

Strategic gap assessment tool for benchmarking progress on strategic infrastructure planning



When using the core three-step process and supporting examples to strengthen strategic infrastructure planning, it can be challenging to understand where to start or what 'good' looks like for each country.

As countries have different governance, geographical and political considerations, it is often challenging for governments to use available tools and approaches that set out a universal approach.

The strategic planning gap assessment tool helps governments overcome this hurdle by outlining key milestones for setting up a successful strategic approach. Countries can evaluate which stages they are in to help them understand where to focus their resources.

Any stakeholder involved in the strategic planning process can use the strategic planning gap assessment tool to identify further work needed.

Using the tool will provide clarity on:

- how countries compare when it comes to strategic infrastructure planning
- where governments can start using our guidance and how they can benefit
- a country's direction of travel and next steps towards setting up a robust strategic infrastructure planning process

- what is missing from a country's current approach.

The stakeholder groups below can use the strategic planning gap assessment tool in the following ways:

- **arms-length bodies** - to assist with how they provide technical and data-based insights on assessing and managing infrastructure needs, including how to develop evaluation measures and monitor inputs
- **private sector** - to provide technical and other expertise to design and action key outcomes
- **research and academia** - to provide thought leadership and critical appraisal of steps and reflections for (re)assessment
- **civil society** - to ensure national and regional needs are understood and incorporated into strategic planning and to support good governance by ensuring accountability
- **The public** - to provide input on infrastructure needs and scrutinise government plans and processes.



For easy access to the **Enabling Better Infrastructure strategic planning gap assessment tool**, scan the QR code.

<https://www.ice.org.uk/news-insight/policy-and-advocacy/enabling-better-infrastructure#strategic-planning-tool>

The strategic planning gap assessment tool outlines the following options:



Limited initial work needed

Sufficient systems and activities are in place, and focus can be directed on areas requiring further work outlined by the *requires development or refinement* or *requires support* categories. These considerations will need to be reassessed as part of the regular reporting framework.



Requires development or refinement

Systems and activities are in place that indicate a good foundation for further work. The *limited initial work needed* category outlines what goals the enhancements and refinements can be directed towards achieving.



Requires support

There are limited or no systems and activities in place for this this key area. Further work is needed to strengthen this area through government or external support. The *limited initial work needed* or *requires development or refinement* categories provide insight on which activities can improve this area and what a good outcome would look like.

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

1. How is the national vision incorporated into policymaking?

Developing a strong process for translating a national vision into policymaking is central to developing an effective infrastructure strategy that governments can follow to create stable, sustainable and investable project pipelines.

Stages towards incorporating a national vision into policymaking:



Limited initial work needed

There are specific government departments, in association with other stakeholders, responding to a clear mandate to integrate the national vision into existing and new policy and decision-making structures. They 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

A limited or fragmented set of departments plan infrastructure strategically. Each works within a narrow or siloed operational mandate. There is some communication around national vision, where inputs across departments take place for some core decisions.



Requires support

No government departments have a remit 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.

Stages towards embedding sustainability outcomes into decision-making:



Limited initial work needed

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are used as a baseline for setting outcomes for infrastructure projects. There is also a list of clearly defined sustainability goals or outcomes, including awareness of the sustainability measures needed for 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 useful for funding and financing.



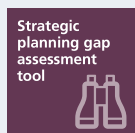
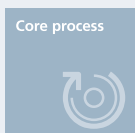
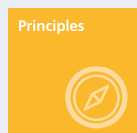
Requires support

There are no agreed sustainability goals or clear outcomes. There is limited use of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and limited awareness of the sustainability measures is needed for funding and financing.

 **Principle: 2**

 **Core process: Step 1**

EBI guidance key:



3. How does a systematic approach contribute to planning?

A systematic approach is the broader set of processes and actions for developing and implementing infrastructure strategies and policies. These can be part of existing regulations or through ad hoc interventions such as dialogues. A systematic approach ensures evidence, needs and outcomes align to create a robust strategic planning approach that can be reviewed over time.

Stages towards adopting a systematic approach:



Limited initial work needed

An existing internal or regulatory process identifies clear steps for integrating evidence, needs and outcomes into building strategies. This process is adaptable and includes responsibilities from across government departments. 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 strategies. This process is followed ad hoc, with limited coordination across government departments and limited opportunities to benchmark progress with other countries.



Requires support

There are no departmental or other regulatory processes setting out clear steps for integrating evidence, needs and outcomes for building strategies. There is no existing coordination between government departments or activities to benchmark progress.



Principle: 1,8



Core process: Step 1,2,3

4. How are country-specific considerations factored into the strategic planning process?

Every country is different, and all governments need systems to draw on existing data and knowledge to inform strategic planning processes to ensure they adequately plan their infrastructure in light of their country-specific considerations. Data, institutional knowledge and experience of prior policy interventions are all essential for building a robust strategy, ensuring it is fit for purpose and delivers over the lifetime of the strategic planning process. The most successful strategic planning processes incorporate country-specific data and have feedback loops to ensure available data, institutional knowledge and experience are used to strengthen the strategic planning system.

Stages towards factoring in country-specific considerations:



Limited initial work needed

Existing data and institutional knowledge on country-specific factors and outcomes of previous policy interventions are used in planning and overall strategy development. Opportunities for reflection and review are factored into the strategic planning process.



Requires development or refinement

Limited existing data and institutional knowledge on country-specific factors and outcomes of previous policy interventions are used in planning and overall strategy development. Data and institutional knowledge are sometimes included in the planning process and strategy development, depending on what is being planned for.



Requires support

External sources of knowledge or data from other organisations are used to understand and plan for country-specific factors. There are limited options to use the outcomes of previous policy interventions as part of planning and overall strategy development.



Principle: 1



Core process: Step 1

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continued



5. How are infrastructure service needs understood?

Structures for ensuring data is gathered and used to inform decision-making are key to unlocking infrastructure service needs and how they can be 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 are essential components for driving success in the strategic planning process.

Stages towards understanding infrastructure service needs:



Limited initial work needed

Data gathered through existing structures for data collection are used to inform evidence-based decision-making. Data needs are actively reflected on, and steps are taken to meet these needs over time. New methodologies for supporting robust data gathering are used.



Requires development or refinement

Available data gathered through existing systems for data collection informs evidence-based decision-making. There is some reflection on data needs, but more steps could be taken to meet them. The same methods are followed over time.



Requires support

Existing data on needs neither available nor used; intuition is relied on to understand needs. Limited structures are in place to gather evidence to understand needs better.

 Principle: 3

 Core process: Step 2

6. How is the condition of infrastructure assets assessed?

Understanding the condition and performance of infrastructure assets is essential for understanding what further policy work is needed to ensure government delivers on infrastructure service needs. This requires a clear assessment of what services infrastructure delivers and what services it can provide over the asset's lifetime. Building feedback loops to ensure the condition and performance of infrastructure assets are known helps to inform evidence-based decision-making.

Stages towards assessing the condition of infrastructure assets:



Limited initial work needed

Existing initiatives and reporting databases outlining accessibility, cost and quality are used to understand the state of existing infrastructure assets. Available data is readily used to inform decision-making, and new methodologies are tested to overcome limitations.



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. There is a weak connection between existing service provision and decision-making.



Requires support

There are no individual or routine initiatives to understand service provision and the state of existing infrastructure assets. There are no accessible databases outlining this information and no connection between service needs, state of infrastructure and decision-making.

 Principle: 3

 Core process: Step 2

7. How is implementation considered in the planning process?

Implementation is often an afterthought when it comes to strategic infrastructure planning. That said, considering implementation upfront, including financial and technical considerations, is vital to overcoming bottlenecks in infrastructure delivery.

Stages towards considering implementation:



Limited initial work needed

Implementation is always considered in the planning process, where it is considered upfront. Stakeholders involved in implementation are included at the start of the planning process, and potential risks are identified and addressed upfront. This also includes the financial and technical bottlenecks that can also influence delivery.



Requires development or refinement

Some aspects of implementation are considered in the planning process. Stakeholders involved in the implementation stage are not included in the planning process. Financial and technical considerations are only sometimes considered where they are intrinsically linked to the key deliverables of one or more projects.



Requires support

Implementation is not considered at any stage of the strategic infrastructure planning process. Stakeholders involved in the implementation stage are not included in the planning process. Financial and technical considerations are not considered upfront.

 Principle: 4

 Core process: Step 3

8. How are non-monetary outcomes (positive and negative) included in the planning process?

Not all the benefits of infrastructure can be measured in financial or numerical terms. For these reasons, finding ways to grasp non-monetary value is essential for delivering the full impact of infrastructure. In many cases, the mechanism used to calculate the value of non-monetary terms, e.g. through cost-benefit analysis, requires ongoing refinement and review to ensure it measures all societal and environmental benefits.

Stages towards including non-monetary outcomes:



Limited initial work needed

Non-monetary outcomes are considered at the start of the planning process, both positive and negative aspects. Corporate interests also support the wellbeing of society and the environment.



Requires development or refinement

Some non-monetary outcomes are considered in at least one stage of the planning process. The positive aspects are mostly considered across society and the environment – financial and corporate interests influence which non-monetary outcomes are assessed.



Requires support

No non-monetary outcomes are considered during the planning process. Few or no adverse outcomes are assessed.

 Principle: 4,5

 Core process: Step 3



9. How are budgetary and long-term fiscal concerns factored into the planning process?

Understanding what fiscal resources are available for infrastructure is essential for having an informed conversation about what is affordable in the short and long term. When considered at the start of the planning process, an understanding of affordability can enable transparency around which funding opportunities might help achieve national needs and can support detailed consideration of returns on investment for costly programmes and projects.

Stages towards factoring in budgetary and long-term fiscal concerns:



Limited initial work needed

Fiscal limits and budgetary concerns are considered right at the start of the planning process. These are well understood and are used to set boundaries for how external funding and investments are structured. They are readily used to calculate returns on investment for costly projects and programmes.



Requires development or refinement

Some fiscal limits and budgetary concerns are considered in the planning process. These are used to understand the following steps, including funding and opportunities from other sectors. Figures are sometimes used to calculate returns on investment for costly projects and programmes on an ad hoc basis.



Requires support

Fiscal limits and budgetary concerns are not considered during the planning process. No boundaries are agreed upon before engaging funding and input from other sectors.

Principle: 4,6

Core process: Step 3

10. 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 and civil society are involved in project planning. 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 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: 7

Core process: Step 1,2,3

11. How is data capture embedded into the development and assessment of policy outcomes?

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.



Principle: 8



Core process: Step 3