SCOTTISH
FUTURES
TRUST

Scottish Futures Trust
Briefing and Evaluation Framework

This framework has been developed to support anyone embarking on any form of infrastructure investment to better define, validate and evaluate the outcomes they are seeking to achieve.

This document is not Statutory Guidance but offers a best practice approach to brief planning, stakeholder engagement, development of objectives and measurement of success.

Developed by Scottish Futures Trust in partnership with Ryder Architecture.

Authors:
Triona Tiernan, Scottish Futures Trust
Soo Darcy, Ryder Architecture

Scottish Futures Trust
11-15 Thistle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 1DF

Contents

This document is interactive, with an introductory section followed by more detailed guidance.

Pages with a link icon contain links to external sources or to other sections of the framework.

Click the back button to return to the introduction.

About the Framework

Who is the Framework For?

This framework is intended for use by anyone embarking upon or commissioning a project, whether that be an initial place based evaluation, a feasibility study or capital investment.

The framework establishes an approach that is equally applicable to complex projects with multiple stakeholders as it is to straightforward projects. It emphasises the link between good planning and meaningful measurement of success, therefore can be scaled up or down depending on the complexity of your project.

The guidance in the framework should be followed by everyone on the project team, particularly at the outset of the project to ensure everyone understands the benefits of establishing a shared vision and clear objectives, and committing to evaluating success throughout the project.

It will be of particular use to the individual or team responsible for establishing the project brief. We suggest that a 'Vision Champion' or 'Agent of Change' role is identified (see Introduction) to act as the driver behind the core activities in this framework.

What's Involved?

This framework will help you approach a project with the end in sight, listening carefully to stakeholders to develop **a brief that is fit for purpose**. It encourages you to **validate regularly** as the project progresses. The information you gather will provide solid foundations for **meaningful, relevant and useful measurements of success**.
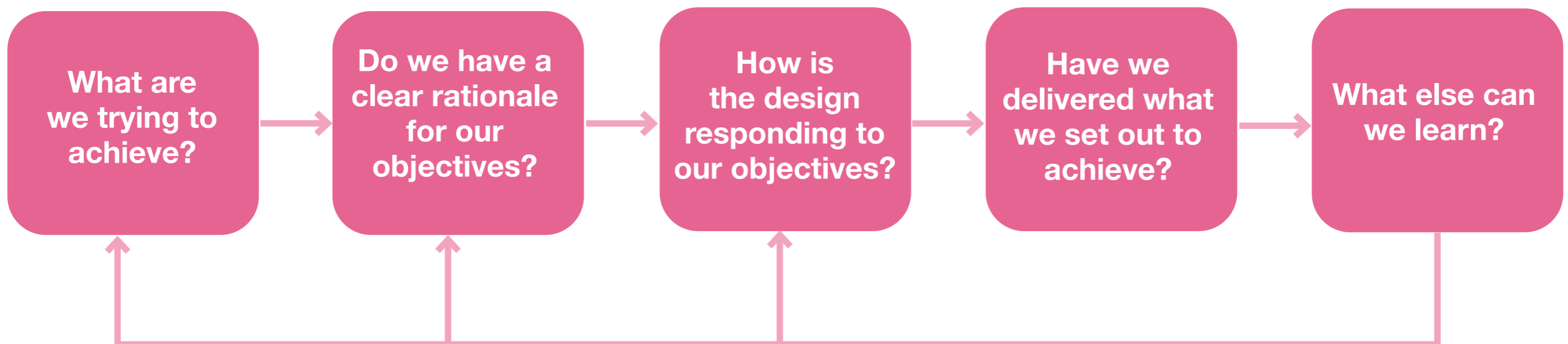
This framework guides you to identify and refine your aspirational goals into **strategic outcomes – the high level aspirations that summarise the vision for the project.**

Each strategic outcome will then be distilled into a series of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely **(SMART) objectives that will become the basis for success evaluation**.

All other activities continue as normal, but your team uses these objectives to shape and validate decisions as the project progresses.

This framework is not intended to replace existing frameworks and requirements, rather to complement those frameworks through practical guides to help you work towards defined outcomes with your stakeholders.

The images and templates provided in this document are intended to help you visualise your activities as you work through the steps. However, you can proceed through the framework using whatever format of outputs you find easiest and most effective – this could be as simple as a spreadsheet of objectives.

| What are we trying to achieve? | → | Do we have a clear rationale for our objectives? | → | How is the design responding to our objectives? | → | Have we delivered what we set out to achieve? | → | What else can we learn? |

Introduction

Planning the Journey

If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?

Every project is a journey. From the moment a need is identified to the end of the life of a building, the journey is joined along the way by thousands of people. It will touch the life of every one in some way – for better or for worse.

Every project is also part of a much bigger journey – for Scotland, for public health and wellbeing, for education and employment, for the environment, for the future. Are we all travelling in the same direction? And are we charting the same map?

Anywhere can be a destination if you don't start with the end in sight. Is it the right one?

We can point to any finished building and say we arrived at a destination, For many projects, that is where validation and evaluation ends.

But we really need to know, was it the right destination for the context, the community and the needs of the users?

How can we measure success if we didn't define what 'success' would look like before we started?

And crucially, how can we share our knowledge with others, for the benefit of the next project, if we don't know what our success criteria were?

Plan your destination carefully before the journey begins

We therefore need to:

✓ **Seek early input** from a broad range of people and sources, to ensure our journey is well planned and for the right reasons

✓ **Define success** at the start – this is our destination

✓ **Regularly check** we are still on course to get there

✓ **Evaluate** whether we did it successfully

✓ **Reflect** on whether we chose the right success criteria

Three Stages for the Lifetime of Your Project

There are three key stages in the framework, broken down into nine steps to guide you through the project from inception to post-handover. This page outlines the three stages; on the next page you will see the nine steps to follow. Each chapter in this document provides more detail on each of the nine steps.

DEFINE

A thorough briefing process is essential to set the project up for success

Through the earliest stages you will think about the project in its unique context of place, people and values, channelled through the relevant national and regional requirements

You will identify your stakeholders and work with them to establish a clear vision and measurable objectives

Definition comprises steps 1 to 6 of the framework

VALIDATE

Validation is about carrying forward the vision and measurable objectives to inform the design and delivery of your project

Your objectives should be referred to regularly, checking the emerging designs address them

The objectives can form the basis of discussion and decision making if compromises need to be made as the design emerges

Once the building is in use, users can gather anecdotal evidence about how well it is working against the objectives

Validation is step 7 of the framework

EVALUATE

Evaluation is about measuring success, identifying improvements and sharing learnings for the benefit of future projects

By the time the building has been in use for a year, you should have a good (anecdotal) understanding of how it is meeting its objectives

A Post Occupancy Evaluation provides a formal measurement

By following the briefing process, you can conduct a meaningful, relevant POE that measures against the objectives established for the project at its outset

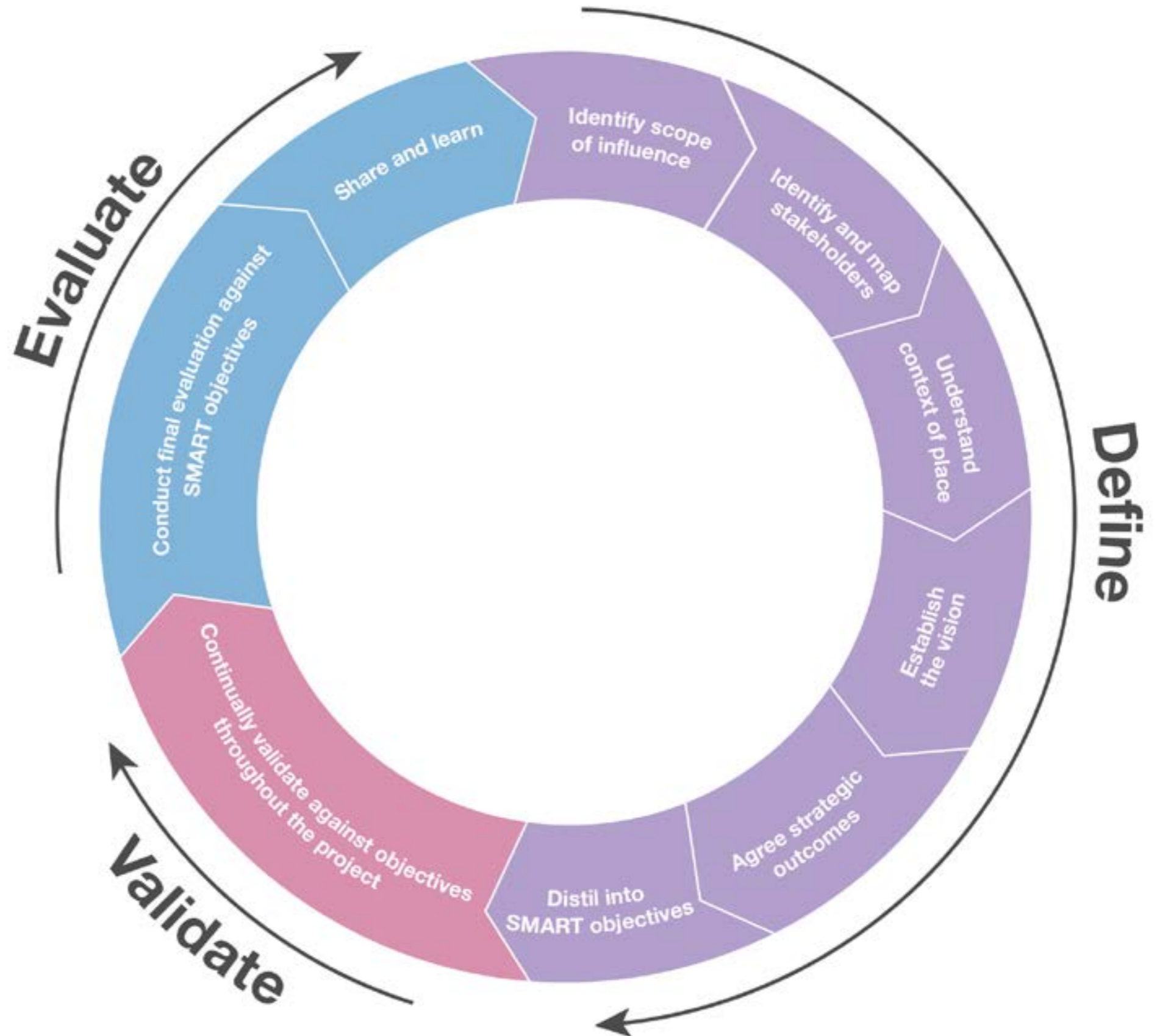**Evaluation comprises steps 8 and 9 of the framework**

Key Steps

The process is a circular flow of information that begins at project conception and ends by feeding its learnings into the next project, thereby starting the cycle again. It follows the usual project stages, but provides a focus for activity that encourages the project team to seek out and capture essential information to measure the success of the project at each step.

The first part requires research and engagement to ensure you have fully understood the project context, consulted with stakeholders and captured the strategic outcomes and SMART objectives of the project to create a meaningful brief.

The second part requires the team to refer to the objectives, regularly reflect on them, and continually validate activities against them. This creates a living document that details the rationale for decision making.

Finally, you will carry out evaluation to understand whether the project delivered what was expected, and whether the building is performing as intended. This evaluation is based on the project's own objectives, ensuring the findings are relevant to the context.

Evaluate

Define

Validate

Share and learn

Identify scope of influence

Identify and map stakeholders

Understand context of place

Establish the vision

Agree strategic outcomes

Distil into SMART objectives

Continually validate against objectives throughout the project

Conduct final evaluation against SMART objectives

What Skills Do We Need?

Types of skills

There are two key skill sets that will be required in your team, which will likely reside in different people.

First is the project vision champion or agent of change, who will be responsible for safeguarding the work done throughout this process. On projects that bring together a range of services or require people to work in new ways, it is possible that some level of compromise or changes to service delivery models will need to be managed.

The second skillset is those skills required to conduct and analyse the various engagement activities as part of your vision and outcomes development and subsequent evaluation. You may be able to access these skills in house, or may feel it is appropriate to seek an external consultant to support you.

A key benefit of this process is that, if you do need to seek the support of an external consultant, you will be able to provide them with a detailed roadmap of the work conducted so far and the support you require.

Click here to download a sample Scope of Service covering the key tasks for the Vision Champion and Engagement Facilitator

Vision Champion / Agent of Change

This role is likely to reside within the client organisation, as it is essential that the role is not diluted or undermined by a lack of authority or lack of mandate to defend and champion the agreed vision as the project progresses.

This person may need to encourage service providers to think outside the box, to collaborate, to overcome challenges and embrace compromises. Even on a relatively straightforward project, this role will be essential to keep partners aligned to the agreed project objectives.

This person needs to:

- ✓ Have a position of **authority**, or at least a mandate to act, at the Executive Board level
- ✓ Be **trusted** by the partners and likely to instil confidence and enthusiasm
- ✓ Have the belief in the project vision to **defend** it in the face of challenge
- ✓ **Understand** the process journey and what it is trying to achieve
- ✓ Have good **project management** skills and the authority to schedule sessions with senior decision makers

Engagement Facilitator

This skillset may reside in more than one person, perhaps with one individual who takes ownership of managing the activities.

The role requires an ability to:

- ✓ Research, collate and review information (**desk research**)
- ✓ Confidently and objectively **facilitate / moderate focus groups or workshop sessions** with stakeholders. It helps if the moderator is not too closely linked to the day to day project, to enable them to remain impartial and encourage listening, rather than defending
- ✓ Design and administer **surveys**, online or on paper
- ✓ **Analyse data**, both qualitative and quantitative, that is generated from the groups and surveys
- ✓ Conduct **walk-throughs** of the building

Tips for Success

Build validation into the programme

Just as the team would regularly check all technical documentation at project meetings, the objectives documentation should be part of the project pack that is validated regularly.

Set a programme that is suitable for the project and stick to it.

The objectives should be front of mind throughout the design process – imagine them stuck to the wall of your office as a constant reminder!

Set up a regular process of assessing and recording whether the design is still on track, at least at every RIBA stage milestone.

Get the design team involved early

Regular validation will be much easier if you get buy in from the entire team at the outset.

The design team should reap the value of a well thought through, well articulated brief that is rooted in the context of the place.

Ensure they are appointed with the understanding that these activities are taking place, and encourage ownership of relevant activities.

Involve experts and appoint design champions

During the brief development and validation it may be necessary to bring in experts to help you understand a particular perspective, or to explain information to stakeholders. For example, specialists in midwifery, social care or new educational approaches.

When you initially appoint your project board, remember that the makeup of that board can change over time. You might bring in experts for a short period where useful, but they do not need to join every meeting.

At the validation phase, remember to involve these people and give them the chance to defend their objectives. They could be brought into validation meetings to act as design champions who can work with the architect to ensure the solution meets their intended outcomes.

Build careful communications into your plan

At the initial stages of brief development, there will be a lot of activity involving stakeholder consultations and workshops.

You should establish a communications plan early to ensure the right information is going to the right people. Use the stakeholder map you will prepare as part of this process – which people need to be kept regularly involved, and which need light touch information?

Remember that nothing is set in stone as the design develops, as long as you keep those strategic objectives – and the reasons for them – in mind.

Keep a regular and transparent dialogue with your stakeholders so you can return to them if more input is needed as the design progresses.
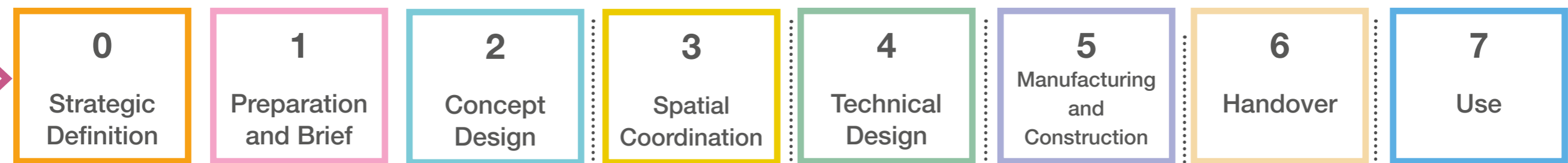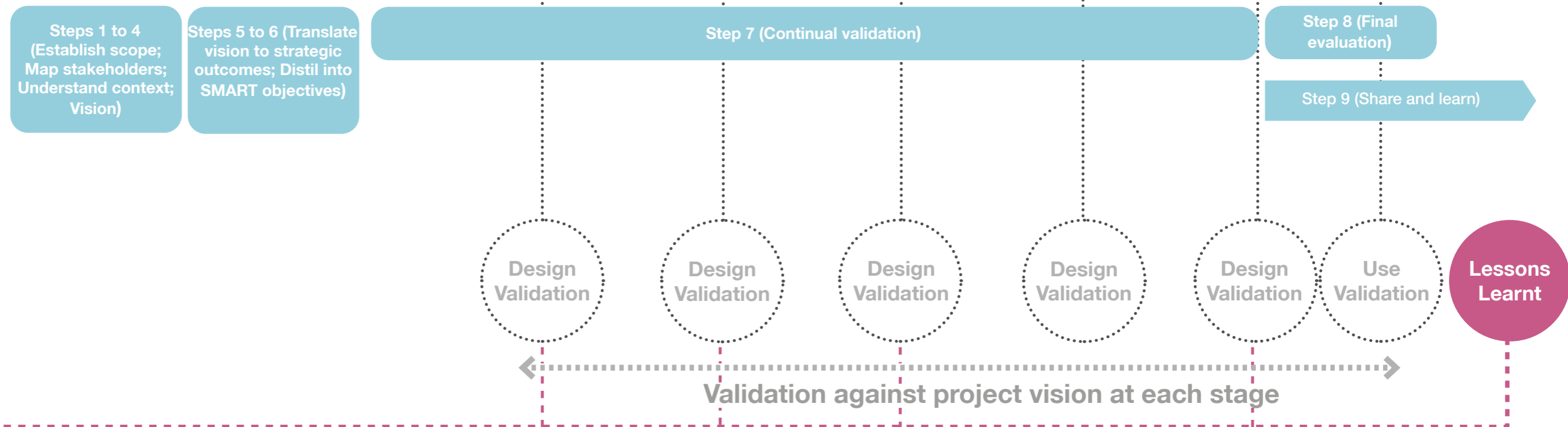
Timelines

This framework is designed to help you establish meaningful objectives and ensure you validate against them as the project progresses, feeding into useful and targeted evaluation of whether those objectives have been met. It is not intended to replace existing frameworks and requirements, rather to complement those frameworks through practical guides to help you work towards defined objectives with your stakeholders.
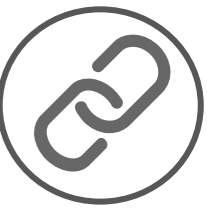
RIBA Plan of Work

0 Strategic Definition	1 Preparation and Brief	2 Concept Design	3 Spatial Coordination	4 Technical Design	5 Manufacturing and Construction	6 Handover	7 Use

Framework Steps

Steps 1 to 4 (Establish scope; Map stakeholders; Understand context; Vision)

Steps 5 to 6 (Translate vision to strategic outcomes; Distil into SMART objectives)

Step 7 (Continual validation)

Step 8 (Final evaluation)

Step 9 (Share and learn)

Design Validation · Design Validation · Design Validation · Design Validation · Design Validation · Use Validation

Lessons Learnt

Validation against project vision at each stage

FEEDBACK

RIBA Plan of Work (https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-plan-of-work)

Supplementary Resources

To help you get the most from the Framework, several supplementary resources are available as appendices to this document. Click on the case studies and worked example below, or follow the links provided to access the templates referenced in the Framework.

Case Study 1 – Forestry and Land Scotland

Case Study 2 – Callander Community Campus

Case Study 3 – Learning Lessons from POE

Worked Example

Strategic Outcomes and SMART Objectives diagram – template

Evaluation tracking spreadsheet – template

Sample Scope of Service

Identify the Scope of Influences

1

Establishing the Big Picture

There is one obvious but inescapable challenge with developing a good brief: it's not easy! It requires effort, time and resource. But the alternative is infinitely more costly – risking a building that is not fit for purpose, that does not meet the needs of the people and the community it serves or, worse, that never considered their needs in the first place. A comprehensive brief needs to start with the broadest possible context, before refining the detail.

Where do we start?

The seemingly obvious place to start on any project is with the things we know. There are likely to be some obvious factors and influences that will shape the project – for example, these might be to do with budget, timelines or the demands of service providers.

The problem with using these factors as a starting point is they might form a biased basis on which to establish the project parameters. We risk over-focusing on these factors, layering on other factors in a piecemeal fashion as they present themselves. The context for the project will be disjointed, and likely full of holes. Step back from your preconceptions or perceived limitations, and view the project with fresh eyes.

Don't ask yourself, "What is the scope of this project?" but rather, "What is the scope of all the things that could influence this project?" Don't ask yourself, "Who are our stakeholders?" but "Who are all the people who could possibly be stakeholders?"

Once you understand the big picture, and have considered the project in its broadest sense, you can start to narrow down the factors that are most important to the project.

Avoiding information overload

The drawback to starting with a broad outlook to the project is that you may need to review a lot of information, which can seem overwhelming. You will need to consider the views of lots of people, and balance the demands of lots of parties.

But the benefit is that you have a clear path from start to finish, with a series of steps, and a clear plan for each one. Do not allow these steps to overlap, and establish the goals for each step before you proceed. Tell your stakeholders that you are working through a defined process, and use this to manage their expectations.

It may be that as you progress through the framework you can tick off some of the steps quickly and easily.

However, you should consider each step carefully and work through the questions to make sure you have thoroughly interrogated your assumptions. Remember, what has worked in other locations (or in the past at the same location) may not necessarily work now.
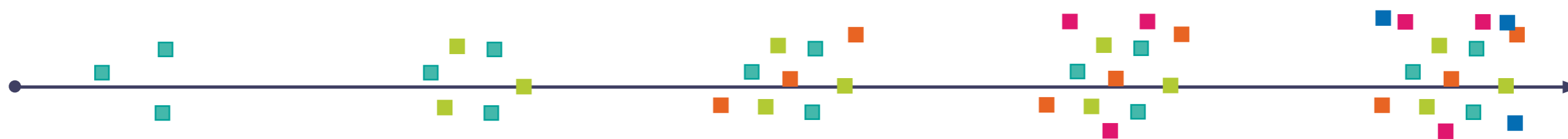
Starting with what we know leads to a gradual collection of disparate information, with the risk that you have missed something important
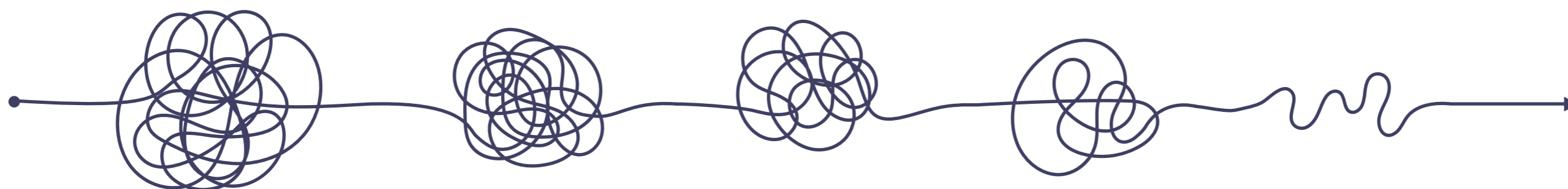
Untangling the bigger picture ultimately leads to greater clarity

Top Down, Not Bottom Up

If we are to untangle the 'big picture', we must take a top down approach rather than bottom up.

When engaging with stakeholders you will hear all sorts of opinions, requirements and demands, from the vague to the very detailed, from positive to negative. These are your 'people based' requirements. It is virtually impossible to satisfy all of these demands, and they may not address many of the issues that are important to your project at a national, regional and local level.

However, they are very important to allow for the development of a detailed design and to ensure knowledgeable stakeholders have been listened to.

'Context based' factors are the overarching influences on your project. They are the place based, economic, political, time and sector or service based factors that will shape the direction of travel as well as presenting opportunities and constraints. They may be essential to funding or meeting energy targets, for example.

If you take a bottom up approach, your people influences and context influences are likely to crash in the middle, leaving you with a host of conflicting information that is difficult to prioritise. The key to managing these more specific people factors is to establish your strategic outcomes first, then address user requirements through the filter of these outcomes.

This approach allows you to contain, direct and control the influx of information. Having done your due diligence to develop a set of strategic objectives, you can feel confident that you are directing these activities in a manner that is appropriate to the context of the project and place rather than a scattergun approach, or allowing your project to be overly influenced by one or two stakeholders.
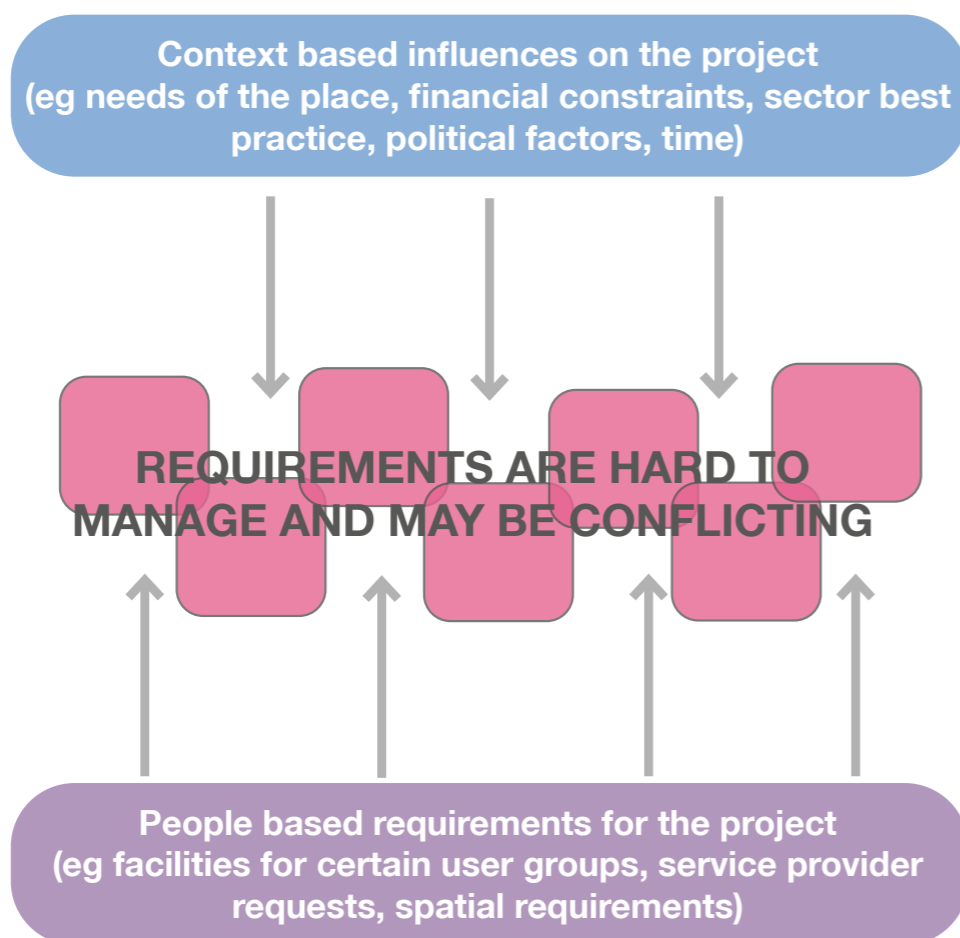
A bottom up approach leads to conflicting demands which are hard to manage
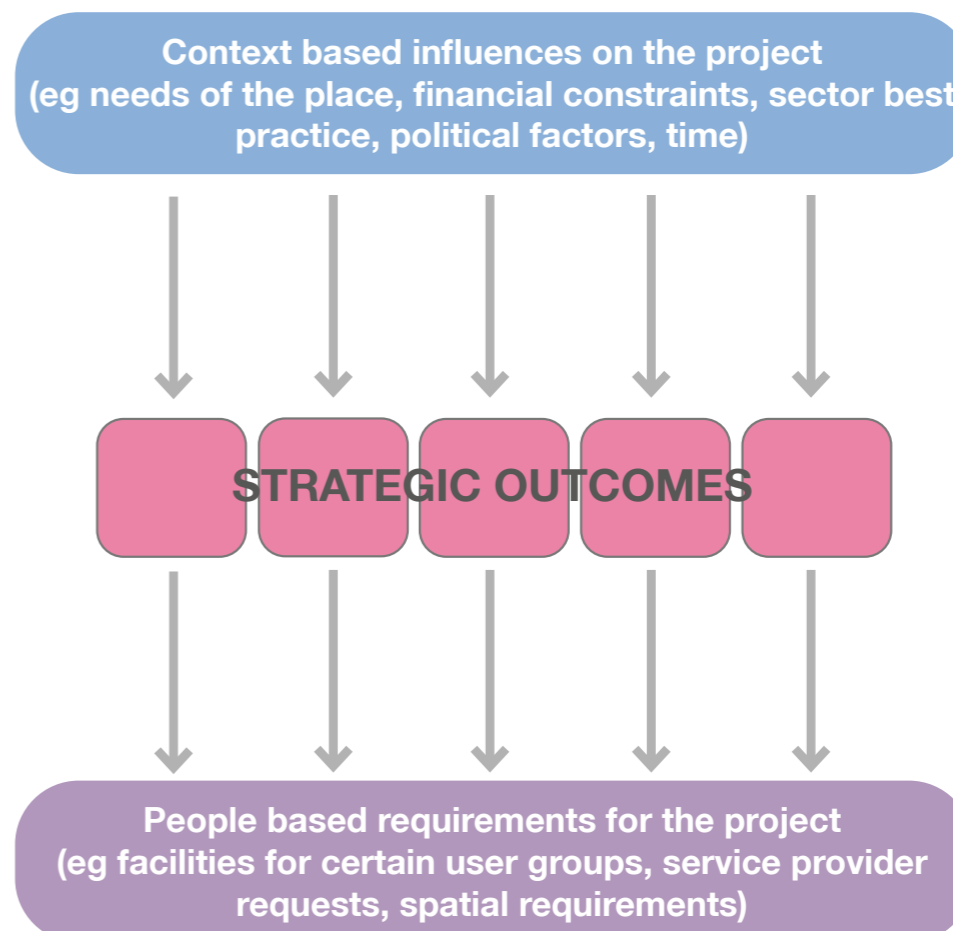
Instead, identify your objectives then capture the detail in the context of those objectives

Managing Information Flows

Information exists in many formats in the early stages of a project – from formal requirements through to ad hoc requests and comments from those who will use the building.

Managing this information is key to successful brief development, but it can feel like a formidable task. There may be a temptation to move too quickly from initial brief to detailed spatial requirements, without stopping to consider aspirations for how the spaces could best be used.

The structure of this framework encourages you to start broad, and cascade learnings from each step down to the next. You take the key information forward until you can distil it into a set of strategic outcomes for the project.

Only then should you broaden back out to explore the detailed requirements of various users, at each step learning more detail about their needs at a service, departmental and individual level – always in the light of the project's strategic outcomes.

Working with the SIMP
The project will have specific information requirements, which for the project delivery phase can be set out within the Standard Information Management Plan (SIMP) – click here to view. In the early phases of the programme you should have a high level understanding of what your information requirements will be. This framework will generate data directly linked to the feedback and analysis, so work with the Client Project Information Manager to ensure the two are aligned.

The SIMP will contain questions called Project Information Requirements (PIRs), and it will be necessary to establish a PIR related to this framework: for example, have the SMART objectives been addressed? Exchange Information Requirements (EIRs) lay out the deliverables required for each area, which will likely be the final post occupancy evaluation and Stage Reports to demonstrate that the plan has been reviewed regularly.

Gathering the information you need for the SIMP can seem rather daunting, and the terminology may seem technical.

But the principles are exactly the same – following the framework should help you get a good start on the SIMP process. Aim to:
- Start thinking about this **as early as possible**. Ask for advice from your SIMP adviser so you can start to plan and gather information from the start
- **Communicate**! If terminology sounds too technical, say so. A simple visioning session format works well to explore what information already exists in the organisation, who holds it, and what it is used for. This can be a simple way to kick off the project and break down potential communication barriers

- Bring the **right people on board early**, and let the experts do their job. Starting early allows the right people to get on board at the right time, so they can input where their expertise has most relevance

Working with the WLPF
Scottish Futures Trust has developed a Whole Life Performance Framework, which should form part of your resources from the outset. It will help you identify metrics and ensure your SMART objectives are measurable. There is more information about the WLPF in section 6.

Click here to open the framework.
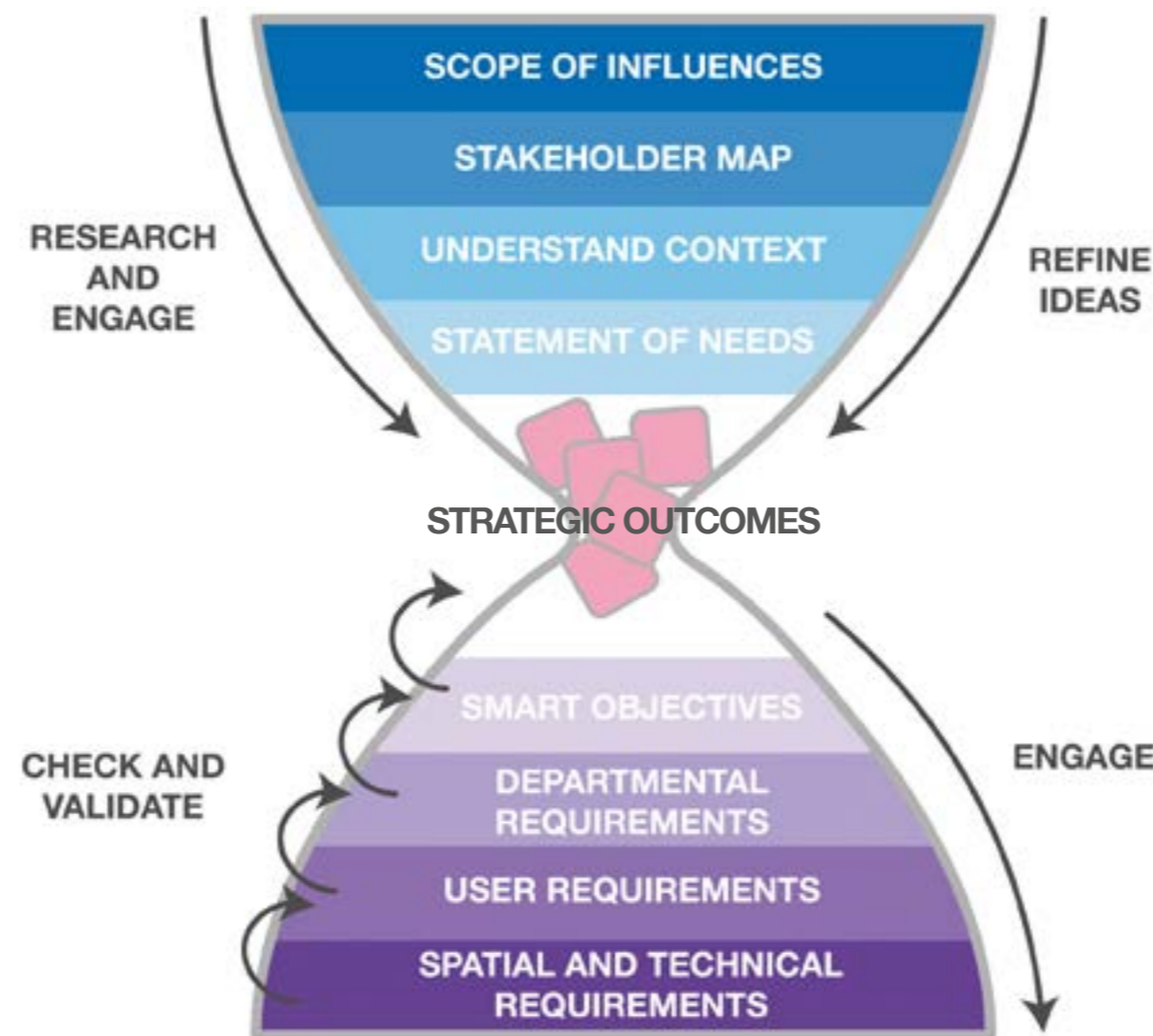
Aligning With Policies and Targets

The various policies, frameworks and guidelines that affect Scotland at a national, regional and local level must be tied into the objectives for the project from the outset. Just like the approach to brief development described here, they can be tackled in a 'cascade' approach whereby broad national initiatives and policies sit over the top of strategies related to specific sectors, regional factors and local issues.

As you progress through this journey you will need to identify your own strategic outcomes, but some can be populated from the outset as you align with requirements such as funding, achieving national and local requirements for education or health, or energy targets.
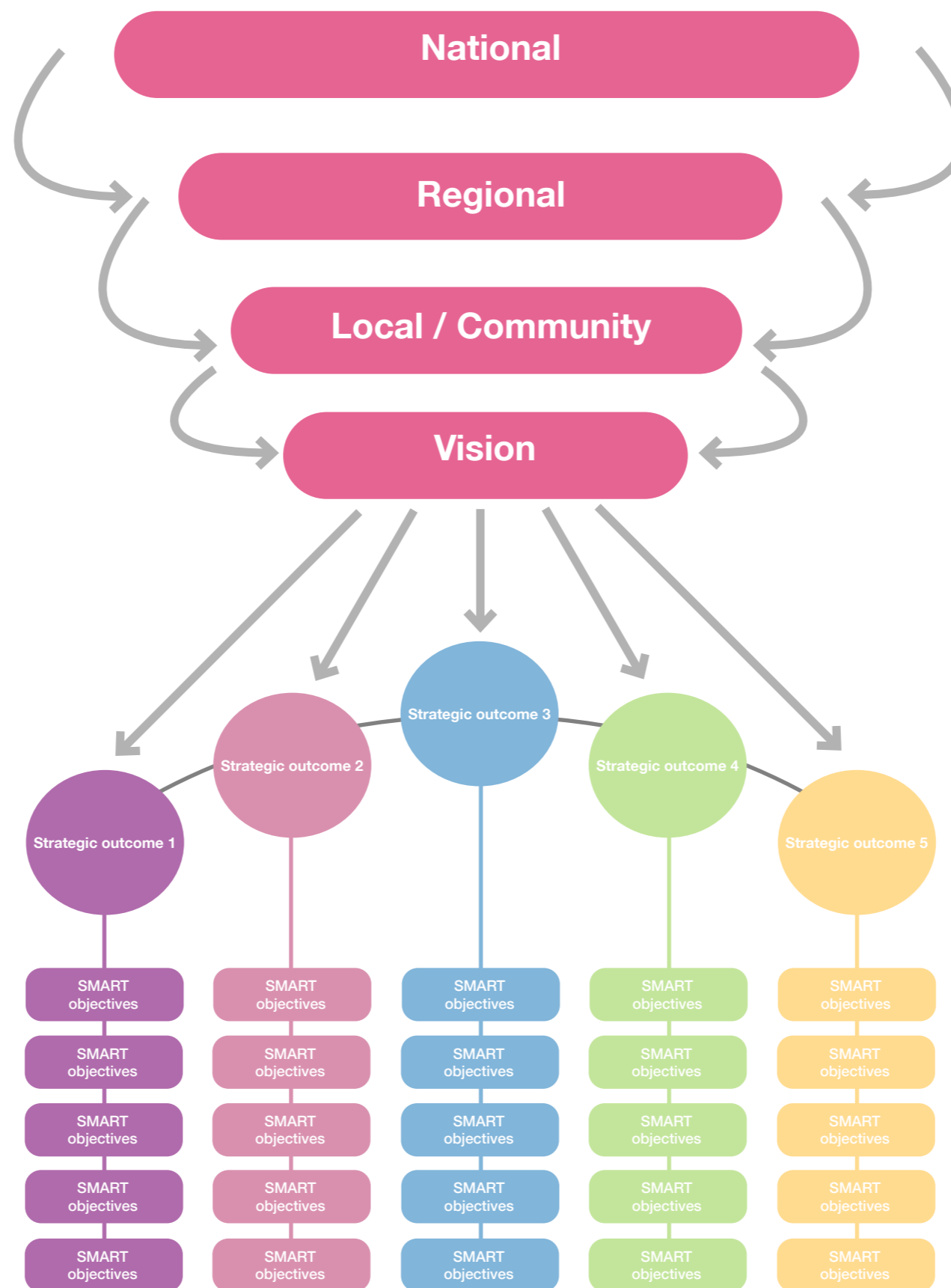
At this step, focus on the high level principles and influences that will affect your project. What are the national policies and frameworks you need to consider? What are the practical implications of plans at the local authority level, or community based objectives that the project can meet?

It may seem that this level of 'big picture' thinking is only necessary for large or complex projects, or those involving multiple partners. But remember, the purpose of this process is to help you methodically narrow down a set of measurable objectives for your project, many of which will fall directly out of, or at least be influenced by, existing policies and guidance.

National

Regional

Local / Community

Vision

Strategic outcome 1

Strategic outcome 2

Strategic outcome 3

Strategic outcome 4

Strategic outcome 5

Certain objectives, such as those addressing Net Zero Carbon or programme requirements, should be pre-populated on your SMART list from the outset.

Identify these objectives now and ensure your stakeholders understand they are already in place. They can, however, be used to trigger wider discussions on other related objectives.

SMART objectives (×5 for each strategic outcome)

Gathering Information

This first step in the process is about understanding the breadth of factors that might have an influence on the project's success, direction, timelines, cost and performance.

The outcomes of RIBA Stage 0 require that the best means of achieving the client requirements are confirmed. This could be a new building, however it could alternatively be the refurbishment of existing buildings, the removal or relocation of some services, or maintaining the status quo. It is therefore essential that the initial scoping does not take as its starting point 'The new building should…' but recognises that another solution could be more appropriate.

Even if you think your scope is already well defined, it is always a good idea to take a step back and think about the bigger picture for the project. Is the rationale well thought through, and justifiable to those who will be affected by it? Can you clearly articulate the benefits and potential drawbacks, and do you know who will be affected? Is the scope in the heads of one or two people, or has it been clearly mapped out for the benefit of the wider project team?

Practical steps to identify the scope

The aim is to identify a wide scope for the project at first, to ensure nothing important is missed, and pinpointing factors that:

- Are non negotiable (including national or regional policies, energy targets, planning considerations, site constraints)
- Could impact the size, nature, cost or timeline of the project
- Will help you understand what functions or services need to be supported, and whether the proposed solution is the right one
- Could prove to be sensitive or require careful handling

- Have the potential to improve the project or the building in use, or provide opportunities in other ways such as collaboration
- Need immediate or in depth attention, or should be kept on the radar for later in the project
- Are unimportant or low risk and therefore are unlikely to need further consideration

PESTEL and SWOT

Two common analysis tools, PESTEL and SWOT, provide a useful framework. They are simple and clear, and have stood the test of time. You might find another approach equally useful, but in any case you should aim to take a broad brush approach to your initial scoping.

Map out the headings and brainstorm everything you can under each one. Talk to colleagues, get peer review and return to your lists on several occasions to add and amend entries.

PESTEL requires you to think about the **P**olitical, **E**nvironmental, **S**ocial, **T**echnological, **E**conomic and **L**egal influences on the project. Some users also add **D**emographic, **E**thical, **I**ntercultural, **I**nfrastructure and **T**ime to this list as appropriate.

SWOT analysis requires you to think about the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats offered by the project. Work through the PESTEL analysis and then look for SWOT categories – some will fall into more than one category.

Example SWOT and PESTEL ideas for a potential school and health service

Strengths	Weaknesses
Long term support in the community for a new facility Addresses national initiatives on community inclusivity and empowerment	Potential site has limited access and parking will be an issue Population trends in the community – likely uptake of services in future?

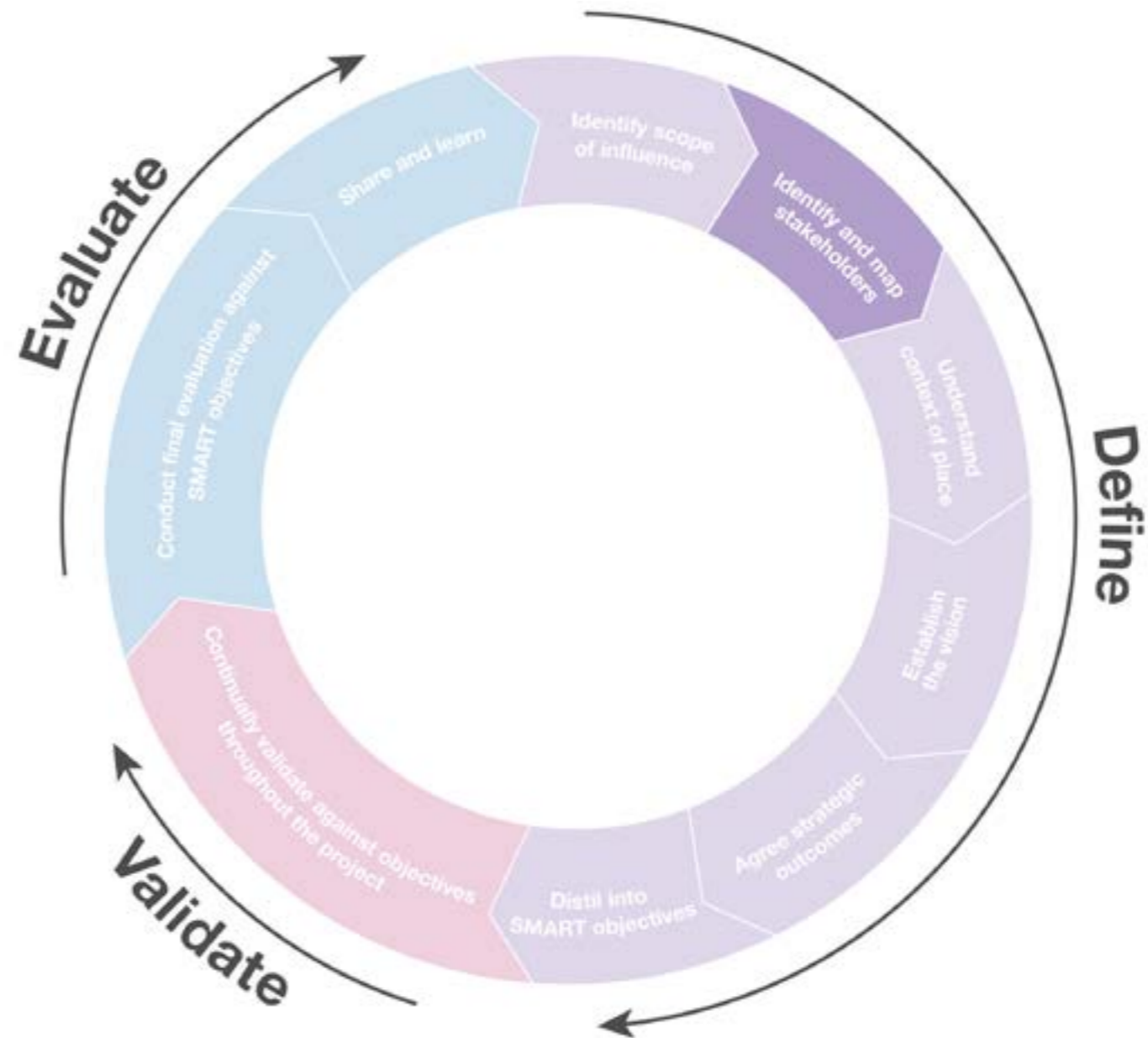| Opportunities	Threats
Integrate health services in the community (currently having to travel elsewhere) Increase employment Improve education	Several service providers will need to collaborate – needs careful stakeholder management Possible reticence from the community around space and congestion

Political	Environment	Social	Technology	Economic	Legal	Time	Demographic
National and regional frameworks (eg performance, carbon, sustainability, education, health, digital, community and place) Need to manage input from council and NHS Other services to consider – social care, sports, library?	Must meet government standards – energy and carbon performance Environmental aspirations of the school? Travel and transport – how many pupils rely on public transport? How can healthier lifestyles be encouraged?	What social value benefits will the community want? Improving health and wellbeing in the community Which services could be brought into the community?	Future proofing the school's technology Clinical requirements? Opportunities for sponsorship / IT excellence	Funding requirements and opportunities? Capital versus operational expenditure Combining services could reduce footprint of required sites (shared spaces?)	Statutory stakeholders need to be consulted early Land adjoining site is privately owned – impact on parking	Current pupils to be consulted will not be the ones who use the new school Decant strategy Disruption during academic year	No recent increase in number of school age children Growing elderly population – drive to provide local healthcare

2

Identify and Map Stakeholders

Identify Your Stakeholders

Stakeholders encompass everyone who could contribute to, benefit from or be affected by the project. Stakeholders need to be consulted and informed early in the project and at various times throughout, depending on their level of interest, involvement and influence. One of the first steps is to compile a list of all potential stakeholders, before categorising them by role. This will form the basis of your approach to engagement and validation.
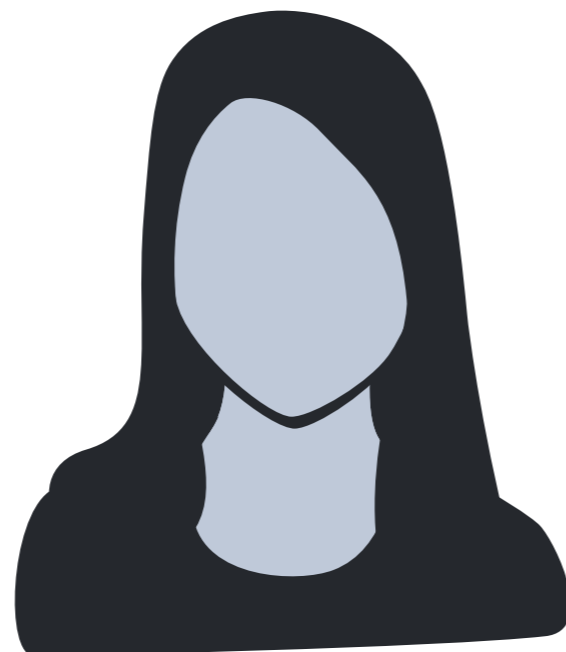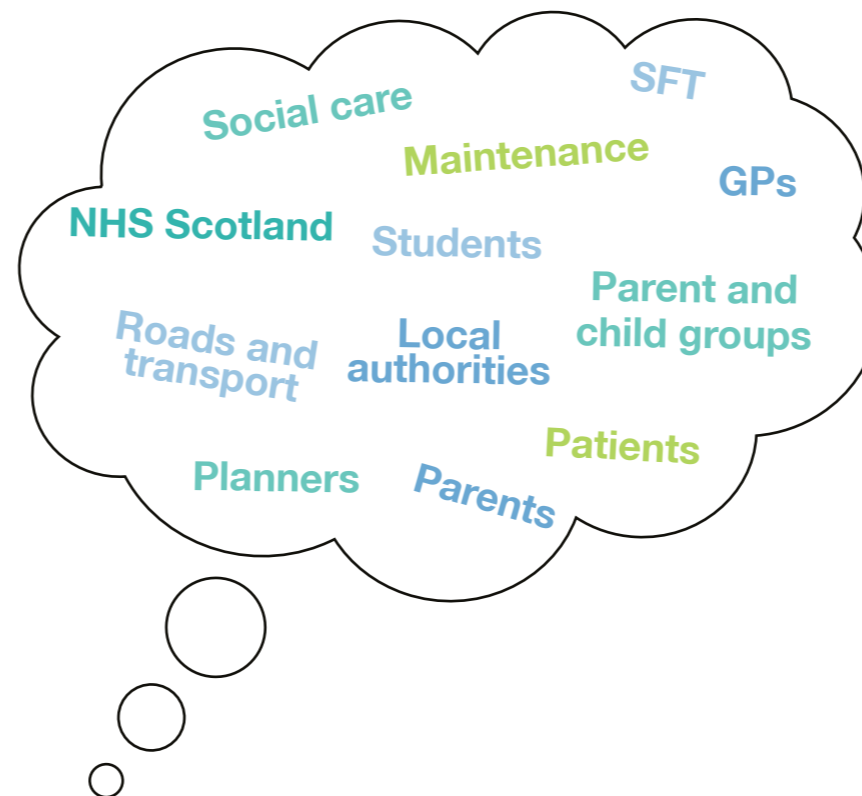
Start broad, refine later

"We missed opportunities to deliver benefits to the community. We should have spoken to the wider community and third sector organisations who provide services to the NHS, services like befriending and daycare. There may have been better ways to provide the services if we had included them in the discussions."

It is crucial that your first pass at compiling a stakeholder list considers **all** potential groups and individuals who could influence or be affected by the project. Your statement of needs has not yet been defined, so the parameters of the project have not yet been determined. At this point, no group or individual should be off limits.

Start by brainstorming as many stakeholders as possible, and compile a working list based on your research of the place context. Think broad and deep, including:

- People who have direct control and influence over the project
- People who can contribute to the project and / or provide specialist advice
- People who might use the facilities
- People who might deliver services or conduct activities in the facilities
- People who might benefit from the facilities
- People who might be adversely affected by the project, during construction or in use

SFT
Social care
Maintenance
GPs
NHS Scotland
Students
Parent and child groups
Roads and transport
Local authorities
Patients
Planners
Parents

Be specific when referring to groups

Whilst it is important to think broadly overall at this point, you should be specific in your references to individual groups. For example, a heading of 'Community' could encompass a wide variety of people such as:

- Religious and cultural groups
- Vulnerable groups such as refuges
- Parent and baby groups, care for the elderly
- Farming community
- Local charities
- Sports teams and clubs
- Business groups

You will at some point need to decide who should be contacted and how to reach out to them. It is helpful at this point to recognise the breadth of stakeholder types that need to be considered.

Use your network to build your list

Do not attempt to work through this exercise in isolation. Work with colleagues and ask those already on your list to review it. Who else can they identify?

Create a Stakeholder Map – Groups and Profiles

A robust stakeholder map helps ensure you involve the right people at the right time, and that no stakeholder group is missed. Some will be involved heavily at the outset, some will come to the fore later, and some will be a constant presence. Some stakeholders will have significant input whilst others simply want to be kept informed. Profiling these groups will help you anticipate their level of involvement, creating order and structure around the engagement activities.

There are several benefits to creating a stakeholder map. The map will help you:
- Keep stakeholders informed with the right level of information at the right times **(What?)**
- Understand the best times to involve them in the engagement **(When?)**
- Plan suitable methodologies for engagement **(How?)**

Profile your stakeholders

For each of the groups on your list, work through a profiling exercise which will help you prepare a robust map. List everything you know about each group against suitable categories.

There is no single right way to profile stakeholders, and you may choose to add more categories to your profile. But you should at least include headings that address the three points listed above. This means thinking about:

What?

The type of information you need to get from, and share with, your stakeholders will depend on their level of **influence** on the project. What power for decision making, rejection or approval does this group or individual have? How well informed are they?

What is their likely **interest** in the project? (Does the project affect them directly? In what way? Are they likely to provide positive or negative input? Are they likely to engage at all?)

When?

Do these stakeholders have important knowledge to feed into the project at an early stage? Do they need regular or occasional engagement?

Is this group well connected? Are they geographically close to the community and other stakeholders, or remote? Are they likely to be supporters or opponents?
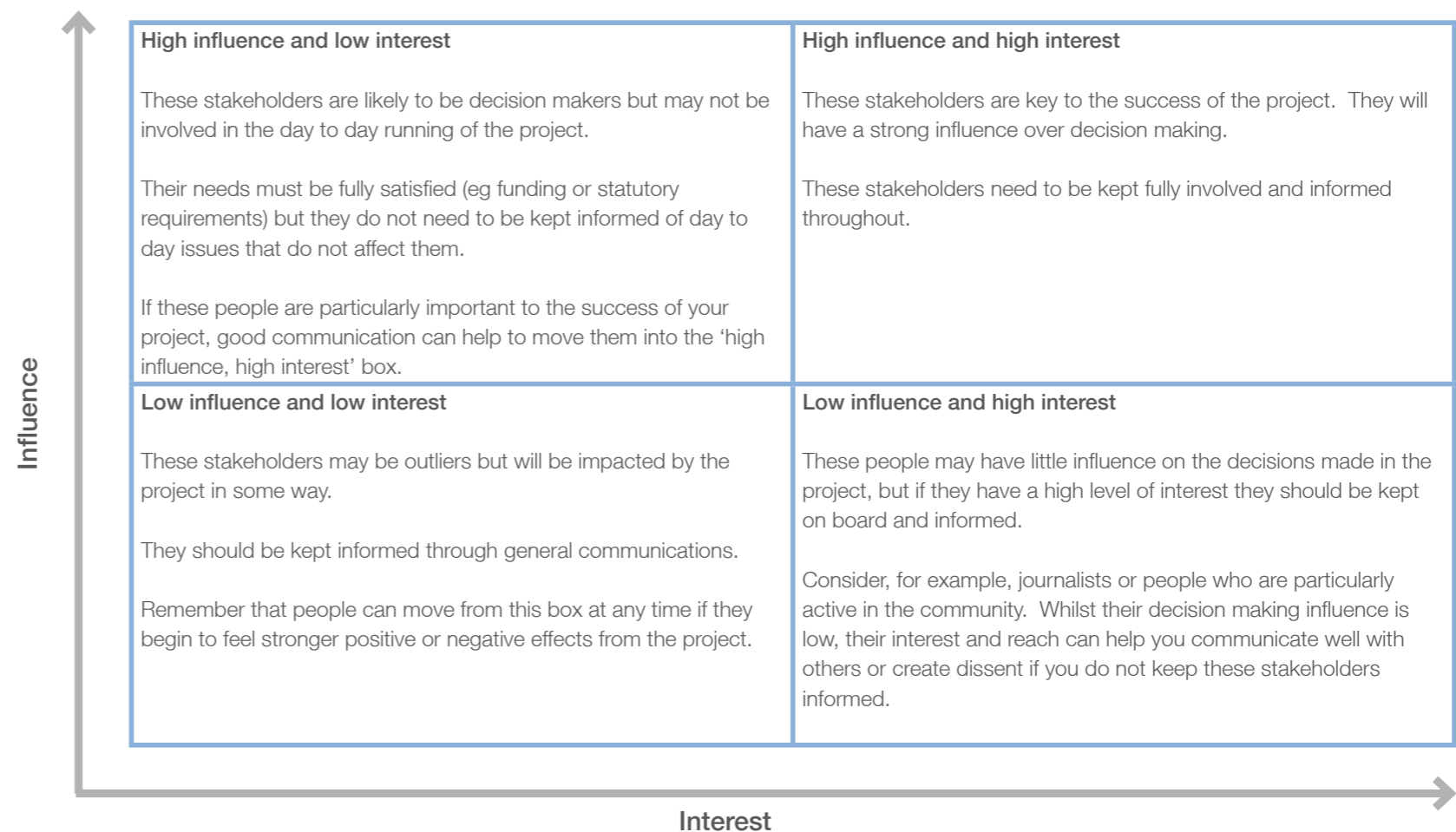
How?

What type of engagement will be most suitable for this group? Do they need to be engaged in face to face, complex discussions or simply provided with a summary document?

Will they be hard to reach? Are they very busy? Would they be likely to use an online platform or be put off by technology?
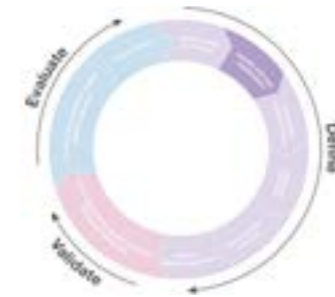
Do they need to participate in strategic discussions? Drop in sessions? Focus groups? Or just a need to be kept informed?

Remember to think about inclusivity, people with protected characteristics, and whether your engagement needs to be representative of the community demographics.

Influence versus interest map for engagement planning

Influence →	**High influence and low interest**	**High influence and high interest**
	These stakeholders are likely to be decision makers but may not be involved in the day to day running of the project.	These stakeholders are key to the success of the project. They will have a strong influence over decision making.
	Their needs must be fully satisfied (eg funding or statutory requirements) but they do not need to be kept informed of day to day issues that do not affect them.	These stakeholders need to be kept fully involved and informed throughout.
	If these people are particularly important to the success of your project, good communication can help to move them into the 'high influence, high interest' box.	
	Low influence and low interest	**Low influence and high interest**
	These stakeholders may be outliers but will be impacted by the project in some way.	These people may have little influence on the decisions made in the project, but if they have a high level of interest they should be kept on board and informed.
	They should be kept informed through general communications.	Consider, for example, journalists or people who are particularly active in the community. Whilst their decision making influence is low, their interest and reach can help you communicate well with others or create dissent if you do not keep these stakeholders informed.
	Remember that people can move from this box at any time if they begin to feel stronger positive or negative effects from the project.	

Interest →

Create a Stakeholder Map – Engagement Groups

Categorise stakeholders

The next step is to categorise your list into groups. For an integrated facility, school or healthcare facility, the following groups may be suitable:
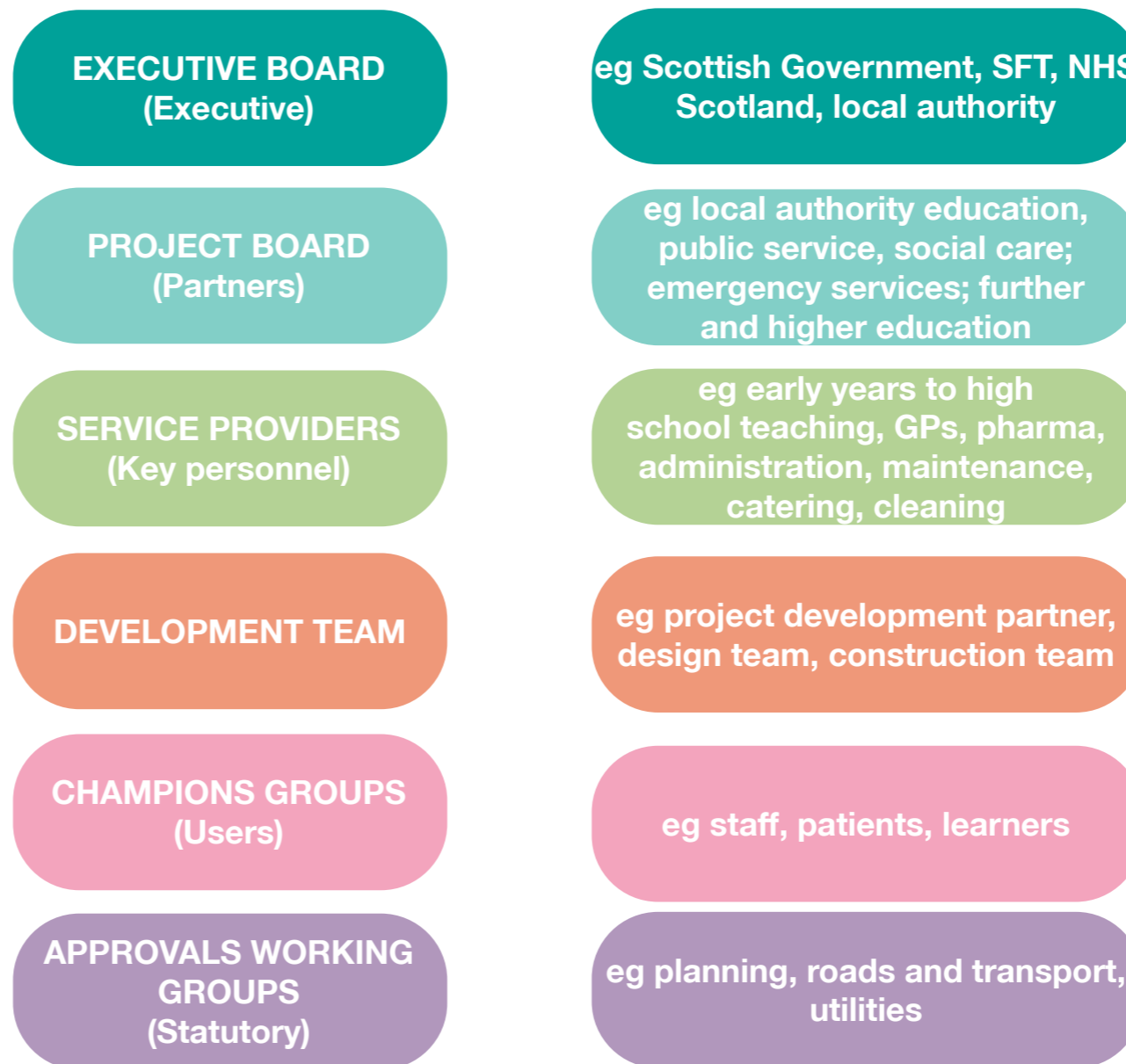
- High level decision makers who can drive change at a policy level
- Partners who might help to develop the vision
- Service providers already operating in the community
- Potential users of the facility, including staff and visitors
- Wider community who might be affected
- Statutory authorities

The list should not be static, but should be considered as a starting point for your consultation plan. Some stakeholders will fit into more than one group – include them in consultations at the highest appropriate level.

"It needs to be remembered that GPs are incredibly powerful stakeholders. It's their business. We also need GPs to help us engage with the community and service users, so they need to be involved at the outset alongside the rest of the important stakeholders. We're currently completing a brief on a project and have involved GPs from the outset, as part of the governance structure."

Example categories

The following stakeholder categories were used on an integrated facility project combining education, health and social care. Your categories may be more or less complex, but aim to create groups that help you plan out the engagement and governance structure.

EXECUTIVE BOARD (Executive)	eg Scottish Government, SFT, NHS Scotland, local authority
PROJECT BOARD (Partners)	eg local authority education, public service, social care; emergency services; further and higher education
SERVICE PROVIDERS (Key personnel)	eg early years to high school teaching, GPs, pharma, administration, maintenance, catering, cleaning
DEVELOPMENT TEAM	eg project development partner, design team, construction team
CHAMPIONS GROUPS (Users)	eg staff, patients, learners
APPROVALS WORKING GROUPS (Statutory)	eg planning, roads and transport, utilities

Plan Your Approach

Once you have identified the scope of influences affecting your project, you need a combined approach of research and stakeholder engagement to help you establish a collective vision for the project. The method for this is covered in the next section, and will only involve some of your stakeholders at this point. Start by identifying the roles and outputs for each stakeholder group by applying your mapping exercise.
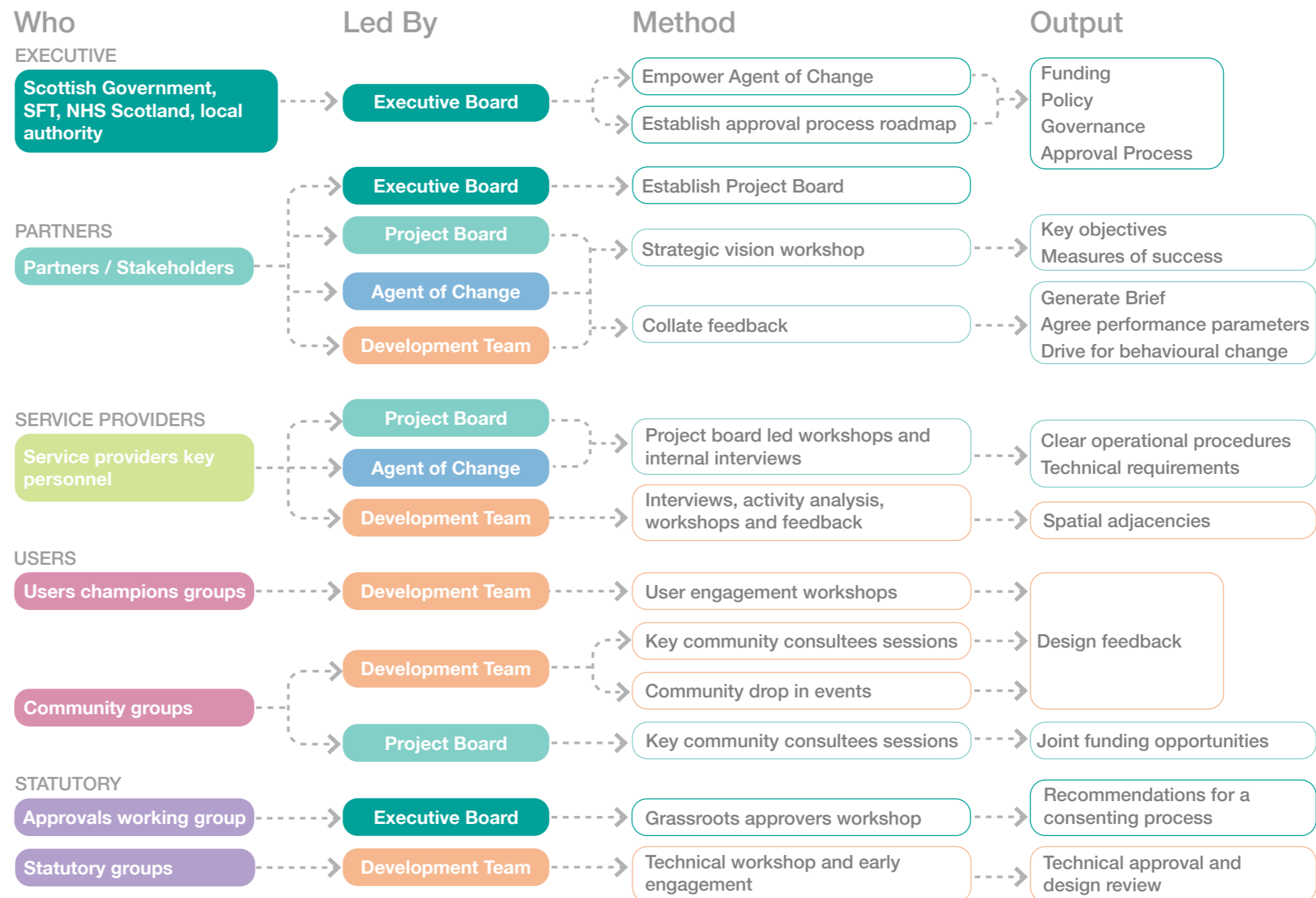
Engagement planning

Some of your engagement needs to happen now, to feed into the statement of needs and help you understand the vision and strategic outcomes for the project. Key stakeholders will help you narrow the scope of the vision into a manageable set of goals that can be refined and detailed later.

Look at your stakeholder map, which should now contain distinct groups who will have varying degrees of influence and involvement with the project. Each one will input differently to the consultation, some at an early point and some later. Several will have input throughout.

The graphic on the right is an example engagement map for a project combining stakeholders from both education and healthcare.

It combines the stakeholder groups with their likely input to the project, mapping out how each group should be engaged with.

You can see that some groups will need to be brought in at the early steps as well as later – community groups, for example, will be invaluable to help identify opportunities for joint funding as you assess the needs of the place and the scope of the project, and which services are to be included. They should also be involved later to feed into the design as it develops.
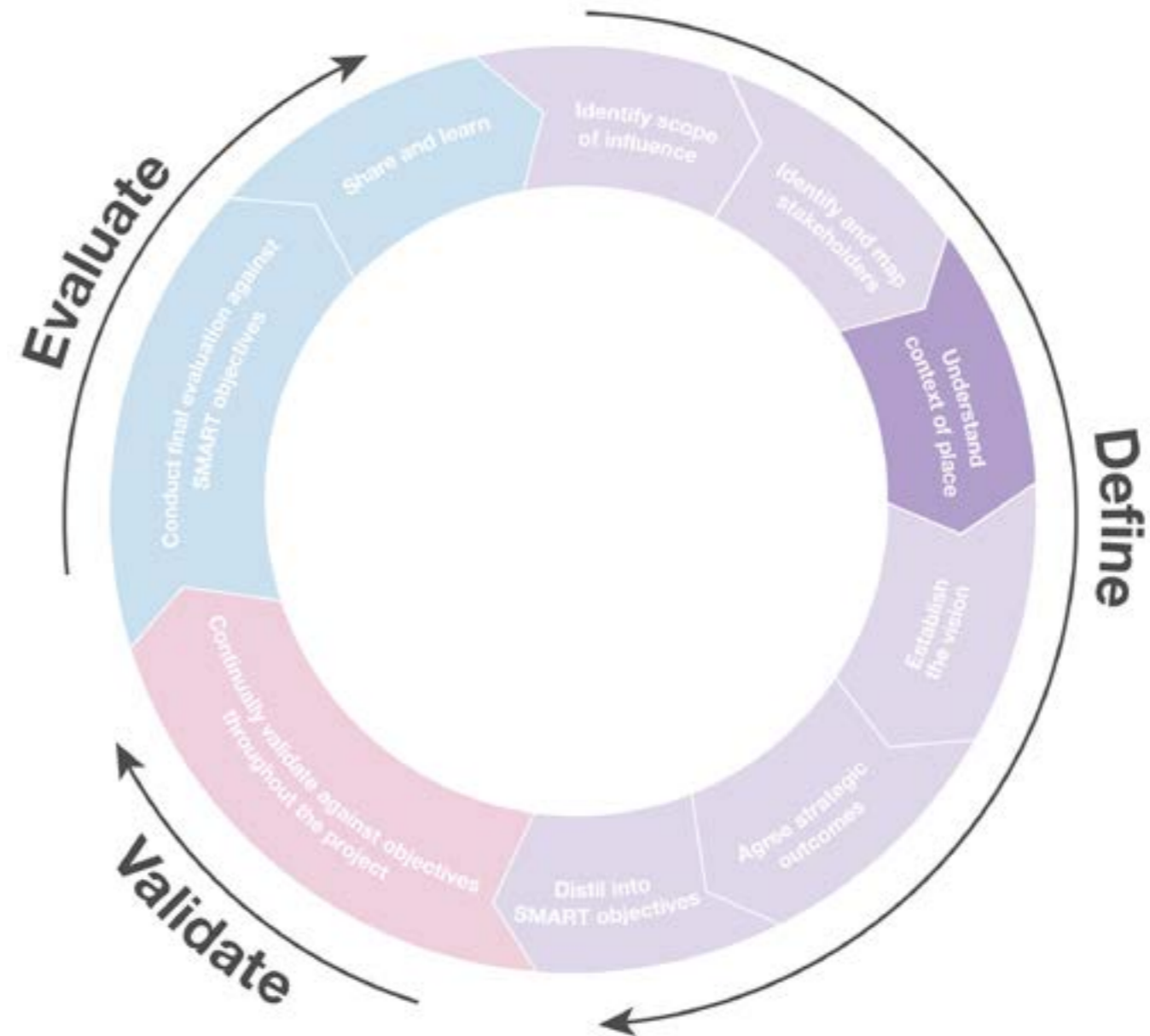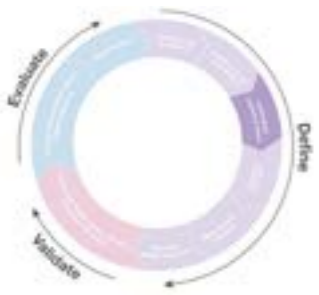
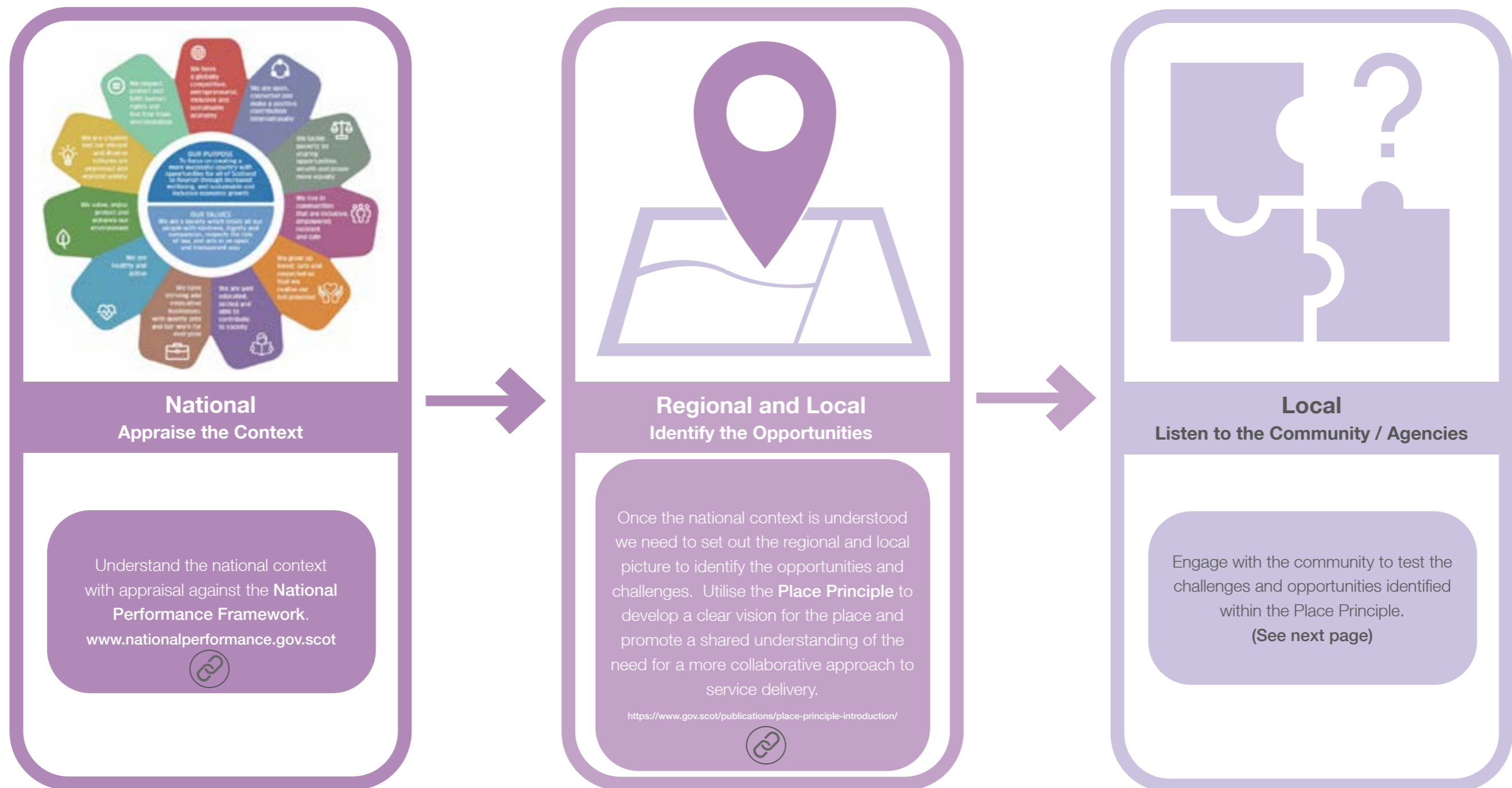| Who	Led By	Method	Output
EXECUTIVE			
Scottish Government, SFT, NHS Scotland, local authority	Executive Board	Empower Agent of Change	Funding
		Establish approval process roadmap	Policy
			Governance
			Approval Process
	Executive Board	Establish Project Board	
PARTNERS			
Partners / Stakeholders	Project Board	Strategic vision workshop	Key objectives
	Agent of Change		Measures of success
	Development Team	Collate feedback	Generate Brief
			Agree performance parameters
			Drive for behavioural change
SERVICE PROVIDERS			
Service providers key personnel	Project Board	Project board led workshops and internal interviews	Clear operational procedures
	Agent of Change		Technical requirements
	Development Team	Interviews, activity analysis, workshops and feedback	Spatial adjacencies
USERS			
Users champions groups	Development Team	User engagement workshops	
Community groups	Development Team	Key community consultees sessions	Design feedback
		Community drop in events	
	Project Board	Key community consultees sessions	Joint funding opportunities
STATUTORY			
Approvals working group	Executive Board	Grassroots approvers workshop	Recommendations for a consenting process
Statutory groups	Development Team	Technical workshop and early engagement	Technical approval and design review

3

Understand the Context of Place

Understand the Needs of the Place

This is the point at which you need to analyse your gathered resources and filter them into broad themes. Appraise the context based on the National Performance Framework, which will help you ensure you have worked through the broad issues affecting the project. The themes of the Place Principle will help you focus on the place itself, which will have unique features, challenges and opportunities to take into account. Consultation with communities and / or key stakeholder groups such as service providers will help you test and develop the Place Principle themes.

National
Appraise the Context

Understand the national context with appraisal against the **National Performance Framework**.

www.nationalperformance.gov.scot

Regional and Local
Identify the Opportunities

Once the national context is understood we need to set out the regional and local picture to identify the opportunities and challenges. Utilise the **Place Principle** to develop a clear vision for the place and promote a shared understanding of the need for a more collaborative approach to service delivery.

https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/

Local
Listen to the Community / Agencies

Engage with the community to test the challenges and opportunities identified within the Place Principle.
(See next page)

Place Principle – Early Stage Engagement

"We need to remember that all projects are different. We need to check everyone's understanding of the problem we're trying to solve."

Purpose of early engagement

As the project progresses you wll engage with a wide variety of stakeholders to develop the vision and outcomes. However, at the earliest stages when you are thinking about place, you may need to work with local partners who can help you understand the service landscape and how public services could be better delivered, the challenges associated with demographics, geography, workforce and skills, or any other unique features of the place. At this stage, it is not about consulting on the development of the project itself, but about ensuring you get to the heart of the community, how the project can benefit it, and what challenges you might be able to help overcome.

Establish a plan for engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a resource heavy task that needs to be carefully planned and executed. You may need extra resource and / or an independent consultant to help you. Remember that at this early stage, you may be concentrating more on identifying interested parties and making connections to help you as the project develops. But the principles of good engagement will apply throughout, and following them now will help keep these important stakeholders enthused and willing to support the project. If you are inviting people to contribute, you will need to:

- Plan activities and prepare materials so that you can clearly communicate what the session is for, what stage the project has reached, and how people's input will be used (and when they might expect to be able to contribute again)

- Host and moderate the sessions – remaining objective and open
- Analyse the results, which are likely to be qualitative
- Share feedback to keep your stakeholders interested and enthused, and to demonstrate that you have heard what they have to say

What are we trying to achieve?

Think carefully about the scope of each session and how it fits into the overall plan for engagement. At each session, are you trying to reach a consensus (if so, are your attendees representative of the appropriate groups)? Are you trying to find an answer to a question (if so, have you firmly outlined the parameters and prepared clear, easy to understand feedback forms)? Are you seeking suggestions for improvements to existing plans or service delivery (if so, have you planned a suitable method to capture that feedback)?

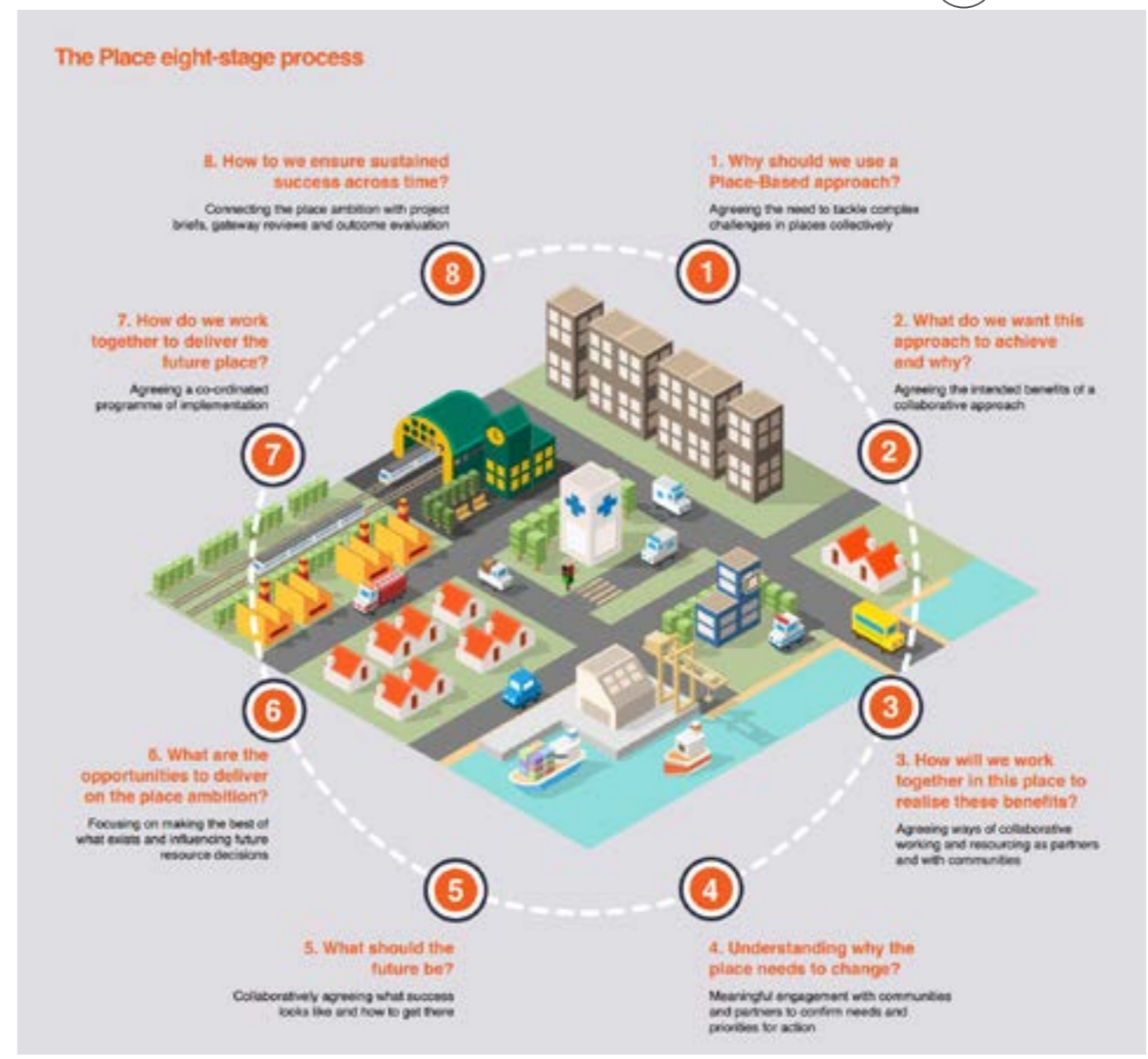## Do you need subject experts?

It can be very helpful to bring in subject experts who can provide targeted information to attendees and explain any terminology or processes that could be confusing. For example, the general public may not fully understand how certain healthcare services are delivered – nursing staff can provide a bridge between the technical needs of the project team and the information provided to members of the public.

The Place Guide

SFT has produced a comprehensive guide to a place-based approach, which is invaluable for teams working on any kind of public service project. Healthcare facilities, schools, community campuses... all should be planned to enhance local outcomes and deliver on national policy.

A place-based approach allows you to make informed, targeted investment decisions that respond to the unique needs of a place, and forms part of the wider thinking required to situate your project in context before you narrow the focus towards your particular project and stakeholder groups.
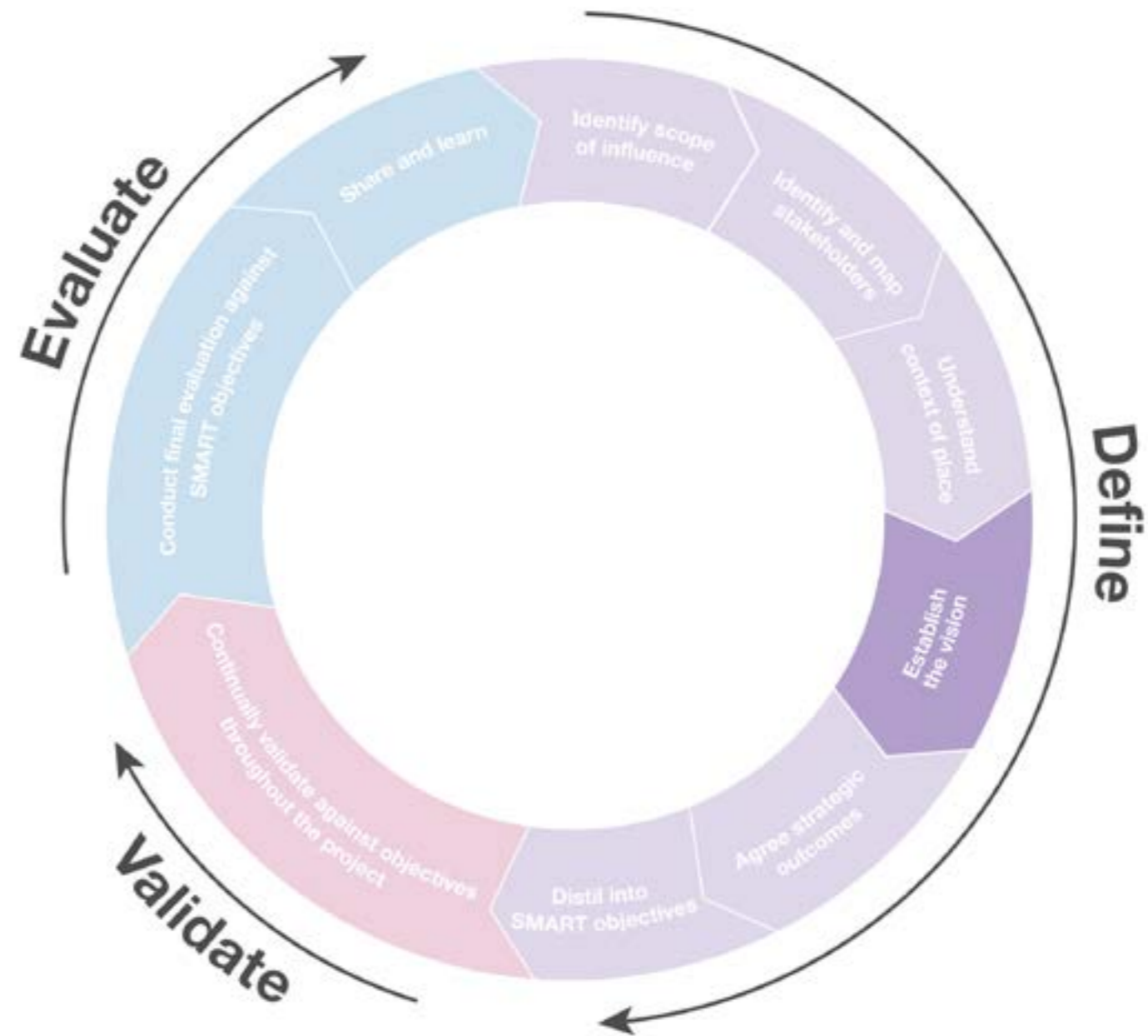
Access the Place Guide here.

The Place eight-stage process

8. How to we ensure sustained success across time?
Connecting the place ambition with project briefs, gateway reviews and outcome evaluation

1. Why should we use a Place-Based approach?
Agreeing the need to tackle complex challenges in places collectively

2. What do we want this approach to achieve and why?
Agreeing the intended benefits of a collaborative approach

7. How do we work together to deliver the future place?
Agreeing a co-ordinated programme of implementation

3. How will we work together in this place to realise these benefits?
Agreeing ways of collaborative working and resourcing as partners and with communities

6. What are the opportunities to deliver on the place ambition?
Focusing on making the best of what exists and influencing future resource decisions

5. What should the future be?
Collaboratively agreeing what success looks like and how to get there

4. Understanding why the place needs to change?
Meaningful engagement with communities and partners to confirm needs and priorities for action

4

Establish the Vision

Develop and Articulate Your Vision

What is the vision?

This is the first step in getting your stakeholders to think carefully about what the project should be, and could be. It is a short statement that sits over the top of your more detailed outcomes and SMART objectives. It should be sufficiently aspirational to bring everyone on board, get them interested in what you are doing, and succinctly describe what the project is all about.

> Think of it like the classic business elevator pitch:
> if you had to describe the success of the project to a stranger in one minute, what would you tell them?

How do we develop a vision?

The vision is developed through the ideas and ambitions of your core project stakeholders, who have an understanding of the potential scope and will be invested in providing services from the place. Their ideas should be informed by the background work already conducted, to understand the needs to the place and set the project in a national, regional and local context.

Each of these stakeholders need to thing about what they want to get out of the project. What are the benefits to be realised and the challenges to be overcome? Are they anticipating changes in the way their service is provided? How could this be supported by the building or space?

If there are multiple service providers (such as in an integrated health and education facility), their visions might be very different.

It can help to have key representatives from each stakeholder group attend the visioning workshop to kick start the process. They can share and discuss their vision and aspirations, which will help to identify areas of agreement and potential conflict.

It is important to acknowledge that not all projects have the luxury of a 'blank slate' approach. Not all project teams will be able to fully clear the decks and start from scratch, as there may already be a clear directive to take a particular approach by the time this engagement activity takes place. Nevertheless, the activity is a useful exercise in itself – it encourages the project team to carefully consider the broader context in which the project is situated, and to challenge assumptions that could potentially be addressed in a better way. This is a crucial step in brief development.

> !
>
> Practically speaking, the visioning workshop is often most convenient and productive when combined with development of your strategic outcomes. We have therefore provided guidance for running the visioning workshop in chapter 5, allowing you to understand how these two steps feed into each other.
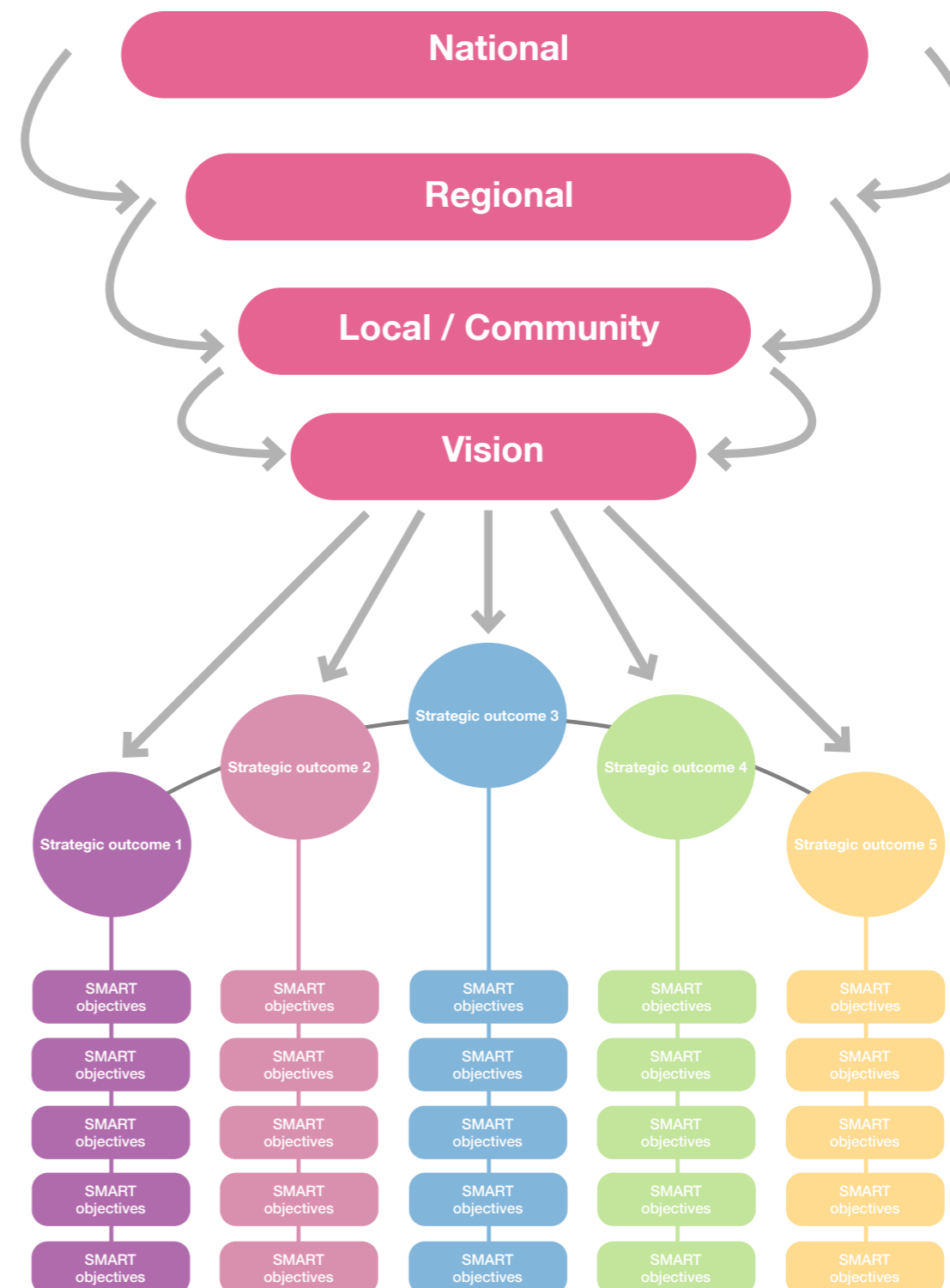
Establish a Statement of Needs

The statement of needs is a standard document for many projects – always make sure you follow the requirements for your sector or governance bodies. Having worked through the process of establishing a vision, the statement of needs should be a natural development that reflects the requirements of the place and project.

Whether or not you are following a specific structure, a good statements of needs is underpinned by research and evidence. It is therefore an important element of the briefing process and should be incorporated into your wider activities. It will help to focus the rest of your brief development through a clear statement of the problem and the likely solution, in the context of your vision.

What is a statement of needs?

In its simplest form, the statement outlines the proposed project as a response to an identified need. It should be contextual, supported by factual, timely and place-specific evidence that demonstrates why a particular solution is needed. Your research may have revealed that a new building to replace one facility, such as a school, is the best option, or that existing assets could be refurbished, or that several services need to be brought together on a new site, or there is not currently sufficient need to make any changes.

In developing the background to your vision, your initial activities should have been focused on getting a solid understanding of the place, political, social, financial and other influences that affect the proposed project.

They should by now be sufficiently robust to explain and support:

- The problem that needs a solution – what are we trying to change or improve?
- The locality or localities that are affected by the problem – and the potential solution (remember that a proposed solution could benefit an even wider set of stakeholders, for example by supporting services elsewhere)
- The timeliness of the solution – why now? What is the potential effect of delaying?
- Who is best placed to address this issue – who needs to be involved?

Do…

Make the statement location specific – why this particular facility, service or community? Gather as much local evidence as you can.

Include national evidence as well, but make it relevant. You should take into account national initiatives and strategies as a matter of course, but remember that they apply everywhere – what specific impact do they have on your project?

Ensure your data is up to date and timely. Do not rely on old or generic surveys. If at all possible, gather evidence that shows change over time – how has the community, its services or the performance of its facilities changed in recent years?

Don't…

Rely on circular arguments. "We need X because we don't have X" does not explain why having X is necessary or important.

Rely on emotive arguments. "Children are suffering because we don't have X" is unquantifiable and therefore not evidence based. Can you demonstrate that grades are falling? That engagement with certain community services is declining? Is there evidence to show that staff satisfaction or retention is falling due to working conditions?

Use statistics without context – they are meaningless. For example, patient waiting times of X days tells us nothing – we need a national or other local figure for comparison to understand if they are especially high or low.

Agree Strategic Outcomes

5

Identify Strategic Outcomes

Strategic outcomes are the roadmap that guides the project to fruition and beyond. They are the core issues, goals, and criteria that are most important to the project, the ones it cannot function without, the ones that describe – in a few short sentences – what you want to achieve.

There will of course be significant detail that sits below these strategic outcomes. You will later break them down into specific and measurable SMART objectives against which you can begin to focus on more detailed design, delivery and evaluation. But for now, think of your strategic objectives as an umbrella that spans everything else and acts as a constant reminder of what you are trying to achieve.

Your strategic outcomes should be relatively short and each focus on a particular aspect of the project's context – for example, your environmental or sustainability aspirations, improved service delivery, how you want users to feel when they use the building, the image, brand or values you want to embody, or the community returns you hope to gain.

Aim to create around five to eight strategic outcomes, and in most cases you should have no more than 10. Too few outcomes will limit your horizons as the project progresses, but too many will become unwieldy and you may limit your ability to achieve them all.

1 – Articulate the vision for the project

As outlined in Step 4, every key stakeholder group should have the chance to express their vision for the project. In this section we have combined the vision and outcomes engagement into one workshop, as in reality they often work well to be explored at the same time – and of course this will be more convenient for your stakeholders.

2 – Identify key themes

A list of key contextual factors should be drawn out of the research you have conducted to understand the scope of the project. Think about the aspects of the place, its assets, the needs of each party, the identity or 'brand' of the service providers, the national strategies that need to be tied into the project, and so on. Break these into manageable chunks, by topic, and identify the ones that are most important to the success of the project.

Use these themes to help you manage the visioning process. The aim of this exercise is to funnel your research and engagement (so far) into a more manageable set of important issues.

For example, contextual factors might include:
- The school is not perceived to adequately support extra curricular activities such as sport and music
- Local transport links do not allow people to easily reach healthcare provision, resulting in higher than average levels of non-attendance at appointments
- The school community wishes to lessen its carbon footprint but the building is not fit to meet national targets

When you discuss key themes, ensure you include and explore these key issues. Your stakeholders will rightly focus on the areas of most importance to them, but you may need to inject a dose of reality or encourage them to explore a range of options.

Visioning Session – A Practical Guide

How do we do it?

The vision and strategic outcomes need to be explored, discussed and agreed by all of the parties at the project level, and signed off by the core client team.

How you achieve this is up to you, but the following visioning workshop format is an effective and efficient way to get results.

Visioning workshop
Format

Set up a workshop with all of the key project decision makers in attendance.

The workshop will require a moderator to keep control of the discussion. This should be someone with experience of managing large groups sessions. You should also have a scribe to make notes and one or two people on hand to answer questions and work their way around group activities. If you intend to film or record the session you will need permission from all attendees first.

The room will need a screen and whiteboards or flipcharts. Bring:

- Flipchart or whiteboard pens
- Writing pens
- Writing pads
- Sticky notes / Post-It notes
- Sheets of small coloured stickers (around 1cm diameter)

There should be sufficient space in the room for the attendees to break out into smaller groups, ideally around tables or flipcharts.

Length

The length of the session depends on several factors, and could be anything from a couple of hours up to a day or even longer. The following factors will likely require a longer session:

A large number of stakeholder types. This has more impact than simply the number of attendees – think about whether you will have stakeholders from a range of sectors, such as education, health, social care. They will each have ideas to express, which may be conflicting and require significant time to work through.

A large number of attendees. Factor in time for everyone to arrive, introduce themselves, speak and break into groups.

Clarity of existing research and vision. Does your project already have a fairly well defined vision or is it lacking in direction? Did your context based research result in a wide variety of conflicting factors that made it difficult to pull together the statement of needs? Allow time for significantly more exploration and discussion if you don't feel there is much clarity in the direction of the project at this point.

Setting up

Your attendees should be prepared to think creatively, challenge each other and speak openly and honestly. The invitation to join the session should clearly outline what is expected of them, what the session is for, how long it will last, and an agenda of topics to be covered.

Prepare a presentation detailing the activities completed thus far. For example, include key issues that came out of the initial engagement at the context step, the statement of needs and any aspirations that you already know are important to the stakeholder groups in attendance.
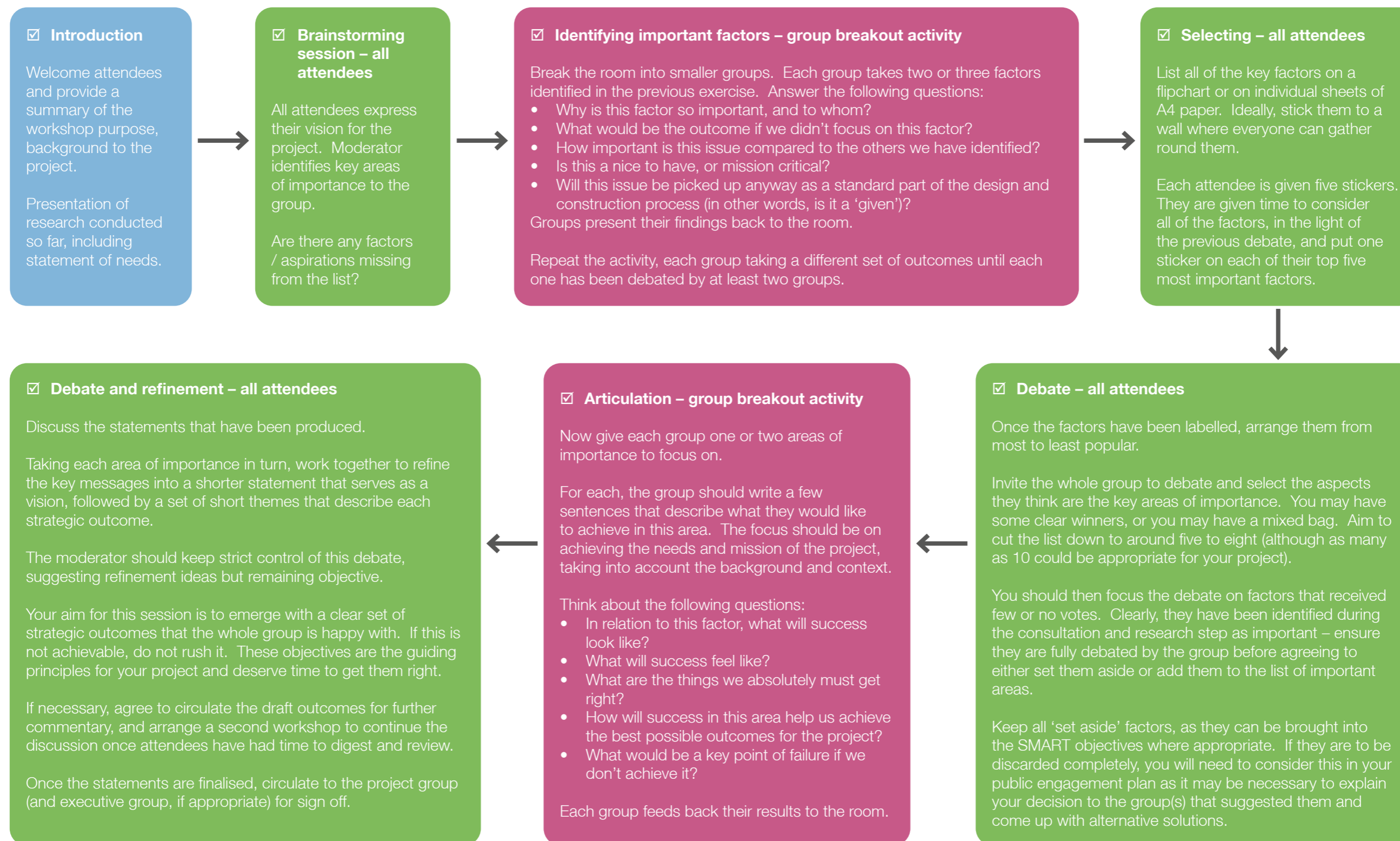
Prepare activities and a topic guide (list of open questions) to drive the session forward.

On the Day

There is no single correct way to run the visioning session, but the following agenda is a useful guide:

☑ **Introduction**
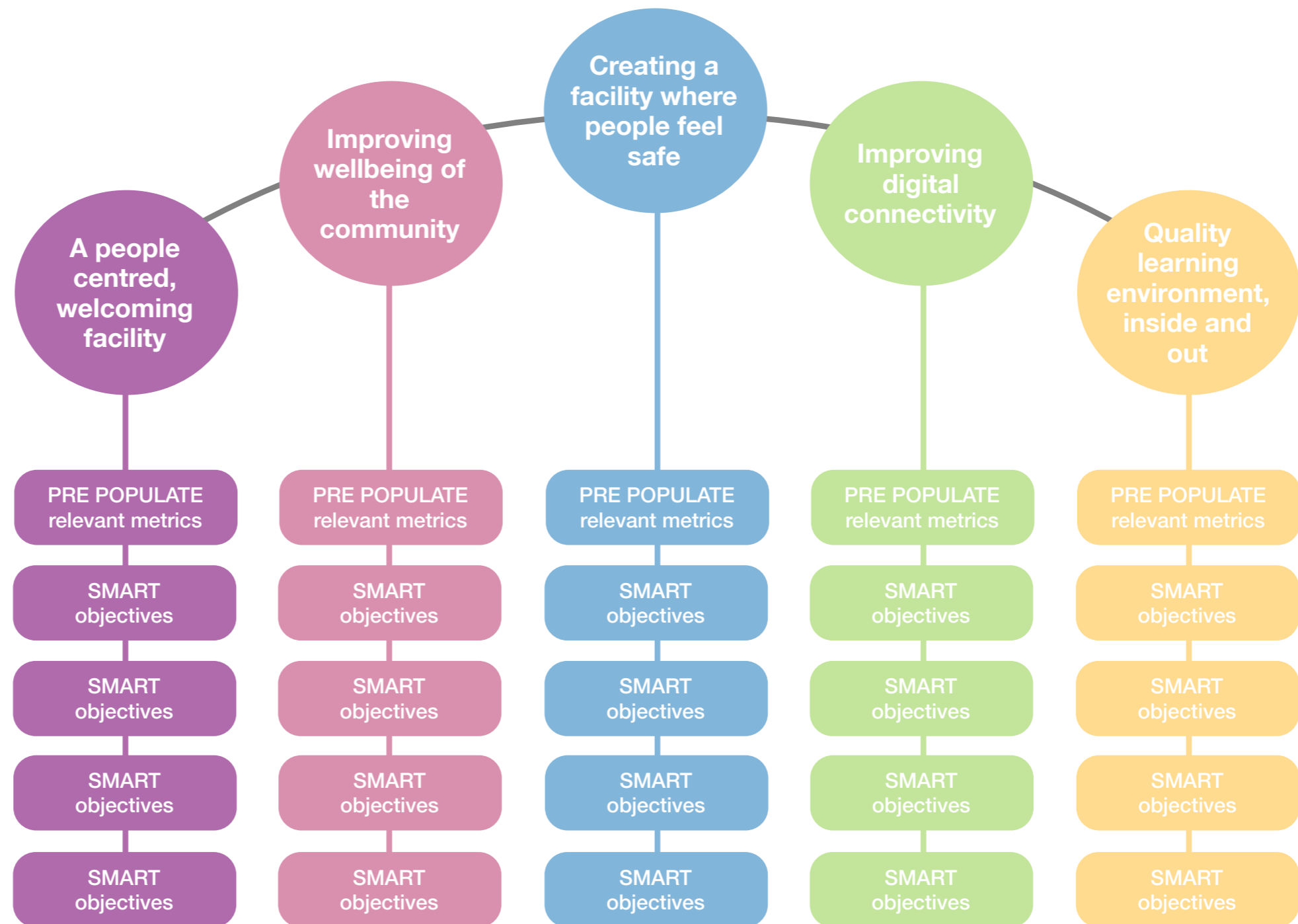
Welcome attendees and provide a summary of the workshop purpose, background to the project.

Presentation of research conducted so far, including statement of needs.

☑ **Brainstorming session – all attendees**

All attendees express their vision for the project. Moderator identifies key areas of importance to the group.

Are there any factors / aspirations missing from the list?

☑ **Identifying important factors – group breakout activity**

Break the room into smaller groups. Each group takes two or three factors identified in the previous exercise. Answer the following questions:
- Why is this factor so important, and to whom?
- What would be the outcome if we didn't focus on this factor?
- How important is this issue compared to the others we have identified?
- Is this a nice to have, or mission critical?
- Will this issue be picked up anyway as a standard part of the design and construction process (in other words, is it a 'given')?

Groups present their findings back to the room.

Repeat the activity, each group taking a different set of outcomes until each one has been debated by at least two groups.

☑ **Selecting – all attendees**

List all of the key factors on a flipchart or on individual sheets of A4 paper. Ideally, stick them to a wall where everyone can gather round them.

Each attendee is given five stickers. They are given time to consider all of the factors, in the light of the previous debate, and put one sticker on each of their top five most important factors.

☑ **Debate and refinement – all attendees**

Discuss the statements that have been produced.

Taking each area of importance in turn, work together to refine the key messages into a shorter statement that serves as a vision, followed by a set of short themes that describe each strategic outcome.

The moderator should keep strict control of this debate, suggesting refinement ideas but remaining objective.

Your aim for this session is to emerge with a clear set of strategic outcomes that the whole group is happy with. If this is not achievable, do not rush it. These objectives are the guiding principles for your project and deserve time to get them right.

If necessary, agree to circulate the draft outcomes for further commentary, and arrange a second workshop to continue the discussion once attendees have had time to digest and review.

Once the statements are finalised, circulate to the project group (and executive group, if appropriate) for sign off.

☑ **Articulation – group breakout activity**

Now give each group one or two areas of importance to focus on.

For each, the group should write a few sentences that describe what they would like to achieve in this area. The focus should be on achieving the needs and mission of the project, taking into account the background and context.

Think about the following questions:
- In relation to this factor, what will success look like?
- What will success feel like?
- What are the things we absolutely must get right?
- How will success in this area help us achieve the best possible outcomes for the project?
- What would be a key point of failure if we don't achieve it?

Each group feeds back their results to the room.

☑ **Debate – all attendees**

Once the factors have been labelled, arrange them from most to least popular.

Invite the whole group to debate and select the aspects they think are the key areas of importance. You may have some clear winners, or you may have a mixed bag. Aim to cut the list down to around five to eight (although as many as 10 could be appropriate for your project).

You should then focus the debate on factors that received few or no votes. Clearly, they have been identified during the consultation and research step as important – ensure they are fully debated by the group before agreeing to either set them aside or add them to the list of important areas.

Keep all 'set aside' factors, as they can be brought into the SMART objectives where appropriate. If they are to be discarded completely, you will need to consider this in your public engagement plan as it may be necessary to explain your decision to the group(s) that suggested them and come up with alternative solutions.

Recording Outputs

When you have identified your strategic outcomes, note them down in a format you are comfortable using. We have presented them in this document in an 'umbrella' shape to indicate the overarching nature of the objectives, with SMART objectives falling below.

The objectives shown here are not exhaustive, but illustrate the types of objectives your project might develop.

In the next section we will outline how to populate the SMART objectives that support each one. Much of the thinking that will inform the SMART objectives has already been done in the visioning workshop, so keep these notes to refer to later. However, the SMART step also needs to include input from a broader selection of stakeholders.

Click here to open a template.

A people centred, welcoming facility

- PRE POPULATE relevant metrics
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives

Improving wellbeing of the community

- PRE POPULATE relevant metrics
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives

Creating a facility where people feel safe

- PRE POPULATE relevant metrics
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives

Improving digital connectivity

- PRE POPULATE relevant metrics
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives

Quality learning environment, inside and out

- PRE POPULATE relevant metrics
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives
- SMART objectives

Distil into SMART Objectives

6

Briefing and Evaluation: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Now that you have your high level strategic outcomes in place, they need to be broken down into smaller, more specific and measurable points (your SMART objectives). It is likely that your first pass at SMART objectives will lack measurability, and will firm up as you proceed through the process of engagement and take time to reflect on your objectives. Take a look at the metrics contained in the Whole Life Performance Framework (WLPF) to help you quantify appropriate objectives and think about the kind of terminology you might use – see page 43 for more on the WLPF.

SMART objectives play three critical roles:

They support the brief by signposting the specific ways in which the building can deliver on the strategic objectives

They form the basis of your evaluation criteria for the rest of the project, and into use

They ensure certain objectives are included and are clear to all stakeholders from the beginning. (For example, those required to meet Net Zero Carbon targets or programme requirements.)

Start with the end in mind
It is therefore essential that when you create your SMART objectives, you think about how you could evaluate them throughout the project and once the building is in use.

For every objective, ask yourself the following:

"Is there enough information to allow another person to accurately interpret the meaning?"

"Have I used words that can be quantified and measured in some way?"

"Can I think of a simple way to assess whether or not we have met this objective?"

If the answer to these questions is no, then your brief is not sufficiently specific to allow for meaningful evaluation.

If it is not specific enough to allow for meaningful evaluation, it is unlikely to be specific enough to provide clear direction to your design team.

As such, the criteria that constitute a meaningful evaluation of any project should be the same criteria that constitute a good brief for a project. They are two sides of the same coin.

The rest of this section helps you to develop a set of robust SMART objectives.

Brief

A good design response needs clear, specific objectives → **Design response** ← **A meaningful evaluation needs clear, specific questions**

Evaluation

What are we trying to achieve?
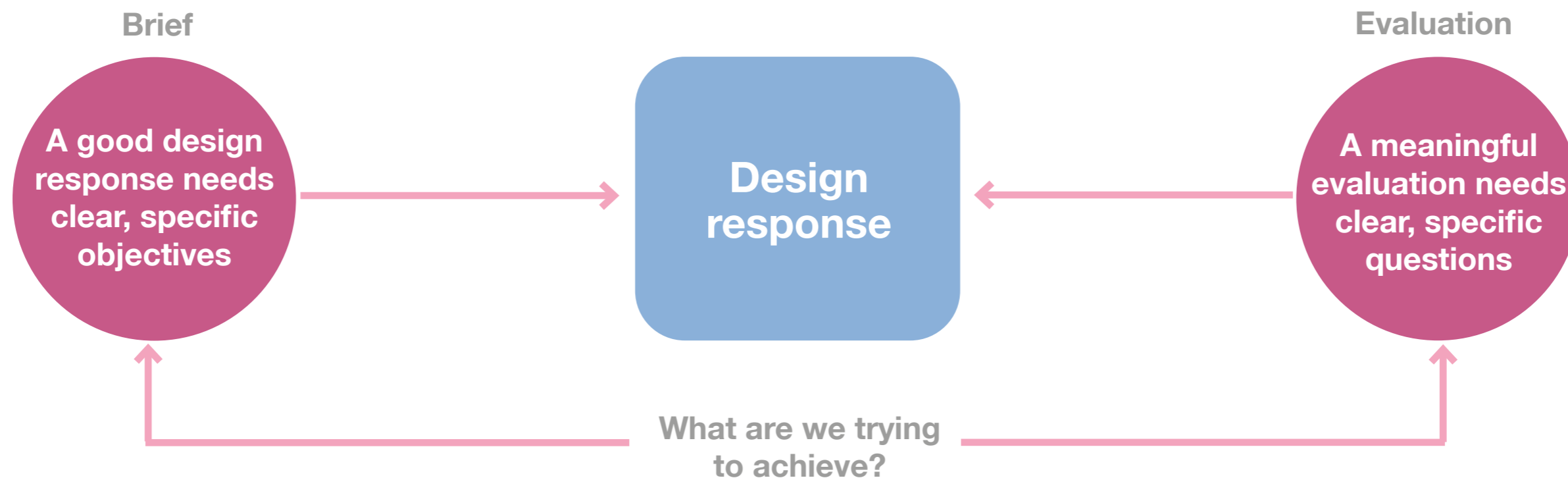
What are SMART Objectives?

Each strategic outcome needs a series of SMART objectives to support it, to provide detail and clarity, and to create a basis for evaluation.

It may help to think of your strategic outcomes as an umbrella that permanently sits above the project, spanning every aspect of the work, with SMART objectives beneath each one.

We are using the SMART acronym as it is a standard and recognisable method that already has plenty of guidance available to help you work towards objectives that are:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable (or Accountable)

Relevant

Timely

However, this is not the only guidance for setting objectives and you may prefer another method. The key is to establish objectives that are more detailed than your strategic objectives and which are – crucially – **S**pecific and **M**easurable.

Achievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely act as checks to ensure the objectives can be met, while specific and measurable help you write the objectives in the context of the project.

Specific

Is your objective directly related to a particular aspect of the project? Try to word your objectives so they relate to only one aim (for example, an aspect of safety, comfort or look & feel), or to one space within the building (for example, the entrance, or the classbases, or the office areas).

Measurable

Think about measurement of your objectives. Avoid intangible wording that is hard to quantify in some way. Ask yourself, 'Can I clearly explain to someone what this means and how we could check that it has been achieved?'

Achievable

The project delivery team and workshop moderator should be well briefed about the project scope, including issues such as limitations on how the site could be developed, who will provide services from the facility, and budget. Blue sky thinking is an excellent way to explore the vision but it needs to be reined in to a set of sensible, achievable objectives.

Relevant

Make sure your SMART objectives sit within the context that has already been established by the strategic objectives. The aim is to cascade information down from one activity to the next, ensuring the focus is always relevant to the project.

Timely

Pay particular attention to suggested objectives that have a long timescale. Improving public health is a fine ambition, but you need to identify ways the building can support delivery of services within appropriate timescales.
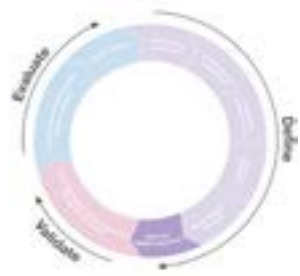
Stakeholder Engagement to Develop SMART Objectives

SMART objectives take time to develop through careful engagement. Having gone through the process of researching and consulting on the needs of the place and the wider context, and having brainstormed the important issues to get to your strategic objectives, you will probably already have a selection of needs, wants and nice to haves that should be recorded. Keep this list, and add to it as you go through the next steps of stakeholder engagement.

This engagement requires you to listen to the particular needs of departments, service providers or users. Start with your strategic outcomes, and ask your stakeholders what they would require from the project in order to achieve them. This forms the basis of your SMART objectives.

An example

A school is being replaced, with the vision expressed as follows:

"Create a school that provides top class teaching facilities for our pupils and attracts high quality teaching staff. The school should embody our school values and be flexible enough to accommodate new ways of teaching and learning."

The strategic objectives include the creation of optimised internal environments to support learning and teaching, expressing the 'brand' of the school, and creating flexible spaces for collaboration and community use.

Contextual research has already revealed that the school's technology is poor, with little space in classrooms allocated to interactive learning such as screens and collaboration areas.

Requirements for funding have been identified and included on the documents shared in preparation for the session.

To understand how to improve teaching facilities, a combination of teacher consultation, pupil consultation, expert advice, visiting other schools and looking at post occupancy evaluations is useful.

School visits prompt the imagination and show teachers what is possible. It can be difficult to think outside the box when you are working in the same environment every day; staff and pupils may have limited experience of other schools.

If visits are not possible, the design team can present examples of interesting or unusual solutions from other projects, to prompt discussion. Try to keep these broad and varied, so as not to inadvertently direct stakeholders towards a particular idea.

Workshops with teachers and pupils focus on:
- Recapping current facilities and their limitations.
- Identifying the areas where teaching and learning are difficult. Can pupils and teachers give examples of problems they face each day? How have they worked around them?

- In an ideal world, what else would teaching spaces provide? How would pupils like to learn? What is important to them – in relation to technology, classroom layout, access to outdoor spaces, desks, collaboration spaces outside the classroom?
- 'Blue sky' thinking to brainstorm the possibilities for better learning, better equipment and better spaces to address the issues raised.

Activities also focus on adjacencies, storage, and communal areas such as dining and toilets in order to understand departmental, user and spatial requirements.

The results of the workshops help the project team to establish clear SMART objectives for the delivery of better teaching facilities, including increased engagement with technology in class and at home, classroom layouts allowing for both directed learning and collaboration, and more group work in spaces outside the classroom.

Specific and Measurable

Outcomes, not instructions

Your SMART objectives should be about outcomes, not instructions.

In our school example, the SMART objectives focus around what the school wants to achieve – they do not attempt to tell the design team how to achieve it.

Compare the following:

- ✗ Provide interactive whiteboards in every classroom.
- ✓ Increase engagement with technology in classrooms and at home.

The former is an instruction, not an outcome. If, at some point during the design phase, it becomes apparent that interactive whiteboards are not viable, the instruction could be discarded. However, the outcome of 'increased engagement with technology' has lots of potential solutions – these should be expressed and agreed through departmental, user and technical requirements. If one solution is not viable, the project team should still be working towards the objective of better engagement with technology, which stays firmly on the agenda while a different solution is found.

Whole Life Performance Framework

The WLPF promotes the analysis of whole life outcomes across four assessment criteria: commercial; performance; environmental; and social & economic.

This tool provides an invaluable source of metrics that can be mapped onto your SMART objectives to help you make them measurable. You will most likely find that many of your objectives start relatively 'woolly', but it is important to work through them in the first instance and ensure they are recorded. Always keep measurement in mind, as it helps to focus thinking, but do not discard important metrics simply because they seem unmeasurable at the moment.

Go through your objectives against the metrics in the WLPF to match up those that can be applied. There is a mix of qualitative and quantitative metrics in the framework, so remember that both can be measured. This might be by counting an increase in deliverables, energy performance or number of spaces provided for wellbeing (quantitative) or could be a simple Yes/No assessment of whether a goal has been met. For the latter, you should still think about what 'being met' means for your project. For example, 'Does the project increase green space amenities for the public?' can be answered with a yes or no, but you may wish to put specific targets in place.

To prioritise, or not to prioritise?

This is a very common question – should you sort your objectives into a prioritised list? The counter to this question is, for what purpose? If you prioritise certain objectives you are essentially pointing to those that can be more easily overlooked or removed.

If you have done your due diligence at the outset, you should have a set of objectives that have been clearly argued and reasoned, are set within the context of the place and the factors that influence it, and which are important to one or more stakeholders. In this case, you should not be able to argue that one is more important than another – they should all be essential to the successful outcome of this particular project in this particular context.

Benchmarks and comparisons

Words such as better, more, increase and decrease need a benchmark for comparison. It is easy to put these words on paper. They create a sense that the project is moving forward, that it has purpose and value, and that users will experience improvements. But unless they are rooted in a current, identifiable problem – or the need to meet a requirement that currently cannot be met – there is no way of knowing whether the project is delivering improvements or simply doing the same things in different ways.

For each SMART objective, think carefully about the problem you are trying to solve or the outcome you are reaching for. Remember – it needs to be both specific and measurable.

For example:

If you wish to increase usage of certain facilities, what is the current usage? What level of use would be an acceptable increase? Why?

If you wish to reduce congestion in waiting areas, what is the current level of congestion? Is your objective about reducing the volume of people waiting, or is it more about reducing inconvenience to other users by unblocking thoroughfares?

These questions relate to both measurability and specificity – the design response to the two scenarios outlined here could be very different.

Your contextual research and stakeholder engagement should have revealed problems that need to be solved. You may be able to access data related to quantifiable elements such as waiting times, number of people using a service or footfall in a certain location. Alternatively, seek or conduct surveys or observational exercises to help you understand the current situation.

Dealing With Emotive Words
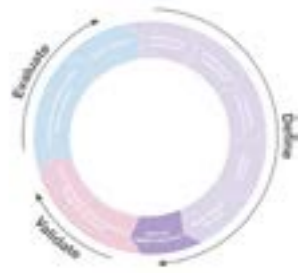
Behavioural and attitudinal words are difficult to quantify and measure, but there is great value in doing so.

Objectives often describe user emotions such as feeling safe, happy, engaged or satisfied. It is certainly possible to quantify these feelings by conducting surveys among users, but this is unlikely to tell us much about how the design should address them.

Try to think about these words from an objective viewpoint.

- Why are they important?
- What is the current feeling among building / service users?
- Is there actually an outcome rather than an emotion you are trying to reach?
- Should they be a 'given' or an aspiration?

This will help the design team establish a rationale for how they respond to these words.

Later in this framework, we show you how to set up a 'living document' that records the outcomes of your stakeholder engagement sessions. There is a column for 'rationale', which will help you remember the detail of these conversations and support the design response to each objective.

In the table below, you can see how subjective words can be interpreted very differently, and it is essential that we seek input from stakeholders to understand what they want and need.

Once you have more detail, you can measure the impact of each specific part of the response rather than simply asking, 'How satisfied are you...'?

Emotive words – A worked example

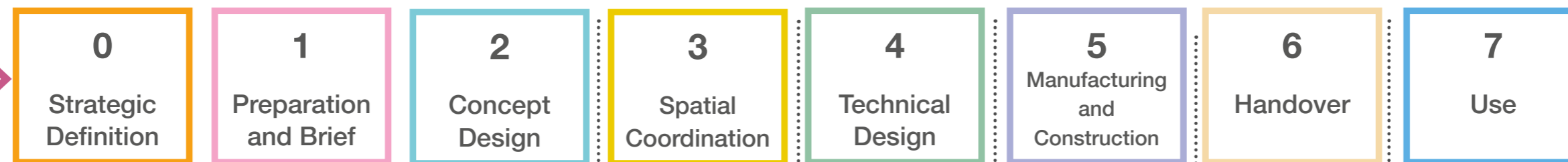| Example objective	Ask your stakeholders...	They might tell you...	Impact on measurement...
Create an environment where people **feel safe**	How can we quantify 'safe'? Should this be a given? Is this a reaction to concerns that people currently feel unsafe? If so, can we conduct research to find out where, and why? Are there standard design features that we can learn from – reference to other projects?	"When I visit healthcare services, it makes me feel safe if I can clearly see the security measures in place." "When I come to school, it makes me feel nervous and unsafe if I can see lots of alarms and barriers everywhere. It's good to know they are there, but they look quite scary."	As well as asking people if they feel safe, ask what aspects of the building make them feel that way. Has hiding or revealing security measures had the desired effect?
Improve **satisfaction** among service users	Which areas of satisfaction can be addressed by the building, and which by the quality of service? Can we break it down further? What outcome would increased satisfaction create? Are we trying to improve service standards generally? Increase user numbers? Reduce complaints? Can we measure any of these outcomes?	"I hate waiting in the queue, it takes ages to get my prescription. The person who used to work here was much faster, they just take too long now." "The service is fantastic, the staff do a great job but they're struggling to work in a building that is no longer big enough for the number of people."	Don't just ask about satisfaction, ask why. In these examples, satisfaction can be impacted by the service itself, or by the building, or both. In what ways has the design responded to these issues? Have they reduced congestion or waiting times as intended?
Improve **engagement** with learning	What do we mean by engagement? More time, better results, less distraction, fewer absences? Will this rely on teachers' reports or asking the students? Are we trying to improve specific outputs like exam results, or promote activities such as drama and sport? How engaged do the pupils feel now?	"My students are frequently distracted because the breakout area is right outside our room, and they can see their friends." "We're struggling with poor technology. It's hard to engage them when the screens and laptops take ages to set up every day."	Find out what the barriers are to engagement, and how it could be improved. Rather than simply asking whether engagement has improved, measure each specific area: has access to technology improved? Has the layout of the building reduced distractions?
Create a space where visitors **feel welcome**	Are we currently losing visitors or getting poor feedback because they feel unwelcome? What aspects of a design make people feel welcome? And unwelcome? Is this about wayfinding, masterplanning, reception areas, look & feel, branding? To what extent is this feeling about the building and to what extent about the way staff treat visitors? Can we distinguish the two?	"The reception area is drab and uninviting, there are hardly any seats and it's hard to see where you're meant to go, so you don't really feel like you're supposed to be there." "The woman on reception is horrible. She makes me feel like I'm not wanted, even though it's her job! The building is lovely though."	Think about the drivers behind people feeling welcome. Ask people whether the space makes them feel welcome, and ask what features of the design make them feel that way. Measure reactions to any design features that have responded to specific issues, such as layout or seats or position of the reception desk.
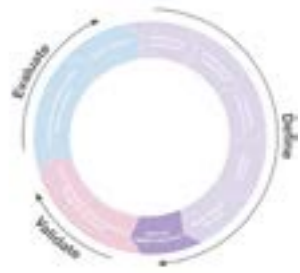
Plan Now for Validation

This framework directs you to plan your objectives with continual validation in mind, culminating in good quality project and post occupancy evaluations.
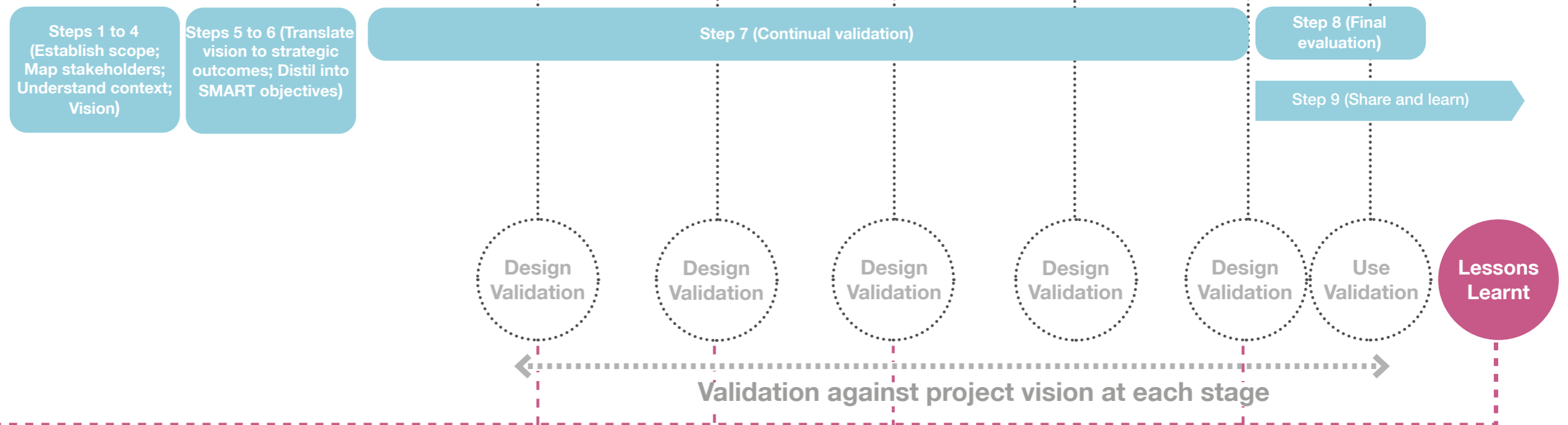
The next section provides a template for keeping track of your continual validation throughout the design phase and into construction. Put your strategic outcomes and SMART objectives into a spreadsheet that acts as a 'living document' to keep track of design validation as the project progresses.

The entire team must be committed to regularly reviewing the document and referring decisions back to the objectives. Work this validation into your usual meeting structure and save the document in a centrally accessible location.

RIBA Plan of Work

| 0 Strategic Definition | 1 Preparation and Brief | 2 Concept Design | 3 Spatial Coordination | 4 Technical Design | 5 Manufacturing and Construction | 6 Handover | 7 Use |

Framework Steps

Steps 1 to 4 (Establish scope; Map stakeholders; Understand context; Vision)

Steps 5 to 6 (Translate vision to strategic outcomes; Distil into SMART objectives)

Step 7 (Continual validation)

Step 8 (Final evaluation)

Step 9 (Share and learn)

Design Validation · Design Validation · Design Validation · Design Validation · Design Validation · Use Validation · Lessons Learnt

Validation against project vision at each stage

F E E D B A C K

RIBA Plan of Work (https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-plan-of-work)

48

Continually Validate

7

The Importance of Continual Validation

If you have followed steps 1 to 6 throughout the definition phase of your project, you should now have a clear set of outcomes and objectives that take into account relevant legislation and guidance, the context of the place and the needs of its communities, and the ambitions of your stakeholders.

This feeds into the brief and forms the basis of design decisions as the project progresses, helping all parties to move forward with the same vision in mind. It is therefore essential that design decisions are made to address the agreed outcomes and objectives, otherwise the benefits of that investment of time and ambition will be lost – and different expectations will be met (or missed) across different members of the team.

Continual validation is therefore essential to preserve the integrity of the brief, to ensure the project stays on course to the agreed destination. However you choose to carry out and record this validation, make sure it involves all key decision makers and is a collaborative, transparent process. This is where having a Vision Champion can really help: someone to regularly check and challenge the team in plain, objective language.

What are we doing, and why?

Are the vision, outcomes and objectives established with a clear rationale?

How is the design responding?

Are we making conscious, informed decisions that respond to the identified needs?

Are we thinking holistically?

Have we considered how each objective might impact on different aspects of design, and how they affect each other?

Can we justify changes?

If we need to deviate from the objectives, can we explain why and consider compromises that still fit with the vision?

Are we still on track?

Are we regrouping regularly to check the vision is still at the heart of the design?

Practical Applications of Validation

Once you have established and agreed your vision, outcomes and SMART objectives, they can be used to inform and support a wide range of decisions and developments as the project progresses. Below are examples from real projects where validation against objectives has helped support key decision making.

Site options

A community campus has existing education and leisure facilities on site. When deciding where to position a primary school on the existing site, the design team carefully considered objectives including connectivity, collaboration, learner pathways, use of existing assets, access, shared services and delivery areas.

Each option was able to deliver some of the objectives, but compromises would have to be made: each location on the site had pros and cons based on the site restrictions and available space.

The whole team was able to assess each site option against the objectives, making an informed decision that could be justified by balancing the known benefits and drawbacks of each option.
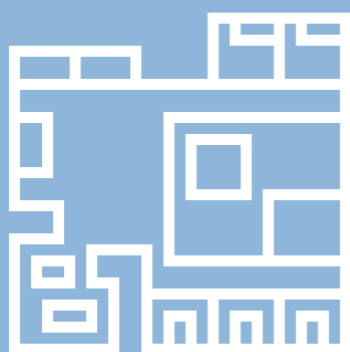
Adjacencies and flow

A combined health, social care, council services and education campus will serve a small, close-knit community. Place-based assessment showed that there would be significant benefits to the community in delivering these services in a collaborative and colocated way. However, engagement also revealed that residents were nervous about being seen accessing services from a shared reception, as their neighbours would easily be able to deduce the reason for their visit.

This notion of collaboration combined with discretion became a central part of the vision and objectives. It informed adjacency planning for the services being provided, and the flow of users through the building from entrance to exit.

Specification

A school requires hard working shared spaces to ensure pupils have access to dining, assembly, drama, dance and sports facilities. These spaces need to be as flexible as possible as they will likely be multi-use, including by the local community both during and outside school hours.

It was proposed that a flooring material be used, different to the one that had been specified. There were good reasons to consider it but, before agreeing, the team reviewed the objectives and concluded that the proposed material would not be suitable for the range of activities required. This decision could be justified by understanding the importance of flexible, multi-use spaces to the school – as documented during a thorough engagement process.

Outline Business Case

An organisation wishes to expand production and storage facilities on site to increase capacity for supply of its products. The business case requires a demonstration that the requirements have been carefully considered, articulated and planned for, but the client team has not been required to undertake such a detailed process in the past.

By following the framework, the client was able to create a comprehensive matrix of outcomes and objectives, each linked to the business case requirements with a clear rationale and explanation of how the design is responding.

A Validation Mindset: Who, When and What?

In order to validate meaningfully, it is important that the team understands and enters into the validation mindset. This requires a sense of purpose and commitment to the benefits of having established your vision and objectives – if the document sits on the shelf for the rest of the project without validation, you risk:

- Focusing on the wrong things and losing the essence of what you were trying to achieve
- Creating a building or space that does not do the job it was intended to do
- Disappointing the stakeholders who took the time to work with you at the briefing stage

Who should do it?
This process should be driven by the client, but should involve representatives from the entire project team. Ultimately, at every validation stage the client needs to be comfortable that the project is still on course to deliver what was asked for.

They should be prepared to question the relevant members of the project team to understand why decisions have been made, and how they contribute to the vision and strategic outcomes. Ideally, this will be a collaborative session where the whole team can challenge each other to make sure everyone understands the impacts and outcomes.

The strategic stakeholders (those who wrote the business case) should be involved in validation at least once during the process.

When should we validate?
On the following pages, and in a linked template you can use to record your validation, we have suggested that validation happens at least at every RIBA stage. But there is no definitive answer – at the outset of the project you should draw up a plan for validation that takes into account any relevant milestones and gateways.

As a general rule, validation should occur regularly in the early stages of the project and through construction. The point is to ensure that decisions have been scrutinised and agreed against the vision before the project proceeds past any stage where decisions cannot easily be undone, or new people are coming onboard.

It is a good idea to conduct an interim validation part way through the project which includes the strategic stakeholders. This might be suitable around RIBA stage 3, for example, as the design is developing in detail.

How should we do it?
The templates in this report suggest how you might record the outputs of validation to keep a 'living document' of your activities. It is essential that this is not seen as a tick-box exercise, rather as a simple way to record the outcomes of detailed discussions for future reference.

Prepare attendees to be ready to challenge at the validation session. Like a design review, they should have a mindset to scrutinise and question:

"Are we definitely on track to deliver A, B, C...? How can we be sure, and how can we evidence it? If we're making changes or compromises, are we clear why and how they affect the outcomes?"

Imagine your validation is always being watched over by the strategic stakeholders. Can you at any time explain how and why you're on track to deliver what's in the business plan?

The Validation Mindset
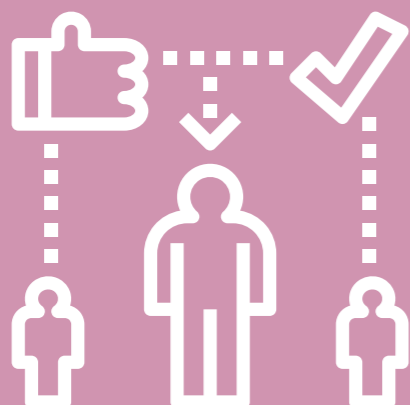
Validation is a client-driven process

Is the team committed to validating regularly and meaningfully?
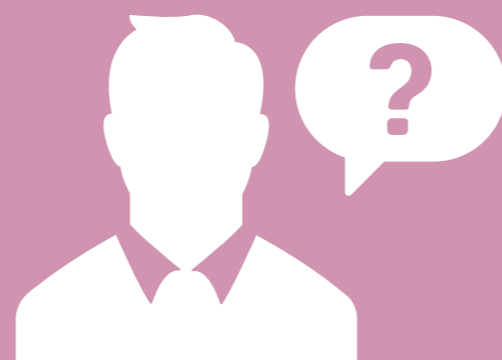
Validation needs an objective viewpoint

Do you have people around you who will challenge decisions in a constructive way?

Validation is about holding yourselves to account

Are you prepared to say 'Do not continue...' until the team has debated and agreed?

Validation should stand up to scrutiny

Could you clearly articulate your decisions and rationale to an external party at any time?

Create a Living Document and Update Regularly

The template below provides a simple method for recording the project objectives. The design team and client should regularly interrogate the objectives to ensure they are being met as the project moves into the design phase and beyond.

It can be useful to include a design champion for certain stakeholder groups, who can provide information on specialist areas and ensure they are protected as the design progresses. For example, a specialist nurse who can advise on particular objectives related to their field.

As soon as your SMART objectives are agreed, record them into the working document that includes the rationale for each objective. The team can then focus on what a successful outcome should look like, with a reasoning that can be defended whenever necessary.

The template is not intended to be static, and you can add or remove columns to suit your requirements. It should be a natural extension of the SMART objectives document you set up during the briefing step. At this point, your objectives have been established and you have thought about how to measure them, so the template below illustrates additional columns to record validation as the design progresses.

Strategic Outcome 1:												
SMART Objectives	Rationale	Concept Design Response	Validation	Spatial Coordination Response	Validation	Technical Design Response	Validation	Change Log	Anticipated Performance	Validation	In use Performance	Lessons Learnt
Steps 0 - 1	Steps 0 - 1	Step 2		Step 3		Step 4		Steps 2 - 5	Steps 2 - 4		Step 6+	Steps 0 - 7+

Record core objectives arising from the brief.

Use a new line for each area of the building / type of objective.

Record the activities, research or statutory obligations that informed each objective.

Focus on why each is important, and to which stakeholders.

Record design responses at each step.

Responses will increase in complexity through steps 2, 3 and 4.

The project board should agree a suitable format for validation. This might be as simple as initials and date, or as detailed as minutes of a design team meeting.

Note all changes that occur throughout design and construction, including rationale.

Record validation for all changes.

During the briefing and design phases, record expected performance linked to objectives.

This could be user response, technical performance or energy / environment.

Was the objective met as anticipated?

Record all early observations and anecdotes.

Record outputs of all evaluation activity related to this objective.

In hindsight, were our objectives the right ones? How could we have improved our responses? Were the right stakeholders engaged?

From Validation to Evaluation

As the project progresses and the decisions, responses and changes have been continually checked and validated against your SMART objectives, you can turn your attention back to the measurement of success.

If you have consistently kept the objectives front of mind throughout the life of the project, you should by now have a comprehensive document detailing all decisions and rationale. If compromises have been made, they should have been carefully considered in the light of the objectives. Your spreadsheet should contain a record and explanation of such decisions.

By the time you get to the point of final evaluation, after occupancy, there should be no great surprises. You do not need to design a POE from scratch, but should be able to refer to the spreadsheet to see what needs to be evaluated in use, and what has already been clearly validated (delivered) by the project. Your POE need only fill in the gaps and provide further useful insight.

Refer back to the columns in your document shown in the example below, when you are ready to move on to post occupancy evaluation.

Click here to open a template spreadsheet.

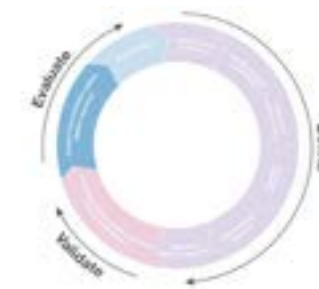| Strategic Outcome 1: People centred, welcoming facility						
SMART Objectives	Rationale and predicted impact	Evidence	Evaluation during design	Notes	POE evaluation	Suggested questions
Entrance is clearly defined with good wayfinding from outside	Users and visitors, including school children and elderly patients, need to be easily able to find their way	Look & feel testing with a range of users. Use of precedents.	Reviewed against goals at RIBA stage 1, 2, 3 and during construction	Initial feedback from staff indicates that people are able to easily find their way through the grounds and into the building. No reports of difficulties or lost visitors in early weeks of occupancy.	Survey (pupils and visitors)	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 1 The entrance to the building is clear and easy to see 2 I can find my way easily from the road into the building
The building feels welcoming	The facility is intended to act as a hub for the community, so should be a place people want to visit rather than feeling intimidating or clinical	Focus groups with the local community, pupils and staff. Use of precedents and POE feedback.	A range of layouts, colour palettes and furniture were tested and refined with stakeholders throughout the design.	Early users of the building were reviewed anecdotally to gauge reactions to the entrance and key spaces. This indicated a good reaction to the entrance although there were some suggestions to improve processes at reception.	Focus groups and survey (staff and pupils / visitors)	**Survey** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 1 The entrance to the building makes me feel welcome 2 The reception and waiting areas are welcoming to visitors **Focus groups** 1 How would you describe the entrance to the building? 2 How does it make you feel? 3 What aspects of the building make you feel welcome, or contribute to a positive experience in the building? 4 And what could be improved, to make you feel more welcome?

Final Evaluation

8

57

Planning an Evaluation

Throughout this framework we have stressed the importance of setting objectives at the outset, keeping ongoing records of rationale and design responses, and continually evaluating against those objectives throughout the project.

At the point of handover and early occupancy, you can continue to populate your document with observations and anecdotal evidence in relation to each objective.

When the building has been occupied for a longer period, you should also conduct a more formal evaluation, known as a Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE). For many projects this is a requirement of funding, but for others it is optional. The value of conducting such an evaluation is enormous, as it is your opportunity to formally test and measure performance against your objectives and share the learnings.

Planning an evaluation is exactly like planning the briefing. You need to think about your end goals for conducting the evaluation, who should be involved, and how you can get the information you need.

Anywhere is a destination if you don't start with the end in sight.

This is as true for evaluation as it is for the project itself. Anyone can send out a survey or conduct a focus group. It will produce some results, and you will have therefore reached a destination of sorts. But if those results are not useful, the journey has been wasted.

By structuring your POE against the project's objectives, you can achieve a useful, bespoke report that delivers real insight.

An evaluation should...

Be specific to the project, but also...

...utilise best practice from other projects and research techniques

Address the SMART objectives (and, by extension, the strategic outcomes) you developed for the project

Build on the knowledge you gained during the validation steps

Fill in any gaps left by the validation work – what do you still need to test in use?

Be user friendly to read – put the interesting findings up front

Address a small number of issues well, rather than a lot of issues poorly

Combine qualitative and quantitative findings where relevant. For example, can energy monitoring be compared to occupants' behaviours or levels of comfort?

Use the most appropriate method of information gathering for the stakeholder group

Be shared with others, for the benefit of the next project

An evaluation should not...

Try to be all things to all people. You can't possibly test everything

Be done 'just because it has to'. This leads to generic results and lost value

Follow a fixed template unless this is necessitated by a sector body. Think creatively about how you can capture insightful information

Focus on only the senior stakeholders. Ask the users what they think!

Be done all at the same time. Your objectives should give you a range of issues you could tackle at the most appropriate time. Use different research techniques to explore each one

Require the reader to sift through hundreds of pages to find relevant lessons learnt
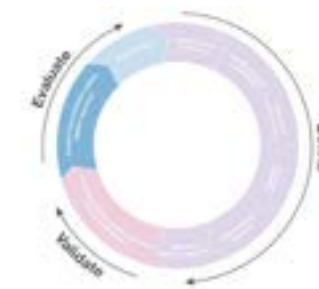
Methodologies – Common Approaches to Gathering Feedback and Evidence

|	Typical format	Points to consider
Walk-through / Observation	A structured observational journey through key areas of the building, in order to do a high level diagnostic check on key areas of interest. A checklist should be prepared in advance, detailing items to be observed. Walk-throughs can be used for technical feedback (eg snagging, wear and tear) or user behaviour feedback (eg use of space, flow and congestion).	Walk-throughs are useful at various points in the programme, from completion to beyond occupancy. They are a relatively easy and resource-light way to spot issues that could use further investigation. Think carefully about the time of day and year. For technical issues, has enough time elapsed to see the building in full operation / with all amenities being used? For user behaviour, walk-throughs at various times, across several days, may be needed to get an accurate picture of how spaces are being used.
Focus Group	Typically conducted with 6-10 attendees, lasting 60-90 minutes. The group answers questions on a focused set of topics, guided by a facilitator. Sessions usually begin with an ice breaker followed by structured discussion and activities. A topic guide is prepared in advance, as well as a brief for the facilitator.	An experienced facilitator and a second helper / scribe will be required. Sessions are usually anonymous – permission is required to record or video. You may need to provide an incentive to encourage participation, and hold sessions at an accessible time / venue. More than one session should be held among each stakeholder type, to avoid bias that often arises from one or two outspoken attendees.
Survey	Surveys can be paper or online, depending on resources, timescale, ease of reaching your audience and likely access to the internet. Surveys typically include a majority of quantitative (closed) questions but can include space for verbatim (open) responses.	Surveys should be short, clear and easy to fill in. Think very carefully about what results will be generated and how you will use them. Survey design is crucial to the data quality and will ideally be conducted by an experienced researcher. You need sufficient responses to generate statistically robust findings. Plan resource for distributing and gathering surveys, data entry and analysis of results.
Interviews	Interviews can be carried out with individuals or in pairs / small groups. While interviews might be intimidating for members of the public, users of the facility or community group members, they can be a very effective way to engage with service providers, department heads and those with technical expertise (ie M&E, IT, HR). Interviews are especially useful for space planning during briefing, and subsequent follow up.	Interviews are time consuming (typically lasting an hour each, face to face or by phone), but can be scheduled across one or two days if interviewees are on site. They are not anonymous – respondents need to clearly understand what their comments will be used for. Interviews generate a lot of verbatim data – create a topic guide and analyse responses in line with key themes of interest. Look out for anomalies that could signal a need for further research.
Building Performance	Some of your objectives will require measurement by a suitably qualified consultant in the form of an environmental / energy performance report. This addresses specific metrics such as temperature, humidity, acoustics, lighting, energy and utilities costs, and system performance.	Whilst this activity has a slightly different focus to the user feedback evaluation, there is significant benefit in aligning the two exercises. For example, if your surveys identify that users are too hot or cold, or are struggling to use certain facilities and systems, the building performance evaluation can investigate issues to support the data.
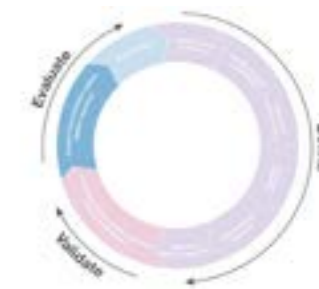
Deciding on a Methodology

A thorough POE will use a mix of methodologies. If you have followed through this process from start to finish, you will already know what issues need to be evaluated and will have thought about how they might be measured.

Go through your SMART objectives and think about the best way to evaluate each. Often, a combination of survey followed by focus group, or walk-through whilst conducting an interview, is the most effective way to gather information.

Walk-through

A **walk-though** (or series of walk-throughs) is used to spot immediate issues with maintenance or layout, and to see whether spaces are being used as expected.

You should plan the route to cover key areas and be clear about the purpose of the walk-through. Draw up a checklist to keep you on track. If necessary, do separate walk-throughs to cover maintenance versus use of space, the latter requiring you to revisit several times over a period of days or weeks.

Use walk-throughs for SMART objectives such as:

The layout of the dining area must reduce congestion at serving and refuse areas

Access and parking must separate walkers and cyclists from cars and buses

Large spaces such as dining and sports hall should be capable of being separated by partitions for smaller group activities

Interview

Use **interviews** to gather specific information from specific people, where it would not be of interest to focus group attendees. This methodology is particularly suitable for topics such as upkeep and maintenance, security and IT.

Draw up a loose set of questions in the areas you wish to cover, but allow your interviewee to discuss any other areas they feel are important.

Use interviews for SMART objectives such as:

The facilities shall be sufficiently flexible to allow for future alteration or extension with minimal disruption

Materials shall be low maintenance and be able to withstand extreme weather conditions without diminishing in quality

The facility shall provide community access to designated areas whilst maintaining security to the rest of the building

Survey

Surveys gather factual information from a large number of people, or test attitudes towards certain aspects of the design.

You can, and should, ask some open-ended questions to gather more insight but remember they are often poorly answered and you cannot guide people to give more information.

Use surveys for SMART objectives such as:

The building must provide adequate storage for teachers, close to classbases

Survey: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
- I have adequate storage for teaching equipment
- Storage is close enough to my classbase to allow me to work efficiently

Toilet areas shall be designed to minimise anti-social behaviour through passive supervision

Survey: Does the design of the toilets allow you to supervise pupils?
- Yes
- To some extent
- No

Focus group

Use **focus groups** to explore issues that are hard to quantify, require active discussion, or are particularly emotive. Use them to understand why certain results were obtained in your surveys.

They can tackle standalone issues or be combined with surveys to cover SMART objectives such as:

Layout of spaces should promote and support collaborative working

Survey: To what extent does the design support you to perform the following types of work...?
Focus group: What aspects of the design help you to work collaboratively? How do you use these spaces? Would you improve anything?

The entrance and reception should be welcoming and easy to navigate

Survey: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:
- The entrance is welcoming
- It is easy to find my way from the entrance to the rest of the building

Focus group: What aspects of the entrance and reception make them feel welcoming? Why?
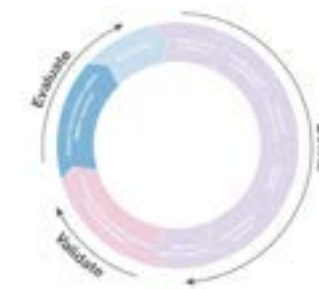
Planning Interviews and Focus Groups

The key to good engagement is careful planning and preparation.

Think carefully about the order in which you carry out these activities. For example, a walk-through may reveal issues you had not thought about, which you can ask about in your surveys and focus groups.

It may be helpful to conduct surveys before focus groups, so you can analyse the data and use your focus groups to seek additional clarity or insight on key issues.

Once you have identified which objectives should be evaluated via interviews or focus groups, you need to set up these engagement activities using the following steps.

Online sessions
You may need to arrange online rather than in-person sessions, due to pandemic restrictions or simply due to availability or location of the participants.

Online sessions should run in exactly the same way as those in person, via a suitable conferencing software.

It is very important that online sessions are well planned with exercises to keep the attendees interested, so be sure to map out and circulate your agenda well in advance with dedicated slots of time for activities. Using plenty of visual material will help focus attendees and encourage interaction.

Icebreakers are particularly important for these sessions, so allow time for everyone to introduce themselves and say a little about their interest in the project.

Step 1: How many topics?
Look carefully at your list of objectives. How many different topics do they represent? Group them into topics that can be covered by different types of people, for example facilities management, maintenance and security can be covered by an interview with a facilities manager. Use of key spaces will require focus groups with key user groups such as staff, school pupils, healthcare patients.

Step 2: Think about who you need to invite
Who is likely to be able to answer your questions on each topic? Consider whether certain groups will be able to answer your questions. For example, healthcare patients may access services sporadically therefore will be unlikely to have detailed knowledge of the whole facility. Primary school pupils will be able to tell you what they like and dislike about spaces, and what they do in those spaces, but may not be able to articulate the drivers behind their attitudes and behaviours.

Step 3: Consider how to reach your respondents
Some respondents are very difficult to reach out to, for various reasons. Patients of a healthcare facility comprise members of the general public, and you may not be able to access them easily due to confidentiality rules. They might be better accessed via surveys conducted by someone positioned in a GP surgery, for example. Staff and school pupils are often a great resource as they are easily contactable via a central email database.

Step 4: How many sessions?
You might need to conduct more than one session with some groups, particularly if there is a risk of bias from just one session with one or two opinionated attendees! Think about whether it would be wise to arrange separate groups for staff and parents, or young and old pupils. Will mixed groups cause some people to feel intimidated or be of benefit to generate debate?

Step 5: Plan the venue
Interviews can be conducted during a walk-through or at the person's place of work, or even remotely. Focus groups should be conducted in a neutral room, where there are unlikely to be distractions through glass partitions or activities going on outside. Think about accessibility and a room that is easy to find. You will need space for flipcharts or whiteboards, possibly a screen for a presentation, and tables for breakout activities. Arrange seats in a horseshoe shape so attendees can see each other and the moderator.

Step 6: Issue invitations
Send invitations well in advance, and issue reminders closer to the session. Allow for around eight people per focus group, which typically requires you to invite 10 to 12. The invitation should clearly state the date, time, expected duration and venue. Focus groups typically last 90 minutes, while interviews could be 30 to 60 minutes, The invitation should include a concise but thorough explanation about the purpose of the session, what to expect (do they need to bring anything or prepare in advance), and what their feedback will be used for.

If you are offering incentives such as vouchers to attendees, state this on the invitation and ensure they sign to acknowledge receipt at the session.

Step 7: Design your topic guide
Prepare a series of open-ended questions that cover your key objectives. They should be objective and unbiased, intended to generate discussion among the group or elicit a thoughtful response from an interviewee. For each question, add a series of additional prompts that could be used to seek out further detail. Be realistic about how many questions you can get through in a session.

Step 8: Brief your moderator
Focus groups should be moderated by someone objective and experienced, who has been thoroughly briefed. It is a good idea to have a second person in the session to hand out equipment, help with breakout groups and take notes.
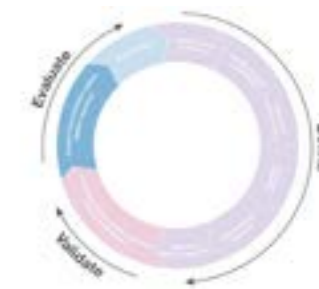
Planning Surveys

Like interviews and focus groups, surveys need careful planning to get the best out of the methodology. They are easy to do poorly, giving you results that are hard to interpret or, at worst, useless.

You may benefit from seeking the advice of a research consultant to help you devise an effective set of surveys. However you go about it, use your objectives document to identify the questions you need to ask.

Consider the following things when planning your survey.

Write clear, unambiguous questions

A common mistake is to try and pack a lot into each question, resulting in confused respondents who cannot give you a straight answer. If you ask, 'Is the room bright and airy?', how can your respondents answer if the room is airy but dull, or bright but stuffy? Make your questions simple.

Remember your 'before' measurements

If you have taken 'before' measurements (for example, assessing how many people use active travel options or how satisfied people are with current service provisions) you will need to include comparable questions in your final analysis. Always try to use the same wording and response options, and send your survey to the same type of user audience.

Include lots of closed questions...

Respondents find it much easier to answer single or multiple choice questions than open-ended questions, and the results are easier to analyse!

...but always allow an option for 'Other' or 'Tell us more'

If you are asking questions such as overall satisfaction, or what are the respondent's likes and dislikes, include questions about why they gave that answer. This will give you some qualitative insight that you can supplement in your focus groups.

If you offer a single or multiple choice list, include an option for 'Other - please specify'.

Keep surveys as short as possible

Long surveys tend to result in low response rates unless you have a very committed audience. Ideally, surveys should take around seven minutes to complete. A good rule of thumb is to think about what you will do with the data you collect. Don't ask questions unless you can do something meaningful wth the answers.

Think about routing

Not all questions will be suitable for all respondents. You might like to ask certain questions to certain people, or only ask a follow-on question if a respondent gives a negative score. Most online survey software allows you to do basic routing of this type, although you will need to pay for a platform to do advanced programming.

Think about how you will cut the data

Think carefully about whether you need to 'cut' your data, ie analyse it by sub groups. For instance, you may want to issue the same survey to both education and healthcare staff, but it is important that you can separate out their results as well as analysing the full data set. Make sure you include compulsory questions that will allow you to identify respondent types – you can't go back and ask this information afterwards!

Test, test, test

Once you have written your survey, give it to as many people as possible to test. Ask for feedback on clarity of questions, length of survey, and whether anything was confusing or hard to answer. Make adjustments and test again.

Be careful with personal data

Your invitation email or letter must clearly state the purpose of the survey, whether it is anonymous or not, how the data will be stored and collected and by whom. Collection and storage of any personal data must be in line with all relevant data protection legislation. If you don't really need to gather personal information, don't ask for it.

Distribution channels

Online surveys are efficient and do much of the work for you when it comes to data collection and analysis. You can distribute links to the survey via email or social media, depending on the audience. However, paper copies may be needed for audiences that don't typically have access to technology, or who would not usually come across your survey online (such as patients visiting a GP). Think about how you will ask people to request or return paper copies, and allow resource to data enter the results into your analysis software or spreadsheet.

Leave the survey open for long enough

Plan your timelines to ensure your survey runs for long enough to get a good response. Two weeks is a good rule of thumb, as it allows you to send out a couple of reminders spaced out by several days. Stipulate the closing date in your introductory email. Think about the time of year, for example people may be on holiday in the summer or may not look at work or school emails over Christmas.
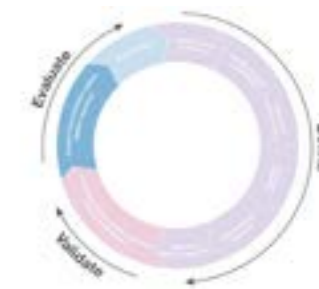
What Will Our Feedback Look Like? User Satisfaction Questions

User surveys commonly contain satisfaction questions. Before using them, think about the results they are likely to generate – what will they tell you? Are they specific or generic? How will you use them to inform future decisions?

Example Question – Satisfaction

3. How satisfied are you with the following?

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
The exterior of the building	✗					
Reception		✗				
Communal spaces		✗				
Classrooms				✗		

Example Results – Satisfaction

User Satisfaction

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
The exterior of the building	25%	42%	23%			10%
Reception	25%	29%	33%	13%		
Communal spaces	17%	33%	25%	17%	8%	
Classrooms	50%	38%	13%			

■ Very satisfied ■ Quite satisfied ■ Neither ■ Quite dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied ■ Don't know

Points to consider

This data can be compared to a pre move survey to assess whether attitudes have improved or worsened. The two surveys should be carried out among comparable groups under similar circumstances.

If no comparative data is available, can you benchmark in another way? What scores would you be happy with, and what would cause you to take further action?

This question needs sufficient responses to generate statistically reliable results, particularly if you want to compare data (eg pre and post move satisfaction). Be very wary of trusting results based on low response rates. You could seek advice from a researcher with statistics experience.

Are the results useful, specific and actionable?

On their own, satisfaction scores have limited value. They point to areas that work well and areas that require improvement, but further research will be required to understand:

• What could be improved – which design decisions drive negative feedback?

• What works well – which design decisions drive positive feedback?

• Have the needs of users changed since briefing, and how?

• Which areas in particular need attention – 'communal spaces' and 'classrooms' could include a wide range of spaces, and this data does not pinpoint specifics

Use qualitative research to supplement these findings
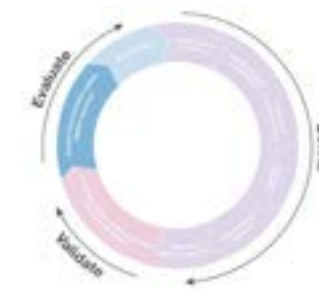
What Will Our Feedback Look Like? Measuring Change Over Time

Accurately measuring change over time can be tricky. Before setting objectives that necessitate measuring change, think about how – and whether – you can capture the results. Objectives such as '…increase satisfaction…', '…reduce waiting times…' and 'improve safety…' all suggest measurement over time is needed.

Example Question – Post Occupancy Only

7. What do you think of the catering provision in the new building?

○ Better than before

○ About the same as before

○ Worse than before

Example Results – Pre and Post Occupancy

Points to consider

This type of question can result in low response rates. Only those who experienced the previous building will be able to comment, making it particularly unsuitable for eg healthcare visitors who may only use facilities once or twice in their lives.

The results will not tell you whether users are happy with the provision, only whether it is better or worse than before. It may have improved but still be unsatisfactory, or vice versa. Combine with a satisfaction question to get a better idea of users' views.

Think carefully about factors that could influence the results, particularly in a complex or integrated facility. In this example, a resounding result that catering provision is better could be due to cheaper prices or a different catering company. Target your questions towards specific design (or other) decisions to get actionable results.

Points to consider

Planning your evaluation at the outset of the project may afford you the opportunity to conduct pre and post occupancy surveys. As has been discussed throughout, be sure to identify key areas of interest at the briefing phase to avoid a 'measure everything' approach.

Response rates are very important in quantitative studies. If you need to prove a measurable increase or decrease, take advice from a researcher with statistics expertise. Unless you have surveyed sufficient people, an uplift like the one in the example to the left may not be statistically significant. This means you cannot claim a genuine increase or decrease, which may render your results meaningless.

Pre and post occupancy surveys need to be conducted under similar conditions. Think carefully about who you can reasonably survey (is your audience easy to reach, such as students, or harder to reach, such as GP patients?) Think about contextual factors that could affect the reliability of your results, such as time of year.
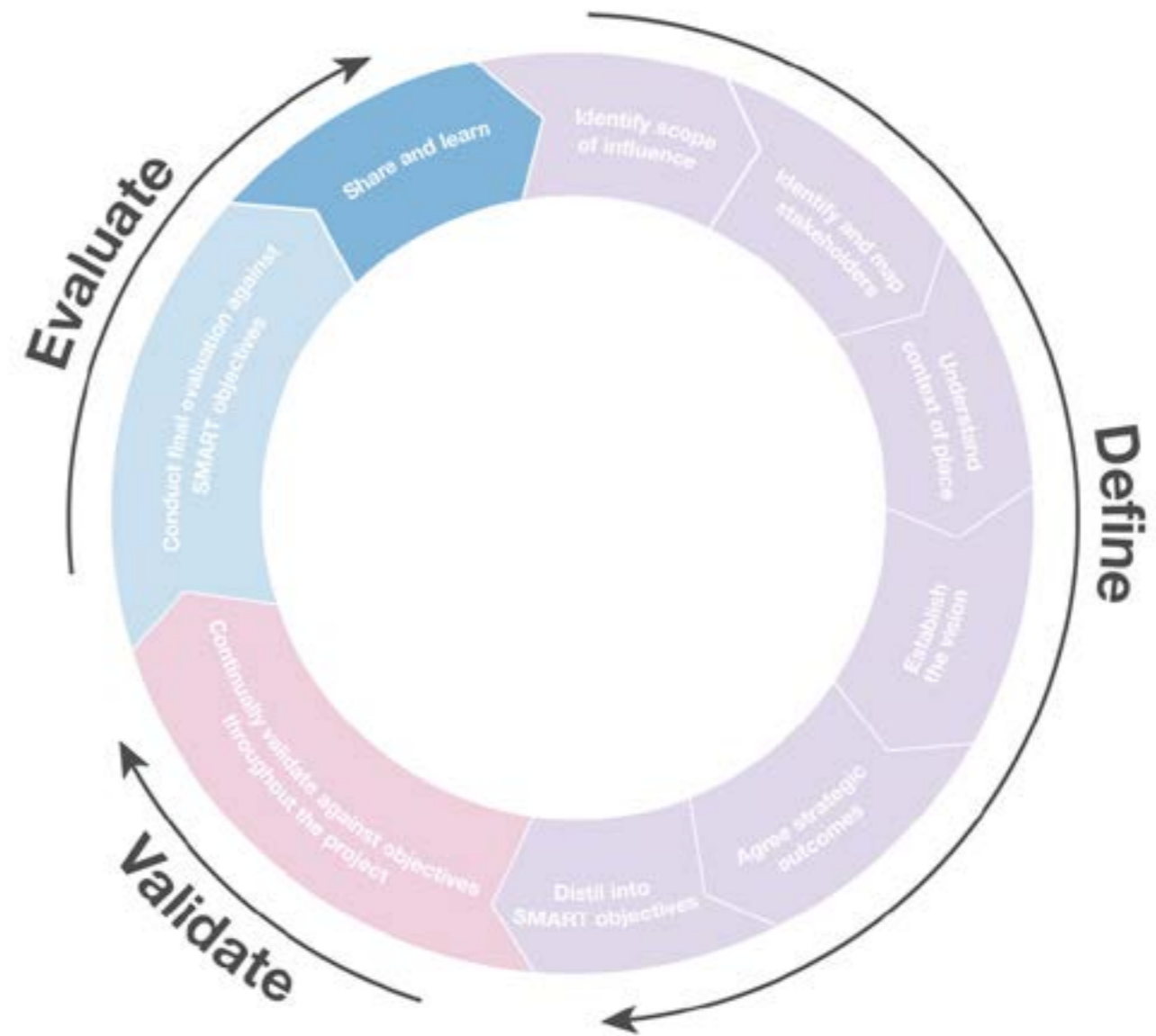
9

Share and Learn

Reporting Your Results

A good evaluation needs to be shared, so learnings can be passed on to benefit future projects.

Evaluation reports can be long and dry, or short and too high level. When reporting your results, think about the salient points that would be of benefit to other people starting out on the journey you have just taken.

Include an executive summary that contains the most noteworthy findings. Many readers will not read past this summary, so make it short but impactful. Keep the detail for the main report.

Avoid all jargon. Your report should be attractive and accessible to readers of all types, from experienced clients and designers to those just setting out on the journey.

Structure your report around your project objectives. If your focus was on better health outcomes, state what decisions were made to deliver this and detail whether or not they had the desired response. If you paid particular attention to the layout of classbases and breakout areas, outline what your intentions were and whether they have been successful.

Include plenty of detail about your methodology. This helps readers understand and interpret your results, and demonstrates whether results are robust or should be treated with caution. For example, a survey with 10 responses among a staff group of 15 people is a good sample, whereas a survey of the public with only 10 results is a poor sample size. Include this information so your report is not misinterpreted by other readers.

Report both the aspects of the project that went well, and those that could have been improved. The value of the report is to demonstrate where things can be done better in future.

Think about what you needed to know at the start of your journey. What would you have asked other people? What mistakes would you have avoided? What aspects of the design would have been useful to review on other projects? How would you have liked to access this information? It is helpful to share the draft POE with other members of the project delivery team, to understand what information is of most interest to them as a reader.

Getting the Most From Evaluation

Buildings should be designed to support the needs of those who will live, work and learn in them every day. They should enhance lives, support the efficient and effective delivery of services, meet energy and comfort performance targets, and sit sensitively in their surroundings.

In the public sector, buildings often have multiple functions for a wide range of users, and need to make spaces work hard to get the best value from the investment.

Every member of the project team needs to continually strive to get the best from their buildings. That means being open to learning from past mistakes, and building on successes for continual improvement.
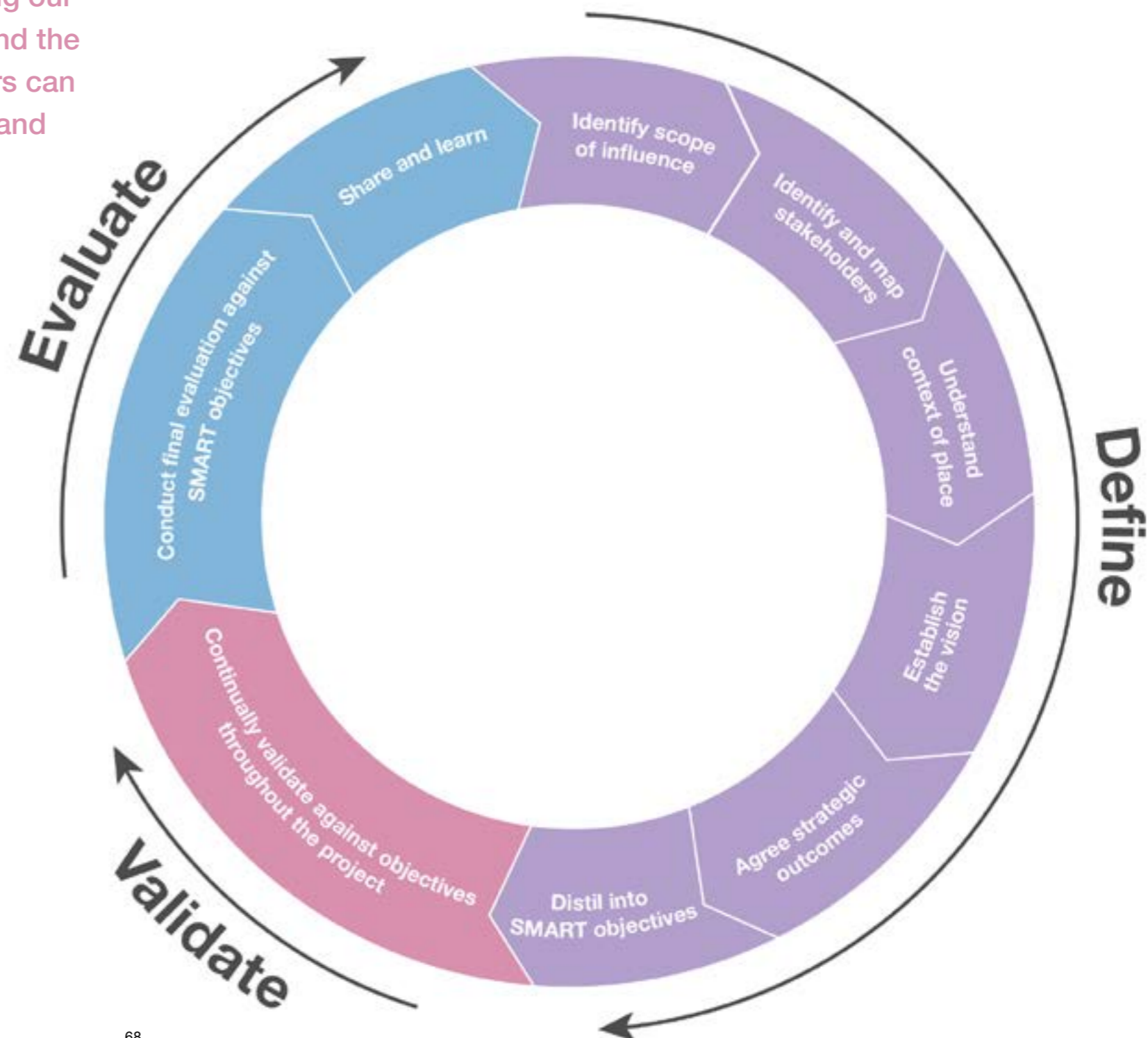
This is only possible if we:

Commit to evaluating our projects thoroughly and openly

Conduct evaluations in a way that tells us something meaningful about the decisions we made, and their impact

Report the findings in a reader-friendly way, avoiding jargon and clearly stating the salient points

Share the results among our project teams, peers and the wider industry so others can learn from our failures and successes

Remember that the process is not linear, even if you do not ever expect to be involved in a project of this type again. The building will be in use for decades, and it is incumbent on clients and their teams to close the loop by sharing and learning for the benefit of all future projects.

SCOTTISH FUTURES TRUST

Scottish Futures Trust
1st Floor
11-15 Thistle Street
Edinburgh EH2 1DF
www.scottishfuturestrust.org.uk

Image Credits

Cover Images
Column 1
Image 1 © Scottish Futures Trust
Image 2 © Keith Hunter Photography

Column 2
Image 1 © Scottish Futures Trust
Image 2 © Keith Hunter Photography
Image 3 © Keith Hunter Photography

Column 3
Image 1 © Scottish Futures Trust
Image 2 © Scottish Futures Trust

Page 7
Image 1 © New Africa / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © pingebat / Adobe Stock

Page 10
Icon 1 © FourLeafLover / Adobe Stock
Icon 2 © FourLeafLover / Adobe Stock
Image 1 © alotofpeople / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © Kaspars Grinvalds / Adobe Stock
Image 3 © weedezign / Adobe Stock
Image 4 © zimmytws / Adobe Stock

Page 11
Image 1 © 5second / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © REDPIXEL / Adobe Stock
Image 3 © Mangostar / Adobe Stock
Image 4 © Aleksandr Matveev / Adobe Stock

Page 13
Image 1 licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0 (https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/)
Icon 1 © 'Coffee break' icon by Madness Stock from thenounproject.com
Icon 2 © 'Quiet' icon by Bohdan Burmich from thenounproject.com
Icon 3 © 'Temperature' icon by Vector Portal from thenounproject.com

Page 16
Image 1 © Konstantin / Adobe Stock

Page 17
Image 1 © 4zevar / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © 4zevar / Adobe Stock

Page 23
Image 1 © Mykyta / Adobe Stock

Page 29
Image 1 licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0 (https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/)
Image 2 © sdecoret / Adobe Stock
Icon 1 © by mynamepong from thenounproject.com

Page 37
Image 1 © Photo by Scott Graham on Unsplash
Image 2 © Photo by Toa Heftiba on Unsplash

Page 38
Image 1 © Photo by You X Ventures on Unsplash
Image 2 © Photo by Dylan Gillis on Unsplash
Image 3 © Photo by Jo Szczepanska on Unsplash

Page 44
Image 1 © TungCheung / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © Jo Panuwat D / Adobe Stock
Image 3 © zephyr_p / Adobe Stock
Image 4 © Rawpixel.com / Adobe Stock

Page 45
Image 1 © Keith Hunter Photography
Image 2 © Keith Hunter Photography
Image 3 © Keith Hunter Photography
Image 4 © Keith Hunter Photography

Page 46
Image 1 © Monster Ztudio / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © H_Ko / Adobe Stock

Page 51
Icon 1 © 'Location' by Tresnatiq from thenounproject.com (icon amended)
Icon 2 © 'Respond' by Gregor Cresnar from thenounproject.com
Icon 3 © 'Globe on Hand' by alvianwijaya from thenounproject.com
Icon 4 © 'Compromise' icon by RomanP from thenounproject.com
Icon 5 © 'Location' by Tresnatiq from thenounproject.com

Page 52
Icon 1 © 'Pin Location' by ic2icon from thenounproject.com
Icon 2 © 'Floor Plan' by Eucalyp from thenounproject.com
Icon 3 © 'Building Specifications' from Edwin PM at thenounproject.com

Icon 4 © 'Business Report' by Visualeat from thenounproject.com

Page 53
Icon 1 © 'Validated' by Nithinan Tatah from thenounproject.com
Icon 2 © 'Questions' by Gregor Cresnar from thenounproject.com
Icon 3 © 'Stop' by Adrien Coquet from thenounproject.com
Icon 4 © 'Explain' by Ranah Pixel from thenounproject.com

Page 58
Image 1 © Antonioguillem / Adobe Stock
Image 2 © Photographee.eu / Adobe Stock
Image 3 © Andrey Popov / Adobe Stock
Image 4 © alfa27 / Adobe Stock

Page 61
Image 1 © Chaay_tee / Adobe Stock

Page 62
Image 1 © jannoon028 / Adobe Stock

Page 67
Image 1 © 4zevar / Adobe Stock

Icons
Link icon (page 3 and throughout document) © 'Link' icon by The Impekables from thenounproject.com

Back arrow icon (page 3 and throughout document) © 'Back arrow' by Mask Icon from thenounproject.com

All other images © Ryder Architecture