IPAT Questions & Answers 2020

1. What is the IPAT®?

The IPAT® (Infrastructure Project Assessment Tool) is a common tool for infrastructure projects in Europe that can be used for evaluating, monitoring and improving these projects. The objectives of the IPAT® are to assess 'the maturity' of a large infrastructure project, provide an indication to what extent a project delivery organisation is ready to enter its next project phase and to define strengths and areas for improvement for the project management organisation.

2. What is the aim of an IPAT Assessment?

The IPAT addresses how the Project Delivery Organisation (PDO) and Client/Sponsor (C/S) manage and plan to manage all relevant aspects of a large infrastructure project. The objectives of the IPAT are to assess the totality of management quality relating to the project, including plans to reach the agreed objectives and to implement the outputs (not just the physical construction). By doing so, an IPAT assessment highlights strengths and weaknesses in management and the realism of the project delivery plan for the whole project and specifically for the next project phase.

3. How was the IPAT developed?

The tool was designed by NETLIPSE members: people responsible for and involved in the delivery of large infrastructure projects in Europe. It is a practical tool based on international quality management principles that builds on the NETLIPSE 2006-2008 research results, namely best practices and lessons learnt in the management and organisation of large infrastructure projects in Europe. The IPAT was developed in 2008-2010 by the NETLIPSE network and revised and updated in 2018.

4. On which topics does an IPAT Assessment focus?

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

- Theme 1: Political Context
- Theme 2: Objectives, Purpose, Business Case (Value) and Scope
  - 2a. Objectives and Purpose
  - 2b. Business Case (financial feasibility)
  - 2c. Scope
- Theme 3: Stakeholder Engagement and Communication
  - 3a. Stakeholder Engagement
  - 3b. Stakeholder Communication
- Theme 4: Risk Management and Project Controls
  - 4a. Costs and Benefits
  - 4b. Planning
  - 4c. Risk (Opportunities and Threats) Management
- Theme 5: Organisation and Management
  - 5a. Organisation and Structure
  - 5b. Human Resources
  - 5c. Project Team and Culture
  - 5d. Knowledge Management

- Theme 6: Permits, Authorisations and Consents (PAC)
  - 6a. Identification and mapping of PACs
  - 6b. Management of all PACs
- Theme 7: Technology
  - 7a. Functional Specifications
  - 7b. Choice of Technology
- Theme 8: Contracting and Procurement
  - 8a. Contract Strategy
  - 8b. Procurement Strategy
  - 8c. Contract Management

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

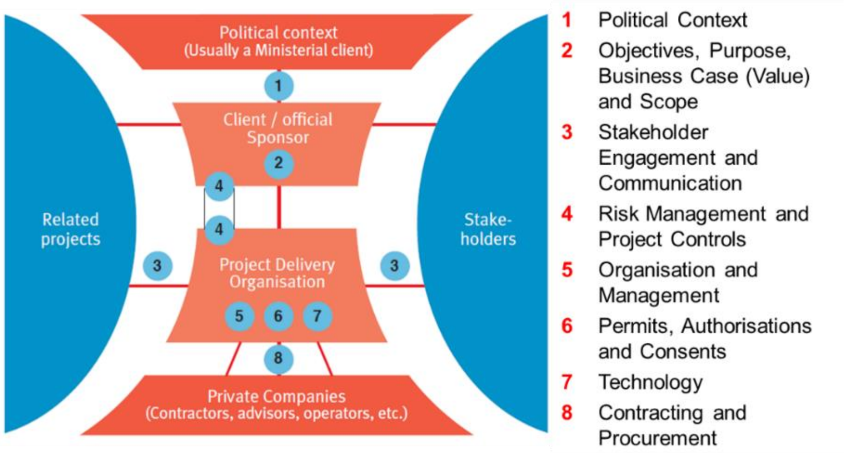

Figure 1: IPAT themes

5. What does an IPAT Assessment cost?

An IPAT Assessment costs €22.000. Approximately half of this amount covers the travel and sustenance expenditures of the five-person Assessor Team and the efforts of the Coordinator for coordination and organisational activities, administration and writing the Feedback Report. All Assessors work on an in kind basis, their man hours are not paid for. Any remaining budget is considered as a sponsorship contribution to the NETLIPSE Network to fund NETLIPSE activities. NETLIPSE is a not for profit organisation.

6. How long does an IPAT Assessment take and how much time does it cost me as client?

An IPAT Assessment takes about 2 to 3 months from beginning to delivery of the final Assessment Report. In the first weeks, the Client and Coordinator prepare the Site Visit and the Client prepares the Background Document (approximately 20 pages containing relevant project information). The Background Document is sent to the Assessor Team 2 weeks before the Site Visit at the latest. The Site Visit takes 3 days and includes a kick-off meeting with the Project Team (welcome, introduction and project presentation), a visit to the project location or construction site, approximately 10 interviews and an initial feedback session with the team. Two to three weeks after the Site Visit, the Assessor Team shares a draft Feedback Report with the client, which is finalised approximately a month after the site visit. The process is visualised in the figure at the right.

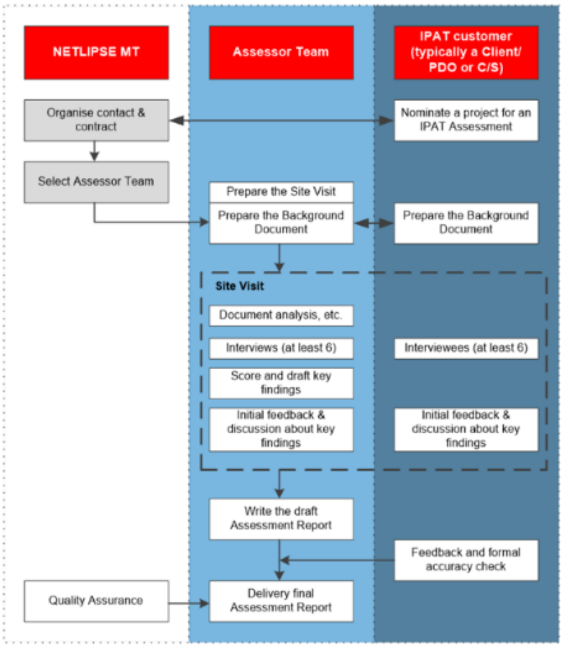

Figure 2: IPAT Assessment roles and responsibilities

[Click here to read the instructions for a Background Document]

7. Is a 3-day Site Visit enough to get a useful result for the Project Team?

Although three days seems a short time to investigate large and mega projects, the experienced Assessor Team forms a well-founded opinion on the project by interviewing a significant number of project team members, stakeholders and/or contractor (approximately 10 interviews with 20 persons). Because the Assessors themselves are responsible for the delivery of comparable large infrastructure projects, they quickly recognise strengths and areas for improvement. The Background Document provided by the Client beforehand, helps the Assessor Team to prepare for the interviews by understanding the project and its context.

8. How many and what kind of people are in the Assessor Team?

An Assessor Team exists of four experienced and trained Assessors and one trained Coordinator/Assessor. The Lead Assessor has at least 10 years of practical experience and responsibility within major infrastructure projects. The other assessors have significant practical experience in the delivery of infrastructure projects. At least one local assessor is assigned to the team. All assessors have a good working knowledge of the English language, are independent from the project to be assessed and have successfully passed the IPAT Assessor Training. The Assessor Training has been developed to train potential IPAT-assessors to use and apply the IPAT.

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

The Assessor Team exists of five persons. During the Site Visit, the Assessor Team discusses the IPAT themes with several people with different backgrounds and perspectives. It is up to the Client how many people they involve in the interviews. Normally there are approximately 10 interviews, in which the Assessor Teams speaks in total with approximately 20 people from the Project Team, stakeholders and/or Client organisation. Interviews take place at the project location and are often planned with more than 1 person at a time.

10. Not everybody in my Project Management Team speaks English, is this a problem?

This is not a problem. There is always a local assessor assigned to a the team who speaks the local language, can translate if necessary and who can provide an explanation to the other Assessors of contextual issues. An alternative is to use a translator from the project organisation during the interviews.

11. In which project phase should I do an IPAT Assessment?

The IPAT Assessment is applicable in all phases of a project: from initiation until after completion. The IPAT distinguishes seven project phases that are defined in terms of Milestones (M) that mark the start of the next project phase. Around these milestones it is most useful to apply an IPAT assessment. The project phases distinguished in the IPAT are:

1. M1: Initiation of the project
2. M2: Funding assembly
3. M3: Planning application, as a basis of land acquisition
4. M4: Tender
5. M5: Execution
6. M6: Test operations
7. M7: Operation

12. Do you publish the IPAT Assessment Report?

The Assessor Team delivers a Assessment Report to the client. It is completely up to the client if he or she wants to share the report with other parties or make it public. Sometimes local legislation in a country requires any outside reviews to be made public. This varies per country. The Assessors have all signed confidentiality agreements and will not use any of the information provided to them as a result of the IPAT assessment for other purposes than for the assessment without consent of the client.

13. Does the client have a say in the final Assessment Report?

Approximately 2-3 weeks after the Site Visit, the Assessor Team shares a first draft of the Assessment Report with the client. The client can review this report on inaccuracies and misunderstandings. After the review of the client, the Assessment Report is finalised by the Assessor Team and delivered to the client.

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

The Assessor Team formulates for each of the 8 IPAT themes the strengths of the project, weaknesses and areas for improvement. If possible, these areas for improvement include useful recommendations for the project. In many reviews the client organisation has let us know that the discussion with the project team on the findings of the IPAT Assessor Team are already valuable improvement activities. Some organisations transfer the improvement suggestions to their quality management improvement register to carry out and monitor improvement activities. Others, discuss IPAT results in project department meetings as formulated strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement are also useful for other or future projects.

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

An IPAT Assessment is not a formal audit, but a ‘health check’ of the project. It is executed by and for public sector Project Managers and focusses on learning from each other. An IPAT Assessment often gives energy to the team and stimulates a project team to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses. In an IPAT Assessment we look at all aspects of a project and can confirm possible weak signals and identify possible new areas for improvement. Because the IPAT Assessor Team consists of Assessors from different countries, they can provide your project team with new and 'fresh' insights and perspectives on your challenges. Compared to a traditional gate review, an IPAT Assessment focusses more on reflecting, learning and the conversation in and with the project team.

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

Each IPAT theme is scored by the Assessor Team in order to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the project organisation. This is reflected in a low score - weakness of the project organisation - and a high score - strengths of the project organisation. The Assessor Team scores on an 1 (low) to 4 (high) point scale. The higher the score, the more likely the (sub)criteria contributes to a successful project delivery. The Assessors first score individually, then discuss the themes and come to a group score.

17. What do I get in the end?

The client receives an Assessment Report in which the assessment results are presented in detail. The results indicate the overall performance as well as the strong and weaker points and areas for improvement per theme. The IPAT Assessment Report contains a combination of the information collected in the Background Document, the data collected during the interviews and the analysis of the scoring. It contains the following elements:

1. Organisation and Stakeholders;
2. Project Facts and Figures;
3. Project History;
4. Assessment results: strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement per theme;
5. Project Summary and Conclusion.

[Click here to see an example report] and [Click here to see another example report]

18. Which kinds of projects are suitable for an IPAT Assessment ?

An IPAT Assessment is suitable for large and middle-sized infrastructure projects. Since 2010, more than 30 projects have been assessed in Europe.