

“[Insights](#)” offer an evidence based approach, tested by a range of external delivery experts and real policymakers, to help you implement more effectively.

The Diagnostic Tool is based on the Insights, and is for anyone involved in implementation and delivery.

Implementation Insights Diagnostic Tool

The Diagnostic Tool may be used:

- when designing a new policy to ensure that all implementation issues have been identified and dealt with
- when revisiting a programme that is off-track, to quickly identify potential reasons why this may be the case
- as either a stand alone diagnostic test, or as a source for lines of inquiry when developing issues trees
- as a tool to explain the implementation insights and build capacity when working with others.

The Diagnostic Tool consists of a series of questions about a policy or programme. Each question may be answered as 'yes', 'no', or 'unclear'.

- Where the answer is 'unclear' this means further information is needed to answer the question.
- Where the answer to a question is 'no', this indicates a potential weakness that warrants further inquiry to determine whether it is an issue that could jeopardise implementation.

Is there a clear, shared understanding of the goal?	Yes	No	Unclear
Is the problem that the government is trying to solve clear and does it need to be solved now?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear why the government needs to be involved in solving this problem and what the government's role should be?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the key constraints to tackling the problem understood (eg time, money, capacity, legal)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear what would constitute success and how it would be measured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear how the goal fits in with other policies in the department/government?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a common understanding of the above issues that is shared across government?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hint: People who work in implementation find that problem often arise where there is clack of clarity around the goal and intended impact, and/or where outcomes are interpreted and prioritised differently across government.

Have all relevant options and evidence been considered?

Yes

No

Unclear

Have all the different policy levers and actions that could be relevant to the desired outcome been considered?

Has local, private and international evidence been studied in developing options?

Is there a clear justification for why the proposed solution is the right one, as opposed to other options?

Have the risks and potential unintended consequences been assessed, and is there a strategy to address these?

Is there a plan to test or pilot the proposed solution before starting to deliver at scale?

Hint: Using Issues Trees could help you answer these questions, see guidance on how to use them [here](#).

setting the goal

planning

achieving impact

Will those who need to act to achieve the goal do what is required?

Yes

No

Unclear

Is there an understanding of the needs, preferences, behaviours and experiences of the users / customers?

Has everyone involved in delivery been identified, and are the links between different actors known?

Do the relevant people and organisations have an incentive to deliver?

Is there the necessary capacity and skills in the system to deliver the policy?
Is there a plan to fill any gaps?

Hint: Consider using a Focus Group to gain insight into people's views and experiences. See tips on how to run one [here](#).

setting the goal

planning

achieving impact

Is there a plan for delivering the policy that includes a way to measure progress?

Yes

No

Unclear

Has the critical path for delivery been identified?

Is there an agreed timetable for delivering each element of the plan, and is responsibility clearly assigned?

Is there an expected trajectory and interim milestones set out for achieving the policy goal?

Have early warning indicators been developed to identify if something is going off track?

Is there a plan to gather qualitative data on progress?

Hint: People who work in implementation find that problems often arise where there is no clear allocation of responsibilities. They also emphasise the importance of developing good metrics and trajectories. For an explanation of trajectories see [here](#).

setting the goal

planning

achieving impact

Are accountabilities clear and supported by routine monitoring, so that you will always know if things are on track?

Yes

No

Unclear

Is it clear who is responsible for monitoring the leading indicators and qualitative evidence to identify future risks?

Are there accountability and governance arrangements in place to track delivery? Are Ministers being regularly engaged?

Is there a capable and empowered core team in place to drive delivery?

Is it clear who is responsible for monitoring the leading indicators and qualitative evidence to identify future risks?

Have key dependences been identified and are they being managed?

Is there a system for tracking and monitoring unintended consequences?

Hint: People who work in implementation say that it's critical to engage in regularly, active and active honest tracking of outcomes and progress against trajectories.

setting the goal

planning

achieving impact

Are you ready to take targeted action to improve performance and manage risk?

Yes

No

Unclear

Is it possible to start evaluating the impact of the project as soon as implementation commences?

Will the plan/policy be subject to review and iteration to reflect learning from delivery?

Is it clear how to escalate issues if problems arise?

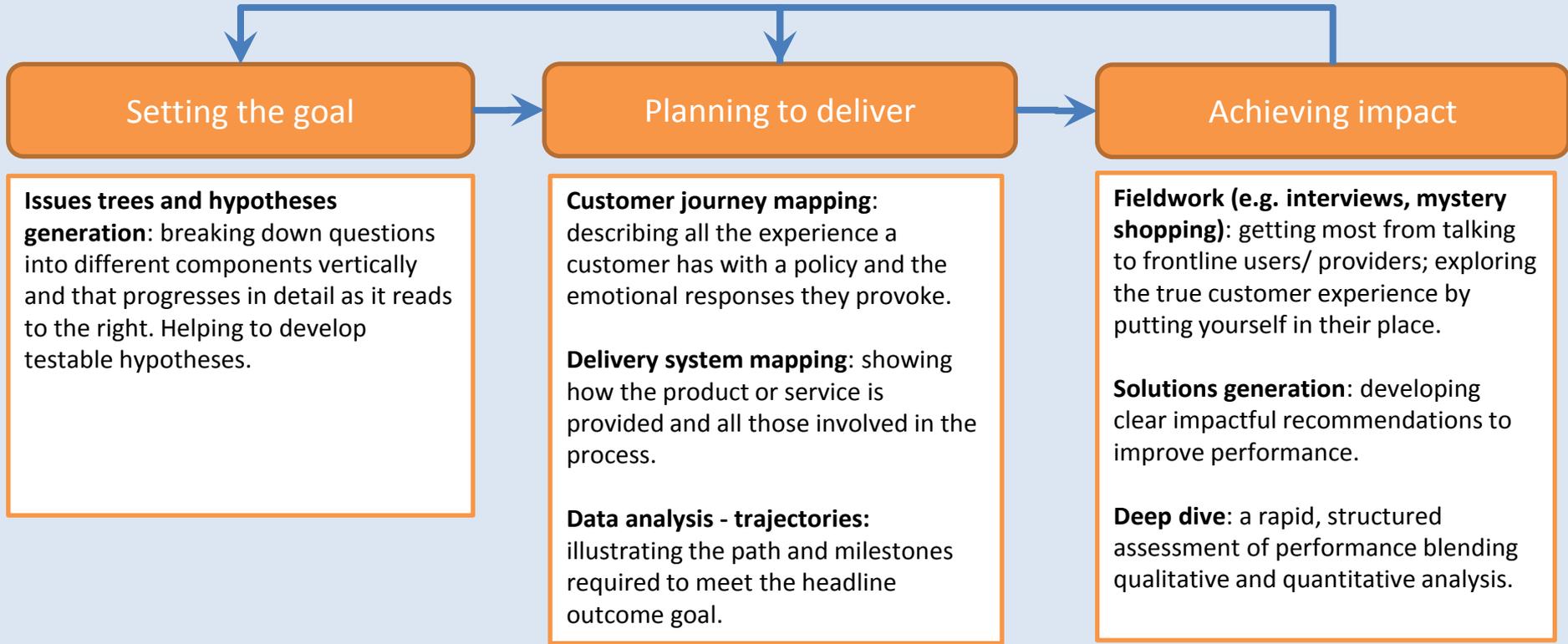
Will it be clear if the strategy/policy/programme has failed?

Hint: People who work in implementation emphasise the importance of starting to evaluate impact ASAP, so you know whether your policy is working.

setting the goal

planning

achieving impact



For more information on the tools outlined above or to discover additional tools to help improve the implementation of your policy, please contact us: implementationunit@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

In addition to standard guidance many other areas of Government offer helpful tools that can help enhance implementation, including:

GO Science Horizon Scanning
www.gov.uk/government/groups/horizon-scanning-programme-team

Behavioural Insight Team
www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/

What works centres
www.gov.uk/what-works-network

Institute for Government
www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/

Policy profession
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service-policy-profession