



**Institute of
Commissioning &
Assurance**

WHAT OUTCOME-BASED GOVERNANCE LOOKS LIKE

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(ICxA)

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

Executive Summary

As accountability for outcomes moves decisively into governance, organizations are increasingly asking a practical question: what does outcome-based governance actually look like?

This paper explains the operating logic of Outcome Assurance as a governance system. It describes how outcomes are governed through clear decision authority, evidence-based authorization, and lifecycle continuity—without prescribing delivery methods, technical solutions, or contractual mechanisms.

Outcome Assurance is presented not as a framework or methodology, but as a governance model for making and authorizing outcome decisions.

Purpose and Scope

This paper is issued by the Institute of Commissioning and Assurance (ICxA) to clarify how outcome-based governance operates in practice. It is intended for boards, sponsors, senior executives, regulators, and governance bodies responsible for authorizing outcomes, accepting risk, and protecting long-term value.

This paper does not describe how projects are delivered. It defines how outcome decisions are governed.

Outcome Assurance Is a Governance Decision System

Outcome Assurance is not a collection of assurance activities. It is a decision system.

In governance, the most consequential moments are decisions—not tasks. In projects, these decisions include whether to proceed, whether to integrate, whether to transfer control, and whether to accept outcomes into operation.

Outcome-based governance focuses on these decisions. It exists to ensure that they are made deliberately, based on evidence, and by an authority accountable for the consequences.



Governing Outcomes Rather Than Monitoring Delivery

Traditional project governance is structured around oversight of delivery performance. It tracks progress, cost, schedule, risk, and compliance. While necessary, this form of governance does not address whether the intended outcome is achievable, ready, or defensible.

Outcome-based governance shifts the focus from monitoring activity to authorizing capability. The central question is no longer whether work has been completed, but whether the outcome is sufficiently assured to justify progression or acceptance. This distinction is fundamental.

Outcome-Based Authorization Points

Outcome governance operates through explicit authorization points. These are not delivery milestones and are not tied to contractual completion. They are governance decisions that determine whether outcome risk is accepted, deferred, or rejected.

At each authorization point, governance must be satisfied that: - the outcome intent remains valid, - integration risks are understood and managed, - readiness has been demonstrated through evidence, - and accountability for the next phase is clear.

Without these authorization points, outcome risk transfers silently and without ownership.

Evidence as the Basis for Governance Decisions

Outcome-based governance relies on evidence, not optimism or plans.

Evidence demonstrates readiness, integration, and capability. It provides an objective basis for governance decisions and protects authorities from relying on assurance by assertion.

Importantly, evidence is generated by professionals and delivery teams, but it is evaluated and acted upon by governance authorities. This separation ensures independence and protects both professionals and decision-makers.

Separation of Authority and Execution

A defining feature of outcome-based governance is the separation between those who execute work and those who authorize outcomes.

Delivery teams are incentivized to progress work. Governance exists to apply restraint when conditions are not yet satisfied. For outcome decisions to be credible, they must be made by an authority that is independent of delivery pressures.

Outcome Assurance formalizes this separation by defining an Outcome Authority role accountable for authorizing outcome progression, handover, and acceptance.

Continuity Across the Outcome Lifecycle

Outcome accountability does not end at delivery completion. It extends through integration, validation, and transfer of operational control.

Outcome-based governance maintains continuity of accountability across this lifecycle, ensuring that outcomes are not accepted prematurely and that operational risk is not inherited without explicit authorization.

This continuity is what distinguishes outcome governance from traditional project closeout.

Governance Without Prescribing Delivery

Outcome Assurance does not prescribe how work is performed. It does not replace project management, engineering standards, or operational procedures.

Instead, it provides a governing layer that operates above delivery, defining what decisions must be made, what evidence is required, and who is accountable for authorizing outcomes.

This allows Outcome Assurance to be applied consistently across sectors, delivery models, and technical domains.

Conclusion

Outcome-based governance replaces assumption with authorization.

It ensures that outcomes are accepted deliberately, based on evidence, and by an authority accountable for the consequences.

As projects grow more complex and outcomes more consequential, this form of governance is no longer optional.

Outcome Assurance provides the structure to govern outcomes with intent, clarity, and accountability.