New Transport Appraisal Framework – NTA Summary Bulletin

What is the Transport Appraisal Framework?

The Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF) provides appraisal and implementation guidance that aims to promote investment in the transport system which meets the needs of society, fulfils strategic policy objectives, and delivers value for money to develop a common framework for appraising transport investments and was originally developed in accordance with the Public Spending Code (PSC).

The TAF replaces the Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes. Through a Department of Transport circular dated on 13th June 2023, the TAF took effect, and it should be followed by Sponsoring Agencies when submitting relevant documentation to the NTA where the NTA is the Approving Authority. The PSC was replaced by the Infrastructure Guidelines (IGs) in December 2023 and the TAF was updated in July 2024 to ensure alignment with the IGs. The TAF should be applied in conjunction with the IGs and NTA Project Approval Guidelines (2024).

Main Changes from the Common Appraisal Framework to the TAF

- The TAF comprises ten separate, but interrelated, modules:
    1. Introduction
    2. Roles, Responsibilities and the Project Lifecycle
    3. Project/Programme Outline Documents
    4. Preliminary Business Cases
    5. Detailed Business Case and Procurement Strategy
    6. Final Business Cases
    7. Detailed Guidance on Appraisal Techniques
    8. Detailed Guidance on Appraisal Parameters
    9. Project Implementation, Review and Ex-Post Evaluation
    10. Key Definitions and Useful Resources.

- The threshold for Government decision on major programmes has increased from €100m to €200m.

- The TAF abolishes Decision Gate 0 (Strategic Assessment Report) and replaces it with a Project/ Programme Outline Document for schemes over €20m. Where a Strategic Assessment Report was at an advanced stage of development prior to the introduction of the TAF, it is not required to produce a separate Project/ Programme Outline Document.

- The TAF introduces a Longlist Assessment Report as an interim stage between the Project/ Programme Outline Document and the Preliminary Business Case for major projects only. The NTA deem the requirements of the Longlist Assessment Report as met through the 'Option Selection Report' (per Gateway 2 of the NTA's Project Approval Guidelines) and as such, a separate document in respect of the Longlist Assessment Report, is not required.

- For the option selection process, while alignment with TAF appraisal assessment criteria may be beneficial, alternative evaluation criteria may be more appropriate to use for this phase in order to facilitate adequate comparative consideration of options. However, the subsequent appraisal of the selected option at later stages of the project's development and Public Spending Code process should be based on seven criteria set out in Module 7 'Detailed Guidance on Appraisal Techniques'.

- The TAF introduces a National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) Assessment table to assess the proposal's policy alignment. The NIFTI is the Department of Transport's high-level strategic framework to support consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport. The NIFTI sets out four investment priorities: decarbonisation, protection and renewal, mobility of people and goods in urban areas, and enhanced regional and rural connectivity. Sponsoring Agencies must demonstrate a scheme's alignment with at least one of these priorities.

- The TAF updates the guidance on the use of Multi-Criteria Analysis to filter a longlist of scheme options to a shortlist for detailed appraisal.

- The TAF sets out a Transport and Accessibility Appraisal framework, which is designed to capture impacts that are challenging to monetise and assess using traditional appraisal techniques, in order to highlight qualitative benefits.

- The TAF increases the threshold of economic appraisal to apply Multi-Criteria Analysis from €20m to €30m.

- The TAF provides detailed economic appraisal methodologies including the Transport and Accessibility Appraisal (TAA), a high-level Cost Effectiveness Analysis, and a Cost-Benefit Analysis for schemes with total estimated costs over €30m.

- The TAF updates existing parameters with the new base year (2016).

- The TAF introduces four new parameters to be used in the Cost-Benefit Analysis: journey time reliability, journey quality, electric vehicle fuel consumption, and cycling journey quality.

Next Steps for TAF Adoption by Sponsoring Agencies

- ❑ Progress projects and programmes in line with the requirements of the TAF, while noting that for major projects, the requirements of the Longlist Assessment Report are deemed to be addressed through the manner described in the previous section, and as such, a separate document in respect of the Longlist Assessment Report is not required;

- ❑ Progress projects and programmes in line the NTA's updated Project Approval Guidelines which take account of relevant aspects of the TAF and IGs;

- ❑ Prepare economic and financial appraisals based on the thresholds and requirements set out in the TAF;

- ❑ Appraise the scheme based on seven criteria set out in Module 7 'Detailed Guidance on Appraisal Techniques';

- ❑ Apply appraisal parameters in line with updated guidance and requirements set out in Module 8 'Detailed Guidance on Appraisal Parameters'; and

- ❑ The applicable deliverables, decision gates, reviews, and approvals required are set out in the 'Transport Project Lifecycle' chart below.
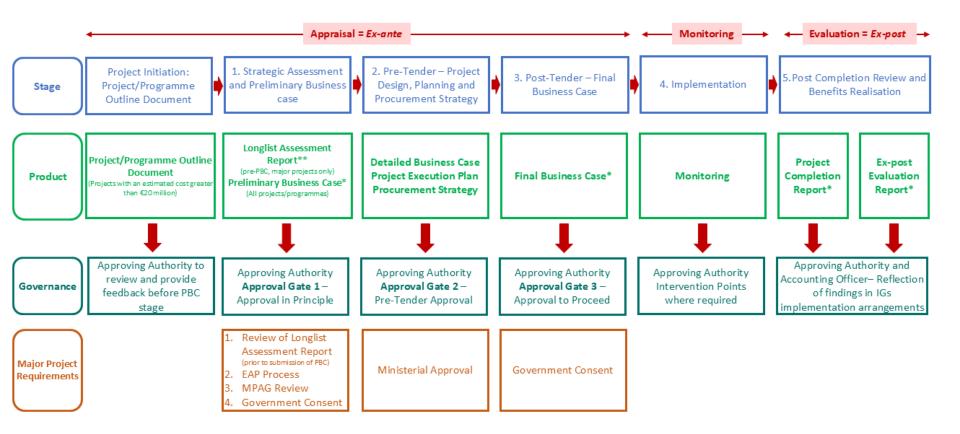
Key Links

- Transport Appraisal Framework (https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c9038-transport-appraisal-framework-taf/)

- The Infrastructure Guidelines (https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/e8040-infrastructure-guidelines/)

- NTA Project Approval Guidelines (https://www.nationaltransport.ie/publications/project-approval-guidelines/)

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Transport Project Lifecycle

This diagram largely reflects the Transport Project Lifecycle in Figure 1 of TAF Module 2. Minor amendments were made for the NTA's elaboration on the aspect of the project/programme stages of the TAF and PSC.

	Appraisal = *Ex-ante*				Monitoring	Evaluation = *Ex-post*	
Stage	Project Initiation: Project/Programme Outline Document	1. Strategic Assessment and Preliminary Business case	2. Pre-Tender – Project Design, Planning and Procurement Strategy	3. Post-Tender – Final Business Case	4. Implementation	5. Post Completion Review and Benefits Realisation	
Product	Project/Programme Outline Document (Projects with an estimated cost greater than €20 million)	Longlist Assessment Report** (pre-PBC, major projects only) Preliminary Business Case* (All projects/programmes)	Detailed Business Case Project Execution Plan Procurement Strategy	Final Business Case*	Monitoring	Project Completion Report*	Ex-post Evaluation Report*
Governance	Approving Authority to review and provide feedback before PBC stage	Approving Authority **Approval Gate 1** – Approval in Principle	Approving Authority **Approval Gate 2** – Pre-Tender Approval	Approving Authority **Approval Gate 3** – Approval to Proceed	Approving Authority Intervention Points where required	Approving Authority and Accounting Officer– Reflection of findings in IGs implementation arrangements	
Major Project Requirements		1. Review of Longlist Assessment Report (prior to submission of PBC) 2. EAP Process 3. MPAG Review 4. Government Consent	Ministerial Approval	Government Consent			

* Deliverables Requiring Publication

** The NTA deem the requirements of the LAR to be met through the 'Option Selection Report' (per Gateway 2 of the NTA's Project Approval Guidelines) and as such, a separate document in respect of the LAR, is not required.