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RECLAIMING INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY: A GLOBAL IMPERATIVE FOR COMMISSIONING-LED GOVERNANCE

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Reclaiming Infrastructure Delivery: A Global Imperative for Commissioning-Led Governance

Introduction

Across sectors and continents, the ability to deliver major projects on time, on budget, and with measurable public value is under threat. From aerospace and infrastructure to energy and climate programmes, the delivery crisis is no longer anecdotal - it's systemic. This paper synthesises three powerful perspectives: Jared Isaacman's (@rookisaacman) call for bold institutional ambition, Alexander Budzier's (*Fellow in Management Practice at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford*) work on the UK government-backed Office for Value for Money (OVfM) study on governance reform, and *The Economist's* critique of America's fragmented construction industry. Together, they form a compelling case for commissioning-led governance as a sovereign discipline.

The Delivery Crisis: Cultural, Structural, and Strategic

Jared Isaacman's reflections reveal a troubling cultural shift: a loss of "extreme ownership" and belief in bold execution. He cites a growing list of delayed and over-budget programmes - from aircraft carriers and nuclear reactors to space missions and high-speed rail. His concern is not just technical - it's existential. Without a return to the mindset that defined the Manhattan Project, the Space Race, and early supercomputers, national competitiveness will erode.

Alexander Budzier's contribution to the OVfM study reinforces this diagnosis with empirical rigour. UK mega-projects routinely suffer from poor early estimates, unclear accountability, and rigid governance. The study proposes five reforms: transparent strategy, tailored assurance, incremental funding, flexible capital envelopes, and specialist recruitment pipelines. These are not cosmetic changes - they are structural interventions aimed at restoring delivery integrity.

The Economist adds a global lens, highlighting America's construction sector as a cautionary tale. Productivity has declined 40% over 50 years. Regulatory complexity, underinvestment, and fragmented delivery models have made it "too hard and too expensive to build." The consequences are profound: housing shortages, energy insecurity, and diminished technological leadership in AI, robotics, and advanced manufacturing.

Commissioning-Led Governance: A Capability Response

ICxA's commissioning-led framework offers a strategic solution to these delivery risks:

- **Outcome Assurance** becomes a recognised institutional capability - ensuring readiness, traceability, and performance verification across the asset lifecycle.
- **Evidence-based decision-making** replaces informal assumptions, enabling credible planning and measurable results.
- **Capability maturity** is built through staged development, not ad hoc heroics - supporting repeatable behaviours across sectors.
- **Governance structures** are codified to support leadership behaviours that move programmes forward - not just keep them afloat.

This is not a procedural fix - it's a cultural reset.

Credential Integrity and Professionalisation

The ICxA Career Development Pathway is designed to balance accessibility with rigour, offering a structured progression that reflects real-world capability and leadership maturity.

- CxP Level 1 provides orientation for individuals seeking to understand the systems-based thinking required to own outcomes and lead projects with purpose.

Levels 2–4 are achieved through demonstrated experience in applying commissioning-led governance across the built environment—earned through performance, peer validation, and a sustained commitment to outcome assurance.

This pathway is more than a credential - it's a practical framework that equips today's and tomorrow's leaders to deliver major projects with confidence, integrity, and strategic clarity. It offers a clear route to confront the delivery crisis we face and reshape the mindset of an industry that must evolve to meet the demands of our social, economic, and climate systems.

Conclusion

The delivery crisis is not just technical - it's strategic. As Isaacman warns, geopolitical competitors are accelerating. As Budzier shows, institutional reform is possible. And as *The Economist* cautions, failure to act will compound risk across housing, energy, and innovation.

ICxA offers a pathway forward: commissioning not as a checklist, but as a leadership discipline rooted in governance, evidence-based decision making, and outcome integrity.