Rural Infrastructure Investment Course: Prioritising, Funding and Delivering Roads, Water and Power

23 – 27 November 2026
Vienna

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Programme Summary

Rural infrastructure investment is the subject of this one-week training course for development agency directors, rural programme managers and senior officials, ending in a rural infrastructure investment plan for one programme. Funds for rural roads, water and power are spread across many villages, and projects are often chosen by request rather than by need. The programme moves from needs assessment and prioritisation to funding, delivery arrangements for small works and community involvement, then to maintenance and results monitoring. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on rural infrastructure investment to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Rural roads, water supply, sanitation, power and digital access serve people who live far from the centres where budgets are decided. Many small works, spread over wide areas, are hard to supervise and easy to leave unmaintained. Agencies that rank needs openly, fund the whole life of each asset and track results can show funders what their investment achieved and where it still falls short.

- Investment Targeting: Improves when needs and benefits are ranked by shared criteria.
- Delivery Cost: Falls when small works are packaged and procured in a planned way.
- Asset Life: Extends when maintenance duties and funds are agreed before handover.

Principles and Evidence Base

- UN Sustainable Development Goals: Frame Goal 6 on water and sanitation, Goal 7 on energy and Goal 9 on infrastructure, applied in Sessions 1 and 2 to needs and priorities.
- Logical Framework Approach: Links inputs, outputs and results, applied in Sessions 3 and 4 to programme design and indicators.
- ISO 21502: Gives guidance on project management, applied in Sessions 3 and 5 to delivery arrangements and the programme plan.

Intended Participants

- Development agency directors who decide where rural funds are placed.
- Rural programme managers who deliver dispersed works across many villages.
- Senior government officials who set rural investment policy and budgets.
- Finance and planning leads who prepare and defend funding proposals.

Typical settings include development agencies, rural ministries, regional authorities and utilities.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose rural needs across roads, water, sanitation, power and digital access.
2. Participants will be able to prioritise rural investments by shared criteria and available funds.
3. Participants will be able to evaluate funding sources and their conditions.
4. Participants will be able to design delivery and procurement arrangements for dispersed small works.
5. Participants will be able to construct a results framework with community involvement and maintenance duties.
6. Participants will be able to justify a rural infrastructure investment plan to a funder.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Rural Infrastructure Investment Foundations

What do rural communities need, and what does the programme aim to change?

- UN Sustainable Development Goals Mapping
- Rural Needs Assessment Guide
- Village Service Gap Profile
- Stakeholder Interest Map
- Rural Access and Connectivity Review

Day 2: Priorities and Funding Sources

Which investments come first, and who pays for them?

- Prioritisation Scoring Matrix
- Cost and Benefit Screening Sheet
- Funding Source Comparison
- Co-Financing Structure Outline
- Whole-Life Funding Plan

Day 3: Programme Design and Delivery Arrangements

How is a programme of small, dispersed works designed and bought?

- Logical Framework Matrix
- Works Packaging Options
- Small Contractor Procurement Approach
- Delivery Schedule and Supervision Plan
- ISO 21502 Planning Review

Day 4: Communities, Maintenance and Results

How do communities, upkeep and monitoring keep benefits in place?

- Community Participation Plan
- Operation and Maintenance Agreement
- Maintenance Fund Model
- Results Indicator Set
- Field Monitoring Report Format

Day 5: Rural Infrastructure Investment Plan for One Programme

Do the earlier tools combine into one plan a funder can approve?

- Applying the Session 1 Rural Needs Assessment Guide
- Testing the Session 2 Prioritisation Scoring Matrix
- Checking the Session 3 Logical Framework Matrix
- Rehearsing the Session 4 Results Indicator Set
- Completing the Rural Infrastructure Investment Plan

Methodology

The programme uses a structured exercise built on prepared case material for two regions, one with scattered farming villages and one with remote settlements, each with needs data, cost estimates, funding offers, community requests and maintenance records. Participants work in groups, challenge each other's rankings and defend their plan to peers acting as a funder.

- Suggested activity: Ranking twenty village requests when funds cover only six.
- Suggested activity: Packaging small road and water works into contracts that local firms can bid for.
- Suggested activity: Writing a maintenance agreement that a village committee can keep.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a rural infrastructure investment plan for one programme. It holds a needs and priorities summary, a funding approach, a delivery and procurement outline, a community and maintenance arrangement and a results framework. The plan is used at work to brief a funder, to guide programme teams and to review progress at fixed intervals.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is a training programme on rural infrastructure investment suitable for officials without an engineering background?

Yes. Rural infrastructure investment is taught through prepared cases and templates. It assumes you plan, fund or oversee rural programmes, but needs no earlier work in engineering or procurement.

Which standards and frameworks does rural infrastructure investment rest on?

Rural infrastructure investment rests on the UN Sustainable Development Goals for direction, the logical framework approach for results, and ISO 21502 for project management, each applied to prepared cases.

How is the plan from rural infrastructure investment used at work?

You use the rural infrastructure investment plan to brief your funder, guide programme teams in delivery, and review results and upkeep at fixed intervals.

How does rural infrastructure investment differ from a programme on road design?

Rural infrastructure investment covers needs, priorities, funding, delivery arrangements and results across roads, water and power, while a road design programme concentrates on the technical design of road structures.