



**Institute of  
Commissioning &  
Assurance**

# WHY OUTCOMES CANNOT BE DELEGATED

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(ICxA)

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

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Projects commonly delegate design, construction, integration, testing, and handover activities to third parties. This reflects the scale, specialization, and complexity of modern assets. Delegation of work is necessary. Delegation of outcome responsibility is not possible.

Outcome responsibility is established at the point of approval. Outcomes define the capability, performance, and value that justify investment. They describe what the asset must provide in operation, not merely what must be built. These outcomes are defined and accepted by owners and approving authorities. They are independent of delivery structure and are not created by contractual arrangements.

Once approved, outcomes remain the responsibility of the approving body. This responsibility does not transfer through procurement, outsourcing, or contract award. It persists throughout delivery and into operation. Delivery strategies may change. Outcome accountability does not.

Delivery organizations are accountable for executing defined scope. Their responsibility relates to performing tasks, meeting technical requirements, complying with specifications, and producing agreed deliverables. This accountability is limited to execution. Delivery parties do not hold authority to determine whether the approved outcome has been achieved.

Determining outcome readiness requires acceptance of risk. It involves judgment about integration, performance under operating conditions, and the ability of the asset to sustain its intended function. This judgment carries long-term consequences. Only owners hold the mandate to accept this risk on behalf of the organization.

In practice, this boundary is frequently unclear. Completion of construction or installation is treated as evidence of readiness. Successful testing is treated as confirmation of outcome achievement. Handover documentation is accepted as a proxy for operational capability. These practices substitute activity completion for outcome authorization.

At turnover, responsibility for unresolved issues is often transferred implicitly. Risks that remain open are assumed rather than explicitly accepted. No formal decision records that the approved outcome is ready to be placed into service. The absence of an explicit authorization decision is not visible until performance issues arise.

When issues emerge in operation, accountability fragments. Delivery parties have met contractual obligations and exited the project. Operators inherit constraints, limitations, and risks that were never formally accepted. Owners remain accountable for outcomes without having authorized readiness based on outcome-focused evidence.

Contractual mechanisms do not resolve this condition. Contracts allocate responsibilities between parties and define remedies for non-performance. They do not establish governing authority over outcomes. No delivery party can accept outcome risk on behalf of the approving body. No operator can assume responsibility for an outcome that was never authorized as achieved.

Outcome responsibility persists because only owners hold authority over value realization, long-term performance, and residual risk. This authority exists regardless of delivery model, contract form, or organizational structure. Delegation of execution does not alter outcome accountability.

Outcome Assurance provides a governing mechanism to address this condition. It makes outcome responsibility explicit. It defines when outcomes are authorized, the evidence required to support that decision, and the authority accountable for making it. It separates the production of evidence from the acceptance of outcome risk.

Where this governing structure is absent, projects rely on informal decision-making. Authorization is driven by schedule pressure, consensus, or contractual closure. Outcomes are treated as implied rather than authorized. Accountability becomes diffused and retrospective.

Outcomes cannot be delegated. They can only be governed.