



**Institute of
Commissioning &
Assurance**

FROM LEGACY TO LEADERSHIP: WHY COMMISSIONING MUST BECOME A SOVEREIGN DISCIPLINE

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A Hidden Discipline at the Heart of Infrastructure

Commissioning has long played a vital role in safeguarding the integrity of critical infrastructure — from transport and energy to water, communications, and public services. Traditionally embedded within engineering and operational routines, it has ensured assets are delivered safely, reliably, and in line with regulatory standards. Without commissioning, projects cannot deliver fully operational systems built for decades of reliable use. When installation becomes the goal instead of readiness, the result is fragmented systems that don't work together, can't be operated with confidence, and fail to deliver the purpose the project was meant to serve.

Yet despite its central role in achieving true project outcomes, commissioning remains an informal, undervalued process - never codified as a governance discipline or recognised for its strategic value. It has operated quietly in the background, sustained by technical teams and institutional memory, but without the authority to shape outcomes at scale.

This paper calls for a strategic shift: commissioning must evolve from a hidden technical function into a recognised governance discipline - one that anchors infrastructure delivery in public value, operational readiness, and outcome assurance.

Legacy Institution's Approach to Commissioning Practice

The post-war infrastructure entities developed commissioning protocols to meet rigorous safety and performance standards. Though analogue in delivery, these practices upheld systemic consistency and public accountability.

Entity	Commissioning Function
British Rail (1948–1997)	Centralised assurance across civils, rolling stock, signalling, and telecoms
Regional Water Authorities (1974–1989)	Basin-wide systems thinking; commissioning nested within operations
Central Electricity Generating Board (1957–1990)	Structured commissioning for nuclear and thermal plants; rigorous handover and defect protocols
British Gas Corporation (1973–1986)	Safety-led commissioning post-Piper Alpha; compliance-driven readiness

Early pioneers relied on commissioning to uphold technical and operational standards - but it lacked formal governance status. When infrastructure was privatised, this absence of outcome-focused governance became structural, entrenching siloed delivery, reactive fixes, and a systemic blind spot in socio-technical assurance.

As institutionalised fragmentation took hold, efforts shifted toward optimising isolated processes rather than aligning the whole system to deliver intended outcomes.

ICxA's Response: Credentialing Commissioning as Governance

ICxA transforms these legacy practices into a globally scalable credential career pathways, to develop current and future leaders to guide project outcomes - one that embeds commissioning and operational readiness within government mandates, regulatory systems, and value creation frameworks.

Legacy Practice	ICxA Innovation	Credential Levels
CEGB's nuclear protocols	Strategic commissioning in risk-intense domains	Levels 1-4
RWAs' systems-led planning	Outcome stewardship across asset lifecycles	Levels 1-4
British Rail's integrated assurance	Whole-of-system outcome orientation	Levels 1-4
British Gas's compliance models	Operational readiness under socio-technical standards	Levels 1-4

Each ICxA credential level reflects earned personal capability and accountability for delivering outcomes - progressing from operational readiness to strategic competence and governance leadership. These are elite individuals who see the bigger picture, cut through fragmentation, and align systems and teams to deliver what matters - value.

From Legacy Project Delivery to the Global Benchmark Standard

The history of project infrastructure delivery frames ICxA's global positioning as the authority to realign a fragmented industry:

- **Strengths of Legacy Infrastructure Delivery:** Technical rigour, system-level thinking, and high-trust delivery to achieve outcomes
- **Current Systemic Gaps:** Absence of commissioning-led governance leads to fragmented execution and underperforming outcomes
- **Industry Reform Catalyst:** ICxA elevates commissioning as a governance imperative - aligning teams, systems, and project initiatives to deliver outcomes once only possible through cohesive leadership and integrated governance.

ICxA gives organizations the capabilities to transform commissioning from a background project role into a globally recognised governance discipline to deliver outcomes. Drawing from the infrastructure legacy, ICxA's credential pathway gives project owners and commissioning service providers the capability to restore trust in project delivery, embed accountability for outcomes, and set a new global benchmark for professional standards in infrastructure planning, execution, and operation.

Embedding Commissioning Wisdom into Project Governance

Commissioning isn't what you do at the end - it's how you empower project teams to deliver outcome certainty from day one.

ICxA empowers governments, regulators, and asset owners to uphold infrastructure performance in the public interest. Through structured credentials anchored in proven commissioning governance and best-practices to deliver outcomes, ICxA drives project delivery that breaks down siloes, builds cross-sector alignment, and secures intended, measurable outcomes.



Project Strategic Advancement

This isn't a band-aide fix - this gets right to the root cause of the underperforming construction industry. Ask anyone in the industry and they'll tell you projects suffer from poor planning, siloed execution, and groups optimizing for the wrong outcomes. The construction industry will only recover from this when the root cause is addressed. ICxA makes a call to action that cannot be ignored, and has taken the following steps:

1. **Codify Historical Delivery Models:** ICxA's Global Commissioning and Outcome Assurance Standards distill decades of project success into practical guidance - now freely available through ICxA's Knowledge Hub to embed into any delivery strategy.
2. **Credential Recognition** ICxA certification levels reflect real-world experience in complex, integrated projects — earned through practice and grounded in a robust knowledge foundation.
3. **Strategic Partnerships** ICxA works with leading industry, academic, and policy partners—those who understand what it truly takes to deliver complex infrastructure, not just participate in projects.

This is a call to action. If you're frustrated by underperforming projects, disheartened by our declining delivery standards, and fed up with waste and the lack of accountability in how public and private funds are spent - ICxA wants you. Join a growing movement for outcome-driven governance that restores trust and delivers the infrastructure our society depends on. Contact us at info@icxa.net and we'll show you the way.

