

Science of Delivery at the World Bank Group

Delivery Case Studies: Frequently Asked Questions

The Science of Delivery works with a wide range of partners to create a globally accessible online library to support and improve the quality of development interventions. Science of Delivery is the collective and cumulative knowledge base of delivery know-how that helps practitioners make more informed decisions and produce consistent results on the ground. The Global Delivery Initiative (GDI) invites partners to contribute to the Global Delivery Library. Participation in the Initiative is open to bilateral and multilateral development organizations, private sector organizations, research institutions, and other partners. Partners have regional/global reach, ability to provide financial or in-kind support to the GDI, and experience and genuine interest in developing delivery case studies.

1. Why are we doing case studies?

Case studies provide insights into delivery successes and failures, and help to identify why a particular outcome occurred. They explore interventions in their contexts, and describe what was done, why, how, and with what results. The data collected through case studies is often richer and of greater depth than would normally be obtained by other research designs, which allows for a clearer identification and understanding of causal effects and mechanisms explaining results, and generalizability beyond the defined context of the case. The case study method facilitates the identification of patterns and provides practical insights on how to navigate complex delivery challenges. Capturing implementation processes and building a collective and cumulative body of operational knowledge and know-how will help development practitioners deliver better results.

2. How will we learn from case studies?

Central to our understanding of Science of Delivery is the notion of revisiting past interventions to apply knowledge about the implementation process to future operations. The case study method encourages researchers to ask questions about underexplored complex delivery problems and processes that development stakeholders routinely grapple with: what they are, when they arise, and how they might be addressed, including detailed accounts of delivery techniques, strategies, and experiences of the twists and turns of the implementation process. Systematically investigating delivery in its own right will make it possible to distill the common delivery challenges – the institutional, political, behavioral, logistical, and other issues that affect the delivery of specific interventions. It will also inform practitioners when they are faced with similar delivery challenges in their own programs and projects.

3. How are case studies selected?

Case study topics should be closely related to identified development challenges affecting countries, and examine development innovations and their potential to scale up. To meaningfully compile the case, reliable data, information and evidence should be accessible and/or relatively easy to collect. Project team leaders and staff should have willingness and time to exercise ownership of the case study process, in particular for providing information, helping case writers identify interviewees, etc. Delivery case studies focus on development interventions, projects and programs which have closed within the last three years. In exceptional cases, ongoing projects with important delivery lessons and available evidence may also be selected.

4. What is the process for commissioning and preparing case studies?

Case studies are commissioned by practitioner teams based within the World Bank Group (WBG) and partner organizations. Writing case studies is both science and art, and is best done by people professionally trained in it. Therefore, we are currently working closely with global experts and partners to develop a standard, uniform set of guidelines for writing case studies. As the case study initiative is phased in at the WBG and with partners over the next year, the Science of Delivery team will continue to provide guidance on quality, and work to collect and share lessons from the case studies. A Quality Assurance Board, composed of leading practitioners and academics, will ensure consistency and rigor.

5. What is our target for the coming year?

With our partners through the Global Delivery Initiative, we aim to have at least 20 case studies by March 2016 and a library of over 200 case studies over the next three years.