



INSTITUTE OF COMMISSIONING & ASSURANCE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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**The Outcome Assurance Gap
Knowledge Roundtable**

**The Old Delivery Model Is No
Longer Enough**

CEO's Message

By Paul Turner, P.Eng., PMP

Most projects are still started as though completing the scope is the same thing as achieving an outcome.

I don't think anyone believes this is actually true – but this is how projects are often managed.

Project management frameworks teach PMs to break activities into a WBS, procurement packages, construction areas, milestones, and to monitor percentages complete. Project teams are really good at tracking engineering deliverables, equipment deliveries, installed quantities, and completed activities. And as progress is tracked, the project appears to be

moving forward because progress is visible in each of these areas.

But visible progress and green dashboards do not mean the project is actually becoming operationally ready.

This is the gap - deliverable outputs from PM processes do not achieve outcomes - there is a gap between deliverables and readiness - PM processes end and do not account for readiness and intended outcomes. When you read the PMBOK, it suddenly ends. Scope is delivered and moves directly to project closeout - nothing in between, the project is suddenly assumed done.

A project can complete thousands of activities, install thousands of pieces of equipment, and close thousands of work packs - but that does not mean that the project is prepared to operate

as an integrated facility.

This is why so many projects appear to be on track until the very end.

Everything can look complete on paper. But when systems are energized, media is introduced, interfaces are tested, and plant operators are engaged, the reality becomes clear: the project completed all the scope, but it did not take steps much earlier to create readiness.

Traditional project management models are designed to manage outputs. Once the traditional PM framework is complete at the end of delivery, it falls short of achieving outcomes. The traditional PM framework gives no indication of readiness or the steps required much earlier to create readiness conditions.

The Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), Advanced Work Packaging (AWP), procurement plans, construction sequencing, and discipline-based execution plans are all useful tools. They are all necessary to organize and deliver the scope.

But these tools within the traditional PM framework are designed to answer one question:

“Has the work been completed?”

They do not anticipate or attempt to answer the more important and complex question: “Can the completed work actually function together to achieve the intended outcome?”

That is a systems question. The traditional PM framework does not function with a systems-mindset - it functions with a WBS mindset - backwards from what is required at the end of projects.

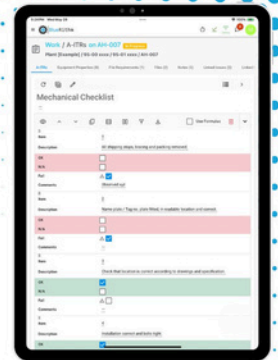
Outputs only become outcomes when systems, subsystems, controls, utilities, interfaces, people, procedures, and operational readiness come together and perform as one. This systems-based approach is absent in traditional PM frameworks. With this approach, there should be no surprise that projects fail. The traditional PM framework is functioning exactly as it was designed - to deliver scope. The traditional PM framework was never designed to achieve integrated outcomes.

This is why a new outcome-based approach is required - not to replace traditional PM - but to supplement it, to receive PM deliverables, and follow the proven systems-based approach to consistently and reliably achieve project outcomes.

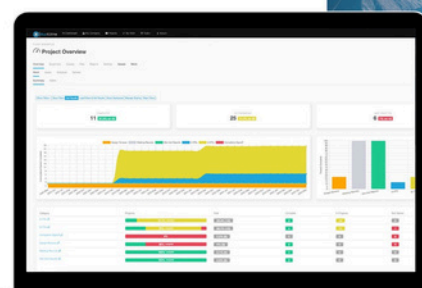


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When the conditions for readiness are created much earlier in projects (i.e. right from the start), it becomes quite possible to achieve intended outcomes.

ICXA's recently completed research reinforces this outcome gap. Across more than 1,400 organizations involved in major capital projects in all countries, the average Outcome Assurance Index (OAI) score was only 31.6 out of 100. Very few organizations scored above the mid-40s. Outcome governance, system integration, operational readiness, and outcome delivery were consistently among the weakest areas measured from publicly available data.

This research gives a clear indication of the message being sent from the industry. The industry is not underperforming - it is performing exactly as the traditional project management structure allows. Most organizations are still operating within a deliverables-based model that was designed to manage scope, schedule, budget - not outcomes. This is how the industry was designed decades ago and how new people to the industry are trained. It is not anyone's fault - they are operating within a structure that was designed for a simpler world.

Systems-based completion is what matters. And a systems-based approach is absent from the project management mindset. When projects are initiated with the traditional WBS approach, they are already headed in the wrong direction.

Systems-based completions are the bridge between deliverable outputs and operational outcomes. But the traditional PM framework ends at deliverables, leaving the larger project team lost and confused on how to achieve outcomes.

There are, however, groups with a systems-based mindset - these are, of course, the commissioning folks and operational readiness folks. Unfortunately, they are typically engaged too late in the project, long after their systems-based mindset should have been embedded within delivery strategies.

Since the traditional PM frameworks are designed to manage scope-schedule-budget, the opportunity to embed systems-based thinking in the delivery strategy does not occur. The shift from thinking about isolated work packages to thinking about integrated operational capability never occurs until far too late - the damage is done before anyone even knows there is a problem. The conversation needs to move away from "what is complete?" and toward "what is ready?"

Now, systems-based thinking does not replace WBS, AWP, or traditional project controls.

Those tools are still necessary.

But they are not enough.

Projects do not fail because activities were missing from the schedule. Or because of poor project management. Better project management is not the answer.

They fail because the industry still assumes that if enough deliverables are completed, the outcome will somehow emerge on its own.

But that is not how outcomes are achieved, the lessons of project failure continue to show us this. The industry has to recognize the limits of traditional project management frameworks and adopt the proven processes to achieve outcomes. Acknowledge that PMBOK and ISO-21500 cover projects up to the completion of deliverables, and that they

stop there. We need these processes to deliver projects, but your PMO is not able to govern outcomes, because that is not the framework they are working within. They will say differently, that a PMO is responsible for outcomes, yet there is nothing in PMBOK or ISO-21500 that shows them how to consistently and reliably do this. And before you say “each project is unique, can’t be done”, the projects that follow these proven processes will tell you otherwise.

Outcomes have to be deliberately structured, integrated, tested, and authorized. And the conditions for readiness need to be fostered much earlier in projects, not left to the end as an after-thought.

The transition from outputs to outcomes is the role of the systems-based completion methodology.

And ultimately, that is the role of Outcome Assurance - defined in the Outcome-Based Delivery Model.

This edition of the newsletter explores this Outcome Gap in more detail, including why traditional PM project control models cannot and never will close this gap on their own, why Outcome Assurance is essential, and why the future of project delivery depends on governing outcomes rather than simply tracking deliverables

Paul Turner, P.Eng, PMP

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

CONTRIBUTE TO THE GLOBAL OUTCOME ASSURANCE BENCHMARK



For the first time, the Institute of Commissioning and Assurance (ICxA) is establishing an independent global baseline for Outcome Assurance capability across major project organizations.

This international research initiative spans sectors, regions, and project types.

Organisations selected to participate receive their confidential Outcome Assurance Index (OAI) Score, providing an independent reference point reflecting their position relative to the Outcome Assurance Standards, the emerging global benchmark, as well as peer organisations.

Participation contributes to advancing professional standards and improving project outcome reliability worldwide.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE INITIAL BENCHMARK
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THE OUTCOME ASSURANCE GAP

by Paul Turner, CEO | ICxA

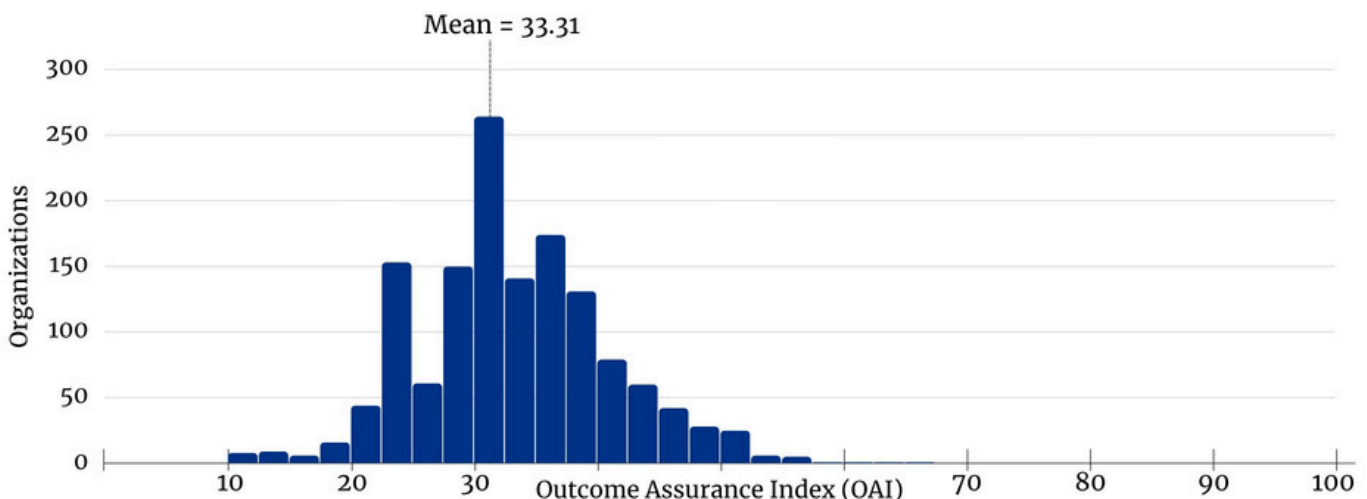
There is a disconnect between what projects deliver and the outcomes they actually achieve. Scope is delivered, but projects still struggle to achieve operational readiness, stable startup, sustained performance, or the business outcomes they were intended to create.

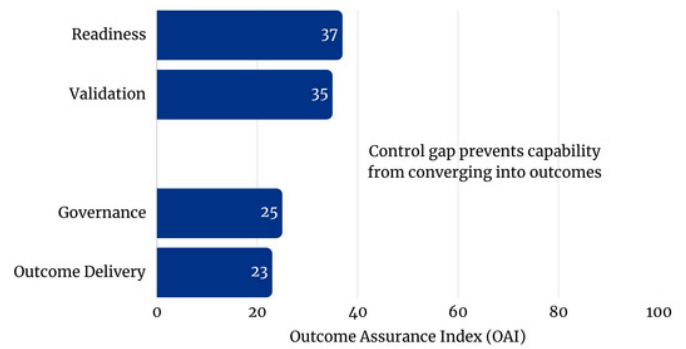
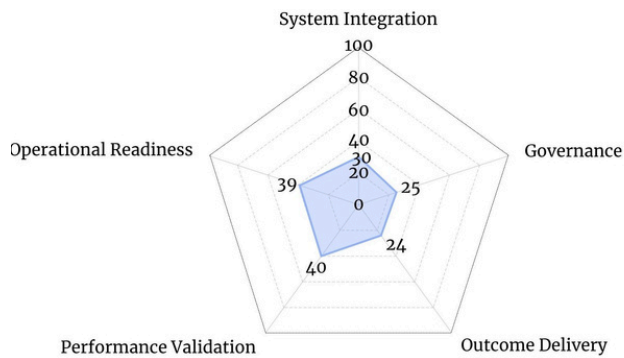
ICxA's latest research report, *The Outcome Assurance Gap*, examines this issue across 1,406 organizations globally and identifies a consistent pattern: projects are highly effective at managing activities, but are far less effective at governing whether those activities converge into an assured outcome.

The research found that the average Outcome Assurance Index (OAI) score across the global market is only 33.31 out of 100.

The OAI is ICxA's measurement framework for assessing how well an organization appears to govern project outcomes rather than just project activities. Rather than measuring whether work was simply completed, the OAI measures whether governance, system integration, operational readiness, performance validation, and outcome delivery are connected into a single system oriented toward the final result. A higher score indicates stronger evidence that an organization is governing whether projects will perform as intended, not just whether activities have been completed. More than 96% of organizations fall into "Minimal" or "Weak / Fragmented" maturity levels, and no region, industry, or organizational class exceeds approximately 45 out of 100. Operational Readiness and Performance Validation are generally the strongest areas, while Outcome Governance and Outcome Delivery remain the weakest.

This suggests that the industry does not suffer from a lack of capability. In fact, many organizations are highly capable within their individual domains. Engineering firms design effectively. Contractors execute work. Commissioning teams test systems.





Operations teams prepare for handover. The problem is not that these capabilities are missing. The problem is that they are rarely governed together as a single system oriented toward the final operational outcome.

The five pillars of the Outcome Assurance Index are Governance, System Integration, Operational Readiness, Performance Validation, and Outcome Delivery. What the research reveals is that execution-oriented pillars such as readiness and validation are relatively mature, while Governance and Outcome Delivery remain significantly weaker. In other words, the industry is becoming increasingly effective at completing work, but not more effective at ensuring that completed work will perform as intended.

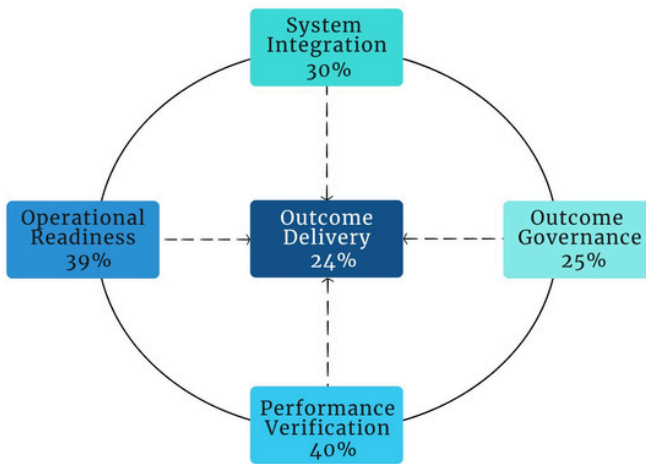
This gap becomes more significant as projects grow more complex, more digital, and more interconnected. A project can no longer rely on the assumption that if each discipline completes its work, the final result will naturally succeed. Modern projects depend on the integration of systems, people, data, processes, and operating environments. When this integration is not explicitly governed, outcome risk accumulates quietly across the project lifecycle. Delays at startup, prolonged stabilization periods, underperformance after handover, warranty disputes, operational disruption, and missed production targets are often symptoms of this structural gap rather than isolated project failures.

One of the strongest findings in the report is that the industry is remarkably consistent regardless of geography, sector, or stakeholder type. North America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America all perform within a narrow band. Likewise, industries such as power, oil and gas, transportation, mining, and manufacturing show only minor differences in maturity. This suggests that the issue is not tied to any one region, sector, or organization class. It is structural. Different industries. Same result.

The research report also highlights a critical accountability problem. Asset owners define the intended outcome, EPC contractors coordinate scope, engineering authorities provide technical rigor, suppliers deliver components, and contractors execute work. Every participant contributes to the result, yet no single role consistently governs whether the integrated outcome will actually be achieved.

The outcome is influenced by everyone, but owned by no one.

This is where Outcome Assurance becomes essential. Outcome Assurance is not an additional project phase or a separate activity layered on top of existing delivery systems. It is the governing layer that connects governance, integration, readiness, validation, and accountability directly to the intended outcome. It shifts the focus from whether



Control Gap prevents capability from converging into outcomes

The industry does not need to create all new capabilities from scratch. Most of the required capabilities already exist. The opportunity is to connect them differently.

The central message of the report is that the industry is not underperforming - it is operating exactly as its current structure allows. The prevailing project management delivery model is highly effective at managing scope, schedule, cost, milestones, and contractual deliverables. But it is not explicitly designed to assure that those deliverables will combine into a predictable, operational outcome.

work has been completed to determine whether the project is genuinely ready to perform.

A more mature, outcome-based delivery model would include explicit ownership of the final outcome, evidence-based stage-gates, system-level integration criteria, operational readiness under real operating conditions, performance validation tied to authorization, and continuity of accountability across handovers.

The next stage of project maturity will not come from improving the traditional project management framework. It will come from introducing a governing system that connects existing capabilities into a single, outcome-based project delivery model. That is the role of Outcome Assurance.

Read the full research report at <https://icxa.net/research>

Delivery-Based Model



Progression based on completion

Outcome-Based Model



Progression based on demonstrated readiness

KNOWLEDGE ROUNDTABLE

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

As Chairman of the Technical Committees at the Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA), I am pleased to introduce a new initiative that reflects both the maturity of our community and the urgency of the challenges we face: the ICxA Global Knowledge Roundtable. This initiative did not emerge in isolation - it is the direct result of the work, insights, and shared ambition of our Technical Committees, which have consistently highlighted a critical gap in our industry: the need for deeper, more structured global collaboration.

Across our committees, we have seen a recurring pattern: Organizations continue to confront similar challenges in different parts of the world, often solving them in isolation. Valuable knowledge remains fragmented across regions, disciplines, and industries. The Global Knowledge Roundtable was conceived to address this fragmentation by creating a collaborative platform where knowledge is not only shared but collectively shaped.

At its core, the initiative is designed to bring together professionals from all corners of the globe, leaders and practitioners representing

diverse industries, cultural contexts, and technical disciplines. This diversity is intentional. True progress in our field depends on our ability to integrate multiple perspectives, challenge entrenched assumptions, and co-create solutions that are both practical and adaptable across contexts.

The Roundtable is not a traditional forum. It is a structured, problem-driven environment where collaboration is the central mechanism. Each session is focused on a specific, high-impact challenge, whether related to interface management, transition to operations, system integration, or risk governance. Participants engage in facilitated dialogue that goes beyond exchanging experiences; they actively collaborate to test ideas, refine approaches, and build upon each other's insights.

What distinguishes this initiative is its emphasis on collective distillation. Through disciplined collaboration, the Roundtable seeks to transform diverse inputs into coherent, high-value knowledge. The goal is to generate outputs that are not tied to a single project or organization, but that can serve as reference points for the broader industry. In doing so, we move from isolated expertise to shared intelligence.

“The ICxA Global Knowledge Roundtable is, therefore, both a platform and a catalyst: it embodies our belief that the future of commissioning and operational readiness lies in collaboration...”

Equally important is the role this initiative plays in fostering the co-evolution of the execution ecosystem.

When professionals collaborate across boundaries, they do more than solve individual challenges - they begin to align on better practices, identify systemic inefficiencies, and contribute to the organic development of global standards.

This is particularly critical in bridging the persistent gap between technical completion and true operational readiness, where misalignment continues to undermine value realization.

The ICxA Global Knowledge Roundtable is, therefore, both a platform and a catalyst: it

embodies our belief that the future of commissioning and operational readiness lies in collaboration, not as an abstract principle, but as a structured, intentional practice. By harnessing the collective expertise of our global community, we aim to accelerate learning, strengthen execution, and ultimately enable more reliable and resilient project outcomes.

This initiative represents a natural evolution of the Technical Committees' mandate.

It is our commitment to ensuring that knowledge does not remain static, but continuously evolves through collaboration, through challenge, and through shared purpose.



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THE OLD DELIVERY MODEL IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

by Paul Turner, CEO | ICxA

For decades, the project industry has been built around a simple premise to define the scope, manage the schedule, control the budget, and deliver the project.

That model created the modern project management profession. It gave organizations a common language for planning, execution, controls, and delivery. It brought discipline, consistency, and accountability to increasingly complex work.

However, the world has changed.

Projects are now larger, more integrated, more digital, more automated, more regulated, and more operationally complex than ever before. Yet despite increasingly sophisticated project controls, the same problems continue to emerge. Projects reach completion but cannot operate as intended. Assets are handed over with unresolved interfaces and incomplete readiness. Progress dashboards report visible progress while the outcome gap continues to grow beneath the surface. Facilities reach construction completion, but not operational performance. Owners receive deliverables, but not outcomes, and are frustrated with the continued poor project performance.

This is not because project managers are

failing.

It is because the industry is still operating inside a delivery model designed to govern activities, scope, schedule, budget, contracts, and deliverables rather than outcomes.

That distinction matters.

Traditional project management standards are designed to answer questions about whether the project is on schedule, within budget, and delivering the agreed scope. They are designed to manage activities, track progress, coordinate resources, and ensure that work is completed.

Those are important responsibilities. However, they are not the same as asking whether the finished asset will actually work as intended, whether the operation is ready to receive it, whether the interfaces have been proven, whether the system has been tested under real operating conditions, whether there is evidence that the intended outcome can be achieved, and who has the authority to say the project is truly ready.

That is the outcome gap.

PMI helped define the profession of project management.

ICxA exists to define the profession of Outcome Assurance.

PMI standards manage scope, schedule, budget, activities, and deliverables. ICxA standards govern outcomes.

These are not competing roles. They are different layers of the project system.

Projects still need strong project management.



They still need planning, controls, contracts, risk management, execution discipline, and delivery capability. However, strong project management alone does not guarantee that the finished project will work, perform, integrate, start up successfully, achieve the intended business case, or transition safely into operation.

The industry has spent decades trying to solve outcome problems with better execution inside the old delivery model. It has added more meetings, more schedules, more dashboards, more reporting, and more controls. Yet better execution inside a model designed around deliverables will never fully solve a problem that exists between completion and outcome.

That is why a new model is needed.

The New Model: Outcome-Based Project Delivery

Outcome-Based Project Delivery starts from a different premise.

It recognizes that project completion is not the finish line. Installation is only one point in a larger chain that includes readiness, integration, operational transition, performance validation, and outcome achievement.

Under this model, activities matter because they support outcomes. Deliverables matter because they support outcomes. Construction matters because it supports outcomes.

Completion matters because it supports outcomes. However, none of those things is the outcome itself.

Outcome Assurance becomes the governing layer that sits above project delivery.







It shifts the focus from whether something has been built to whether it will work. It asks whether the operation is ready, whether the interfaces have been proven, whether the intended outcome has been validated, and whether the organization is prepared to



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receive the asset, and whether there is evidence that the intended outcome will actually be achieved.

This is the missing layer between project outputs/completion and successful project outcomes.

It is the layer that governs system integration, operational readiness, testing and validation, stage-gates and authorization, interface management, evidence of readiness, residual risk, transfer to operations, and accountability for outcomes.

This is not additional bureaucracy. It is not a duplication. It is not another reporting layer.

It is the missing governing layer that ensures projects do not simply get delivered, but

achieve the outcome they were meant to achieve.

A New Professional Identity

For many professionals, this shift is more than a new process.

It is a new identity.

Most people in the industry have spent their careers being measured on activity, progress, completion, and delivery. Yet many have also experienced the frustration of seeing projects declared complete even when they are not truly ready.

They have seen assets handed over too early. They have seen systems fail during startup. They have seen unresolved interfaces create



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major problems. They have seen organizations celebrate completion while operations inherit the risk.

They've known for a while that something is missing.

Outcome Assurance gives that missing piece a name.

It creates a new professional identity for people who understand that project progress is not the same as project readiness, that installation is not the same as integration, and that completion is not the same as outcome achievement.

These are professionals who understand that everything can appear on track and still fail when everything has to work together.

These are Outcome Leaders. They are the people who ask the questions others overlook.

They focus on readiness, interfaces, evidence, operational transition, residual risk, and outcome achievement. They understand that projects do not fail within activities. They fail between them.

The old delivery model has completed installation.

The new model governs outcomes.

That is the shift.

That is the future.

And that is why ICxA exists.

If you believe projects should be judged not only by whether they are delivered, but by whether they actually work and achieve their intended outcome, then you are already part of this movement.

You are not just a project professional.

You are an Outcome Leader.

BEYOND DELIVERY. TOWARD OUTCOMES.

The old model stops at completion.
The new model ensures outcomes are achieved.

THE OLD DELIVERY MODEL

- SCOPE DEFINED
- SCHEDULE MANAGED
- BUDGET CONTROLLED
- DELIVERABLES PRODUCED

Completion
not Outcome

THE
OUTCOME
GAP

- Unproven Interfaces
- Operational Readiness
- Integration Risk
- Startup Issues
- Unrealized Value

THE NEW MODEL: OUTCOME-BASED PROJECT DELIVERY

- OUTCOME ASSURANCE GOVERNS
- OPERATIONAL READINESS CONFIRMED
- SYSTEMS INTEGRATED & TESTED
- PERFORMANCE VALIDATED & EVIDENCED
- AUTHORIZED TO TRANSFER TO OPERATIONS
- OUTCOMES ACHIEVED & SUSTAINED

ASSURANCE. READINESS. RESULTS.