

GOVERNMENT OUTCOMES LAB

UK

COMMISSIONING



GOVERNMENT
OUTCOMES
LAB

Launched in 2016, the Government Outcomes Lab (GO Lab) helps the UK improve public services to tackle pressing societal challenges. Local and national governments often struggle to effectively address the causes of complex social issues, spanning from health to social care, from criminal justice, to employment, and education. By bringing together cutting-edge research, as well as engaging directly with public servants, the GO Lab aims to support innovative approaches to address social issues.

The GO Lab is a joint partnership between the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government and the UK Government, and it is led by a team of academics and practitioners. The team is supported by a wider network of Fellows of Practice, who are thought leaders in different domains and work with the GO Lab on a pro-bono basis. The GO Lab's main activities focus on building evidence and sharing best practices around outcome-based commissioning models, such as payment-by-results schemes and Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). Its work is structured around three main priority areas: 1) Research, 2) Advisory and 3) Connecting the ecosystem.

1. RESEARCH: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY-MAKING

The GO Lab conducts research with the objective of building evidence around the effectiveness of outcome-based commissioning, including SIBs and other payment-by-results schemes. In the long term, the aim is to support policymakers to overcome long-entrenched issues in public service delivery: siloed operations, short-term planning horizons, and cultural inertia.

Currently, the GO Lab is working in partnership with Life Chances Fund projects to investigate whether and how SIBs can deliver better outcomes compared to alternative commissioning approaches. For this reason, the GO Lab is developing a comparative methodology to investigate the effects of different commissioning approaches and governance structures on social service delivery.

The Life Chances Fund is a £80m Government Fund aiming at tackling social issues across six core themes, and is managed by the Big Lottery Fund on behalf of the Government. With the goal of supporting local government units to implement innovative commissioning practices, the fund provides top-up contributions to outcome-based contracts involving social investment.

2. ADVISE: STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Alongside its research work, the GO Lab provides pro-bono policy advice and practical support to public authorities in order to improve the quality of public service provision. The objective of GO Lab's work in this area is to develop the skills of public sector

commissioners through training and advice. The GO Lab also connects public sector officials with their peers in order to nurture best practice in the social sector.

The GO Lab's advisory work focusses on local and regional government units, where it works directly with policy makers and commissioners to guide decisions about policy challenges and how to best address these. In particular, the GO Lab supports teams in local governments that are developing innovative outcome-focused approaches and, where appropriate, connects them with experts and public authorities that are striving to address similar challenges. To date, the GO Lab has worked with a range of local authorities, including the Bristol City Council, Suffolk County Council, Sheffield City Council, Norfolk County Council, and Westminster City Council, as well as central government departments. The GO Lab also engages with international organisations that wish to learn from the UK's experience on Social Impact Bonds and other outcome-oriented approaches.

3. CONNECT: A HUB OF EMERGING PRACTICE

The GO Lab seeks to strengthen the ecosystem around outcome-based contracting and SIBs. With its independent, yet highly connected platform, the GO Lab is in an exceptional position to link experts working in government with those working in academia and in the private and voluntary sectors. The goal is to bring together different actors enabling them to explore innovative ways to tackle complex societal challenges.

The GO Lab has developed a network of Fellows of Practice, which now includes 21 leading experts from different sectors. The Government Outcomes Lab regularly involves the Fellows as well as a wider group of international stakeholders to not only build the evidence base around outcomes-based commissioning approaches, but also to provide direct practical advice and support to those public sector officials developing innovative approaches to tackling entrenched social issues.

4. THE GO LAB'S ROLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

In the past decade, many social innovations have substantially changed the landscape of social service provision in the UK: from SIBs to fund interventions to cross-sector collaboration projects to improve service delivery – the UK has taken the lead in developing innovative solutions for the social sector.

So far, the UK has 45 SIBs (of 108 worldwide) and has used outcome-based commissioning to address various social problems, such as homelessness, unemployment, and diabetes. In the UK, the Government has a growing portfolio of outcome-based commissioning schemes, accounting for £15bn of public spending in 2015. The GO Lab is a fundamental pillar in the social innovation ecosystem as it gathers evidence around innovative models of commissioning and public service delivery, as well as advises policymakers on how to develop and implement cutting-edge solutions to tackle pressing social and societal challenges.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact the EVPA Policy Team. You can also connect directly with the Government Outcomes Lab through Twitter, or consult their website here: golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk. If you would like to have a more in-depth discussion about the work of the GO Lab, please contact Andreea Anastasiu at andreea.anastasiu@bsg.ox.ac.uk

✉ policy@evpa.eu.com
🌐 evpa.eu.com/policy

🐦 [@ukgolab](https://twitter.com/ukgolab)
🌐 golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk