Infrastructure
and Projects
Authority

Gate Review Process

Gate 0 Review: Strategic Assessment

Version: V1.0

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Introduction to the
Gate Review Process

Why Getting Programmes and Projects Right Matters

Good management and control of programmes and projects is essential to the successful delivery of government objectives and protecting value for money. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority's (IPA) Gate Review process is designed to provide a realistic view on a programme and project's ability to deliver agreed outcomes to:

- time;

- cost;

- benefits; and

- quality.
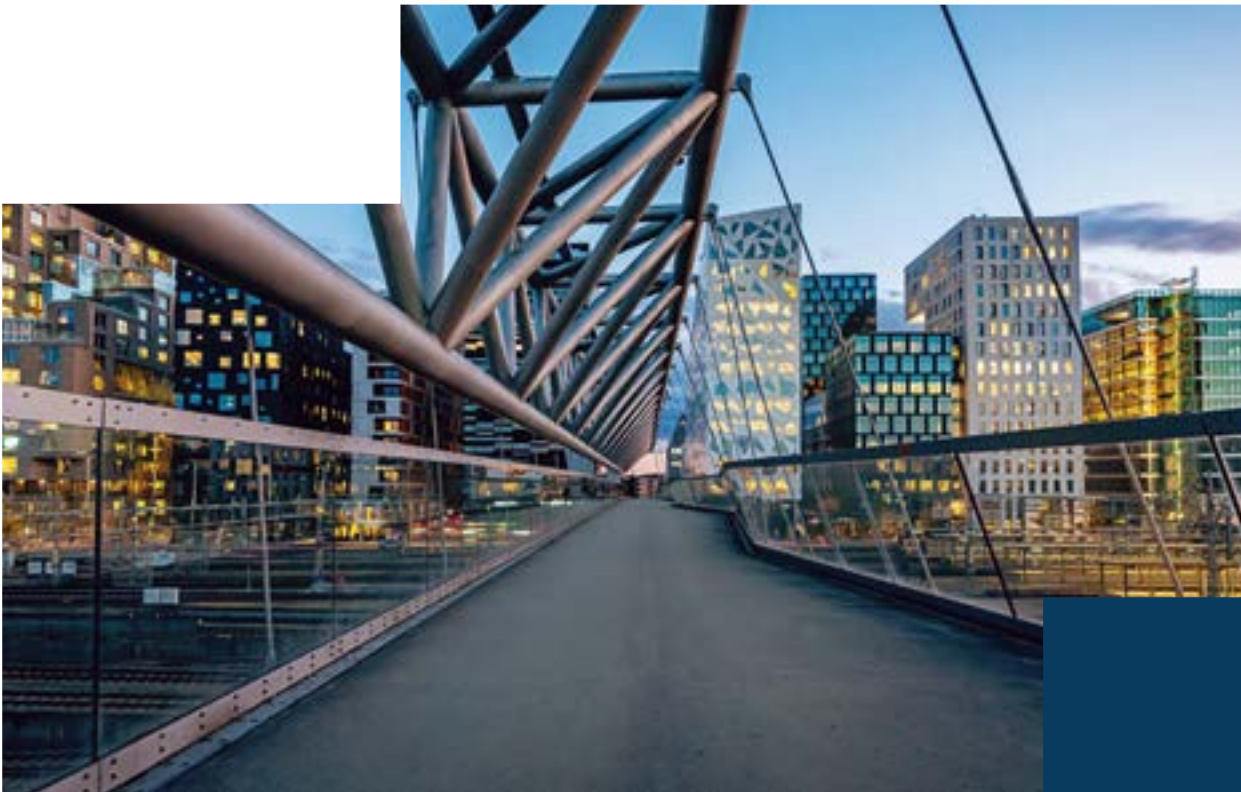
The Gate Review Process

The Gate Review process gives independent guidance to Senior Responsible Owners (SROs), programme and project teams and to the departments who commission their work, on how best to ensure that their programmes and projects are successful. For Programmes and Projects on the Government Major Project Portfolio (GMPP) review outcomes will be shared with the Accounting Officers (AOs), HM Treasury (HMT) and Cabinet Office (CO) Leadership to further support successful delivery.

This process is anchored to the Five Case Business Case Model and looks to examine programmes and projects at key decision points in their lifecycle to provide assurance that they can progress successfully to the next stage. Refer to the Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery for more information on the project delivery lifecycle and key decision points.

SROs and AOs should be aware of the extent and limitations of the various review processes – for example, the fact that a Gate Review has taken place does not replace the need for a full audit opinion on the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance in the audited area.

The Gate Review Process as part of the Assurance Framework

Every public sector body will have its own structures and resources for carrying out internal reviews, health checks and audits of their activities, including programmes and projects. The Gate Review process provides a snapshot view of progress at a point in time and, therefore, should be seen as complementary to these internal processes, and not a replacement for them.

Organisations should have in place an effective framework to provide a suitable level of assurance for their portfolio of programmes and projects. This requires management to map their assurance needs in an Integrated Assurance and Approvals Plan (IAAP) and identify the potential sources for providing them. Public sector bodies are encouraged to ensure adequate and timely coordination and sharing of information, including plans, between the various internal review functions.

Further, none of these review processes is a substitute for a rigorous governance framework in the organisation to manage key processes including business planning, investment appraisal and business case management (including benefits management), programme and project portfolio management, risk management, procurement/acquisition, and service and contract management.

Gate 0 Review: About this Gate Review Workbook

This workbook supports the Government Gate 0 Review: Strategic Assessment; this Review that sets the programme in the wider policy or corporate context. It is used in two main circumstances:

a. To take an overall view of a programme composed of sub-programmes and/or projects which are going through the Gate 1-5 life-cycle in different timeframes. A Gate 0 review does not replace the Gate 1-5 reviews of these sub-programmes/projects but may be combined with one of them, for instance as a Gate 0/3 review.

b. For an annual review in between Gate 1 and Gate 2, Gate 2 and 3, etc.

This Review investigates the direction and planned outcomes of the programme, together with the progress of its constituent projects. It can be applied to any type of programme, including policy and organisational change. The Review is repeated throughout the life of the programme from start-up to closure; an early Gate 0 Review is particularly valuable as it helps to confirm that the way forward is achievable, before plans have been finalised.

Purpose of the Gate 0 Review

The purpose of the Gate 0 Review is to:

- Review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to the overall strategy of the organisation and its senior management;

- Ensure that the programme is supported by key stakeholders;

- Confirm that the programme's potential to succeed has been considered in the wider context of Government policy and procurement objectives, the organisation's delivery plans and change programmes, and any interdependencies with other programmes or projects in the organisation's portfolio and, where relevant, those of other organisations;

- Review the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the programme as a whole and the links to individual parts of it (e.g. to any existing projects in the programme's portfolio);

- Review the arrangements for identifying and managing the main programme risks (and the individual project risks), including external risks such as changing business priorities;

- Check that provision for financial and other resources have been made for the programme (initially identified at programme initiation and committed later) and that plans for the work to be done through to the next stage are realistic, properly resourced with sufficient people of appropriate experience, and authorised;

- After the initial Review, check progress against plans and the expected achievement of outcomes.

- Check that there is engagement with the market as appropriate on the feasibility of achieving the required outcomes;

- Where relevant, check that the programme takes account of joining up with other programmes, internal and external; and

- Evaluation of actions taken to implement recommendations made in any earlier assessment of deliverability.

Purpose of the Gate 0 Review

Strategic Assessment: When to repeat the Gate 0 Review

The Gate 0 Review is applied at the start-up of a programme, is repeated at appropriate key decision points during the programme, and is applied at the end of the programme.

First Gate 0 Review

The programme start-up process draws together the justification for the programme based on the policy or organisational objectives that are to be secured, an analysis of the stakeholders whose cooperation is needed to achieve the objectives, and an initial assessment of the programme's likely costs and potential for success. The first Gate 0 Review comes after the broad strategy for change has been set, before a public commitment is made, and before a development proposal is put before a Programme Board, executive authority or similar group for authority to proceed. It focuses on the justification for the programme.

Typically a Gate 0 Review will take place following the production of the Programme Brief or initial version of the Programme Business Case (PBC) which contains an outline description of the programme's objectives, desired benefits, risks, costs and timeframe. However, the management of the organisation may consider it appropriate to conduct an earlier Gate 0 Review, or an internal checkpoint, following the issue of the Programme Mandate; this is the trigger for identifying a programme, and defines the overall objectives for the programme in line with the policy or organisational objectives. The issue of the Programme Mandate may be the outcome of a workshop held by the organisation to consider delivery of policy.

The first Gate 0 Review provides assurance to the Programme Board that the scope and purpose of the programme has been adequately researched, that there is a shared understanding of what is to be achieved by the key stakeholders, that it fits within the organisation's overall policy or management strategy and priorities; that there is a realistic possibility of securing the resources needed for delivery and that any procurement takes account of prevailing government policies e.g. sustainability and Net Zero. The Review will, in addition, examine how the work strands will be organised (in sub-programmes, projects, etc.) to deliver the overall programme objectives, and that the programme management structure, monitoring and resourcing is appropriate. In short, the first Gate 0 Review aims to test whether stakeholders' expectations of the programme are realistic, by reference to costs, risks, outcomes, resource needs, timetable and general achievability.

Mid-Stage Gate 0 Review

Subsequent Gate 0 Reviews revisit the same questions to confirm that the key stakeholders have a common understanding of desired outcomes and that the programme is likely to achieve them. The Gate 0 Review will be repeated at appropriate key decision points during the programme, such as:

- At scheduled milestones, such as the completion of a set of projects in the programme portfolio;

- When there is a significant change to the desired outcomes;

- When the outcomes delivered must change (perhaps as a result of government changes), or when it becomes apparent that the programme will not provide the necessary outcomes and needs to be reshaped;

- When the programme's sponsors have concerns about the programme's effectiveness;

- When there is a change in Senior Responsible Owner for the programme; and

- To learn lessons to transfer to other programmes when a substantial amount of successful delivery has taken place.

Repeated Gate 0 Reviews will be particularly concerned with establishing the continued validity of the Business Case for the programme, and with ensuring that the outcomes and desired benefits of the programme are on track.

Final Gate 0 Review

Finally, a Gate 0 Review will take place at the conclusion of the programme, to assess the overall success of the programme and the extent to which the desired outcomes and benefits have been achieved, and to check that the lessons learned have been analysed and promulgated.

Assessment of the Proposed Solution

The Gate 0 Review questions and evidence points should be built using the Gate 1 to 5 Review Workbooks:

- **The First Gate 0 Review** should leverage the Gate 1 Review Workbook questions and evidence, which are available here.

- **The Mid-Stage Gate 0 Review** should leverage the Gate 2, 3 and 4 Workbook questions and evidence points (as appropriate, depending on what the programme is delivering), which are available here.

- **The Final Gate 0 Review** should leverage the Gate 5 Review Workbook questions and evidence points, which are available here.

Supporting Guidance

- **Gate Review Book:** A Workbook for each Gate Review provides detailed questions and evidence points to support each review. The workbooks can be downloaded from the IPA Assurance Toolkit on GOV.UK

- HMT Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government – and supporting supplements

- HMT Orange Book: Management of Risk, Principles and Concepts

- IPA Assurance Toolkit

- Treasury Approval Process for Programmes and Projects

- Project Delivery Functional Standards

- IPA Principles for Success

- The Art of Brilliance

- Project Initiation Routemap

- 7 Lens of Maturity

- Accounting Officer Assessment

- The role of the SRO

- Achieving NetZero

- UN Sustainable Development Goals

- Modern Methods of Construction

- Resilient Infrastructure Systems

- National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) principals

- Transforming Infrastructure Performance

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