



**Institute of
Commissioning &
Assurance**

WHEN EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE, NO ONE IS ACCOUNTABLE

Issued by: Institute of Commissioning and Assurance
(ICxA)

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

Large projects and public programs commonly involve multiple parties contributing to delivery. Contractors, consultants, operators, and oversight bodies may all be described as responsible for achieving success. While shared contribution is necessary, responsibility alone does not establish clear accountability for outcomes.

Outcome accountability is distinct from task responsibility. Responsibility relates to performing activities or providing inputs. Outcome accountability relates to the authority to decide whether an intended outcome has been achieved and whether it is permitted to proceed or be put into use. Although many parties may contribute evidence and analysis, accountability for authorizing an outcome must be clearly assigned.

Projects progress through outcomes that require formal authorization. These outcomes represent governing decision points, not simply delivery milestones. At each point, a determination must be made that defined conditions have been met and that it is appropriate to advance to the next stage or transfer the outcome to operation.

When outcome accountability is not explicitly defined, these governing decisions are often weakened. Progress may be based on consensus, implied agreement, or schedule pressure rather than a clear authorization. Evidence may be produced, but no single role is required to determine whether it is sufficient to support the decision to proceed. As a result, outcomes may advance without having been formally governed.

This situation is typically not the result of individual failure. It arises from governance arrangements that emphasize shared participation but do not clearly assign decision authority. Committees, joint reviews, and collective sign-offs can support coordination, but they do not establish accountability unless authority is clearly defined.

Outcome Assurance addresses this governance gap. Outcome Assurance is the discipline that defines how outcomes are governed through explicit authorization. It establishes outcome-based gates where readiness must be demonstrated through evidence and where progression requires a formal decision.

At each governed outcome, an Outcome Authority is identified. The Outcome Authority is accountable for reviewing the relevant evidence, confirming that defined requirements have been met, and authorizing - or withholding authorization for - the outcome to proceed. This decision is intentional, recorded, and traceable.

Where outcome accountability is absent or unclear, projects may reach completion or handover without confirmation that outcomes are ready, safe, or fit for sustained operation. Systems may be placed into service because delivery activities are complete, not because outcomes have been formally authorized. When issues later arise, it may be difficult to determine who approved the outcome or on what basis.

Clear outcome accountability is therefore a governance requirement. It ensures that outcomes are authorized through defined decision points rather than assumed through progress or completion. It provides transparency for owners, regulators, and the public, and it protects all parties by making decision authority explicit.

Effective governance separates contribution from authorization. Many parties contribute to achieving outcomes. However, for each governed outcome, a single Outcome Authority must be accountable for determining whether the outcome has been achieved and whether it may proceed. This clarity is essential to outcome assurance and to maintaining public trust.