



The background features a stylized illustration of an observatory with a tall tower and a smaller dome, set against a dark blue sky and green hills. A large, circular data visualization with concentric rings and dots is positioned in the upper left, with lines connecting it to the observatory's dome. The text 'Events Data Observatory Feasibility Report' is centered within the innermost circle of this visualization.

Events Data Observatory Feasibility Report



Fabio Thomas, Richard Hawley, Yasmin Damji

frycreative.uk

FRY Creative would like to express our thanks to Spirit of 2012, especially Amy Heaton-Finch and Gaetano Iannetta, as well as to everybody who agreed to be interviewed as part of the process.

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Foreword

Events - individuals intentionally coming together in any shared moment or practice - play a central role in making the UK a vibrant, inclusive and healthy place to live and work. They bridge sectors, stakeholder groups, and communities, proactively enabling the arts to rub shoulders with sports organisations, volunteering to be embedded in cultural heritage. Whether formally funded by the third sector or delivered due to commercial viability; whether directly commissioned by central, devolved or local governments or run solely on will of the public; events play a role in making society work emotionally, culturally and economically.

You feel the power of events when you're there: in the crowd, on the stage or taking the pitch, but when it comes to attributing and articulating this after the fact, we often fall short in communicating the whole of an event's value. As a result, the impact of events - whether they be cultural, artistic, sporting or heritage driven, whether they be twenty people in a musty function room, or twenty-thousand in a public square - are often questioned: what's the aim or purpose? What's the value and impact? Where's the justification?

For events to be successful, these questions must be asked. But in order to answer them, we need to equip ourselves with robust, rigorous and thoughtful tools and methods of measurement. Equally, for events to be more successful, we need to move beyond the questions currently asked: what didn't work about an event? How could it be improved? How can events maximise each other's impacts? How do we pass on learning? To answer these questions, we must equip ourselves with space, conversations and collaborations that facilitate honest appraisal, iterative practices and a culture of ongoing learning and development.

Monitoring, evaluation and research - when delivered well - enables us to answer the above questions. Where they could do better is helping us move from evidencing the impact of singular events in isolation, to displaying the connected, long-lasting and contingent value of events as an ecosystem.

We believe that an Events Data Observatory can play a role in shifting this dial, and in doing so not only improve the storytelling, evidencing and evaluation of events, but also their capacity to achieve their intended outcomes in the first place.

- In its ability to aggregate data across events or conduct longitudinal studies into places: an Events Data Observatory will help us move from a culture of storytelling about single events to a body of inter-related impacts which show how events relate to each other.
- In promoting use of centralised methodologies alongside facilitating space for transfers of knowledge: it will help us move from a culture of competitive audience counting and pressured press releases to an open and honest attitude towards learning and iteration.

- In facilitating alignment of disparate event's theories of change: it will ensure that independently operating organisations don't undue each other's good work via conflicting outcomes and intentions.

An Events Data Observatory will not solve all issues associated with events. It will not ensure everything goes to plan at events. It will not even always succeed in articulating all facets of their magic.

What it will do however, is ensure the events we deliver keep getting better; that we keep getting more efficient and effective at achieving our aims; that when a positive impact is achieved, it is robustly and rigorously evidenced and articulated.

Via centralising pre-existing tools, models and data; via collaborating to collectively improve them; via fostering open communication about failure and learning - an Events Data Observatory can begin to grasp at the true power of events, helping to secure their place at heart of the UK economy, and in the minds of policymakers guiding it.

The following sector leaders have offered their signatures to represent their formal support for the findings and conclusions drawn in this feasibility study:

Helen Bewsher, Director of Evaluation, Bradford 2025

Board of Trustees, Spirit of 2012

Raidene Carter, Artistic Director & Co-CEO, Artsadmin

Dr Peter Dawson, Associate Professor in Economics, University of East Anglia

Dr Beatriz Garcia, Associate Director, Centre for Cultural Value

Martin Green CBE, Vice President Global Events, TAIT

Ruth Hollis, Chief Executive, Spirit of 2012

Professor David McGillivray, Professor of Event and Digital Cultures, University of the West of Scotland

Professor Gayle McPherson, Director, Centre for Culture, Sport and Events, University of the West of Scotland

Penny Mills, Director of Consultancy, The Audience Agency

Andrew Mowlah, Director of Research, Arts Council England

Professor Jonothan Neelands, Academic Director for Cultural Partnerships, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick

Cat Orchard, Head of Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund, West Midlands Combined Authority

Dr Verity Postlethwaite, Vice-Chancellor Independent Research Fellow, Loughborough University

Professor Andrew Smith, Professor of Urban Experiences, University of Westminster

Kully Thiarai, Executive Producer, Factory International

Nicola Turner MBE, Chief Executive Officer, United by 2022

Niels de Vos, Director, FABRIC Group

Professor Ben Walmsley, Director, Centre for Cultural Value

Background

Spirit of 2012 is the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Legacy funder, established with a £47m endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund. They fund projects that help people to be creative, active and connected across the UK in order to improve the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Spirit of 2012 (Spirit) is a spend out trust. Their current strategy sets out an ambition to commit the remaining endowment by the end of 2023 and close in 2026.

As part of committing their remaining endowment, Spirit have recently funded a number of linked research projects aimed at understanding how the culture, sports and events sectors can use, collect, unify and promote data, evaluation and research. This began with the publication of the Spirit of 2012 Inquiry and has resulted in the commissioning of several interlinked projects that look more specifically into how data and evaluation can be more uniform, better utilised and more influential in these sectors.

These projects include ‘Connective Tissue’ - a consultancy piece aiming to arrive at an ecosystem theory of change for mega events - a feasibility study for a ‘UK City of Sport’ competition, and an action research project aggregating audience data from three disparate mega events. The latter project was conducted by FRY Creative. This report pertains to the final project in this suite of related work, a feasibility study for an Events Data Observatory.

During summer 2023 a working group of academics and researchers, convened by Spirit of 2012, developed the idea of the Events Data Observatory which culminated in an Invitation to Tender, which was subsequently successfully awarded to FRY Creative in October 2023. The concept of the Events Data Observatory was outlined as followed in the Invitation to Tender for this project:

Birmingham 2022, Coventry 2021 and Unboxed: Creativity in the UK have given us access to a richness of data about the impact of events in the UK like never before. With it, we have a significant opportunity to explore questions about the long-term impact of events. But once the formal evaluations are done and the conversation moves on, this evidence is at risk of being seriously underutilised. Looking further back, we have a wealth of academic research, impact studies and grey literature covering events such as London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and Liverpool 2008 European Capital of Culture, as well as studies of smaller festivals, tournaments and community events.

Spirit of 2012’s Power of Events Inquiry found strong demand for a better way of understanding event impacts. There is a consensus that we need an approach that:

- *takes a longer-term view, giving a robust evidence base from which to track legacy commitments and change in the place over time;*
- *allows researchers to look at changes for people and places;*

- *draws connections between events rather than seeing them in isolation, including bridging the divide between sports and arts events.*

The following report represents a summary of the methodology undertaken by FRY Creative to deliver the feasibility study, as well as a summary of the findings of our public consultation.

Methodology

FRY Creative's proposal for undertaking this feasibility study was split into data collection and consultation across six research pillars as outlined below:

1. **Need:** what prospective users want from the Observatory. This will cover both the problems it seeks to solve and opportunities it seeks to capitalise on. This will use problems/opportunities identified in Spirit of 2012 Inquiry as a springboard for further research;
2. **Prospective functions:** the potential functions which the Observatory could offer in response to problems/opportunities above;
3. **Current services in place:** offers from other organisations already in place which solve/develop the issues/opportunities outlined above. This will explore how existing offers can be incorporated into the Observatory's services;
4. **Best practice models:** how a new Observatory can learn from other observatories/centres/hubs within the sector and beyond it. This would span learning from both the services they offer and their delivery models;
5. **Prospective delivery models:** the working models of the Observatory, both at an oversight level and at a service delivery level;
6. **Prospective funding models:** the fundings models available to the Observatory.

Via a mixed methods research approach FRY Creative sought to gather insights on the above research pillars. This information was gathered via three principal methods:

1. **1-2-1 Interviews:** Consultation conducted with a range of relevant stakeholders. This included researchers and evaluators working for agencies; academics; funders; central government; local authorities; cultural programmers; producers; community organisations; universities. A full list of the organisations that were interviewed as part of this work can be found in appendix one.
2. **Desk Research:** Independent research and study conducted according to the six pillars above. This desk research was further iterated and expanded upon as a result of the conversations held in our 1-2-1 interviews, where participants often pointed us in the direction of other relevant delivery, research, data or prospective partners.
3. **Event Research and Observation:** Attending sector events on evaluation, research and large scale events, in order to embed the feasibility study in contemporary conversations, needs and the ongoing direction of the sector.

The three research methods outlined above have offered insight and further questioning into the six research pillars listed.

At a midpoint during the research FRY Creative presented Spirit of 2012 with an interim report. This report offered a summary of the work conducted thus far, which had principally focused on understanding the needs to which the Observatory could respond (pillar 1), and some of the functions required to respond to those needs (pillar 2). By the nature of the research, these insights often led to discussions around how the functions would logistically operate. As such, the interim

report also offered insights into potential delivery models of the Observatory (pillar 5), as well as initial considerations regarding potential funding sources (pillar 6) and associated indicative costs. These latter points, as well as further detail throughout, have been provided in full here, alongside content from the interim report, as the final feasibility study for an Events Data Observatory.

FRY Creative's original proposal suggested that all 1-2-1 interviews be conducted in phase one of the project. Insights collected here intended to contribute to all six research pillars. However, some research pillars proved challenging due to the evolving nature of the feasibility study. For example, discussion of funding models was initially inconclusive, as there was no clear prioritisation of the functions at play at this point in the study. Equally, understanding the scale of investment needed was unclear due to multiple possible delivery models, and scales of function. In order to respond to this, FRY Creative have utilised feedback from the interim report, to inform the direction of this final feasibility study.

In undertaking 1-2-1 interviews for this feasibility study, we were faced with a central paradox. On one hand, the purpose of the consultation was to understand the need/s stakeholders would have for a Data Observatory. In this respect, conversations were to be semi-structured and led by the interviewee and their genuine needs. At the same time, in order to understand how the Observatory may be used, and whether they perceived its need, interviewees were keen to explore the proposed practical delivery functions that the Observatory may provide.

As such, across interviews, interviewees were sometimes responding to content presented before them, and sometimes generating ideas for the Observatory according to their individual professional needs, or the perceived needs of others, after being given ideas within the interview. As such, the functions outlined in the first section of this report are sometimes derived directly from interviewees (they spoke about a particular need, and drew out a function in response), and in some instances they were presented with a function as an example, and responded according to how far they thought the function was necessary, needed or purposeful.

Following the sign off of this feasibility report, FRY Creative engaged and re-engaged stakeholders with the final version of this study. A group of stakeholders who have a vested interest in its ongoing development were asked to co-sign the foreword of the report, in order to display their support for the study's findings and proposition. The intention is that the public launch of the study, to take place in June 2024, will further galvanise momentum for financial investment into piloting the Data Observatory. This is further outlined in the 'Next Steps' section of this study.

Introduction

Across interviews, there was broad agreement and buy-in to the idea of a Data Observatory. All interviewees saw its value and potential. Where opinion differed was according to where an Observatory's efforts are best directed. As outlined in the methodology section, in order to explore the potential delivery models for the Observatory, as well as potential funding streams, we need to understand where it will prioritise its effect. In short: who are its stakeholders? This is best understood according to the prospective functions that the Observatory could provide. Each has related user group/s, audiences, and/or stakeholders. Understanding the prospective functions of the Observatory is therefore a useful way to understand its prospective stakeholders. This in turn will help us understand how it may be funded.

As such this report uses potential functions of the Observatory as a springboard to discuss and outline broader issues which came to light during our research. 'Functions' are used throughout this report to refer to the work undertaken by the Events Data Observatory, either internally or by the contracted suppliers it may employ.

This report therefore takes two halves: the first offers a broad overview of the findings from our research, split into different topics of interest. The second, lays out, in some more detail, the proposed functions of the Observatory. In this latter section, we have begun to think about some of the practical tasks the Observatory may undertake. However, it is anticipated that these may shift according to how the Observatory becomes funded, and which stakeholders that particular funding is looking to focus its efforts at.

In the latter half Observatory functions are split into 'Project Functions' and 'Continuous Functions'. These functions are defined generally by the way in which they would be delivered by the Observatory. The former refers to discrete work, with a clear start and end, which is linked to specific deliverables and outputs. In many instances these functions could be tied to specific events. The latter refers to work which is continuous in nature, and is more about playing the role of a central body, point of reference, or home for knowledge, in the absence of other, centralised spaces. In most instances, therefore, the 'Continuous Functions' section is about events in general and the golden thread running between them. As will be discussed in the delivery models section, the former can be delivered internally by the Observatory or outsourced to other organisations via contract. The latter is best delivered via an internal, permanent, salaried staff.

The different sub-groups of functions are as follows. They have been briefly outlined here in order to inform research findings outlined in the first half of the report. More detail on each is given in the second half of the report.

PROJECT FUNCTIONS

1. Further Research Study

- Undertaking further research into the impact of events-based interventions. This could be conducting further analysis on pre-existing data, to understand cross-event based evidence on particular topics or could be conducting new research and evaluation on long-term impacts of events on places.

2. Event-specific Research Support

- The Observatory working specifically on the evaluation of events-based interventions. This could include provision of Technical Reference Groups or expert panels, consultancy on specific uniform methodologies, or strategic guidance on development of event specific outcomes.

CONTINUOUS FUNCTIONS

3. Reports Library

- The Observatory permanently housing evaluation reports from events-based interventions which have taken place. This could include conducting literature reviews to condense learning or consolidating recommendations which have continued to be made across disparate reports, to further lobbying and campaigning for their uptake.

4. Data Library

- Housing, open sourcing, aggregating and conducting analysis on quantitative and qualitative data which was previously collected at events-based interventions. This would enable further research to be conducted by the Observatory, but also facilitate better use of existing data by academics, researchers and agencies outside of it.

5. Methodologies Library

- The Observatory collating and centralising open-sourced methodologies relating to the evaluation of events-based interventions to promote the use of more uniform approaches and further disseminate pre-existing approaches such as Culture Heritage Capital or the Green Book. This would simultaneously seek to shift the dial on attitudes towards evaluation from competitive counting to learning-based iterative practice and better strategic alignment between events.

6. Data Tools

- The creation of a data dashboard using aggregated information from the Data Library. This would seek to broaden the pool of stakeholders of people who were able to benefit from Observatory outputs - to those working in programming, producing or funding. It would generate insights based on a large and robust sample of population data, collected from the range of events.

7. Transfer of Knowledge

- The Observatory acts as an active facilitator of dialogue between delivery organisations for events-based interventions, to ensure learning and iterative practice is maximised between events. This will take the form of casual working relationships between individuals as well as formalised reflection sessions, documents and toolkits.

8. Wraparound Engagement

- As detailed throughout this report, all functions of the Observatory require wraparound engagement planning and support to ensure that their outputs are used by the sector. This function facilitates wraparound engagement for a number of disparate stakeholders, who all require differing levels of support.

As will be outlined throughout this report, many of the functions are contingent on each other. For example, 'Further Research Study' refers to undertaking additional analysis on pre-existing data, to glean deeper insights over longer periods of time. This is therefore contingent on 'Data Library' - the Observatory acting as a space permanently housing data. In contrast, some functions are standalone and could operate in silo, for example: 'Reports Library', the permanent and central housing of evaluation, learning and best practice reports by the Observatory.

Whilst the functions alone do outline the multiple directions and possibilities for the Observatory, our conversations and desk research has also engendered multiple factors which affect the strategic direction and priorities of these functions. Therefore, we have chosen to outline these factors in the first half of the report, as they provide useful context for the functions which follow them. In short, they explain how different points of focus affect the prospective delivery functions, models and funding streams of the Observatory.

Research Findings

Research findings from Key Informant Interviews, Desk Research and Observation at Event Attendance

Users and Engagement Planning

Generally speaking, the depth and scale of work necessitated by the proposed functions is directly related to the proposed stakeholder group that the Observatory should serve. Depending on the interviewee's unique position, each felt that it should serve a slightly differing stakeholder. Different stakeholders using or engaging with the Observatory require different volumes of delivery work. Simply then, the higher the volume of the work delivered by the Observatory, the broader the type of stakeholder who could benefit from it.

Taking the 'Data Tools' and 'Data Library' functions as an example displays the variation. These functions essentially concern the Observatory working with pre-existing datasets. This represents one example amongst many functions the Observatory could provide and is used here to highlight the different volumes of internal Observatory delivery provision needed to engage different stakeholder groups.

At its most basic level, this function (listed in the second half of the report as 'Data Library') would involve working to gain access to datasets, archiving them and open sourcing them for individuals and organisations to access. This would involve no work on the data. It solely allows users to access data that either isn't currently available, is difficult to access or is underutilised. Users will be able to proceed and make use of this data for their own ends. The audience for this function would therefore be data analysts, researchers, academics, evaluators. Moreover, it would be those who are capacity-rich, as the data sets held by the Observatory would be unaggregated, or potentially uncleaned, and thus require significant preparatory work on the part of the user. This is further outlined in the [Events Data Aggregation Report](#).

The next level of depth to this function (outlined below as 'Data Tools - Aggregation') would be for the Observatory to collate data in the above manner, but to then undertake work aggregating, cleaning and preparing the data for further, external use. Again, as detailed in the [Events Data Aggregation Report](#), this would make it more readily usable.

The user group for this function would still predominantly be data analysts, researchers, academics, evaluators. However, the additional level of depth, facilitated by additional delivery work, would broaden Observatory engagement by making the data easier to use. This is due to the fact that:

1. the public user saves time due to lack of preparatory work needed;
2. the data would be more accessible to those who perhaps don't have the skills to aggregate data according to their needs;

3. the process works towards a more uniform or unified way of analysing and presenting events-based data, as aggregation is conducted by a central authority.

The final level of depth to this function (outlined as 'Data Tools - Dashboard' in the second half) would be for the Observatory to collate the data, aggregate it via the discussed methods, and then present the data in an analysed format whereby no further manipulation would be necessary for the user to be able to glean insight. In short, aggregated data would be presented in the form of a dashboard.

This results in a broadening of the user group to those outside of research and evaluation positions to those in programming, funding or production roles at organisations of different sizes. In turn, the Observatory would have a much larger impact footprint than if it were purely to open-source datasets for others to go on and manipulate. The larger impact footprint achieved here by the Observatory is a result of it providing information, data and evidence directly to those in cultural or sporting events delivery and provision, as opposed to solely informing further research by academics.

With this final step ('Data Tools - Dashboard') comes the need for bolt on, wraparound engagement plans. This is to ensure that the significant resource used to aggregate data, and build a dashboard, is an effective use of time. In short, the additional work necessitated in aggregating data and presenting it should not be undertaken if resources are not also invested in engagement planning. The latter is essential in ensuring that those delivering cultural or sporting events are aware of how the Observatory could benefit their work.

Due to preexisting skill sets, capacity strain and conflicting priorities, the prospective user group of a data dashboard (programmes, producers, etc) are much more difficult to engage than academics who are more naturally inclined to the offer. As we will go on to note, wraparound engagement and communications functions are a central and necessary part of the Observatory - no time should be invested in building tools, storing information or conducting research, if there is no dedicated function to engage stakeholders - evaluators, policymakers, programmers or the public - in Observatory outputs.

The volume of internal delivery work increases exponentially through the multiple tiers of the function outlined above. At a basic level, the Observatory will have to do more work to deliver a 'Data Dashboard' than it will a 'Data Library'. In addition, due to the fact that this additional work will broaden the prospective user pool, it will also increase the volume of wraparound delivery needed. As the volume of delivery work increases, potential users increase, as does the volume of engagement provision required. The budget implications of this should not be lost when discussing prioritisation of who the Observatory should serve.

Without wraparound engagement planning, functions will fail to reach adequate audiences. The need for, and size of, wraparound engagement functions increase according to the breadth of stakeholder that the Observatory is looking to engage. As above, 'Data Library' would need the least amount of wraparound engagement, followed by 'Data Aggregation', followed by 'Data

Dashboard'. As the stakeholder groups broaden, so does the work required to deliver the functions, as well as the wraparound engagement needed to make sure people use them.

Throughout all of the functions detailed in the second half, we have listed potential users. These are listed exhaustively below. In light of the above, they are listed in order of how much wraparound engagement they generally may need to engage, and how much function specific delivery work would be needed to engage them. This should be taken generally and is subject to change depending on the function in question.

It must be stressed, that despite needing the *lowest* level of engagement planning, groups at the top of this list (marked in green) will still require significant work to enable them to engage with the Observatory. The below outlines the principal prospective users of the Observatory, and how they may begin to use it. More detail is provided in the 'Functions' section of this document, and the possibilities provided here engagement are not exhaustive.

Academics and Researchers	Individuals from academic institutions, undergraduate and postgraduate students. These individuals will be conducting research and actively seeking out information to utilise for their own ends. They could be commissioned to deliver research by the Observatory, as a project function. The Data Observatory will be able to supply these individuals with data, research and insights for them to use for their own ends.
Evaluation & Research Agencies	These organisations will be commissioned to deliver research or evaluation activities on behalf of a client and according to a particular brief. They could be commissioned to deliver research by the Observatory, as a project function. They will also be proactively seeking out sources of data, advice on research methodologies, reference points in other research. The Data Observatory has the capacity to provide this data, guidance and reference.
Lobbying Organisations	These are organisations with a particular subject interest, who seek evidence to support their aims as an organisation. Due to the breadth of information held in events-based data, the Observatory may be able to provide these organisations with data to manipulate or evidence, statistics and research to reference in their lobbying activities.
Third Sector Funders	Cultural and Sports funders across the UK need evidence to inform their decision making. This could be around how demographic groups engage with particular types of provision, where funding has been allocated geographically, or the long-term impact of placed based funding models. Whilst funders have valuable data from their own grantees, the sector lacks a centralised cross-funder view. The Observatory could be the source of such evidence. In addition, they may also seek to benefit from long-term evaluation of individual events made possible by the Observatory.
Local Authorities	Policy makers in local government, in the same manner as funders, need evidence to inform their decision making and policy. This becomes particularly relevant for local politicians and civil servants needing geographically specific data which may be otherwise unavailable. Combined Authorities and Local Authorities seeks to gain from the depth available from large datasets. The individuals are often working in time pressured environments, the Observatory would facilitate confidence in a reliable location to store the data they've commissioned, following organisational dissolution.

Central Government	Central government, in particular DCMS, are often the only body which has a continual, albeit scaleable, involvement in all large scale and mega events. The Observatory would provide a centralised mechanism through which to engage the sector around past, present and upcoming events. As will be discussed, the Observatory could provide a place to prompt use of centrally accepted methodologies such as the Green Book, Culture Heritage Capital, or the Audience Counting Methodology brief currently commissioned by DCMS. Politicians, Ministers and MPs may also make use of place based or topic-based evidence which informs their policy agendas or priorities.
Journalists/Media	Through the consultation a few stakeholders remarked that the Observatory ought to play a role in changing public perceptions of spending on Culture, Arts, Heritage and Sport. The Observatory could achieve this by engaging media in its research outputs, to change the narrative on the value of, and investment in, Culture, Sports and their respective events.
Delivery Organisations	Cultural, Arts, Sports, Heritage and Events organisations often commission research, audience segmentation, or engagement consultation projects to better understand their prospective users' needs, priorities, and habits. The Observatory has the potential to lessen the costs of this research for delivery organisations. It also has the potential to foster better data driven decision making attitudes for these organisations, by encouraging a culture where data is accessible and readable. Moreover, events evaluation often comes with learning and recommendations which are currently under-accessed and under-utilised. This user group seeks to gain most from these learnings, as they are the only stakeholder group who frequently delivers provision with the public.
Community Organisations	Less established delivery organisations, voluntary organisations and community organisations seek to gain from the Observatory in the same way as delivery organisations: through using data to understand the levers of change in the users they are engaging with. These organisations however, often stretched for resource and capacity, and will therefore need the most support in order to be able to engage effectively with outputs from the Observatory. They also seek to gain most from the methodologies housed by the Observatory, but may require additional support in learning about evaluation from the ground up.

As outlined, there are a number of different stakeholder groups that the Observatory can benefit from. Each requires their own level of wraparound engagement delivery. Moreover, certain functions, or levels of function provision, will cater to different stakeholder groups.

Sectors

To date, we have principally focused on discussion of the type of content that the Observatory may deliver through its functions, and the users who may engage with each. In the same manner that user group prioritisation has an effect on delivery modelling, funding and costs, so does the sectors that the Observatory looks to support, and the scales at which it is supporting these sectors.

Primarily, there is an overarching ambition among some interviewees that the Observatory incorporates data from, as well as engages with, the Arts, Culture and Heritage sectors as well as the Sports and Physical Activity sectors. There is clear ambition and desire for cross-sector collaboration. As identified by interviewees, the sectors listed above have much to learn from each other's practices, with each holding particular expertise in areas where there are skills gaps for their counterparts. Moreover, the specific lens of events-based intervention often facilitates more fluid crossover between the sectors: the Commonwealth Games with a wraparound Cultural Festival or Cities of Culture incorporating wellbeing focused, physical activity such as yoga or dance classes, for example.

Logistically, many of the functions can facilitate inclusion of both sectors (crudely bucketed here as Cultural and Sports) with comparatively minimal additional input. The 'Data Library' can seamlessly include datasets from both sectors, with comparatively minimal amendment to delivery of the function. Equally, 'Further Research Study' could look at how impacts differ between sports and cultural interventions in events.

In spite of this, when we broaden the Observatory out to benefitting two sectors, any dissemination or engagement functions would need to expand. Clearly, they would need to undertake double the amount of work, building networks, and refining communications to ensure that target sectors felt like the Observatory was 'for them'. In addition, if the general branding and marketing of the Observatory is that it is for use by both sectors, and rather not defining the sector that it is intended to be used by, then this further exacerbates the difficulties with engagement planning. If it is not branded as a culture sector tool, for example, then the culture sector may be less likely to engage with it.

As above, the more sectors which are targeted, the more delivery capacity is needed by the Observatory. However, if the Observatory were to only prioritise engagement with a particular stakeholder group, then it may be more possible to engage that stakeholder group across multiple sectors simultaneously. For example, if the Observatory were to only focus on engaging academics, then it would be more possible to allocate capacity to engaging academics interested in multiple areas (social cohesion; wellbeing; public health) or across multiple sectors (sports research; heritage engagement research; cultural interventions) or across multiple geographies (local authorities; central government; devolved governments). Again, the various routes forward could be defined according to weighing up which is a greater priority: working with multiple sectors, working with different types of stakeholders, working across a number of geographical areas.

The advantage of taking a cross-sector view, is that it enables a focus on the outcomes of interventions, rather than the interventions themselves. It shifts the onus onto the ‘why’ of events-based work, as opposed to the ‘how’. In short, if a sporting event and a cultural event both intend to increase a sense of place in its audiences, then an Observatory which accounts for, understands and directs both types of intervention simultaneously will result in stronger outcomes and better learning. In turn this will lead to more refined, directed and intentional interventions that are grounded in the ‘why’ over the ‘how’.

Geography

A further observation on the part of a number of interviewees was the extent to which the Observatory would include information from events that took place solely in England or whether it would also account for interventions and content from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. As has been noted, the Observatory provides a unique opportunity for broader collaboration, shared learning and better unification of strategy. As such there is a clear benefit to the incorporation of data, learning and reporting from events-based interventions taking place in the devolved nations. This is further compounded by the fact that, as identified by the Spirit of 2012 inquiry, both Scotland and Wales benefit from a National Events Strategy, where England does not. The development of such a strategy for England features as a recommendation within the Ecosystem Theory of Change study - another project funded by Spirit of 2012 being delivered in tandem within this feasibility study.

Evidently, the broader geographical scope further exacerbates engagement planning capacity issues outlined in the prior section. However, as frequently noted, strategic alignment across events, better integrated delivery, and a stronger willingness to lift learnings from peers, will lead to events’ impacts becoming greater than the sum of their parts. In addition, as will be discussed in the following section, if the Observatory is to focus on events on a Large and Major scale, then UK-wide focus enables a large pool of data to be included. Finally, the Observatory seeks to benefit from learning generated in the implementation of the national strategies in Wales and Scotland. The incorporation of events data, reporting and methodologies from across the UK into an Events Observatory is therefore a key recommendation for the development of the Observatory.

Event Scales

A further distinction is needed to define which scales of event are prioritised by the Observatory. This does not refer to how individuals working at the events might engage with the Observatory as users, but rather how events of different scales might contribute data, reporting and learning to the Observatory. The differing scales of events have been crudely and approximately outlined by total cost in the below table to illustrate the point. They have been further categorised into four main tiers of events-based intervention. There are no doubt events which are smaller scale than those defined as ‘mid-sized’ here, however, as the focus of this feasibility is on larger scale events, they have been omitted for ease. This is also largely due to the fact that small scale events often don’t publish event-specific cost and spend information. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are

multiple ways in which event scale can be categorised, cost has been selected in this instance as the most primitive, uniform input across interventions.

Type	Event	Investment (nearest 100k)
Giga	London 2012 Olympics (inc. Cultural Olympiad)	£8,770,000,000 ¹
Mega	Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (inc. Cultural Programme)	£778,000,000 ²
Mega	Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games (inc. Cultural Programme)	£543,000,000 ³
Mega	Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008	£122,400,000 ⁴
Mega	UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK	£120,000,000 ⁵
Mega	London 2012 Cultural Olympiad	£97,000,000 ⁶
Major	Hull City of Culture 2017	£32,800,000 ⁷
Major	Coventry City of Culture 21	£21,300,000 ⁸
Major	Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme	£13,200,000 ⁹
Major	Birmingham 2022 Festival	£12,000,000 ¹⁰
Major	Leeds 23	£8,000,000 ¹¹
Large	Birmingham Festival 23	£2,000,000 ¹²
Large	Manchester International Festival 2019	£1,500,000 ¹³
Large	Croydon Borough of Culture 2023	£1,200,000 ¹⁴
Mid-sized	Cambridge Literary Festival	£400,000 ¹⁵
Mid-sized	Lichfield Festival	£400,000 ^{16 17}

¹ London 2012: UK public says £9bn Olympics worth it - BBC Sport, 26 July 2013.

² Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, 8 April 2024.

³ Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games legacy: final evaluation report, Chapter 1: Background and Introduction, 3 April 2018.

⁴ Liverpool claims 650% return on Capital of Culture spend - Place North West, 25 September 2009.

⁵ Independent report finds UNBOXED generated £175.5m - Access All Areas, 30 March 2023.

⁶ 2012 Cultural Olympiad - Wikipedia.

⁷ Cultural Transformations: The Impact of Hull UK City of Culture 2017 - Summary, March 2018.

⁸ Funding of Coventry City of Culture Trust, 18 July 2023. This is a pre-delivery budget. The final budget will be made available as part of the final evaluation.

⁹ Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games legacy: final evaluation report, Chapter 7: Culture, 3 April 2018.

¹⁰ About the Birmingham 2022 Festival.

¹¹ Charity overview, LEEDS CULTURE TRUST.

¹² Birmingham Festival 23 Evaluation Report October 2023

¹³ Manchester City Council, Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee, Manchester International Festival 2021, November 2021.

¹⁴ Croydon allocates £850k for Borough of Culture legacy | News | ArtsProfessional, 18 March 2024. This is a pre-delivery budget. The final budget will be made available as part of the final evaluation.

¹⁵ Charity Overview - CAMBRIDGE LITERARY FESTIVAL.

¹⁶ Charity Overview - LICHFIELD FESTIVAL LIMITED.

¹⁷ The smaller scale events in this instance often do not publish event specific costs, so those listed are taken from the total spend of the Charity, where the Charity's principal purpose is to put on an event.

The above sample of events enables categorisation into six scales:

1. **Giga Events** (spend in excess of £1,000,000,000)
2. **Mega Events** (spend in excess of £50,000,000)
3. **Major Events** (spend in excess of £5,000,000)
4. **Large Events** (spend in excess of £1,000,000)
5. **Mid-sized Events** (spend in excess of £100,000)
6. **Small Events** (spend less than £100,000)

Evidently, events from all five categories bring their own unique value to the Observatory, each generating specific and valuable learning which can inform events in the tiers above, below and around it. However, as above, Small Events, which are produced and delivered by smaller teams, may require additional support in engaging with Observatory to provide it with data, learning and insights. They should therefore, in the first instance, not be a focus for the Observatory's datasets. In addition, in order for the events to be able to contribute meaningfully to Observatory data, then the scale of evaluation taking place must reach certain thresholds: quality assurance, strong confidence intervals, etc. It is anticipated that events in Large, Major and Mega categories are more likely to hold such information. Therefore, due to the additional wraparound engagement necessitated by gathering information from Small and Mid-sized events, it is suggested that in the first instance the Observatory should focus its study and learning from Large and Major Events. Mega-events should equally not be a primary focus due to their frequency, and the fact that the impact they seek to achieve is on a radically different scale to that in the categories below.

This prioritisation is for a further three reasons. First, that Major and Large Events outlined above, often employ a devolved delivery model, where delivery of specific interventions, sub-events, shows, takeovers are often conducted by organisations which would typically be delivering small, localised events. Generally, in order to engage specific communities, topic interest groups, or demographics, Major and Large Events programmes devolve delivery to smaller organisations. As such, evaluation of Major and Large Events should still include learning and data from the smaller organisations which are more embedded in particular communities.

Second, despite not inputting information or data to the Observatory, smaller organisations can still benefit from learning and data presented from Major and Large Events as users, given the appropriate wraparound engagement functions.

Third, specifically referring to the Data Library, Aggregation and Dashboard functions, that the size and scale of data provided by Major and Large Events, with sample sizes in the thousands, may drown insight from smaller organisations, who are more likely to provide data with smaller sample sizes. This could be mitigated however by appropriate, albeit complex, sample weighting.

Delivery Models

As outlined throughout this report, the possible delivery models for the Observatory are contingent on the scale and scope of its work. However, there are two areas which can be

discussed at this point in its development: who will deliver the functions and who will own the Observatory.

In undertaking the primary research for this feasibility, and in developing the prospective functions, it has become clear that, regardless of the scale, the Observatory will need some form of permanent or dedicated staff. Its success and purpose are contingent on holding space and knowledge which is not currently centralised. This will only work if there is a central, permanent staff team.

However, in spite of this, some interviewees discussed that, in order for the Observatory to engage the sector, it must gain buy-in from evaluation and research agencies. The suggested way it could do so would be for them to be involved in delivering some of the work which the Observatory undertakes. This runs counter to a centralised, permanent staff team.

As such, it is anticipated that the Observatory would need to adopt a hybrid delivery model. As outlined throughout the functions, this would involve a core team delivering particular functions (mainly those outlined in the Continuous Functions section), with particular functions then outsourced to the sector (mainly those outlined in the Project Functions section). Generally, the internal staff team would be responsible for Library and engagement-based functions - storing information and enabling stakeholders to engage with it - whereas contracted suppliers would be commissioned to create content in the form of new research, insights and learning. This would also engender some of the network, relationship and buy-in building necessary to the functioning of a successful Observatory.

Ownership and Oversight

The second principal question on the delivery model for the Observatory is ownership: is it to be stored and housed within a pre-existing organisation; will it form a new organisation; how will it be governed? Is it to be a private sector, for profit company; a third sector charity; or a department within a public sector body?

The principal benefit of embedding within another organisation is minimisation of set up costs. The challenges: that there is the potential to lose some strategic ownership - an existing organisation will have its own mission and aims. The latter could be combated by democratic, external oversight or governance, perhaps by a consortium of funders, as discussed in the 'Funders' section of this report.

A central driver for the Observatory is making evaluation and research delivery more efficient: using pre-existing data, sharing methodologies, strategically overlapping intended impacts. In this vein, this feasibility study recommends that the Observatory does sit within a pre-existing organisation.

In addition to the costs and time saved in not establishing a new entity, there are a large number of organisations, projects, programmes and funders delivering similar services and functions to the

Observatory. Bolting the Observatory proposition onto their pre-existing structures will therefore serve as the most efficient option for its setup. This will be further discussed in the 'Current Services and Projects' section of the report.

Prospective Observatory Structure

In light of the above observations and conclusions, we have outlined a prospective structure for the Observatory in diagram form below. It displays an Events Observatory delivered within an existing organisation, sharing Finance, HR, Operations and Fundraising delivery with the organisation in which it was housed. Any funding intended for the Observatory would proportionally contribute to the costs of this delivery to the housing organisation.

The centre of the diagram depicts the proposed structure of the Observatory's internal team. It splits the Observatory into two principal departments: Engagement and Research. These each have three respective areas of responsibility, which, depending on the focus of the Observatory could be conducted by individual members of staff, small teams, or one individual working across multiple areas of responsibility. Each area of responsibility is outlined as below, as well as in the diagram.

ENGAGEMENT: Connecting the Observatory to organisations and individuals

Academic and Agency Engagement

Responsible for using content produced by the Research team to engage academics and research agencies. They will use content in their own research studies; adopt methodologies; come to the Observatory for advice, discussion and to share learning; and contribute to its datasets and reports repository.

Events and Programming Engagement

Responsible for using content produced by the Research team to engage organisations who are delivering, programming or producing events-based interventions. This should be furthering data driven decision making, using Observatory outputs to guide organisations in the type of work they are programming, and how it is delivered.

Press and Policy Engagement

Responsible for using content produced by the Research team to engage policymakers and press. The former will utilise data and learning from the Observatory to influence policy decision making. They will also be responsible for collecting methods, data, inputs from funders and local authorities to input into Observatory functions. They will also be responsible for managing an external PR agency as well as providing topic or place specific data and insights to lobbying and subject-specific organisations.

RESEARCH: Producing Observatory outputs

Data Led

Responsible for sourcing, aggregating and open-sourcing data, managing the data dashboard. Provide Academic and Agency Engagement with data for them to conduct research. Provide Events and Programming Engagement with access and information on Data Dashboard. Takes data from Press and Policy Engagement to input into the Observatory.

Methods Led

Responsible for sourcing, devising and disseminating uniform methodological approaches. Provide Academic and Agency Engagement with methods for them to apply when delivering events-based work. Provide Events and Programming Engagement with access and information on historic theories of change, uniform indicators and outcomes, etc. Takes methods from Press and Policy Engagement to input into the Observatory.

Learning Led

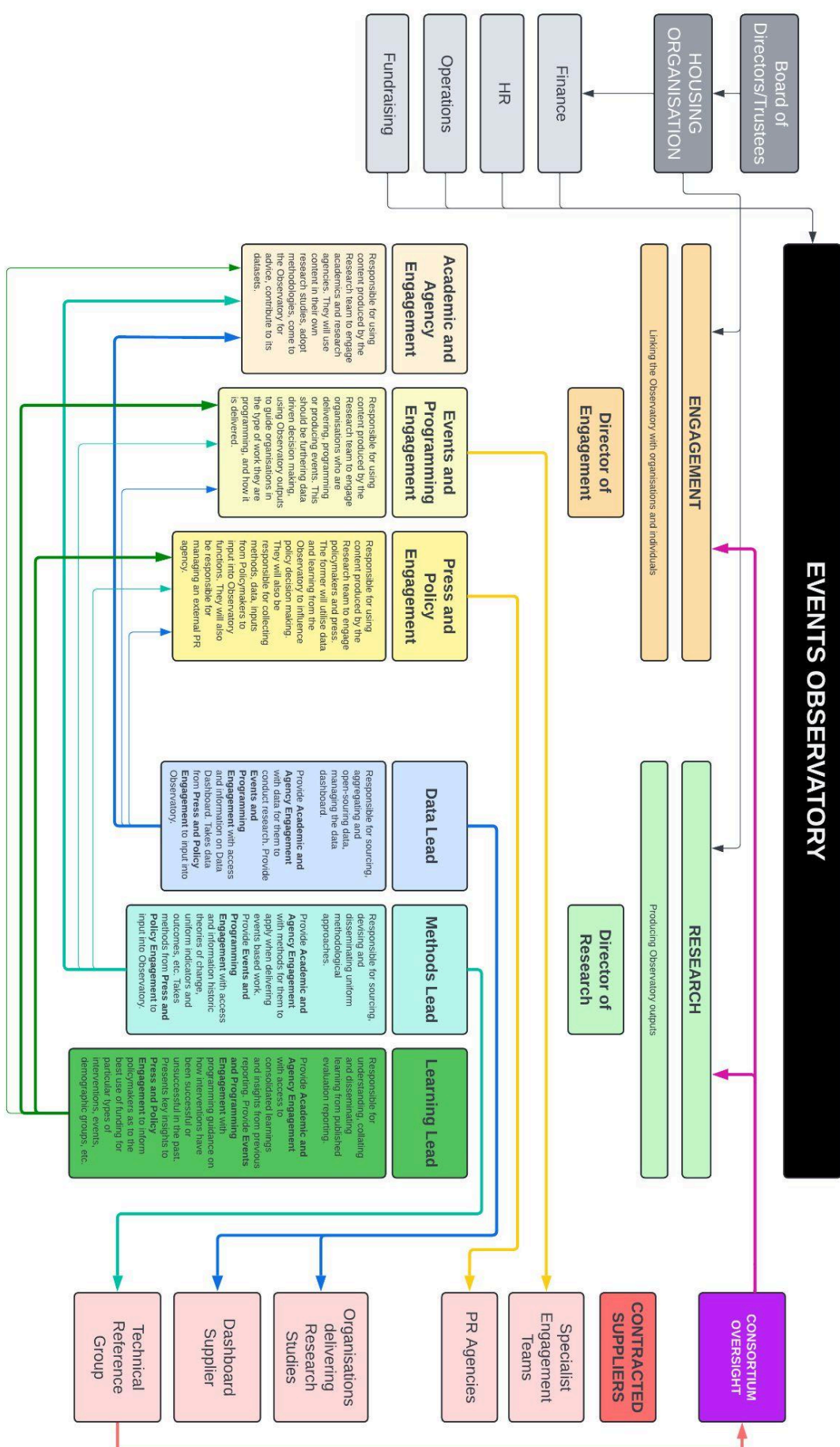
Responsible for understanding, collating and disseminating learning from published evaluation reporting. Provide Academic and Agency Engagement with access to consolidated learnings and insights from previous reporting. Provide Events and Programming Engagement with programming guidance on how interventions have been successful or unsuccessful in the past. Presents key insights to Press and Policy Engagement to inform policymakers as to the best use of funding for particular types of interventions, events, demographic groups, etc.

The right-hand side of the diagram outlines some of the external contracts which may be engaged by the Observatory, to deliver work as Project Functions, or otherwise.

As outlined in the 'Fundlers' section of this report, the top-right corner of the diagram establishes an 'Oversight Consortium' which would guide and direct the work of the Observatory. It is anticipated that - even if the Observatory is resourced by a single funder - this Oversight Consortium is best made up of a range of UK events-based funders (DCMS, UKRI, ACE, Sport England, NLHF, NLCF, etc).

As has been detailed throughout, the success of the Observatory is contingent on takeup of funders, both as users of the Observatory, but also as contributors to it. This Oversight Consortium will be informed by the Observatory's outsourced Technical Reference Group, as detailed in its function section, a group of independent experts on the impact of events-based interventions. This structure is intended to ensure that the Events Observatory has distinct strategic input from outside of its housing Organisation, but also that all parties (Housing Organisation, Observatory Internal Team, Oversight Consortium, Technical Reference Group) are adequately held to account.

Prospective Observatory Structure (PDF available [here](#))



Funding

The sixth research pillar of this feasibility study aims to identify potential funding avenues for the Events Observatory. As such, many of the interviewees were UK funders. As with other stakeholders which took part in the 1-2-1 interviews, UK funders saw the value and ambition of the Data Observatory. They identified how it would be useful to their own work, as well as the work of organisations they fund and support.

Some interviewees suggested that the Observatory would be best funded, and therefore governed, by a consortium of different parties. A primary reason given is that many of the functions outlined are centred around better collaboration, more open sourcing, more uniform data collection techniques. Naturally then, a consortium approach fits the content of the Observatory. Moreover, funders have central control over whether the organisations they work with engage with these practices. More funders invested in the Observatory's success results in more organisations willing to engage with its functions and contribute to its Libraries.

For example, if the Data Observatory was established by a consortium, then funders in the group could write into their agreements with delivery providers that they will open-source data via the Observatory. This would decrease the delivery capacity needed for the 'Data Library' function. Additionally, if the 'Methodologies Library' seeks to store and disseminate more uniform indicators, metrics and output definitions; then funders are equally able to stipulate that projects they fund utilise these methodologies. In turn, more uniform data is collected. In turn, the 'Data Aggregation' function becomes more labour light.

Even if funders acting as a consortium stipulated that 5% of the work they fund must use centralised Observatory methodologies, and contribute to a centralised Observatory Data Library, then the insights possible would facilitate a number of functions outlined. More data, from a range of sources, collected in increasingly uniform ways, provides a higher volume of opportunities for cross-event analysis; artform/geographical comparison; or baselining than datasets which are currently publicly available.

Strands of funding for the Observatory could equally be split into the differing functions it delivers. For example, the continuous functions and internal staff team of the Observatory could be funded via one pot (whether that be a consortium or single funder). In turn, discrete project functions - such as longitudinal study into a particular topic or geographical area could be funded via a separate pot, and as such a separate funder, or consortium of funders. Funding drawn down for use in project funding could equally ring fence a certain portion of the total budget for bolstering continuous Observatory Functions. By structuring the Observatory as continuous and project functions, and matching funding pots to this structure, the Observatory is able to stay flexible to the potentially volatile nature of funding access. This is further supported by the fact that project functions are outsourced to contracted delivery partners and therefore less long-term commitment is made to their spend on the part of the Observatory.

Current Services

The third and fourth research pillars look to understand similar work and organisations currently in existence. Below outlines a list of organisations, projects, programmes, contracts or studies which have been derived from 1-2-1 interviews and desk research, along with a brief summary - often lifted directly - of their work.

As outlined in the research pillars the mapping of current services was intended to simultaneously identify any delivery models that the Observatory could draw from, but also any proposed functions which are currently being undertaken elsewhere. Throughout the above research findings, we have consolidated and outlined delivery models and learnings from some of these current services. In the below list, we have begun to briefly outline the work of the organisation, in order to understand and map where similar services are currently at play. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, and further work needs to be conducted into the specific intentions of projects, to understand how far they do, or do not, currently deliver on Events Observatory aims.

<u>Centre for Cultural Value</u>	Building a shared understanding of the differences that arts, culture, heritage and screen make to people's lives and to society. Ambition for cultural policy and practice to be based on rigorous research and evaluation of what works and what needs to change. Not event specific, but a large crossover of content and function.
<u>eventIMPACTS</u>	A toolkit of resources to help event organisers improve their evaluation of the impacts associated with staging sporting and cultural events. Methodological guidance but no open sourcing of data. Across sports and culture.
<u>Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre</u>	Independent research and policy recommendations for the UK's creative industries. Delivering research functions in an agency format, not open sourcing data or methodologies.
<u>Audience Answers</u>	Insights tool, designed with users to help them achieve audience development goals. Aggregating user inputted data for all users to utilise. Comparison and baselining against industry.
<u>WM Place Profiler</u>	Brings together audience, demographic and social data from across the West Midlands, to help organisations better understand the people and places of the region. Focus on culture, non-events specific.
<u>Birmingham City Observatory</u>	Data collaboration for insight and innovation. Not events specific but open sourcing data for collaboration and wider use across sectors.
<u>World Cities Culture Forum</u>	Centralised study of global city data, centralising and aggregating data from around the world for purposes of comparison and study. Lobbying activities around topics.
<u>Observatory for Sport</u>	Identify knowledge gaps, and find, commission and communicate relevant research and evidence in order to inform solutions. Sport specific.
<u>Culture and Heritage Capital Programme</u>	Evaluation guidance and principals around measuring culture and heritage programmes with the intention of helping organisations make the case for stronger investment. Not events specific.

Evaluation Repository

Project currently in beta phase, being undertaken by DCMS. All evaluation undertaken will be published and open sourced via an evaluation repository. Search terms are currently limited, not events specific.

Events Legacy

Contract currently being managed by DCMS to develop:

1. Uniform ways for baselining events-based interventions
2. Methodologies for long-term evaluation of events
3. Understanding current picture of long-term impact of mega events

Audience Attendance Methodology

Contract currently being managed by DCMS to develop uniform ways of counting audience engagement in large scale, public space-based events.

HM Treasury Green Book & Evaluation Task Force Magenta Book

HM Treasury guidance on how to appraise and evaluate policies, projects and programmes. Centrally approved government guidance on how to conduct evaluation. Non-event specific, and often difficult to apply to events.

UK Data Service

The UK Data Service is the principal repository for economic, population, and social research data in the UK. As hosts of the largest trusted digital archive of its kind, its expertise in the collection, preservation, and dissemination of quality data is the culmination of nearly sixty years of sustained investment by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in the UK's research data infrastructure.

Public Health Profiles

Fingertips is a large public health data collection. Data is organised into themed profiles, which can be selected via their website. Most relevant information is on Physical Activity and Mental Health.

Participation Survey

The Participation survey is a continuous push to web survey of adults aged 16 and over in England. The purpose of the survey is to understand:

- Provide a central, reliable evidence source that can be used to analyse cultural, digital, and sporting engagement, providing a clear picture of why people do or do not engage.
- Provide data at a county level to meet user needs, including providing evidence for the levelling up agenda.
- Underpin further research on driving engagement and the value and benefits of engagement.

OECD

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives. Its goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all. We draw on 60 years of experience and insights to better prepare the world of tomorrow. Together with governments, policy makers and citizens, we work on establishing evidence-based international standards and finding solutions to a range of social, economic and environmental challenges. From improving economic performance and creating jobs to fostering strong education and fighting international tax evasion, we provide a unique forum and knowledge hub for data and analysis, exchange of experiences, best-practice sharing, and advice on public policies and international standard-setting.

The above does not intend to be an exhaustive list of all similar services at play, but rather seeks to illustrate that much of the work the Observatory intends to deliver has crossover points with other projects, organisations and programmes at play. This is not to say that the above outlines that the work proposed throughout this report is being conducted. Rather, the Observatory seeks to play

the central role in convening the currently disparate work which already exists within the field, to better direct and strategically align it. In some instances, because the above resources are not centrally listed or accessible, and in many cases because they do communicate frequently with each other, there is often confusion on where to access data, methods, historic reporting or learning. The result: organisations delivering work don't, or they gain a limited view. This is in the minority of instances, and the takeaway, that whilst centralisation and signposting does take place throughout the above, it does so to different ends than those sought by an Events Data Observatory.

Whilst delivering the functions outlined throughout this report, the Observatory would seek to utilise and disseminate data, learning and methods from the above sources. In addition, it would seek to signpost its stakeholders and users to the other services at play. In short, as a central hub for events-based impact, the Observatory would not seek to write over the above work in the sector, but rather draw it together, consolidate its content, and signpost stakeholders back out to the work taking place.

In addition, as outlined, many of the functions proposed by the Observatory operate as an ecosystem - they are reliant on each other. This is where opportunities for success could be maximised by linking some of the currently disparate work via an Observatory. By means of example, data aggregation and better cross-event examination goes hand in hand with adopting uniform methodologies. This work is maximised when it can communicate with each other, via an Observatory.

Indicative Costs

In order to understand the level of investment needed to develop a data observatory, we have roughly approximated the running costs of an Observatory, should it be housed within a pre-existing organisation, and structured in the proposed manner.

The below budget outlines spend in five principal areas:

- **Core Team Salary** - internal members of the Events Observatory team.
- **Internal Budgets** - the money internal members of the Events Observatory team would have at their disposal to deliver their roles. This would largely be separate from any project-based contracting of suppliers needed to deliver certain functions.
- **Housing Organisation** - budget contribution to the organisation in which the Observatory was housed, to support additional capacity needed for operations costs outlined.
- **Continuous External Contract Costs** - budget for ongoing contracted suppliers not linked to individual project-based functions. For example, a dashboard supplier would need to be contracted on an ongoing basis.
- **Project Contract Support** - the most approximate of the budgets - this is to cover costs of specific project-based functions, for example a longitudinal study of the impact of events on a single city. Project based contracts factor in budget to dissemination of their outputs. These costs are evidently scaleable depending on size and scope of the study or project taking place.

Indicative costs have been outlined in three tiers, with each tier outlining running costs per year, of an Events Data Observatory. These tiers are briefly summarised as follows:

Minimum Viable Product (£177,500 per year)

- Internal team of 3 full time members of staff - one director, one engagement lead and one research lead;
- Contributing £12,500 to a housing organisation for ongoing operation costs;
- Spending £25,000 a year on function running costs;
- No continuous external suppliers;
- No project specific spend.

Core Team

- Core team of 8 full time members of staff - two directors, three engagement leads, three research leads;
- Contributing £25,000 to a housing organisation for ongoing operation costs;
- Spending £50,000 a year on function running costs;
- No continuous external suppliers;
- No project specific spend, however significant increase to internal capacity could see some of this work delivered internally.

Core Team, External Projects Supported

- Core team of 8 full time members of staff - two directors, three engagement leads, three research leads;
- Contributing £25,000 to a housing organisation for ongoing operation costs;
- Spending £50,000 a year on function running costs;
- Dashboard supplier and technical reference group on retainer;
- 3 project functions delivered per year.

Indicative Budget (excel available [here](#))

AREA	DESCRIPTION	DETAIL	COST	MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT	CORE TEAM NO PROJECT FUNCTIONS	CORE TEAM 3 PROJECTS	
		Director of Research	£60,000.00	0.50	£30,000.00	1.00	£60,000.00
		Director of Engagement	£60,000.00	0.50	£30,000.00	1.00	£60,000.00
		Academic and Agency Engagement	£40,000.00	0.33	£13,200.00	1.00	£40,000.00
		Events and Programming Engagement	£40,000.00	0.33	£13,200.00	1.00	£40,000.00
		Press and Policy Engagement	£40,000.00	0.34	£13,600.00	1.00	£40,000.00
		Data Lead	£40,000.00	0.33	£13,200.00	1.00	£40,000.00
Core Team Salary	Costs to cover the internal team salaries of the Data Observatory	Methods Lead	£40,000.00	0.33	£13,200.00	1.00	£40,000.00
		Learning Lead	£40,000.00	0.34	£13,600.00	1.00	£40,000.00
TOTAL			£360,000.00	£140,000.00	£330,000.00	£360,000.00	
Internal Budgets	Budget for use by the internal team in the delivery of continuous functions	Research Budget	£15,000.00	0.50	£7,500.00	1.00	£15,000.00
		Engagement Budget	£15,000.00	0.50	£7,500.00	1.00	£15,000.00
		General Budget	£20,000.00	0.50	£10,000.00	1.00	£20,000.00
TOTAL			£50,000.00	£25,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	
Housing Organisation	Overheads to cover the housing of a data Observatory within a pre-existing organisation, and for the Observatory to benefit from pre established operational functions.	Finance	£5,000.00	0.50	£2,500.00	1.00	£5,000.00
		HR	£5,000.00	0.50	£2,500.00	1.00	£5,000.00
		Operations	£10,000.00	0.50	£5,000.00	1.00	£10,000.00
		Fundraising	£5,000.00	0.50	£2,500.00	1.00	£5,000.00
TOTAL			£25,000.00	£12,500.00	£25,000.00	£25,000.00	
Continuous External Contract Costs	Costs to facilitate provision of continuous functions	Dashboard Supplier	£30,000.00	0.00	£0.00	0.00	£30,000.00
		Technical Reference Group (5 days, 8 members, £1,000 p/d)	£40,000.00	0.00	£0.00	0.00	£0.00
TOTAL			£70,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£70,000.00	
Project Contract Support	Approximate costs per discrete project function delivered by the Observatory. This would be very scale dependant according to the project, and may, as detailed be funded from outside of the central funding pot. There may be project specific funding on certain topic of geographical areas of interest.	Specialist Engagement Teams	£10,000.00	0.00	£0.00	0.00	£30,000.00
		PR Agency	£5,000.00	0.00	£0.00	0.00	£15,000.00
		Research organisation	£20,000.00	0.00	£0.00	0.00	£60,000.00
		TOTAL	£35,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	3.00	£105,000.00
TOTAL COST			£177,500.00	£177,500.00	£405,000.00	£610,000.00	

Conclusions & Next Steps

This feasibility study has intended to outline the opportunities and challenges that go hand in hand with developing and delivering an Events Data Observatory. It was intended to interrogate the various routes forward, through which an Observatory could be developed. In undertaking this work and consolidating the feedback of stakeholders, interviewees and findings, the feasibility study has concluded that the Events Data Observatory should:

1. Focus on events-based interventions, but do so across Sports and Cultural sectors, as defined above;
2. Focus, in the first instance, specifically on incorporating content from Major and Large scale events - those with a total event spend of between £1,000,000 and £50,000,000;
3. Be housed within a pre-existing organisation, with an external oversight panel to ensure independent strategic direction;
4. Have a core, salaried staff, but also outsourcing some delivery to external suppliers;
5. Look to expand to include information from events-based interventions across the UK, if resourced with appropriate budget;
6. Engage all stakeholder groups outlined in the prospective audiences section from the outset, from community organisations to academics, and dedicate the appropriate budget to doing so;
7. Dedicate as much time and resource to engaging stakeholders in the Observatory outputs as creating the outputs in the first place;
8. Seek to whenever possible, incorporate or signpost to pre-existing outputs, prior to creation of new outputs;
9. Prioritise functions which collate and disseminate pre-existing information (Libraries and Analysis) over those which conduct additional primary data collection (further research study).

In order for the Observatory to continue to grow and develop as an idea there are several possible routes forward:

1. A full application is submitted for the 'Minimum Viable Product' (MVP) version of the yearly budget. This enables the Observatory to be thoroughly and properly piloted over the period of a year whilst longer term funding streams are developed.
2. An application is submitted for a smaller 'stepping stone' budget of circa £50,000. This would resource a fundraiser to identify and apply to funding sources which may resource the MVP tier of the Observatory Budget. This would also enable conversations with stakeholders around the need for an Observatory to stay in circulation.

It is suggested that funding in both of the above instances is allocated directly to the organisation in which the Observatory is aimed to be housed within, this gives the organisation appropriate incentive to explore the development of the Observatory in a way which could be seamlessly integrated into their own strategic development.

FUNCTIONS

In light of the overview given throughout this report, the following section seeks to clearly identify the multiple and varied prospective ‘functions’ that the Observatory could undertake. These functions have been discussed to varying extents in the above narrative, but often in the form of giving examples of the possible avenues of further exploration for the Observatory. As above, these are split into Project Functions, those which principally have a start and end, and Continuous Functions, which are more about the permanent housing of information.

All of the functions list the following information, in order to clarify their purpose and intention:

WHAT	The content of the service the function will deliver.
NEED	The absence or need which the function is responding to.
WHY	The reason why this absence is important to solve.
AUDIENCES	The prospective audiences who would engage with this function, according to the need it responds to.
HOW	The prospective models that could facilitate delivery of this function.
CURRENT SERVICES LINK	Any current services, projects or organisations delivering work in this area. (This detail will largely be provided as part of the final report)

FURTHER RESEARCH STUDY

Using the Observatory to manage or deliver new research into events and their impacts. This could be through utilising pre-existing or new, primary data. It could focus on a particular event, look across events at a topic-based study, or seek to draw the evidence of long-term impact on a geographical location. These studies can prove particular value in events, display long-lasting, multi event impacts, and help us learn about the specific nuances of events. These can in turn inform future programming or strategic prioritisation on the part of delivery partners, funders and policy makers alike.

PROJECT FUNCTION: Evaluating Medium- and Long-Term Event Specific Outcomes

WHAT	Data collection, analysis and reporting on the medium- and long-term outcomes established in events-specific theories of change.
NEED	During events-based interventions, delivery vehicles dissolve and there is often no team to produce a long-term evaluation, whether that be holding a contract with a supplier or delivering an evaluation internally.
WHY	long-term evaluation is crucial to the meaningful evidencing of the power of events-based interventions. Given some of the issues of events-based legacy, as suggested by the Inquiry, this is all the more pertinent: long-term evaluation may display the ongoing impact of an event.
AUDIENCES	- Third Sector Funders - Local Authorities - Central Government - Journalists/Media

HOW	1. Delivered by an internal team of researchers employed and managed by the Observatory. 2. Outsources to an established evaluation agency where the contract was managed and overseen by the Observatory.
CURRENT SERVICES LINK	DCMS do currently undertake some long-term evaluation, there is a one-year-on evaluation of Birmingham 2022. However, the level of detail on particular elements, for example the Cultural Festival, is minor. Events such as UNBOXED don't have provision for long-term Evaluation.

PROJECT FUNCTION: Place Based Studies Displaying Cross-Event Impact on Place

WHAT	Analysis and reporting of existing data to understand how the impact of events, when working towards the same goals, in the same places, can be more than the sum of their parts.
NEED	No central organisation, outside of DCMS, is responsible for oversight of these events as a collection or group. Therefore, their collective impact is never a priority.
WHY	Lack of evidence on the long-term impact of place-based funding and how continued investment in a region via events can act as a catalyst for change.
AUDIENCES	- Third Sector Funders - Evaluation Agencies - Academics - Local Authorities - Central Government
HOW	1. Delivered by an internal team of researchers employed and managed by the Observatory. 2. Outsources to an established evaluation agency where the contract was managed and overseen by the Observatory.

PROJECT FUNCTION: Topic-Based Studies Displaying Cross-Event Impact on Place

WHAT	Analysis and reporting on existing data to understand the nuances of impact on specific topics, areas, groups and demographics according to the interventions taking place. For example, understanding the differing impact on wellbeing across different interventions, or understanding how theatre based interventions differed across mega events.
NEED	These studies do take place and are delivered by those with a specific area of interest in the topic at play, datasets are not often available to these organisations and individuals. The Observatory would provide access and a central space to house a cross-event view.
WHY	Lack of access to comparable datasets from multiple, discrete sources and interventions. The wealth of data available is currently underutilised, despite the cost taken to collect it. This would put underutilised data to additional use, without the (costly) expense of more primary data collection.
AUDIENCES	- Academics - Evaluation Agencies - Local Authorities - Central Government - Lobbying Organisations
HOW	1. Lobbying organisations interested in specific areas could commission the Observatory to undertake research on topics 2. Lobbying organisations interested in specific areas could work in collaboration with the Observatory to commission externally delivered research on particular topics

	3. Academics who are funded to undertake research on particular topics come to the Observatory to use it as a resource, the research happens externally, and the Observatory provides data and acts as a partner, but does not drive research direction.
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EVENT SPECIFIC RESEARCH SUPPORT

PROJECT FUNCTION: Event-by-event use of Central Technical Reference Group

WHAT	Mega events often appoint a technical reference group to oversee evaluations of mega-events. These groups oversee the evaluation taking place as part of mega events, offering technical expertise, sector knowledge, learning, and networks to those delivering the evaluation. Knowledge from this group would be formalised and recorded as part of the process.
NEED	These groups build knowledge event on event, but this knowledge is rarely formalised or held. It therefore inherently has the risk of becoming lost or staying with individuals.
WHY	Continuity over who is part of technical reference groups will ensure better uniformity in the way that events are evaluated. It will also better embed learnings from evaluations in the delivery of subsequent events. Formalising this process will help to crystallise evaluation learning whilst also stipulating a centralised, democratic authority over evaluation practice for mega events. It will additionally help to shift the dial on evaluation practices which are ripe for change, such as the pressure for high audience/attendee numbers over depth of engagement.
AUDIENCES	- Delivery Organisations - Evaluation Agencies
HOW	1. The internal Data Observatory team could recruit and centrally manage the oversight group. This group could be a paid or voluntary position. 2. The governance structures in place could recruit the oversight group for the Observatory team to centrally manage.

DATA LIBRARY

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Storage and Open Sourcing of Datasets

WHAT	Housing, but doing no additional analysis on raw datasets collected as part of mega events, following the dissolution of mega events' delivery vehicles. Via housing this data, the Observatory would be responsible for open sourcing it, and establishing data sharing agreements between funders, evaluation suppliers and delivery organisations.
NEED	Large datasets collected at mega events are underutilised in the scope of the evaluations to which they contribute, but are valuable to researchers conducting work.
WHY	There is no organisation which is centrally responsible for mega events and therefore event datasets don't have a centralised home, or a method through which to open-source data.
AUDIENCES	- Academics - Evaluation Agencies
HOW	1. A central team at the Observatory maps mega events taking place across the UK and works to encourage data-sharing in the event's funder requirements. Data will be shared with the Observatory as part of the dissolution process.

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Aggregation of Datasets

WHAT	Working with data that is provided to the Observatory to aggregate it with other datasets, facilitating comparison between events. This is the topic of the data aggregation report.
NEED	If data is to be compared as part of the studies outlined in the 'Further Research Study' section, then some aggregation will need to take place between datasets. If this happens centrally within the Observatory, then it will save aggregation having to be undertaken by the specific body undertaking the project based research. This will save costs of the project based research taking place. It will also broaden access, allowing those who may not have the skills to aggregate the data, to still work with the information.
WHY	This will enable more researchers to use the data, by minimising the work they need to do project side to aggregate it.
AUDIENCES	- Academics - Evaluation Agencies
HOW	1. Central team at the Observatory undertake aggregation as data is collected by the Observatory, knowledge is held internally. Observatory to undertake a Quality Assurance role when sourcing data. 2. Data aggregation as a CONTINUOUS FUNCTION is outsourced to a delivery organisation who undertake aggregation on behalf of the Observatory, knowledge is held externally, contracts must be ongoing.

DATA TOOLS

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Data Dashboard

WHAT	Following on from Data Library and Data Aggregation functions, events-based data will be open sourced in the form of a data dashboard, which is easily readable and understandable by individuals and organisations who are not well versed in analysing data.
NEED	Organisations who will benefit from data driven decision making are unable to access data-based insights from mega event interventions because the data is not publicly available and because it is not in an accessible format. This process will turn underutilised data into an accessible form whereby organisations can approach a dashboard looking to find out about a particular topic, and manipulate factors in the dashboard in order to generate insights.
WHY	There is a lack of publicly available information on events-based participation and engagement. This data would be valuable for organisations looking to make strategic decisions around their provision.
AUDIENCES	- Delivery Organisations - Journalists - Lobbying Organisations - Local Authorities - Central Government - Community Organisations
HOW	1. The internal Observatory Team builds a dashboard following aggregation of data. 2. The internal Observatory Team outsources a permanent dashboard for an agency with specialist skills to design and deliver. 3. (Project Function) Dashboards on particular topics are commissioned by the Observatory, to be delivered by external agencies.

METHODOLOGIES LIBRARY

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Dissemination and Facilitation of Established and Uniform Evaluation Methodologies

WHAT	A home for a set of centralised and quality assured methodologies and approaches to measuring the impact of events. These methodologies may include: - Ecosystem Theory of Change: A system by which mega events subscribe to similar outcomes and strategic aims, in order to build on each other's impact and become more than the sum of their parts. This is currently in development on behalf of Spirit of 2012, but has no long home. - Long-Term Measurement Methodology: An established methodology for conducting long-term evaluation for the impacts of events, following this dissolution of the delivery vehicles producing events. This is currently in development on behalf of DCMS, via their Events Legacy Brief. - Centralised Evaluation Metrics: An established set of baseline metrics which could lead to uniform measurement of baselining across mega events. This should be developed down to a uniform question bank by which events can select information as required. This is currently in development on behalf of DCMS, via their Events Legacy Brief. - Audience Counting Methodology: A more accurate and uniform approach to counting audience metrics, an issue which many events are pressured to produce high numbers for. This would provide a uniform methodology, which would in turn decrease pressure on evaluators and their clients to inflate audience numbers. This is also currently in development by DCMS. The observatory would house these methodologies and continue to develop them with the Technical Reference Group. They would liaise with events during planning processes to encourage use of the methods. This will in turn tee up close down processes which will ensure data sharing back with the Observatory.
NEED	Time and money are being spent developing a number of evaluation tools, which all seek to deliver more uniform data collection, analysis, and measurement as well as more unified strategic alignment for mega events.
WHY	More uniform approaches to data collection will enable more time efficient comparison between events. It would increase the efficiency of functions such as 'Data Aggregation'. Better strategic intention alignment would mean that the actual impact of events would be more effective. In short, they become more than the sum of their parts, via working in cannon as opposed to in parallel.
AUDIENCES	- Delivery Organisations - Evaluation Agencies - Community Organisations
HOW	1. The Observatory commissions external experts and/or the Technical Reference Group to develop and formalise these methodologies. The Observatory central staff then work to disseminate these methodologies and deploy the Technical Reference Group to help delivery organisations and evaluation agencies embed them within then planning. 2. The Observatory sources methodologies from existing sources and signposts delivery suppliers and evaluation agencies to these external sources as best practice guides in particular areas.

REPORTS LIBRARY

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: A Home for Evaluation Reports and Learning Documents

WHAT	A repository or Library of documents, reports, blueprints, playbooks and best practice guides generated by events-based evaluations. This guide would ensure that outputs produced as part of evaluation processes are accessible in the public domain, and that there is a central source of accessing them. Built into this function would be a librarian or custodian of the reports, who would be able to point users in the direction of work that they may find particularly insightful.
NEED	Evaluation reports are numerous, but few engage with their content, as often they are difficult to find. This is largely because they are all stored in different locations and on different websites. This would enable a central hub for sources of information, as well as the ability to search by topic, location, content, etc.
WHY	Evaluation documents provide useful insight into how to iterate interventions and change delivery models according to learning. They also provide detail on best practices for processes and delivery which have worked well. For researchers, agencies and academics, they provide references and comparison points for new research or evaluation.
AUDIENCES	- Academics - Evaluation Agencies - Delivery Organisations - Funders
HOW	1. An internal team which is housed in the Observatory acts as custodian of these reports, building an in-depth knowledge of them, whilst also seeking out new documentation, research and evidence which is being produced.

TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Fostering Better Learning Between Events

WHAT	Facilitated spaces for informal connection between organisations working as delivery organisations for large scale events, as well as more formalised knowledge documentation and dissemination from events
NEED	Iterative practise and learning culture between events could be stronger
WHY	Events-based interventions, specifically across different sectors and geographies, do not have a formalised mechanism to pass learning informally and formally between each other. Formalised evaluations from events are often not the space where more process driven learning, grounded in the detail of delivery, is recorded.
AUDIENCES	- Delivery organisations
HOW	1. Internal team at Observatory facilitate connection between individuals working on different events 2. Internal team at Observatory host, fund and facilitate learning workshops between groups, ensuring that the time to reflect and share is built into often busy delivery schedules which prevent reflective time.

WRAPAROUND ENGAGEMENT

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Report Learning Engagement

WHAT	Maximising the impact of learning generated from both pre-existing reports and new research commissioned by the Observatory. This function will see the development of in-depth engagement plans which seek to disseminate information from the above sources to identified stakeholders. This could include for example, Observatory staff looking over historic events evaluation to deduce recurring learnings across events, which perpetually fail to be solved. These learnings would be distilled and communicated to future event programmers and delivery organisations, for example.
NEED	Evaluation reports are often dense, lengthy and rigorous. As such it is difficult for time poor stakeholders - such as policy makers and delivery organisations - to digest, distil and then act upon the findings from such research. This function would seek to solve this process, making reporting and research, both old and new, more accessible.
WHY	If evaluation reports continue to be published but continue to go unread, then we will continue to make the same mistakes around events-based legacy. Events-based impact is maximised when it learns from previous interactions and this process promotes learning.
AUDIENCES	- Delivery Organisations - Community Organisations - Local Authorities - Central Government - Lobbying Organisations
HOW	1. The Observatory produces engagement plans via an internal engagement team. 2. The Observatory outsources production of engagement plans to organisations who specialise in engagement with the target stakeholder group.

CONTINUOUS FUNCTION: Data Dashboard Engagement

WHAT	The data dashboard will make open-source datasets from events more readily readable by a wider range of stakeholders. However, wraparound engagement is still needed to ensure that they know it exists, and second that they understand how they seek to benefit from utilising the data. This wraparound engagement could be tutorial sessions whereby Observatory staff work to understand an organisation's needs and priorities, then show them how to utilise the dashboard to get what they are looking for.
NEED	Stakeholders who could gain most from utilising data are also the group who may struggle to know how to engage with a data dashboard or what to use it for. This wraparound engagement ensures that users are getting the most out of the dashboard and that people are aware of its existence.
WHY	Data driven decision making and data literacy are an important way to undertake strategic decision making. However, organisations sometimes don't have the knowledge or the data to be able to undertake this work. The data dashboard could simultaneously provide them with useful insight, whilst also helping to build the case for data driven decision making within their organisations.
AUDIENCES	- Journalists - Delivery Organisations - Community Organisations - Local Authorities - Central Government
HOW	1. The internal Observatory team undertakes engagement with stakeholder groups,

	following mapping of target users. 2. Partners (such as funders and/or bridge organisations) who signpost the Observatory to organisations who they think might benefit from, or be interested in, utilising the dashboard. 3. An external engagement agency, which has specialist knowledge of the stakeholder group with which the Observatory is trying to engage, undertakes an engagement plan in partnership with Observatory dashboard specialists.
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