

Information sheet: CRITICAL THINKING



This information sheet is supplementary to the online modules, *BCA essentials* and *The BCA principles in action*. Make sure you have completed these modules and have a basic understanding of the BCA.

The Business Case Approach (BCA) encourages genuine exploration and critical thinking, applied in such a way as to maintain a clear line of sight from strategy to benefit realisation. Critical thinking can be described as self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored and self-corrective thinking.

Use this information sheet as a reference when reading, writing or reviewing business cases (BCs) to ensure you are applying critical thinking to address a problem.

Why use critical thinking?

Critical thinking allows business case developers (BC developers) to consider less obvious, more creative ways to address a problem. By applying critical thinking during each phase within the BCA, BC developers can:

- Ensure early and meaningful engagement with stakeholders.
- Test the strategic direction of a proposal against an organisation's priorities, as well as the NZ Transport Agency's investment strategy.
- Stop development of poorly aligned investments early on, saving time and resources.
- Encourage innovation and stakeholder collaboration by focusing on a problem rather than jumping to a solution.

Critical thinking skills

Critical thinking is an applied skill. The best way to improve critical thinking skills is through one-on-one coaching and mentoring. There are a number of skills, behaviours and outcomes that can be used to measure progress and improvement of critical thinking skills.

We apply critical thinking to:	Critical thinking behaviour	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distinguish fact from opinion - seek multiple perspectives - recognise assumptions - identify bias and persuasion - evaluate arguments for relevance and accuracy - weigh data appropriately - use multiple sources rather than a single source - balance logic and emotion - use diagrams to visually represent processes and thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asks questions that furthers understanding - doesn't draw conclusions too hastily - considers all sides of an argument - uses criteria to evaluate information - can 'push back' effectively - recognises other people's agendas - explores multiple perspectives - adjusts assumptions in light of new evidence - understands how conclusions were drawn - identifies what's known and what isn't - has genuine curiosity - seeks to understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - well-thought-out decisions based on a sound rationale and evidence - information, conclusions and decisions are revised as new information comes to light - decisions reflect a 'systems thinking' rather than 'silo' approach - information evaluated based on evidence, logical inference, and informed guesses - ideas and plans are presented in a coherent and well thought out fashion - decision makers have confidence in recommendations made.

The business case for critical thinking, www.agilecriticalthinking.com