

IPAT® ASSESSMENT

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the IPAT®?

The IPAT® (Infrastructure Project Assessment Tool) is a tool that can be used for evaluating, improving, and monitoring large infrastructure projects. The IPAT is developed to assess the ‘maturity’ of a large infrastructure project, and provide an indication to what extent the project delivery organisation (PDO) is ready to enter its next project phase. This is done by defining strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement for the PDO.

2. What is the aim of an IPAT Assessment?

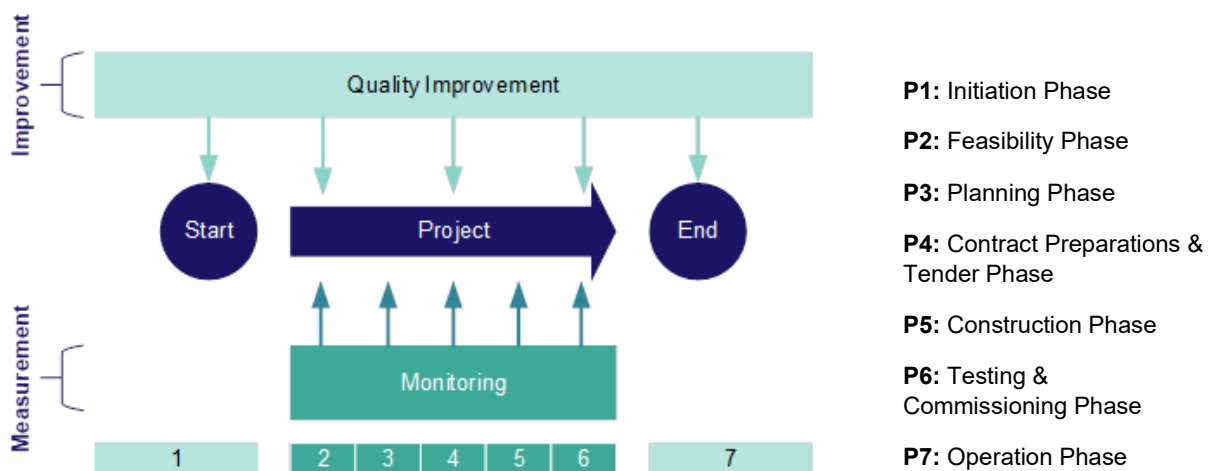
The aim of an IPAT Assessment is to assess the totality of management quality relating to the project. During the assessment, we address the way in which the PDO and client/sponsor (C/S) manage and plan all relevant aspects of a large infrastructure project. This includes assessing how the PDO and C/S plan to reach the project’s objectives and obtain the envisioned outputs (and not just the physical construction). By using this approach, an IPAT Assessment can provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the project’s management and whether the project is well prepared to enter the next project phase. Thereby helping the management to successfully deliver their projects.

3. How did we develop the IPAT?

The IPAT is designed as a practical tool and was developed by a combined group of project managers, researchers and others that are actively involved in the delivery of large infrastructure projects in Europe. The tool is based on international quality management principles, and builds on the NETLIPSE 2006-2008 research results¹. In this study we analysed the best practices and lessons learned in the management and organisation of large infrastructure projects in Europe. The original IPAT was developed in 2008-2010, and has since been revised periodically (2018, 2022, 2024) to make sure that it is up-to-date with the latest developments in project management and infrastructure delivery.

4. In which project phase should I commission an IPAT Assessment?

The IPAT recognises seven project phases in a project’s lifecycle, starting from the initiation of a project, to operations and maintenance of the completed infrastructure. As the IPAT assesses primarily the current performance of a PDO and C/S, it is applicable in those phases in which a PDO is responsible for the project management of the project. This is the case in phase 2 up to and including phase 6.



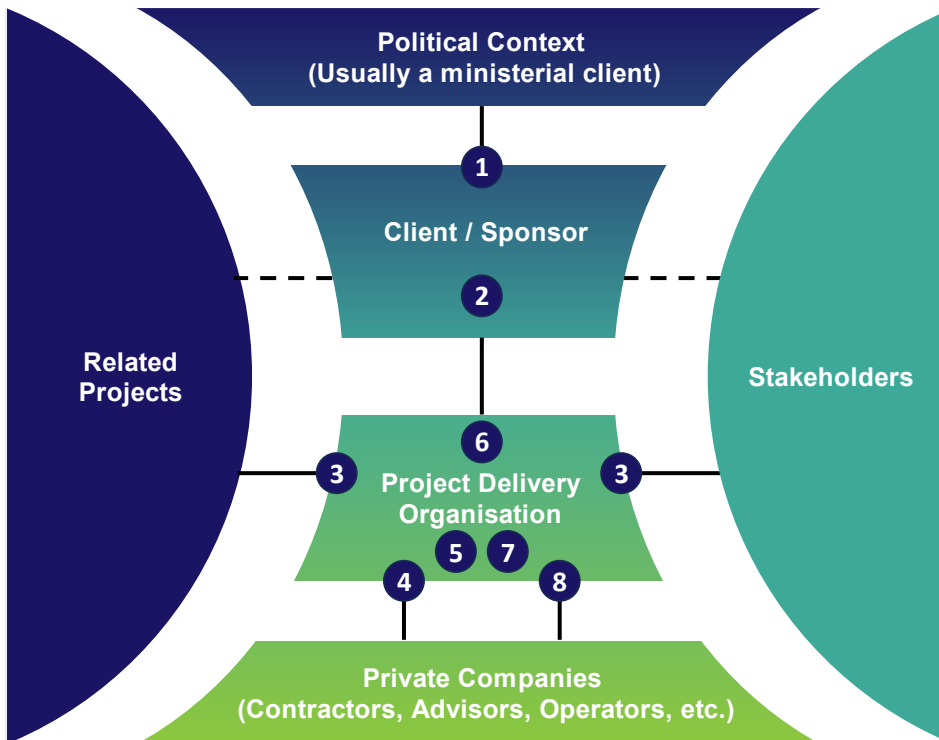
¹ [Managing Large Infrastructure Projects: Research on Best Practices and Lessons Learnt in Large Infrastructure Projects in Europe](#)

5. On what topics do we focus in an IPAT Assessment?

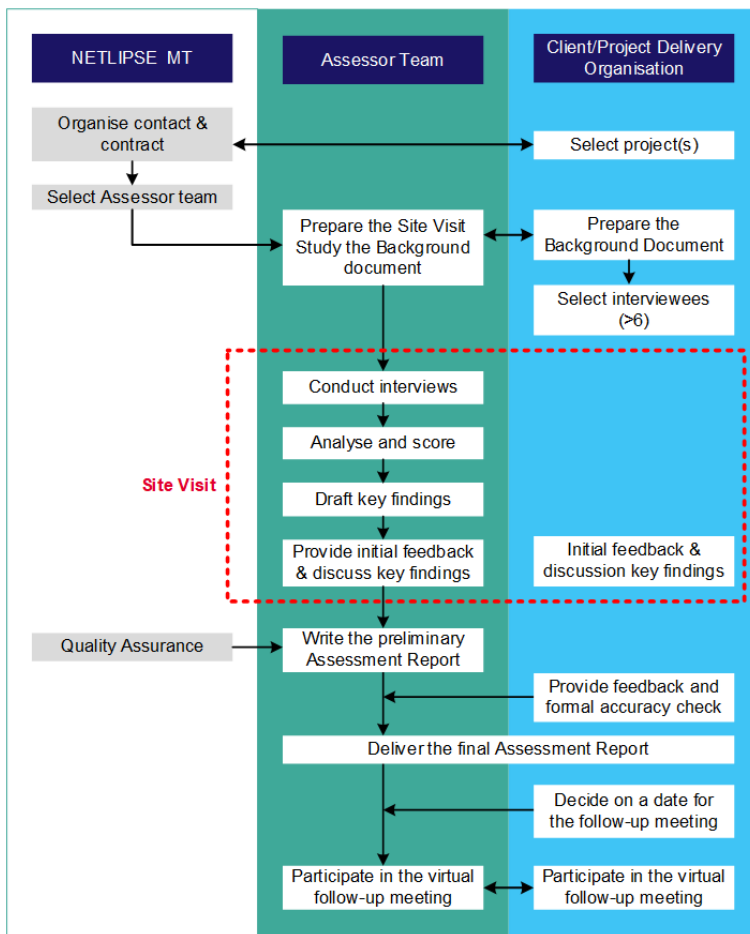
An IPAT Assessment covers all relevant management aspects of a large infrastructure project. These management aspects are categorised into eight management themes:

Management Theme	Subtheme
1. Political Context, Objectives & Purpose	1a. Political Context 1b. Objectives and Purpose
2. Scope & Financial Feasibility	2a. Scope Definition 2b. Financial Feasibility
3. Stakeholder Engagement & Communications	3a. Stakeholder Engagement 3b. Communications
4. Contracting & Procurement	4a. Contracting and Procurement Strategy 4b. Contract Management
5. Project Controls	5a. Scope Management 5b. Financial Management 5c. Planning Management 5d. Risk Management
6. Organisation	6a. Structure and Governance 6b. Project Team 6c. Management Support Processes
7. Permits, Authorisations & Legal Consents	7a. Permits, Authorisations and Legal Consents
8. Technical Management	8a. Requirements and Specifications 8b. Choice of Technology 8c. Technical Interfaces and Uncertainties

The eight management themes are visualised in the figure below. The position of the theme indicates where the responsibility for the theme lies.



6. How long does an IPAT Assessment take, and how much time does it require from me as a client?



An IPAT Assessment typically takes around 2 to 3 months from the initial meetings to the delivery of the final Assessment Report. The process is illustrated in the figure to the left.

In the initial weeks, the client and coordinator make the arrangements for the site visit, and the client prepares a background document (about 20 pages with key project information).

This document is sent to the assessor team no later than 2 weeks before the Site Visit.

The site visit lasts for 3 days and includes a kick-off meeting with the project team (welcome, introduction, and project presentation), a visit to the project site or construction location, around 10 interviews, and an initial feedback session with the team.

Two to three weeks after the site visit, the assessor team provides the client with a draft feedback report, which is finalised about a month after the visit.

7. Is a three-day site visit enough time to get useful results for the project team?

Although three days might seem short to assess large or mega projects, the experienced assessor team is able to form a well-informed opinion by interviewing a substantial number of project team members, stakeholders, and/or contractors (about 10 interviews with 20 people). Since the assessors themselves are typically responsible for delivering similar large infrastructure projects, they can quickly identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The background document, provided by the client in advance, helps the assessor team prepare for the interviews by gaining an understanding of the project and its context.

Additionally, around 3 to 4 months later, a virtual follow-up meeting is arranged between the team lead assessor, the coordinator/assessor, any available assessors, and the project team. The project team decides when this meeting will take place. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the implementation of the suggested improvements, clarify any matters that may still be unclear, and address any other questions for the assessment team. In some cases, the follow-up meeting has been held with the management of the government agency or board to present and discuss the IPAT Assessment results.

8. What are the costs of an IPAT Assessment?

An IPAT Assessment costs €40,000. Organisations that are NETLIPSE Partners and have commissioned an IPAT programme receive a 25% discount on this fee. Around half of the fee covers the travel and accommodation expenses for the five-person assessor team, as well as the coordinator's work on organising, managing, administration, and writing the assessment report. All assessors contribute their time voluntarily, and their working hours are not paid. Any remaining funds are considered a sponsorship contribution to the NETLIPSE Network to support its activities. NETLIPSE is a not-for-profit organisation.

9. Who are the assessors?

An assessor team consists of four experienced and trained assessors, along with one trained coordinator/assessor. The lead assessor has a minimum of 10 years of practical experience and responsibility in major infrastructure projects. The other assessors also have substantial practical experience in delivering infrastructure projects. At least one local assessor is included in the team to help explain the project's local context and assist with any necessary translation. All assessors are fluent in English, independent from the project being assessed, and have successfully completed the IPAT assessor training. This training is specifically designed to teach potential IPAT assessors how to use and apply the IPAT.

10. How many people are involved in an IPAT Assessment?

The assessor team is made up of five people. During the site visit, the team discusses the IPAT themes with various individuals who bring different backgrounds and perspectives. It is the client's decision how many people they involve in the interviews. Typically, there are around 10 interviews, during which the assessor team speaks with approximately 20 people in total from the project team, stakeholders, and/or the client organisation. The interviews are held at the project location and usually involve more than one person at a time.

11. Not everyone in my project team speaks English, is this a problem?

This is not an issue. A local assessor is always assigned to the team, who speaks the local language, can provide translation if needed, and can explain contextual matters to the other assessors. Alternatively, a translator from the project organisation can be used during the interviews.

12. Does NETLIPSE Publish the IPAT Assessment Report?

The assessor team provides the assessment report to the client. It is entirely the client's decision whether to share the report with other parties or make it public. In some countries, local laws may require external reviews to be made public, but this varies by country. All assessors have signed confidentiality agreements and will not use any information provided during the IPAT assessment for any purpose other than the assessment itself, without the client's consent.

13. Does the client have any influence over the content of the final IPAT Assessment Report?

Approximately 2 to 3 weeks after the site visit, the assessor team shares the first draft of the assessment report with the client. The client has the opportunity to review this report for any inaccuracies or misunderstandings. Following the client's review, the assessor team finalises the assessment report and delivers it to the client.

14. How can I implement the results from an IPAT Assessment in my project?

The assessor team identifies the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement for each of the eight IPAT themes. When possible, these areas for improvement include helpful recommendations for the project. Many clients have informed us that discussing the findings from the IPAT assessor team with the project team has already led to valuable improvement activities. Some organisations record the improvement suggestions in their quality management improvement register to implement and track these activities. Others discuss the IPAT results in project department meetings, as the identified strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement can also benefit other ongoing or future projects.

15. What is the added value of the IPAT Assessment compared to the standard review systems that most client organisations already have in place?

An IPAT assessment is not a formal audit but rather a 'health check' of the project. It is conducted by and for public sector project managers and focuses on learning from one another. An IPAT Assessment often energises the team and encourages project members to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. During the assessment, we examine all aspects of a project, allowing us to confirm potential weak signals and identify new areas for improvement. Since the IPAT assessor team consists of assessors from different countries, they can offer your project team fresh insights and perspectives on your challenges. Unlike a traditional gate review, an IPAT assessment emphasises reflection, learning, and dialogue within the project team.

16. How is the project scored by the Assessor Team?

Each IPAT theme is scored by the assessor team to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the project organisation. A low score indicates a weakness, while a high score reflects strengths within the project organisation. The assessor team uses a scale from 1 (low) to 4 (high). The higher the score, the more likely the (sub)criteria contribute to successful project delivery. The assessors first score each theme individually, then discuss their findings together to reach a group score.

17. What do I get in the end?

The client receives an assessment report that presents the results of the assessment in detail. These results highlight the overall performance as well as the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement for each theme. The IPAT assessment report includes a combination of information from the background document, data gathered during interviews, and the analysis of the scores.

18. What kind of projects are suitable for an IPAT Assessment?

An IPAT assessment is suitable for large and medium-sized infrastructure projects. Since 2010, over 60 projects have been assessed across Europe.

19. Where can I find more information?

For more information, please contact the NETLIPSE management at info@netlipse.eu.