Institute of Commissioning & Assurance (ICxA)

Readiness Audit Criteria

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Performance audits of major capital projects test value for money against criteria. Cost, time and scope have accepted criteria. Whether the asset can be brought into service and operated as intended usually does not, so it is examined after the fact, when a project has already entered service late or below its planned performance. ICxA calls the missing subject readiness. These criteria let an auditor examine it while the project is still being delivered.

What readiness covers

Readiness is the condition in which sufficient evidence is available for a decision to proceed (ICXA-10001 cl. 8.1). It applies at every point of commitment in a project, not only at the end: readiness to commit, to proceed, to integrate and to operate. It covers the asset and its systems, which must be designed, procured, built, tested and integrated so that each system works with the others. It covers the organization that will operate the asset: its people, its organization, its care of the asset, and its systems and processes. It also covers the interfaces and contracts between the parties, and the evidence and governance on which each decision rests.

How to use the criteria

There are 28 criteria in six areas. Each project defines its own stage-gates, readiness criteria and readiness conditions under the ICxA Standards, so an auditor examines the project against what it has defined and against the criteria below. What can be expected depends on where the project is in its life.

Stage	What the evidence shows	Criteria
At the investment decision and through engineering: the path	Operating outcomes are defined. Stage-gates, criteria and evidence needs are set in advance. Roles and independence are assigned. A systems completion strategy and an operational readiness plan exist.	A01, A02, A04, B01, B03, C01, C02, D01, E01
During procurement and construction: the progression	Readiness is in the master schedule. Interfaces and vendor deliverables are tracked. Systems are being completed by system. People, organization, asset and systems capability are developing on time. Reviews are held and recorded.	A03, B02, B04, C03, C04, D02, D03, D04, D05, E02, E04, F01, F03
From commissioning to operations: the condition	Testing is prepared and complete for each system, and systems work together. Deficiencies and deferred work are controlled. Transfer follows a recorded review and acceptance. Ramp-up is monitored.	C05, C06, D06, E03, F02, F04

For each criterion a finding can be stated as one of: demonstrated, confirmed deficiency, insufficient evidence, not yet due, or not applicable with reasons. A requirement that the project's plan does not yet require is not a deficiency. Missing or inaccessible evidence is insufficient evidence, and is not by itself a finding of technical failure. Findings should not be combined into a score. Low readiness early in a project is normal; the risk is the absence of evidence that it is maturing.

A. Outcomes and commitment

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
A01	The intended operating outcomes (capacity, output, availability, quality, ramp-up profile, operating cost basis) are defined, traceable to project requirements, and consistent with the assumptions in the approved business case or financing case.	Statement of intended operating outcomes. Reconciliation of those outcomes to the approved case.	ICXA-10001 cl. 4.1, 6.2; ICXA-20201 cl. 4.4 a)
A02	Construction completion, commissioning stage-gates, start-up, transfer of operational control and the in-service or commercial operation date are separately defined, sequenced by system, and connected to the schedule.	Milestone definitions. Schedule showing each milestone by system.	ICXA-10001 cl. 6.3, 6.5; ICXA-20101 cl. 9.1, 9.2.2
A03	Systems completion and operational readiness activities, constraints, reviews and decision points are integrated with the project master schedule, so that slippage is visible to decision-makers when it occurs.	Integrated master schedule showing readiness activities, reviews and decision points.	ICXA-20101 cl. 10.1, 11.7; ICXA-20201 cl. 6.7
A04	Changes that affect outcomes, operating assumptions, system boundaries or readiness requirements are evaluated before they are relied on, and outcome or acceptance criteria are not relaxed to accommodate shortfalls.	Change records showing the effect on outcomes and readiness was evaluated before the change was relied on.	ICXA-10001 cl. 6.2, 6.4; ICXA-20101 cl. 7.5; ICXA-20201 cl. 7.1.5.3

B. Contracts, interfaces and decision authority

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
B01	Responsibilities for systems completion, testing, operational readiness, handover and post-handover support are allocated across contractors, suppliers, the owner and the operator without gaps or overlaps.	Division-of-responsibility matrix across contracts.	ICXA-20101 cl. 6.6, 10.4, 11.2 f)
B02	Interfaces that affect system readiness and verification are identified, assigned, tracked and resolved, including dependencies between contracts, vendors, utilities and the operator.	Interface register with owners, status and resolution dates.	ICXA-20101 cl. 11.8; ICXA-10001 cl. 8.4 f) g); ICXA-20201 cl. 6.7
B03	The project has defined who prepares readiness evidence, who reviews it, and who decides progression at each stage-gate, with review separated from those responsible for delivery and from schedule pressure.	Governance arrangements naming who prepares, evaluates and authorizes. Evidence that evaluators are independent of delivery.	ICXA-10001 cl. 5.3; ICXA-20101 cl. 6.1, 6.2; ICXA-20201 cl. 5.1, 5.2
B04	Readiness gaps, evidence disputes and authority conflicts have a defined escalation route that reaches decision-makers in time, including where several contracting parties are involved.	Escalation procedure. Records of escalated issues and how they were resolved.	ICXA-20101 cl. 6.5; ICXA-20201 cl. 5.4, 5.5

C. The asset and its systems

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
C01	A system-based strategy and plan for systems completion, verification and handover exist, set out milestones, resources, risks and tailoring, and are maintained as the project develops.	Systems completion strategy and plan, with revision history.	ICXA-20101 cl. 10.1, 10.2, 10.7, 11.2

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
C02	A system breakdown structure with defined system boundaries is baselined, used as the index for completion, testing and handover records, and kept under change control.	Baselined system breakdown structure with boundaries. Change control records.	ICXA-10001 cl. 4.3 e); ICXA-20101 cl. 7.1, 7.2, 7.5, 11.6
C03	Systems completion stage-gates (at least Construction Completion, Ready for Dynamic Commissioning, Ready for Start-Up and System Handover, or documented equivalents) have defined entry criteria and minimum evidence, and progression is not based on percentage complete alone.	Stage-gate definitions with entry criteria and minimum evidence sets. Stage-gate records.	ICXA-20101 cl. 6.7, 9.2.2, 9.4, Annex B
C04	Vendor testing, documentation, support during commissioning, spares and warranty obligations needed for readiness are defined in procurement and tracked to delivery.	Procurement requirements. Tracking of vendor deliverables.	ICXA-20101 cl. 10.5, 12.8, 13.6
C05	Verification and test plans, integrated and dynamic test procedures, control and safety system testing, and a start-up readiness review are prepared in time for the systems concerned.	Verification and test plans. Integrated test procedures. Start-up readiness review record.	ICXA-20101 cl. 9.2.2 d), 12.2, 12.5, 12.6
C06	Outstanding work and deficiencies are classified by their effect on stage-gate progression, tracked to closure with evidence, and not downgraded or deferred solely to protect schedule.	Deficiency register showing classification, closure evidence, and any reclassification with reasons.	ICXA-20101 cl. 9.3, 12.9; ICXA-10001 cl. 8.5

D. The operating organization

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
D01	An operational readiness charter and plan (or equivalent) define the readiness scope, operating assumptions, criteria, reviews and decision authority, mapped to the system breakdown.	Operational readiness charter and plan.	ICXA-20201 cl. 4.3, 4.4, 6.1.1, 6.1.2
D02	People. The workforce model, recruitment, training and demonstrated competence of operating and maintenance staff progress in time to support start-up and operation, including capacity for abnormal and emergency conditions.	Workforce plan. Recruitment status. Training records and competence assessments.	ICXA-20201 cl. 6.4, 7.1.2.1 to 7.1.2.4; ICXA-20101 cl. 13.4
D03	Organization. Operating governance, decision authority, operational control arrangements and emergency preparedness are defined and shown to work before operational control is assumed.	Operating governance and authority arrangements. Emergency arrangements, with records of exercises or trials.	ICXA-20201 cl. 7.1.3.1 to 7.1.3.4
D04	Asset. Asset condition, maintainability, spares, consumables, utilities and external supply commitments needed to operate are identified and in place for the systems being transferred.	Spares and consumables status. Utility and supply agreements. Maintainability reviews.	ICXA-20201 cl. 7.1.4.1 to 7.1.4.3; ICXA-20101 cl. 13.2 e)
D05	Systems and processes. Operating and maintenance procedures, enabling systems (maintenance management, operating data, document control) and configuration control are built and usable by the people who rely on them before transfer.	Operating and maintenance procedures. Status of enabling systems. Configuration control records.	ICXA-20201 cl. 6.5, 7.1.5.1 to 7.1.5.3

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
D06	Criteria and records for transfer of operational control, operational acceptance, start-up support, ramp-up and stabilization are defined, and transfer occurs only after a recorded readiness review and acceptance by the receiving authority.	Transfer criteria. Readiness review and operational acceptance records for each transfer.	ICXA-20201 cl. 9.1, 9.3; ICXA-20101 cl. 13.1 to 13.3

E. Evidence

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
E01	For each stage-gate and transition milestone the project defines in advance what evidence is required, proportionate to consequence and irreversibility, before that evidence is produced.	Dated record of the evidence required for each stage-gate, set before the evidence was produced.	ICXA-10002 cl. 4 e), 5, 6; ICXA-10001 cl. 8.2
E02	Readiness evidence is controlled, current, traceable to the system and stage-gate it supports, and retrievable for review.	Evidence register. A sample of evidence traced to its system and stage-gate.	ICXA-20101 cl. 8.3, 8.4, 8.6; ICXA-20201 cl. 8.1, 8.2
E03	Readiness conclusions rest on evidence that is relevant to the decision, not on document volume, checklist completion, dashboards or activity status.	Readiness conclusions and the evidence cited for them.	ICXA-10002 cl. 4 h), 7; ICXA-20201 cl. 8.2; ICXA-20101 cl. 6.7; ICXA-10001 cl. 8.3
E04	The project holds readiness reviews at planned points, records a recommendation (proceed, proceed with conditions, or hold) and reports hold outcomes.	Readiness review schedule and records, including the recommendation made at each.	ICXA-20101 cl. 6.7; ICXA-20201 cl. 8.4, 9.1

F. Risk, deferred work and correction

Ref	Criterion	Evidence to examine	ICxA reference
F01	Readiness risks are identified early, expressed as operational and transition consequences, assigned to owners, and kept current in the project risk register.	Risk register entries for readiness risks, with owners and review dates.	ICXA-10001 cl. 6.1; ICXA-20201 cl. 6.2, 8.3; ICXA-20101 cl. 6.4
F02	Where progression proceeds with conditions or deferred work, each item is recorded with owner, due date and closure evidence, safety-critical or regulatory-critical items are not deferred past the relevant gate, and deferred items are visible to the governing body.	Register of conditions and deferred work, with owner, due date and closure evidence.	ICXA-20101 cl. 6.4, 13.3 a), Annex B.1; ICXA-20201 cl. 8.3; ICXA-10001 cl. 8.5
F03	Readiness deficiencies and review findings receive corrective action plans with owners and deadlines, and closure is verified with evidence.	Corrective action plans. Closure verification records.	ICXA-20201 cl. 8.3, 10.3; ICXA-20101 cl. 12.9
F04	After transfer, ramp-up and stabilization performance, early-life defects and open readiness actions are monitored against defined targets.	Ramp-up and stabilization reports against defined targets. Early-life defect records.	ICXA-20201 cl. 9.3; ICXA-20101 cl. 13.6

Where the criteria come from

Every criterion is taken from the requirements of the ICxA Standards: Outcome Assurance (ICXA-10001 and ICXA-10002), Commissioning and Outcome Execution (ICXA-20101) and Operational Readiness (ICXA-20201). The clause references let an auditor read the underlying requirement. The same criteria are used

by lenders through the ICxA Lender Readiness Implementation Pack, with the wording adapted here for public audit.

The criteria describe evidence. They do not certify that a project is ready, and meeting them cannot establish that start-up will succeed. The auditor forms its own conclusion.

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