

Enabling Better Infrastructure (EBI) programme

Driving purpose, certainty, and pace in strategic infrastructure planning.

The [EBI programme](#) helps governments around the world to identify and deliver on their country's infrastructure needs so that their people and the planet can thrive.

This includes everyone having access to clean drinking water or being able to get to school or work using public transport.

To help governments achieve this, the EBI programme brings together independent experts who understand how to plan and prioritise infrastructure to ensure people have access to the services they need.

From government officials to private sector professionals, like civil engineers, and non-government representatives, like the United Nations, they each bring a valuable view to the table.

EBI works with countries to understand specific challenges that they face as a nation to come up with a unique strategy to address their specific issues.

The EBI guidance is composed of:

1. Eight principles to help governments plan infrastructure
2. A three-step process so governments can build their own infrastructure strategy
3. A gap assessment tool to help countries figure out where their infrastructure planning could improve

The programme works towards a vision of a world where people can live safe, healthy and productive lives, supported by sustainable and resilient infrastructure that meets everyone's needs.

The eight guiding principles

The following eight principles outline the most important things that governments and other stakeholders need to consider when setting up their infrastructure strategy.

Principle 1 – Create a clear vision

When planning infrastructure, it's important to start with a clear vision of the economic, social, and environmental outcomes that are needed.

A clear vision is important as it gives people something to 'get behind'.

Having support from government and other stakeholders means that planning new infrastructure projects is generally a smoother process, as people can see how each project fits into the bigger picture.

This means making decisions about projects becomes easier, as everyone is working towards the same outcome.

Principle in practice

Before deciding on your project, think of what you want to achieve for society, the economy and the environment.

You'll need to convince others that your project is worth pursuing, so make sure that you have a very clear vision of what it is you want to do.

Principle 2 – Use the UN Sustainable Development Goals to identify outcomes

Infrastructure provides a wide range of benefits to society and the environment. It helps guarantee access to healthcare, it provides means to get to work, it helps ensure there's enough food for everyone, among many other things.

International measures such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer guidance to ensure that infrastructure delivers these benefits.

They also ensure that infrastructure is planned in ways that delivers more than just what it was built for by considering themes such as inclusivity and equity.

For example, a country might need to invest in transport infrastructure, like a new bus terminal. Building it fulfils that need, but thinking carefully about where it's placed can ensure everyone, including the most vulnerable, can access it and feel safe using it.

Principle in practice

When coming up with ideas for your project, look through the [UN SDGs](#). Try and meet as many as you can to deliver a wide variety of benefits to people and the environment.

Be mindful that addressing one of the goals could mean going against another. It's likely that there will be trade-offs, but you can decide what those trade-offs will be.

Principle 3 – Look at a wide range of infrastructure options

Before investing resources in an infrastructure project, consider how it meets current and future needs across many different sectors, such as water, energy, transport, etc.

It's also important to consider how climate change, population growth and maintenance can affect the project in the future.

Focusing on providing the services that people need, rather than just building for the sake of building, means that a wider variety of options are available.

It may be that you don't need to build anything new and can repurpose existing infrastructure.

Principle in practice

You don't always need to build something new to achieve your goals. Can you repurpose an existing structure? Can you use a natural alternative?

Sometimes you [don't need to build at all!](#) Make sure you consider all your options before you decide on your project.

Principle 4 – Scope ahead to drive success

Putting plans into practice can reveal a range of obstacles.



To get around these and ensure that you have a solution to possible problems, think of what you need to deliver these infrastructure projects.

To avoid things getting in the way later on, consider what you'll need in terms of:

- money
- resources
- skills
- technology
- research
- sustainability

Other factors will come into play – the more you can think of ahead of time, the better!

Principle in practice

A complete project proposal needs to look ahead. What could stop you from achieving your goal? Think of as many obstacles as you can, and potential ways to address them.

Remember that you can ask your mentor for help! They have lots of experience to draw on and can offer valuable advice.

Principle 5 – Refine cost-benefit analysis

When comparing project options, assessing their cost and the benefits that they'll bring (cost-benefit analysis) across the environment and society is important.

These factors also need to be considered at national and regional levels.

Some benefits will be harder to assign a monetary value to (e.g. biodiversity), but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be considered.

For example, deciding whether to build a community hub or a park is broken down into how much it will cost in relation to the social and environmental benefits it will bring. This will differ depending on where it's built.

Principle in practice

It's not just about how much money something will cost to build or do. Something that costs more could potentially bring greater benefits, and then that could make it worth it.

Think about whether your project could improve quality of life, make a place more accessible, protect wildlife, reduce climate risks like flooding, and any other benefits that don't necessarily have a price tag attached.

The [Australian government takes this approach](#) to assess the benefits and impacts of a project. For example, they look at: cultural heritage, indigenous values, protecting ecosystems, and physical and mental health.

Principle 6 – Use affordability to prioritise projects

When you have a whole list of projects to build and/or maintain, it can be difficult to know which ones to do first.

Considering what you can afford to do helps to prioritise and use limited resources in the best way possible.

Thinking in terms of what's affordable can also help to choose projects that bring the most significant benefits to the community, using the national vision as a guide.

Prioritising projects this way can also help to show that sometimes projects that require a large sum of money upfront can turn out to be affordable in the long run.

Principle in practice

If you're deciding between a few project ideas, and you've already thought about what benefits each could deliver, then thinking about what you can afford with your given budget will help you pick.

Try and deliver as many benefits as you can with the resources you have.

Principle 7 – Establish relationships for long-term change

To collaborate effectively with everyone involved in the project, all stakeholders must know all the facts.

This ensures that the projects survive periods of instability, or changes in government.

It can also help to find solutions when separate parties want different things.

Including people that have a background in planning, design and construction in the planning process also helps to build trust and make delivery smoother.

Governments should also work with academic institutions and private companies to support the projects through innovation and resources (i.e. money).

Principle in practice

Communication is a key factor of good teamwork. Make sure you share all your ideas and concerns with your teammates so everyone can be on the same page.

Also, remember that your mentor is there to help you, so make sure you share with them too. They could bring something up that you hadn't considered!

Principle 8 – Set up systems to support the use of data

Data can be a huge help to determine the benefits and performance of infrastructure projects.

But to use it effectively, structures or platforms need to be in place to make sure all that data can be hosted and accessed with ease. Having these structures in place ensures that resources are given to data gathering, as everyone can see its value.

Principle in practice

There's a lot of information available. You'll easily be able to find things like statistics and case studies online. Use this data as evidence to shape your project proposal.

Make sure that you store this data in an organised way (for example, on a shared drive) so that other team members can access and use it too.

[Find out more about the EBI programme.](#)