Institute of Commissioning & Assurance

INSTITUTE OF COMMISSIONING & ASSURANCE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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By Paul Turner, P.Eng., PMP

Setting ICxA's Direction for 2026

As we begin 2026, I want to share where ICxA is heading - and why this year matters for Outcome Assurance.

2025 had been intentionally focused on clarity. Before an industry can change how it governs outcomes, it must first understand what has been missing. Over the last year, ICxA has concentrated on defining Outcome Assurance as a governing discipline - separate from project delivery, independent of commercial structures, and focused squarely on outcome accountability rather than activity completion.

That foundation now allows us to move decisively forward.

In 2026, ICxA's focus shifts from definition to application and influence.
Our work this year centers on three priorities.

- **Standards Maturity.** We will continue developing all levels of Outcome Assurance Standards - normatively defining outcome stage-gates, authorities, readiness conditions, and evidence. These standards are intentionally discipline-agnostic and contract-independent, enabling Outcome Assurance to be implemented consistently across sectors, delivery models, jurisdictions, and within all levels of project accountability.

- **Leadership Capability.** ICxA defines the competency frameworks, certification requirements, and accreditation criteria

that qualified individuals and accredited program providers must meet. In 2026, we will expand and formalize this accreditation ecosystem to ensure that outcome-first leadership is developed consistently, rigorously, and independently – to allow everyone access to the critical skillsets required for project success.

- **Strategic Adoption.** ICxA is not pursuing incremental, project-by-project uptake. Our focus is upstream - engaging owners, public agencies, financiers, insurers, and advisors who shape how projects are governed long before execution begins. Systemic change occurs at the governance level, and that is where Outcome Assurance belongs.

In this context, ICxA occupies the same institutional space for outcome governance that ISO occupies for standards, PMI for professional competency, and LEED for sustainability - serving as the independent authority that defines the rules, not the means, by which outcomes are governed.

It is important to be clear about ICxA's role. We do not authorize outcomes. We define the rules by which outcomes must be authorized. That distinction safeguards independence, credibility, and long-term relevance - and it is fundamental to building trust in the discipline.

2026 will be about discipline, credibility, and focus - establishing clear boundaries for project success, establishing strategic coalitions for the adoption of Outcome Assurance, and building an institute that leaders rely on when outcomes truly matter.

If you are part of the ICxA community, it is because you recognize that today's projects consistently fail to protect outcomes. This year is about turning that shared recognition into durable standards, accredited capability, and a
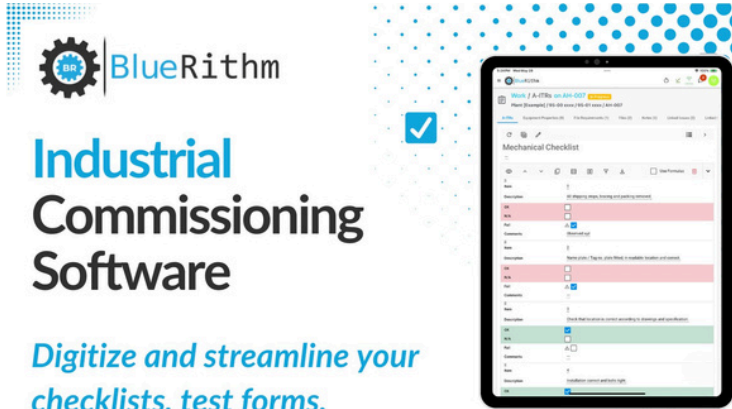
governing framework others can adopt with confidence.

What This Means for Members in 2026

In 2026, ICxA members can expect greater clarity on Outcome Assurance stage-gates, authorities, and evidence expectations, supported by maturing, ISO-ready standards that owners and institutions can reference with confidence. This year will also see the formalization of an accreditation ecosystem designed to protect the integrity of Outcome Assurance credentials, alongside increased engagement with the decision-makers who influence how projects are governed upstream.

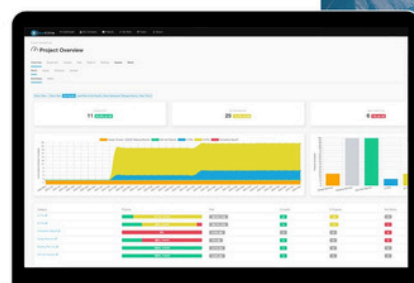I look forward to what we will build together in 2026.

Paul Turner, P.Eng, PMP

THE ANALOGY CORNER

Distilling key ICxA themes into clear, concise, and engaging perspectives

by Peter Foxley
ICxA *Commissioning Governance & Policy Director*

Welcome to ICxA's Analogy Corner - where complex ideas in infrastructure performance are decoded through vivid analogies. Each month, we bridge technical detail with institutional vision, helping practitioners, policymakers, and the public see how governance can evolve into a licensed profession of public trust.

ANALOGY CORNER: THE HAND AND THE GLOVE
HOW GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE FORM A SINGLE PROFESSION OF PUBLIC TRUST

To professionalise outcome assurance in practice, governance cannot be treated as an administrative task - it must be recognised as a licensed profession of public trust. A simple way to show how its four primary pillars work together is to picture governance and assurance as the hand and the glove.

The hand represents governance: purposeful, knowledgeable and accountable. The glove represents assurance: independent, sensing and protective.

Neither works properly on its own. But together, they form a single, coordinated system capable of delivering **trustworthy and validated outcomes.**

The Hand - Governance as Intent, Stewardship, and Value Creation

The hand is the active force. It shapes intent, directs value, and carries responsibility for the outcomes promised to society. In ICxA's mission, this hand is expressed through the first three pillars:

1. **Asset Portfolio Management - The Hand of Stewardship.** This is the hand's grip: firm, deliberate, and long-sighted. Asset Portfolio Management ensures that investments, procurement, and risk allocation serve public value, not short-term convenience. It is the discipline that secures legitimacy across generations.
2. **Architecture - The Hand of Intent and Control.** This is the hand's articulation: the ability to lead, align, guide and protect. Architecture defines purpose, sets direction and ensures that statutory obligations - including planning consents - are met with traceability and transparency.
3. **Engineering - The Hand of Creation and Integration.** This is the hand's craft: the transformation of intent into reality. Engineering integrates knowledge, manages uncertainty and ensures that infrastructure

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THE ANALOGY CORNER CONT'D...

- resilient, sustainable and fit for the future. It is governance made tangible through design, build and systems-based delivery.

Together, these three pillars form the governing hand - purposeful, coordinated and accountable for measurable value across the lifecycle.

The Glove - Assurance as Independent Verification of Outcomes

A hand alone can act, but it cannot **sense** with precision or protect itself from unseen risks. This is where the glove, the fourth pillar, comes in.

4. **Commissioning - The Glove of Outcome Assurance**

Commissioning is the independent layer that surrounds the hand. It begins not at the end of delivery, but the moment intent is first expressed - from translating stakeholder planning consents, turning business case approvals into design statements, through to shaping the value-driven system solution.

Throughout the lifecycle, the glove **tests**, **verifies** and **validates** whether the system is on track to perform as intended. It ensures that promises made through governance are proven through evidence.

The glove does not constrain the hand - it enables it. It provides **sensitivity**, **feedback** and **confidence**. It closes the assurance cycle by confirming that outcomes have been **evidenced and realized**.

Hand and Glove - A Closed Cycle of Trust

When the hand and glove work together, the system becomes whole:

- Asset portfolio stewardship (the hand's purpose)
- Architectural planning and control (the hand's direction)
- Engineering lifecycle value (the hand's craft)
- Assured whole-system outcomes (the glove's verification)

This is the closed cycle at the heart of ICxA's mission - a cycle that elevates governance to a licensed profession of public trust, standing alongside **architectural engineering**, **medicine**, **law**, and in its societal importance.

The metaphor is simple: governance is **the hand** that shapes the future; assurance is **the glove** that ensures that future is safe, sound and worthy of public confidence.

Together, they form the discipline the world now needs: **Governance-Led Outcome Assurance**.

WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD OUTCOMES IN 2026

by Paul Turner, CEO | ICxA

For decades, owners, regulators, and oversight bodies have invested heavily in improving how projects are governed and delivered. Organizations have invested in leadership training, maturity models, and frameworks designed to improve how projects are managed. And yet, despite this effort, outcomes continue to disappoint - assets underperform, benefits fail to materialize, and accountability dissolves once delivery is declared "complete."

This is not a leadership failure in the traditional sense. It is a governance failure.

As we enter 2026, outcome-first leadership is no longer about being a better project manager, a more collaborative contractor, or a more engaged sponsor.
It is about understanding - and accepting - what it actually means to govern outcomes, rather than simply oversee delivery.

Outcomes Are Not Managed. They Are Authorized by Authority

One of the most persistent misconceptions in projects is the belief that outcomes emerge naturally from good execution. If the schedule is controlled, costs are managed, and scope is delivered, outcomes are assumed to follow.

In reality, outcomes do not emerge - they are authorized.

Every meaningful outcome requires an explicit decision that conditions are ready, that risks are acceptable, that evidence is sufficient, and that responsibility can be transferred from one stage to the next. When those decisions are implicit, deferred, or delegated to delivery teams, accountability erodes and outcomes become accidental rather than assured.

Outcome-first leadership begins with recognizing that authorization is a leadership responsibility, not an administrative step.

Governance Is Not Oversight

Many owners and regulators equate

governance with oversight: attending steering committees, reviewing reports, or approving stage transitions prepared by delivery organizations. While oversight is necessary, it is not sufficient.

When governance is properly understood, it is about defining:

- Who has the authority to decide that an outcome is ready
- What evidence is required to support that decision
- Under what conditions authorization can be granted or withheld
- Where accountability sits if the outcome fails

Outcome-first leaders do not ask, "Are we on track?"

They ask, "Do we have the right to proceed?"

This distinction is critical for projects that want to deliver successful outcomes.

Outcome Accountability Cannot Be Delegated to Delivery

Another defining feature of outcome-first leadership is the refusal to delegate outcome accountability to delivery organizations.

Contracts can allocate risk. Organizations can be assigned responsibility. But accountability for outcomes - the obligation to ensure that intended value is actually realized - rests with those who authorize progress.

When leaders allow delivery teams to self-approve readiness, certify completion, or

define success criteria, they unintentionally undermine outcome integrity.
Independence is lost, and assurance becomes performative rather than substantive.

Leading outcomes in 2026 means being clear about where independence is required - and insisting on it.

From Stage Approvals to Outcome Stage-Gates

Traditional project stage approvals are typically schedule-driven and activity-based. Milestones are reached, documents are submitted, and approvals are granted to maintain momentum.

Outcome stage-gates are different.

They exist to answer one question: *Is the outcome protected if we proceed?*

This requires leaders to think beyond construction complete, mechanical completion, or handover checklists, and to focus instead on readiness, integration, operability, and the conditions required for successful transfer of responsibility.

Outcome-first leaders insist on stage-gates that are evidence-based, authority-defined, and outcome-focused - regardless of delivery pressure.

Why This Matters Now for Owners and Regulators

The scale, complexity, and public impact of modern projects mean that outcome failure is no longer tolerable - or defensible.
Governments, investors, insurers, and operators are increasingly asking not how projects were delivered, but whether outcomes were properly governed.

In this environment, leadership credibility is no longer tied to optimism or momentum.
It is tied to decision quality.

Outcome-first leadership is not about slowing projects down. It is about ensuring that progress is legitimate.

The Role of ICxA in Public and Institutional Governance

The Institute of Commissioning and Assurance exists to support this shift - by defining the rules by which outcomes must be governed.

ICxA's role is to establish clear standards for outcome stage-gates, authorities, and evidence, and to accredit the capability ecosystem that supports consistent application.

Leading Outcomes Is a Choice

In 2026, leaders will increasingly face a choice.

They can continue to rely on delivery success as a proxy for outcome success - or they can step into their role as outcome governors, explicitly authorizing progress based on evidence, authority, and readiness.

Outcome-first leadership is not a title, a role, or a methodology.
It is a decision to lead where accountability truly sits.

And that is what will define credible leadership in the years ahead.

> *"In reality, outcomes do not emerge - they are authorized."*

THE CASE FOR AN ISO OUTCOME STANDARD

by Peter Foxley
ICxA Commissioning Governance & Policy Director

Across the built environment, a quiet but profound shift is underway.
Governments, regulators, investors and the public are no longer satisfied with assurances about process, compliance or intent.
They want confidence in **outcomes** - the real-world performance of the systems that shape daily life. Yet despite decades of standards development in governance, risk, quality, asset management and information management, organizations still lack a coherent, internationally recognised framework that links governance decisions to verifiable, repeatable outcomes.

This is the gap ICxA was created to address. And it is why the time has come for an ISO Outcome Standard.

Why Outcomes, and Why Now?

Modern systems - infrastructure, digital platforms, public services, safety-critical environments - are more complex and interconnected than ever. When they fail, the consequences cascade across sectors, borders and communities. Investigations into these failures repeatedly point to the same underlying issue: fragmented governance, inconsistent assurance practices and an inability to demonstrate that systems will perform as intended.

Existing ISO standards provide important components of good practice. But none of them define how governance and assurance should work together to deliver outcomes that are **trustworthy, repeatable and evidence-based**. This missing integration is now widely recognized as a root cause of failures that erode public trust, increase costs and expose organizations to avoidable risk.

The world is signalling a need for a new kind of standard - one that unites governance, lifecycle value, evidence-based decision-making and independent assurance into a single, coherent framework.

The Case for an ISO Outcome Standard

An ISO Outcome Standard would fill this gap

by establishing a global benchmark for outcome-based governance and assurance. It would:

- define how outcomes should be specified, assessed, measured and verified
- integrate governance intent with operational reality
- align assurance activities across the full lifecycle of complex systems
- clarify competence, accountability and evidence-based decision-making expectations
- provide a shared international language for value-led social, climate and economic outcomes
- strengthen public trust in essential systems

In short, it would give leaders a clear, internationally recognized way to

demonstrate that their systems can deliver reliable, evidence-based performance.

Why ICxA is Well Positioned to Navigate this Global Standards Gap

ICxA is uniquely positioned to convene the coalition required to lead this next step. Our work sits at the intersection of governance, engineering, digital transformation, asset management and assurance - precisely the disciplines that must come together to define an outcome-based standard.

A Moment of Opportunity

The conditions for progress are aligned:

- public trust in essential systems is under pressure
- governments are seeking clearer accountability

- industry is grappling with complexity and systemic risk
- regulators want more transparent, evidence-based assurance
- professional bodies are calling for outcome-led practice
- international partners are signalling demand for a unified framework

This is a rare moment where need, momentum and capability converge.

What Happens Next

ICxA is preparing to initiate the development of an ISO Outcome Standard. The standard will:

- establish consensus on principles and requirements
- provide a structured framework for early adoption
- generate the evidence base needed for ISO approval
- demonstrate international relevance and demand

This is not just a technical exercise. It is a strategic intervention aimed at reshaping how the built environment delivers value, manages risk and earns public trust.

Conclusion

The built environment is at a crossroads. We can continue to rely on fragmented standards and institutional codes of practice and hope they add up to reliable outcomes - or we can define a new, integrated approach that reflects the complexity and expectations of the world we now inhabit. An ISO Outcome Standard is not simply desirable, it is necessary. ICxA is leading the way, providing the clarity and coherence needed to deliver social, climate and economic outcomes that are trustworthy and demonstrably achieved.

"The world is signalling a need for a new kind of standard - one that unites governance, lifecycle value, evidence-based decision-making and independent assurance into a single, coherent framework."