



JUNE 2025

# Place Evaluation and Learning Asset Mapping Resource

## Purpose of Evaluation and Learning Asset Mapping

As part of Sport England's commitment to place expansion, all places – both new and existing – are encouraged to develop their own local evaluation and learning plans. As the National Evaluation and Learning Partnership (NELP), we recognise that every place is unique, with its specific strengths, priorities, and needs for evaluation and learning.

In recognising this diversity, we understand that places may need time and space to reflect in order to support the thorough development and implementation of their plans. We also appreciate that how each place fulfils its Place Evaluation and Learning requirements will vary in accordance with their funding award and be shaped by local priorities, building on each place's existing assets, relationships, and capabilities.

The purpose of this Evaluation and Learning Asset Mapping (ELAM) exercise is to work collaboratively with places to identify and understand their evaluation and learning needs, as well as their existing evaluation and learning practices (assets). It may also help generate ideas for how places can better use these assets.

This resource consists of two parts.

**Part 1** explains what the ELAM is and why it may be of value to places to enhance their evaluation and learning approaches.

**Part 2** consists of the mapping exercise itself, which may be conducted with NELP or independently at any time. The key questions underpinning the ELAM have been produced in line with the System Maturity Matrix (SSM) 'Cycles of Learning and Action' condition:

<https://evaluatingcomplexity.org/resources/Cycles-of-learning>.

We encourage places and those completing this exercise to familiarise themselves with this condition alongside the other eight SMM conditions: <https://evaluatingcomplexity.org/resources>.

# PART 1: ELAM Explainer

## Why this work matters

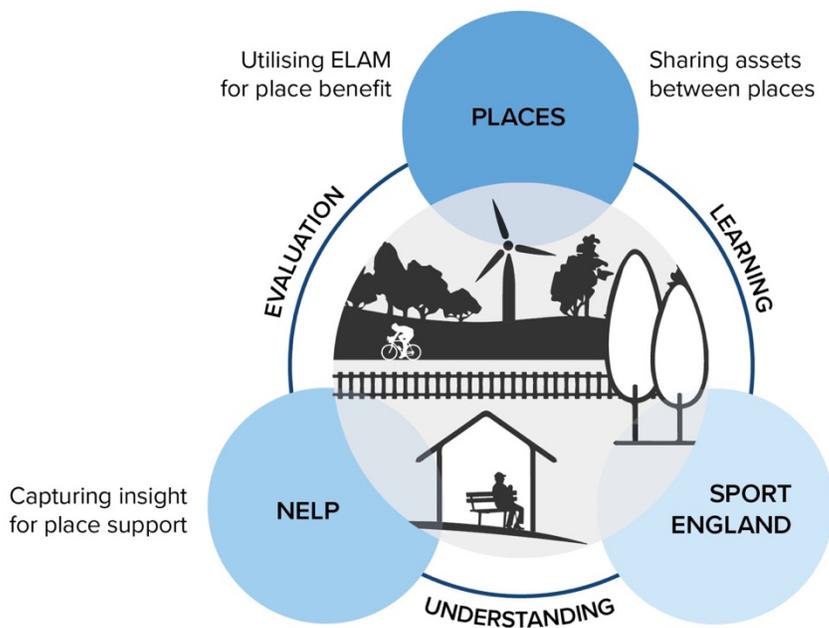
There are several reasons why this collective work is important:

1. Places can use this exercise to inform their evaluation and learning practices (cycles of learning and action)
2. NELP can better understand local evaluation and learning needs and assets, while also building relationships with places.
3. This then informs how NELP can add value or support places locally and proportionately across all places receiving Sport England investment.

## How ELAM supports ongoing learning and action

The ELAM facilitates ongoing reflection on evaluation and learning between places, NELP and Sport England, working together to strengthen local cycles of learning and action, ensuring that evaluation adds real value to the work and to partners.

We see this as a developmental piece – forming relationships and building mutual understanding about what evaluation and learning mean to places. From here, places may be able to identify what they want their evaluation and learning practices to look like, and what they would like to do next with their assets.



## What is an evaluation and learning asset, and where does mapping come into it?

In addition to identifying areas of need and opportunity, this process aims to capture the existing assets in places. These assets may consist of the following:

- **People, skills, capabilities, capacities, and leadership** – The people who contribute to evaluation and learning in a place, their diverse skillsets and the ways they are supported to lead. These may consist of meaningful relationships with people who may not usually have a say in evaluation activities but are trusted by their community and can help generate broader engagement for evaluation and learning to gain momentum.
- **Tools and methods** – The methods and tools that places use for evaluation and learning across their system to enhance learning and action. These may include tools already being used to capture data, such as data networks (for example, relationships with Public Health Analysts), and approaches being led within the community.
- **Evaluation and learning support** – How places draw upon support from within and outside their organisation. For example, this may include bespoke support developed in collaboration with academic partners, consultancies, and academic outputs.
- **Sharing and using knowledge assets** – How places go about communicating the learning and impact of their work, drawing upon the positives and the negatives (for example, findings in reports, evidence briefings, publications, and conferences/conference attendance). What impact do they see from this?

Thinking in this way may help places identify and map these assets, while also illuminating their strengths and areas of innovation.

### Some of the questions we would like to explore are:

What methods and tools are most valued in places for capturing data, and what makes them useful?

In what ways are places creatively integrating cross-sector insights to strengthen decision-making and learning? How is this occurring?

What motivates places to choose their current evaluation focus? How has this decision helped shape their view of impact?

How are places fostering inclusive and equitable evaluation approaches into evaluation and learning?

If places could design their ideal evaluation and learning system, what would it look like?

How have places successfully used learning to drive meaningful action? What specific tools/methods have been most effective in doing this?

Where are places already making learning visible in their actions? What are the most promising ways, e.g. methods, they are embedding learning into practice?

Where have places/communities developed or adapted innovative methods and tools to enhance learning and evaluation? What methods are these?

How have places seen success in ensuring all voices, including inactive people, are included in the design, delivery, and use of evaluation

These questions aim to inspire reflection and align with the [Cycles of Learning and Action](#) condition, as outlined in the [System Maturity Matrix](#).

## Steps in the ELAM process

### **Step 1: Introductions and awareness**

- The NELP team will contact places and place relationship managers to build relationships and introduce the ELAM process.

### **Step 2: Exploration session**

- The ELAM session will take place with places and key stakeholders identifying and mapping the assets following the key questions identified in Part 2. Here, we will identify key reflections and actions relating to the evaluation landscape of each place. We will also capture key reflections on the ELAM process to inform adaptation and refinement.
- These findings will be captured and stored in our data management system.

### **Step 3: Making use of findings**

- During and after the exploration process, session findings will be shared amongst places, NELP and Sport England.
- Places will be able to reflect and draw upon what this means for them and their place, utilising the insights to enhance their evaluation and learning work.
- NELP and Sport England will be able to capture a clearer sense of the evaluation and learning assets that exist in places.

## Resources and further information

- Sport England (2022) [Evidence and Learning approach and action plan, 2022-2025](#)
- NELP (2024) [Cycles of Learning and Action](#)
- NELP (2024) [Cycles of Learning and Action seminar recording](#)



## Part 2: Place Evaluation and Learning Asset Mapping Exercise

This exercise aims to be useful for places and their surrounding partners, capturing the evaluation and learning assets that exist in their place, as well as areas they would like to strengthen.

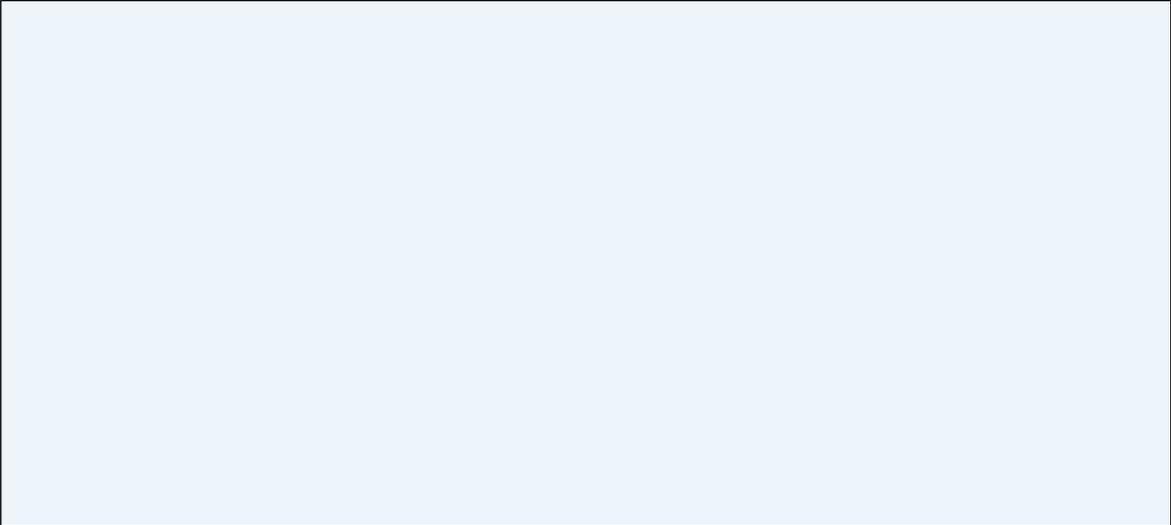
Places are encouraged to complete this exercise with the support of key Sport England and NELP resources, notably the [Cycles of Learning and Action condition](#).

When completing the mapping exercise, the following framework may be valuable for informing the process. It is not the expectation that all themes should be completed at once, and it is fine to revisit and refine each section.

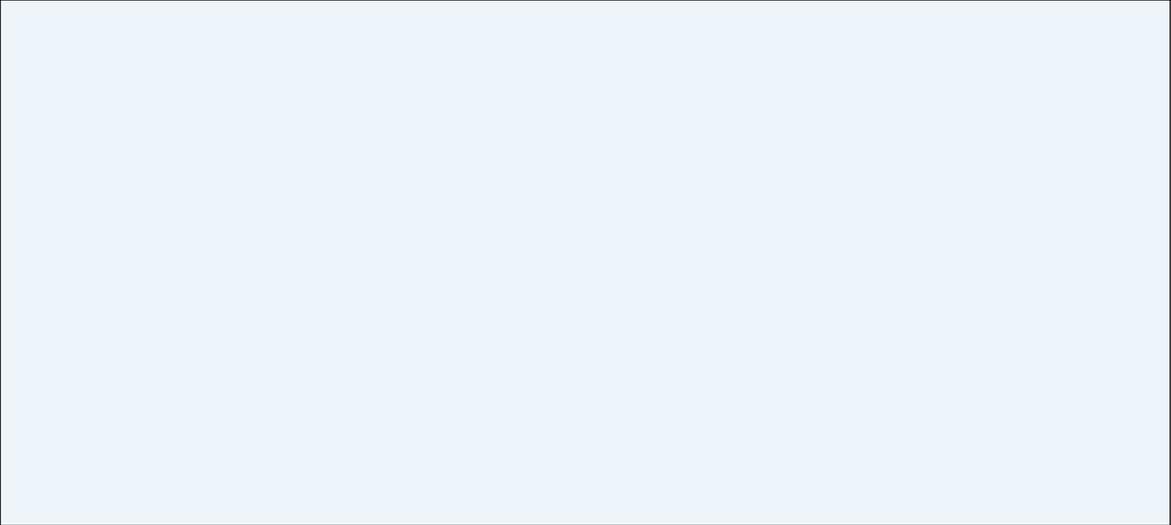
Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
Defining the evaluation and learning assets that exist in our place	Mapping evaluation and learning assets	Our learning culture	Our learning process	Learning to action

# Theme 1: Defining the evaluation and learning assets that exist in our place

What do we mean by evaluation and learning in our place? What are our evaluation and learning questions?



How do we define an evaluation and learning asset?



## Theme 2: Mapping evaluation and learning assets

What are our internal and external people skills and capacities? Who is involved in designing what is evaluated?

How do our evaluation approaches consider and account for wider asks, such as Moving Communities?

What methods do we use?

What assets would we like to develop further?

# Theme 3: Our Learning Culture

What does learning mean for the team and our partners?

What are the strengths of our learning culture?

What are the areas to strengthen in our learning culture?

How do we feel about accepting uncertainty and the opportunity to learn from 'failure'?

# Theme 4: Our Learning Processes

What learning processes, if any, do we have?

Do we believe that our learning processes are established?

What are the strengths of our learning processes?

What are the learning processes gaps, opportunities and threats?

# Theme 5: Learning to action

Can we see how our evaluation and learning processes lead to actions and ideas in our work or the work of the Place Partnership?

