

CASE STUDY:

Understanding DECC's non-domestic policy portfolio and new and innovative approaches to evaluation

The challenge

DECC wished to better understand 1) their non-domestic policy portfolio, and how it fitted together 2) whether there were better ways of managing the suite of evaluation activities they undertake for their non-domestic policy portfolio. Historically DECC had not followed a set strategy or approach for evaluations, with individual evaluations commissioned to varying specifications. The department wished to explore whether there were efficiencies (in terms of costs and time) that could be delivered whilst improving the robustness of findings through the use of e.g. a portfolio or part-portfolio evaluation approach

**The approach**

A highly collaborative stakeholder engagement exercise was completed, engaging with policy an evaluation specialists right across the department. Databuild designed and delivered a number of workshops with stakeholders, as well as conducting depth telephone interviews. Alongside this, the research included a search exercise and review of any best practice literature on different approaches to evaluation for bodies operating a number of different policies / programmes, and engaging with experts in the fields of policy and evaluation to discuss options. Outputs included collections of technical policy maps illustrating how policies fit together, various working papers, culminating in a final report.



Analysis was conducted at policy level, looking at the mechanisms involved with individual policies and how they exert their influence – looking at objectives, mechanisms, effects and unintended effects. Databuild examined where policies overlap, and, where overlap occurred, whether this overlap reinforced, had no impact on, opposed or was repetition (e.g. that policy ‘effect’ would have been exerted anyway due to another policy working in the same space). This exercise also included some analysis of the markets for the organisations that are in scope of DECC policies. The research included a detailed review of policy and evaluation literature – including policy documents, impact assessments and evaluation reports.

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The project was highly iterative and changed scope in response to shifting internal priorities for the department; the project was managed and delivered effectively through close reference to overall project and resource plans – the project was tightly managed in a small team working closely with the client, with at least once weekly progress update telephone calls or meetings.

The outcome

DECC were able to take the results of the project to:

- Better understand the intricacies of their portfolio (and whether all policies were supporting each other, or whether there was any repetition in terms of policy action)
- Explore where they could build in efficiencies, ensure that evaluations were delivered in the same way to build in consistencies for comparison, and look at how they are planning their evaluation budget and timings overall.