Fit4Finance

Funded by Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

In partnership with Greater South East Net Zero Hub

# Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool Manual

## Overview

The Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool helps local authorities assess how ready they are to develop investable net zero project pipelines, attract finance, and move from ambition to delivery.

The tool asks structured questions across seven pillars of investment readiness:

- Access to Finance
- Organisational Factors / Organisational Capacity
- Place-Based Strategies
- Socio-Economic Factors
- Political and Public Policy
- Planning and Procurement
- Community Engagement

After completion of the assessment, the tool provides an Excel export with scores and graphical outputs showing current strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. These results are intended to support internal planning, prioritisation, and progress tracking over time.

This manual explains how to complete the tool, interpret the outputs, and turn results into practical actions. It should be used by officers and teams involved in finance, climate, planning, procurement, community engagement, policy, and programme delivery.

The tool is a diagnostic and planning aid. It is not a funding application, financial model, business case template, or substitute for legal, financial, or commercial advice.

Date 18/09/2026



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# Introduction

## What question does the tool help answer?

*"How ready is your local authority to develop investable net zero project pipelines, attract finance, and accelerate place-based net zero delivery?"*

The Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool helps local authorities understand where they are on the journey towards building investment readiness for net zero. It does this by asking structured questions across seven thematic pillars, then converting responses into graphical outputs that show current conditions, areas of strength, and areas that may need further work.

The tool is ***not*** a funding application, business case template, or financial advice service. It is a diagnostic and planning tool. Its purpose is to help local authorities understand the conditions needed to develop a stronger, more investable approach to net zero delivery.

## Who should use this manual?

This manual is for local authority officers and teams involved in developing, funding, approving or delivering net zero projects. It is relevant to a range of roles because investment readiness is ***not*** only a finance issue. It depends on how well different parts of the authority work together to turn net zero ambition into deliverable projects.

The manual is likely to be useful for:

- **Climate officers**, who may be responsible for developing net zero strategies, identifying project opportunities, coordinating action across departments, or making the case for climate investment.
- **Finance officers (Section 151 officers)**, who need to understand the financial implications, risks, governance requirements, and investment case for net zero projects.
- **Energy project officers and technical officers**, who may be developing specific projects such as heat networks, retrofit, EV charging, solar, or wider energy infrastructure.
- **Programme managers**, who need to coordinate multiple projects, build project pipelines, track progress, and report benefits.
- **Planning, procurement, property, highways, housing, economic growth, and public health officers**, whose input may be needed to assess whether projects are deliverable, locally appropriate, and aligned with wider council priorities.
- **Senior leaders and decision-makers**, who need a clear view of where the authority is ready to move forward and where further work is needed before projects can attract finance.

The tool works best when completed with input from more than one service area. Different officers will hold different parts of the evidence: finance teams may understand affordability and risk, technical teams may understand feasibility, climate teams may understand carbon and policy alignment, and community or public health teams may understand social value and local impact.

For this reason, the diagnostic should be treated as a structured cross-organisational conversation, not a task for one officer to complete in isolation. A single user can complete the tool, but the results will be more useful where answers are informed by the right people across the authority.

## Purpose of manual

This manual helps you:

1. understand what the Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool is assessing
2. complete the diagnostic in a consistent and useful way
3. interpret your results
4. identify priorities for action
5 .use the outputs to support internal planning, discussion, and improvement

This manual is designed to support users throughout the diagnostic process: while completing the tool, when interpreting the results, and when reviewing progress over time.

***NOTE:*** *The tool does not offer a quick fix. It supports planning, reflection, and improvement by helping authorities identify the conditions they need to strengthen to become more financially ready for net zero delivery.*

## What the diagnostic assesses

The tool is structured around seven foundational thematic pillars. These pillars reflect the conditions local authorities need to strengthen if they want to develop investable net zero programmes. The seven pillars are:

1. Access to Finance
2. Organisational Factors / Organisational Capacity
3. Place-Based Strategies
4. Socio-Economic Factors
5. Political and Public Policy
6. Planning and Procurement
7. Community Engagement

Each pillar contains statements for the user to consider against their local context, mechanisms, and delivered net zero outcomes. The tool then converts those responses into benchmarked outputs showing current conditions.

## How to complete the diagnostic well

The results are only useful if the answers reflect your authority's current position. When completing the tool:

- answer based on what is currently in place, not what is planned or hoped for
- involve colleagues from relevant service areas where possible
- use evidence where available, such as strategies, budgets, governance documents, project pipelines, procurement records, or delivery plans
- be consistent across pillars
- record assumptions or uncertainties separately so they can be revisited later

The tool's own guidance states that outputs are most effective when users provide honest responses about current conditions rather than ambition or unachieved goals.

# Understanding the seven pillars

## 1.Access to Finance

This pillar considers whether your authority is ready to move from reliance on grants and partner funding towards a more diverse and scalable finance approach. It covers:

- Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment
- Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms
- Government & Public Funding
- Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms
- Financial Capacity & Governance
- Risk Management & Financial Sustainability
- Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships
- Sector-Specific Financial Planning
- Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning
- Financial Readiness & Expertise Development

A low score in this pillar may indicate that projects are not yet structured in a way that external funders or investors can assess confidently.

## 2.Organisational Factors / Organisational Capacity

This pillar examines whether your authority has the internal capacity, structure, and skills needed to deliver net zero projects. It covers:

- Leadership & Strategic Commitment
- Staffing & Resource Capacity
- Risk Appetite & Organisational Culture
- Decision-Making & Organisational Efficiency
- Internal Skills & Consultant Dependency
- Stakeholder & Business Partnerships
- Inter-District Collaboration & Resource Sharing

A low score may indicate that delivery depends on a small number of individuals, lacks senior ownership, or does not yet have the internal capability needed to move projects forward.

## 3.Place-Based Strategies

This pillar looks at whether net zero plans are shaped by the specific characteristics of the local area. It considers:

- Land & Asset Availability for Renewable Energy
- Local Authority Funding & Investment for Net Zero Projects
- Optimal Use of Organisational Resources
- Coordination Between Housing & Climate Teams
- Grid Capacity & Energy Infrastructure
- Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) & Energy Planning
- Partnerships for Net Zero Projects
- Innovative Technologies & Deployment

A strong score suggests the authority is tailoring its net zero approach to local conditions rather than applying generic solutions.

## 4.Socio-Economic Factors

This pillar explores how net zero delivery connects to wider economic and social outcomes. It considers:

- Job Creation & Economic Growth
- Smart Technology Accessibility & Adoption
- Fuel Poverty and Air Quality
- Social Inclusion & Just Transition

A low score may suggest that net zero projects are not yet clearly linked to local economic development, community benefit, or inclusive growth.

## 5.Political and Public Policy

This pillar assesses whether political leadership, governance, and policy conditions support net zero delivery. It considers:

- Political Leadership & Commitment
- Adopted Strategy & Policy Stability
- Governance & Accountability
- Funding & Financial Commitment
- Legislative Alignment & Policy Updates
- Public Communication & Vision
- Risk Mitigation & Resilience
- Regional & Corporate Integration
- Net Zero Project Implementation
- Political Stability & Decision-Maker Buy-In
- Political Barriers to Implementation
- Local Community Benefits & National Policy Alignment

A low score may indicate that projects could face delays or uncertainty because the political mandate, governance structure, or policy alignment is not yet strong enough.

## 6.Planning and Procurement

This pillar focuses on practical delivery conditions. It considers:

- Strategic Planning
- Project Execution & Monitoring
- Procurement Process
- Resource & Capacity
- Contract & Risk Management
- Stakeholder Collaboration

A low score may suggest that projects are conceptually strong but may struggle to move through planning, procurement, contracting, or delivery.

## 7.Community Engagement

This pillar considers whether local communities are involved in shaping, supporting, and benefiting from net zero projects. It looks at:

- Net Zero Plan Accessibility
- Community Engagement & Events
- Community Leadership & Trust
- Demonstrator Projects & Participation
- Community Energy Sector Growth

A low score may indicate that projects risk weak public support, limited participation, or missed opportunities for community-led delivery.

# What results the tool provides

After completing the diagnostic, the tool displays graphical outputs showing your current position across the pillars on screen.




The scores are only visible in the downloadable Excel sheet.




These outputs are designed to help you prioritise activity across themes and consider the impact of different conditions. The tool also allows completed sessions to be accessed through the website. Sessions are linked to the user account, and users can view and manage versions as well as export inputs and outputs.

## Methodology: How the scoring works

The Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool converts your responses into a set of scores that help show how ready your authority is across the seven pillars of investment readiness. The tool works by asking users to respond to statements within each pillar. These statements reflect the conditions, mechanisms, and outcomes that support investment-ready net zero delivery. Your answers are then converted into scores and displayed through graphical outputs.

1.Responses are collected against each pillar

Each pillar contains a set of statements or questions linked to a specific area of investment readiness. Users answer these based on their authority's current position. Users should answer based on what is currently in place, not what is planned, intended, or hoped for. This is important because the tool is designed to assess current readiness conditions.

2.Scores are converted into comparative outputs

The tool converts the scores into outputs that help users compare performance and understand priorities. These may include relative performance, percentage distribution, and potential gain. Such as that shown below (snippet from the downloadable Excel sheet):

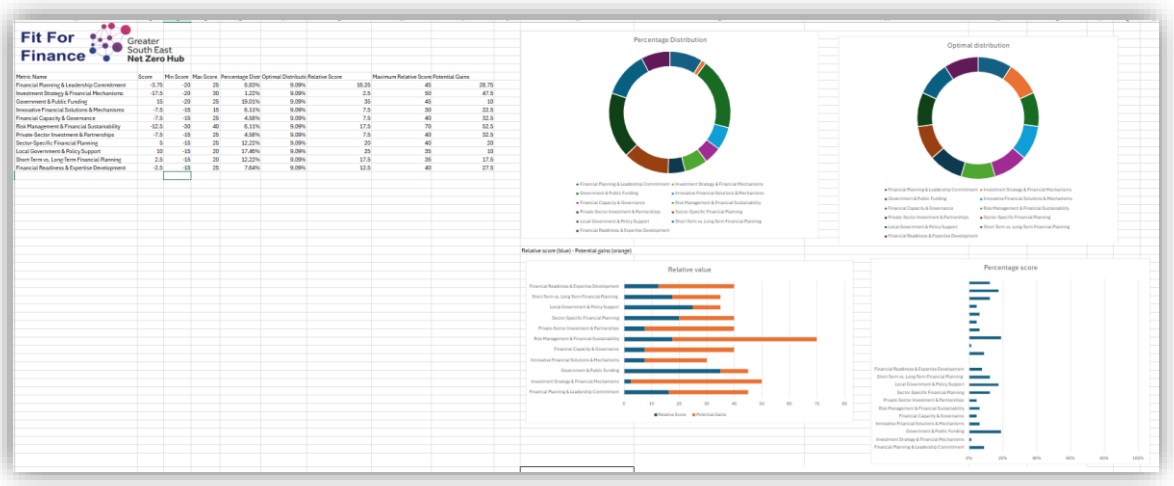
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| Metric Name | Score | Min Score | Max Score | Percentage Distribution | Optimal Distribution | Relative Score | Maximum Relative Score | Potential Gains |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment | 0 | -20 | 25 | 10.72% | 10.00% | 20 | 45 | 25 |
| Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms | 0 | -20 | 30 | 9.65% | 10.00% | 20 | 50 | 30 |
| Government & Public Funding | 0 | -20 | 25 | 10.72% | 10.00% | 20 | 45 | 25 |
| Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms | 0 | -15 | 15 | 12.06% | 10.00% | 15 | 30 | 15 |
| Financial Capacity & Governance | 0 | -15 | 25 | 9.04% | 10.00% | 15 | 40 | 25 |
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | 0 | -30 | 40 | 10.34% | 10.00% | 30 | 70 | 40 |
| Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships | 0 | -15 | 25 | 9.04% | 10.00% | 15 | 40 | 25 |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | 0 | -15 | 25 | 9.04% | 10.00% | 15 | 40 | 25 |
| Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning | 0 | -15 | 20 | 10.34% | 10.00% | 15 | 35 | 20 |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | 0 | -15 | 25 | 9.04% | 10.00% | 15 | 40 | 25 |

## Exporting your results

The tool allows users to export their diagnostic inputs and outputs into Excel. This export provides a structured record of the completed assessment, making it easier to review results offline, share findings with colleagues, compare versions, and use the data in internal planning documents.

***Example:***




The Excel export should be treated as a working evidence record. It can help teams identify which pillars and sub-areas need attention, track changes between review periods, and support discussions with senior leaders, programme boards, finance teams, and delivery partners.

When using the Excel export, focus on:

- the overall pattern of results across the seven pillars
- lower-scoring areas that may require action
- areas with high potential gain
- differences between current and previous diagnostic versions
- evidence or comments that explain why a score was selected

The export is particularly useful when preparing an internal action plan, because it gives teams a practical format for turning diagnostic results into owners, actions, timescales, and review points.

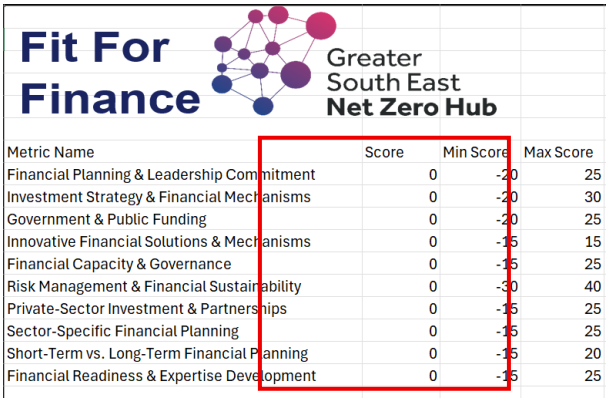
The key purpose of the results is to help you answer the following questions:

1. Where are we strongest?
2. Where are the biggest gaps?
3. Which areas are holding back investment readiness?
4. Which actions should be prioritised?
5. What should we revisit when we repeat the diagnostic?

# How to interpret your results

## Score

In the Excel export, **Score** refers to the **raw score** generated from your responses for a specific pillar or sub-area. It is shown alongside the **minimum score** and **maximum score**, which indicate the lowest and highest possible raw scores for that area.




| Metric Name | Score | Min Score | Max Score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment | 0 | -20 | 25 |
| Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms | 0 | -20 | 30 |
| Government & Public Funding | 0 | -20 | 25 |
| Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms | 0 | -15 | 15 |
| Financial Capacity & Governance | 0 | -15 | 25 |
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | 0 | -30 | 40 |
| Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships | 0 | -15 | 25 |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | 0 | -15 | 25 |
| Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning | 0 | -15 | 20 |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | 0 | -15 | 25 |

The **Score, Minimum Score,** and **Maximum Score** are useful for understanding the scoring range, but they should not be used on their own to compare different areas. This is because each pillar or sub-area may have a different number of questions, different weighting, or different possible score range.

For example, a score of **5** may be strong in one area if the maximum score is **8**, but weak in another area if the maximum score is **30**. This is why the tool normalises scores before showing comparative outputs.

When reviewing your results, use the Score column as background information only. To identify priorities, focus on the visual outputs and the normalised measures instead.

First, look at the chart to see which areas appear smaller compared with others. These are likely to be weaker areas within that pillar. Then use **Percentage Distribution** in the Excel export to check the same point numerically. A lower percentage distribution suggests that the area is weaker compared with the others in that pillar. A higher percentage distribution suggests that the area is stronger compared with the others.

For example, within the Finance pillar, the chart may show that **Government and Public Funding** is the smallest slice. This would suggest it is a weaker area compared with the other finance sub-areas.

Second, look at the **Relative Value** table to understand the improvement opportunity. The blue section of the line shows your current relative score. The blue and orange sections together show the maximum relative score that could be achieved. In the Excel export, use **Relative Score** to see your current relative value and **Maximum Relative Score** to see the full potential value.

Use the results in this order:

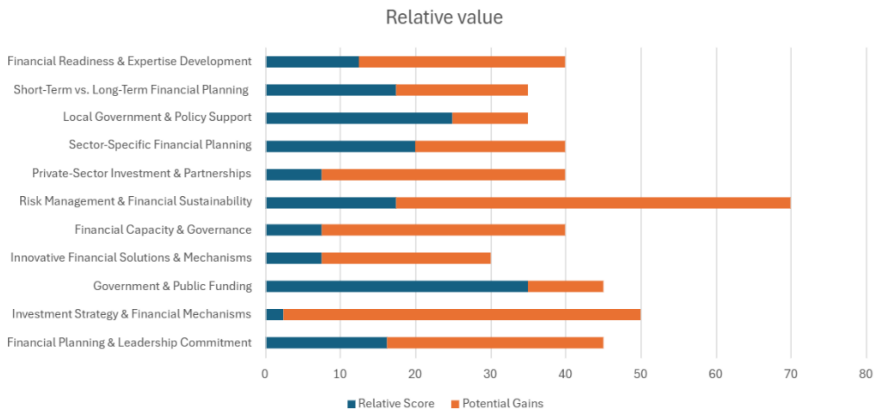
- review the visual chart to spot smaller or weaker areas;
- check **Percentage Distribution** to confirm this numerically;
- review **Relative Score** and **Maximum Relative Score** to understand the improvement opportunity;
- use the supporting resources to decide what action is needed.

Do not use **Score, Minimum Score,** or **Maximum Score** alone to decide which areas are weakest. These are raw values before normalisation. The detailed scoring methodology can be included in the Annex for users who want to understand the calculation process.

## Relative performance

Relative performance helps show whether one area is stronger or weaker compared with others.

***Example:***




Use it to:

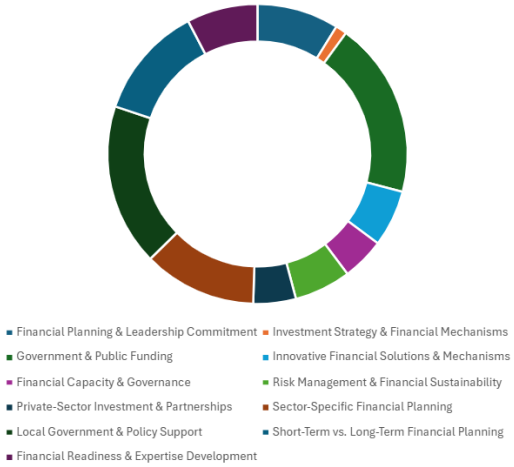
- identify stronger areas that may already be supporting delivery
- identify weaker areas that need further attention
- compare performance across sub-areas within a pillar
- focus discussions on where improvement would have the greatest practical value

A lower relative score does not automatically mean failure. It means the area may need more attention, more evidence, more maturity, or more coordinated action.

## Percentage distribution

Percentage distribution shows how much each area contributes to the overall picture within a chart.

***Example:***




Use it to:

- spot imbalance between areas
- identify areas that are underdeveloped compared with others
- check whether progress is concentrated in only a few themes
- support prioritisation discussions

A balanced distribution can suggest that progress is being made across several conditions. An uneven distribution can show that some conditions are more developed than others.

Do not interpret a small percentage in isolation. Use it together with the underlying question area and the relevant pillar narrative.

## Potential gain

Potential gain shows where there is room for improvement. Use it to:

- identify where targeted action could make the most difference
- prioritise areas with both low performance and high improvement potential
- develop an action plan for the review period

High potential gain should be treated as a useful opportunity. It shows where improvement activity may have a visible effect on future diagnostic results.

## Limitations

The Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool is designed to support reflection, planning, and improvement. Like any diagnostic tool, its results should be interpreted with judgement and context.

Key limitations include:

- **Self-assessment bias:** results depend on the answers provided by users. Scores may be affected by optimism, caution, incomplete evidence, or differences in how officers interpret the questions.
- **Variation in organisational knowledge:** no single officer is likely to hold all the information needed to answer every section accurately. Finance, climate, planning, procurement, property, community, and senior leadership teams may each hold different parts of the evidence.

- **Difficulty scoring cultural factors:** some areas, such as risk appetite, leadership commitment, organisational culture and political confidence are inherently harder to score than more factual areas such as whether a strategy, pipeline, or procurement route exists.
- **Capacity and capability are different:** an authority may have skilled officers but insufficient time or resource or it may have staff capacity but need specialist technical, financial or commercial expertise.
- **Scores do not explain root causes on their own:** a low score shows where further attention may be needed, but users still need to discuss why the score is low and what action would address it.
- **Results are a snapshot in time:** the diagnostic reflects the authority's position at the point of completion. Scores may change as projects progress, staff change, funding conditions shift, or governance decisions are made.
- **The tool does not replace professional advice:** results can support planning and prioritisation, but they should not be treated as legal, financial, commercial, procurement, or technical advice.

These limitations do not reduce the value of the tool. They explain how to use it properly: as a structured evidence-informed conversation, not as a final judgement. The results are strongest when completed honestly, reviewed by the right teams, and used alongside local evidence and professional judgement.

# Turning results into action

After reviewing your outputs, use the following process.

## Step 1: Identify low-scoring areas

Start with the areas where the result is weakest or where the gap appears largest. Ask:

- What is the result telling us?
- Is this genuinely weak, or did we lack evidence when answering?
- Which service areas need to be involved?
- Is this issue strategic, operational, financial, political, or community-related?

## Step 2: Identify dependencies

Some weaker areas may be linked to, or caused by, weaknesses in other pillars. Before creating actions, consider whether a low score is a standalone issue or part of a wider delivery challenge. For example:

- weak access to finance may be linked to unclear project pipelines
- weak project delivery may be linked to procurement capacity
- weak community engagement may affect political confidence or public support
- weak organisational capacity may affect progress across several other pillars

Look for linked causes rather than treating each score separately.

## Step 3: Prioritise

Do not try to fix every gap at once. Prioritise actions that are:

- important for investment readiness

- within the authority's influence
- likely to unblock other areas
- achievable within the next planning period
- linked to live projects or strategic decisions

A practical approach is to choose three to five priority actions after each diagnostic review.

## Step 4: Assign owners

Assigning owners helps turn the diagnostic results into practical follow-up activity. Each action should have:

- an owner
- supporting teams
- a timescale
- a clear output
- evidence that can be used when the diagnostic is repeated

Where possible, actions should be assigned to existing boards, working groups, or programme structures.

## Step 5: Repeat the diagnostic

The tool is most useful when used over time. Repeat the diagnostic at agreed intervals, for example every six months or at major programme milestones. Compare results with previous versions to understand whether conditions are improving.

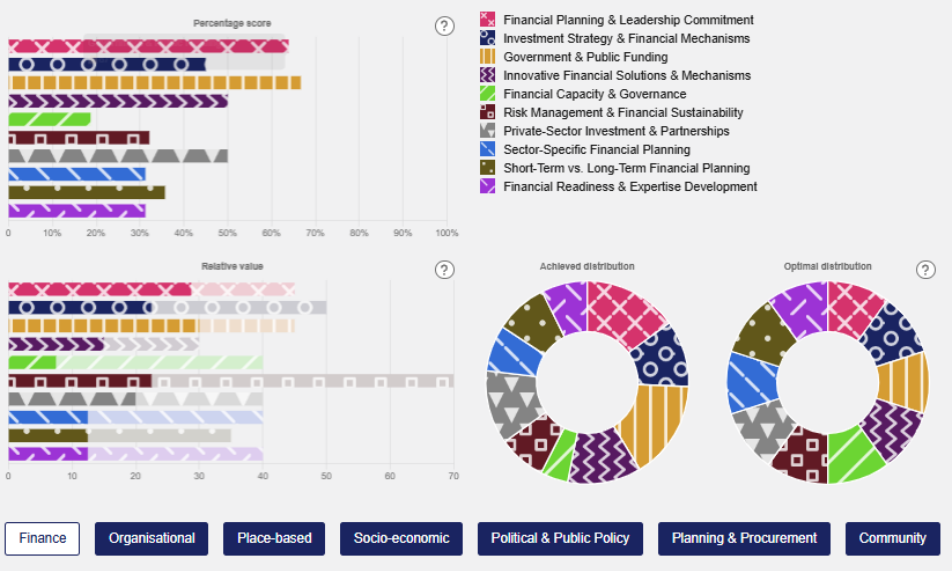
The diagnostic should be repeated at agreed intervals, such as:

- every six months;
- at key programme milestones;
- before or after major funding or investment decisions;
- when developing or refreshing the net zero project pipeline;
- in line with annual budgeting, business planning, or medium-term financial planning cycles.

Aligning the diagnostic with budgeting and business planning cycles helps ensure that the results inform real decisions about resources, project development, governance, and delivery priorities. It also creates a clearer link between the diagnostic findings and the authority's wider corporate planning process.

***Worked Example: Interpreting the Access to Finance results***

The example below shows how to interpret results for the Access to Finance pillar. The same approach can be used for the other six pillars.




Start with the Percentage Distribution chart. This shows how each sub-area contributes to the overall result for the pillar. In the example, the strongest areas are Government & Public Funding at 15.70% and Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment at 15.04%. These sit above the Optimal Distribution of 10%, which suggests they are comparatively stronger areas.

The weakest areas are Financial Capacity & Governance at 4.42%, Sector-Specific Financial Planning at 7.36%, Financial Readiness & Expertise Development at 7.36%, Risk Management & Financial Sustainability at 7.57%, and Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning at 8.41%. These sit below the 10% optimal distribution and should be reviewed as potential improvement areas.

Next, look at the Relative Value chart. This shows how far each sub-area has progressed against its maximum possible relative score. The darker section shows the current position, while the lighter section shows the remaining potential.

In this example, Risk Management & Financial Sustainability has the largest potential gain. This means it may be one of the most important areas to prioritise, even though it is not the smallest area in the percentage distribution chart.

The key point is that users should not rely on the raw Score, Min Score, or Max Score columns alone. These are useful background figures, but they are not the best way to compare sub-areas because scoring ranges differ. To identify priorities, users should first review the charts, then check Percentage Distribution, Relative Score, Maximum Relative Score, and Potential Gains in the Excel export.

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| Metric Name | Score | Min Score | Max Score | Percentage Distribution | Optimal Distribution | Relative Score | Maximum Relative Score | Potential Gains |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment | 8.75 | -20 | 25 | 15.04% | 10.00% | 28.75 | 45 | 16.25 |
| Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms | 2.5 | -20 | 30 | 10.60% | 10.00% | 22.5 | 50 | 27.5 |
| Government & Public Funding | 10 | -20 | 25 | 15.70% | 10.00% | 30 | 45 | 15 |
| Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms | 0 | -15 | 15 | 11.77% | 10.00% | 15 | 30 | 15 |
| Financial Capacity & Governance | -7.5 | -15 | 25 | 4.42% | 10.00% | 7.5 | 40 | 32.5 |
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | -7.5 | -30 | 40 | 7.57% | 10.00% | 22.5 | 70 | 47.5 |
| Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships | 5 | -15 | 25 | 11.77% | 10.00% | 20 | 40 | 20 |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | -2.5 | -15 | 25 | 7.36% | 10.00% | 12.5 | 40 | 27.5 |
| Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning | -2.5 | -15 | 20 | 8.41% | 10.00% | 12.5 | 35 | 22.5 |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | -2.5 | -15 | 25 | 7.36% | 10.00% | 12.5 | 40 | 27.5 |

Overall, this example suggests that the authority may have a reasonable foundation for accessing finance, especially around public funding and leadership commitment, but may need to strengthen financial governance, risk management, sector-specific financial planning, and internal expertise.

For a detailed worked example of how to interpret the charts and Excel export, please refer to *Appendix 1: Worked Example — Interpreting Access to Finance Results.*

# Resources

Once you have reviewed your results and identified priority areas for improvement, use the **Fit4Finance Knowledge Platform Library** to find resources that can support your next steps.

The library brings together practical materials that can help local authorities strengthen their investment readiness across the seven pillars. These may include guidance, templates, case studies, toolkits, and examples of delivery models.

Use the library to move from diagnosis to action. For each lower-scoring area, identify which resource could help you understand the issue, develop a response, or support internal discussion.

***Link to Knowledge Library***

# Appendix

***Appendix 1: Worked Example — Interpreting Access to Finance Results***

This appendix provides a worked example of how to interpret the results generated by the Fit4Finance Diagnostic Tool. The example uses the **Access to Finance** pillar, but the same approach can be applied to the other six pillars.

The purpose of this example is to show how users should move from the visual outputs and Excel export to a practical interpretation of strengths, weaknesses, and improvement priorities.

## 1.Example results used

The example is based on an Access to Finance result containing ten sub-areas:

1. Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment
2. Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms
3. Government & Public Funding
4. Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms
5. Financial Capacity & Governance
6. Risk Management & Financial Sustainability
7. Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships
8. Sector-Specific Financial Planning
9. Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning
10. Financial Readiness & Expertise Development

The tool presents these results visually through charts and numerically through the Excel export.

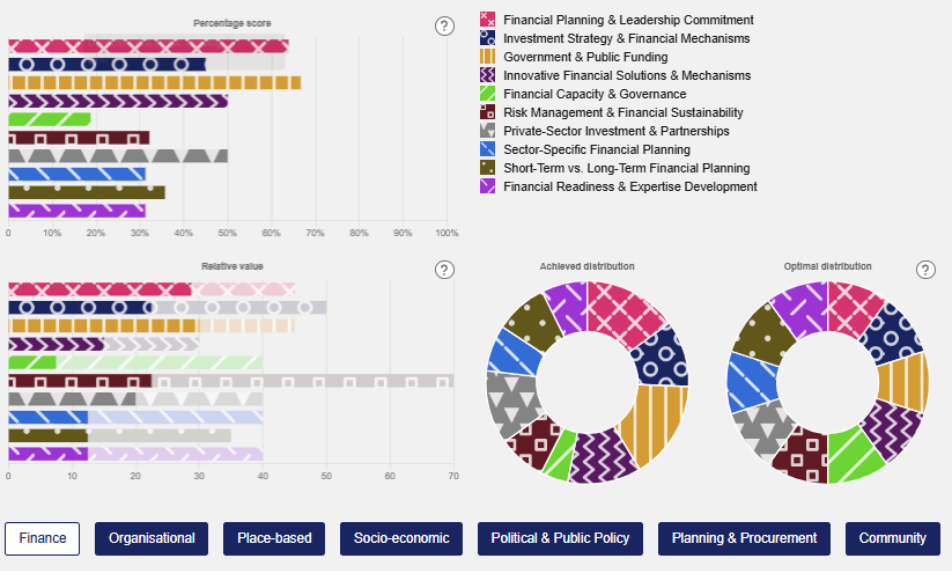



*Figure 1: Example Access to Finance results dashboard showing percentage score, relative value, achieved distribution, and optimal distribution.*

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| Metric Name | Score | Min Score | Max Score | Percentage Distribution | Optimal Distribution | Relative Score | Maximum Relative Score | Potential Gains |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment | 8.75 | -20 | 25 | 15.04% | 10.00% | 28.75 | 45 | 16.25 |
| Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms | 2.5 | -20 | 30 | 10.60% | 10.00% | 22.5 | 50 | 27.5 |
| Government & Public Funding | 10 | -20 | 25 | 15.70% | 10.00% | 30 | 45 | 15 |
| Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms | 0 | -15 | 15 | 11.77% | 10.00% | 15 | 30 | 15 |
| Financial Capacity & Governance | -7.5 | -15 | 25 | 4.42% | 10.00% | 7.5 | 40 | 32.5 |
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | -7.5 | -30 | 40 | 7.57% | 10.00% | 22.5 | 70 | 47.5 |
| Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships | 5 | -15 | 25 | 11.77% | 10.00% | 20 | 40 | 20 |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | -2.5 | -15 | 25 | 7.36% | 10.00% | 12.5 | 40 | 27.5 |
| Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning | -2.5 | -15 | 20 | 8.41% | 10.00% | 12.5 | 35 | 22.5 |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | -2.5 | -15 | 25 | 7.36% | 10.00% | 12.5 | 40 | 27.5 |

*Figure 2: Example Excel export for the Access to Finance pillar.*

## 2.Why some questions have a bigger effect on the score

Not all questions contribute equally to the final result. Some questions are weighted more heavily because they represent more important or more influential conditions for investment readiness.

This means that two sub-areas may have a different effect on the overall result, even if they appear similar at first glance. For example, a question about whether a council has clear financial governance, risk ownership, or confirmed delivery capacity may carry more weight than a question about early-stage awareness or informal activity.

The Excel export helps users see the results numerically, but the detailed scoring logic is needed to fully understand why some questions have a larger effect than others. Users should refer to the scoring detail in this appendix when they want to understand how responses contribute to the final score.

When interpreting the results, users should therefore avoid assuming that every question has the same influence. Instead, they should use the charts and Excel export to identify priority areas, then refer to the scoring detail where they need to understand why a particular result appears high, low, or has significant potential gain.

## 3.Start with the Percentage Distribution

The **Percentage Distribution** shows how each sub-area contributes to the overall Access to Finance result.

In this example, the **Optimal Distribution** is 10% for each sub-area. This is because there are ten sub-areas within the Access to Finance pillar. A result above 10% suggests the area is comparatively stronger. A result below 10% suggests the area may need more attention.

**Stronger areas in this example**

| Sub-area | Percentage Distribution |
|---|---|
| Government & Public Funding | 15.70% |
| Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment | 15.04% |
| Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships | 11.77% |
| Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms | 11.77% |

These areas sit above the optimal distribution. This suggests that the authority is comparatively stronger in public funding, leadership commitment, private-sector partnership activity, and innovative finance mechanisms.

**Weaker areas in this example**

| Sub-area | Percentage Distribution |
|---|---|
| Financial Capacity & Governance | 4.42% |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | 7.36% |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | 7.36% |
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | 7.57% |
| Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning | 8.41% |

These areas sit below the optimal distribution. They should be reviewed as potential improvement priorities.

The clearest weak area in this example is **Financial Capacity & Governance**, because it has the lowest percentage distribution.

## 4.Compare Achieved Distribution with Optimal Distribution

The tool also shows an **Achieved Distribution** chart and an **Optimal Distribution** chart.

The **Achieved Distribution** shows the current shape of the authority's results across the sub-areas. The **Optimal Distribution** shows what an even result would look like if all sub-areas contributed equally.

In this example, the achieved distribution is uneven. Some areas, such as **Government & Public Funding** and **Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment**, are larger than the optimal share. Other areas, such as **Financial Capacity & Governance**, are much smaller.

This shows that the authority has some strengths within Access to Finance, but those strengths are not evenly supported by the wider finance readiness conditions.

## 5.Then review the Relative Value

The **Relative Value** chart shows how much progress has been made in each sub-area compared with the maximum possible relative score.

In the visual chart:

- the darker section shows the current relative score;
- the lighter section shows the remaining improvement potential.

The Excel export shows this numerically through:

- **Relative Score**
- **Maximum Relative Score**
- **Potential Gains**

**Largest improvement opportunities in this example**

| Sub-area | Relative Score | Maximum Relative Score | Potential Gains |
|---|---|---|---|
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | 22.5 | 70 | 47.5 |
| Financial Capacity & Governance | 7.5 | 40 | 32.5 |
| Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms | 22.5 | 50 | 27.5 |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | 12.5 | 40 | 27.5 |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | 12.5 | 40 | 27.5 |

This shows that **Risk Management & Financial Sustainability** has the largest potential gain. Although it is not the lowest-scoring area by percentage distribution, it has the greatest room for improvement.

This is important because users should not only focus on the weakest-looking area. They should also consider where improvement could have the greatest effect.

# 6.How to read the Excel export

The Excel export includes the following columns:

| Column | Meaning | How to use it |
|---|---|---|
| Metric Name | The sub-area being assessed | Use this to identify the relevant theme |
| Score | The raw score generated from responses | Use as background information only |
| Min Score | The lowest possible raw score for that sub-area | Use to understand the scoring range |
| Max Score | The highest possible raw score for that sub-area | Use to understand the scoring range |
| Percentage Distribution | The sub-area's share of the overall pillar result | Use to compare strengths and weaknesses |
| Optimal Distribution | The benchmark share if all sub-areas were evenly balanced | Use to identify imbalance |
| Relative Score | The current normalised score | Use to understand current progress |
| Maximum Relative Score | The maximum possible relative score | Use to understand full potential |
| Potential Gains | The remaining improvement opportunity | Use to prioritise action |

The **Score, Min Score**, and **Max Score** columns should not be used alone to decide which areas are weakest. These are raw values before comparison. Different sub-areas may have different scoring ranges, so raw scores can be misleading if compared directly.

For prioritisation, users should focus on:

1. Percentage Distribution
2. Relative Score
3. Maximum Relative Score
4. Potential Gains
5. Overall interpretation

In this example, the authority appears comparatively stronger in:

- Government & Public Funding;

- Financial Planning & Leadership Commitment;
- Private-Sector Investment & Partnerships;
- Innovative Financial Solutions & Mechanisms.

This suggests that the authority may already have some foundations for identifying funding opportunities, securing leadership attention, and considering different finance mechanisms.

However, the authority appears weaker in:

- Financial Capacity & Governance;
- Risk Management & Financial Sustainability;
- Sector-Specific Financial Planning;
- Financial Readiness & Expertise Development;
- Short-Term vs. Long-Term Financial Planning.

This suggests that the authority may need to strengthen the internal systems, governance, risk management, specialist planning, and skills needed to turn finance opportunities into investable projects.

The overall takeaway is:

The authority has some foundations for accessing finance, but needs to strengthen the internal structures, skills, governance, and risk management arrangements that make net zero projects credible, investable, and deliverable over time.

## 7.Example improvement priorities

Based on the results above, the authority could consider the following improvement priorities.

| Priority area | Why it matters | Possible action |
|---|---|---|
| Financial Capacity & Governance | Lowest percentage distribution, indicating a weak area within the pillar | Review governance arrangements for net zero finance and clarify roles, responsibilities, decision routes, and ownership |
| Risk Management & Financial Sustainability | Highest potential gain, indicating the largest improvement opportunity | Develop a risk and financial sustainability framework for priority net zero projects |
| Sector-Specific Financial Planning | Low percentage distribution and high potential gain | Produce finance route assessments for specific project types, such as heat networks, retrofit, EV charging, or solar |
| Financial Readiness & Expertise Development | Low relative score and high potential gain | Identify finance skills gaps and arrange targeted training, peer learning, or external support |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Investment Strategy & Financial Mechanisms | High potential gain, despite moderate current performance | Develop or refresh an investment strategy for the net zero project pipeline |

These actions should be refined locally and assigned to named owners through the authority's improvement plan.

## 8.Key learning from the example

This example shows that users should interpret results in stages.

First, use the charts to identify weaker-looking areas. Then use **Percentage Distribution** to confirm this numerically. Next, use **Relative Score, Maximum Relative Score**, and **Potential Gains** to understand where improvement could have the greatest effect.

Users should avoid relying on the raw **Score, Min Score**, and **Max Score** columns alone. These columns help explain the scoring range, but they are not the best basis for comparing different sub-areas.

The most useful interpretation comes from reading the charts and Excel export together, then using the findings to agree practical improvement actions.

| Version | Date | Purpose / Change | Produced by | Approved by | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.1 | 01-AUG-26 | Draft | Nicholas Sia Han Ming | Justin Olosunde | 11-SEP-26 |
| **1.0** | **11-SEP-26** | **Version 1.0** | **Nicholas Sia Han Ming** | **Dora Hargitai** | **30-SEP-26** |