PROJECT APPROVAL GUIDELINES

(ICT Projects and Programmes)

September 2025

NTA

Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of these Project Approval Guidelines (ICT Projects and Programmes) (the "**Guidelines**") is to provide a framework to ensure the successful development, delivery and oversight of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects funded by the NTA, ensuring that the correct project is implemented in an appropriate manner at an optimal cost. Separate NTA guidelines - *Project Approval Guidelines (Infrastructure Projects and Programmes)* - are in place for non-ICT projects and 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 an ICT project into nine "Phases" as follows:

ICT PHASE 0:	**Concept**
ICT PHASE 1:	**Initiation**
ICT PHASE 2:	**Planning**
ICT PHASE 3:	**Procure**
ICT PHASE 4:	**Analysis & Design**
ICT PHASE 5:	**Build & Test**
ICT PHASE 6:	**Deploy / Rollout**
ICT PHASE 7:	**Hand Over & BAU**
ICT PHASE 8:	**(Post Project) Benefits 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 ICT projects funded by the NTA, while separate NTA approval guidelines apply to capital (non-ICT) infrastructure projects.

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. 14/2021: Arrangements for Oversight of Digital and ICT-related Initiatives in the Civil and Public Service" published by (DEPENDR);

- 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).

ICT projects must ensure compliance with all appropriate EU, national regulations and NTA policies for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and technology specific areas including Artificial Intelligence. ICT projects must also ensure compliance with national guidelines on the inclusion of Irish language and accessibility measures in the technology solution delivered by the ICT project.

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

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

Section 14 provides a summary chart of the nine phases, the relevant gateways and the key deliverables within each phase.

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 monitor and 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 certain key matters related to the project/programme which are identified as part of the Board's establishment.

2.3 NTA's ICT Project Management Office

The ICT Project Management Office (PMO) is a department within the NTA that defines the standards and processes for ICT project management funded by the NTA.

The PMO undertakes and supports the development of appropriate governance, consistency, transparency, reusability and provides delivery support and Project oversight across transport related ICT projects.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 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 with the NTA 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 projects and programmes, very robust cost estimation is required, which is likely to involve specialist 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 are given at the embryonic stages of a Project, when the level of unknowns 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.

3.5 Change Orders

For the management of project contracts, 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 Orders 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 supplier/consultant/contractor:

• €50,000 for contracts up to €5.0M;

• €100,000 for contracts between €5.0M and €20M; and

- €150,000 for contracts over €20M.

For Change Orders below these amounts, the Sponsoring Agency must notify the details in the subsequent monthly progress report 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.

4 Project Execution Plan, Gateway Process and PRS

4.1 Project Initiation Document

The Project Initiation Document (PID) is a key document for managing a project and sets out the high-level schedule for delivery. The PID sets out the policies and procedures governing the delivery of the particular project. It provides a comprehensive description of the project's overview, scope, objectives, critical success factors 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 budget, and to a set timeframe.

In addition, the PID should also include details of the proposed Stakeholder Engagement, Communications, Quality, Change and Risk Management approaches which should be reviewed and updated as individual plans or registers through-out the project lifecycle.

It is recognised that while larger and more complex projects will require more comprehensive project plans, smaller projects can adopt simpler documentation. The PID should be developed by the Sponsoring Agency at the start of ICT Phase 1 (Initiation).

The Project Plan should be provided to the NTA during Phase 2 (Planning) and an updated project plan or confirmation that the previous project plan 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 plan previously provided to the NTA at the end of the prior phase is still the applicable plan or that an updated version of the project plan 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 completed in an online format on PRS.

The PRS system has functionality that allows 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 for applicable projects / programmes.

5 ICT Phase 0: Concept

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 0 Approval Request	Gateway 0 Approval Request	Gateway 0 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 1	Approval to proceed to Phase 1	Approval to proceed to Phase 1

5.1 Purpose of ICT Phase 0

The purpose of this ICT Phase 0 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) or Project Charter 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 0 is that there is a clear understanding of the expected scope, timescale, costs and outcomes of the project, subject to more detailed development at the next phase.

The completed Grant Application Form must be submitted by the Sponsoring Agency to the NTA for approval. In the event of an internal NTA request, the form (or Charter) should be submitted to the NTA ICT Project Management Office (PMO).

5.2 Contents of Project Outline Document

The Project Outline Document should be developed in accordance with the Transport Appraisal Framework requirements and 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 ICT Phase 1: Initiation

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 Approval Point	Option Selection Report Project Initiation Document (PID) DGOU Approval (if relevant)	Option Selection Report Project Initiation Document (PID) DGOU Approval (if relevant)	Option Selection Report Project Initiation Document (PID) DGOU Approval (if relevant)
	Gateway 1 Approval Request	Gateway 1 Approval Request	Gateway 1 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 2	Approval to proceed to Phase 2	Approval to proceed to Phase 2

6.1 Purpose of ICT Phase 1

The purpose of this Phase is to develop the business justification for the project through the Project Initiation Document and to identify the optimal solution to deliver the project's objectives.

All investment projects involve making choices between different solutions and/or different approaches to address the particular project's objectives. It is important that an appropriate analysis is undertaken to ensure that the optimal alternative is selected having regard to the relevant factors.

6.2 Option Selection Report

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.

While for most projects an options selection process must be carried out, in the case of small, limited projects, this may not be required, subject to NTA approval.

An options selection process ("optioneering") should determine the Preferred Option. Depending on the project type, optioneering should consider the realistic alternatives for the implementation of the project.

These alternatives may involve different solution types, alternative designs, or substitute approaches that could also deliver the core project objectives.

The Sponsoring Agency shall assess the options using a clearly defined methodology to select a preferred option – cost must be a key consideration in the options evaluation process. The Preferred Option will then form the basis for the further development of the project.

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; and

- Feasibility Working Cost Estimate of the Preferred Option

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.

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 DGOU Approval

In the event that the ICT element of a project cost is equal to or exceeding €25,000, further approval must be

sought by the Sponsoring Agency or internal NTA business unit from the Digital Government Oversight Unit (DGOU) to secure funding. The Sponsoring Agency is required to submit this request for approval. Likewise, if the requestor is an internal NTA business unit, the onus is on the business unit to prepare the DGOU approval request.

The approval request must be forwarded to the Department of Transport by the ICT liaison officer in the NTA and should be accompanied by one of the following project artefacts: - Business Case, Grant Application Form (or Project Charter), or Project Initiation Document.

6.4   Project Initiation Document

A Project Initiation Document is required to be developed for the project. This document combines the key information needed to start the project on a sound basis and conveys the project information to all key project stakeholders in a presentable format.

The contents of the Project Initiation Document should include sections on Project Overview, Objectives, Timeline and Schedule, Critical Success Factors, Scope, Budget, Stakeholders, Communications, Quality, Change and Risk Management.

7   ICT Phase 2: Planning

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 Plan Detailed Requirements Specification Preliminary Business Case Test Strategy	Project Plan Detailed Requirements Specification Preliminary Business Case Test Strategy	Project Plan Detailed Requirements Specification Preliminary Business Case Test Strategy
Approval Point	Gateway 2 Approval Request	Gateway 2 Approval Request	Gateway 2 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 3	Approval to proceed to Phase 3	Approval to proceed to Phase 3

7.1   Purpose of ICT Phase 2

During this phase the Sponsoring Agency, following the selection of a preferred option, establishes the detailed functional requirements for the project, further develops the strategy for its delivery including a test strategy .

The establishment of the detailed requirements for the project also allows the informed development of a Preliminary Business Case in relation to the particular proposal.

7.2   Project Plan

The Project Plan provides a statement of how and when the project's time, cost, scope and quality performance targets are to be achieved by showing the major deliverables, activities and resources required for the project. The Project Plan expands on the project management approach as outlined in the Project Initiation Document and incorporates a number of detailed sub-plans. These detailed sub-plans include Scope Management Plan; Stakeholder Engagement Plan; Schedule; Budget Plan, Communications Plan; Risk Management Plan; Quality Plan; and specialist plans as required (subject-specific plans prepared to cover unique detailed specialist work areas within the project).

The Project Initiation Document will serve as an input to the Project Plan, but the Project Plan and associated sub-plans as outlined above, will be expected to have a more comprehensive level of information.

7.3   Detailed Requirements Specification

A Detailed Requirements Specification should outline all functional and non-functional requirements for a project. It defines what the system must do, how it should perform, and the constraints it must operate within.

The document should include stakeholder needs, business requirements, data and interface requirements, business rules, and a traceability matrix to ensure alignment with project goals. It serves as a foundation for procurement, design, development, and testing, ensuring all parties have a shared understanding of expectations.

7.4   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, except where it is agreed with the NTA that an alternative methodology can be used.

In the interests of proportionality, a simplified approach can be adopted for the preparation of the Preliminary Business Case for Band 1. Subject to NTA agreement, a simplified form of business case, providing a simple appraisal of the project, can be utilised in the case of smaller Band 1 projects.

7.5   Test Strategy

The Test Strategy should define the overall approach to testing a project's deliverables to ensure quality and

compliance. It should outline the testing objectives, scope, types of testing (e.g. unit, integration, system, non-functional, UAT), and roles and responsibilities. It should also detail test tools, environments, entry/exit criteria, and defect management processes.

The objective of the Test Strategy is to ensure consistent, efficient testing aligned with project goals and timelines.

8   ICT Phase 3: Procure

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	Detailed Business Case Tender Documents Procurement Strategy	Detailed Business Case Tender Documents Procurement Strategy	Detailed Business Case Tender Documents Procurement Strategy
Approval Point	Gateway 3A Approval Request	Gateway 3A Approval Request	Gateway 3A Approval Request
	Tender Report Final Business Case	Tender Report Final Business Case	Tender Report Final Business Case
	Gateway 3B Approval Request	Gateway 3B Approval Request	Gateway 3B Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 4	Approval to proceed to Phase 4	Approval to proceed to Phase 4

8.1   Purpose of ICT Phase 3

The purpose of ICT Phase 3 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 delivery contract(s).

As part of this process, the Sponsoring Agency is also required to prepare and finalise the Detailed Business Case and the Final Business Case.

8.2   Pre-Tender Documents

8.2.1   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 3B 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 operate.

Accordingly, the contents of the Detailed Business Case for Phase 3A should align, as far as practicable, with the requirements for the Final Business Case set out in Module 6 of the Transport Appraisal Framework.

As identified earlier, a simplified approach can be adopted for the preparation of the Detailed Business Case in the case of smaller Band 1 projects.

8.2.2   Tender Documents

The quality of tender documentation is fundamental to the success of the delivery 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 3A approval is issued by the NTA should the Sponsoring Agency issue tender documents for the relevant contract(s).

8.2.3 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 for inclusion in the Detailed Business Case to reflect the finalised approach to the implementation of the project.

8.3 Post Tender documents

8.3.1 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.

8.3.2 Final Business Case

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

Where there have been material changes from the circumstances reported in the Detailed Business Case prepared for Gateway 3A, 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 smaller Band 1 projects.

The Final Business Case is required to include the finalised post-tender financial information. This should include any updates to the cost information arising from the tender process and any changes to other costs as necessary. In addition, any changes to the risk and contingency analysis should also be included.

9   ICT Phase 4: Analysis and 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	System Design Document Test Plan Training Requirements and Support Model Data Privacy Impact Assessment	Solution Design Document Test Plan Training Requirements and Support Model Data Privacy Impact Assessment	System Design Document Test Plan Training Requirements and Support Model Data Privacy Impact Assessment
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

9.1   Purpose of ICT Phase 4

The purpose of this phase is for the Sponsoring Agency to coordinate the analysis of the project requirements, the architectural and process designs, the approach for delivering the project and the expected costs of the project. Input from suppliers, vendors, project managers, project team members and subject matter experts are required in this Phase.

It is important to agree on timelines and resource demand with suppliers and vendors at this time so that a robust delivery timeline can be confirmed and aligned with the project plan. Project Plan updates may be required based on the outputs of this phase.

This phase represents progression towards the build, testing and rollout of the solution. The NTA should be consulted on any issues or events that could have an impact on the cost, scope, quality or programme of the project.

9.2   Solution Design Document

The Solution Design Document should include the following items, developed to a comprehensive level sufficient for the build and test phase:

- Solution Requirements Specification, inclusive of provisions for Irish language and accessibility requirements;

- Non-functional Requirements Specification;

- Architecture Document;

- Functional and Technical Design; and

- Security Design.

The above items can be provided as a singular document, with sections covering each of the above items, or as separate individual documents for each item.

9.3   Test Plan

The Test Plan should set out the detail of the testing arrangements intended to be undertaken in respect of the project. Building on the previously developed Test Strategy, it should set out details of the types of testing, roles and responsibilities, test environments, test tools, entry/exit criteria, and defect management processes. The Test Plan should ensure comprehensive and robust testing aligned with project goals and timelines.

9.4   Training Requirements and Support Model

As part of this phase, the approach to training and support for deployment and operational use shall be developed.

Appropriate guidance documentation shall be identified for later development along with an outline definition of the operational training needs.   In addition, an approach to subsequent support of the proposed solution shall be defined.

9.5   Data Privacy Impact Assessment

A Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA) is a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirement to assess how personal information will be collected, processed and effectively safeguarded during the course of the project. Any risks to the protection of personal data must be identified and documented in the DPIA and project risk register. Mitigation strategies to appropriately address these risks must be documented in the DPIA and risk register and addressed as part of the project delivery.

10 ICT Phase 5: Build and Test

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	Test Reports User/ Operation Guides Release to Production Approval Form (or equivalent)	Test Reports User/ Operation Guides Release to Production Approval Form (or equivalent)	Test Reports User/ Operation Guides Release to Production Approval Form (or equivalent)
Approval Point	Gateway 5 Approval Request	Gateway 5 Approval Request	Gateway 5 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 6	Approval to proceed to Phase 6	Approval to proceed to Phase 6

10.1 Purpose of ICT Phase 5

The purpose of this phase is to build, test and demonstrate the solution in non-production environments prior to deployment of the solution into a production/ live environment.

This phase is crucial to ensure that the products of the solution are successful in the objective to address the business needs for which the project has been undertaken or otherwise highlight any adverse effects prior to deployment into a production environment. This phase represents progression towards rollout of the solution into production.

The NTA should be consulted on any issues or events that could have an impact on the cost, scope, quality or programme of the project.

10.2 Test Reports

Details of the outcomes of the testing undertaken in accordance with the Test Plan shall be assembled and provided as one of the deliverables under this phase. Test reports are required for each phase of testing. The test reports shall clearly identify any issues identified during testing that have not been fully resolved together with any proposed mitigation measures that enable the satisfactory operation of the system. For any unresolved or mitigated items, the approach to their full resolution shall be set out.

10.3 User/ Operation Guides

In order to allow the release of the developed system into operational use, it is important that an appropriate level of operational guidance and training has been provided to the intended users of the system.

As part of the deliverables for this phase, the Sponsoring Agency must provide the user and operational guides that have been developed for the system, sufficiently detailed to allow end-users to understand and operate the developed solution.

10.4 Release to Production Approval Form

At the end of ICT Phase 5, the developed solution is expected to be ready for deployment into operational use. This requires a process of approval to release the product into production.

Sponsoring Agencies should have internal processes in place to confirm the readiness of the developed solution for deployment. For internal NTA projects, a "Release to Production Approval" form signed off by the NTA ICT Project Management Office is required for any request to deploy a solution into production. Suitable equivalent arrangements should be in place for other Sponsoring Agencies

NTA approval of Gateway 5 is required prior to the release of the developed solution into production. The required deliverables should be provided as part of the

Gateway 5 Approval Request inclusive of the Release to Production Approval form or an equivalent document.

11 ICT Phase 6: Deploy / Rollout

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	Deployment Report Receipt of Deployed Software Final Run-Book (Operations Guides)	Deployment Report Receipt of Deployed Software Final Run-Book (Operations Guides)	Deployment Report Receipt of Deployed Software Final Run-Book (Operations Guides)
Approval Point	Gateway 6 Approval Request	Gateway 6 Approval Request	Gateway 6 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 7	Approval to proceed to Phase 7	Approval to proceed to Phase 7

11.1 Purpose of ICT Phase 6

This phase describes the deployment of the solution into a production environment.

During this phase any issues with the deployment are identified and addressed. It is important that an appropriate level of support is provided during the early stages following rollout.

Depend on the delivery contract, a handover of a copy of the deployed software, or those elements whose intellectual property rights are vested in the Sponsoring Agency, should be arranged by the Sponsoring Agency. Appropriate arrangements to retain that software copy should be put in place to facilitate later modification, development or redeployment if required.

The deliverables required to be provided in this phase may be provided as a singular document, with sections covering the above items, or as separate documents for each item.

11.2 Deployment Report

Following the deployment of the solution into operational use, a short report on the deployment should be prepared. This report should succinctly set out the outcome of the deployment process and identify any issues that arose during the rollout phase.

Any residual issues requiring further development at a future point should be established and recorded. In additional, any operational limitations not previously identified should also be recorded.

11.3 Receipt of Deployed Software

As part of the Gateway 6 Approval Request, the Sponsoring Agency shall confirm that it has received and safely stored a copy of the deployed software, to the extent permitted under the relevant implementation contract.

11.4 Final Run-Book

Prior to deployment, operational guidance and training should have been provided in respect of the new solution. Following initial deployment, that previously developed guidance should be reviewed to identify any updates or refinements required.

Arising from this review, the necessary changes should be made to the guidance documents to ensure that they fully reflect the final operational system. These final guides shall provide a comprehensive framework for the full use of the developed solution in operation.

12 ICT Phase 7: Hand Over & Business as Usual

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 (Including Lessons Learned)	Project Completion Report (Including Lessons Learned)	Project Completion Report (Including Lessons Learned)
Approval Point	Gateway 7 Approval Request	Gateway 7 Approval Request	Gateway 7 Approval Request
	Approval to proceed to Phase 8	Approval to proceed to Phase 8	Approval to proceed to Phase 8

12.1 Purpose of ICT Phase 7

The purpose of ICT Phase 7 is to ensure that:

- the implementation of the project is properly concluded, 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 projects.

12.2 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 ICT PAG and agreed deliverables . 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;

- Whether open risks or issues have been transferred to and accepted by the business

- The lessons learned including positive and negative findings

- 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 Projects

13 ICT Phase 8: Benefits Review

	Projects – Band 1 < €5.0 million	Projects – Band 2 €5.0 million to €20 million	Projects – Band 3 > €20.0 million
Project Band			
Key Deliverables	Benefits Realisation Report (Sample Projects)	Benefits Realisation Report (Sample Projects)	Benefits Realisation Report
Approval Point	Gateway 8 Approval Request	Gateway 8 Approval Request	Gateway 8 Approval Request
	Project Closure	Project Closure	Project Closure

13.1 Purpose of ICT Phase 8

The purpose of ICT Phase 8 is to confirm that the expected benefits of the project products have been realised and assess how the products have performed when in operational use. Each expected benefit is assessed by the business, and a decision is made on whether any additional time is needed to assess the residual benefit.

The Benefits Review may also serve to identify unexpected side-effects (both beneficial and adverse) and provide rationale for why these side-effects were not foreseen.

13.2 Benefits Realisation Report

The aim of the Benefits Realisation Report is to evaluate and determine whether:

- The expected benefits and outcomes materialized including operational performance.

- The planned outcomes were the appropriate responses to actual public needs; and

- The conclusions that can be drawn which are applicable to other projects or programmes, to the ongoing use of the asset, or to associated investment proposals.

For most ICT projects and programmes, benefits will not be seen until after the proposal is completed. Accordingly, the benefits review is conducted by the business once sufficient time has elapsed for the benefits and outcomes to fully materialise.

For proposals with a capital cost of less than €20 million, the preparation of a Benefits Realisation Report is not required for every project and, instead, only a sample proportion of projects will be directed to undertake an ex-post evaluation. The NTA, in its role as the Approving Authority, will identify which Band 1 and Band 2 projects are required to prepare a Benefits Realisation Report. In such cases, the Sponsoring Agency shall proceed to carry out the post-implementation evaluation and prepare the Benefits Realisation Report for submission to the NTA.

14 Summary of Approval Process

NTA PHASES AND GATEWAYS (For ICT Projects and Programmes)			
Phase/ Title	**Key Deliverables**	**Gateway**	**Gateway Decision**
Phase 0 Concept	Grant Application Form Project Outline Document [1]	Gateway 0	Decision to commence project and proceed to next phase including option development
Phase 1 Initiation	Options Selection Report Project Initiation Document DGOU Approval (if needed)	Gateway 1	Decision to bring the preferred option to the Planning stage
Phase 2 Planning	Project Plan Detailed Requirements Preliminary Business Case Test Strategy	Gateway 2	Decision to proceed to procure the preferred solution
Phase 3 Procure	Detailed Business Case Tender Documents Procurement Strategy Tender Report Final Business Case	Gateway 3	Decision to proceed to further design and develop tender documentation
Phase 4 Analysis and Design	System Design Document Test Plan Training Requirements and Support Model Data Privacy Impact Assessment	Gateway 4	Decision to proceed to develop and test proposed solution
Phase 5 Build and Test	Test Reports User/ Operation Guides Release to Production Form	Gateway 5	Decision to release the developed solution into production
Phase 6 Deploy / Rollout	Deployment Report Receipt of Deployed Software Final Run-Book	Gateway 6	Decision to start the closure process for the project
Phase 7 Hand Over & BAU	Project Completion Report (including Lessons Learned)	Gateway 7	Closure
Phase 8 Benefits Review	Benefits Realisation Report [2]	Gateway 8	Confirmation of whether the planned project benefits have been realised

[1] For Projects > €20 million.

[2] For Projects < € 20 million a sample approach only is required.