Investing in infrastructure that is fit for the future, our communities and the planet

These advocacy positions have been developed by the ICSI Action Track on Funding and Financing Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure. This set of key messages can be used to drive engineering-led impact and to influence policy outcomes at global events and fora. The positions support unlocking funding for equitable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure across the globe and prioritise infrastructure that delivers positive outcomes for people and the planet.

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Infrastructure investment decisions must adopt a systemic approach that embeds low-carbon strategies and measures while enhancing the resilience of infrastructure systems to the benefit of communities and natural ecosystems

- The engineering community strongly advocates for systemic interventions that consider climate resilience and adaptation and carbon mitigation, while delivering positive outcomes for communities and natural ecosystems.
- These types of holistic, outcome-led, integrated interventions require inclusive engagement of a broad range of stakeholders across the infrastructure value chain, including local communities.
- Engineers have the technical know-how to provide evidence-based, practical solutions to meet the demands of policymakers and to help increase investors’ confidence.
- The potential trade-off between investing in resilience and adaptation and other policy drivers, such as achieving net-zero targets, should be accounted for and addressed.
- Tailored policies and regulatory frameworks, strengthened governance and innovative financing approaches will incentivise and enable greater uptake of resilience and adaptation to climate change in infrastructure development, delivery and maintenance.
Closing the adaptation finance gap requires urgent focus, the right enabling environment, and a better articulation of the value delivered by these investments

- Adaptation finance needs are 10–18 times as great as current international public adaptation finance flows - at least 50% higher than previously estimated, according to the UN Environment Programme Adaptation Gap Report 2023. We need an immediate increased focus on resilience and adaptation finance, particularly in developing countries.

- Quantification of both the financial value and the wider benefits of resilience investments must improve. Investment is required to further develop the methodologies and tools required to make better, more holistic assessments, and more awareness raising is needed to catalyse interest from the ESG impact community worldwide. If a better explanation of the value and return of projects is provided, this would result in more capital being unlocked.

Communication of risks and returns, capacity building and knowledge transfer are key enablers of implementation at scale

- Highlighting and clearly communicating the risks, benefits and cost of inaction that can be realised through infrastructure is key to acceptance and uptake among decision-makers and the public.

- Local knowledge gaps among policymakers and practitioners must be identified and addressed. There are often insufficient resources for developing local capacity, preventing local stakeholders from engaging in new infrastructure projects or achieving a level of competency to sustain resilient projects.

- Once financing is in place, the next major bottleneck is likely to be the capacity and capability of the global engineering community to implement just, sustainable, resilient and nature-positive infrastructure, particularly in developing countries where this is most needed.

- The development, curation and dissemination of a database of solutions, resources and best practices would be an effective way to transfer knowledge across sectors, minimise duplication and accelerate uptake.
About ICSI's Action Track on Funding and Financing Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure

This Action Track seeks to develop thought leadership on the topic of unlocking finance for sustainable and resilient infrastructure by drawing out and building on learnings and recommendations from recent reports and other relevant publications. The group works to collaborate with other relevant initiatives to increase collective impact and to communicate key advocacy positions at global events. Although engineering-led, the Action Track is cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary and inclusive of professionals and practitioners beyond the engineering community such as the investor and policymaking communities of practice, academia and civil society. We would like to thank the co-lead organisations, namely the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) for their time and leadership.

Further reading:

The above advocacy positions have built on the following research and thought leadership developed by ICSI's Action Tracks and partner organisations:


International Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure. (2021). ICSI Roundtable: What is the engineering community's role in bridging the gaps on climate, sustainability, and resilience for infrastructure?

Institution of Civil Engineers. (2022). Financing Low-Carbon Infrastructure.


