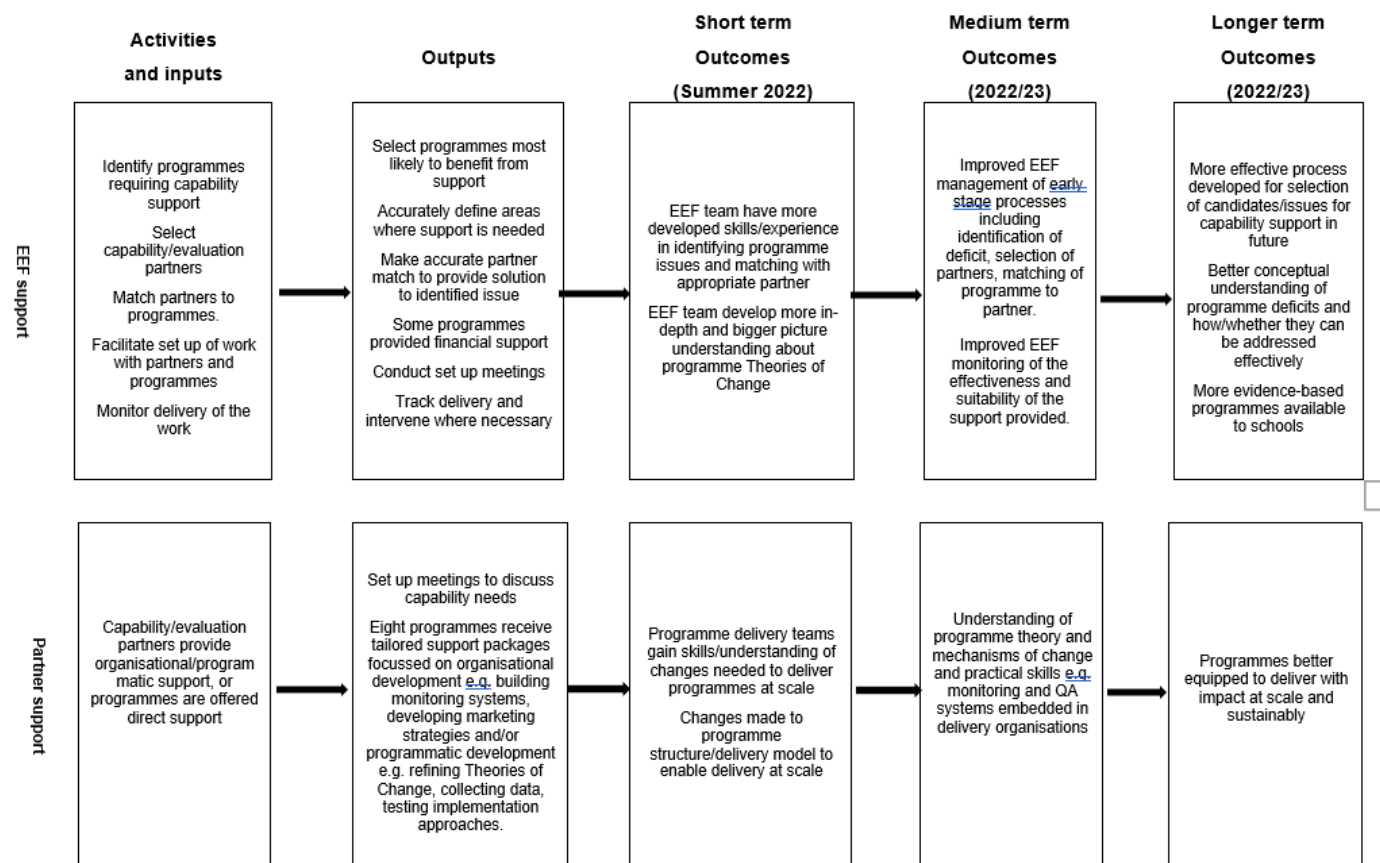
Elements	Notes
EEF commissioning and selection processes and protocols	Recruitment and identification of developers, evaluators and partners as relevant to strands
EEF implementation processes, support, protocols and tools including those for monitoring and implementation where relevant	Varying across AF pipeline strands, includes plans, inception meetings, TIDiER workshop at inception, guidance documents, Theory of Change (ToC) frameworks, brokering between developers and evaluators where applicable etc
Other EEF support for effective school recruitment strategies	Advising on recruitment or drawing on other parts of the EEF evidence system (e.g., support with recruitment through the Research School (RS) network)
EEF brokering support on evidence informed practice	Brokering support on the evidence base from other EEF colleagues or with expertise outside EEF
EEF additional financial resource for capability building or development	Relevant to scaling and capability strand. Financial support for additional development of the programme, subject to intellectual property agreements and crown copyright
EEF coaching/individual support	Focused support additional to any usual set processes, meetings, protocols etc
EEF train the trainer	Training others (e.g., RSs to deliver training to schools)
External evaluation	Including EEF evaluation processes and protocols, input from external evaluation partners
Partners' workshops/training	Partners can mean any support partner, varying across strands; support partners – anyone supporting programme teams and EEF – so evaluators, RSs supporting recruitment Workshops and/or training involve content that is shared. There may be finer grained or more specific elements within workshops (e.g., peer support within workshops)
Partners' tools and models	Partners can mean any support partner, varying across strands; support partners – anyone supporting programme teams and EEF – so evaluators, RSs supporting recruitment and, in the development and capability strands, partners supporting programme development and capability building.
Partners' one-to-one or group support/coaching	One-to-one coaching support of group reflection or review sessions in the development and capability strand This support is distinguished from workshops/training by not having specific content beyond responding to the programme team's needs.
Programme quality features	Features of the programme that lead to outputs and outcomes, (e.g., attractiveness to participants, delivery meeting identified needs)
Programme team experience of implementing a programme/offer	This includes the experience of designing, developing and implementing a school support – developing new or enhancing existing expertise in relation to teams' knowledge, capacity and capability for designing, developing and implementing programmes
Programme team quality assurance processes	Develops new or enhances existing expertise in relation to teams' knowledge, capacity, and capability for designing and implementing high-quality programmes

These elements operate across inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Appendix B: Strand ToCs, mechanisms and assumptions and contextual factors

1 Early-Stage Programme Development Theory of Change (ToC)

Early-Stage Programme Development implementation pathway²²



²² In developing the ToC model, an additional ToC model was developed focused on the design of the strand itself as a way of assessing the potential and effective approach to support early-stage programme development. For simplicity, this is not included here, but it informed the overall evaluation. For simplicity, CBC support is not included as this was only experienced by two schools.

Additionally, for two RSs, support was received by CBC in additional workshops on how to apply the Behaviour Change Wheel to programme development. This leads to additional outputs of the application of the Behaviour Change Wheel. Intended outcomes are the same for all nine RSs.

Early-Stage Programme Development elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Table 20: Early-Stage Programme Development elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Generic element	Strand specific element/instance	Mechanism/assumption
EEF commissioning and selection processes and protocols	Recruitment and selection of RSs, identification and commissioning of external partners	RSs with capability and programme with potential → engagement with the strand support and leads to effective programme Partners with appropriate expertise → effective support for RSs and programme development
EEF implementation processes, support, protocols and tools including those for monitoring and implementation where relevant	EEF pilot processes for supporting programme development (e.g., tools to support programme manualisation)	Effective programme design, including complementary elements of training, on-going support and programme development as action inquiry → effective programme
Other EEF support for effective recruitment strategies	EEF advice on recruitment and brokering support for RS network in regions (recruitment)	EEF support on recruitment → better recruitment
EEF brokering support on evidence-informed practice	Early programme development leads brokering support from other EEF colleagues to enhance programme evidence base (design)	Early programme development leads brokering → access by RS of useful evidence
EEF coaching/individual support	Individual programme support by early-stage programme development leads via meetings and email coaching (design, delivery, formative evaluation planning.)	Coaching by EEF → successful recruitment, effective design and implementation, and evaluation
External evaluation, including EEF evaluation processes and protocols, input from external evaluation partners	Assessment by external partner of feasibility of the programme (review)	External partner assessment of feasibility → informing internal process to identify programmes that are feasible
Partners' workshops/training	Dartington workshops and CBC workshops (for two RSs only), with EEF input, supporting design, delivery and developing a formative evaluation plan (programme team capability building)	Effective programme design including complementary elements of training, on-going support and programme development as action inquiry → effective programme Programme design training → enhanced RS capability, knowledge and skills for developing and implementing programmes

Generic element	Strand specific element/instance	Mechanism/assumption
Partners' tools and models	Dartington and CBC models (design, delivery, programme team capability building)	Effective programme design including complementary elements of training, on-going support and programme development as action inquiry → effective programme
Partners' one-to-one or group support/coaching	Dartington one-to-one/group support included feedback on ToCs and evaluation plans, implementation support workshops (small groups of RS), data analysis drop-ins, structured discussions.	Review sessions by Dartington → effective implementation and review
Programme team experience of implementing a programme/offer	Programme teams successful in implementing programme in a small number of schools (programme team capability building)	Design and implementation of a programme → enhanced RS capability design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and programme developed
Programme team quality assurance processes	RSs' self-assessment and monitoring of programme quality (review, programme further development and scaling)	Programme team quality assurance processes → improve programme quality, feasibility and potential to scale

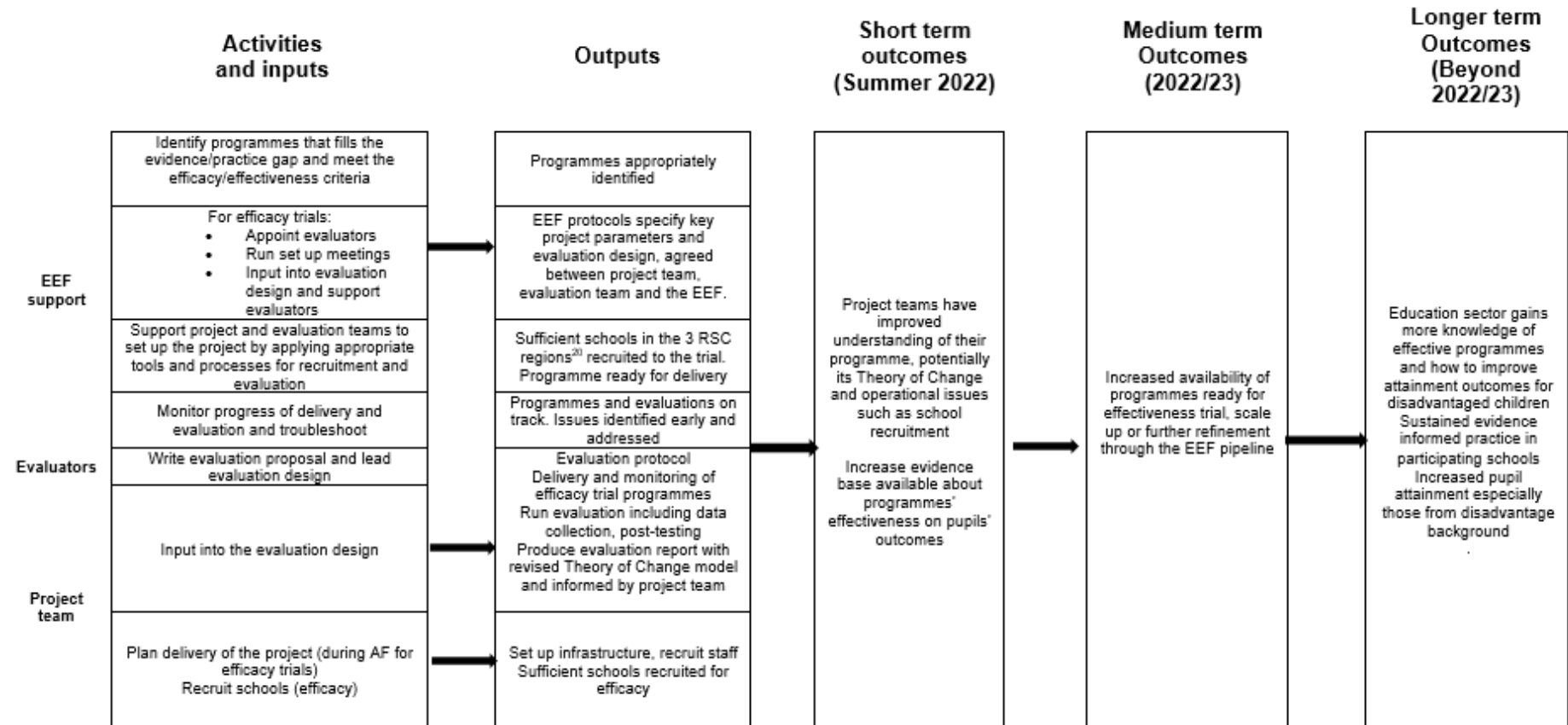
Early-Stage Programme Development contextual influences

Table 21: Early-Stage Programme Development contextual influences

Type of factor/influence	Details
EEF support	EEF effectiveness of support to RSs and tools provided
Partners (providing support, capacity building, evaluation)	Dartington and CBC effectiveness of support and models
Programme team	<p>Previous RS experience in programme development and implementation, and specifically previous knowledge of ToC, the Behaviour Change Wheel, and/or evaluation</p> <p>RSs' knowledge, capability and interest in the foci of their programme</p> <p>Effectiveness/extent of RS networks and understanding of the needs and priorities of their local schools</p> <p>RSs' competing priorities/staffing/capacity issues</p>
Programme factors	<p>Extent to which focus in programmes links to areas of concern for schools and/or address EEF priorities</p> <p>AF funding factors: activity focus, timescale constraints, contracting</p>
School factors	<p>Schools' knowledge, capability and interest in the foci of the nine programmes (impacting recruitment and engagement)</p> <p>Degree of schools' previous engagement in EEF programmes and value placed on EEF support</p> <p>Value placed on evidence-based programmes</p> <p>Level of SLT support; capacity of schools to commit time and resources; staff turnover etc</p> <p>Schools in challenging circumstances with other priorities</p>
Wider factors	<p>Influence of Covid-19 on schools' priorities and capacity to engage</p> <p>Ofsted judgements influencing school priorities</p> <p>DfE policy and accountability influences</p>

2 Trials Theory of Change (ToC)

Trials implementation pathway²³



²³ The implementation pathway for trials is shown for efficacy trials only. The implementation pathway for effectiveness trials varies only slightly from this.

Trials elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Table 22: Trials elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Generic element	Strand-specific element/instance	Mechanism/assumption
EEF commissioning and selection processes and protocols	Selection of programmes for trialling, evaluation commissioning	EEF commissioning → programmes feasible for trialling and appropriate evaluation design
EEF implementation processes, support, protocols and tools, including those for monitoring and implementation where relevant	EEF standard processes and protocols for trials led by programme and evaluation managers (design, recruitment, delivery, programme team capability) Brokering between developer and evaluator	EEF processes → optimal trial design Trial design optimal → effective set-up of trials Effective systems and processes to support programme teams → improve programme teams' ability to deliver and implement the programme effectively EEF brokering → productive and effective relationship
Other EEF support for effective recruitment strategies	EEF support for programmes focuses on efficacy trials in the three regions and nationally for effectiveness trials (recruitment)	Effective recruitment mechanisms → recruitment targets are met Recruitment to programmes → increased awareness of the value of evidence-informed practice
External evaluation including EEF evaluation processes and protocols, input from external evaluation partners	EEF standard evaluation processes and protocol led by evaluation manager with independent evaluator (review)	Evaluation processes → support effective implementation at scale
Generic programme quality	High-quality effective programmes (design, delivery, programme outcomes for beneficiaries)	Projects are identified/selected appropriately, programme are implemented as intended, trial run effectively → leads to professional learning (where applicable) and/or improved learner outcomes
Programme team experience of implementing a programme/offer	Selection of programmes that have previously shown promise	Teams have previously implemented programmes → have more capability to deliver at scale

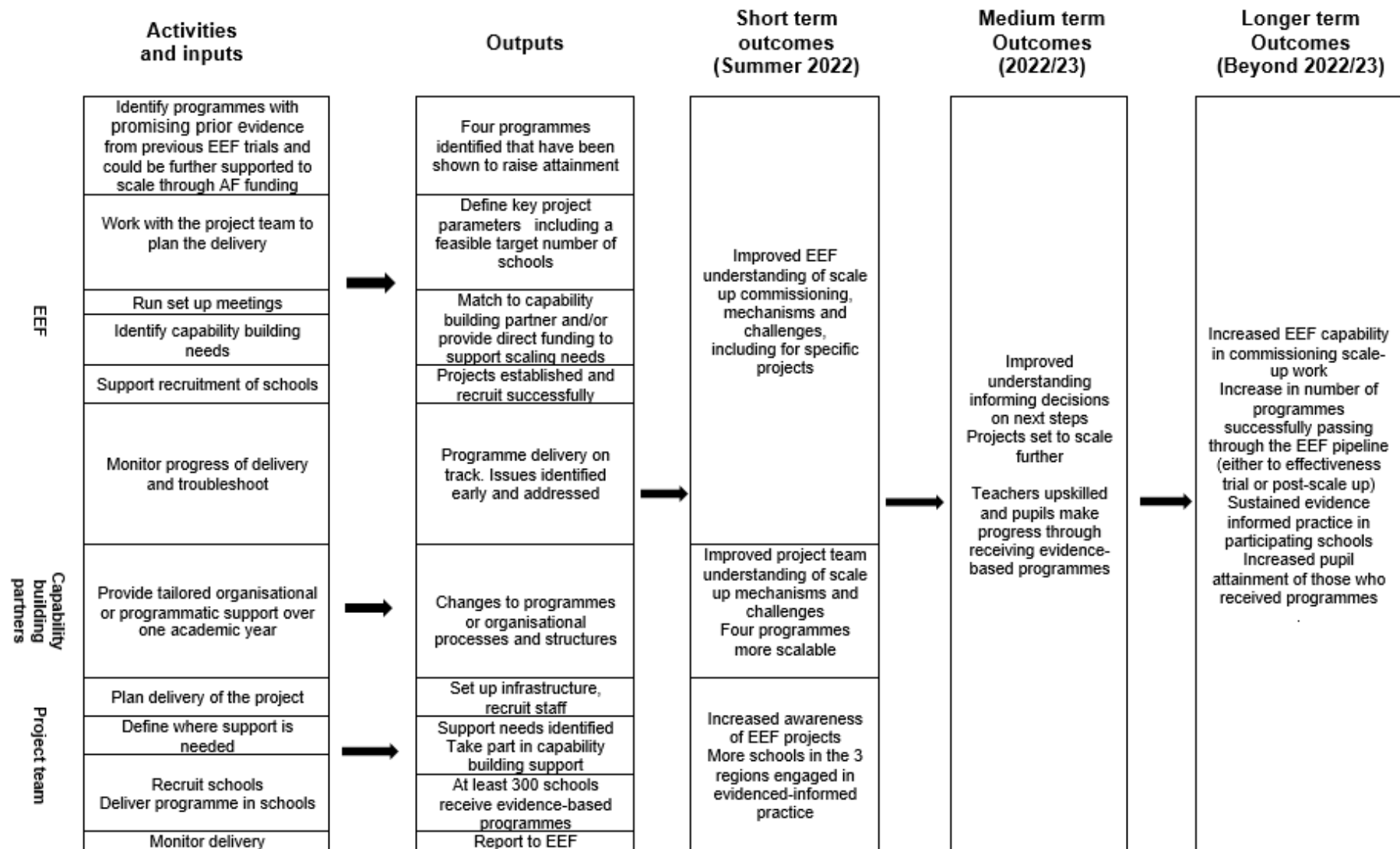
Trials contextual influences

Table 23: Trials contextual influences

Type of factor/influence	Details
EEF support	EEF effectiveness of recruitment support Flexibility in approach
Partners (providing support, capacity building, evaluation)	Evaluator resources/capability/willingness to engage with EEF commissioning and support processes Similar for any other partners involved
Programme team	Project team resources/capability/willingness to engage with EEF commissioning and support processes
Programme factors	Effectiveness of programme embedding lessons from previous trials AF funding factors: activity focus, timescale constraints, contracting
School factors	School SLT receptiveness to adopting new, evidence-informed approaches and willingness/capacity to commit time and resources Degree of schools' previous engagement in EEF programmes and value placed on EEF support Value placed on evidence-based programmes Schools in challenging circumstances with other priorities
Wider factors	Influence of Covid-19 on schools' priorities and capacity to engage Ofsted judgements influencing school priorities DfE policy and accountability influences

3 Scaling Theory of Change (ToC)

Scaling implementation pathway



Scaling elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Table 24: Scaling elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Generic element	Strand specific element/instance	Mechanism/assumption
EEF commissioning and selection processes and protocols	Selection of programmes for scaling EEF assessment of capability needs and promising prior evidence from previous EEF trials (design)	Selection process → identified programmes have potential for scaling EEF identification of capability needs → match with capability partners
EEF implementation processes, support, protocols and tools, including those for monitoring and implementation where relevant	EEF support for planning for delivery (design, delivery) Brokering between developer and evaluator (for embedding formative assessment only)	EEF support for planning delivery → improves potential for implementation EEF brokering → productive effective relationship
Other EEF support for effective recruitment strategies	EEF recruitment support via set-up meetings, monitoring additional recruitment support (recruitment)	Effective recruitment mechanisms → recruitment targets are met Recruitment to programmes → increased awareness of the value of evidence-informed practice
EEF additional financial resources for capability building ²⁴	Some programmes have additional financial support (design, programme team capability building)	Financial support → improved capability
Partners' one-to-one or group support/coaching	Partners support for building capability to scale (programme further development and scaling, programme team capability building)	Capability support → improves project teams' capability to deliver and implement the programme
Generic programme quality	Programmes are effective (programme outcomes for beneficiaries)	Programmes are effective → lead to professional learning (where applicable) and/or improve learner attainment
External evaluation including EEF evaluation processes and protocols, input from external evaluation partners	External evaluation of EFA only (review)	EFA only – external evaluation → generates further evidence about programme

²⁴ Note that this support was provided as part of the capability strand and is included here for completeness, but the value of this support is considered in the capability strand evaluation. Table 2 provides data on the financial and external support provided to projects involved in the Scaling and Capability Building strands.

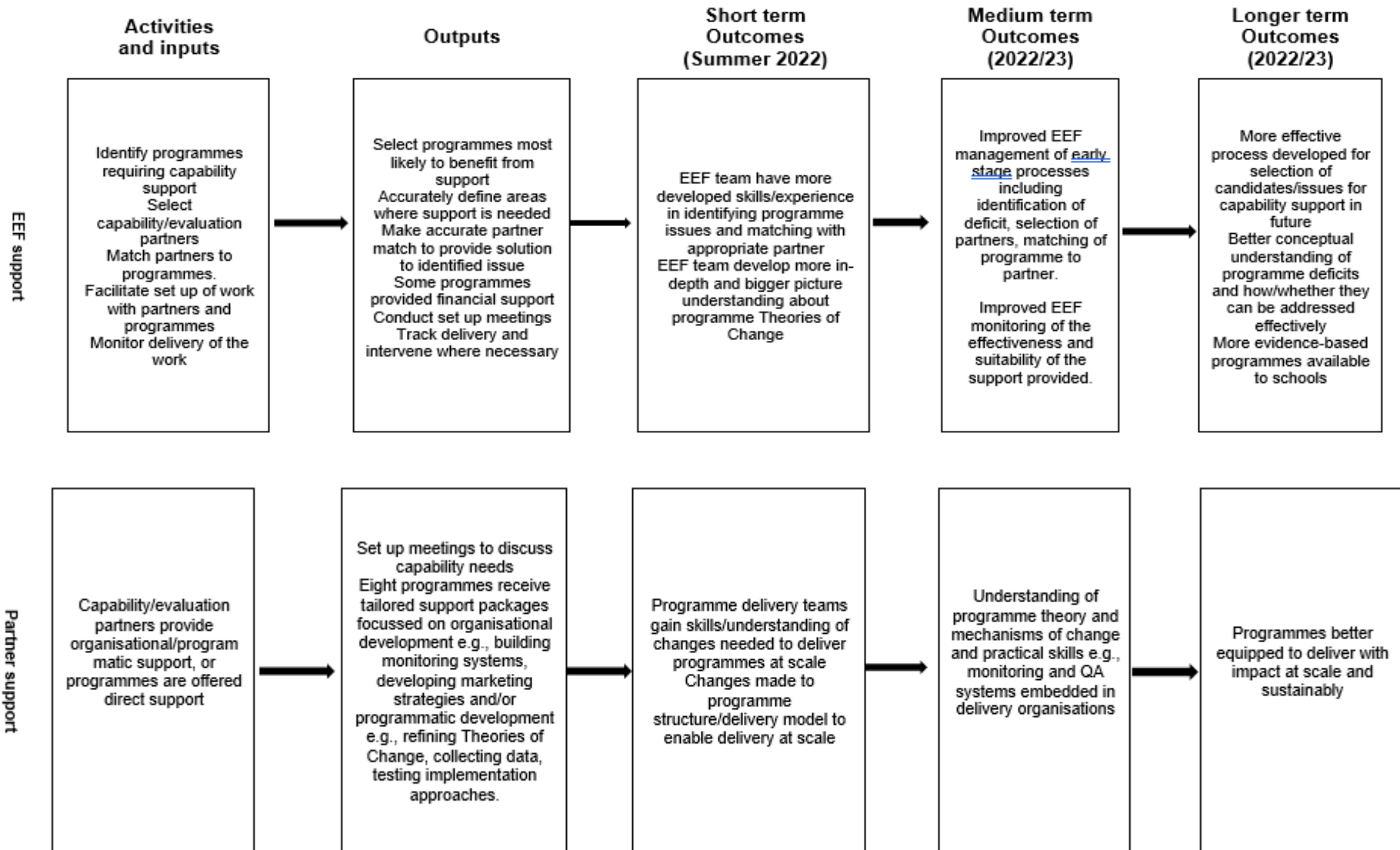
Scaling contextual influences

Table 25: Scaling contextual influences

Type of factor/influence	Details
EEF support	EEF effectiveness of recruitment support Flexibility in approach
Partners (providing support, capacity building, evaluation)	Evaluator (EFA) resources/capability/willingness to engage with EEF commissioning and support processes
Programme team	Project team resources/capability/willingness to engage with EEF support processes and capability partner, including willingness of programme team to engage in scaling
Programme factors	Suitability/effectiveness of programme AF funding: activity focus and timescale constraints
School factors	School SLT receptiveness to adopting new, evidence-informed approaches and willingness/capacity to commit time and resources Degree of schools' previous engagement in EEF programmes and value placed on EEF support Value placed on evidence-based programmes Schools in challenging circumstances with other priorities
Wider factors	Influence of Covid-19 on schools' priorities and capacity to engage Ofsted judgements influencing school priorities DfE policy and accountability influences

4 Capability Building Theory of Change (ToC)

Capability Building implementation pathway



Capability Building elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Table 26: Capacity Building elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Generic element	Strand specific element/instance	Mechanism/assumption
EEF commissioning and selection processes and protocols	EEF identification of developers with expertise and promising programmes for capability building, and identification of capability needs EEF selection and commissioning of external partners Matching partners to developers/programmes	Identification of developers and needs assessment → developers who are receptive and have the capacity for capability building Selection, commissioning and matching of partners → external partners with required expertise matched to developers' needs
EEF implementation processes, support, protocols and tools including those for monitoring and implementation where relevant	EEF monitoring of progress to objectives and adaptations to objectives or timelines if needed	EEF support → improves effectiveness of implementation
EEF additional financial resource for capability building	Some programmes have additional financial support (design, programme team capability building)	Financial support → improved capability
EEF coaching/individual support	EEF support for programme teams (design, delivery, programme team capability building)	EEF support for planning delivery → improves capability building support offered
External evaluation including EEF evaluation processes and protocols, input from external evaluation partners	External evaluation for two out of eight projects (review)	External partner assessment → identifying what works in capability building and further evidence on programmes
Partners' one-to-one or group support/coaching	Support by partners for individual programmes (delivery, programme team capability building, review workshops)	Programme team expertise developed → desired change
Partners' workshops/training	Workshops to two projects on how the teams can use behavioural insights BIT), and workshops to help projects think about pathways to scale (CEI)	Workshops → programme teams for two projects have greater understanding of behavioural insights and teams who engaged in CEI workshops greater understanding of pathways to scaling.
Partners' tools and models	Behavioural insights and pathways to scale models	Application of models → improves programmes and/or builds team capability

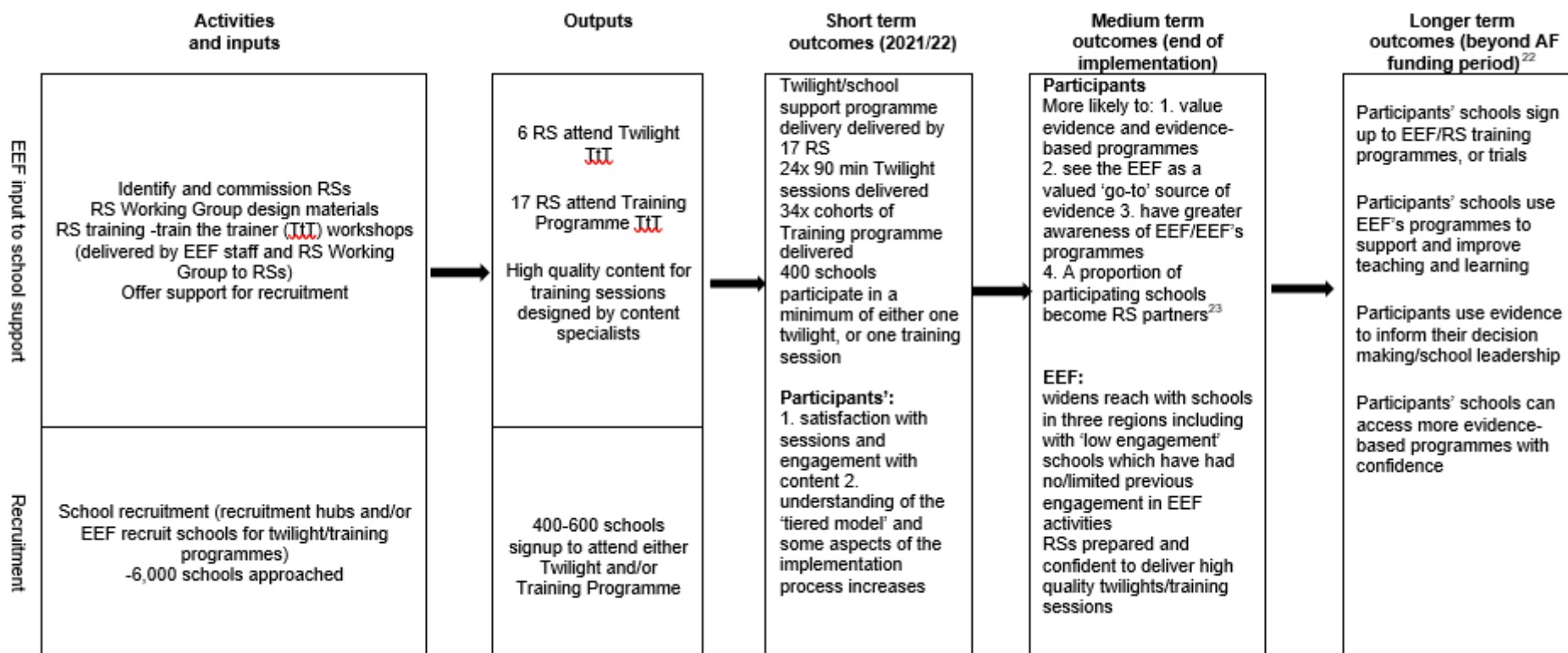
Capability Building contextual influences

Table 27: *Capability Building contextual influences*

Type of factor/influence	Details
EEF support	EEF effectiveness in diagnosing issue to be addressed EEF effectiveness setting up/facilitating support work Effectiveness of EEF management, coordination and evaluation of partners' support to maximise impact on programme teams receiving support
Partners (providing support, capacity building, evaluation)	Effectiveness of partner support (capacity/expertise/adaptability to meet programme teams' needs etc) Effectiveness of relationship developed between partner and programme team
Programme team	Change is dependent on receptiveness of organisation, (e.g., culture or individual staff, to new approaches and practices) Sustainable change is dependent on ability of organisation to commit resources in the longer term Change is dependent on programmes having capacity/willingness to make recommended changes
Programme factors	Effectiveness of work is dependent to some degree on previous working relationship between EEF and programme team AF funding: activity focus and timescale constraints (tight project timescale means decisions were pragmatic: what was possible within 6-month period)
School factors	Not applicable
Wider factors	Covid-19 situation re: capacity of partners and programme teams to engage Ofsted judgements influencing school priorities DfE policy and accountability influences

5 School Support

School Support implementation pathway



²² Following discussions with the EEF team we have focused on more realistic ambitions for the longer-term outcomes (i.e., outcomes for participating schools rather than the sector more generally).

²³ Target number/percentage for this to be provided by EEF.

School Support elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Table 28: School Support elements and mechanisms/assumptions

Generic element	Strand specific element/instance	Mechanism/assumption
EEF commissioning and selection processes and protocols	EEF identification and commissioning of RSs	RS selected with appropriate expertise and capacity to deliver training to schools → successful implementation
EEF implementation processes, support, protocols and tools including those for monitoring and implementation	EEF support for delivery (design of materials and support for RSs – see train the trainer below)	EEF support for delivery → improves effectiveness of implementation
Other EEF support for effective recruitment strategies	EEF support for recruitment (recruitment)	Regionally based recruitment hubs → effective recruitment of schools to target and expansion of EEF's reach 'Recovery' focus of training → attractive to schools and encourages engagement.
EEF train the trainer	Training for RSs to deliver the programme by EEF (delivery)	Train the trainer model → improves RS capacity to deliver training
Programme quality	Quality of the school support programme (programme outcomes for beneficiaries)	'Light touch' approach → stimulates school interest for deeper engagement in learning about use of 'evidence'. Making training free of charge → attracts schools RS twilight/school support programme → intended outcomes for participants
Programme team experience of implementing a programme/offer	Selected RSs capability to implement workshop-based school support programmes (design, programme team capability building)	RSs have capability to offer school support programme → successful implementation

School Support contextual influences

Table 29: School Support contextual influences

Type of factor/influence	Details
EEF support	EEF effectiveness in curating suitable content/materials, training RSs, setting up programme (e.g., booking systems, marketing materials etc)
Partners (providing support, capacity building, evaluation)	Not applicable
Programme team	Capacity of RSs to deliver this additional training alongside existing training commitments RS preparation by EEF to deliver training
Programme factors	AF funding: activity focus and timescale constraints, including scope and duration of the training to impact behavioural change compared to other EEF training programmes Relationship between free-of-charge training and level of school engagement
School factors	Schools' ability to adopt new approach in decision making and embed into standard practice (including committing resources) Training was open to SL and teachers; ability/time of teachers to cascade learning to more senior colleagues
Wider factors	Influence of Covid-19 situation on the attractiveness of 'light touch' training and level of school engagement

Appendix C: Survey tables

Table 30: School phase by AF/Non-AF schools

	AF schools		Non-AF schools		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Primary	122	79%	406	79%	528	78%
Secondary	29	19%	106	21%	135	20%
All-through	1	<1%	4	<1%	5	<1%
16 plus	1	<1%	1	<1%	2	<1%
No Data	1	<1%			1	<1%
Total	154	100%	517	100%	671	100%

Table 31: Region by AF/Non-AF schools

	AF schools		Non-AF schools		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
East Midlands and the Humber	55	36%	206	40%	261	39%
North of England	54	35%	127	25%	181	27%
West Midlands	45	29%	184	36%	229	34%
Total	154	100%	517	100%	671	100%

Table 32: FSM quintile by AF/non-AF schools

	AF schools		Non-AF schools		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Lowest 20%	22	14%	111	21%	133	20%
Medium-lowest 20%	31	20%	103	20%	134	20%
Middle 20%	39	25%	109	21%	148	22%
Medium-highest 20%	31	20%	98	19%	129	19%
Highest 20%	30	19%	91	18%	121	18%
Missing	1	<1%	5	1%	6	<1%
Total	154	100%	517	100%	671	100%

Table 33: Which of the following sources do you get most of your updates about EEF activity from? – Numbers (Q5)

	AF school (N=61)	Non-AF school (N=321)	Overall (N=382)
EEF website	43	264	307
Twitter	14	81	95
LinkedIn	2	5	7
Facebook	3	24	27
EEF newsletter	18	70	88
Research School Network newsletter	14	26	40
Through your local Research School	15	26	41
Not sure	4	15	19

Table 34: Which of the following sources do you get most of your updates about EEF activity from? – Percentages (Q5)

	AF school (N=61)	Non-AF school (N=321)	Overall (N=382)
EEF website	70%	82%	80%
Twitter	23%	25%	25%
LinkedIn	3%	2%	2%
Facebook	5%	7%	7%
EEF newsletter	30%	22%	23%
Research School Network newsletter	23%	8%	10%
Through your local Research School	25%	8%	11%
Not sure	7%	5%	5%

Table 35: Which of the following EEF resources/opportunities are you aware of? – Numbers (Q4a)

	AF school (N=74–134)	Non-AF school (N=220–497)	Overall (N=294–631)
EEF blogs	31	101	132
Early Years Toolkit	44	193	237
School planning resources	50	151	201
Guidance reports	85	239	324
Evaluation reports and research	77	293	370
Pupil Premium resources	99	307	406
Teaching and Learning Toolkit	118	442	560

Table 36: Which of the following EEF resources/opportunities are you aware of? – Percentages (Q4a)

	AF school (N=74–134)	Non-AF school (N=220–497)	Overall (N=294–631)
EEF blogs	42%	46%	45%
Early Years Toolkit	44%	57%	54%
School planning resources	64%	60%	61%
Guidance reports	74%	70%	71%
Evaluation reports and research	68%	76%	74%
Pupil Premium resources	88%	76%	79%
Teaching and Learning Toolkit	88%	89%	89%

Table 37: Which of the following reasons best reflect why you chose to use these resources? – Numbers (Q4b)

	AF school (N=38)	Non-AF school (N=211)	Overall (N=249)
The resources are relevant to my school's priorities (e.g., to support pupil progress)	34	183	217
The resources relate to my school's context	10	69	79
My school has made time available to use the resources	3	8	11
We were advised to use them by our MAT, LA, school improvement partner or Ofsted	5	22	27
The resources are easy to understand	15	79	94
The resources are easy to put into practice/implement	11	55	66
The resources help me to make decisions about school strategy	23	115	138
We were supported to use them by external CPD providers (e.g., Research Schools)	3	12	15

Table 38: Which of the following reasons best reflect why you chose to use these resources? – Percentages (Q4b)

	AF school (N=38)	Non-AF school (N=211)	Overall (N=249)
The resources are relevant to my school's priorities (e.g., to support pupil progress)	89%	87%	87%
The resources relate to my school's context	26%	33%	32%
My school has made time available to use the resources	8%	4%	4%
We were advised to use them by our MAT, LA, school improvement partner or Ofsted	13%	10%	11%
The resources are easy to understand	39%	37%	38%
The resources are easy to put into practice/implement	29%	26%	27%
The resources help me to make decisions about school strategy	61%	55%	55%
We were supported to use them by external CPD providers (e.g., Research Schools)	8%	6%	6%

Table 39: Which of the following (AF) activities have you been involved in? AF schools (Q8)

	Number	Percentage
An EEF research trial	50	34%
My school has not recently been involved in an EEF/Research School activity	33	23%
An EEF/Research School CPD programme 'Supporting Recovery'	32	22%
An EEF/Research School early-stage programme development project	24	17%
An EEF scale-up/subsidised programme	25	17%

Table 40: Why did you decide to become involved in these activities? – AF schools (Q9a)

	Number (N=60–101)	Percentage
The activity/activities align to my school's priorities (e.g., to support pupil progress)	85	84%
We believe the activity will be of benefit to our school	79	78%
The EEF/Research Schools are a trusted source of evidence and learning	61	60%
We believe it is important to engage in CPD led by experts in the area	33	55%
We want to learn about evidence-informed practices	53	52%
We want to contribute to building the evidence base	33	33%
We have prior experience of working with EEF/Research Schools	24	24%
Other (please specify)	1	2%

Table 41: Which of the following reasons best reflect why you have not participated in activities run by the EEF or Research Schools? (Q6b) – Non-AF Schools

	Non-AF school (N=65)
We have not been asked to take part in these activities	38%
I am/my colleagues are too busy to take part in these activities	35%
We do not know how to get involved in these activities	34%
We are not sure of the benefit of such activities to our school	17%
The activity/activities do not align to my school's priorities	12%
The activity/activities are not relevant to my school's context	9%

Table 42: What could the EEF do to make you more likely to use its resources/opportunities? (Q7)

	AF school (N=146)	Non-AF school (N=503)	Overall (N=649)
Keep the time commitment manageable	54%	56%	56%
Communicate effectively about EEF's opportunities and offers	42%	46%	45%
Simplify the process for sign-up to trials/programmes	31%	39%	37%
Increase incentive payments to schools who take part in trials or subsidised programmes	31%	37%	35%
Release resources/opportunities at a point in time which is useful	36%	32%	33%
Align resources and opportunities with topical education priorities	32%	33%	33%
Make sure resources/details about the opportunities are clear and easy to understand	33%	29%	30%
Provide clear guidance about how to use the resources/opportunities in practice	23%	32%	30%
Provide case studies/examples of how schools have put these resources/ opportunities into practice	28%	29%	29%
The EEF doesn't need to do anything else – I am already likely to use its resources/opportunities	15%	10%	11%

Table 43: How satisfactory have you found the process of being involved in the following activity/activities? – AF Schools (Q9b)

	Percentage reporting very or extremely satisfactory
Overall (N=99)	77%
EEF/Research School early-stage programme development project (N=23)	83%
EEF research trial (N=48)	73%
EEF scale-up/subsidised programme (N=25)	84%
EEF/Research School CPD programme 'Supporting Recovery' (N=32)	78%

Table 44: How long have you/your colleagues been using these resources/taking part in these opportunities? (Q4e)

	AF school (N=134)	Non-AF school (N=357)	Overall (N=491)
Less than one year	24%	11%	15%
1–2 years	29%	30%	30%
More than 2 years	47%	56%	53%
I don't know	0%	3%	2%

Table 45: Which of the following EEF resources/opportunities are you aware of? (Q3)

	AF schools (N=153)	Non-AF schools (N=516)	Overall (N=669)
Teaching and Learning Toolkit	90%	97%	95%
Early Years Toolkit	67%	66%	66%
Evaluation reports and research papers	76%	75%	75%
EEF blogs	50%	43%	45%
Pupil Premium resources	75%	78%	78%
School planning resources	52%	49%	50%
Guidance reports	78%	66%	69%
Taking part in EEF trials or programme evaluation	71%	46%	52%
Taking part in EEF scale-up/subsidised programmes	37%	20%	24%
Taking part in Research School activities (e.g., CPD programmes)	55%	39%	43%
None of the above – I have not heard of EEF before	1%	0%	0%
None of the above – I have not heard of any of these resources	2%	0%	1%

Table 46: Number engaging with at least one EEF resource or activity (Q4a & Q4c)

	AF school (N=123–146)	Non-AF school (N=295–511)	Overall (N=418– 657)
Number who have engaged with at least one resource	94%	97%	96%
Number who have engaged with at least one activity*	84%	52%	61%
Number who have engaged with at least one EEF resource or activity	98%	97%	97%

Table 47: Proportion engaging with at least one EEF resource or activity (Q4a & Q4c)

	AF school (N=123–146)	Non-AF school (N=295–511)	Overall (N=418– 657)
Number who have engaged with at least one resource	137	496	633
Number who have engaged with at least one activity*	103	154	257
Number who have engaged with at least one EEF resource or activity	143	496	639

Table 48: Number participating in EEF opportunities (Q4c)

	AF school (N=56–123)	Non-AF school (N=100–295)	Overall (N=156– 418)
Research School activities (e.g., CPD programmes)	58	90	148
An EEF trial or programme evaluation	71	81	152
None of the above	12	99	111
A scaleup/subsidised programme	22	11	33

Table 49: Percentage participating in EEF opportunities (Q4c)

	AF school (N=56–123)	Non-AF school (N=100–295)	Overall (N=156– 418)
Research School activities (e.g., CPD programmes)	71%	45%	53%
An EEF trial or programme evaluation	67%	34%	45%
None of the above	10%	34%	27%
A scaleup/subsidised programme	39%	11%	21%

Table 50: Please think about an approach that you have introduced in the past two years to improve teaching and learning and to support pupils' academic progress. How important were the following influences in identifying this approach? (Q2)

	Not at all important	Not very important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Summaries/guidance based on research (such as those produced by the EEF) (N=670)	0%	1%	14%	44%	40%
My own experience/the experience of other teachers or schools (N=669)	0%	1%	14%	50%	34%
Academic research articles or reports (N=664)	0%	2%	23%	45%	29%
Research-informed CPD led by my school/trust/local authority or an external provider (N=667)	2%	5%	20%	45%	28%
Research conducted by me or other teachers (N=667)	4%	9%	27%	43%	17%
Other CPD led by my school/trust/local authority or an external provider (N=668)	4%	8%	30%	46%	13%
Guidance from the DfE, Ofsted or exam boards (N=664)	2%	9%	36%	42%	12%
Guidance from my MAT or local authority (N=654)	9%	15%	33%	31%	12%

Appendix D: Evidence scan – approach and sources

D1: Overview

An evidence scan was undertaken focusing on evidence, research and knowledge systems, to inform the development of Theory of Change (ToC) models and interpretation of analysis. Given the resource and time available, an evidence scan of a small number of sources was undertaken.

D2: Selection criteria

Sources were identified based on their potential to offer insights for the AF pipeline and the EEF system as a whole, with specific emphasis on early-stage programme development and move to scale up as key features of the AF pipeline. Sources were identified based on our own expertise and that of organisations/individuals with expertise in knowledge mobilisation and systems approaches that we have collaborated with. Review of citations of initial sources led to the identification of further sources.

An Initial list of 20 sources was identified and then these were considered for review following an initial reading. Based on a first reading, 12 were selected for review with eight selected because they focused on whole-evidence systems, and four included to address key issues of early-stage programme development and programme innovation.

D3: Review

Each selected source was reviewed by one researcher using a common review frame that had the following sections:

- source details (full reference and link, if source available online)
- the evidence underpinning any approach(es)/model(s) identified in the source (is it a theoretical piece; is it a description of a practice model; has there been any testing for efficacy; have there been any refinements?)
- evidence the source is based on (data/analysis – including scale and scope; literature; opinion; experience etc) and how reliable/trustworthy it is
- the key learning from the source for other pipeline approaches that aim to mobilise evidence from production (early-stage development programmes and onwards) through to implementation in schools)
- which pipeline elements do any identified approach(es)/model(s) focus on (e.g., early-stage programme development; progress via trial; scale-up; brokerage into practice; training/implementation into practice; the whole)?
- influencing factors (barriers/enablers) – are they accounted for in any approach(es)/model(s) identified in the source? How are these considered to influence the whole, or specific elements?
- the extent the source provides evidence of the effectiveness or impact of any approach(es)/model(s) identified
- any other noteworthy points from the source to inform the roundtable discussion.

D4: Sources selected

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- What Works for Children's Social Care (2022) *Evaluation Pipeline*. Available at: https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Evaluation-Pipeline_v1.0.pdf (accessed 1 November 2022).
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