

Document	Highways Service VFM – Peer Reviewer Engagement
Description	The protocols which will govern the engagement of peer reviewers in Highways Service VFM assessments
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1 Background and Context

The ADEPT and Proving Services VFM Benchmarking Club forms part of the Future Highways Research Group (FHRG). From late autumn 2020, each FHRG member will receive an independently certified, annual VFM assessment of their highways service. Each assessment typically comprises:

- A one day Stakeholder Scoring Workshop, which generates:
 - An analysis of current VFM performance, benchmarked against FHRG peers; and
 - A prioritised summary of opportunities to improve VFM.
- A half day Improvement Planning Workshop.

Each VFM assessment is delivered and led by a Proving director. From 2020, the FHRG has endorsed the inclusion of peer reviewers as part of each VFM assessment team.

This document sets out the purpose, benefits and protocols that will govern the engagement of peer reviewers.

2 Purpose and Benefits

Peer review is a popular concept across many local government disciplines and, in the highways sector, was a successful and well-regarded feature of the former HMEP regime. The re-introduction of peer review to the sector, through the VFM Benchmarking Club, will deliver the following benefits:

- The sharing of best practice, in terms of the peer reviewer's opportunity to both:
 - offer critical friend commentary to the organisation under review; and
 - take best practice identified as part of the review back to their home organisation.
- Subject matter expertise to support the lead Proving reviewer.
- Personal development opportunities for the peer reviewer.
- A further control to ensure consistency and rigour across assessments.

3 Scope of Engagement

Each FHRG member subject to a VFM assessment will be assigned a maximum of one peer reviewer. The scope of engagement of the peer reviewer will be:

- Attendance at the Stakeholder Scoring Workshop, to support the lead reviewer by offering subject matter expert commentary and questions.
- Review of the draft report, which will be authored by the lead reviewer, to offer observations from a subject matter perspective.
- Optional attendance at the Improvement Planning Workshop.

4 Terms of Engagement

Peer reviewers will:

- Be drawn from the FHRG membership and nominated deputies.
- Only assigned with the agreement of the organisation under review.
- Only undertake reviews following introductory training.
- Not lead reviews or author reports.
- Not be remunerated for their time, other than for travel which will be reimbursed at 45 pence per mile.

- Be required to submit to Proving, at the conclusion of each review, a bullet point summary of any best practice identified and general observations.

5 Training and Support

The following mandatory training and support will be offered:

- Each peer reviewer will be assigned a Proving Director as mentor and first line support.
- Peer reviewers will attend a one hour virtual workshop, in advance of engagement, to ensure they understand the scope, responsibilities, outcomes required and support available in discharging their role.
- A detailed understanding of Value Analyser is not required to undertake the peer reviewer role, but a basic tutorial will be given as part of the virtual workshop.