

Article

Exploring Briefing Processes across Mature Markets of Public–Private Partnership (PPP) Projects: Comparative Insights and Important Considerations

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Abstract: The primary objective of this research paper is to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the process of developing briefs for Public–Private Partnership (PPP) projects. The study aims to outline the fundamental stages, standard processes, and critical decision points involved in this process. This is achieved through a comparative analysis of briefing frameworks used in three countries that are among the top in the PPP Market Maturity chart: The United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. The paper discusses the stages and decision points within these countries' briefing processes, highlighting their challenges, similarities, and differences. It emphasizes the fundamental role of effective communication and coordination in PPP projects, which involve multiple stakeholders. By examining these interconnected activities and analyzing the phases, stages, and key processes constituting the briefing process, the study provides valuable insights into the PPP briefing processes in these nations. The paper concludes by proposing a conceptual process framework for brief development in PPP projects, which will be further tailored for adaptation in the PPP market in the United Arab Emirates.

Keywords: briefing process; decision points; public–private partnership (PPP); comparative analysis



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1. Introduction

The project briefing is the process by which the client's needs are investigated, developed, crystallized, and communicated to the supply side of the construction industry [1]. The briefing process, known in North America as Architectural Programming, is considered the initial step toward establishing an effective client–architect/designer relationship. It is a vital stage of every project and must be planned and responsive to the client's needs. The project brief should be clear and workable, providing a sound basis for the project's needs and design [2]. A clear project brief aids in reducing brief changes, design changes, and construction changes throughout project delivery. According to [3], a clear and comprehensive project brief is crucial for project success, particularly in the construction industry, as it can reduce changes and errors, ultimately improving cost and time performance.

The briefing process is considered the keystone for achieving client satisfaction due to its crucial role in eliciting and communicating the client's requirements to the design and construction teams [4]. Most of the significant decisions made during the briefing stage of any project will have a far-reaching impact throughout the project's life cycle. Clients are at the core of all project processes; satisfying them is considered the main measure of project success; this is why the briefing must be well planned to respond to the client's needs. Research work by [5] emphasized that clients' satisfaction can be achieved by meeting two requirements: first, translating their needs into a design that specifies the criteria and

quality standards for the technical characteristics and functional performance of the work and second, completing the project on time and in the most cost-effective manner.

The client's requirements are normally captured in briefing documents, which record them in a documentary form known as the "brief". This is a means of communication and interaction between the client and the architect. For architects and others involved in a construction project, the brief should provide a clear overview and understanding of the needs and ambitions of the client in accommodating the work of his/her organization. In addition, the brief document functions as a "touchstone" for testing the design proposals, where alternatives can be compared. It helps to structure the debate between the client and architect about the quality and value of the design proposals. Hence, the importance of this document comes from its serving as the basis of the facility's planning, design, and technical work at different stages [6,7].

In the context of the PPP procurement method, project delivery is a highly complex process involving multiple stakeholders and multidisciplinary inputs from numerous participants. This contributes to the complexity of communication and coordination, making the briefing process one of the most important stages.

2. Research Methodology

The research presented in this paper is the first part of a comprehensive research project. The main aim is to develop and validate a process framework for PPP briefing, with a specific focus on the PPP market in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The development of this framework aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the brief development of PPP projects in the UAE. The framework's development is divided into two main stages:

- The first stage is aimed at reviewing PPP briefing, stages, and processes in general, and briefing practices in the mature PPP markets in particular through conducting a comparative analysis of the briefing frameworks of three countries that rank highly on the PPP Market Maturity level. This step led to the development of a "Generic Conceptual Process Framework for the Development of Briefs in PPP Projects".
- The second stage has two main methods. First, case studies and document analysis are proposed to localize the above conceptual framework for the UAE PPP market. This is followed by structured interview sessions with experts from the UAE PPP market to finalize and validate the above preliminary framework. The output of this process will be the final Process Framework for PPP brief development with special reference to the UAE construction industry. See Figure 1 for more details.

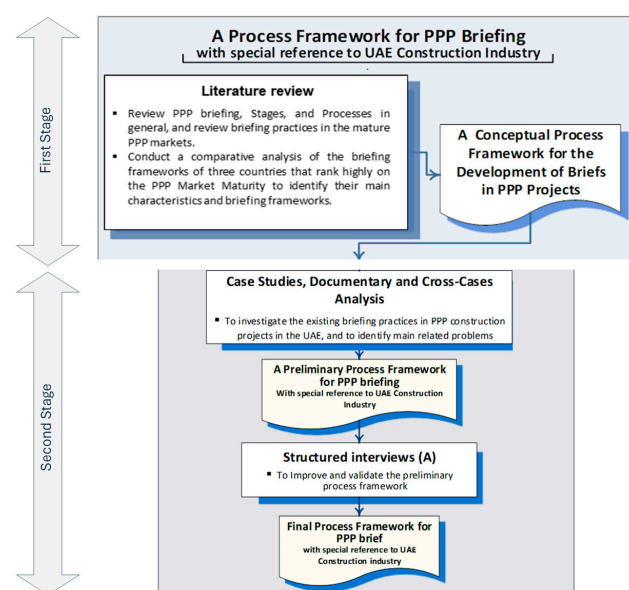


Figure 1. The research methodology to develop a systematic process framework for PPP brief development with special reference to UAE construction projects.

Figure 1 illustrates the research methodology stages and main processes and outcomes. This paper details the first stage and outlines the creation of a Generic Conceptual Process Framework to guide the development of briefs in PPP projects.

3. The Brief Development: Stages and Processes

The briefing process is the preliminary stage in the design process. It is considered the initial step toward establishing an effective client-architect/designer relationship. Successful briefing can ensure project delivery, on target time, cost, and quality [8]. Several studies highlighted the critical role of construction project briefing in achieving successful project delivery. Both [3,8] emphasize the importance of a clear and comprehensive client brief in reducing change orders and improving project performance.

The briefing process is often referred to and developed through a stage or a series of stages in the design or construction process, representing a part of the overall life cycle of the construction project. It is usually developed through a systematic approach of inquiry by which the client's requirements are made explicit and understandable. In their review of the brief development process, research by [9] claimed that there are two main schools of thought on construction project briefing: one views the brief as a static entity that is finalized after a critical period, while the other sees it as a dynamic document that evolves iteratively through a series of stages from an initial global brief, thus being an ongoing activity during the early project life cycle.

Fundamentally, the briefing process can be divided into two main stages: strategic briefing and project briefing [10–12]. The strategic stage aims to review the stated requirements in light of the objectives by identifying the organization's needs to determine if a building of a specific type and in a particular location is the most effective solution [13]. According to [14], a strategic briefing study should describe the mission of the business project and its strategic fit with the corporate objectives of the client organization. It is suggested that corporate objectives should be explicit in terms of commercial goals and implicit in terms of cultural values, with the client's value system being formed by a combination of these objectives and values. One advantage at this stage is the opportunity to discuss a range of options for delivering the business project, helping strategic management make informed decisions by providing unambiguous information before advancing to the next stage.

The second stage, project briefing, involves making tactical decisions. The project brief translates the strategic brief into physical terms according to the design specification [15], specifying the performance requirements for each project element. Ref. [14] argued that the project brief is the "construction industry's response to the client requirements expressed in the strategic brief". Project requirements encompass several sets of criteria, including those related to the client, user, site, environment, regulations, design, construction, and life cycle [16]. It is worth noting that researchers generally agree on this separation of the briefing process [11,14,15,17–20].

The RIBA Plan of Work is the most common document used in the UK to describe the different stages of construction projects. The evolution from the RIBA Plan of Work 2007 to the 2020 version reflects advancements in the process of brief development of projects.

In the 2007 Plan, brief development starts with Stage A: Appraisal and Stage B: Design Brief. The Appraisal stage identifies client needs and objectives, laying the groundwork for the project. The Design Brief stage then develops these initial requirements into a detailed project brief, outlining specific needs, goals, and design parameters, where the Project Brief is completed through the design development stage. The 2013 Plan introduces Stage 0: Strategic Definition and Stage 1: Preparation and Brief. Strategic Definition focuses on high-level project goals, resulting in a Strategic Brief that addresses site selection and project scope. The Preparation and Brief stage builds on this by developing a detailed project brief through feasibility studies and early design considerations, ensuring alignment with strategic goals and a finalized design program.

Finally, the 2020 Plan refines the 2013 approach, with refined outcomes for each stage, and maintaining Stage 0: Strategic Definition and Stage 1: Preparation and Brief. Strategic Definition involves strategic appraisal, resulting in a Strategic Brief that outlines key project outcomes and considerations. The Preparation and Brief stage further develops the project brief, incorporating feasibility studies and stakeholder engagement to ensure clear alignment with strategic objectives, agree on project brief derogations, and finalize the design program. Figure 2 compares the RIBA Plan of Work 2020 with the RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007.

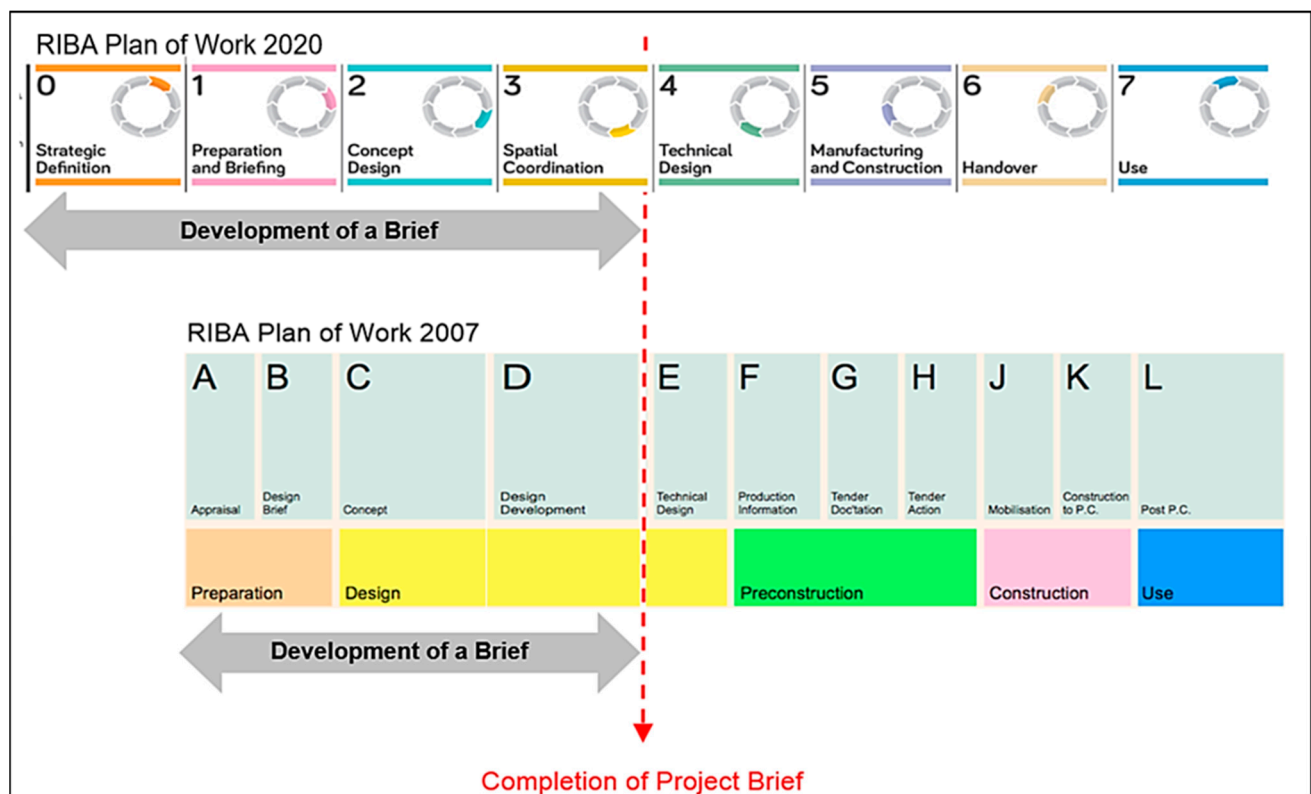


Figure 2. RIBA Plan of Work 2020 compared with RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007—developed based on [21,22].

The briefing process usually involves actively archiving data to enhance the documentation of lessons learned by collecting, organizing, analyzing, identifying, interpreting, compiling, and presenting all essential information required for a construction project [23]. However, the briefing process frequently encounters execution problems that can ultimately impact its effectiveness. Despite being crucial for successful project delivery and client satisfaction, the process is widely acknowledged as needing improvement [24]. Many issues in construction projects can often be traced back to deficiencies in the briefing stage [9,25].

Briefing in PPP Projects

PPP projects can be executed through various modes, each tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the project. Research by [26] has investigated and identified the various execution modes of PPP infrastructure projects. The BOT type is commonly used worldwide, especially in tolled roads and highways PPP projects, followed by BLT, BOOT, and O&M PPP contracts.

As explained in the previous section, the briefing process takes place during the early stages of a project's development. In PPP projects, a briefing session typically occurs about halfway through the bid preparation period [17]. Appropriate PPP briefing is crucial for large-scale infrastructure projects like transportation, public utilities, and healthcare facilities. Transportation projects (highways, bridges, railways, airports) require detailed

planning for logistical, financial, and operational demands. Research [22–24] discusses the legal, financial, and operational challenges of PPPs in transportation projects. Identified challenges include complex concession agreements, risk sharing, and the need for new evaluation tools and risk transfer mechanisms.

For public utilities (water supply, waste management, energy), important issues that should be well investigated in brief development include technology integration and regulatory compliance. According to [22], the challenges in PPP public utilities are multifaceted, including the need to balance political control with managerial autonomy.

In the case of healthcare, facilities require precise briefs for construction and operational efficiency, including patient care standards. According to [27,28], the challenges of PPPs in healthcare facilities include inadequate risk management models, difficulty in reaching agreements, project complexity, a lack of bankable project agreements, institutional capacity, risk allocation, and environmental and social impact assessments.

4. Briefing Practices in the Mature PPP Markets

Different countries around the world follow unique paths in developing PPP infrastructure, influenced by local geography, political climate, capital market sophistication, and the driving forces and factors favoring partnerships. Various stages of understanding and sophistication in using innovative partnership models are required to bring a country's PPP program or market to maturity.

The “maturity” analysis of PPP programs worldwide was investigated by [29]. The research compared the maturity of PPP markets in several countries, using typical success factors based on their levels of sophistication and activity. Following that [30], in 2011, reviewed and updated this maturity analysis. Furthermore, [30] explained that PPP maturity worldwide can be categorized into three distinct stages: stage one, the developing PPP market; stage two, the active PPP market; and stage three, the well-functioning and mature PPP market. The curve analysis of the compared PPP mature market curves generates the following findings:

- The overall ranking of countries in PPP maturity levels changed due to the global financial crisis in 2008 and its aftermath, which is shown in arrows.
- The UK and Australia are the most mature adopters of the PPP model, outdoing many industrial countries in reaching Stage Three. In contrast, the Canadian market has moved towards Stage three in giant steps.
- Many European countries are either improving their position to the advanced stages or starting their journey to maturity.

PPP processes, including the detailed briefing stage, are investigated and analyzed in three of the most mature countries. This analysis breaks the process down into major stages, which are further subdivided into phases. The main processes within these phases, along with their inputs, expected outputs, and main implementation challenges, are identified in the following sections.

4.1. Briefing Practices in the UK PPP Projects

PPPs in the UK have developed mainly through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) model; various studies by UK researchers have indicated the high success rate of this procurement model in the UK [11]. According to [31], the UK's “Private Finance Initiative” was launched in 1992. It is a specific type of PPP contract which bundles construction, operations, and maintenance into a single contract. PFI projects generally have a life span of approximately 25 years; numerous PFI projects are ongoing.

PFI traditionally involves establishing a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to raise capital and undertake the project. This SPV is then run throughout the life of the infrastructure to receive payment over the life of the agreement with the public body [13]. PFI has traditionally been associated with social infrastructure such as health, education, and housing—although the model has been used for other infrastructure such as transporta-

tion [31]. Various studies by UK researchers have indicated the high success rate of this procurement model in the UK [14].

The PFI development process sequence appeared in the RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007 [21]. This plan organizes the process of designing and managing building projects, as well as administering building contracts, into a number of key Work Stages. It illustrates the Work Stage sequences for different procurement methods. According to the RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2007 [21], the PFI Work Stage sequences are grouped into four main stages as illustrated in the RIBA Plan: (i) Preparation stage, (ii) Tender/Negotiations stage, (iii) Construction stage, and (iv) Use. Based on the PFI model of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), this Plan of Work was issued in 2008 by the Royal Institute of British Architects. Furthermore, the briefing stage is located within the preparation and tender/negotiations stages. Those two stages examine such technical and financial issues as preparing the business case for the project, the invitation and pre-qualification of potential bidders, design, finding solutions, evaluation of bids to determine value for money and affordability, selection and negotiation of a contract with the preferred bidder, financial close and development of the full business case for the PFI project.

The UK segments the various phases of PPP projects through gateways (OGC) from 1 to 5, the first three gateways constituting the briefing stage. In the initial phase of Gateway 1, a strategic assessment is made to ensure the project meets the business needs. In Gateway 2, the business justification is evaluated, and recommendations for improvements are offered. Gateway 3 is the procurement strategic phase, which gauges the project's potential and ability to succeed.

It is worth mentioning that the RIBA Outline Plan of Work 2013, which was further refined in the 2020 version, does not specifically include diagrams or detailed guidance exclusively for PPP/PFI projects as seen in the 2007 version. These versions focus on a broader approach to project planning and management that can be adapted to various procurement routes but without dedicated diagrams for these specific methods.

In December 2012, the PFI procurement methods were replaced by a similar but updated approach called Private Finance 2 (PF2). According to [31], new improvement elements of PF2 include centralized procurement units for specific sectors, an 18-month cap for competitive tendering, the government acting as a minority equity investor, private sector equity competitions, a shift in risk allocation towards the public sector, increased standardization of contract documents, and the removal of soft facilities management from contracts.

Research by [32] investigated the challenges of the PFI model in the UK and identified issues such as inaccurate use of public sector comparators, skill strengths and deficits in the public sector, misallocation of risks, higher risk premiums charged to the public sector, complex and rigid PFI contracts, and lack of transparency. In a detailed case study by [33], the possible failure of a major transportation project in the UK was investigated. The study found several challenges and reasons for failure, including poor infrastructure conditions, lack of financial and risk management systems, poor corporate governance of the private sector company, the inability of the public sector to manage the contract, and a tied supply chain. A recent study identified the need for effective governance and stakeholder management as important challenges to PPP implementation in the UK [34]. Research by [33] also highlighted potential negative consequences, such as limited transparency and reduced government flexibility.

Successful implementation of PPPs requires a clear legal framework, risk allocation, and value-for-money objectives [35]. Analyzing the variety of risks and factors is essential before implementing the project [33].

4.2. Briefing Practices in the Australian PPP Projects

The practice of using the public–private partnership (PPP) model for the delivery of large-scale projects in Australia has been well established and has played a crucial role in the country's infrastructure development. According to [36], Australia is a world leader in PPP infrastructure delivery, with over two decades of experience in providing civil

and social infrastructure services through PPP concessions. Along the way, public and private participants in these projects have developed the practices and a mature institutional framework necessary for managing long-term, high-risk public–private commercial partnerships. Most PPP projects are undertaken in New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, and Queensland [37]. Moreover, New South Wales and Victoria have taken quick action to profit from their accumulated experiences in PPP infrastructure projects, compared with Western Australia, which preferred to use more PPPs with an alliance agreement [38,39].

According to [40–42], the PPP project development cycle generally comprises three main stages: (i) the project strategy stage, (ii) the project options stage, and (iii) the project delivery stage. The PPP process content of the activities of Partnerships Victoria [40] and the NSW [42] are the same. See Figures 3 and 4.

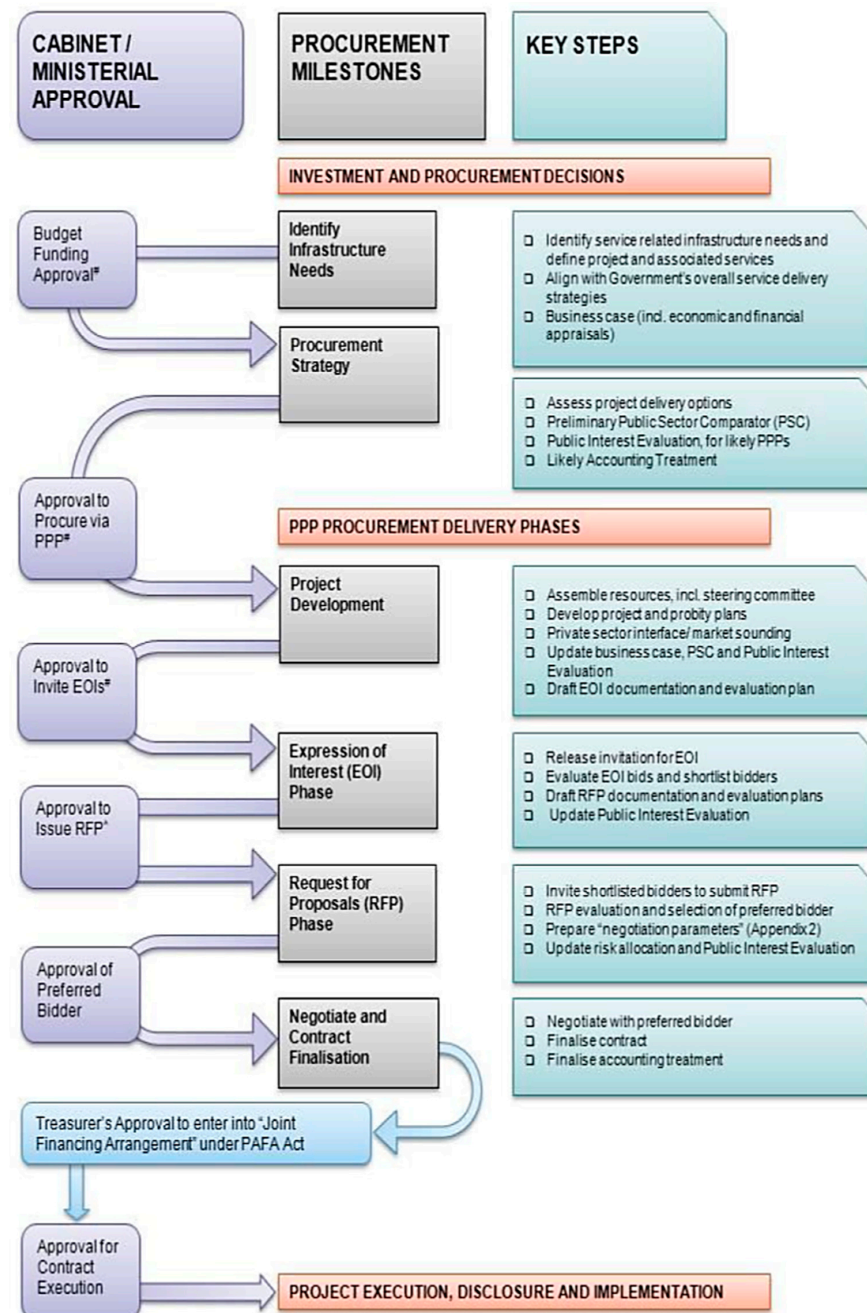


Figure 3. Phases and activities of the PPP delivery process in Australia—Phases of government approval in NSW—source: [42].

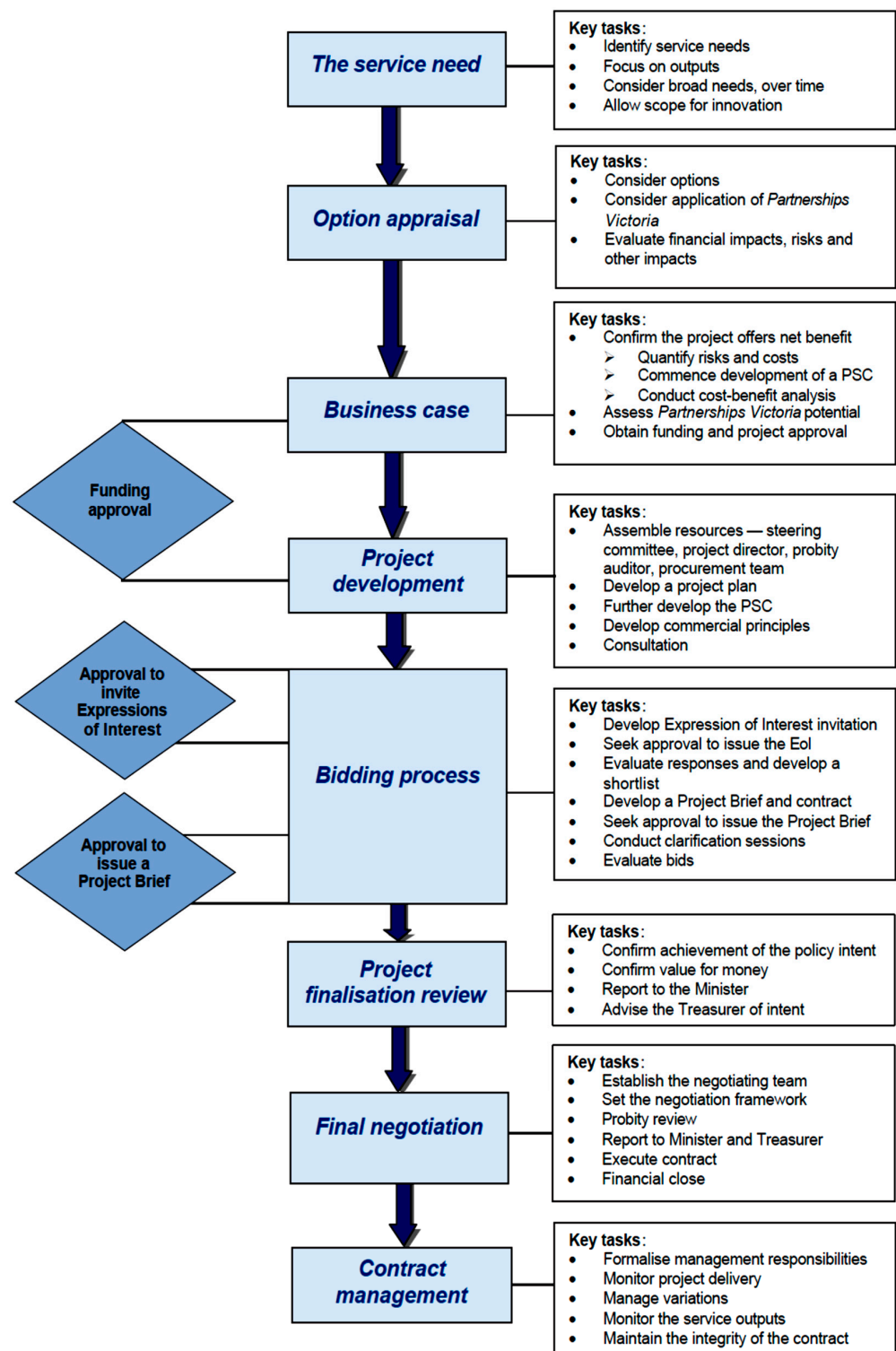


Figure 4. Phases and activities of the PPP delivery process in Australia—Major stages in developing a *Partnerships Victoria* project—source: [40].

Government approval will be required at various project milestones throughout the PPP procurement process. Figure 3 illustrates the government approval process and required documentation in NSW. The figure depicts two main stages: on a strategic level, the investment and procurement decision, where project needs and requirements are identified, followed by identifying options for the procurement strategy. After this, the project moves to the “procurement delivery phases”, where the project brief is developed

further by identifying project parameters and resources, moving through the Expression of Interest phase (EOI), and then the Request for Proposal phase (RFP). Following that, the project will go through negotiations and contract finalization with bidders and receive final approval before moving to the execution stage.

According to the definition and timing of the process, the development of a brief in Australia should be in operation from the time of identifying a set of service needs up to the end of the bidding process. For example, according to [40], the PPP briefing process should encompass five major phases: identifying the services needed, options appraisal, business case preparation, project development, and reaching the bidding process. During the briefing process, a “gateway” approval of the PPP (by a special committee) is required for three major decisions: (i) project selection to proceed with the development of the business case; (ii) before issuing requests for expressions of interest; and (iii) before issuing project briefs and a contract. In analyzing this process, it is evident that high priority is given to clear communication with all stakeholders, particularly the bidders, to ensure that all variations are well understood in good time.

The challenges facing PPP implementation in infrastructure projects in Australia were investigated by [43]. Failure factors and lessons learned in two major PPP projects (road and light rail) were examined. The main challenges reported are inadequacy of business cases, independence of transport agencies, political interest, and limited objectivity in the Treasury office. The authors recommended several important points, including acknowledging the skills of key stakeholders and properly managing their involvement and interests in PPP mega projects, and accommodating political interest as part of the risk area in policies and National PPP Guidelines, as it improves public accountability in decisions taken during the development of the PPP project.

4.3. Briefing Practices in the Canadian PPP Projects

Public–private partnerships (PPPs) have been increasingly utilized in Canada for large-scale public infrastructure projects, with the government playing a significant role in funding and governance. Across Canada, governments at all levels have increasingly embraced PPPs as their preferred approach to delivering large-scale public infrastructure [44]. Since the mid-1990s, Canadian governments, like those in Europe and Australia, have been heavily involved in PPPs in capital-intensive infrastructure sectors, such as transportation (roads, airports, and bridges), water and wastewater, hospitals, recreation facilities, power and energy, and other facilities. Moreover, PPPs have been used to provide many other smaller projects [45,46].

Like Australia, Canada has a worldwide reputation for its procurement process in terms of efficiency and its track record of taking transactions through the procurement process to the financial close. Figure 5 describes the entire Canadian Public–Private Partnership process, as extracted from the Canadian Council for Public–Private Partnerships [47]. The delivery of a PPP project goes through three main phases: (i) planning (the pre-procurement stage), (ii) procurement, and (iii) contract management (operation). The detailed key tasks and major deliverables in each stage are shown in the same figure.

As can be noticed from Figure 5, the development of a project brief goes through two main phases: the planning and procurement phases. In planning, the project scope in terms of its requirements will be developed, screening different options as well as assessing the risk and cost of different project options. A project scope and feasibility study are the main deliverables of this stage. Following that, during the procurement phase, the project brief will develop in terms of its parameters and resources, moving through the request for qualifications, request for proposals (RFP), and then negotiation with bidders to finalize the project agreement. The project then moves to the execution phase.

Like Australia and the UK, the implementation of Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Canada faces several challenges. Research by [44] investigated possible challenges and highlighted high upfront costs, limited community consultations, and a procurement process that hinders design excellence. Similarly, [48] argued that the presence of key

stakeholders as drivers of P3 policy was critical to the trust that industry participants placed in the process. They stressed the extreme importance of the internal capacity of the public sector. In many provinces, it is mandatory for P3s to employ the public sector comparator (PSC) to demonstrate value for money (VfM). However, there are suggestions that VfM is prone to manipulation to skew decisions in favor of the P3 model [49].

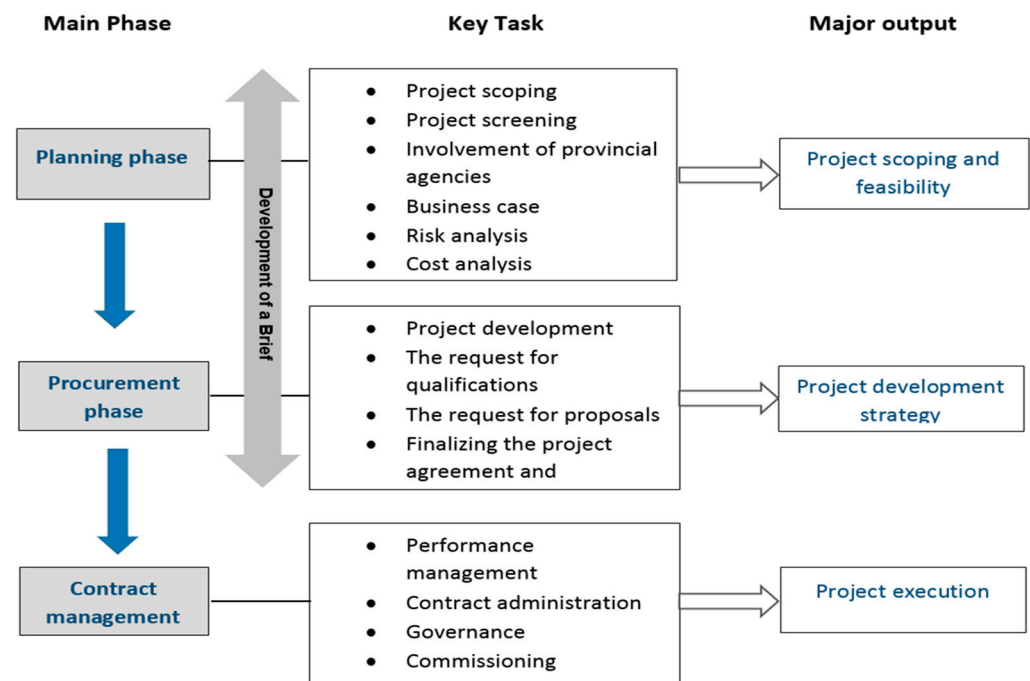


Figure 5. Overall, the Canadian PPP delivery process—developed based on [47].

5. Comparative Analysis of the Briefing Processes of the Mature PPP Markets in Light of Briefing Considerations

According to [11], briefing is a process that consists of a set of linked activities, taking an input (information) and transforming it to produce an output (brief). Therefore, the discussion of the PPP briefing processes in mature countries will compare these interrelated activities of translating inputs into outputs. For the purpose of comparison, it is necessary to map the briefing stages in the three countries discussed above to define the various phases, stages, main processes, and activities that constitute the briefing process. To this end, inputs and outputs should also be identified because if the inputs or the information are inconsistent, inadequate, or incorrect, then it is very likely that the activity/process and its outputs will also be deficient. Furthermore, the process content, decision gates, and identity of those who take control within the briefing processes of the three countries are also compared.

The procedure used in the three most mature countries to conduct the entire PPP process, including the briefing stage, was studied and analyzed to discern the main stages, which were subdivided into phases. Then, the main relevant processes within these phases, their inputs, expected outputs, decision gates, and control points were identified and analyzed. The comparison of briefing processes in the three countries is shown in Figure 6. The review of the processes applied during the PPP briefing process in these countries reveals that:

- The management and control of PPP briefing in the above countries are entirely under the public sector client (the public sector client body).
- Despite differences in the titles of the main phases in the three countries, the phases have almost the same content in their processes and share the same decision gates.
- The content of activities in the reviewed processes is almost identical, and the main differences between the processes relate to the timing of the briefing activities.

- Generally, there are three vital decision gates recognized through the briefing processes of the three countries: (i) the decision on the need for physical assets/infrastructure to meet the identified business and organization needs; (ii) the decision on the PPP's suitability; and (iii) the decision on whether to issue the final project brief.
- In the UK process, the task of negotiation precedes the evaluation of bids, whereas in Australia and Canada, the RFP process allows for negotiation after the preferred proponent is selected.
- Generally, the UK, Canada, and Australia use the same multi-stage procurement process: an Expression of Interest (EOI) stage, an RFP stage involving interaction with bidders, the selection of a preferred bidder, and pre-award contract negotiation.

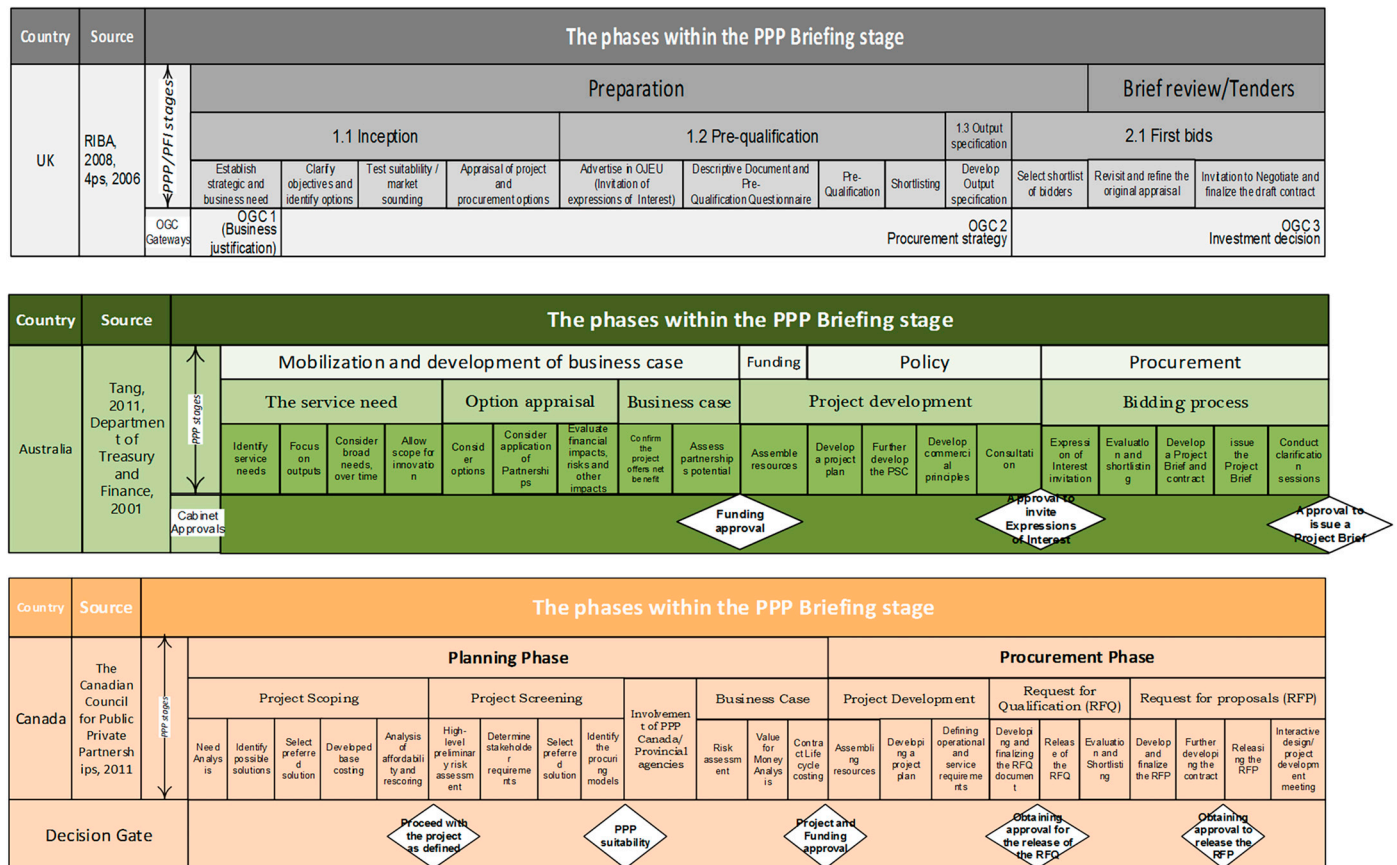


Figure 6. The overall briefing stages in detail for the three countries [17,21,22,40,47].

Figure 7 illustrates the main phases and decision gates within the PPP briefing stages in the three most mature countries.

The above analysis of interconnected activities and a detailed review of the phases, stages, and essential processes that comprise the briefing process provide valuable insights into the complexities of PPP briefings in the UK, Canada, and Australia. In all three countries, the public sector client plays a pivotal role in maintaining centralized control over the PPP briefing process, ensuring consistency across projects. Despite differences in the naming of phases, our analysis reveals significant similarities in the processes and decision-making gates, which are crucial for aligning project objectives and ensuring reliability. The uniformity in the content of activities, albeit with some timing differences, further contributes to the reliability of PPP projects. Three critical decision gates across these countries are identified: the necessity of the infrastructure, the assessment of PPP suitability, and the issuance of the final project brief. These gates serve as essential milestones in the project lifecycle.

Country	Source	The phases within the PPP Briefing stage				
UK	RIBA, 2008	Inception		Prequalification	Output specification	First bids
Australia	Tang 2011, Victorian Government, 2001	Mobilization and development of business case		Funding	Policy	Procurement
Canada	The Canadian Council for Public Private Partnerships, 2011	Planning Phase		Procurement Phase		
Decision Gate		Asset-based solution	PPP suitability	Project and Funding approval	Obtaining approval for the release of the RFP	Obtaining approval to release the RFP

Figure 7. Main phases and decision gates within the PPP briefing stages in the three most mature countries [17,21,40,47].

6. The Development of a Conceptual Process Framework for PPP Briefing

A conceptual process framework for PPP briefing is developed and presented in Figure 8. Reflecting on the comparative analysis described earlier for the three countries within the mature PPP markets, the proposed conceptual process framework includes nine processes covering the most common aspects within the PPP briefing stage. These nine processes are needs analysis, output and scope, options appraisal, risk assessment, value assessment (which includes affordability, value for money, and bankability), market testing, funding, project development, Expression of Interest (EOI), and Request for Proposal (RFP).

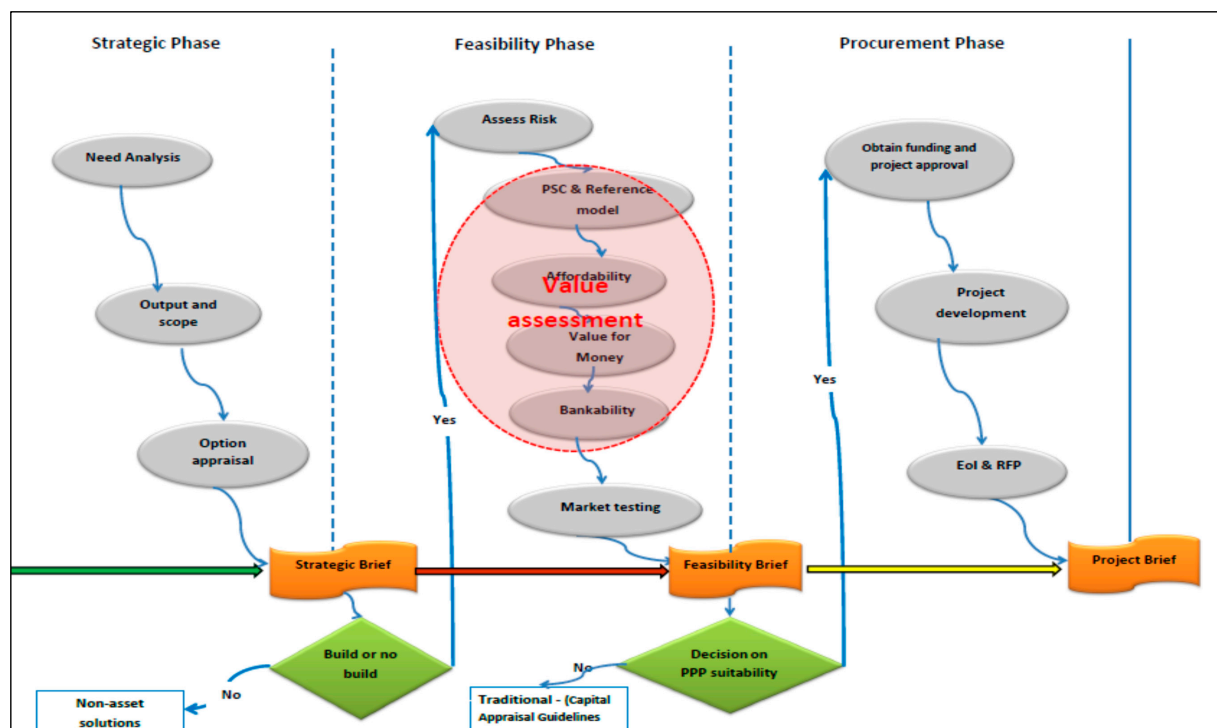


Figure 8. The proposed conceptual process framework for PPP briefing.

The proposed framework consists of three main phases: the strategic phase, the feasibility phase, and the procurement phase. It has 12 main processes through which the final PPP brief is iteratively developed. A key decision is required at each main phase of the PPP briefing development process. These three phases are described in detail below.

- **The Strategic phase:** During this phase, a list of reasonable alternative options is investigated based on analyzing the actual strategic and business needs before deciding

to proceed with the asset-based solution. This phase consists of three main processes: Needs Analysis, Outputs and Scope, and Option Appraisal. In the Needs Analysis process, the long-term business/service need is identified, project alignment with institutional strategic objectives is demonstrated, and institutional commitment and capacity are ensured. In the second process, the project parameters and scope are investigated through user group analysis and their input, the project parameters and specifications are analyzed, and the project statement of requirements is drafted. Finally, in the Options Appraisal process, possible options to meet needs are identified and evaluated, and a decision on the early suitability of the preferred option is made. The “build or no-build” decision is the first decision gate at the end of this strategic phase of brief development. The “Strategic Brief” of the proposed PPP project is the main deliverable of this phase.

- The Feasibility phase: In this phase, alternatives are analyzed, and a decision on the PPP’s suitability is made. Parameters of different project options are further analyzed by identifying possible risks/uncertainties of each option, analyzing their impact, and identifying suitable response strategies. Following that, the project value for money is assessed in terms of potential benefits, public sector comparator (PSC), and financial analysis. Additionally, market interest and capacity are analyzed. The “PPP suitability” decision is the second decision gate at the end of this feasibility phase of brief development. The “Feasibility Brief” of the proposed PPP project is the main deliverable of this phase.
- The Procurement phase: In this phase, the preferred option is more clearly defined, and the decision to proceed further with the project is made. The project brief is further developed through stakeholder analysis and their needs, a further Public Sector Comparator, more detailed project parameters and its scope, development of Expression of Interest (EOI) and its evaluation criteria, finalizing the project brief, and finally, Request for Proposal (RFP) and briefing sessions. At the end of this phase, the “Final Project Brief” of the proposed PPP project is the main deliverable.

Through these three phases, an early and well-defined PPP briefing process can be established to ensure that development budgets are well spent. Moreover, such a framework enables oversight agencies to be involved in approving projects on time. It also provides a precise mechanism for identifying and accurately representing all stakeholders’ requirements in the briefing stage of PPP projects.

7. Conclusions

The presented research explored the briefing processes within mature PPP markets, specifically focusing on a comparative analysis of three countries: the UK, Canada, and Australia. Briefing lies in transforming input information into a comprehensive brief through a sequence of interconnected activities. By examining these interrelated activities and scrutinizing the phases, stages, and key processes constituting the briefing process, valuable insights are gained into the intricacies of PPP briefing in these nations.

The paper begins by providing an overall understanding of project brief development in construction projects, outlining its processes and stages. It then explores the briefing process for PPP projects, discussing relevant considerations and implementation challenges. Following this, the paper investigates the development process of briefs for PPP projects, defining its main stages, generic processes, and key decision gates as recommended in the literature. A comparative analysis of the briefing process frameworks from three countries among the top in the PPP Market Maturity chart was conducted. Based on this analysis, a “Generic Conceptual Process Framework” for the development of briefs in PPP projects was developed.

The comparative study reveals that despite differences in terminology and specific procedures, the fundamental elements of PPP briefing processes are remarkably similar across these countries. Centralized control by the public sector, clear communication, and systematic decision-making are pivotal for the success of PPP projects.

Unlike the brief for conventional procurement, the brief for a PPP project must provide information not only on the project requirements but also on the project program, risk management, output specification, value for money, and payment mechanism. In addition, the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the briefing process of PPP projects contributes to the complexity of communication and the difficulty of coordinating the project conditions.

The implementation of PPP projects in the three studied countries faces several challenges, as reported in various research works, though they share common issues. In the UK, the PFI model encounters problems such as misleading use of public sector comparators, public skill deficits, misallocation of risks, higher risk premiums, complex contracts, and lack of transparency. Effective governance, stakeholder management, clear legal frameworks, proper risk allocation, and value-for-money objectives are crucial. Similarly, Australia's PPP projects face challenges like inadequate business cases, political interests, and limited objectivity in the Treasury office. In Canada, PPP project challenges include high upfront costs, limited community consultations, and a procurement process that hinders design excellence. Trust in the process relies on stakeholder involvement and the public sector's internal capacity. The mandatory use of public sector comparators to demonstrate value for money is also susceptible to manipulation, favoring the P3 model.

Across these countries, addressing these challenges requires careful risk analysis and management before project implementation. To overcome the challenges of PPP implementation, it is essential to enhance public sector skills through training, improve transparency, optimize risk allocation, and simplify contract structures. Strengthening business cases, mitigating political influence, and ensuring Treasury objectivity are crucial for Australia. Additionally, focusing on increasing community consultations, improving procurement processes, and maintaining integrity in value-for-money assessments will significantly improve PPP implementation.

To localize the above-developed generic conceptual framework for the PPP market in the UAE, case studies of mega PPP projects from the UAE will be analyzed. Additionally, existing governmental procedures for developing PPPs will be examined to gain a deeper understanding of the development processes for PPP construction projects in the UAE and to explore the roles of local government authorities and the private sector in this process. The framework will also be further refined and validated through structured interview sessions with professionals and experts from the UAE PPP market, with the results to be published in future publications. It is recommended that the challenges mentioned above during this process be investigated. The translation of PPP models from other countries can be risky, and the specific challenges of implementing PPPs in the UAE should be studied and reflected in the final model. These insights should be considered while developing the final process framework, with particular reference to the PPP market in the UAE.

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