



Infrastructure  
and Projects  
Authority

# Common Minimum Standards for Construction

Common Minimum Standards for the  
Procurement of Built Environments in the  
Public Sector

March 2017

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## The Infrastructure and Projects Authority

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) works to ensure the successful delivery of all types of projects both across government and the private sector; from infrastructure, defence and IT, through to transformational programmes designed to improve efficiency and transform the way government interacts with citizens.

To ensure the successful delivery of all types of projects, the IPA:

- oversee policy on infrastructure delivery, finance and Public Private Partnerships
- deploy expert commercial, financial and delivery support
- track project performance and manage independent project assurance
- develop useful standards and tools, such as the Project Initiation Routemap
- support the project delivery and project finance professions
- deliver finance schemes such as Private Finance 2 and the UK Guarantees Scheme

The IPA is led by its Chief Executive, Tony Meggs, and reports to HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office.

As the National Infrastructure Commission identifies our long term infrastructure needs, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority ensures these are translated into successful delivery. Together both organisations establish the right framework for a comprehensive approach to infrastructure.

## Introduction

This document updates the existing Government Construction Common Minimum Standards for the Built Environment, published in 2012, with immediate effect.

Where the business case of a new programme or project includes a construction element, departments should make sure that this is carried out with full reference to the Common Minimum Standards for Construction (CMS) set out in this document. Project team members including Investment Decision Makers, Senior Responsible Owners, Project Sponsors and Project Managers should take steps to understand and implement the CMS on appropriate projects and programmes.

### Background

The Government is committed to delivering good value for the taxpayer. Procurement decisions should support the delivery of good value for money and can help enable wider government objectives. Public sector procurers are subject to a range of policy initiatives from those relating to sustainability through to skills development. A common set of standards that apply to all construction projects will support the delivery of value for money and wider policy objectives alongside enabling a coordinated engagement with industry.

This document does not introduce additional standards but summarises existing government policy and relevant standards to provide clarity for public procurers and industry. The Common Minimum Standards are intended to represent the minimum normal threshold for the application of existing government policies.

The CMS apply to central government, including departments, executive agencies and the non-departmental public bodies for which they are responsible. Departments will be expected to take reasonable measures to make sure that the standards are also adopted throughout the wider public sector, where responsibility for the expenditure of public funds has been devolved. It should be noted that the standards do not cover all legislative requirements, which are in any event mandatory.

Compliance with these standards is considered to represent cost effectiveness, however their practical application by individual procurers should be considered on a project-specific basis, within the context of practicality, achievability and value for money (defined as the optimum combination of whole-life cost and quality to meet user requirements). Procurers will be expected to comply with these standards unless it can be clearly demonstrated that one or more of them fall outside of the above criteria.

### Further information

Any queries or requests for further information should be directed to:  
governmentconstructionteam@ipa.gov.uk

## General Standards

<b>1</b>	<b>Central government departments should continue to improve construction client capability to support the more productive delivery of government construction projects as set out in the Government Construction Strategy 2016-20.</b>
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- 1.1 The [Government Construction Strategy \(GCS\) 2016-20](#) sets out the principles to enable greater productivity from government construction. The GCS supports departments to deliver their planned construction projects more efficiently and achieve £1.7 billion of efficiency savings over this Parliament.
- 1.2 The GCS contains measures to improve client capability, embed the use of digital construction technologies, drive collaborative approaches, deliver 20,000 apprenticeships through construction procurement, and develop whole-life approaches.
- 1.3 Improving construction client capability is central to government driving increased productivity from its construction activity. Construction is a complex activity which draws on skills from the commercial, project delivery, digital and property functions, aligned to a wider departmental estates strategy.
- 1.4 The Government Construction Strategy outlines plans to improve central government client capability by developing measures to assess key capability metrics across government in collaboration with departments. The output of the assessments will be reviewed by a Client Capability Working Group, to develop specific actions for improving the construction client capability of each department. Measurement of departmental construction client capability progress will be supported through a standardised approach to [Data and Cost Benchmarking](#) across central government.

## Project and Programme Procurement Standards

<b>2</b>	<b>Procurement options and decisions should be taken based on option and project appraisals and evaluation techniques that consider whole-life value for money.</b>
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- 2.1 Options appraisals techniques are described in the [HMT Green Book](#). The Green Book is guidance for central government on how publicly funded bodies should prepare and analyse proposed policies, programmes and projects to obtain the best public value and manage risks.
- 2.2 The [Project Initiation Routemap](#) provides a framework to help identify and address many common and recurring problems, particularly during the early stages of projects. It enables sponsors, clients and those responsible for project delivery to properly align project complexity with the necessary capabilities and other components to support a more successful outcome.
- 2.3 The appraisal of procurement options and the selection of the preferred project strategy shall take account of whole-life value for money<sup>1</sup> (including costs for operation, maintenance and lifecycle). Such decisions should not be based solely on capital cost. This assessment should include justification for any decision to procure new facilities rather than to reuse or refurbish existing facilities and should take account of the likely economic, environmental and social costs and benefits, where it is possible and practical to do so.

<b>3</b>	<b>Procurement strategies and contract types should support the development of collaborative relationships, enable early contractor involvement and support innovative approaches.</b>
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- 3.1 Procurement routes should be limited to those which support [early contractor involvement](#) such as Design & Build, the Prime-type Contracting approach<sup>2</sup>, [Cost Led Procurement](#), [Two Stage Open Book](#), [Integrated Project Insurance](#) and framework arrangements consistent with the GCS.
- 3.2 Early contractor involvement can support improved team working and innovation to deliver value for money. It involves an integrated contractor and designer team who are able to consider delivery and operational issues earlier in the design process. The early sight of the client's requirements enables contractors to identify and mitigate risks, develop delivery solutions, and plan their resources to support efficient delivery. The client should consider any innovative approaches they wish to pursue as early as possible in the procurement strategy to enable the maximum benefit to be realised. Innovative approaches may include Design for Manufacture and Assembly, lean, and technologies such as 3D Printing, Laser Scan Surveying and Virtual and Augmented Reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Value for money is defined as the optimum combination of whole-life cost and quality to meet user requirements.

<sup>2</sup> Prime type contracting is where a supply team is appointed with a single point lead who takes overall responsibility for the design and construction of the project and gives commitments on the operational costs of or takes responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the facility for a defined period.

- 3.3 Approaches that do not enable early contractor involvement should not be used unless they can be clearly shown that they offer best value for money.

<b>4</b>	<b>Procurement processes should be appropriate for the project, meeting legal obligations and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy and costs for suppliers. Pre-qualification Questionnaires (PQQs) for central government clients should adopt the standard wording for questions as set out in PAS 91.</b>
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- 4.1 Clients should incorporate any new and relevant procurement regulations contained in [Procurement Policy Notes](#) (PPNs) into their practices. PPNs apply to all generic forms of procurement for goods and services. Where appropriate requirements should address sector specific issues, for example construction.
- 4.2 Central government clients are required to comply with steel policy guidance ([PPN 16/15: Procuring Steel in Major Projects](#))<sup>3</sup>, in order to remove barriers that may prevent UK suppliers of steel from competing effectively for public sector contracts. Helping to enable UK steel suppliers compete on a level playing field should stimulate competition that leads to better value for money.
- 4.3 Central government clients are required to place contracts worth over £10,000 on [Contracts Finder](#). Contracts Finder enables all public sector opportunities over the associated thresholds to be held in one place, which makes public sector procurement more accessible, particularly for smaller businesses.
- 4.4 Standard wording for core pre-qualification questions should be adopted as set out in [Publicly Available Specification \(PAS\) 91](#). At the pre-qualification stage, construction firms can incur significant costs by qualifying through bespoke client formats, which can go beyond the legal requirements for this stage of procurement. Consistent use by the public sector of a single national pre-qualification database is a longstanding construction industry desire and led to the development of the industry-wide standard, PAS 91.
- 4.5 Clients should make use of the core criteria essential to prequalification contained in PAS 91, plus the option contained in it that buyers can choose to pre-qualify suppliers who have been successfully assessed by a member of Safety Schemes in Procurement (SSIP) against the health and safety questions in PAS 91 module A-4. PAS 91 includes provisions for project-specific questions to be inserted where necessary.
- 4.6 Public sector clients should make sure that contractors and suppliers are aware that they can raise concerns about procurement practices with the [Mystery Shopper Service](#). The Mystery Shopper Service sits within the Crown Commercial Service and allows government suppliers and potential government suppliers to raise concerns anonymously about public sector procurement practice.
- 4.7 Clients should follow the applicable [Commercial Standards for Government](#), which define how departments should operate to drive strong commercial behaviours and get value for money.

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<sup>3</sup> This guidance is mandated for contracts with a capital value of £10 million or above and sets out how government buyers and their Tier 1 contractors should source steel in a more strategic and transparent way. The guidance explains how to address various issues at the key stages of the procurement life-cycle, including, taking into account the social impacts of competing suppliers as well as environmental and economic factors.

- 4.8 Clients should adopt a balanced scorecard approach when designing their procurement processes for major works, infrastructure, and capital investments where the value is over £10 million. The [Procuring Growth Balanced Scorecard](#) Procurement Policy Note sets out an approach to balance straightforward matters such as cost against more complex issues such as social and wider economic considerations.

<b>5</b>	<b>Central government clients should require Building Information Modelling (BIM) Level 2 on relevant construction projects.</b>
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- 5.1 All new applicable procurements, including framework agreements, should require the use of BIM Level 2 in their terms and conditions.
- 5.2 Clients should consider the PAS 1192 suite of documents which outline the:
- a. code of practice for the collaborative production of architectural, engineering and construction information ([BS 1192:2007](#));
  - b. specification for information management for the capital/delivery phase of construction projects using BIM ([PAS 1192-2](#));
  - c. specification for information management for the operational phase of assets using BIM ([PAS 1192-3](#));
  - d. code of practice for fulfilling employer's information exchange requirements using COBie ([BS 1192-4](#)); and
  - e. specification for security-minded BIM, digital built environments and smart asset management ([PAS 1192-5](#)).
- 5.3 To deliver a BIM project in line with the standards outlined in 5.2, the client is required to produce an Employers Information Requirements document that describes its information needs for the project. Clients should explore where a digital approach to information can replace or enhance traditional information methods to create increased value for money.
- 5.4 Clients are advised to review their Information Requirements in conjunction with the asset and estates management teams, as well as their departmental BIM Champion or lead to inform the collection of appropriate data for the management, operation and maintenance of the asset.
- 5.5 Clients are able to tailor their approach to BIM with the outcomes they require in mind. Information of this type can be exploited for many different opportunities and these should be aligned and valued in line with the project or programmes needs such as for planning consents, visual management of stakeholders, quality assurance and project management.
- 5.6 Clients should consider the competence of the personnel and supply chain to deploy BIM for their programme or project. Consideration should therefore be given to the provisions that are in place to assist in the delivery of the project or programme in relation to knowledge and skills.

<b>6</b>	<b>Public sector clients should pay promptly all monies properly due and in any event within the contractually required timescales. In scope public sector clients are required to pay valid and undisputed invoices within 30 days and shall make sure these terms are passed down the supply chain.</b>
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- 6.1 In scope organisations should follow the [Public Contracts Regulations 2015](#), which requires the payment of valid and undisputed invoices within 30 days and that these terms are passed down the supply chain. Central government clients should sign up to the [Construction Supply Chain Payment Charter](#). Signatories of the Charter agree to fair payment commitments including Tier 1 within 14 days, to Tier 2 within 19 days and to Tier 3 within 23 days of the due date, which will be 7 days after the common assessment or valuation date established by the client in the Tier 1 contract<sup>4</sup>.
- 6.2 Where practicable, mechanisms that support fair payment, such as [Project Bank Accounts](#) (PBAs) should be chosen to realise the benefits offered by integrated team working. Central government departments are committed to implement the principles of fair payment on all their new projects. Fair payment is now required as a contractual condition. PBAs should be used on contracts unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

<b>7</b>	<b>A Risk Potential Assessment and the appropriate assurance reviews (or a similar departmentally approved process) should be undertaken on all programmes and projects.</b>
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- 7.1 Assurance reviews are designed to provide independent guidance to Senior Responsible Owners, programme and project teams and departments, on how best to make sure that their programmes and projects are successful. These reviews examine programmes and projects at key decision points in their life-cycle and look ahead to provide assurance that they can progress successfully to the next stage. [Integrated Assurance and Approval Plans](#) (IAAP) should set out how assurance activities will be timed and coordinated for each programme or project.
- 7.2 Assurance reviews are a "peer review" process in which independent practitioners from outside the programme/project use their experience and expertise to examine the progress, risks and challenges to assess the likelihood of successful delivery. The reviews use a series of interviews and/or workshops, documentation reviews and the teams' experience to provide valuable additional perspective on the issues facing the project team and an external challenge to the robustness of plans and processes.
- 7.3 A [Risk Potential Assessment](#) (RPA) is designed to provide a standard set of high-level criteria for assessing the strategic risk potential of programmes and projects and of emerging policies and initiatives that are expected to be delivered through a programme or project in the future and should be used where appropriate.

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<sup>4</sup> Procurement Information Note 2/2010

## Health, Safety and Welfare Standards

<b>8</b>	<b>All clients should use the CDM 2015 guidance and assess the health &amp; safety performance and processes of their shortlisted supply teams as part of the pre-qualification assessment process.</b>
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- 8.1 Clients have major influence over the way their project is procured and managed. The CDM (Construction Design and Management) Regulations 2015 makes a commercial client accountable for the impact their decisions and approach have on health, safety and welfare on their project. The health and safety and welfare of those involved and affected by the construction projects is a priority for all government clients. Complying with [CDM 2015](#) should help make sure that no-one is harmed during the work, that welfare facilities are provided on site and that the building is safe to use and maintain while giving good value. Effective planning should also help support well managed work with fewer unexpected costs and problems.
- 8.2 Clients should make suitable arrangements for their projects so they can be managed in a way that secures health and safety, including by measuring health and safety performance. This includes appointing people with the necessary skills (see CMS Standard 13), knowledge, experience and (where an organisation), the organisational ability to carry out the work.
- 8.3 Suppliers with inadequate competence and/or poor health & safety performance records on comparable projects should be excluded from the tender lists. Feedback should be given to such suppliers to allow them to remedy such failings for the future. Where suppliers have previously had poor performance, they must be able to demonstrate sufficient, sustained improvement before being reinserted in tender lists.
- 8.4 The measurement process is to include the performance of all parts of the supply team (contractors, sub-contractors and designers). The systems clients put in place should take account of leading indicators as well as data such as accident records.
- 8.5 Further general information about performance measurement can be found in Part 3 of the HSE publication [Managing Health and Safety](#) (HSG65). Guidance more specific to construction work can be found in the [Leadership and Worker Involvement Toolkit](#), which was developed by the construction industry's Leadership and Worker Engagement Forum to help contractors and managers learn how to make health and safety improvements in their businesses.

<b>9</b>	<b>Clients should include within all contracts involving construction a requirement for their constructors to be registered with a suitable site management / good neighbour scheme such as the Considerate Constructors Scheme and to comply with the scheme's Code of Considerate Practice.</b>
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- 9.1 The industrial strategy, [Construction 2025](#), contained a clear objective to improve the image of the industry. Organisations can present a positive advertisement for themselves and the industry through factors including competent management, efficiency, awareness of environmental issues and neighbourliness.

- 9.2 The [Considerate Constructors Scheme](#) is concerned about any area of construction activity that may have a direct or indirect impact on the image of the industry as a whole. The scheme principally focuses on three areas, the general public, the workforce and the environment. Construction site, companies and suppliers can voluntarily register with the Scheme and agree to abide by the [Code of Considerate Practice](#), which encourages best practice beyond the statutory requirements.

<b>10</b>	<b>Clients should include a contract clause requiring that all members of their supply teams who are workers on or regular visitors to a construction site should be able to demonstrate their competence to carry out the work for which they have been appointed.</b>
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- 10.1 The best primary evidence for an individual's competence is a mix of nationally recognised qualifications, relevant experience and an assessment of the individual's skills in the workplace. As secondary evidence, in line with current industry practice, any card schemes bearing the [Construction Skills Certification Scheme \(CSCS\)](#) logo may be used to help judge an individual's competence. CSCS branded schemes share a common requirement for minimum level 2 qualifications and a commitment to the use of smartcard technology. Individuals should be assessed as competent in line with the guidance in the supporting [Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015](#).

## Design Standards

All clients should aim to deliver design excellence in accordance with the principles set out in the [Government Construction Strategy](#) 2016-20. In order to achieve this:

<b>11</b>	<b>Clients should develop a clear project design brief that addresses current and future service requirements, in line with Government Soft Landings (GSL) principles as appropriate. The design brief should also address the client's aspirations for the building and the project's physical and social context.</b>
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- 11.1 The on-going maintenance and operational cost of a building during its lifecycle far outweighs the original capital cost of construction and [Government Soft Landings](#) (GSL) identifies the need for this to be recognised through early end-user engagement in the design and construction process. GSL centres on aligning the interests of those that design and construct an asset with those who subsequently use it.
- 11.2 Clients should involve all stakeholders, including end-users, before, during and after delivery of a programme or project, in the development of the output specification and design brief and in the assessment of project success. A structured process should be developed for commissioning handover and aftercare and post operational evaluation should take place against agreed performance criteria.

## Sustainability Standards

<b>12</b>	<b>Project and programme procurement strategies should support government sustainability objectives.</b>
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- 12.1 Clients should use [PAS 2080: 2016 Carbon management in infrastructure](#) where appropriate, which provides a framework on how to manage whole-life carbon. The guidance is an output from the [Infrastructure Carbon Review](#), which made clear that reducing carbon reduces cost.
- 12.2 Clients should follow the requirements of the Public Service (Social Value) Act, which requires commissioning authorities to consider economic, social and economic well-being. In addition, to support sustainable skills development [Procurement Policy Note 14/15 – Supporting Apprenticeships and Skills through Public Procurement](#) requires that all bids for government contracts worth more than £10 million and lasting 12 months or longer must demonstrate a clear commitment to skills development and apprenticeships. In particular, employers’ bids will be reviewed in line with best practice for the number of apprentices that they expect to support.
- 12.3 The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), a charity that works with organisations and individuals to support them reduce waste, develop sustainable products and use resources efficiently, have developed procurement clauses to support more sustainable construction. The [WRAP model procurement clauses](#) cover waste reduction, waste recovery and greater usage of recovered materials at all stages of a project.

<b>13</b>	<b>Procurement should take account of the Government Buying Standard for new-build construction and major refurbishments.</b>
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- 13.1 The [Government Buying Standards](#) require as a minimum:
- a. an appropriate environmental assessment process such as the [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology](#) (BREEAM) or an equivalent (e.g. CEEQUAL, DREAM etc.) appropriate to the size, nature and impact of the project must be carried out on all projects;
  - b. where BREEAM is used, all new projects are to achieve an ‘excellent’ rating and all major refurbishment projects are to achieve at least ‘very good’ rating, unless site constraints or project objectives mean that this requirement conflicts with the obligation to achieve value for money; and
  - c. where an alternative environmental assessment methodology is used, projects should seek to achieve equivalent ratings.
- 13.2 All timber or timber products (including timber used solely during the construction process such as temporary fencing, hoardings or shuttering) shall be purchased in accordance with the Government’s timber procurement policy. The [Government’s Timber Procurement Policy](#) requires that clients make sure that timber and wood-derived products are legal and sustainable. Only timber and wood-derived products originating from an independently verifiable Legal and Sustainable source (which can include from a licensed Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade partner) will be demanded for use on the government estate and appropriate supporting documentation will be required.



