



A gap assessment tool for identifying areas for improvement

The EBI gap assessment tool enables governments to know where to start and what to focus on when it comes to planning infrastructure strategically. It outlines key milestones for setting up a robust strategic approach, including which parts of the EBI guidance can be drawn on to focus time and resources.

The assessment tool helps to provide clarity to governments on:

- how their country compares against others when it comes to strategic infrastructure planning
- what is missing from a country's current approach
- establishing their country's direction of travel and where to prioritise action
- how to draw on EBI guidance to strengthen the next steps.

The stakeholder groups below can also gain value from the gap assessment tool, where it can help them to understand where further work and input from government is needed:

- **Arms-length bodies** - technical support on assessing and managing infrastructure needs, including how to monitor and evaluate progress.
- **Private sector** – expertise to build robust business cases to inform the design and or infrastructure projects.
- **Research and academia** – thought leadership on the next steps and best practice for refinement and review.
- **Civil society and the public** – inputs on national, regional and local needs and support for good governance through ensuring accountability.

The assessment tool identifies the following options:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Adequate systems and activities are in place for this milestone. Focus can be shifted to areas requiring further work, as outlined by the *requires development or refinement* or *requires support* categories. Considerations will need to be assessed again as part of regular review and monitoring.
- **Requires development or refinement** – Systems and activities are in place, providing a good foundation for further work on this milestone. *The limited initial work needed* category provides direction on the refinements needed.
- **Requires support** – There are limited or no systems and activities in place for this milestone. Further work is needed to strengthen this milestone through government or external support. The *limited initial work needed* or *requires development or refinement* categories provide insight on which activities require improvement and what a good outcome looks like for this milestone.



For easy access to the **Enabling Better Infrastructure gap assessment tool**, [click this link](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-insight/policy-and-advocacy/enabling-better-infrastructure#strategic-planning-tool).

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To use the gap assessment tool, consider the following questions:

1. How are national goals incorporated into policymaking?

Having a strong national process for translating a country's vision into clear goals is central to creating and delivering an effective infrastructure strategy. This should consider all needs – economic, social and environmental – in an inclusive manner.

Stages towards incorporating national goals into policymaking:

- **Limited initial work needed**
There is an agreed-upon definition of infrastructure across one or more stakeholders (government and other) responding to a clear mandate to integrate the national goals into existing and new policy and decision-making structures. Stakeholders work together to agree on how they will interpret the vision, seeking input from other government departments and bodies (internal/external) where necessary.

- **Requires development or refinement**
There is a limited or fragmented set of government departments or other stakeholders that plan infrastructure strategically. Each works within a narrow or siloed operational mandate. There is some communication around national goals, where inputs across departments take place for some core decisions.

- **Requires support**
No government departments or supporting stakeholders are mandated or step in to plan infrastructure. There is limited or no capacity to identify and action a national vision to meet infrastructure service needs.



Principle: 1



Core process: Step 1

2. How are sustainability outcomes embedded into decision-making?

Embedding sustainability measures such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals into decision-making can set out clear social and environmental outcomes for infrastructure programmes, including inclusivity, gender and equity.

Stages towards embedding sustainability outcomes into decision-making:

- **Limited initial work needed**
A sustainability measure, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, is used as a baseline for setting national goals and securing investment. There is also a list of clearly defined sustainability goals or outcomes, including steps to considering them as part of the long-term planning process, including skills needs and funding and financing.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Some sustainability goals are incorporated into planning on an ad hoc basis. There is a limited understanding of how sustainability measures and the UN Sustainable Development Goals are used to set national goals and secure investment, including how sustainability measures link with skills and funding and financing programmes.

- **Requires support**
There are no agreed sustainability goals or clear outcomes in place. There is a limited use of the UN Sustainable Development Goals or associated measures to plan and deliver infrastructure, including the skills and funding and financing requirements.



Principle: 1



Core process: Step 1

Figure 9:

A gap assessment tool for identifying areas for improvement



3. How does a systematic approach contribute to planning and delivery?

A systematic approach is the broader set of processes and actions for developing and implementing infrastructure strategies and policies, ensuring they lead to the effective delivery of infrastructure programmes. A systematic approach ensures evidence, needs and outcomes align to create a robust strategic planning approach that can be delivered in practice.

Stages towards adopting a systematic approach:

- **Limited initial work needed**
An existing internal or regulatory process sets out clear steps for integrating evidence, needs and outcomes into a clear national strategy or plan for the long term. This process is adaptable and includes responsibilities from across government departments (e.g. national, regional and local) for planning and delivery. There is a clear set of activities to benchmark progress with other countries.

- **Requires development or refinement**
A fragmented departmental or broader regulatory process identifies steps for integrating evidence, needs and outcomes for building a national strategy or plan for the long term. This process is followed ad hoc, with limited coordination across government departments (e.g. national, regional and local) to support planning and delivery. Actions to benchmark progress with other countries are limited or non-existent.

- **Requires support**
There are no departmental or other regulatory processes setting out clear steps for integrating evidence, needs and outcomes for building a national strategy or plan for the future. There is no coordination between government departments or activities to benchmark progress with other countries.

Principles: 1,2,4,7,8

Core process: Steps 1,2,3

4. How are service needs understood?

Structures for ensuring data is gathered and used to inform decision-making are key to ensuring infrastructure service needs are met. Without a data-informed approach to understanding infrastructure needs, it can be difficult to identify priority areas for strategic infrastructure planning. Setting up structures and data-gathering techniques from the start is essential for driving success in the strategic planning process.

Stages towards understanding service needs:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Data gathered through existing structures for data collection is used to inform evidence-based decision-making. Initiatives are set up at the national level, where sectoral stakeholders or agencies regularly share their information. Data needs are actively reflected on, and steps are taken to meet these needs over time. New or refined methodologies are used to gather robust data and there is consensus on which long-term projections are being used (e.g. economic, demographic, climate change) across infrastructure sectors.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Available data gathered through existing systems for data collection informs evidence-based decision-making. This could be set up at the national level or where sectoral stakeholders or agencies share their information on an ad hoc basis. There is some reflection on data needs, but more steps could be taken to improve this to strengthen strategic planning. The same methods are used with little refinement or innovation and there is limited consensus on which long-term projections are being used (e.g. economic, demographic, climate change).

- **Requires support**
Intuition is used to understand needs rather than data from sectoral stakeholders or agencies. Limited initiatives are in place to gather evidence at the national level to draw together existing data sets. There are no clear plans to gather data on needs in the future and there is no consensus on how long-term projections are used.

Principles: 2,3,7

Core process: Steps 2,3



5. How is the condition of infrastructure assets assessed?

Understanding the condition and performance of existing infrastructure assets is essential for establishing what further policy work is needed to ensure government delivers on infrastructure service needs. This requires a clear assessment of what services infrastructure delivers, the services it can provide over the asset's lifetime, and its maintenance requirements. Processes and initiatives for integrating data into strategic planning ensure visibility and that all needs can be catered to.

Stages towards assessing the condition of infrastructure assets:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Existing initiatives and reporting databases capture data on the accessibility, cost and quality of infrastructure and how it is expected to change in the future. This includes a clear picture of the maintenance requirements, the costs of maintenance and its benefits in enhancing infrastructure performance and reliability. There is consensus among leading government and other stakeholders on how the data is used to inform decision-making (e.g. via agreements, other). New or refined methodologies are used to ensure asset registers are accurate and transparent.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Incomplete or incorrect data on accessibility, cost and quality is used to understand the state of existing infrastructure assets as part of routine reporting initiatives. Limited accessible databases are available outlining the state of the infrastructure stock and its maintenance requirements. There is a weak connection between existing service provision and decision-making, with limited work to ensure the accuracy and transparency of asset registers.

- **Requires support**
There are no individual or routine initiatives to understand service provision and the state of existing infrastructure assets, including their maintenance requirements. No accessible databases or asset registers exist outlining this information and no connection is made between service needs, state of infrastructure and decision-making functions.

 **Principles: 2,3,4,8**

 **Core process: Steps 2,3**

6. How are infrastructure options considered to deliver on service needs?

Delivering on infrastructure needs in the most efficient way possible requires thinking through the range of options that would best deliver on them and adding these as programmes or projects to the infrastructure pipeline. This can include the delivery of new infrastructure, or the use of alternative solutions such as repurposing infrastructure or low- or no-build solutions.

Stages towards considering options:

- **Limited initial work needed**
There is an established process for generating and appraising the options that can deliver on service needs (e.g. business cases or cost-benefit analysis). This includes a wide spread of options incorporating existing infrastructure, where the impacts on the economy, society and the environment are understood. Options are selected based on a clear framework for delivery that achieves national goals and value for money.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Some of the methods for evaluating options that can deliver on service needs are established (e.g. business cases or cost-benefit analysis). This includes some options incorporating existing infrastructure, where the impacts on the economy, society and the environment are considered in part or full. There is inconsistent appraisal, with some decisions taken without considering the full range of options.

- **Requires support**
Service needs are not used to scope infrastructure options. The impacts on the economy, society and the environment are not considered in full and there is no clear basis for option or solution selection. There is limited options appraisal, with most decisions taken without consideration of all the options.

 **Principles: 2,3**

 **Core process: Step 2**



7. How is value for money delivered on?

Deciding what value for money looks like is essential for having an informed conversation about what should be prioritised in the short and long term and how infrastructure will be paid for. When considered at the start of the planning process, it can support transparency around what is needed to achieve national goals, inform the appraisal of infrastructure options, and determine how infrastructure programmes can be funded or financed.

Stages towards delivering on value for money:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Value for money is well understood, where it is used to prioritise options and sources of funding and financing for infrastructure programmes decided on at the national level. A reliable measure of affordability is used for publicly funded programmes (e.g. fiscal remit) and clear regulations for the private sector are established and actively used.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Value for money is not well understood and it is inconsistently used to prioritise infrastructure options and sources of funding and financing at the national level for infrastructure programmes. A reliable measure of affordability is not routinely used for publicly funded programmes (e.g. fiscal remit) and there are limited regulations for the private sector to identify and deliver programmes and projects.

- **Requires support**
No clear understanding of value for money exists. Affordability and regulation are not used to prioritise infrastructure programmes.

 **Principle: 5**

 **Core process: Steps 1,2,3**

8. How are inputs from all stakeholders included in the strategic planning process?

Gathering inputs from all stakeholders ensures that the needs of clients, users and consumers of infrastructure services are factored into the strategic planning process. Although this may not be standard practice across all countries, there is value in bringing in stakeholders from other sectors to share insights into what is needed, how it could be delivered and what blockages there are. Furthermore, including all stakeholders helps to factor in scrutiny, critical review and the needs of any vulnerable groups.

Stages towards including all stakeholders:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Stakeholders from the private sector (e.g. infrastructure users, financiers, owners, designers and constructors) and civil society are involved in project planning from its inception. Opportunities for stakeholder involvement are revisited to ensure balanced insights are used to inform planning and that these include inputs from vulnerable groups. Opportunities for public scrutiny of policies, strategies and plans are used to strengthen collectively agreed outcomes.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Stakeholders from the private sector or civil society are involved in at least one aspect of programme and project planning. Some options for public scrutiny of policies, procedures and plans exist. Inputs from vulnerable groups are incorporated on an ad hoc basis.

- **Requires support**
No other stakeholders (e.g. private sector and civil society) are involved in programme and project planning. There are no opportunities for public scrutiny of policies, strategies and plans. Inputs from vulnerable groups are not considered.

 **Principle: 6**

 **Core process: Steps 1,2,3**



9. How is delivery considered as part of long-term planning?

Early consideration of project delivery can add significant value to strategic infrastructure planning. Considering how infrastructure programmes or projects will be delivered upfront, including their skills (e.g. technical and leadership), financing, and market or supply chain requirements, is vital to overcoming bottlenecks later in the infrastructure life cycle. Taking this step supports the development of a stable and sustainable infrastructure pipeline.

Stages towards considering delivery:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Delivery and implementation are always considered in the planning process, where they are considered upfront. Stakeholders involved in delivery are included at the start of the planning process, and potential risks are identified and addressed upfront. This also includes the skills (e.g. technical and leadership), funding and financing concerns, and market-based considerations.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Some aspects of delivery and implementation are considered in the planning process. Stakeholders involved in the implementation stage are not included in the planning process. Skills (e.g. technical and leadership), funding and financing concerns, and market-based considerations are only sometimes or inconsistently considered in planning, where they are intrinsically linked to the key deliverables of one or more programmes or projects.

- **Requires support**
Delivery is not considered at any stage of the strategic infrastructure planning process. Stakeholders involved in the delivery stage are not included in the planning process. Skills (e.g. technical and leadership), funding and financing concerns, and market-based issues are not considered upfront.

Principles: 4,8

Core process: Steps 2,3

10. How is evidence used to improve the planning process over time?

Reviewing the effectiveness of strategic infrastructure planning requires data capture and its use in decision-making processes. Central to this process is putting in place structures to capture and use data. The strongest review systems also incorporate a periodic appraisal of the methods and data used, highlighting where this can be refined over the lifetime of a project or programme.

Stages towards embedding data capture:

- **Limited initial work needed**
Established structures for data collection and monitoring and evaluation measures are used. Steps are in place to gather, integrate and refine methods to ensure data helps assess policy outcomes accurately. There are also systems in place to enhance the accessibility and shareability of data. Available data is used to inform a regular review of strategic planning and data-gathering processes over time.

- **Requires development or refinement**
Fragmented or imperfect data is available. Some monitoring and evaluation measures are in place but infrequently match available data or evaluation needs. Some steps are taken to gather, integrate and refine methods to ensure data helps assess policy outcomes accurately. Structures are in place to enhance the accessibility and shareability of data. Some data is used to inform a regular review process.

- **Requires support**
There are no established structures for data collection and no monitoring and evaluation measures in place. No systems are in place to enhance the accessibility and shareability of data. Existing data is not used to inform a strategic planning review process.

Principles: 7,8

Core process: Step 3