



Report Number : ICRR0024742

1. Project Data

Project ID P169921	Program Name Edo BESST PforR	
Country Nigeria	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-67640	Closing Date (Original) 31-Dec-2024	Total Program Cost (USD) 69,234,850.14
Bank Approval Date 25-Aug-2020	Closing Date (Actual) 31-Dec-2024	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	75,000,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	74,877,894.00	0.00
Actual	69,234,850.14	0.00

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2. Program Context and Development Objectives

a. Objectives

As stated in the December 29, 2020, Financing Agreement between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the International Development Association (IDA) (Schedule 1, p. 5), the program's development objective (PDO) was "to improve teaching and learning processes in basic education and expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship development programs for youth in Edo State."



b. Were the program objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

The project was developed to support the Edo State Basic Education and Skills Development Program (BESDP) 2020-2024, which prioritized two pillars: basic education and skills development. The Program for Results (PforR) interventions focused on two main results areas (RAs) aligned with these pillars:

RA1: Accelerated improvement of the teaching and learning processes in basic education through technology and innovation (planned cost: US\$55 million; actual cost/disbursements: US\$52.2 million) through supporting the implementation of six disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) focused on improving teaching and learning in basic education, including:

(a) strengthening the scale-up and institutionalization of the Edo Basic Education Sector and Skills Transformation (EdoBEST) program in public primary schools and Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) to ensure that implementation meets defined minimum criteria for improved quality and accountability, and accelerating system resilience and improvement through supporting the development and implementation of the EdoBEST@Home program to enable remote learning for students outside school.

(b) developing core institutional frameworks and capacity by supporting the creation and implementation of a Basic Education Management Information System (BEMIS) for use in key management functions, the development and implementation of a foundational Learning Assessment Strategy and System (ELAS) for grades 3, 6, and 9, and enhancing teacher quality through quality assurance and accreditation of pre-service programs at the Colleges of Education (CoEs).

RA2: Improved access, quality, and market relevance of digital skills and entrepreneurship training to increase employment opportunities (planned cost: US\$15 million; actual cost/disbursements: US\$15 million) through supporting the implementation of two DLIs focused on governance and training delivery, including:

(a) strengthening the management and governance structure for Edo Innovates, which involved the establishment of a Board of Directors to provide strategic policy guidance, and the establishment of a public-private partnership (PPP) framework to encourage and support private sector participation in training delivery and innovation.

(b) improving access to quality and market-relevant digital skills training to increase employment opportunities by supporting the design and delivery of digital skills and digital entrepreneurship training programs. This effort included curriculum development, the establishment of a Learning Management System (LMS), and the launch of e-learning platforms.

The program also included an investment project financing (IPF) component (planned cost: US\$5 million; actual cost/disbursement: US\$2.4 million) to complement the PforR component. The IPF-financed activities were to support project implementation, procurement, and reporting for DLIs. Specifically, the IPF instrument was intended to support technical assistance (TA) and capacity-building activities, the



procurement of essential goods, monitoring and evaluation systems, and stakeholder engagement to complement the broader program (PAD, p.31).

e. Comments on Program Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Costs/financing: The project was financed by a planned US\$75 million IDA credit. Actual financing was US\$69.56 million, with US\$5.44 million undisbursed and returned to the World Bank (US\$2.8 million from the PforR and US\$2.6 million from the IPF component). The IPF component suffered from persistent implementation challenges and limited capacity, resulting in less than half of planned financing being disbursed.

Borrower Contribution: The Borrower/Recipient's original financing estimate was US\$218 million. The actual expenditure reported by the Borrower was US\$159.28 million, representing 73.1 percent of the appraisal estimate.

Dates: The project was approved on August 25, 2020, and became effective on April 30, 2021. It closed on December 31, 2024, as planned, with no restructurings.

3. Relevance

a. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The project's objectives were closely aligned with prevailing national and World Bank strategies. The project was relevant to the Nigerian context at the time of its appraisal in 2020 because it addressed Nigeria's most pressing developmental challenges, including weak human capital outcomes, poor educational attainment, and high rates of poverty (PAD, p. 8). The nation suffered from weak human capital outcomes, as evidenced by the World Bank's Human Capital Index, which indicated that a child born in Nigeria would be only 36 percent as productive as they could be under ideal conditions. This deficit was underpinned by poor educational attainment, specifically a national average of only 4.25 learning-adjusted years of schooling, highlighting a profound crisis in the quality and efficacy of the basic education system. Furthermore, the operation directly tackled the issue of high rates of poverty, particularly by including a focus on expanding access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship training. By targeting improvements in teaching and learning as well as enhancing youth job readiness, the project aimed to build human capital and create pathways out of poverty in Edo State (PAD, p. 8).

The objectives directly aligned with the government's Economic Sustainability Plan and Nigeria's goal to lift 100 million citizens out of poverty by 2030 (ICR, p. 1). The project directly supported key aspects of the Edo State Government's BESDP 2020–2024, which aimed to transform public education quality through technology (EdoBEST) and address job-relevant training needs (Edo Innovates). The PDO were relevant to the World Bank's FY21-FY25 CPF, supporting its Pillar 2 (Investing in Human Capital). Specifically, the twin objectives addressed: CPF Core Objective 2: increase access to, and quality of, basic education; and CPF Core Objective 6: expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship development programs. The



project was also aligned with Human Capital Project goals and with the World Bank Scorecard indicators related to reducing the number of youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) and increasing the number of youth with digital skills for jobs (ICR, p. 9).

Project design would have benefited from more specific wording of PDO 2, “to expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship development programs for youth in Edo State.” More articulation of the kinds of digital skills to be targeted and specific type of trainings and programs for youth in Edo State would have helped better develop and align the project to the specific context and country needs. Furthermore, there was not a clear definition of what constituted quality skills and entrepreneurship within the specific country context.

Appropriateness of the PforR Instrument. The choice of the hybrid PforR instrument was well-justified given the program context and state capacity:

- **Focus on Results and Ownership:** The PforR approach was appropriate because it successfully shifted the focus to results and outcomes over inputs. This design fostered enhanced government ownership and provided motivation for implementing large-scale, critical reforms across basic education and skills development.
- **System Strengthening:** The instrument was explicitly chosen to address key institutional constraints while strengthening the use of country systems for implementation, including fiduciary and M&E systems.

Hybrid Rationale: The project was designed as a hybrid PforR, with a complementary IPF component (US\$5 million). This TA component was crucial for supporting targeted capacity building, specialized technical support, and the engagement of an independent verification agency (IVA), which mitigated institutional weaknesses inherent in the state’s systems. This approach provided flexibility while maintaining a strong results orientation (ICR, pp. 5, 16).

Rating

High

b. Relevance of DLIs

DLI 1

DLI

Primary schools implementing EdoBEST in line with defined minimum criteria for improved quality and accountability

Rationale

DLI 1 was relevant as it directly supported the achievement of Objective 1: “to improve teaching and learning processes in basic education in Edo State.” The project sought to address weaknesses in basic education, including outdated teaching practices, poor teacher quality (high absenteeism, with 35 percent of school days



missed each month), and institutional oversight issues. This DLI incentivized the crucial step of scaling up the technology-enabled reform initiative, EdoBEST, across all primary schools in the state. Disbursement was tied to verifiable institutional and classroom improvements, ensuring that implementation met defined minimum criteria. These criteria covered essential elements of the reform designed to enhance instructional quality and accountability, including: mandating the use of technology-enabled scripted lessons by at least 80 percent of teachers in the school; strengthening teacher support and management through regular visits (at least three times a year) and coaching by Learning Development Officers (LDOs); establishing quality assurance (QA) measures, requiring QA advisors to visit schools frequently (at least four times a year); and ensuring that learning materials were available for all students (specifically one textbook per three students, and a homework book for every student). By linking substantial financing (US\$15 million) to the expansion and fidelity of the EdoBEST program in primary schools, DLI 1 provided a strong incentive for the government to drive systemic change.

Rating
High

DLI 2
DLI

JSS implementing EdoBEST in line with defined minimum criteria for improved quality and accountability

Rationale

DLI 2 was relevant as it provided essential financial incentives (US\$15 million) to extend the comprehensive EdoBEST technology-enabled reform model from primary schools into junior secondary schools (JSS). This activity directly supported the achievement of Objective 1. The expansion of EdoBEST into JSS was considered critical to ensure continuity of improved quality for students transitioning from primary school, and to better prepare students for subsequent education or employment. It addressed a systemic weakness in basic education by supporting the design, piloting, and comprehensive expansion of strategic interventions to improve teacher effectiveness in JSS.

The DLI's criteria reinforced institutional reforms by linking disbursement to verifiable quality and accountability standards, requiring JSS to meet the same minimum criteria as primary schools, including: (a) technology-enabled scripted lessons (at least 80 percent of teachers using tablets and implementing lesson plans); (b) teacher support and management (LDOs visiting the school at least four times a year and working with at least 80 percent of teachers); (c) quality assurance (QA advisors visiting the school at least four times a year); and (d) availability of learning materials (core set of materials: one textbook per three students and a homework book for every student).

This DLI was designed to comprehensively cover the program cycle, from development through implementation and evaluation. This included requiring a pilot study to compare the performance of JSS implementing EdoBEST against control schools to determine effectiveness and identify areas for improvement, followed by scaling up based on evaluation findings.

Rating



High

DLI 3

DLI

Development and implementation of EdoBEST@Home program to support students outside school

Rationale

DLI 3 addressed the need for system resilience and sustainability in the basic education sector, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatened learning disruptions and exacerbated existing inequalities (ICR, p. 1). This DLI, allocated US\$10 million, was designed to incentivize key institutional performance improvements and system resilience, supporting Objective 1. The DLI focused on developing and implementing the EdoBEST@Home program, an adaptation of the core EdoBEST initiative designed to support remote learning for students when they were outside school (ICR, p. 12). Key activities incentivized by this DLI included:

- Developing digital self-study activity packs for students (grades 1 to 9 and early childhood education).
- Distributing learning materials through multiple channels (multimodal), including audio files, mobile phones, online platforms, and the messaging platform WhatsApp.
- Migrating the initial platform (mostly WhatsApp groups) to an LMS, where each student received a profile with targeted learning materials (lesson videos, study packs, quizzes) and a parent dashboard for monitoring engagement.
- Developing mandatory online course content for teachers focused on digital skills, pedagogy for remote learning, learning assessment, and recovery of learning loss.

Rating

High

DLI 4

DLI

Development and implementation of the Basic Education Management Information System (BEMIS) with use in key management functions

Rationale

DLI 4 focused on institutional performance and sustainability, playing a critical role in addressing fundamental weaknesses in education governance and management data systems in Edo State, thereby supporting Objective 1. At the start of the project, the education system suffered from a lack of education data management systems. Although data were collected on teachers, there was limited use of these data to inform decision-making. The implementation of the tech-enabled EdoBEST initiative made the need for robust data systems, management information, and accountability even more critical. DLI 4 provided an avenue for the Edo State government to develop and institutionalize the BEMIS. The PAD specified that the creation and implementation of BEMIS include, at minimum, student, teacher, principal, school, and school-based management committee data. The PAD further specified that implementation should include integrating BEMIS as part of accounting and data management operations, and that BEMIS be used as the main source



of education system data for producing summary reports and a host of activities related to system management and accountability (PAD, p. 80).

Rating
High

DLI 5
DLI

Development and implementation of a Learning Assessment Strategy and System

Rationale

DLI 5 was designed to incentivize improvements in institutional performance and results critical for monitoring achievement of Objective 1. The rationale behind DLI 5 (allocated US\$5 million) was rooted in the understanding that increased student learning is the aim of the EdoBEST program. A key priority for the State was the establishment of a robust learning assessment strategy and system that allows for the periodic measurement of student learning and tracking of progress, specifically, on learning standards set in mathematics and English for grades 3, 6 and 9. The learning standards were to include elements of “declarative, procedural, schematic, and strategic knowledge that, as a body, define the specific content for each level.” They were to be defined in practical terms and formally endorsed by the Governor of Edo State (PAD, p. 81). These learning standards were completed within the first year of the project. This DLI directly supported the development of the Edo Learning Assessment System (ELAS), which was to serve multiple critical functions in the results chain, including establishing literacy and numeracy learning standards in primary grades 3 and 6, and JSS 3; developing learning assessments; and capacity building to align the national curriculum with the Global Proficiency Framework.

Rating
High

DLI 6
DLI

Quality assurance and accreditation of pre-service programs

Rationale

DLI 6 was intended to incentivize improvements in institutional performance and guarantee the long-term sustainability of quality improvements in basic education (supporting Objective 1). The project identified that developing highly qualified teachers through the CoEs was the most sustainable way of improving education quality while simultaneously reducing the cost of in-service training. Prior to the project, the three existing CoEs in Edo State were not accredited and relied on an old, theoretical curriculum that failed to provide student teachers with the necessary pedagogical content knowledge and skills required for teaching in the basic education sector (ICR, p. 11). DLI 6 targeted systemic reform by incentivizing the government to establish and staff a new CoE with a Quality Assurance unit, providing training to staff to follow National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) toolkit guidelines, undertake QA self-assessments, and undergo the accreditation process in Nigeria. By linking disbursement to these structural reforms, DLI 6 was



intended to ensure that the state developed a sustainable system for producing high-quality teacher candidates aligned with the modern teaching methodologies emphasized in the EdoBEST program.

However, there was lack of specificity on the amount of training to be conducted and lack of clear definition in the wording of the disbursement-linked results (DLRs) under the DLI. For instance, in DLR 6.4, “adequate faculty and programs have been put in place for at least 3 new NCE pre-service programs,” “adequate” was not defined, and it was not specified how adequacy would be measured.

Rating

Substantial

DLI 7

DLI

Establishment of a governance structure to provide strategic, policy guidance including establishment of a PPP model to encourage and support private sector participation in training delivery and innovation

Rationale

DLI 7 was designed to prompt institutional reforms required to achieve Objective 2, “to expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship development programs for youth in Edo State.” At the time of the project’s design, the state-run Edo Innovates program, aimed at equipping youth with digital skills, faced critical governance and institutional gaps. Specifically, the program lacked a Board of Directors to promote good governance and lacked an institutional framework and resources necessary for effective private sector participation.

DLI 7 (US\$10 million) addressed these gaps by incentivizing the following critical outcomes: (a) establishing governance and oversight, and (b) encouraging PPPs. The successful establishment of this governance structure and the PPP framework was a critical first step, but the roles and responsibilities of the governance structure and its place in supporting achievement of PDO 2 remained unclear. The PAD and the ICR did not clearly outline the verification protocols for the DLI (PAD, p. 83), which state: “The Edo State ICT Agency will verify the creation of the governance structure and the establishment of an enabling environment to encourage private sector participation by auditing the records of the Board including minutes of meetings, reviewing and verifying the frameworks that have been created to encourage private sector participation, and producing reports to confirm the above.” It was not clear, however, what exactly the Board expected to do, or how its input and impact would be measured. Similarly, it was not clear how the impact of the PPP model would be measured.

Rating

Modest

DLI 8

DLI

Delivery of digital skills and digital entrepreneurship trainings



Rationale

DLI 8 represented the main output-level achievement metric for Objective 2. This DLI aimed to address Nigeria's need to diversify its economy, tackle high youth unemployment (especially through digital skills), and close the gender gap in technology participation. The underlying rationale emphasized that the greatest challenge with digital skills delivery in Nigeria was often that the curriculum was not relevant to the private sector or did not address pressing skills gaps, leaving certified youth unemployed. DLI 8 provided financial incentives for the delivery of digital skills and entrepreneurship training programs that were aligned with private sector needs, such as online work and micro-work, that have global market demand.

However, the DLI itself specified neither the kinds of training to be provided nor details about benchmarks to be achieved, beyond the number of beneficiaries to be trained. DLRs 8.1 - 8.4 specified "digital skills and digital entrepreneurship training per criteria set out in the Verification Protocol," but the verification protocol was vague, stating that "the content of the training will be developed in partnership with the private sector to ensure that the training will be based on curriculum that is mapped to industry-demanded digital skills gaps, thereby creating a competitive digitally literate, tech-savvy young workforce (PAD, p. 84)." It was unclear from the protocol how the private sector would participate in the development of the curriculum to ensure that it responded to industry needs. The DLI also did not refer to the quality of the training, leaving that part of the second objective, on *quality* programs, unaddressed in the DLIs.

Rating

Modest

OVERALL RELEVANCE RATING

Rationale

The project objectives and core incentives established by the DLIs remained consistently aligned with the strategic priorities of the Edo State government, the development needs of Nigeria, and the World Bank Group's country strategy at the time of appraisal and throughout implementation.

PDO 1 addressed Nigeria's fundamental development challenge of weak human capital outcomes, where children were expected to achieve only 36 percent of their potential productivity due to low educational attainment and poor health.

PDO 2 supported the Edo State government's comprehensive BESDP 2020–2024. However, the wording of the PDO was vague, and as a result, it was left unaddressed how the expansion of quality digital education would respond to the diversifying needs of the Nigerian economy and in what sectors such education would carry the potential to tackle high youth unemployment and underemployment. By prioritizing digital skills through the Edo Innovates initiative, the objective aligned with the Bank's goal of reducing NEET youth and corresponded to CPF Core Objective 6, focusing on expanding access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship programs, but more clarity was needed to understand more precisely the nature of the alignment.



The selection of the hybrid PforR instrument was appropriate because it successfully leveraged the government’s commitment to reform and its prior experience with results-based projects. By focusing on outcomes rather than inputs, the PforR design was intended to foster strong government ownership. The inclusion of a small IPF component (US\$5 million) was seen as important for capacity building and engaging an IVA, mitigating inherent institutional capacity risks and strengthening country systems.

PDO 1 was clearly defined and strategically important, and the chosen DLIs were appropriate incentive mechanisms to achieve systemic reforms in basic education. PDO 2 was strategically important, but the DLIs could have been more clearly defined at the outset to specify how digital skills training and the use of the PPP model would improve youth employment and private sector participation, and how the quality of the training programs was to be incentivized and measured.

Rating
Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To improve teaching and learning processes in basic education in Edo State

Rationale

Objective 1 sought to address critical human capital challenges in Edo State, focusing on weaknesses such as outdated teaching practices, a lack of education data management systems (including learning assessment systems), and fragmented governance in basic education. The program’s theory of change aimed to strengthen foundational learning by supporting key reforms, including the restructuring of teacher training institutions, the deployment of technology-enabled pedagogy, and the distribution of digital tools to standardize curriculum delivery. These interventions aimed to directly tackle classroom-level inefficiencies, improve instructional quality, and enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. This theory of change was sound, as the core links between planned interventions and improved outcomes were plausible and logical. The critical assumptions, particularly those relating to implementation continuity and institutional capacity, were validated by the successful establishment of foundational mechanisms and achievement of DLI targets.

Outputs and Intermediate Outcomes

The achievement of Objective 1 was heavily driven by DLIs 1–6, which focused on scaling the EdoBEST program, developing resilient educational systems, improving institutional performance, and strengthening teacher quality.

Scaling and Quality Implementation of EdoBEST (DLI 1 & DLI 2)



- DLI 1: Primary schools implementing EdoBEST in line with defined minimum criteria for improved quality and accountability: The target for implementation in primary schools was substantially achieved. By project closing, 92 percent of primary schools were implementing EdoBEST in line with the defined minimum criteria. The overall quality of teaching practices measured by a composite score for primary schools reached 71.1 in 2024, against a target of 71.9.
- DLI 2: JSS implementing EdoBEST in line with defined minimum criteria for improved quality and accountability: The deployment of EdoBEST was extended to JSSs. By the end of the project, 96 percent of JSSs were meeting the defined minimum criteria for implementation. The overall quality of teaching practices in JSSs measured by a composite score reached 88.6 against a target of 71.1, exceeding the target.

System Strengthening and Resiliency (DLI 3, DLI 4, DLI 5)

- DLI 3: Development and implementation of EdoBEST@Home program to support students outside school: The development and scaling of the EdoBEST@Home program was a substantial achievement of the project, aimed at system resilience. By project closing, 89.87 percent of primary and JSS students had access to @Home program resources, exceeding the 70 percent target. The platform migrated from WhatsApp groups to a fully functional LMS.
- DLI 4: Development and implementation of BEMIS with use in key management functions: DLI 4 incentivized the development and institutionalization of the BEMIS. The establishment of BEMIS contributed significantly to improving teaching and learning processes by supporting data-driven policy and decision-making.
- DLI 5: Development and implementation of a Learning Assessment Strategy and System: This DLI supported monitoring of student progress and system performance. The government successfully completed the planned two rounds of census-based learning assessment in English and Mathematics for grades 3, 6, and 9. The formal implementation of the revised assessment system occurred in July 2024, completing all DLRs for DLI 5.

Pre-Service Teacher Training (DLI 6)

DLI 6: Quality assurance and accreditation of pre-service programs: This DLI supported the longer-term vision for developing qualified teachers through the CoEs. The government issued a policy establishing a new CoE by merging three existing colleges. The CoE established a QA unit and conducted two self-assessments. During implementation, the CoE was accredited, along with programs at three campuses (Abudu, Afuze, and Igueben). Enrollment significantly increased, with 478 students enrolled in the new accredited programs, exceeding the 200-student target.

Outcomes

The collective achievements under these DLIs led to systemic change and a paradigm shift in the delivery of basic education, including marked improvements in teacher attendance (increasing from 63 percent in 2018/19 to 82 percent in 2023/24). This result is indicative of improved teaching and learning processes (per the objective), but no data were provided on actual improvements in student achievement.



Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship development programs for youth in Edo State

Rationale

Objective 2 focused on strengthening the governance structure of Edo Innovates (DLI 7) and delivering market-relevant digital skills training (DLI 8). The theory of change under this objective aimed to address 21st-century workforce demands by expanding access to market-aligned training through PPPs, e-learning platforms, and innovation hubs. The interventions aimed to enable youth to acquire digital competencies necessary for high-growth fields, though these competencies were not clearly specified from the outset of the project. The intention of this objective was to improve employability and digital entrepreneurship opportunities. Establishing private sector partnerships was a critical step for ensuring that training programs focused on relevant, demanded skills, but the theory of change failed to make the clear operational link between the digital skills training provided and promotion of youth employment Edo State. The theory of change lacked specificity in the operationalization of the DLIs to adequately validate the critical assumption that establishing a strong governance structure (DLI 7) and forging private sector partnerships (DLI 8) would deliver high-quality, market-relevant training. Moreover, the ICR does not discuss in detail how the content from the training was developed and how the trainings were implemented.

Outputs and Intermediate Outcomes

Reinforcing governance of the skills development system (DLI 7)

- DLI 7: Establishment of governance structure to provide strategic and policy guidance, including establishment of a PPP model to encourage and support private sector participation in training delivery at innovation. The project supported the creation of a Board of Directors for Edo Innovates, including private sector participation. The Board holds regular quarterly meetings. A PPP framework for the design and implementation of training programs for Edo Innovates was developed. The Board signed 23 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the private sector for training design and delivery, exceeding the end target of 20 partnerships for training design and delivery (PDO 4). This result was achieved as of November 2024.

Providing quality, market-relevant training programs for selected economic sectors (DLI 8)

- DLI 8: Delivery of digital skills and digital entrepreneurship trainings. By project closing, 42,011 youths had benefited from the training, exceeding the overall target of 40,000 youth trained. The male sub-target (20,000) was exceeded, with the training reaching 24,367 young men. The female sub-target (20,000) was substantially achieved (88 percent achieved), reaching 17,644 female youth. Females constituted 42 percent of all youth trained. However, the indicator called for delivery of “quality, market-relevant” training programs, and project documents do not provide evidence on the quality or market relevance of the training provided.



Outcomes

The project met the target of training at least 40,000 youth. Training programs included digital skills such as digital literacy, web development, cyber security, data analysis, and entrepreneurship that were developed in conjunction with the private sector. However, the ICR did not describe how the private sector was involved in this process, nor did it provide information to substantiate the quality of training. With limited information on this key part of the objective, achievement of the objective is rated Modest.

Rating
Modest

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Overall efficacy is rated as Substantial with caveats related to the modest efficacy of objective 2. The project targeted two results areas: improving basic education (Objective 1) and expanding access to quality digital skills (Objective 2). Achievement under Objective 1 (Improve teaching and learning processes in basic education) was rated Substantial. By project closing, the EdoBEST program had been rolled out to over 99 percent of all primary and Junior Secondary Schools (JSSs) in the state. Crucially, 92 percent of primary schools and 96 percent of JSSs were implementing EdoBEST in line with established minimum criteria. The project successfully incentivized systemic improvements, including the development of resilient education delivery systems through the EdoBEST@Home program, which saw 89.87 percent of students gaining access to its resources. Additionally, institutional performance improved significantly, evidenced by the marked increase in teacher attendance, rising from 63 percent in 2018/19 to 82 percent in 2023/24. Quality reforms were also implemented in pre-service teacher training, leading to the accreditation of the CoE and three programs, exceeding the enrollment target with 478 students.

Achievement under Objective 2 (Expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship development programs) is rated Modest. Key details— how beneficiaries were selected to participate in trainings, and how the training provided was market-relevant and of high quality—were unclear from the ICR and related project documents. The project successfully delivered training, with 42,011 youth benefiting, thereby exceeding the PDO target of 40,000 beneficiaries. System strengthening was reportedly achieved through DLI 7, which incentivized the establishment of a governance structure for Edo Innovates, including the development of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework, though the ICR reports little about how this happened or what lessons can be learned from the process. The resulting engagement saw the signing of 23 MoUs with the private sector for training design and delivery, surpassing the end target of 20 partnerships.

Attribution. The outcomes achieved, particularly the systemic changes in basic education and skills delivery, are plausibly attributable to the Bank-supported project. The DLIs acted as powerful incentives, ensuring institutional strengthening and driving implementation of critical reforms. For instance, the financial support from the project was crucial, contributing approximately 25 percent of the per-student recurrent cost for running the EdoBEST program, which was the direct incentive needed for the government to scale the program across nearly all schools. This resulted in a fundamental change where teachers transitioned to



using digital devices with scripted lessons, complemented by an institutionalized feedback loop established by Learning Development Officers and Quality Assurance Officers. This system and the subsequent rise in teacher attendance demonstrate a link between the project's funding mechanism and achieved outcomes.

Counterfactual. Without project support, the results and systemic shifts observed would likely not have materialized. The project played a pivotal role in implementing the BESDP, as other donors were not supporting the government program in the specific areas receiving project support. By structuring the project as a PforR, the Bank ensured that funds were contingent upon measurable results, mitigating the risk that political or budgetary commitments would wane during implementation. It is important to note that without the necessary financial assistance, the Edo State government would not have been able to fund the large-scale interventions required to expand EdoBEST across the entire public primary and JSS system. Therefore, in the absence of the project, the pace of reform would have been constrained, limiting the scaling of EdoBEST, the establishment of learning assessment systems, and the institutionalization of the PPP model in digital skills training (Edo Innovates).

Rating
Substantial

5. Outcome

The PDO remained relevant throughout the program's implementation, aligning closely with Nigeria's national priorities and the World Bank's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for FY20–FY24. The project aligned with the CPF's Pillar 2, focusing on investing in human capital, and specifically on increasing access to and quality of basic education and expanding access to quality digital skills. The program's design directly addressed critical gaps in Edo State, such as outdated teaching practices, fragmented governance, and limited labor market relevance in digital skills training.

The EdoBEST program was successfully scaled up to over 99 percent of all primary and Junior Secondary Schools (JSSs). Implementation fidelity was high, with 92 percent of primary schools and 96 percent of JSSs implementing EdoBEST in line with established minimum criteria. The project also established foundational systems like the Edo Learning Assessment System and the BEMIS. Institutional performance improved significantly, notably evidenced by the marked increase in teacher attendance from 63 percent in 2018/19 to 82 percent in 2023/24. Furthermore, the proportional target for students accessing the EdoBEST@Home program was exceeded, reaching 89.87 percent against a 70 percent target. Access to digital skills training expanded, with 42,011 youths benefiting from training, exceeding the 40,000 target. Institutional governance was strengthened by the establishment of a Board of Directors for Edo Innovates and the development of a PPP framework. This framework resulted in the signing of 23 MoUs with the private sector for training design and delivery, exceeding the 20-partnership target. However, no evidence was provided to demonstrate the quality or market relevance of the training, per the objective.

Relevance was High, and Efficacy was Substantial (with the caveat that achievement of one of the two objectives was rated Modest). Overall Outcome was Moderately Satisfactory, reflecting moderate shortcomings in the project's preparation, implementation, and results.



Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

6. Risk to Development Outcome

The risk to sustaining the project's development outcome is deemed substantial. This risk primarily stems from two critical areas: (a) governance continuity and (b) insufficient institutional capacity resulting in heavy reliance on external partners.

An overarching risk is related to governance, specifically the change in administration in November 2024. While the new administration indicated that it would continue the reforms/initiatives supported by the project at the time of the ICR, a lack of immediate, firm commitment poses a threat to continuity. Effective mobilization of political support and robust budget allocations are critical mitigation measures needed to preserve the achieved progress.

This substantial risk is compounded by the heavy reliance on a third-party technical partner for DLIs 1 and 2 (EdoBEST implementation), whose ongoing engagement entails substantial costs. If political will and budgetary commitments decline, or if cost-effective alternatives are not pursued, the quality and continuity of EdoBEST could be compromised. Furthermore, the lack of a dedicated learning assessment team means that staffing for the regular administration of learning assessments and the BEMIS is drawn from multiple units without a clear institutional mandate or dedicated budget, putting these systems at risk. The overlapping of responsibilities between the State Ministry of Education (SMoE) and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) further challenges system performance sustainability. A key lesson for overcoming reliance on the technical partner and ensuring long-term sustainability is to embed structured, intentional processes for knowledge transfer and capacity-building.

7. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The preparation team ensured that the project's design was directly related to the BESDP (2020-2024). The design was also closely aligned with the World Bank's 2020-2024 CPF (Pillar 2: Investing in Human Capital) and Nigeria's Human Capital Project. The PDOs were clear: to improve teaching and learning in basic education and expand access to quality digital skills and entrepreneurship programs for youth.

The project's use of a hybrid PforR instrument leveraged government systems, policies, and programs to incentivize critical reforms. The RAs and DLIs were strategically designed, directly linked to the PDO, and considered appropriate for measuring progress. The design also incorporated forward-looking features, such as supporting the EdoBEST@Home program to build a resilient education system capable of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and future shocks. Furthermore, the technical design leveraged international best practices, such as structured pedagogy (EdoBEST) and the World Bank's TEACH instrument (Teaching, Effectiveness, Assessment, Coaching, Help) for assessing classroom practices.



The institutional arrangements for the program involved using government systems for implementation, fiduciary, safeguards, M&E, and reporting. The implementing agencies were SUBEB, SMOE, and the Edo State Skills Development Agency. A Project Implementation Unit (PIU) was established within SUBEB. The design included an IPF component specifically for technical assistance, capacity development, and procurement of key goods, mitigating institutional and implementation risks that were rated Substantial overall at appraisal. M&E design was underpinned by a clear theory of change and the inclusion of an IVA to verify DLR achievements.

However, the preparation team could have better anticipated and planned for the particular challenges arising from the overlapping mandates and institutional fragmentation between SUBEB and the SMOE in the basic education sector. This failure to decisively address institutional competition, including with the design and clear measurement for all DLIs from the outset, created ongoing inefficiencies and coordination issues that were never fully resolved during implementation. With this moderate shortcoming, Quality at Entry is rated Moderately Satisfactory.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank team provided strong, consistent implementation support throughout the operation. The team maintained continuity despite a turnover in Task Team Leaders (TTL), as several original team members remained present. Supervision focused strongly on system capacity development. The team was proactive in securing external funding through trust funds like the Mastercard Foundation and the Accelerator Program to deepen technical assistance. These resources effectively helped cover the capacity development gap created by the underutilization of the IPF component.

Project delays were caused by a combination of initial external shocks, persistent institutional fragmentation, and critical fiduciary weaknesses (ICR, p. 48). A major initial delay stemmed from the protracted approval process of the Borrowing Plan by the National Assembly, shortening the implementation period by about four months. Early implementation was also impacted by exogenous factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused widespread lockdowns and travel restrictions. Throughout the operation, internal institutional challenges proved complex, notably the fragmentation and weak coordination between the SMOE and SUBEB, which led to operational inefficiencies and delays in core initiatives, including developing the BEMIS, establishment of a learning assessment system. Additionally, the IPF component was significantly delayed and underutilized because the primary focus remained on the PforR activities, with those delays exacerbated by limited implementation capacity and persistently slow procurement processes for necessary goods and services. Finally, periods lacking strong political leadership also adversely affected the project.

The IPF component, which allocated \$5 million for technical assistance and procurement of goods, suffered from significant underutilization, disbursing only 47.52 percent of its funds by the operation's closing date. This outcome was largely attributed to the initial decision to prioritize PforR activities. A major challenge throughout implementation was the limited implementation capacity of the government and the persistence of slow procurement processes for goods and services intended for the PIU and new digital innovation hubs. In interviews, the TTL noted that changes in government and ministry staff slowed



implementation of this process as well (TTL Interview, October 2025). The inherent institutional fragmentation and weak coordination between the SMOE and SUBEB exacerbated these operational inefficiencies, particularly affecting the IPF component. These issues resulted in a key financial management consequence: the IPF Designated Account remained inactive for a period of 16 months.

The team responded effectively to these implementation bottlenecks, including coordinating support during the COVID-19 pandemic through alternative virtual means. Crucially, the team was proactive in engaging the Executive Governor to seek solutions for the conflicts and institutional fragmentation between the SMOE and SUBEB. Supervision inputs, including ISRs and mid-term review issue papers, demonstrated high candor, quality, and thoroughness. The team also conducted tailored procurement clinics to address bottlenecks. However, challenges associated with the utilization of the IPF component persisted throughout implementation. Based on the proactive resolution of threats and sustained support, Bank Supervision is rated Satisfactory.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

8. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The operation's M&E design was sound and based on PDO that remained unchanged throughout implementation. The theory of change was mostly sound, linking activities—such as deploying technology-enabled pedagogy and strengthening governance—to expected outcomes like improved teaching and learning processes and expanded access to digital skills. The theory of change, however, was less clear around PDO 2, where DLIs 7 and 8 were not well defined in the verification protocols in the PAD from the outset (PAD, pp. 83-84).

The results framework contained PDO-level indicators, intermediate results indicators (IRIs) for both PDOs, and DLIs/DLRs. These indicators were strategically designed to establish necessary structures and frameworks for systemic reform, though the DLIs for results area 1 were much more clearly defined than those for results area 2.

Key M&E mechanisms included:

1. **System Development:** M&E design required the development and implementation of the BEMIS, critical for improved data collection and decision-making, and long-term sustainability. It was explicitly designed to incorporate data produced in the EdoBEST program as a backup measure, should the technical partner's contract be terminated.
2. **Assessment:** The design incentivized the creation of the Edo Learning Assessment Strategy and System (DLI 5) to allow for periodic measurement of student learning and tracking of progress.



3. **Verification and Quality:** The M&E system included a technically sound and credible protocol for monitoring and verification of DLIs. Importantly, the design included the contracting of an IVA, financed through the IPF component, which was responsible for verifying the achievement of all DLIs/DLRs. The IVA was not only to assess performance but also provide recommendations to encourage improvements in implementation. Furthermore, the PDO indicator for classroom quality leveraged a composite score measured through the EdoBEST lesson observation instrument, which was aligned with the World Bank's TEACH instrument.

The inclusion of these foundational systems (BEMIS, ELAS) and independent verification enhanced the credibility and transparency of results reporting. The M&E design was generally sufficient to assess the achievement of objectives and test the links in the results chain.

However, it became a challenge that baselines and targets were not defined at appraisal for all key metrics, notably the quality of teaching practices (PDO 1) and teacher absence (IRI 1.1, IRI 1.2), due to a lack of appropriate data at the time. Although the results framework often designated the baseline date as October 31, 2019, the actual numerical values for these critical indicators remained undetermined ("TBD") at project entry and were subsequently defined and formalized later, mostly during the mid-term review. This necessitated reliance on newly established metrics, complicating the measurement of the full incremental change attributable to the project from its official inception. Despite this initial challenge in completeness, the project successfully met or exceeded targets against the refined M&E framework once these baselines were established and incorporated into the design (ICR, p. 10; TTL Interview, Oct 2025).

b. M&E Implementation

The M&E implementation system successfully tracked progress, conducted rigorous verification, and delivered key institutional components despite initial capacity and procurement delays. Reporting of selected performance indicators was carried out throughout the project, and the results framework was updated in a timely manner for supervision missions and the mid-term review. The IVA was contracted and successfully conducted independent assessments of DLI/DLR achievements, with IVA reports being used to validate DLI/DLR reports and disburse IDA resources.

The project achieved significant outputs in institutionalizing data systems, including development of the BEMIS and ELAS, and the government conducted the first census-based learning assessment in English and mathematics in March 2023. The teacher observation tool was developed and institutionalized, establishing an effective feedback loop used by LDOs and Quality Assurance Officers during school visits.

Although initial challenges existed due to PIU capacity constraints, these were addressed by recruiting two new M&E officers in 2023, leading to stronger M&E practices in the latter years and final M&E reports that were data-driven due to links established with the BEMIS.

c. M&E Utilization

According to the ICR, M&E data and findings were systematically used to manage the operation, validate results for disbursement, and inform policy decisions, demonstrating effective utilization throughout implementation (ICR, p. 20). IVA reports were critical components of utilization, serving to



validate DLI/DLR reports and authorize the disbursement of IDA resources. A discrepancy identified between government estimates (97 percent) and IVA reports (82 percent) on schools implementing EdoBEST demonstrated the utility of independent verification in accurately assessing achievement according to the verification protocol.

The established systems generated actionable feedback. The teacher observation tool, aligned with the World Bank's TEACH instrument, and its use by LDOs has led to the institutionalization of a feedback loop that supports teacher capacity and development. Teachers credited LDO coaching with helping them develop pedagogical skills and resolve technological problems. The data from the learning assessments (ELAS) conducted in March 2023 and July 2024 were instrumental in bringing learning outcomes to the forefront of basic education policy discussions and decisions. These data also informed the government, LDOs/Quality Assurance Officers, and teachers about gaps in learning where attention needed to be focused. EdoBEST implementation reviews and evaluations were conducted (DLRs 1.7, 2.8, 3.9), and were intended to inform the state on future program development and focus areas.

Data collection mechanisms like the BEMIS were implemented to enable data-driven policy and decision-making. The pre-service quality assurance mechanism was established (DLI 6) and has been institutionalized, signaling its planned use for future accreditation of programs. Reports analyzing the sustainability of Edo Innovates were also planned to underpin future funding models and governance structures.

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

9. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

At appraisal, an Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (ESSA) determined that adverse environmental and social risks and impacts of the operation were not expected to be significant or detrimental. The IPF component also had a Low Social and Environmental Risk classification (PAD, p. 2). The main environmental impact anticipated was the generation of e-waste associated with the distribution of electronic devices (tablets and smartphones) for the EdoBEST program (DLIs 1 and 2). The ESSA and a Stakeholder Engagement Plan were developed and publicly disclosed in June 2020 and August 2020, respectively, in-country at relevant government agencies. The social risks primarily related to Core Principle 5, addressing the needs of vulnerable people (women/girl child, orphans, people with disabilities). Specific risks included sexual abuse and gender-based violence (GBV/SEA) in schools and innovation hubs, exclusion of persons with disabilities due to lack of physical access or appropriate resources, and safety concerns stemming from lack of perimeter fencing and adequate gender-sensitive sanitation facilities in schools. The Program Action Plan (PAP) included measures to strengthen systems, including a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). Guidelines for mainstreaming stakeholder engagement on environmental, health, and safety issues were completed and operationalized by September 2023, and an Environmental and Social Specialist was contracted to engage with the team. Plans were developed to incorporate provisions for orphaned and vulnerable children and to provide adequate, gender-sensitive, and disability-accessible sanitation facilities. Implementation and compliance of safeguards were adequate and implemented correctly (TTL interview). The operation's GRM was fully operational from effectiveness,



offering multiple reporting channels like drop boxes, and was overseen by trained Social Mobilization Officers with an established referral pathway for sensitive issues like sexual exploitation and abuse SEA/GBV. Between 2021 and 2024, the GRM handled 26 reported cases, 20 identified as GBV, all of which were resolved before the operation's closure through comprehensive services, leading Bank management to recognize the GRM as one of the best in their Nigeria portfolio due to beneficiary trust (ICR, p. 21).

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management. The project's original financial management (FM) arrangements remained unchanged throughout implementation. The overall integrated fiduciary risk (FM, procurement, and governance) was initially rated Moderate and remained so throughout the operation's lifetime. The operation adhered to financial reporting requirements. Unaudited interim financial reports (IFRs) were deemed satisfactory and submitted on time. The IPF component's accounting relied on the existing Edo State FM system, which was reported at appraisal as being in reasonably good order (ICR, p. 21). External financial audits were successfully carried out, and the reports were submitted on time and were generally of unqualified opinion (clean reports). The external auditor recruitment was finalized by the project's closing. The internal audit function for the PIU was rated satisfactory. Several fiduciary systems actions included in the PAP were reported as completed by September 2023, including introducing a risk-based internal audit, submitting an annual procurement report to the legislature, and ensuring the existence of a functional records management system by storing procurement records in fire-resistant equipment.

Despite the overall adequate performance, FM arrangements were challenged by persistent issues with the use of the IPF portion of the project. This led to an inactive designated account for a period of 16 months. By the project closing date of December 31, 2024, there were still undisbursed funds in the IPF component. Only 47.5 percent of the IPF funding was disbursed, compared to 96.0 percent of the PforR funding. FM supervisions identified areas needing strengthening, including record-keeping/statement reconciliation and advance justification, though these specific issues were resolved by project closing. The ICR's rating of FM as Moderately Satisfactory reflects overall adequate FM compliance and successful external auditing, balanced against challenges with effective utilization and management of the funds allocated to the IPF component (ICR, p. 21).

Procurement. As noted above, the overall integrated fiduciary risk (FM, procurement, and governance) was initially rated as Moderate. The PAP included mitigation measures to strengthen procurement systems. By project closing, key PAP actions related to procurement were completed, including ensuring that the Public Procurement Agency submitted the annual procurement report to the legislature and that all procurement records were stored in fire-resistant equipment, with proper facilities to maintain a functional records management system.

However, the procurement of goods and services for the IPF component remained slow throughout the implementation period. These persistent delays hindered the effective contracting and delivery of equipment and materials needed for key activities, such as the establishment of two new digital innovation hubs, and contributed to the overall underutilization of IPF resources. An initial procurement delay for BEMIS, related to identifying the platform and funding source, also contributed to slower progress on this DLI. The Bank team provided extensive support to address these challenges, including working closely with the PIU, providing additional technical support, conducting tailored procurement clinics with



implementing units (SMoE, SUBEB, and the Edo State Skills Development Agency), and providing capacity building. Delays persisted, however, and some planned activities were ultimately dropped.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

10. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Modest achievement of Objective 2, with little evidence provided on the quality or market relevance of training supported by the project
Bank Performance	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial	
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

11. Lessons

The lessons identified in the ICR focus primarily on strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability, quality, and effectiveness of basic education and skills reforms. The following lessons are drawn from some of the six lessons and recommendations presented in the ICR (pp. 23-24):

Lesson 1: Prioritizing Knowledge Transfer for Long-Term Sustainability: The rapid scaling of the EdoBEST program was facilitated by reliance on a third-party technical provider. However, this heavy reliance, coupled with the partner's proprietary intellectual property and limited knowledge transfer to government counterparts, poses significant sustainability risks. A key lesson is the need to embed structured, intentional knowledge transfer and capacity-building processes from the outset to build institutional resilience and government ownership of systems and data, ensuring that outcomes last beyond the operation's duration.

Lesson 2: Aligning Resource Strategies with Long-Term Learning Goals: Setting a short-term target of one textbook per three students addressed immediate resource constraints. The downside is that this "stopgap measure" risked inadvertently establishing a substandard norm for teachers and principals. Future resource strategies must balance short-term practicality with long-term educational



goals, prioritizing achievement of one textbook per student to support better instructional quality and learning outcomes.

Lesson 3: Designing Incentive Structures That Directly Target Learning Outcomes: The incentives provided were effective in scaling up the EdoBEST program across the State. However, these initial incentives were not explicitly linked to improvements in learning outcomes. With comprehensive student learning data now available, the next step is to introduce targeted incentive mechanisms—such as performance-based grants or funding allocations tied directly to learning gains—for schools, teachers, and local governments to effectively motivate stakeholders and reinforce accountability for results.

Lesson 4: Investing in Deepening Teacher Content and Pedagogical Knowledge: Despite achieving high rates of teacher presence and fidelity in implementing structured pedagogy through digital tools, gaps in teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge persist. The lesson is that effectiveness requires a comprehensive strategy that moves beyond observation and provides stronger pre-service training, regular knowledge assessments, and sustained support policies, alongside merit-based recruitment.

12. Assessment Recommended?

No

13. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR is candid in its analysis, providing an assessment of both the program’s achievements and its shortcomings, as well as clear explanations. The theory of change presented in the ICR is broadly sound and logically connects sectoral challenges to proposed interventions and intended outcomes. The report is candid in discussing major implementation bottlenecks, particularly the persistent institutional fragmentation and weak coordination between the SMOE and SUBEB, which created operational inefficiencies and delays. The ICR also clearly documents the persistent challenges and underutilization of the IPF component, noting that only 47.52 percent of the US\$5 million was disbursed, contrasting sharply with almost full disbursement of the PforR component. This financial analysis is transparent in detailing the shortcomings of the IPF component in making full progress toward its intended outcomes.

The ICR is results-oriented, focusing on the achievement of DLIs. The report effectively uses the IVA results to triangulate data and correct government estimates, such as noting the discrepancy between the government’s estimate of 97 percent of schools implementing EdoBEST and the IVA-verified result of 82 percent. This critical use of third-party verification enhances the credibility of the reported achievements. The lessons drawn are specific, useful, and clearly based on the evidence outlined in the ICR, particularly addressing the risk to sustainability arising from heavy reliance on a technical partner and the need for intentional knowledge transfer.

However, there were moderate shortcomings. The ICR is not sufficiently analytically critical about issues with the DLIs, their operationalization, and the results framework, leaving the reader without measures for the quality and market relevance of the provided training.



a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial