

PROJECT APPROVAL GUIDELINES



(Infrastructure Projects and Programmes)

March 2024



1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of these Project Approval Guidelines (Infrastructure projects and programmes) (the “Guidelines”) is to provide a framework to ensure the successful delivery and oversight of capital infrastructure projects funded by the NTA, ensuring that the correct project is implemented in an appropriate manner at an optimal cost. Separate NTA guidelines are in place for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects/programmes.

The Guidelines set out the key documentation to be developed by Sponsoring Agencies, which, in addition to ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Infrastructure Guidelines (published by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform), will also provide a robust basis for project development.

As these Guidelines are focussed on the overall oversight and monitoring of capital investments, Sponsoring Agencies should supplement these Guidelines with their own project management procedures and processes to manage the delivery phases of their capital investment projects.

These Guidelines do not aim to be a full statement of the duties and obligations of a Sponsoring Agency or a project team. Responsibility for ensuring that projects are progressed in accordance with applicable legislation, standards and other relevant guidelines remains with the Sponsoring Agency and the project team.

To ensure proportionality of application, these Guidelines are structured around three project band sizes in terms of project cost, as set out below:

Project Bands

Band 1: Up to €5.0 million

Band 2: €5.0 million to €20 million

Band 3: Greater than €20 million

1.2 Project Lifecycle Phases

These Guidelines divide the development of a capital infrastructure project into seven “Phases” as follows:

PHASE 1: Scope and Purpose

PHASE 2: Concept Development & Option Selection

PHASE 3: Preliminary Design

PHASE 4: Statutory Processes

PHASE 5: Detailed Design and Procurement

PHASE 6: Construction and Implementation

PHASE 7: Close-out and Review

1.3 Gateways and Hold Points

The term “Gateways” as used in these Guidelines, refers to NTA approval points, which occur at key points in the lifecycle of a project. These Gateways generally align with the end of the individual Phases of the project lifecycle.

The purpose of an NTA Gateway is to ensure that a project has met certain requirements before it can proceed to the next Phase. Requirements include a level of certainty achieved in relation to scope, cost, quality, and time as well as value and benefits. Gateways serve as milestones where informed decisions can be made on the future phases for the project.

Subsequent sections set out the key deliverables to be developed by the Sponsoring Agency to successfully pass each phase Gateway.

In addition to Gateways, additional project specific “Hold Points” may be required for particular projects. At a Hold Point, a specific activity will be paused pending review and response by the NTA to a particular submission. A limited number of Hold Points are identified for particular project phases in the subsequent sections. However, should the need arise, the NTA may request additional hold points in respect of an individual project, depending on relevant project details and particular circumstances.

As Approving Authority, the NTA requires that the relevant Sponsoring Agency compiles the necessary evidence to demonstrate the specific application of these Guidelines to the particular project.

1.4 Types of Projects

These Guidelines are intended to apply to infrastructure projects funded by the NTA, while separate NTA approval guidelines apply to ICT projects. Certain project types may not neatly fall into one or other category and in respect of such non-standard projects, these Guidelines will generally apply. In such cases, the phase titles and deliverables shall be interpreted, and may be adjusted by the NTA for the relevant proposal, to align with the particular project type, while maintaining the core principles of the Guidelines.

1.5 Programmes of Projects

For the purposes of these Guidelines, smaller projects that individually contribute to the achievement of an overall strategic objective may be grouped together into a Programme. In circumstances where synergies (of cost, minimising disruption, etc.) can be achieved by undertaking a group of projects in a programmed way, the overall Programme can be treated as the relevant project for the application of these Guidelines, subject to the agreement of the NTA.

1.6 Combining of Phases

In some cases, particularly for smaller or simpler projects, certain phases may be combined, or some phases omitted, to reflect the nature of the project. Such an approach requires prior NTA approval.

1.7 Interaction with other guidance

These Guidelines should be applied in conjunction with the NTA's most up to date suite of guidance documents such as the:

- Cost Management Guidelines plus associated templates; and
- Eligible Expenditure Guidelines for Projects Funded by the NTA.

Should an ambiguity or an inconsistency exist between these Guidelines and the other documentation, clarification can be sought from the NTA to resolve such ambiguity or inconsistency.

In addition, these Guidelines complement, and do not replace, other relevant national guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Infrastructure Guidelines published by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DEPENDR);

- Circular No. 02/2022: "Application of Guidelines and Standards in relation to works on Public Roads in Ireland" by the National (Infrastructure) Guidelines and Standards Group of the Department of Transport;
- Circular No. 13/2014 entitled "Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds", (DPER) or any updated relevant Circulars;
- Capital Works Management Framework including associated Guidance Notes published by the Office of Public Procurement; and
- "Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF) for Transport Projects and Programmes" published by the Department of Transport (DOT).

1.8 Alignment with Infrastructure Guidelines

These Guidelines have been developed to fully align with the Infrastructure Guidelines published by DEPENDR. The three approval stages set out in the Infrastructure Guidelines (IG) are:

- Strategic Assessment & Preliminary Business Case: Approval Gate 1 - approval in principle for the proposal;
- Project Design, Planning and Procurement Strategy: Approval Gate 2 - approval for the project to proceed to tender; and
- Final Business Case: Approval Gate 3 - approval to award the main construction contract.

The first IG approval stage aligns with Gateway 3 of these Guidelines. The second IG approval stage is aligned with Gateway 5A in Phase 5 of these Guidelines while the third IG approval stage aligns with Gateway 5B.

1.9 Structure of Document

Following this introductory Section 1, subsequent Sections 2, 3 and 4 provide general information on items related to the overall management of projects.

Sections 5 to 11 set out the key deliverables required to be provided to the NTA during each of the seven lifecycle phases, together with other relevant information relating to the particular phase.

Section 12 provides a summary chart of the seven phases, the relevant gateways and the key deliverables within each phase for Band 3 projects.

2 Governance, Reporting and Publicity

2.1 Governance Overview

The Infrastructure Guidelines published by DEPENDER set out the roles and responsibilities of the Approving Authority and the Sponsoring Agency.

In general, the NTA are the Approving Authority for transport related projects funded, or part funded, by the NTA. In order to fulfil this role, the NTA should be consulted and sufficiently informed at each key milestone in the project's development, enabling sound decisions, as may be appropriate, on the authorisation of the next stage of work and/or project changes.

2.2 Management of Projects

Each project should have a Project Manager or Project Director or equivalent, appointed by the Sponsoring Agency, who will have responsibility for the day-to-day development and delivery of the project. The Project Manager/Director must follow their respective Sponsoring Agency's project management processes to plan, execute, monitor, control and complete the relevant project.

For larger projects or programmes, it may be necessary to set up a Project/Programme Board or Steering Committee to provide additional oversight on the project/programme. The NTA should be consulted prior to establishing such Board or Committee. The NTA reserves the right to require the establishment of a Board/Committee in respect of a particular project.

On larger projects/programmes, the Project/Programme Board typically will include a representative from the Approving Authority. The NTA should be consulted on membership of such Boards/Committees. The Programme / Project Board will normally be chaired by a senior representative from the Sponsoring Agency, unless agreed otherwise by the NTA.

The overarching role of the Programme or Project Board will be to oversee the development and delivery of the project/programme, to provide executive oversight and challenge of the project's execution and to be the decision-making body on key matters related to the project/programme not reserved for the Sponsoring Agency's Management/Board or the Approving Authority or Government.

2.3 Reporting

Good communications and reporting are essential parts of the successful delivery of projects and programmes. All projects are required to have regular reporting and communication between the Sponsoring Agency and the NTA regardless of the project size.

For effective project management and oversight, it is important that regular reports be prepared for each project, providing, among other things, key information on progress and expenditure, as well as detailing risks, issues and opportunities as applicable.

For larger projects, or for a portfolio of projects, periodic meetings should be held with the NTA to review project/programme progress and address emerging issues. In addition, the NTA reserves the right to require additional ad-hoc meetings at its request.

The Sponsoring Agency is required to provide a monthly report on each funded project to the NTA each month. The level of detail in such reports should be commensurate with project size/value. Significant detail will be required for larger projects, whereas less detail may be sufficient for smaller projects. The level of detail required for each report should be agreed at the outset of the project with the NTA, as should the format of the monthly reports. The NTA may also require reports to be submitted in a prescribed format.

2.4 Draft Documents

In order to support effective project development, the NTA may require documents to be provided in early draft form for initial review and feedback.

2.5 Publicity

Information regarding projects is released to the general public at specific stages during the project development. The NTA has specific requirements that must be met when releasing information about a project into the public domain. The Sponsoring Agency shall liaise the NTA appointed Programme Manager, to ensure compliance with these requirements and to provide a coordinated response within the organisations to queries from the public and media.

Prior approval must be obtained from the NTA for any press releases / media events for NTA funded projects.

3 Cost Management

3.1 Cost Overview

Management of costs on projects is one of the most critical areas of project management. However, just as important as managing the delivery costs is the development of robust cost estimates for the project.

The most frequent cause of cost overruns on projects is inadequate cost estimation and budgetary provision. Insufficient recognition of project uncertainties and inadequate allowance to address those uncertainties are frequent occurrences on capital projects and programmes.

Accordingly, Sponsoring Agencies are required to give appropriate attention to ensuring that project budgets are properly developed, using reliable cost data and applying appropriate allowances for risk/contingency and for inflation.

3.2 Cost Management Guidelines and Inflation Bulletin

The NTA has published Cost Management Guidelines and associated templates plus a contingency calculator, which have been developed to assist Sponsoring Agencies to achieve robust cost estimates at each phase in the project life cycle.

In addition, the NTA publishes an Inflation Bulletin, updated periodically, to provide guidance on the inclusion of inflation in cost estimates and project budgets.

3.3 Proportionality

It is recognised that the level of cost analysis will vary by project size and sometimes by project type. For larger infrastructure projects and programmes, very robust cost estimation is required, which is likely to involve specialist quantity surveyors or cost consultants, and specialised techniques such as quantified risk assessment. In addition, other costing tools, such as reference class forecasting, may be required to ensure the adequacy of the cost estimation work.

Simpler approaches can be utilised for smaller projects provided that they deliver robust and reliable cost/budget estimates.

3.4 Cost Ranges

Consideration should be given on the use of cost ranges on projects, particularly at early project stages. Frequently, single point estimates for a project are given at the embryonic stages of a scheme, when the level of unknowns about the project are at their maximum. This frequently provides an inappropriate point of reference for subsequent cost comparisons on the project, as it matures through its development phases and its full implications are better understood.

The use of a cost range instead of a single point estimate should provide a higher certainty of later costs aligning with earlier estimates. Indeed, a cost range can be used throughout the project life cycle, with the extent of the range narrowing as the project develops and the number of uncertainties and risks decrease.

For larger projects, a methodology has been developed on a number of NTA funded projects and programmes of using probability estimates at the P30, P50 and P80 levels. A P50 cost estimate is an estimate where there is a 50% probability that the final cost will be at or below the stated cost figure. A P30 estimate is where there is only a 30% probability of the final cost being at or below the stated cost figure, and that probability increases to 80% in the case of a P80 estimate. Developing a cost range from P30 to P80 on larger projects provides a reasonable level of confidence of the project being completed within the stated figures.

4 Project Execution Plan, Gateway Process and PRS

4.1 Project Execution Plan

The Project Execution Plan (PEP) is a key document for managing a project and sets out the policies and procedures governing the delivery of the particular scheme. It provides a comprehensive description of the project's scope, objectives and delivery arrangements in a structured format. Its purpose is to provide an overall framework to guide the subsequent delivery of the project to the required specifications, within the project capital budget, and to a set timeframe.

The contents of a typical PEP are set out in Document GN 1.1 (*Project Management*) of the Capital Works Management Framework published by the Office of Public Procurement. It is recognised that, while larger and more complex projects will require more comprehensive PEPs, smaller projects can adopt simpler documentation.

In addition to cost management details, the PEP should also include a risk register for the project, which should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The first version of the PEP should be developed by the Sponsoring Agency at the start of Phase 2 (*Concept Development and Option Selection*). That PEP should be provided to the NTA during Phase 2 and an updated PEP or confirmation that the previous PEP still applies should be provided as part of each subsequent Gateway Approval Request.

4.2 Gateway Approval Requests

When a Sponsoring Agency wishes to seek approval to proceed to the next phase of a project or programme, it shall submit a Gateway Approval Request to the NTA seeking such approval. The Gateway Approval Request shall include the following:

- Confirmation that the required deliverables for the current phase have already been provided to the NTA or are being provided as part of the request;
- Confirmation that the Project Execution Plan (PEP) previously provided to the NTA at the end of the prior phase is still the applicable PEP or that an updated version of the PEP is being provided as part of the request; and

- An outline plan and projected budget for the next phase of the project.

4.3 NTA Review Process

Following receipt of a Gateway Approval Request from the Sponsoring Agency, the NTA will review the material provided for that Gateway. That review process may require further clarification to be provided in relation to relevant items and may require meeting with the Sponsoring Agency to discuss issues arising in the review process.

Following the NTA review process, the NTA will confirm the outcome of the Gateway Approval Request to the Sponsoring Agency. In some cases the NTA may confirm that the deliverables provided are all satisfactory, but that, due to funding or other constraints, approval to proceed to the next stage is not being granted at that point in time. In other cases, the NTA may be unable to grant approval to the Gateway Request where it considers that the proposal does not achieve the required quality standard or where the required documentation has not been appropriately provided.

4.4 Project Reporting System

The NTA operates a Project Reporting System (PRS) for its capital programme, through which Sponsoring Agencies' expenditure claims are submitted and processed. Additional features have been added to the PRS system and items such as the Grant Application Form can now be completed in an online format on PRS.

From mid-2024, the PRS system will have additional functionality that will allow Sponsoring Agencies to upload the required Phase deliverables of these Project Approval Guidelines through the PRS portal. This will assist in the streamlining of both the submission and the approval processes.

5 Phase 1: Scope and Purpose

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Key Deliverables	Completed Project Grant Application Form	Completed Project Grant Application Form	Completed Project Grant Application Form Project Outline Document
Approval Point	Gateway 1 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 2	Gateway 1 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 2	Gateway 1 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 2

5.1 Purpose of Phase 1

The purpose of this Phase is to establish sufficient outline details of the project to allow an informed decision to be made in relation to the provision of initial funding of the particular proposal.

For Band 1 and Band 2 projects, the key deliverable is the provision of a Completed Project Grant Application Form (available from the NTA) in respect of the particular proposal.

For Band 3 proposals, a Project Outline Document as set out in the Department of Transport's Transport Appraisal Framework is also required.

The required outcome of Phase 1 is that both the NTA and the Sponsoring Agency share an understanding of the expected scope, timescale, costs and outcomes of the project, subject to more detailed concept development and feasibility work at the next phase.

5.2 Contents of Project Outline Document

The Project Outline Document should contain the following information:

- Outline description of the proposal;
- Policy alignment assessment;
- Modal/service delivery options to be considered;
- Indicative cost range for affordability assessment;
- Appraisal plan setting out the intended approach to appraising the project; and
- Outline of governance arrangements.

6 Phase 2: Concept Development and Option Selection

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Key Deliverables	Project Execution Plan Feasibility Report Option Selection Report	Project Execution Plan Feasibility Report Option Selection Report	Project Execution Plan Feasibility Report Option Selection Report
Approval Point	Gateway 2 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 3	Gateway 2 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 3	Gateway 2 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 3

6.1 Purpose of Phase 2

The purpose of this Phase is to assess the feasibility of the proposal and undertake a comprehensive options assessment process, to ensure that the optimal project alternative is identified for progression.

All transport investment projects involve making choices, whether between alternative modes, technologies, routes, stop locations, or other features of a project. It is important that an appropriate analysis is undertaken to ensure that the optimal alternative is selected having regard to the relevant factors.

This Phase will also confirm technical and initial economic feasibility, establish the limits of the scope, the order of cost and the extent of benefits that can be obtained. This feasibility work will enable the Sponsoring Agency and the NTA to decide whether to proceed further with the development of the project.

Options assessment is one of the most critical phases in the project lifecycle and it is important that the process adequately evaluates the available options and identifies the best alternative for development.

6.2 Contents of Feasibility Report and Option Selection Report

For smaller Band 1 and Band 2 schemes, the Feasibility Report and Option Selection Report can be combined into a singular document or developed as separate reports.

The Feasibility Report should address the following matters:

- Definition of the problem to be addressed;
- Policy background;
- Outline of solution types proposed;
- Confirmation of technical feasibility;
- Outline of likely benefits;
- Order of magnitude of costs on a range basis; and
- Outline of challenges / risks.

In relation to the Options Selection Report, it shall address the following items:

- Project need and objectives;
- List of Alternatives and Options;
- Assessment of Available Options;
- Identification of Preferred Option;
- Feasibility Working Cost Estimate; and
- Indicative planning and procurement approach.

The level of assessment undertaken in relation to alternatives should be proportionate to the scale of the proposal. For smaller Band 1 projects, the assessment may be relatively simple and short, while for larger schemes more complex evaluations will be required.

For Active Travel schemes, an assessment of the potential of “rapid build” solutions for the project should be undertaken – see next section.

The Department of Transport's Transport Appraisal Framework sets out a requirement for a "Longlist Assessment Report" for larger projects, which can be satisfied by the appropriate development of the Option Selection Report.

6.3 Rapid Build Options Assessment

For Active Travel schemes, the Feasibility and Option Selection Report should include a section on rapid build options. This section should consider, as a minimum, measures such as traffic calming, reduction of vehicle carriageway widths and road space rebalancing as a means of delivering the proposed schemes.

Only if rapid build solutions are not feasible, for at least part of the scheme, should traditional build options be considered. The use of more expensive traditional build options in lieu of rapid build solutions should be discussed with the NTA before completion of the Option Selection Report.

6.4 Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

Phase 2 is frequently the first stage of a project where public input in relation to a scheme is sought. Public consultation is an essential part of the successful delivery of transport proposals.

While there are different models of engagement, in general, the most common approach is to seek feedback on an "Emerging Preferred Option" or "Draft Preferred Option", while providing supporting information on the additional options considered. In some cases where choices between different options are less clear, it may be appropriate to seek feedback on more than one option, or more than one option for a sub-section of the project.

In the case of larger projects, it is important that the Sponsoring Agency liaises on a regular basis with the NTA during the options identification and assessment process. This will assist subsequent approval processes and avoid scenarios where the NTA is unable to support the selected option.

In all cases, it is necessary that NTA agreement is obtained to the proposed material for public consultation **before** they are released publicly. Sponsoring Agencies should ensure that proposed material for public consultation is made available to the NTA in sufficient time to allow feedback to be provided

in advance of the commencement of the consultation process.

Following the conclusion of the public consultation process, any feedback obtained should be carefully reviewed and considered by the design team. Having taken account of the public input, the options assessment process should then be concluded, including the identification of the final option to be brought forward through the remaining project phases.

In certain cases, where the feedback received has necessitated significant and material changes to the emerging plans, a second round of public consultation may be required. Similar to the first phase, the Sponsoring Agency needs to liaise with the NTA in relation to the revision of the proposals, and is required to obtain NTA agreement to the amended materials in advance of publication.

7 Phase 3: Preliminary Design

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Key Deliverables	Preliminary Design Report (inclusive of updated cost information and any required audit confirmations plus simplified appraisal)	Preliminary Design Report (inclusive of updated cost information and any required audit confirmations) Preliminary Business Case	Preliminary Design Report (inclusive of updated cost information and any required audit confirmations) Preliminary Business Case
Approval Point	Gateway 3 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 4	Gateway 3 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 4	Gateway 3 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 4

7.1 Purpose of Phase 3

During this phase the Sponsoring Agency, following the selection of a preferred option, develops a design for the project, to a level where, in the case of infrastructure projects, there is a general layout and sufficient details prepared for the project to establish land-take requirements (if applicable), key environmental impacts and a robust preliminary cost estimate. This is referred to as a “Preliminary Design” and it needs to be sufficiently developed to support the preparation of the relevant planning documentation, which could be an Environmental Impact Assessment Report, a Railway Order application, a local authority planning process or other relevant procedure.

The completion of the Preliminary Design also allows the development of a Preliminary Business Case in the case of Band 2 and Band 3 schemes, and a simpler appraisal analysis included within the Preliminary Design Report for smaller Band 1 projects.

The Preliminary Design Report should consider the project’s objectives and ensure that the design addresses those objectives. In the case of certain projects in Band 1, it may be more practical to proceed to prepare a Detailed Design at this stage, rather than developing a Preliminary Design at this phase and a subsequent Detailed Design at a subsequent phase.

This arrangement for Band 1 projects should be agreed with the NTA in advance of commencement of design.

7.2 Preliminary Design Report

The Preliminary Design Report should, in the case of infrastructure projects, include the Preliminary Design drawings and associated specifications and should provide details of:




- overall layout and general arrangements;
- land-take requirements;
- broad environmental impacts;
- mitigation measures;
- Cost information (detailed cost information should be included as an appendix or supporting document); and
- transport benefits.

In developing the Preliminary Design, the Sponsoring Agency should ensure that they engage regularly with the NTA to agree key design items on an ongoing basis.

7.3 Preliminary Business Case

The contents of the Preliminary Business Case should align with the requirements set out in Module 4 of the Transport Appraisal Framework. This will generally include cost-benefit analysis for Band 3 projects. In the interests of proportionality, a simplified approach can be adopted for the preparation of the Preliminary Business Case for Band 2 projects, while on Band 1 projects, the appraisal can be addressed in a simplified form within the Preliminary Design Report.

8 Phase 4: Statutory Processes

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Key Deliverables	Final documentation for planning/statutory consent	Final documentation for planning/statutory	Final documentation for planning/statutory consent
	Hold Point 	Hold Point 	Hold Point 
	Planning Outcome Report	Planning Outcome Report	Planning Outcome Report
Approval Point	Gateway 4 Approval Request	Gateway 4 Approval Request	Gateway 4 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 5	Approval to proceed to Phase 5	Approval to proceed to Phase 5

8.1 Purpose of Phase 4

The purpose of Phase 4 is to finalise the submission of the statutory consent documents (including planning, environmental and land acquisition as applicable) for a project, seek the appropriate statutory approvals and support the approval process to its conclusion.

8.2 Screening Process

The screening process for both environmental impact assessment (EIA) and appropriate assessment (AA) is a key step in the statutory consents process, which determines the applicable statutory process. Separate guidance on EIA and AA screening is available from the NTA and this guidance should be followed on NTA funded projects.

8.3 Application for Statutory Approvals

The Sponsoring Agency shall consult with the NTA to ensure agreement on the relevant project details prior to submitting any documents for statutory planning approval. This is particularly important where the project parameters, in terms of design, costs and benefits, have changed in any significant way from those developed and validated in Phase 3.

A “Hold Point” is included in the project approval process to allow the Sponsoring Agency to obtain NTA prior consent to seeking statutory planning approval. Failure to obtain prior NTA consent to the submission of the planning documentation may result in the withdrawal of NTA funding from the project.

The statutory consent documents must be prepared in accordance with the applicable legislation and should reflect an understanding of issues and sensitivities that are likely to be of importance in the consent process.

8.4 Planning Outcome Report

The Sponsoring Agency should, as soon as practicable after the planning procedure concludes, produce a report of the outcome of the planning process. This report should include:

- the outcome of the planning process including a copy of the planning approval(s);
- a review of any impacts that the terms of approval may have on the scheme going forward; and
- identify any changes arising from the planning processes to the project brief, costs and/or benefits of the proposed project, or other matters which would be likely to alter the initial appraisal.

If statutory approval is not granted, this should be reported to the NTA. Potential alterations to the proposals may be discussed at this stage.

8.5 Land Acquisition and Advance Contracts

Both during and at the end of this Phase 4, the NTA may authorise the progression of certain land acquisitions and/or advance contracts. This may be authorised separately from approval to commence Phase 5, particularly where funding to commence Phase 5 and/or Phase 6 is not immediately available.

9 Phase 5: Detailed Design and Procurement

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Key Deliverables	Tender Report Updated Scheme Appraisal	Detailed Design Report, <i>(inclusive of updated cost information and any required audit confirmations)</i> Detailed Business Case Procurement Strategy and Tender Documents	Detailed Design Report, <i>(inclusive of updated cost information and any required audit confirmations)</i> Detailed Business Case Procurement Strategy and Tender Documents
Approval Point	Gateway 5 Approval Request	Gateway 5A Approval Request	Gateway 5A Approval Request
		Tender Report Final Business Case	Tender Report Final Business Case
		Gateway 5B Approval Request	Gateway 5B Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 6	Approval to proceed to Phase 6	Approval to proceed to Phase 6

9.1 Purpose of Phase 5

The purpose of Phase 5 is for the Sponsoring Agency to undertake, or co-ordinate, the preparation of the design and tender documentation for the implementation of the project and to procure and award the construction/implementation contracts (including the placement of works orders with the Sponsoring Agency's specialist/direct works divisions). As part of this process, the Sponsoring Agency is also to prepare and finalise the Detailed Business Case and the Final Business Case.

9.2 Pre-Tender Document

9.2.1 Detailed Design Report

The Detailed Design Report should constitute the further development of the Preliminary Design Report prepared during Phase 3 to a level sufficient for tendering and/or construction purposes (depending on type of contract).

9.2.2 Detailed Business Case

The provision of a Detailed Business Case as part of the pre-tender decision making process is a requirement of the Infrastructure Guidelines. Those guidelines set out

that the document is intended to comprise an update of the Preliminary Business Case, incorporating new information and refinement of initial details, reflecting the further development of the project.

For NTA funded projects, this requirement is most effectively addressed by developing the Detailed Business Case as an early version of the Final Business Case, which is required for Gateway 5B following receipt of tenders. This approach has the advantage of facilitating a speedier process following receipt of tenders, when the time constraints of a tender validity period operates.

Accordingly, the contents of the Detailed Business Case for Phase 5A should align, as far as practicable, with the requirements for the Final Business Case set out in Module 6 of the Transport Appraisal Framework.

9.2.3 Procurement Strategy

The initial procurement strategy should have been identified as part of the Preliminary Business Case. As part of this phase, those proposals should be updated to

reflect the finalised approach to the implementation of the scheme.

9.2.4 Tender Documents

The quality of tender documentation is fundamental to the success of the construction stage. It is important that Sponsoring Agencies put in place appropriate assurance arrangements to quality check tender documentation before their release to tenderers. Key areas to focus on are ensuring that all the known requirements of the project have been incorporated and that the documents are drafted in clear contractual language. On larger projects, a separate independent check may be warranted.

Only when Gateway 5A approval is issued by the NTA should the Sponsoring Agency issue tender documents for the relevant contracts for Band 2 and Band 3 projects.

In the case of Band 1 projects, the same objective of ensuring quality tender documents still applies. However, given the scale of projects, Sponsoring Agencies may seek tenders as soon as they are satisfied with the tender documents without requiring prior NTA approval.

9.3 Post Tender documents

9.3.1 Tender Report

Following the receipt and evaluation of the tenders, a Tender Report shall be prepared and submitted to the NTA for approval to proceed, summarising the tender process, the details of tenders received and the outcome of the evaluation process.

Given the importance of the tender process, the Sponsoring Agency shall ensure that the persons involved in the process have the appropriate skills, or have appropriate support available to them, to manage the process competently.

9.3.2 Final Business Case

A Final Business Case is required to be prepared for Band 2 and Band 3 projects. If there are no material changes from the circumstances reported in the Detailed Business Case prepared for Gateway 5A, and the final project budget is unchanged, the Detailed Business Case can be re-presented as the Final Business Case.

Where there has been material changes from the circumstances reported in the Detailed Business Case prepared for Gateway 5A, that document should be revised to incorporate the relevant changes, in particular any changes in budget/cost arising from the tender process.

The contents of the Final Business Case should align with the requirements set out in Module 6 of the Transport Appraisal Framework. In the interests of proportionality, shorter and simpler Final Business Cases can be provided for Band 2 projects.

The Final Business Case is required to include the finalised post-tender financial information. This should include any updates to the cost information taking account of the contract sums for the main contracts and any changes to base costs (e.g. land and property) as necessary. In addition, any changes to the risk and contingency analysis should also be included.

9.3.3 Band 1 Projects – Updated Scheme Appraisal

Reflecting the principle of proportionality, Band 1 projects are intended to use a simplified appraisal process at Phase 3 (Preliminary Design). At this Phase 5, that simplified appraisal should be updated (if required) and provided in tandem with the Tender Report.

10 Phase 6: Construction and Implementation

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Reporting Requirements	Regular Progress Reports informing on cost and schedule Change Order Information (if applicable)	Regular Progress Reports informing on cost and schedule Change Order Information (if applicable)	Regular Progress Reports informing on cost and schedule Change Order Information (if applicable)
Key Deliverables	Final Account Report	Final Account Report	Final Account Report
Approval Point	Gateway 6 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 7	Gateway 6 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 7	Gateway 6 Approval Request Approval to proceed to Phase 7

10.1 Purpose of Phase 6

The purpose of this Phase is for the Sponsoring Agency to award the construction contract(s) having completed the tender process and to undertake the construction and implementation activities.

10.2 Managing Construction/Implementation

The Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) published by the Office of Government Procurement, provides detailed guidance for this Phase of a project lifecycle. The CWMF describes key steps to be taken in works contract management, which are designed to ensure smooth delivery of projects.

Guidance is also provided in relation to, among other things, roles and responsibilities, managing the works in progress, managing risk, calculating price variations, project completion and handover. The Sponsoring Agency shall follow the CWMF guidance for the implementation of projects procured under the various CWMF forms of contract.

As part of the CWMF forms of contract, a person shall be appointed to act as Employer's Representative on behalf of the Sponsoring Agency in accordance with the requirements of the relevant contract.

Notwithstanding the appointment of the Employer's Representative, overall responsibility for the delivery of

the project shall remain with the Project Manager/Project Director.

10.3 Project Reporting and Payment

The Sponsoring Agency shall be responsible for providing monthly reports to the NTA which shall include progress and expenditure matters pertaining to the project. These reports should communicate clearly the status of the project and the existence of any significant issues or challenges.

10.4 Change Orders

It shall be an objective of each contract that the use of contract variations or change orders is minimised or avoided if possible.

For Change Order above the following amounts, reimbursement by the NTA of expenditure amounts in respect of such Change Orders will only be facilitated in cases where written approval has been obtained from the NTA in advance of the Change Order instruction to the contractor:

- €50,000 for contracts up to €5.0M;
- €100,000 for contracts between €5.0M and €20M;
- €150,000 for contracts over €20M;

For Change Orders below these amounts, the Sponsoring Agency must notify the details in the subsequent monthly progress to the NTA. This information, along with full details of any overall anticipated project cost changes, are essential to ensure the continued funding of the project.

The NTA reserves the right to change the values of change orders requiring prior written approval, particularly where there are a large number of Change Orders arising on a project.

An up-to-date register of all issued Change Orders, inclusive of their values, shall be included in the monthly Progress Report.

10.5 Potential Claims

The Sponsoring Agency shall notify the NTA if there is a potential claims liability which may impact on the scope, quality, cost, or programme for completion of the project and/or if there is an impact on the Total Project Cost. It is advisable that the Sponsoring Agency should notify the NTA of any potential significant contractual claims as soon as the Employer's Representative becomes aware of them - refer to requirements in the NTA Cost Management Guidelines.

The Employer's Representative shall maintain such records as are necessary in order to properly assess and make a considered determination on any claim(s) submitted.

10.6 Intervention Points

Should circumstances necessitate it, and within the context of any contractual arrangements, the NTA may intervene in the project implementation as required to address issues that it considers necessary or appropriate to address. The NTA will liaise closely with the Sponsoring Agency to work through any proposed interventions.

Amongst other forms, Interventions may take the form of the following:

- Changes to governance arrangements;
- Changes to implementation management;
- Changes to scope;
- Changes to delivery timeframes;
- Cancellation of the project; and/or

- Changes to wider external environment.

10.7 Final Account Report

Once the final outturn cost of the construction/ implementation contract(s) has been determined, the Sponsoring Agency, in conjunction with the Employer's Representative, shall prepare a Final Account Report in accordance with NTA Cost Management Guidelines relating to the contract(s).

11 Phase 7: Close out and Review

Project Band	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Key Deliverables	Project Completion Report	Project Completion Report Confirmation of Safety and Quality Audits (if applicable)	Project Completion Report Confirmation of Safety and Quality Audits (if applicable)
Approval Point	Gateway 7 Approval Request Project Closure	Gateway 7A Approval Request Ex-Post Evaluation Report (on a sample basis) Gateway 7 Approval Request Project Closure	Gateway 7A Approval Request Ex-Post Evaluation Report Gateway 7B Approval Request Project Closure

11.1 Purpose of Phase 7

The purpose of Phase 7 is to ensure that:

- the project is properly closed out, without any outstanding issues;
- the project was delivered as specified;
- the project achieved its objectives; and
- lessons learned have been captured and documented for use on future schemes.

11.2 Project Completion Report

At the completion of the project, the Sponsoring Agency shall prepare a Project Completion Report, whose purpose is to assess if the project was delivered in line with its intended scope and budget and in line with the requirements of the Infrastructure Guidelines. It should address:

- Whether the basis on which the project was undertaken proved correct;
- Whether the business case and management procedures were satisfactory;
- Whether the operational performance and initial benefits have been realised;
- The lessons learned including positive and negative findings; and

- The conclusions that can be drawn which are applicable to other projects, to the on-going use of the asset, or to associated projects.

The Project Completion Report shall be prepared by the Sponsoring Agency in accordance with the requirements of the Infrastructure Guidelines, for all projects, regardless of size/value. However, it is recognised that the nature of these reports should be proportionate to the relevant project, and short, simple reports are appropriate for smaller schemes.

11.3 Road Safety Audit (if applicable)

If relevant, the Sponsoring Agency shall ensure a Road User Audit and Stage 4 Road Safety Audit is undertaken at this operating stage of the project.

11.4 Ex-Post Evaluation Report

For Band 3 project, upon approval of Gateway 7a the Sponsoring Agency shall prepare an Ex-Post Evaluation Report in respect of the relevant development. The purpose of the Ex-Post Evaluation is to determine if the intended benefits and outcomes materialised and to judge the impact of the project or intervention.

An Ex-Post Evaluation Report shall also be prepared on a sample basis for Band 2 project. A sample rate of one in five projects can be used, unless advised otherwise by the NTA. The NTA also reserves the right to require an Ex-Post Evaluation Report for specific individual projects.

12 Summary of Approval Process


NTA PHASES AND GATEWAYS (For Infrastructure Projects and Programmes)			
Phase/ Title	Key Deliverables	Gateway	Gateway Decision
Phase 1 Scope and Purpose	Grant Application Form Project Outline Document ¹	Gateway 1	Decision to commence project and proceed to next Phase including Option development
Phase 2 Concept Development and Options Selection	Project Execution Plan Feasibility Report Options Selection Report	Gateway 2	Decision to develop the Preferred option to Preliminary Design level
Phase 3 Preliminary Design	Preliminary Design Report Preliminary Business Case ²	Gateway 3	Decision to proceed to Statutory Process Stage
Phase 4 Statutory Processes	Planning Documentation  Planning Outcome Report	Gateway 4	Decision to proceed to further design and develop tender documentation
Phase 5 Detailed Design and Procurement	Detailed Design Report Procurement Strategy & Tender Documents Detailed Business Case	Gateway 5A ³	Decision to proceed to tender for construction / implementation
	Tender Report Final Business Case	Gateway 5B ³	Decision to enter into contracts for construction / implementation
Phase 6 Construction and Implementation	(Reporting Requirements) Final Account Report	Gateway 6	Confirmation that the works are complete and that a Project Completion Report should be prepared
Phase 7 Close-out and Review	Project Completion Report Confirmation of Audits	Gateway 7A ⁴	Decision to close the Project
	Ex-Post Evaluation Report ²	Gateway 7B ⁴	Confirmation of whether project benefits have been realised

¹ For Projects > €20 million.

² For Projects > € 5 million.

³ For Projects < €5 million a single Gateway 5 applies.

⁴ For Projects < €5 million a single Gateway 7 applies.

 = Hold Point for NTA Approval.

