



IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGE 2 - DESCRIPTION AND GUIDANCE

MAINTAINING INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS AND ORGANISING DECISION- MAKING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

URBACT Implementation Networks

This Guidance has been designed primarily for the URBACT III Implementation Networks but is relevant for all European cities implementing Integrated Strategies for Urban Development.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The URBACT Implementation Challenges

The URBACT Implementation Challenges were part of the core design of the Implementation Networks, providing seven thematic areas to guide cities in exploring the difficulties commonly found during implementation of integrated action plans. The seven Implementation Challenges are:

- > IC1 - Ensuring the integrated approach in the delivery of the strategy & their related actions/projects
- > IC2 - Maintaining involvement of local stakeholders and organising decision-making for delivery
- > IC3 - Setting up efficient indicators & monitoring systems to measure performance
- > IC4 - Moving from strategy to operational action-plan
- > IC5 - Setting up Public Private Partnerships for delivery
- > IC6 - Designing smart public procurement frameworks
- > IC7 - Enhancing funding of urban policies by exploring financial innovation

The first three Implementation Challenges are deemed to be compulsory for all cities to consider, on the basis that they are common to any implementation project. All the Implementation Challenges are interlinked to some degree, but with the four compulsory Implementation Challenges having a significant degree of cross-over and interplay between them.

Implementation Challenge 4, about moving from a strategy to an operational plan, was also considered as a prerequisite to any kind of implementation. A specific session was delivered to the URBACT networks for this challenge.

1.2. Implementation Challenge 2: Maintaining involvement of local stakeholders and organising decision-making for delivery

Implementation Challenge 2 is concerned with the relationships and roles of the different stakeholders during the implementation of policies and action plans:

Maintaining involvement of local stakeholders and organising decision-making for delivery

Partnership involves the bringing together of a variety of actors – from public, private and third sectors – in the URBACT local group. Different units in the same municipality, but also the regional and national level can be included.

Participation is also the engagement of local citizens in policy-making and delivery, whether in their role as service users, entrepreneurs, residents, tenants etc. Enhancing participation, organising decision-making in this participatory way and maintaining it in the delivery phase is a key challenge to be addressed by the network.

1.3. Acknowledge links with other Implementation Challenges

The Implementation Challenges describe the broad areas of difficulties that cities can face when implementing action plans. In many cases, it is difficult or impossible to successfully tackle these challenges in isolation; there is much cross-over between the challenges in terms of their causes and in terms of the ways of overcoming them. Tools that address the specifics of one of the Implementation Challenges will often also help to address parts of other Implementation Challenges too.

The specific ways in which the Implementation Challenges present themselves will vary from city to city. Responses must therefore be tailored to the local situation to be successful. That said, there are a wide range of tools, methods and skills that can be used as the starting point for tackling the specific Implementation Challenges that you face within your city when implementing your plans, and these can be applied in most contexts.

2. The Nature of the Challenge

2.1. Stakeholders and Implementation

Implementation of integrated action plans requires systems in place to support the effective joint delivery of projects. This includes the engagement, participation and awareness of a wide range of stakeholders and other delivery partners in addition to the creation and maintenance of partnership groups or governance structures that involve the various parties in the most appropriate ways, allowing decision making and project direction to happen in a proportionate and timely fashion.

The specific distinction between Stakeholders and Delivery Partners is an important one.

Stakeholders is a broad term, referring to any individual, group or organisation that has some level of interest or role in something - in this case the implementation of an action plan, or the results it is intended to produce. There are many different types of stakeholders, and various methods and techniques for categorising and analysing them.

Delivery Partners refers to those individuals or organisations who have some direct role to play in the implementation of an action plan – i.e. they will be responsible for, or will themselves carry out, certain agreed actions that are required for the successful implementation of the project. This “Joint Delivery of Projects” is crucial if integrated policies and action plans are to be implemented successfully.

Delivery Partners can also be considered as Stakeholders in the project – they normally have an interest (a “stake”) in the project. But they should be treated as a distinct group, as they play a very different (active) role compared with for example, those people who are simply interested in the results.

However, it is clear that not all Stakeholders will be Delivery Partners i.e. not all those people with an interest in the project will be active in its delivery.

Understanding the different relationships that exist between different stakeholders and the different roles they play in the implementation phase is a major part of this challenge.

2.2. Politics and Critical Stakeholders

There is always a challenge in city administrations in engaging and managing Political stakeholders during an implementation phase of an action plan. Politicians have different roles and priorities to officials and these are often more noticeable during the implementation phase, with the focus being more on a level of detail that isn't typically in the Political domain. Communication about progress is not often crafted in a way that relates to the impact on Political considerations, and hence messages are often not well understood or well received.

In many city administrations, the nature of the role means that policy officers often work in the political arena than project officers do. Consequently, there is often a lesser understanding of the nuances of working in a Political context amongst a delivery team, which can lead to difficulties with managing and engaging Political stakeholders effectively. This can also be true if working with partners that are non-

political organisations. It is a common oversight to (wrongly) assume that organisations working with or near to city administrations have the right skills and understanding of how to operate in a Political environment and the effect of certain comments, communications or actions on the key Political stakeholders.

Similar challenges can also be experienced when the importance of critical / VIP stakeholders is not universally recognised by all partners. Whilst the subtleties of stakeholder management in this area are not as likely to be unfamiliar as with Political stakeholders, there are still difficulties encountered when one or more partner doesn't recognise the importance of certain stakeholders or fails to manage their relationship with them appropriately.

VIPs and Political stakeholders are critical to any implementation project. Keeping them onside is essential and can be challenging, taking much time and resource.

2.3. Community and Citizen Stakeholders

Truly collaborative working and decision making takes time and effort to set up and manage. Projects that have a high level of direct community or citizen involvement often require enormous effort due to the high volumes of contact and wide range of views and working styles to reconcile. Expectations of what the results should be can often be highly personalised or localised and reconciling these conflicting priorities and expectations can be challenging and time consuming. Failure to allocate enough time to this can quickly result in stakeholders feeling disengaged or ignored.

Action plans that have been developed with stakeholder involvement can make it easier when it comes to implementation. However, the nature of the way projects are delivered means that there are still challenges along the way as plans begin to be implemented and issues start to arise. Correcting such issues sometimes means compromise on results or on other parts of the plan. If community and citizen stakeholders are not directly involved in the delivery, then they can feel that operational decisions about the delivery are taken without reflecting their opinions. This in turn risks developing into conflict and disengagement, potentially active opposition.

Communities and citizens are often the “users” or “customers” of the action plan i.e. the plan is intended to improve the lives of people within the city. Any changes to the plan therefore often affects them most directly as it impacts the quality of their lives most directly. There is a challenge in keeping communities actively involved in decision making at all stages as it takes much time and resource to do so. When the pressure to make progress and deliver results is high, management of these stakeholder groups an easier area to spend less time on when there are limited resources.

Working directly with communities and citizens alongside a variety of other (organisation-based) stakeholders can be challenging, as expectations and ways of working can be very different. Where citizens have a high personal stake in the success of a project, they will often have strong views on the way it is delivered but it can be a challenge to have enough time and resource to engage them fully.

2.4. Planning vs Delivery in Partnership

Another important aspect to understand is that the partnerships that exist for the joint *planning* of policies or action plans have a different role to partnerships that are formed to jointly *deliver* those action plans.

Many of the same stakeholders may be involved in the delivery of the projects and activities which make up an action plan. However, such involvement should not be not a given. Different roles, responsibilities, skills, governance etc. are required within the partnership during the implementation phase compared to the planning phase. Different people will often need to be involved in the implementation.

It follows that the exact composition of such partnerships should and will change.

Recognising that the implementation phase is different to the planning phase is often overlooked. Identifying how partnerships need to change and then successfully changing the nature of such partnerships ready for implementation is a common challenge.

2.5. Governance for Delivery

It is important to recognise that governance and decision-making structures are very different during the implementation phase compared to the planning phase. A common (and often costly) error is to leave the original group unchanged as work moves from planning into implementation. At the very least, the exact composition of the partnership and specific focus and skills of any ULG or governance boards should be reviewed for suitability for the implementation phase.

In some cases, a continuation of the exact same partnership and terms of reference for its operation may be suitable. But in the majority of cases, the differing role that any partnership groups will need to take during implementation will necessitate some changes to their terms of reference and composition, if they are to be effective. In some cases, an entirely new structure and composition will be required.

The governance structures needed for delivery have a different focus. They are more about the direction of activity, tracking progress, managing risks, taking corrective action when problems occur and pro-active removal of “barriers” that will negatively affect the project. This includes making decisions about committing resources, prioritisation of activities, resolving resource conflicts and dealing with conflicting priorities. The skills required to be part of such a governance body and the skills to *manage* it as a leader are different to what is needed during policy and strategy development. Good implementation takes time and requires direction and focus.

Project sponsors often do not understand the distinction between planning and delivery. Some individuals may have a valid role in phases. However, that role will almost certainly need to be different in each phase. There may be resistance to changing stakeholder groups or partnership structures as you move from planning into implementation, both from lack of understanding and personal/political interest in remaining in a role that has status or responsibility for an action plan.

Setting up partnership structures for delivery of action plans requires changes from those in place during the planning phase. Getting the right structures in place can be difficult.

3. Tackling this Challenge in practice

3.1. Understanding Your Local Conditions

How the Implementation Challenges present themselves in practice varies from city to city. There are common themes and it is easy to draw strong comparisons between the challenges experienced in different cities. However, the specific circumstances of each specific challenge will vary, even if the root causes are systematic and have comparable situations in other cities.

City officials therefore need to understand exactly what these Challenges “look like” in reality, in their local context. This assessment requires a good degree of awareness and honesty about the local situation to be of value. Challenges can only be overcome where they are acknowledged and understood.

Take the time to be specific about what this Implementation Challenge means for your project, in your city.

3.2. Knowing Your Plan and Your Capabilities

In terms of Implementation Challenge 2: Maintaining involvement of local stakeholders and organising decision-making for delivery, below is a checklist of common things to look for and consider. This list is not exhaustive. You should also consider your own analysis, based on your own knowledge and experience.

IC2 Checklist

✓	Do you know who all your stakeholders are?
✓	Are they aware of the project? Do they understand and support it?
✓	Have you carried out any active analysis of them?
✓	Do you have a Stakeholder Management/Engagement plan?
✓	Have you allocated people from the project team responsible for managing the various stakeholders/relationships?
✓	Are there any stakeholders with conflicting views, expectations or requirements?
✓	Are your stakeholders all clear about their own roles and responsibilities and the roles of others?
✓	Do you have a governance structure that includes all the main stakeholders that should be involved?
✓	Is there a clear scheme of responsibility and agreement on how project decisions will be made during implementation?
✓	Has there been any review and resulting change of governance structures in preparing for Implementation?
✓	Is there a formal mechanism for coordinating the activities of different delivery partners?



IC2 Checklist

✓	Is there a clear vision for the action plan, with specific objectives, defined results and results indicators?
✓	Do all stakeholders understand that vision and share it? Is there a common understanding of the specific objectives?
✓	Are the progress measures and output measures as well as mechanisms for monitoring them, that you will use to keep track of the projects and identify any emerging problems?
✓	Do you know how you will communicate progress to stakeholders?
✓	Are there any different requirements in terms of type and frequency of communication?
✓	Is there clear leadership for the implementation that will guide stakeholders through the more difficult parts of the implementation process?
✓	Are you clear about which skills will be required in order to delivery your implementation plan in relation to the above checklist items?
✓	Do all the Delivery Partners have the required skills to the required levels? If not, what is your development plan to ensure they acquire or develop those skills? (e.g. through capacity building, & training, external input, hiring new people etc.)
✓	Is the management of stakeholders and monitoring of all the above items included as part of your project implementation plan? Has a suitable level of resource been allocated to this management and monitoring activity?

3.3. Continued Focus on Delivery

From the checklist in 3.2 au-dessus you should have a good idea about where you may still have further work to do in terms of being ready to overcome this Implementation Challenge. However, even with the above checklist items covered, there is a still a need to continually monitor and adjust things all the way through the implementation process. Good preparation and implementation planning is the first part; acting on that implementation plan is the essential second part but is very often omitted!

Good Implementation isn't achieved by good planning alone. The right activities need to happen at the right time throughout the implementation process to keep things on track. Constant tracking and adjustments are usually required and this needs to be resourced. (See also guidance on IC3 – Performance Management)

3.4. Tools, Methods and Skills

There are a wide range of tools & methods and adopted good practice that can be used as the basis for your Delivery Approach – how you are going to overcome your local Implementation Challenges. You need to understand which of these capabilities are needed within you're Delivery Approach, which of those capabilities you already have (either in full, or in part), which capabilities need to be improved,

strengthened or developed further, and which capabilities you do not have and need to adopt or develop before you can use them.

Many of the elements needed for your Delivery Approach will be in use in one or more of your network partners already. Learning from others as part of your Transnational Exchange is one of the best ways to develop and improve your own local Delivery Approach. Other practices are well documented and in common use across Europe and can be researched and adopted locally, either with support from your Implementation Network partners or in isolation.

Make best use of what you have; have a plan for acquiring what you lack. Do not ignore gaps in areas of capability that are crucial for your implementation to be successful.

A few simple tools are included below as a starting point for consideration when designing your Delivery Approach in relation to this Implementation Challenge. As noted previous, some of these tools will also support overcoming other Implementation Challenges. Be mindful of interdependencies between the challenges when designing your Delivery Approach. Watch out for unintended consequences and linked opportunities!

Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis

Successful stakeholder involvement is pivotal to success and closely linked to the above challenge regarding an integrated approach. From the outset, a clear stakeholder map, a proper understanding and a defined engagement & management plan for the stakeholders is critical to successful implementation.

This should be done first at the beginning of the planning phase, but repeating the exercise as you move towards implementation is equally important, as roles and influence will change as you move to implementation.

The URBACT Stakeholder Ecosystem mapping tools was shared at the URBACT Summer University 2016 in Rotterdam, and the [Participants Learning Kit](#) from the event is available on the URBACT website: <http://urbact.eu/was-urbact-summer-university-2016>. The Participants Learning Kit contains the basic stakeholder mapping tool on page 49.

The older URBACT Local Support Group Toolkit also includes a follow on tool to map the relative interest and influence each stakeholder has on a project or action plan. This can be found at: http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/ulsg_stakeholders_analysis.docx via the URBACT Local Groups page on the URBACT website: <http://urbact.eu/urbact-local-groups>.

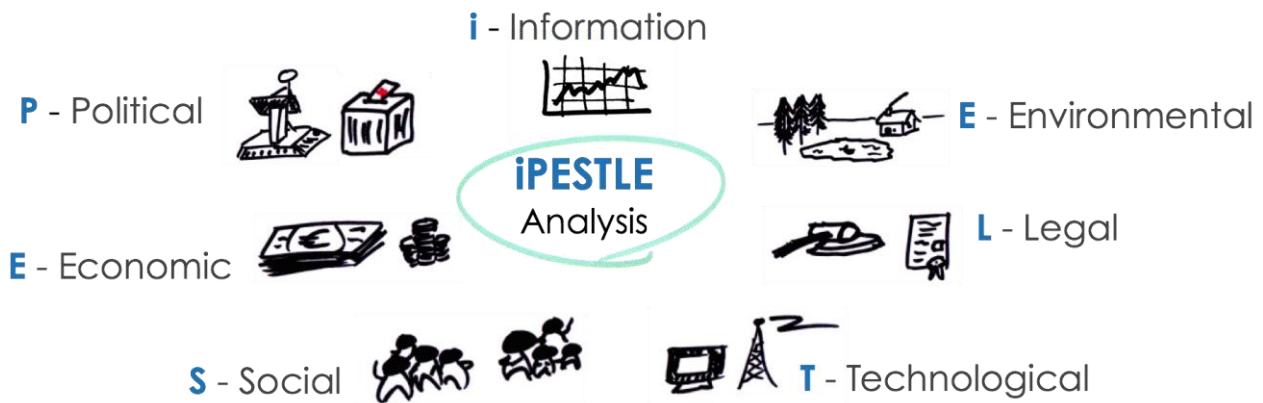
For more detailed analysis of stakeholders, Empathy Mapping can be a powerful tool. This is a more detailed process but can provide highly insightful results, particularly when the results are validated and updated with the local stakeholders involved. It is a simple enough method to use and there are many examples listed online from a simple web search: <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Empathy+Mapping>

Understanding Your Local Conditions

Understanding your local conditions is helpful to see the context in which you and your stakeholders are operating. Understanding the context your local delivery partners are working with gives you a good insight

into what might be important to them and what challenges they may be facing too. It also helps you to see which options for solutions / methods might be open to you and which will not be.

The iPESTLE method is a simple tool to help you structure this process. The letters in iPESTLE stand for seven ‘headings’ to look at when assessing your local context. These are information, Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental.



Think about which of these areas cause the Implementation Challenges you face in your city and be specific about which things within each heading have which effects. Also think about the conditions that make things easy – where are the opportunities you could make use of to help your implementation? Think about the areas you do not normally consider – what new insights or opportunities does this give? For the conditions that cause implementation barriers, which of the conditions could you alter and how?

Project and Programme Management Methodologies

There are huge numbers of different project management methodologies, and even more tools to help you use those methodologies effectively. Choosing the right methodology is dependent on the type of project but also on the local circumstances, city customs and legislation, as well as skills and abilities of the project team and decision makers.

However, whilst it can be difficult to choose one, that should not be a reason for having no structure to your project. If there is no clear methodology, it is very difficult to keep track of your project, spot when things are going off-track and make decisions in a timely fashion. It is also very difficult to communicate with delivery partners about how you intend to work. If you all work differently (or with no structure at all) then this greatly increases the chance of project failure.

There are simple methodologies and complicated ones. If you currently have nothing in place, look for simple methods and tools that will help you to introduce some structure to your projects. If you already have a methodology in place in your city, make sure you follow it properly and help your delivery partners to work in a way that compliments your way of working, ideally adopting the same methodology.

Whichever you choose something simple and light-touch or detailed and thorough, just make sure you do choose one and follow it.

Communication of Progress

If you have a robust results framework in place as part of your action plan and implementation plan (based on a clear logic model for your action plan and resulting change) you can use this to communicate interim results and outputs as progress towards your intended long-term result. For results that are not immediately obvious (i.e. results which take months or years to be seen) the intended result may well not be achieved during the project lifetime. Therefore, being able to communicate interim progress is critical to maintain support from stakeholders. They need to be able to see that things are going as intended, even if the final results are not yet visible.

Using your results framework and output measures can help to demonstrate that you are on track as planned. Such a framework is also a useful tool for communicating the intended results of your action plan in the first place – if clearly defined, it can be used to illustrate the logical path through the actions to the outputs from those actions and through to the intended results. This helps to gain full understanding from stakeholders that is common across your whole stakeholder group.

Once your stakeholders understand that path, you can use the same framework to demonstrate progress along it. People will be more willing to acknowledge progress that they recognise from a plan they understand and support. This also means they will be more confident to communicate that progress to others because they have the clear understanding of the plan and how the achievements are contributing to the intended result. This is particularly important when you rely on others to communicate with key stakeholders.

