



SIB STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Spring 2007

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Introduction and Background

The Strategic Investment Board Ltd. (SIB) is committed to delivering an excellent service to its customers and stakeholders.

In order to help identify ways to improve performance and better respond to customer requirements, Geronimo Communications undertook an independent survey of SIB's stakeholders.

The broad objective of the survey was to identify and quantify the contribution the SIB makes to the work and success of its customers.

The results will be used to inform SIB's strategy and ensure that it takes account of the needs and ambitions of its stakeholders.

Methodology

Online Customer Survey

SIB and Geronimo Communications designed the survey questionnaire. Its content and format was approved by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

SIB made the questionnaire available on-line to a representative cross-section of its stakeholders. The invitation to participate included a covering letter explaining the objectives of the survey, together with details of how to complete it.

The survey asked respondents to grade SIB's performance in key areas using a five point scale. Respondents were also given the opportunity to complement these quantitative answers with free-text comments.

In total, 56 out of 79 individuals responded to the survey before the deadline for completion. This equates to a 70% response rate and represents a satisfactory level of response, given the seniority of the target audience.

In order to encourage as many customers as possible to participate in the survey, SIB took the following additional action:

The SIB Chief Executive, David Gavaghan, wrote to all the nominated stakeholders encouraging their participation.

SIB sent emails to stakeholders who had not responded within a few days of the survey's close, reminding them to take part.

Interviews of Permanent Secretaries

Geronimo Communications and the SIB Chairman, Tony Watson, conducted structured interviews with each NICS Permanent Secretary during February and March 2007. The interview questions were the same as used in the on-line survey.

Summary of Results

86% of customers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received during 2006. 4% were dissatisfied.

83% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that SIB understands the needs of their organisations. 73% of respondents agreed that SIB helped their organisations in the delivery of infrastructure projects.

There was overwhelming acknowledgment that SIB has played a positive role in stimulating Northern Ireland's infrastructure. 83% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case, with no one disagreeing.

Two thirds of respondents believe that ISNI is helping Government Departments focus on delivery.

Of the respondents who expressed an opinion, 100% either agreed or strongly agreed that SIB advisers bring good professional knowledge and skill to projects. Only 12% did not express an opinion.

Nearly three quarters of respondents (70%) either agreed or strongly agreed that SIB staff are customer focused and easy to do business with. There are indications that there can be healthy creative tensions between SIB and its customers.

Drive and experience in moving forward investment projects were cited as some of the key skills that SIB has brought to projects.

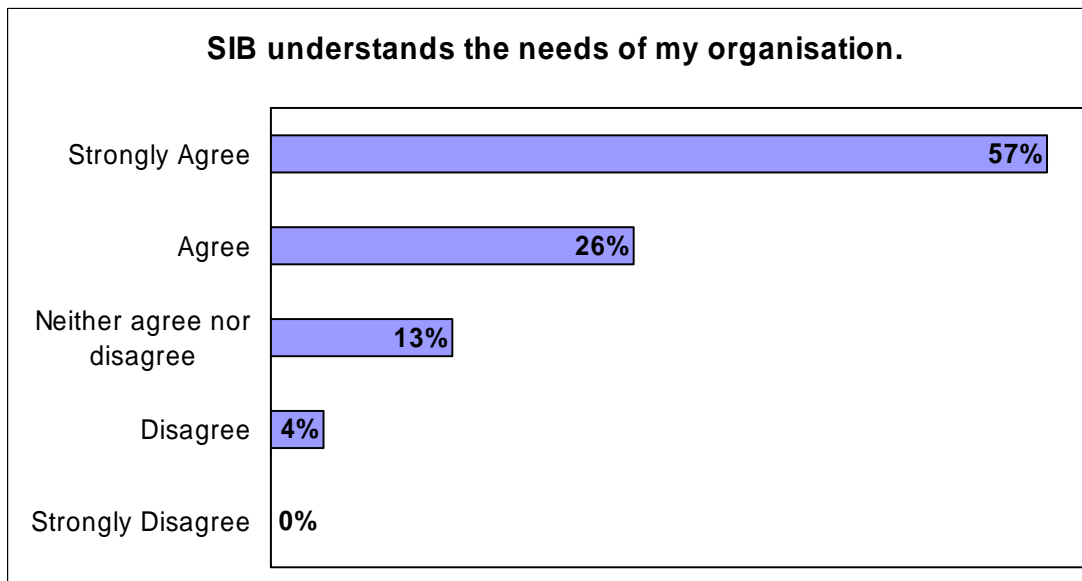
Customers are broadly very happy with the support they receive and many feel reassured when SIB becomes involved in their projects.

There appears to be a perception that SIB is much larger than is the case, with requests for additional support that go beyond its remit.

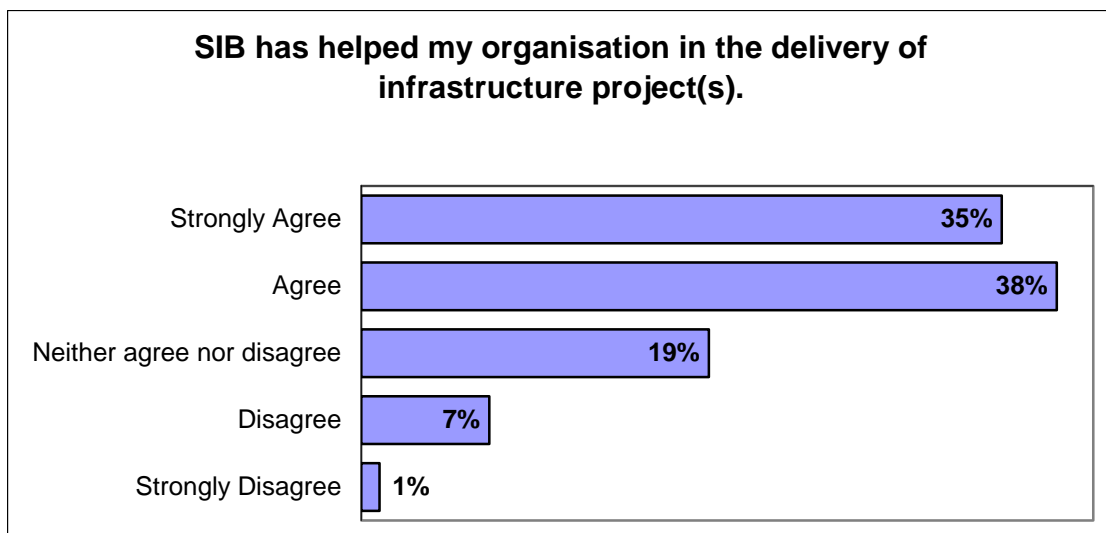
The SIB services that are particularly valued include: the provision of fast access to specialist consultancy skills; programme management and project planning support; the provision of advice on contract and procurement law, economic regulation and corporate finance.

There were requests for greater clarity about the role of SIB at the outset of projects. There was also a general recognition that it was not always easy to define metrics for success. There was a suggestion that lessons learned should be published to help inform future projects.

Results of Online Customer Survey



83% of respondents agree that SIB understands the needs of their organisation. 73% believe that SIB has helped their organisation in the delivery of infrastructure projects.



Where people have answered 'neither agree nor disagree', they have tended to have had limited involvement with projects or advisers.

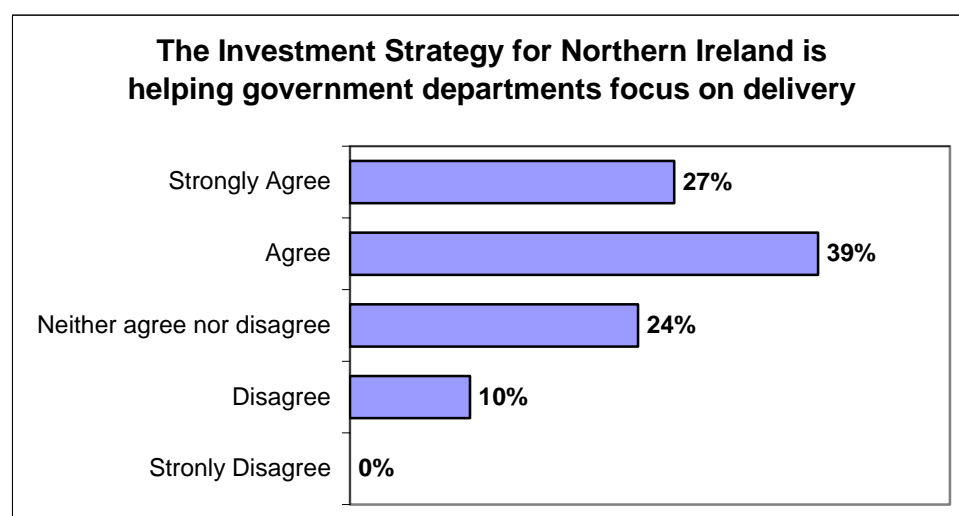
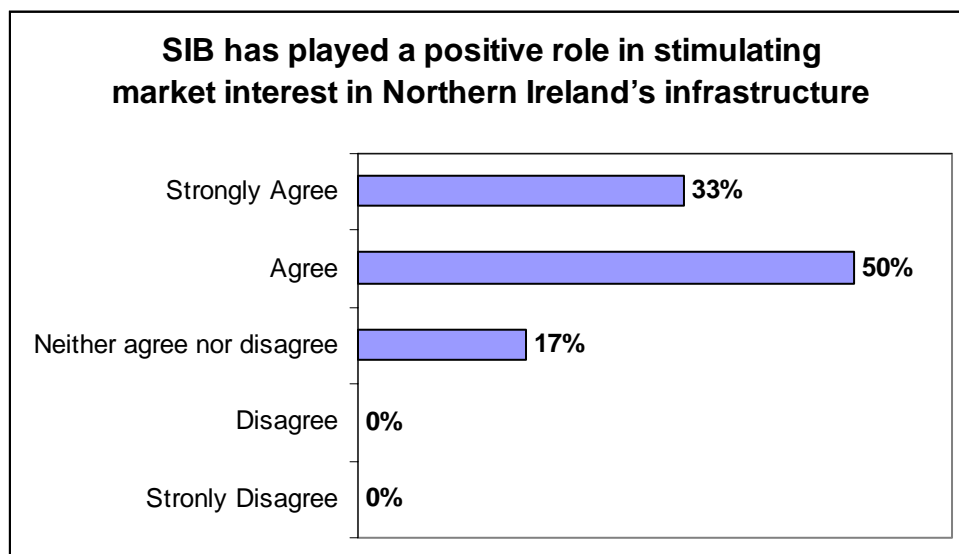
The expertise customers recognised SIB provides includes:

- project board membership & external consultancy management;
- relationship building and "knocking heads together";
- providing a central point to discuss future infrastructure requirements on a cross sectoral basis;

- providing clarity of thought, drive and experience to move investment projects forward;
- helping teams think 'outside the box' as regards how infrastructure should be developed;
- encouraging the market to keep faith and continue investing; and
- overcoming potential bureaucratic obstacles outside customers' control.

Customers were broadly very positive that the SIB was supporting them and their organisations in the successful delivery of projects and many felt reassured when the SIB became involved.

There were some observations that SIB may need additional administrative support and operational consultancy skills which would further support customers. There were also requests for greater clarity about the role SIB plays at the outset of projects.

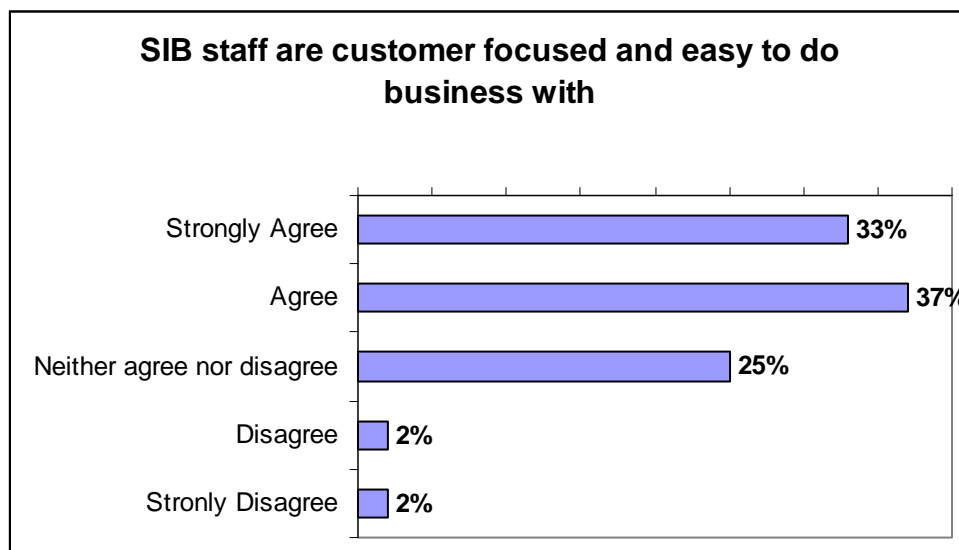
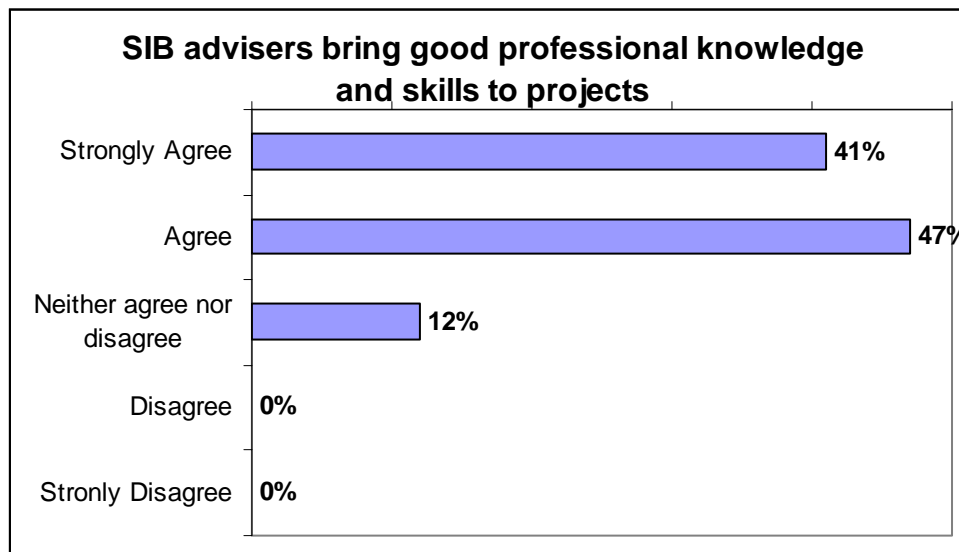


There is a strong acknowledgment that SIB has had a significant impact in stimulating the market and enhanced the chances of successful delivery.

It is generally thought that these skills are being transferred into the public sector.

There was recognition of the importance to the private sector of a steady deal flow. This was matched by concerns about the problems caused to the private sector by stop-start programmes.

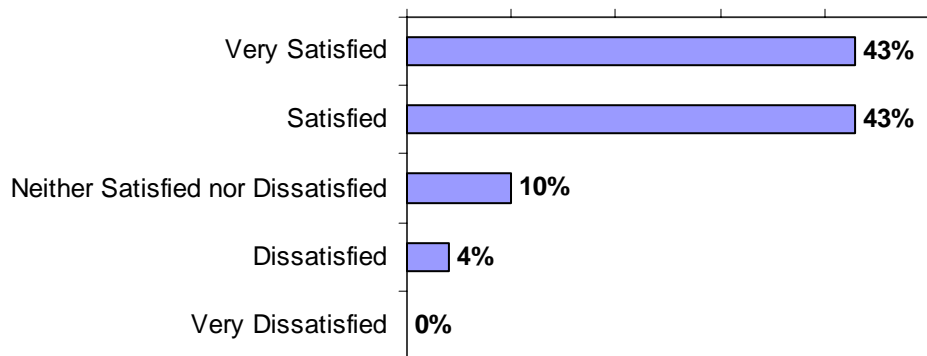
The 10 year approach of the ISNI is thought to be particularly helpful in sensitising Departments to the need to adopt a more strategic and long-term view. However, affordability remains a key concern. ISNI has raised expectations and ISNI 2, with a more detailed look at capital and revenue consequences, could mean substantial changes to existing plans.



Of the respondents who expressed an opinion, 100% agreed that SIB advisers bring good knowledge and experience to projects and demonstrate a depth of knowledge and skill.

There is recognition that there are, at times, creative tensions between SIB and customers. These were described by some respondents as being both frustrating and refreshing.

Overall, how satisfied were you with the quality of service provided by SIB during 2006?



86% respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of service SIB provided in 2006. These figures were supported with additional comments recognising that SIB input has been of the highest quality and has helped move forward many difficult projects. There was recognition that some projects were held back by delays in the decision-making process.

Feedback from NICS Permanent Secretaries

In summary, these senior stakeholders recognised that SIB had:

- Entrepreneurial spirit and vision;
- Strategic approach and technical ability;
- Networking skills;
- Nurtured civil service ambitions;
- Helped ensure issues were paced on the table;
- Stimulated debate
- Built a skills base within NI that is capable of growing further;
- Kept NICS sharp – bringing commercial expertise and driving things forward

The Permanent Secretaries did not agree with some criticisms raised by commentators. In particular they did **not** concur with views that:

- SIB is unaccountable;
- The existing system is perfect;
- There is no place for SIB.

The Permanent Secretaries suggested that:

- SIB should ensure that 'creative tension' is maintained, but in a controlled way that leads to the creation of mutual understanding;
- Set-up an annual review with departments;
- Communicate roles and responsibilities more clearly;
- Build metrics more visibly into its business planning process;
- Examine a broader role for SIB including widening the consultancy role.