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BRIEFING:PROCUREMENT

The new infrastructure procurement routemap: a global guide to improving delivery capability

The UK government's unique new 'infrastructure procurement routemap' sets out best practice for sponsors, clients and supply chains on major infrastructure projects. Denise Bower of the University of Leeds and Alan Couzens of Infrastructure UK say it has the potential for worldwide application.

In 2010 the UK government's advisory unit Infrastructure UK published an infrastructure cost review that identified potential efficiency savings of at least 15%, worth £2 billion to £3 billion a year (HM Treasury, 2010). A subsequent 3-year implementation plan set a target of achieving these savings by 2015.

However, the inability of infrastructure project sponsors and clients to select and implement appropriate procurement strategies, together with wastage and inefficiency in the procurement processes, have been consistently identified as key areas for reform.

Infrastructure UK, the University of Leeds, the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and the Infrastructure Client Working Group thus jointly launched an 'infrastructure procurement routemap' in January 2013 to help improve delivery outcomes (HM Treasury, 2013). It brings together a set of assessment tools in an integrated process aimed at improving the capability of sponsors and clients to plan, execute and operate major infrastructure projects.

Aimed at senior staff

The routemap is aimed primarily at sponsors (e.g. spending departments) and client organisations (procuring bodies) that deliver major projects and programmes, long-term capital investment plans and publicly procured mega-projects. It needs both sponsors and clients to adopt the process principles at a senior level, and for staff engaged with it to be given responsibility for successful delivery, to maximise its potential. Key roles within these organisations are often populated by ICE members and fellows.

The routemap encapsulates a common-sense approach in a simple set of tools. It provides an objective assessment of the

complexity of the organisation and delivery environment, and also of the capability of the sponsor, client and supply chain. The identification of any misalignment between critical success factors, key risks and opportunities can be identified, allowing sponsors and clients to make more informed procurement decisions.

The routemap is needed because no single procurement model can be said to provide the optimum outcome for the wide range of types of infrastructure projects and programmes that exist. The effectiveness of procurement decision-making is based on selecting the correct approach to risk allocation and understanding and managing the multitude of factors that affect the complexity of the delivery environment, particularly in the infrastructure sector.

Identifying skills gaps

Choosing a procurement strategy with little or no understanding of capability requirements will rarely result in an efficient outcome. Sponsors and clients must therefore recognise their own strengths and limitations, identify skills gaps and, more importantly, implement an improvement programme before embarking on complex procurement and delivery planning activities.

The routemap is not intended to be prescriptive; rather it is a reflective process. It does not lead to a single solution but ensures that the right questions are asked at the critical junctures in the project or programme life cycle, and that the key risks attributed to the delivery approach are identified.

Infrastructure UK and the University of Leeds have unlocked an approach to informed decision-making that points to a step-change in the delivery of



London's £14.8 billion Crossrail is one of several projects to have trialled the new infrastructure procurement routemap, which is designed to achieve significant savings

major projects. The routemap promises enormous benefits, not just in cost savings but also in ease of delivery, long-term collaborations and knowledge transfer, up-skilling, reduced tendering costs and a landscape that promotes innovation.

Worldwide application

Trial application of the routemap on London's Crossrail project, the Environment Agency's Thames estuary project, High Speed 2 railway, London Underground's station stabilisation programme and Anglian Water's infrastructure investment strategy have demonstrated the potential for significant savings. Further organisations planning to use it include Network Rail, Heathrow Airport and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

References

- HM Treasury (2010) *Infrastructure Cost Review*. HM Treasury, London, UK. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-cost-review> (accessed 21/06/2013).
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