

Guide to develop Use Cases

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Acronyms and Initialisms

CoST	Infrastructure Transparency Initiative
IAD	Infrastructure Analytical Dashboard

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1 Introduction: What is a Use Case?

Use Cases define interactions between external actors and a system to attain a particular goal.[1]. Basically, a use case is a simple way to describe how someone uses a system to achieve an aim.

In very simple words, a use case can be understood as a short story that explains:

- what a user wants to do,
- what steps they take, and
- how the system helps them.

For example:
A journalist wants to find information about a road project. They open the platform, search for the project, and view key details.

This example shows how this use case starts with a goal and ends when that goal is achieved.

2 Who is this guide for?

This Guide is intended to:

- CoST members and partners
- People involved in designing or using data platforms
- Teams working on Infrastructure Analytical Dashboards (IADs)

The objective is to facilitate the development and writing of use cases that support the development of disclosure platforms or IADs[2].

3 Why Are Use Cases Important?

To design a useful dashboard, we must first understand: What users want to know and why.

This is where use cases come in. Use cases add value by explaining how a publication platform or IAD should perform. They provide a list of goals, which can be used to establish the content and complexity of a disclosure platform or an IAD.

They help answer simple but important questions:

- Who will use the platform?
- What do they want to do?
- What information do they need?
- What steps will they follow?
- How should the system respond?

Use cases help ensure that IADs are:

[1] https://warren2lynch.medium.com/all-you-need-to-know-about-use-case-modeling-828756da3215

[2] An IAD helps users understand what is happening across infrastructure projects by turning data into simple visuals (charts, tables, maps).

- useful (they answer real questions),
- clear (easy to understand), and
- actionable (help users make decisions).

4 Key Concepts (Simple Definitions)

Depending on how in-depth and complex you want or need to get, use cases describe a combination of the following elements:

- User (Actor)
  The person using the platform (e.g., a government officer, a journalist, a citizen).
- Goal
  What the user wants to achieve (e.g. check project costs).
- Trigger
  What starts the action (e.g. opening the dashboard).
- Main Steps (Basic Flow)
  What normally happens when everything works well.
- Alternative Steps
  What happens if something goes wrong or differently.

Below is an example of how these key concepts can be applied to a simple use case:

User: Journalist

Goal: Find information about a project

Steps:

1. The journalist opens the platform
2. They search for a project by name
3. The system shows a list of results
4. The journalist selects a project
5. The system displays project details

Alternative:

If no results are found, the system shows a message: “No project found”

5 How to Write a Use Case (Step-by-Step)

Follow these simple steps:

Step 1: Identify the user

Who will use the dashboard?

Examples:

- Government officials

- Journalists
- Civil society organisations
- Citizens

Step 2: Define their question (goal)

What do they want to know?

Examples:

- Are projects delayed?
- Are projects costing more than the approved budget?
- Are projects at risk of not being completed?

Step 3: Link to data

What data is needed?

Examples: project start and end dates

Step 4: Choose a visual

How should this be shown?

Examples: line chart, bar chart, map

Step 5: List the main steps

Describe what the user does, step by step.

Example:

1. The user opens the dashboards
2. The user selects a visualisation
3. The graphic displays trends
4. The user reviews the information

Step 6: Add insights and actions

What should the user learn and do?

What are the follow-up actions?

6 Examples of use cases for IADs

Below are practical examples to guide you.

Example 1: Monitoring Project Delays (Trend Analysis)

User: Government official

Goal: Understand whether projects are being delivered on time

Use Case: Steps

1. The user opens the dashboard

2. They select the “Project Delivery” section
3. The system displays a chart showing delays over time
4. The user filters by sector (e.g. transport)
5. The system updates the chart

What the Dashboard Shows: A line chart of average project delays over the past 5 years

Insight: Delays have increased in the last two years.

Action: Investigate causes (e.g. funding issues, contractor performance)

Example 2: Identifying Cost Overruns (Trend + Risk)

User: Oversight authority

Goal: Detect projects where costs are exceeding budgets

Use Case: Steps

1. The user opens the dashboard
2. They select “Financial Performance”
3. The system shows a chart comparing planned vs actual costs
4. The user clicks on projects with the largest differences

What the Dashboard Shows: A bar chart of cost overruns by project and A trend line showing how overruns change over time

Risk Indicator: Projects where costs exceed budget by more than a threshold (e.g. 15%)

Insight: Several projects show significant cost overruns.

Action: Prioritise these projects for review

Example 3: Monitoring Procurement Risks

User: Civil society organisation

Goal: Identify risks in procurement processes

Use Case: Steps

1. The user opens the dashboard
2. They select “Procurement Analysis”
3. The system displays indicators related to competition
4. The user filters projects with only one bidder

What the Dashboard Shows: Percentage of contracts with single bidders and a List of projects with low competition

Risk Indicator: Single-bid contracts

Insight: Many contracts have only one bidder.

Action: Raise concerns about competition and transparency

Example 4: Understanding Investment Trends

User: Policy maker

Goal: See how infrastructure spending is changing

Use Case: Steps

1. The user opens the dashboard
2. They select “Investment Trends”
3. The system shows total investment over time
4. The user filters by sector

What the Dashboard Shows: A line chart of total investment by year and A breakdown by sector

Insight: Investment in water infrastructure is increasing.

Action: Align policies or funding priorities accordingly

Example 5: Using a Red-Flag Risk System

User: Auditor

Goal: Identify high-risk projects quickly

Use Case: Steps

1. The user opens the dashboard
2. They select “Risk Overview”
3. The system displays projects using a colour system
    - 🟢 Low risk
    - 🟡 Medium risk
    - 🔴 High risk
4. The user clicks on high-risk projects

What the Dashboard Shows: A list of flagged projects and Reasons for risk (e.g. delays, missing data, cost overruns)

Risk Indicators:

- Missing data
- Delays
- Budget changes
- Low competition

Insight: These projects require immediate attention.

Action: Prioritise audits or interventions.



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Infrastructure Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST)

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