



**Institute of
Commissioning &
Assurance**

WHY OUTCOME ASSURANCE IS BEING CODIFIED AS AN ISO- READY GOVERNANCE STANDARD

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(ICxA)

Outcome Assurance is required as a governing layer to protect outcome accountability beyond project delivery.

Executive Summary

Across sectors, projects are increasingly delivered without reliably achieving the outcomes they were approved to deliver. While awareness of this problem is growing, the absence of a formal, globally recognized governance framework for outcome accountability has persisted. The ISO Outcome Assurance Standards are being developed to address this gap.

This position paper explains why Outcome Assurance is being codified as an ISO-ready governance standard, how it fits within the existing standards ecosystem, and why outcome accountability now requires the same level of rigor applied to quality, safety, and risk.

Purpose and Scope

This paper is issued by the Institute of Commissioning and Assurance (ICxA) to explain the rationale and intent behind the development of the ISO Outcome Assurance Standards. It is intended for governments, owners, boards, senior executives, regulators, and governance bodies responsible for authorizing major investments and accepting outcomes into operation.

This paper does not introduce a new delivery methodology. It defines a governance framework designed to operate above delivery, technical, and contractual standards.

Why Outcome Accountability Has Reached a Standards Threshold

Standards emerge when informal practices are no longer sufficient to manage risk. Financial reporting, safety, quality, and information management all reached inflection points where discretion was no longer adequate.

Outcome accountability has reached the same threshold. Responsibility for outcomes is fragmented across roles, contracts, and lifecycle phases. Decisions to progress, hand over, or close projects are often made without explicit authorization that outcomes are achievable, ready, or defensible. The consequences of this

ambiguity are now measured in underperforming assets, delayed benefits, and transferred operational risk. An ISO-aligned standard does not resolve delivery challenges. It establishes governance clarity by defining what must be decided, when it must be decided, and who is accountable for those decisions.

The Gap in the Existing Standards Landscape

The global standards ecosystem is extensive but segmented. Project management standards govern delivery processes. Technical standards govern design and construction. Quality standards govern consistency. Risk standards govern uncertainty. Information standards govern data.

What is missing is a governing standard that normatively defines outcome authorization.

Existing standards do not establish outcome-based stage gates, define readiness conditions for outcome acceptance, or assign protected authority accountable for outcomes across the lifecycle. Outcome Assurance does not replace these standards; it sits above them, providing the governance layer that connects strategic intent to operational reality.

Designing Outcome Assurance as a Governing Layer

The ISO Outcome Assurance Standards are being developed explicitly as governance standards rather than delivery manuals. They are discipline-agnostic, delivery-model neutral, and structured using ISO-style clause logic aligned with ISO 19650 principles.

Their purpose is to define outcome-based stage gates, readiness and evidence requirements, authority for authorizing outcomes, and rules for progression, handover, and closure. Implementation is intentionally left to existing technical, sectoral, and contractual frameworks.

Outcome Authority as a Standardized Governance Role

A central element of the standards is the formal definition of Outcome Authority. This role is accountable for protecting outcome intent across the lifecycle and for authorizing progression based on evidence of readiness.

Outcome Authority is not an extension of project management or a rebranding of assurance activities. It is a governance function that separates evidence generation from outcome authorization, aligning accountability with authority at the level where consequences are owned.

Why ISO Alignment Matters

ISO alignment is not pursued for formality or prestige. It enables legitimacy, interoperability, and adoption without disruption. Governments can reference the standards in policy, owners can apply them across portfolios, regulators can rely on consistent definitions, and industry can implement them through existing technical standards.

ISO alignment allows Outcome Assurance to operate as a governing layer without prescribing how projects must be delivered.

Codifying What Has Been Missing

Outcome Assurance has existed informally for years, often carried by individuals who stepped beyond their formal authority to protect outcomes.

The ISO Outcome Assurance Standards formalize what has been missing: explicit governance for outcome accountability.

Standards are written when systems mature enough to recognize their blind spots. Outcome accountability is one of them.

