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CEO's Message

By Paul Turner, P.Eng., PMP

As the Institute of Commissioning and Assurance continues to grow, it is important that our communication with members, partners, and the wider project delivery community remains clear, purposeful, and valuable.

Going forward, the ICxA newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis.

This decision reflects the type of organization we are building. ICxA is not simply producing updates for the sake of activity. Our role is to provide meaningful insight, strengthen professional understanding, and advance the importance of Commissioning, Operational Readiness, and Outcome Assurance in improving project outcomes.

A quarterly publication cycle allows us to focus on quality over frequency. It gives us the time to prepare more substantial articles, share important developments, highlight regional and member activity, and provide thoughtful commentary on the issues affecting major capital projects around the world.

In this edition, you will see an important example of that direction through our article on the Calgary in-person Meet & Greet event. Events like this represent more than networking. They are part of how ICxA is building a professional community around shared standards, practical experience, and a clearer understanding of what good looks like in project delivery.
There is also much more to look forward to.

Over the coming quarters, ICxA will continue developing the frameworks, programs, and partnerships needed to support the next stage of professional maturity for our discipline. This includes work on individual competencies, so practitioners can better understand the knowledge, behaviours, and leadership capabilities expected at different levels of professional practice.

We will also be expanding our focus on organizational capabilities. Successful project outcomes do not depend on individuals alone. They require organizations to have the right governance, systems, readiness practices, commissioning capability, evidence discipline, and outcome assurance culture in place. ICxA's role is to help define what good looks like at an organizational level, not only at an individual level.

In parallel, we are developing the Authorized Training Partner Program, which will help ensure that ICxA-aligned training is delivered consistently, professionally, and in accordance with the standards and principles we are advancing globally.

We are also progressing the Operating Partner Program, which will create a pathway for selected organizations to work more closely with ICxA in supporting adoption, implementation, and practical application across industry.

Together, these initiatives form part of a larger direction: helping the global project delivery community move from informal experience and inconsistent practice toward recognized competencies, defined capabilities, credible training pathways, and stronger implementation support.

Projects do not succeed because deliverables are completed alone. They succeed when the intended outcome is clearly defined, properly governed, technically assured, operationally ready, and successfully transitioned into performance.

That is the future ICxA is working toward.

By moving to a quarterly newsletter, we are creating space for stronger content, clearer messaging, and more useful engagement with the people and organizations committed to improving project outcomes globally.

Thank you for your continued support of ICxA and for being part of this important professional movement.

Paul Turner, P.Eng, PMP

Paul Turner
Founder & CEO
Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA)

FIRST ICXA GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ROUNDTABLE FROM "READY TO START" TO "READY TO OPERATE"

by David Tain, Chairman of ICxA Technical Committees, Vice President, VP Regional Governance Latin America, Caribbean, & Mediterranean

The inaugural Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA) Global Knowledge Roundtable brought together industry professionals from across the globe to discuss one of the most persistent and costly challenges in major projects: the gap between being ready to start and truly ready to operate. Moderated by Paul Turner, CEO of ICxA, and David Tain, Chairman of ICxA Technical Committees, the session connected experts from all the corners in the and diverse sectors such as Oil & Gas, Mining, Renewable Energy, Processing, and Aquaculture. Andres Mesa joined us from the United States; Andre Goosens from the Netherlands; Wellington Colombo from Brazil; Jav Ebra from Qatar; James Tuller from Norway; and Jason Miao from China.

Despite the diversity of industries and geographies represented, a common message quickly emerged throughout the discussion: projects around the world continue to face remarkably similar problems during startup and transition to operations. Many organizations successfully build facilities and achieve mechanical completion, yet still experience operational instability, delays, production losses, and safety challenges because true operational readiness was never fully achieved.

The panel reflected on how often the industry mistakes "ready to start" for "ready to operate." In many projects, once systems are installed, energized, and documented, there is a perception that operations can simply take over. However, the discussion emphasized that operational readiness goes much deeper than physical completion. A facility may be technically complete while still lacking the operational capability required to perform safely, reliably, and sustainably under real-world conditions.

Throughout the session, the conversation continually returned to the idea that operational readiness is fundamentally about confidence and capability. It is about ensuring that systems have been validated, operators are prepared, maintenance routines are established, documentation is reliable, and teams understand how to respond not only during normal operations, but also when things do not go according to plan.

One of the strongest themes of the roundtable was the need to rethink the role of commissioning. Rather than being treated as a final-stage activity brought in near startup, the panel described commissioning as a critical bridge between project delivery and operational success. The consensus was that the foundations for successful startup are established much earlier in the project lifecycle — during engineering, design, planning, and decision-making phases.

The discussion highlighted how late involvement of commissioning and operations teams often creates avoidable problems:

interface conflicts, rework, incomplete documentation, operational surprises, and unnecessary schedule pressure. By contrast, involving these functions early allows organizations to identify operational risks proactively and align project execution with long-term operational objectives.

Another concept that strongly resonated throughout the session was the transition from traditional “what if” thinking toward what was described as the “even if” mindset. Rather than only asking what might happen under expected operating conditions, the panel emphasized the importance of preparing organizations to remain resilient even if abnormal situations occur. This includes preparing for equipment failures, unexpected operational disturbances, communication breakdowns, or unforeseen interactions between systems.

The panelists noted that many operational failures do not occur because organizations cannot handle normal conditions, but because they are unprepared for abnormal ones. In that sense, operational readiness becomes not only a technical discipline, but also a mindset focused on resilience, adaptability, and sustained operational performance.

Governance and standardization also emerged as central topics during the discussion. Participants acknowledged that commissioning and operational readiness practices still vary significantly across organizations and industries, often relying heavily on individual experience rather than structured methodologies. The conversation highlighted the need for more consistent terminology, integrated governance models, and globally aligned practices that can help organizations move away from fragmented execution approaches and toward more predictable project outcomes.

The discussion also explored the often-overlooked risks hidden within project interfaces. While individual systems or components may function correctly on their own, problems frequently emerge when different systems, disciplines, teams, and stakeholders begin interacting under operational conditions. These interface risks were repeatedly identified as one of the least visible yet most significant sources of startup instability and operational failure.

Another important theme was the role of documentation and information management. The panel reflected on how documentation is frequently treated as an administrative requirement rather than an operational tool. Incomplete turnover packages, fragmented data, outdated procedures, and inconsistent information can create major operational

challenges during startup. The participants stressed the importance of maintaining a reliable "single source of truth" throughout the project lifecycle to ensure that operational teams inherit accurate and usable information.

Beyond the technical discussion, the session repeatedly reinforced that commissioning and operational readiness are deeply human challenges. Projects are not simply collections of equipment and procedures; they are complex environments shaped by people, decisions, communication, behaviors, leadership, and organizational culture. As a result, achieving operational readiness requires alignment not only across systems and processes, but also across teams, stakeholders, and organizational priorities.

The economic implications of these discussions were equally compelling. The panel emphasized that commissioning and operational readiness typically represent a relatively small portion of overall project costs, yet failures during startup and operations can result in enormous financial losses, safety incidents, environmental impacts, production disruptions, and reputational damage. The message was clear: cutting investment in operational readiness may reduce short-term costs, but often creates far greater long-term consequences.

Ultimately, the First ICxA Global Knowledge Roundtable delivered a strong and consistent message to the global project community: delivering infrastructure alone is not enough. True project success is achieved when organizations can transition safely and confidently into stable, reliable, and sustainable operations. Moving from "ready to start" to "ready to operate" requires a broader vision: one that integrates commissioning, operational readiness, governance, and operational assurance from the very beginning of the project lifecycle.

The session also demonstrated the growing role of Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA) as a global platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing. By bringing together professionals from different countries, industries, and operational realities, the roundtable highlighted the power of collective learning in advancing more predictable projects and more reliable operations worldwide.

By bringing together professionals from diverse sectors across the world, operating in different regulatory, operational, and cultural environments, the ICxA Global Knowledge Roundtable creates a unique space where complex challenges can be analyzed through multiple lenses rather than in isolation. This diversity enables the profession to move beyond fragmented practices and toward more holistic, adaptable, and resilient approaches to commissioning and operational readiness.

Ultimately, these unique forums will catalyze the evolution, standardization, and advancement of the commissioning and operational readiness profession worldwide.

OPERATIONAL READINESS: THE STRATEGIC CAPABILITY THAT TURNS PROJECT COMPLETION INTO LASTING VALUE

Adapted from, "From Project Completion to Operational Capability," by David Tain, Chairman of ICxA Technical Committees

For decades, project success has been measured through the familiar lens of cost, schedule, and scope. If an asset is delivered on time, within budget, and according to specification, it is typically considered successful. Yet across asset-intensive industries, many projects that meet those traditional measures still struggle once they move into live operations. Delayed start-ups, unstable ramp-ups, safety events, production interruptions, and costly post-startup interventions continue to occur after construction and commissioning have been completed.

The reason is clear: technical completion is not the same as operational readiness. A mechanically complete and commissioned asset does not automatically become an operating asset capable of delivering safe, reliable, and sustainable value. In many cases, the most critical phase of the lifecycle begins when the project is declared complete. At that point, technical systems, operating teams, digital platforms, maintenance processes, governance structures, procedures, suppliers, and decision-makers begin interacting under real operating conditions.

This transition is inherently complex. During construction and commissioning, systems are usually tested in controlled or isolated conditions. During start-up, however, those systems become part of a live socio-technical environment shaped by operational pressure, incomplete information, human variability, production demands, and commercial expectations. A small gap, such as incomplete training, unclear escalation protocols, or weak interface management, can quickly cascade across the organization and create wider instability.

This is why a checklist-based approach to Operational Readiness is no longer sufficient. Documentation, training records, completed procedures, and handover confirmations remain important, but they cannot manage the adaptive nature of operational transition on their own. Operational Readiness must be understood less as a closeout activity and more as a strategic organizational capability: the ability to coordinate people, systems, risk, governance, and decision-making during uncertainty.

The paper frames this shift through the **Three Orders of Operational Capability**. The **first order is Operational Execution**: the routine capabilities required to operate under stable conditions, including procedures, maintenance systems, workforce competence, and safety management. The **second order is Operational Readiness**: the capability that prepares the organization to receive, start up, and operate a new asset by aligning people, processes, governance, and risk controls. The **third order is Outcome Assurance**: the capability to sustain reliable performance over

Figure 1: The Three Orders of Capabilities Framework

time through adaptive governance, continuous monitoring, operational learning, and resilience.

This layered model is important because operational performance is not created by isolated functions. Weakness in one capability layer can spread quickly into another. A technically sound asset may still underperform if operating teams are not prepared, maintenance strategies are not integrated, risk signals are not escalated, or governance mechanisms are not strong enough to support timely decisions.

Risk management therefore sits at the centre of effective Operational Readiness. During start-up, organizations must identify and respond to technical vulnerabilities, workforce readiness gaps, procedural weaknesses, interface risks, maintenance constraints, human factors, and governance limitations in real time. Traditional project risk management, focused primarily on cost and schedule, is not enough. Operational transitions require a broader risk perspective tied directly to decision-making and operational control. The same caution applies to technology. Digital dashboards, commissioning software, predictive analytics, and AI-enabled monitoring can improve visibility and coordination, but they do not replace organizational judgment. Without strong governance, disciplined interpretation, and integrated response, technology can create a false sense of control or overwhelm decision-makers with data that is not translated into action.

The paper points to failures such as Heathrow Terminal 5, the Texas Winter Storm power crisis, and Deepwater Horizon to illustrate a common lesson: operational instability is rarely the result of technical deficiency alone. More often, it reflects the absence of mature organizational capabilities to manage complexity, uncertainty, pressure, and risk.

The central lesson is that projects do not generate value simply because they are completed. They generate value when they operate safely, reliably, and sustainably over time. As industrial systems become more interconnected and complex, Operational Readiness will increasingly define which organizations can convert completed projects into resilient operating assets and long-term business value.

ICXA HOSTS ITS FIRST IN-PERSON MEET & GREET IN CALGARY

by Paul Turner, CEO| ICxA

The Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA) held its first in-person Meet & Greet on May 14, 2026, at Craft Beer Market in Calgary. The evening brought together 20+ professionals from different companies and sectors for an informal gathering focused on connection, conversation, and shared interest in the future of Project Outcome Assurance.

As ICxA continues to grow its international footprint as professional body, the event provided an excellent opportunity to meet face-to-face with industry professionals, introduce the Institute's mission to newcomers, and hear directly from those working across projects, operations, readiness, governance, and assurance about the challenges they are facing.

The discussions went well into the evening, with everyone very interested in helping the Institute's mandate and with lots of ideas to make a difference. There were attendees from the oil & gas industry, power industry, and rail industry – all faced with the same challenges. Conversations touched on the need for stronger alignment between all project groups for alignment towards operational performance, the importance of organizational readiness, and the value of a professional community focused on improving outcomes rather than simply completing scope.

The key theme was that organizations need more robust governance to make better, more confident decisions throughout the project lifecycle. The evening created space for practical discussion about the initiatives ICxA

is undertaking to make this a reality – with standards, governance frameworks, capability accelerators, credentials and recognition, and training for newcomers.

The event also highlighted the value of bringing professionals together across company and sector lines. Many attendees recognized that while organizations may approach project delivery differently, they often face similar challenges when it comes to readiness, transition, governance, and sustained performance. The Meet & Greet offered a chance to share those experiences, build new connections, and begin a broader conversation about how ICxA can support both individual professionals and organizations.

ICxA extends its sincere thanks to Mike Kilburn, ICxA Vice-President, North America; Heinz Inabnit, ICxA Advisory Council Chair; and Zach Lowe, ICxA Canada-West Local Chapter Lead, for sponsoring the event and helping make this first live gathering possible. Their support contributed to a welcoming and productive evening and helped set the tone for future ICxA engagement opportunities.

The Calgary Meet & Greet marks an encouraging milestone for ICxA as its first in-person event, and a meaningful step in building stronger connections within the professional community. ICxA looks forward to continuing the conversations started that evening through future events, chapter activities, member engagement, and industry collaboration.

Professionals and organizations interested in learning more about ICxA or joining the Institute are encouraged to contact info@icxa.net.