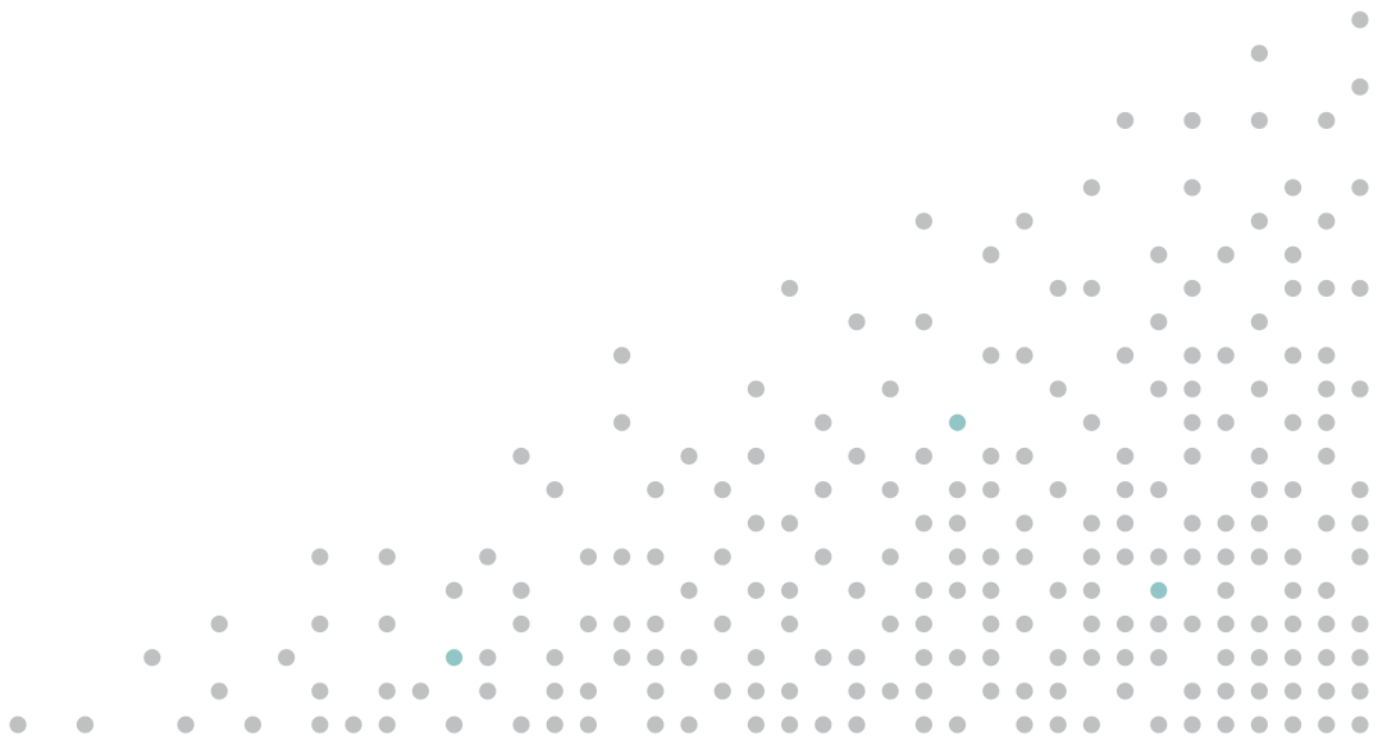




Australian Government
Department of Finance



Australian Government Assurance Reviews

Resource Management Guide No. 106

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Contact us

Please direct questions or comments about the Australian Government Assurance Review Process to:

Assurance Reviews Unit
Investment, Capability and Assurance Branch
Efficiency, Assurance and Digital Government Division
Governance and APS Transformation
Department of Finance
1 Canberra Avenue
Forrest ACT 2603

Email: assurancereviews@finance.gov.au

Internet: www.finance.gov.au/assurance-reviews/

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Audience

The Australian Government Assurance Reviews Framework applies to some non-corporate Commonwealth entities (NCEs). This guide applies to officials of NCEs who are responsible for conducting Assurance Reviews, and Assurance Reviewers.

Key points

This guide provides an overview of the Australian Government Assurance Reviews process and assist NCEs, Assurance Reviewers and other participants to understand their roles and responsibilities.

Assurance Reviews are principle based, providing flexibility for refining and adapting to changing environments, including financial risk and complexities associated with governance.

Information in this guide is designed to be applied using common sense as relevant to the circumstances of each program/project under review.

Resources

The information in this publication is based on the Gateway Review Pack—Best Practice (Version 2), published by the State of Victoria through the Department of Treasury and Finance in 2004 and the Successful Delivery Toolkit (Version 4.5), published by the United Kingdom Office of Government Commerce (OGC), in 2004.

The Victorian Gateway documentation is subject to copyright protection by the State of Victoria and is reproduced with its permission. The Successful Delivery Toolkit is a Crown Copyright value-added product and is developed, owned and published by the OGC. It is subject to Crown Copyright protection and is reproduced under licence with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the OGC.

The Assurance Reviews Unit (ARU) in Finance provides a range of policy, guidance and assistance services in support of the Assurance Review function, including:

- providing guidance on the completion of the Risk Potential Assessment Tool (RPAT).
- facilitating Assurance Reviews and reviewer teams.
- assisting entities that are subject to an Assurance Review on administrative and operational matters.
- facilitating the provision of advice to Assurance reviewers related to policy enhancements and key issues.
- developing reference and supporting materials.
- periodically publishing lessons learned and better practice guidance from Assurance Reviews conducted.

This guide and related materials listed below are available on the Finance website at: www.finance.gov.au/assurance-reviews/.

Other relevant publications include:

- Resource Management Guide No. 107: Risk Potential Assessment Tool and Guidance
- Information Sheets and Questions and Answers
- Information Sheet – Assurance Reviews Process Overview
- Information Sheet – Shared Learning Building Public Sector Capability
- Q&A for Senior Responsible Officials on the Assurance Review Process
- Q&A for Review Team Members on the Assurance Reviews Process.

Introduction

1. This guide provides a high-level overview of each assurance process and aims to demonstrate that each process has a ‘fit for purpose’ aspect. It also outlines the circumstances and criteria that trigger each assurance process, the general timing that would apply, and where to seek further detailed information and assistance.
2. Appendix C: Handbook for Conducting Assurance Reviews provides a consistent framework from which to conduct Assurance Reviews across a range of different programs and projects. The Handbook includes examples of areas to probe and the type of evidence expected at key stages throughout program/project design, implementation and delivery.
3. Implementation and delivery of policy initiatives is one of the key responsibilities of Commonwealth entities. While the planning process and advice leading up to cabinet decisions are critical for effective program/project implementation, there are separate aspects of program/project delivery that need to be addressed in the implementation phase after cabinet decisions have been made.

Part 1 – Australian Government Assurance Reviews

4. External assurance can add important new insights to internal control, as well as an independent perspective to support the delivery of more complex programs/projects.
5. Assurance Reviews do not replace an entity's responsibility and accountability for implementation and delivery of a program/project. Assurance Reviews are designed to strengthen assurance practices and to build capability associated with the delivery and implementation of government programs/projects and services.
6. Australian Government Assurance Reviews draw on a range of proven methodologies, including the Better Practice Guide on Successful Implementation of Policy Initiatives (Australian National Audit Office and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), October 2014) and the United Kingdom's Office of Government Commerce, (OGC) *Gateway Review Process*¹.
7. There are two key types of Australian Government Assurance Reviews administered by the Department of Finance:
 - Implementation Readiness Assessments (IRA)
 - Gateway reviews (Gateway)
8. The IRA was introduced in 2011. The purpose of the IRA is to provide assurance to the responsible Minister, the accountable authority and cabinet on how well practical delivery issues are being addressed for the proposed government programs/projects.
9. The government introduced Gateway in the 2006-07 Budget, focusing initially on projects that satisfied certain financial thresholds or were identified as high risk. However, complexity and implementation challenges associated with program delivery, particularly cross-portfolio programs, led the government to extend the application of the Gateway assurance methodology to apply to programs as well (2011). The purpose of Gateway is to strengthen existing governance and assurance practices, and to increase program/project management capability across government.
10. Experience and feedback has shown that Assurance Reviews assist with:
 - development and maintenance of robust business cases with key milestones, deliverables and benefits clearly articulated.
 - implementation design and planning.
 - development of risk management strategies to address challenges associated with competing priorities, resources and capability, as well as complexities associated with cross-jurisdictional responsibilities.
 - management of regulatory environments that may expose a program/project to failure if not properly identified and managed.

¹ OGC Gateway® is referred to in this document as 'Gateway'. Gateway® is a Trademark of the UK office of Government Commerce.

- development of governance, accountability and reporting strategies to ensure appropriate support and oversight during implementation and delivery.
- building capability and cultivating better practice through independent peer review and monitoring.

Core principles

11. Fundamental to the ongoing success of the Assurance Reviews process are its core principles, which focus on:
 - providing independent assurance on how best to ensure that programs/projects are successful.
 - aligning benefits to entity and government strategic objectives with clear measurable targets, timelines and owners.
 - building capability through access to highly credentialed reviewers who provide mentoring and coaching.
 - promulgating the lessons learned.
12. Key characteristics of Assurance Reviews are:
 - short duration - generally no more than five days.
 - based on non-attributable interviews.
 - flexibility in timing and scope, tailored to reflect the stage of policy development and delivery.
 - value-add - the specialist pool of senior reviewers have skills and experience relevant to the policy delivery environment.

Variance between the IRA and Gateway review process

Review	Timing	Review Report	Objective
IRA	Standalone review can occur prior to a cabinet decision or soon after.	Provided to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCE subject to the review • Central entities • Government 	To support the decision making process by providing government and the accountable authority with assurance on how well practical delivery issues are being addressed.
Gateway	Multiple reviews which occur throughout the program/project lifecycle.	Provided to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Responsible Official (SRO) within the relevant entity • ARU for promulgation of lessons learnt 	To support the successful delivery of a program/project by providing the SRO with an assessment that highlights issues that may jeopardise the delivery of benefits.

13. If a program/project is subject to both an IRA and Gateway, both processes would be integrated to minimise the potential for review burden. E.g., the IRA may replace the pre-decision review stages of the Gateway process.

Interaction with ICT Investment Approval Process and Two Stage Capital Works Approval Process

14. The Assurance Reviews Framework is designed to complement the ICT Investment Approval Process and the Two Stage Capital Works Approval Process. If a program/project is subject to both Gateway and the ICT Investment Approval Process or the Two Stage Capital Works Approval Process, the requirement to conduct Gateway Gate 0 and Gate 1 reviews is not mandatory. Gateway would only commence after the approval process has been concluded or if the entity opted to participate in reviews during the approval process.

Risk management

15. Better practice demonstrates that the identification and treatment of risk is undertaken at the earliest opportunity during policy design. This is an important element of the control framework necessary for effective program/project implementation.
16. Risks are things that may happen at some point in the future and have the potential to negatively impact on the policy and the realisation of objectives. It is essential that risks are identified and actively managed in order to reduce their likelihood of happening or their impact on the policy or program/project.
17. By identifying key factors that affect policy performance and considering how they may evolve in the future, policies can be made more robust to a range of anticipated conditions and indicators developed to identify when policy adjustments are required.
18. NCEs are responsible for assessing the inherent risk factors associated with their New Policy Proposals (NPP). The Risk Potential Assessment Tool (RPAT)² is a standardised risk analysis tool designed to assist NCEs with this process. The resultant risk rating can inform whether additional assurance processes is recommended to government. In making this determination, Finance will consult with relevant stakeholders including the relevant entity and other central entities.
19. Decisions to commission Assurance Reviews are made by government, usually during the pre-budget considerations of NPPs and Portfolio Budget Submissions. In exceptional circumstances, the Minister for Finance, in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, can make the decision to commission an Assurance Review.
20. NCEs are encouraged to consider the scheduling of their cabinet submission timetable to allow for potential pre-decision Assurance Reviews.

² www.finance.gov.au/assurance-reviews/risk-potential-assessment-tool

Part 2 – Conducting successful Assurance Reviews

21. Assurance Reviews consist of four distinct steps requiring the entity's engagement and participation. The following sections outline the core elements of each stage and highlight some of the key elements for undertaking a successful Assurance Review.

The initiation stage

22. Once an Assurance Review has been commissioned, ARU will contact the SRO and/or the Program/Project Manager to: clarify the characteristics of the program/project, discuss the timing and logistics of the review process, and discuss the skill requirements needed for the Assurance Review Team including potential reviewers.
23. Following this, ARU will finalise the Assurance Review Team, including the Review Team Leader (RTL), and brief the Assurance Review Team on the program/project and their role in the review.
24. At this point, the primary responsibility for coordinating the review passes to the RTL and Program/Project Manager. ARU will continue to support the conduct of the review and will be available to provide advice throughout the duration of the review.

The planning meeting

25. A half-day planning meeting is held at the entity's premises approximately two to three weeks prior to the onsite review. The planning meeting allows the SRO the opportunity to meet with the Assurance Reviews Team, discuss key issues and to brief the team about the program/project. Some of the topics that may be covered during the planning meeting include:
- policy, service delivery, legal, governance and/or contractual context of the program/project including reasons for the program/project being initiated
 - relationship of the program/project with government policy, legislation and the entity's (or entities') outputs and outcomes
 - options considered in developing the course of action
 - benefits and outcomes the program/project will be expected to deliver and how they will be measured, realised and maximised
 - the program/project's status, progress to-date and planned future work
 - implementation of the project plan, including an outline of the resourcing, funding and planning arrangements
 - communications and change management strategies
 - risks associated with the program/project, and how they will be managed.
26. The Assurance Reviews Team will make requests for documentation and interviews with key stakeholders during the onsite review week.

- The Program/Project Manager is encouraged to compile a draft list of documents (using Appendices A and C as a guide) and interviewees for the Assurance Reviews Team's consideration.
 - The Program/Project Manager is responsible for organising the interviews prior to the onsite review and making the documents available to the Assurance Review Team soon after the planning meeting. The documents can be provided either electronically (i.e. Govdex) or in hardcopy. Certain classified material may only be made available on the entity's premises.
27. The planning meeting also provides an opportunity to 'plan' the review. This includes discussing the review agenda, resourcing requirements, and protocols for the review. E.g., prior to the onsite review, the Program/Project Manager will also need to organise facilities for the Assurance Review Team. This may include:
- a meeting room with a projector, laptop and/or access to a printer (as requested by the RTL)
 - building security passes; and
 - a cabinet of appropriate security rating to secure documentation.
28. In addition to the above, the IRA process will also include planning meetings with central entity representatives.

The onsite review

29. The onsite review is held at the entity's premises usually over five working days. The purpose of the review is to provide the SRO with an assessment of the program/project's progress against its stated objectives, as well as a Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA) rating (Gateway), or an assessment of the potential issues and risks to successful implementation (IRA).
30. The onsite review includes an examination of the requested documentation and interviews with key program/project stakeholders. Where possible, the Assurance Review Team is encouraged to review the documentation provided by the entity prior to the first day of the onsite review.
31. Generally, on the first morning of the review week the Program/Project Manager will meet with the Assurance Review Team to clarify arrangements for the week and confirm interviews. In the case of most reviews, the first three days of the review will primarily be used for interviews and documentation review, the fourth day will be used for drafting the review report, and the fifth day will be used to finalise the review report.
32. Interviews will generally take between 30-45 minutes unless otherwise requested by the Assurance Review Team. Interviews are best conducted in person, however in some cases, teleconferences may be necessary. The Assurance Review Team will usually request a short break between interviews to discuss key issues and compile notes on their findings which will form the basis of the review report.
33. At the end of each day, the RTL will brief the SRO on the day's findings. This provides the SRO with an opportunity to address any misunderstandings, progress outstanding issues or provide additional information if required. This also ensures that the review

report doesn't contain any surprises for the SRO. During an IRA, the RTL will also regularly brief ARU.

The review report

34. The Assurance Review Team will commence drafting the report as soon as practicable. The report, including conclusions and recommendations, will be finalised and presented to the SRO as a draft on the penultimate day of the review by the Assurance Review Team. The reviewers will base the report on the interviews conducted and the documentation read, applying judgement and expertise. The SRO and entity will have the opportunity to provide comment on the draft report.
35. On the last day of the review, the final report will be provided to the SRO by the Assurance Review Team. ARU will also be provided with a copy of the report to assist with the development of lessons learnt from Assurance Reviews. The final report, which will be signed by all members of the Assurance Review Team, will include:
 - the Assurance Review Team's assessment of overall delivery confidence (Gateway) or potential issues and risks to successful implementation (IRA)
 - key findings and any recommendations, indicating when it is advisable to take action
 - an overall conclusion on the program/project's status and its readiness to progress to the next phase (Gateway)
 - background to the program/project, including its origin, the outcomes it seeks to achieve, and how the outcomes link to the entity's business strategy and/or high level policy objectives
 - the purpose, scope and approach of the review, logistics of the review, including review dates, SRO, Assurance Review Team membership, stakeholders interviewed and documents reviewed; and
 - the progress achieved against previous review recommendations (if applicable).
36. Gateway review reports are for the purpose of informing the entity and as such, they are only provided to the SRO. SROs are encouraged to circulate their reports with key stakeholders and governance arrangements. The aim is to ensure that the appropriate people are aware of issues arising and problems identified, and are able to take the requisite action³.
37. Sharing and reviewing outputs of assurance activities underpins an effective integrated assurance model, and maintaining an integrated assurance log can be a useful tool. Entities are encouraged to escalate the outcomes and recommendations from assurance to the level where appropriate remedial actions can be sanctioned.
38. IRA review reports are provided to the responsible minister, the portfolio secretary and/or accountable authority, the SRO, Finance, PM&C and the Treasury. Finance will also refer to the outcome of the IRA in a briefing provided to government.
39. Gateway reports provided to accountable authorities are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). The entity has responsibility for dealing with FOI

³ OGC Lessons Learned Effective Project Assurance (June 2009)

requests for Gateway reports. Other information held by entities or by ARU related to a Gateway review may also be subject to the FOI Act.

Key elements for a successful Assurance Review

Planning and coordination

40. Successful Assurance Reviews are underpinned by thorough planning and careful coordination. Throughout the review process, discussions are held with key participants from the entity, ARU and the Assurance Review Team to clarify the intent, requirements and timeframes of a review to assist with the planning and coordination process.

Open and clear dialogue

41. During each review, access to key participants and stakeholders is integral to the success of the review. Successful reviews will have fully engaged participants and stakeholders who demonstrate a willingness to share information openly and honestly. Assurance Reviews are most effective if those involved are conscious that the review is being conducted to provide assistance to the program/project, rather than being seen as an externally imposed assessment or compliance audit.
42. Participants are encouraged to respond to questions from the review team accurately and completely. This includes communicating their role, responsibilities and reasons for their actions and decisions as requested. Participants are encouraged to make themselves available to answer follow-up questions and provide additional documentation in a timely manner.
43. Reviewers are encouraged to put participants and stakeholders at ease, give them confidence to talk openly about the program/project and contribute their thoughts, concerns and issues. Reviewers are encouraged to employ a positive, constructive, strictly objective, consistent and non-personal manner when questioning participants. Review teams are also encouraged to clarify the meaning of the terminology used with the program/project team to ensure an accurate and useful review outcome.
44. Review reports will be written on a non-attributable basis.

Confidentiality and accountability

45. Fostering confidentiality during the review process encourages candour and helps ensure access to information. As part of the confidentiality, it is critical that all program/project documentation is returned to the entity at the conclusion of each review. The Assurance Review Team's notes and draft reports will need to be destroyed on the last day of the review. The only permanent record of a review will be the final review report.
46. To ensure an appropriate level of awareness of an Assurance Review, SROs are encouraged to keep their accountable authority informed of the progress of the review, including outcomes and recommendations. It is considered better practice for the accountable authority and where appropriate, the responsible minister to be informed of significant review conclusions.

47. Participation in Assurance Reviews does not absolve an entity's accountability for their programs/projects. SROs are responsible for determining and implementing any actions required to address recommendations critical to the success of a program/project.

Work health and safety requirements

48. In addition to complying with specific health and safety contract requirements, reviewers will need to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and ensure that their actions or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others.
49. Reviewers will need to comply with reasonable instructions given by the entity on whose premises they are working. Reviewers have the right to cease unsafe work on their own initiative when there is a serious risk to safety or when there is reasonable concern for safety. Such circumstances will need to be discussed with the entity and ARU without delay.
50. The entity is required to provide a 'safety induction' for the reviewers so that they know how/where to report incidents and understand the emergency evacuation procedures etc.

Part 3 – Roles and responsibilities

Entities

Senior Responsible Official

51. The SRO is responsible for the successful delivery of the program/project. This will often be an official at the Senior Executive Service band two or three level, who has the authority to make decisions affecting the program/project but who is not responsible for its day-to-day management.
52. During an Assurance Review, the SRO's responsibilities include:
 - providing input to ARU on the skill requirements of the Assurance Review Team
 - briefing the Assurance Review Team on key aspects of the program/project during the planning meeting
 - assisting the Assurance Review Team to gain access to key stakeholders and documentation
 - receiving daily briefings from the Assurance Review Team during the onsite review
 - ensuring appropriate action is taken to address the review findings; and
 - providing feedback to ARU on the quality of the completed Assurance Review and the Assurance Review Team.

Program/Project Manager

53. The Program/Project Manager has primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of the entire program/project. During an Assurance Review, the Program/Project Manager will assist the Assurance Review Team to obtain a thorough understanding of the program/project, including:
 - the program/project origin, stated outcome(s) and how benefits will be realised
 - links between stated outcomes and the entity's business strategy and/or high-level policy outcomes
 - the program/project objectives, desired outputs and delivery strategy; and
 - the governance, composition and management of the program/project.
54. The Program/Project Manager, or their nominee, must ensure that:
 - documents requested by the Assurance Review Team are made available shortly after the planning meeting via Govdex or as agreed with the Assurance Review Team
 - any additional documentation or highly classified material is provided to the Assurance Review Team either prior to, or during the onsite review, at the entity's premises
 - interviews are organised with key stakeholders during the onsite review, and interviewees are informed about the purpose and logistics of the interview; and
 - suitable meeting rooms and facilities are available to the Assurance Review Team for interviews and meetings during the onsite review.

55. In addition to program/project roles, when assuring agile delivery of a digital service the following roles are recommended to also be involved:
- Service manager - accountable for all aspects of the current and future service, including the non-digital channels. They are the keeper of the Service Vision that will guide the team to deliver a service aligned to that vision. The service manager is responsible for ensuring that the service meets user needs, and is responsible for managing channel shift to the digital channel.
 - Product manager - a service may be broken down into a number of products. Each product manager is responsible for the effective development of their specific product, i.e. meeting user need both in itself and as part of the overall service.
 - Delivery manager - responsible for ensuring that teams clearly understand what is expected of them and that sufficient resources are available to effectively deliver all products/services.

Other key stakeholders

56. Other stakeholders include any individual or entity that is either potentially affected by, or who has potential effect on the program/project. This may include central entities, other entities, interest groups or private sector bodies. Other stakeholders may be asked to meet with the Assurance Review Team and provide relevant information in its entirety and in a timely manner.

Assurance Reviews Unit

57. The Department of Finance's ARU provides guidance, support and additional information on Assurance Reviews to Assurance Review Teams and entities as required.
58. ARU does not undertake Assurance Reviews. Assurance Reviews are coordinated by ARU but are undertaken by an independent review team appointed by Finance with the appropriate security clearance and experience.
59. ARU's responsibilities include:
- providing a point of contact to schedule and coordinate Assurance Reviews
 - maintaining a pool of Assurance Reviewers
 - assessing and appointing suitable Assurance Reviewers
 - communicating the requirements of Assurance Reviews to entities and assisting them as required; and
 - compiling and disseminating non-attributable lessons learned of major program/project management to assist entities to implement practices and controls that increase the likelihood of successful program/project outcomes.
60. ARU facilitates Assurance Reviews by:
- liaising with the SRO regarding the skills required for the Assurance Review Team
 - assembling the Assurance Review Team and assisting with logistical and administrative arrangements for the planning meeting
 - briefing the program/project team on the requirements of an Assurance Review
 - providing the Assurance Review Team with relevant templates

- responding to queries and providing advice to the entity and the Assurance Review Team as required
- ensuring that procedural requirements have been met
- collating evaluations on the Assurance Review Team's performance; and
- analysing review reports and recommendations to identify non-attributable lessons learned.

Reviewers

61. Assurance Reviews are conducted by an independent Assurance Review Team appointed by Finance. An Assurance Review Team usually consists of a RTL and up to three Review Team Members (RTMs).
62. Reviewers may be sourced from the public or private sector. Public sector reviewers have the unique and strategic learning opportunity to work across government and contribute their experience to provide assurance to important programs/projects. It is important to note that public sector reviewers are selected for their expertise, and not to represent their entity.
63. Similarly, private sector reviewers are selected for their expertise, not to represent their firm, and may not use the Assurance Reviews process to actively solicit business for themselves or their firm.

Reviewer selection

64. When selecting reviewers, ARU will consult with the entity to ensure an optimal mix of reviewers is selected for the team. Consideration will be given to a number of factors, including:
 - potential conflicts of interest
 - reviewer knowledge, skills, experience relevant to the program/project and the review to be undertaken (refer to [Appendix B](#))
 - reviewer availability; and
 - the level of security clearance required (if applicable).
65. Continuity of team members from one Gate/Stage to another ensures consistency and understanding of the program/project under review. Each Assurance Review Team usually includes one or two members from earlier reviews, however there may be instances where this is not possible.

Review Team Leader

66. The RTL's role is essential to the success of an Assurance Review. They are primarily responsible for facilitating communication and relationships with the SRO, the program/project team, the Assurance Review Team and other review participants. The RTL's responsibilities include:
- liaising with the SRO prior to the planning meeting to introduce themselves, establish the context and logistics of the review and identify concerns and expectations
 - contacting each member of the Assurance Review Team prior to the planning meeting to introduce themselves and develop an understanding of the skillsets and strengths across the team
 - identifying key stakeholders to be interviewed, relevant documentation needed for the review, and potential information access constraints
 - formulating the protocols and logistics for the review, and ensuring that all participants understand their responsibilities and the purpose and structure of interviews
 - acting as the chair during the planning meeting and the interviews, and ensuring that the Assurance Review Team focus on issues that are important to the program/project's success rather than the technical aspects
 - providing daily briefings to the SRO during the review on the day's findings
 - providing leadership to the RTMs, including coaching, support and feedback to develop their skills; and
 - providing an evaluation on each RTM to ARU to assist in assembling future Assurance Review Teams.

Review Team Members

67. RTMs are selected for the relevance of their skills and experience. RTMs' responsibilities include:
- identifying key stakeholders to be interviewed and relevant documentation needed for the review
 - considering documentation relevant to the review and forming an opinion on the adequacy of the documentation, based on their experience and expertise
 - participating in the discussion and assessment of the program/project under review in a professional and objective manner
 - assisting the RTL to conduct interviews and gather/analyse the information made available
 - assisting to write and contributing to the development of a high-quality and constructive review report
 - working cooperatively with all the review participants, including the Assurance Review Team, the entity and ARU
 - contributing, as required, to briefing the SRO on the review's findings, conclusions and recommendations; and
 - providing an evaluation on the RTL to ARU.

Part 4 – Implementation Readiness Assessment (IRA) methodology

68. IRAs are short, independent reviews that provide assurance to government for high risk policy proposals. An IRA is usually commissioned by the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) on the basis of the risks of the proposal and advice from Finance.
69. IRAs are generally focused on reviewing proposals prior to seeking a government decision, however, in some circumstances it is not logistically possible to conduct an IRA in time to inform government deliberations. In these cases, an IRA may still be applied, with the review findings to be included in a letter from the Minister of Finance to the Prime Minister, and copied to the relevant portfolio Minister and the Treasurer.
70. The IRA is a collective and collaborative effort to examine an issue from different points of view prior to a decision. IRAs are designed to:
- assess the program/project implementation strategy against its specific objectives
 - provide early identification of any areas that may require corrective action
 - provide a point in time assessment of the effectiveness in planning for implementation
 - assist to strengthen policy design by building recognition of common values, shared commitment and emerging issues, and by providing an understanding of causal relationships
 - increase confidence that a program/project implementation strategy is effective and conclusive, draws on experience and better practices, has effectively identified risks to implementation and has appropriate mitigation strategies in place; and
 - ensure that central entity stakeholders have the opportunity to inform the IRA review.
71. The IRA is a structured, time-limited review, relying on interviews and existing documentation/material, and is not anticipated to be unduly onerous for entities in terms of administration or preparation.
72. The outcome of an IRA is a succinct review report which clarifies key issues and risks, and provides insights for managing and mitigating implementation risks.
73. The IRA process draws on the methodology of:
- *Better Practice Guide on Successful Implementation of Policy Initiatives*⁴
 - “Chapter 9: Lessons Learned, Identifying the challenges to implementation during policy development”, of Performance Audit No.12 2010-11, Home Insulation Program (Australian National Audit Office, October 2010)⁵
 - The United Kingdom’s Office of Government Commerce (OGC), *Gateway Review Process*.

⁴ https://www.anao.gov.au/sites/g/files/net616/f/2014_ANAO%20-%20BPG%20Policy%20Implementation.pdf

⁵ https://www.anao.gov.au/sites/g/files/net616/f/ANAO_Report_2010-2011_12.pdf

Implementation Readiness Assessment ratings

74. The following three-tiered IRA rating scale differs from that applied to the Gateway methodology. Given the nature of the IRA review, the indicator applied for the IRA reflects the potential issues and risks to successful implementation of a proposal.

Assessment	Description
Green	Successful implementation of the program/project appears likely and there are no major outstanding issues/risks that appear to threaten implementation significantly.
Amber	Successful implementation of the program/project appears feasible but prompt management attention is required to address issues/risks.
Red	Successful implementation of the program/project is in doubt with significant issues/risks already apparent. Urgent action is required to address these.

Key focus areas

75. The IRA process focuses on the following key focus areas to determine how well an entity is planning for future implementation of a policy initiative:

1. Policy design
<p>The key question is whether the means of implementing/delivering this policy is likely to work in practice—whether it ‘hits the mark’.</p> <p>During policy design, in order to move forward without absolute information, assumptions need to be made. In a NPP, there may be a high degree of unknown elements of the proposal. If the assumptions made about an initiative are clearly identified, along with their sensitivity to change, then Ministers and those implementing the initiative can be better informed of the possible risks and their consequences.</p>
2. Implementation planning
<p>A policy initiative is more likely to achieve the best possible outcomes when the question of how the policy is to be implemented has been an integral part of policy design.</p> <p>Has sufficient consideration been given to major implementation risks, e.g., has enough time been spent on planning for implementation, what parties will contribute to implementation and have they been involved during the policy development stage?</p>
3. Governance arrangements
<p>While accountable authorities are commonly required to deal with an array of policy, program/project and organisational issues, it is also important that ongoing attention is given to measures to reinforce good governance and effective administration.</p> <p>Implementation of policy is more likely to succeed if there is strong executive-level support for the delivery processes for the policy.</p>
4. Risk management
<p>The increased understanding across the public sector of risk management processes does not in itself guarantee the proper treatment of challenges to successful policy implementation.</p> <p>The effective management of risk requires a robust, entity-wide risk management climate where decisions are based on accurate and well informed judgments.</p> <p>An important consideration for the accountable authority is the availability of appropriately skilled senior personnel to manage key risks to successful implementation</p>
5. Stakeholder management and communications
<p>Stakeholder management starts with a clear objective for consultation, followed by an identification of the range of people and entities with an interest in the initiative.</p>

Have the right stakeholders been identified, has sufficient consideration been given to how stakeholder interactions will be managed during the implementation phase, and is there clear accountability for stakeholder management, including managing expectations?

6. Evaluation and performance

Evaluation and performance is vital to measuring the success of policy implementation. Will the policy initiative be formally evaluated, do data collection arrangements support effective evaluation, how will results inform future implementation, have key performance indicators been developed and how will they be applied in ongoing program management?

76. Each focus area is rated using the following rating scale. The summation of all the issues raised in each focus area and the risks they pose to successful delivery are then summarised in the body of the report. This establishes an overall assessment on whether the program/project can be implemented successfully.

Assessment	Description
Low	There are no major outstanding issues/risks in this key focus area that at this stage appear to threaten implementation significantly.
Medium	There are issues/risks to implementation in this key focus area that require prompt management attention.
High	There are significant issues/risks in this key focus area that may jeopardise successful implementation.

Report recommendation categories

77. The recommendations made within IRA reports are critical for both highlighting strategies required to address potential issues/risks, and for establishing the priority of the key actions to be taken. The Assurance Review Team provides recommendations which are prioritised in terms of urgency using the following categories:

Assessment	Description
Critical (Do now)	To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome it is of the greatest importance that the program should take action immediately.
Essential (Do by)	To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome the program should take action in the near future. Whenever possible essential recommendations should be linked to program milestones (e.g. before contract signature and/or a specified timeframe i.e. within the next three months).
Recommended	The program should benefit from the uptake of this recommendation. If possible recommendations should be linked to program milestones (e.g. before contract signature and/or a specified timeframe i.e. within the next three months).

Part 5 – Gateway review process (Gateway) methodology

78. Gateway reviews examine programs/projects at key decision points during design, implementation, and delivery. Gateway aims to provide independent, timely advice and assurance to the SRO as the person responsible for delivering the program/project outcomes.
79. Gateway is not an audit process nor does it replace an entity's responsibility and accountability for implementing decisions and programs/projects. Gateway plays a unique role in strengthening assurance practices, as well as building and sharing capability associated with the delivery and implementation of government programs/projects.
80. The Gateway process is intended to be supportive and forward-looking, taking into account future plans to deliver, and intended outcomes and benefits. The use of highly skilled and experienced reviewers, sourced from private and public sectors is intended to increase the confidence in implementation. Gateway reviews assist the SRO's oversight and governance of major programs/projects, and assist with the delivery of agreed programs/projects in accordance with the stated objectives.
81. Key attributes include:
 - time limited reviews (generally five days) at key decision points or milestones (referred to as 'gates' for projects, and 'stages' for programs')
 - reviews that can be conducted multiple times and on a regular basis through-out the life of the program/project
 - principles based to be flexible and adaptable to changing environments
 - a point-in-time assessment of delivery confidence; and
 - cultivating a benefits led approach throughout program/project design, implementation and delivery.
82. For the best results, a review is carried out shortly before a decision point or stage transition to allow sufficient time for any recommendations to be implemented.
83. Gateway applies to proposals which require government approval, are assessed to be high risk, and satisfy the following financial thresholds:
 - projects with a total cost estimated to be \$30 million or more for procurement or infrastructure; or
 - projects with a total cost estimated to be \$30 million or more, including an ICT component of at least \$10 million; or
 - programs with a total cost estimated to be greater than \$50 million.

Note: Gateway does not apply to Defence Capability Plan projects assessed by cabinet under the Kinnaird two-pass approval process.

Gateway for projects

84. There are six different reviews that occur at critical stages (or Gates or decision points) of a project's lifecycle. They are:

Critical Stage	Focus
Gate 0	Business need - assures that the scope and purpose has been adequately assessed, communicated, fits within the entity's overall business strategy and/or whole-of-government strategies and policies and that the expected benefits have been identified and measures have been considered.
Gate 1	Business case - focuses on the robustness of a project's proposed approach to meeting the business requirement and can be delivered within the timeframe and with the resources provided. Assures that a benefits management approach has been applied, improvements are clearly defined and can be quantified.
Gate 2	Delivery strategy – provides assurance that the procurement strategy establishes a clear definition of the project and a plan for its implementation, has made an assessment of the project's potential for success and benefits agreed upon in previous stages have been aligned to the delivery effort, and if the project is ready to invite proposals or tenders.
Gate 3	Investment decision - provides assurance on the supplier selection that the business needs are likely to be met through the project and contract management controls, and that the processes are in place for contract delivery. Assures that benefits management strategies and plans have been incorporated.
Gate 4	Readiness for service - provides assurance on whether the solution is robust before delivery, assesses organisational readiness before and after delivery, and considers the basis for evaluating ongoing performance and whether benefits are likely to be achieved.
Gate 5	Benefits realisation - focuses on measuring the project's success to date in achieving its objectives, expectations for the future and building in remedial action to deal with any potential risks.

Gateway for programs

85. There are three different review stages that occur for programs. They are:

Critical stage	Focus
First stage review	Conducted before or soon after government approval. It assists entities in defining the program by examining the business need and formulation of the business case. Can also be conducted whenever the priority or the scope of the program changes significantly.
Mid stage review	Focus is on assessing the program execution with the number of these reviews being determined by the complexity, timeframe and risks attached to the program.
End stage review	Focus is on program closure, including program controls, records management and the identification and application of lessons learned as well as the delivery of the intended outcomes and benefits.

Blended Gateway reviews

86. Programs do not always fit into the Gateway structure for projects (Gate 0 to 5) because they can represent a series of interrelated projects with a common objective, or a broad framework or policy concept that may result in a series of largely independent smaller projects (potentially all at different stages of implementation).

87. The 'blended' review approach helps to reduce the review burden on entities while simultaneously providing program strategic alignment and project milestone delivery assurance.

88. Identifying the critical factors in a multi-project program, including the issues that need to be addressed to realise benefits, is an important component of the blended review approach.
89. Program reviews will assess the significance of any project to the overall success of the program, and where the single project could benefit from a focussed review, the overall program review will accommodate a combined focus of program and project review. E.g., blend Gate 1 with a First Stage Review or blend Gate 4 with a Mid Stage Review.

Combined Gateway reviews

90. Combined Gateway reviews (i.e. combined Gate 0 and 1) may be conducted when a project has reached the point in its lifecycle where the issues relevant to the subsequent Gateway milestone are pertinent at that point in time.

Phased Gateway reviews

91. Phased Gateway reviews can be conducted, e.g. a Gate 2a followed by a Gate 2b, where the entity, ARU and/or the RTL considers that this approach would add value and be appropriate for the project.
92. A phased approach would work well, e.g., where there are discrete phase 'releases' that would benefit from targeted assurance. This is often the case for large ICT projects and projects applying an Agile methodology. A phased approach may also be applied where the SRO requires independent assurance before committing to a course of action prior to the timing of the next scheduled review.

Intermediate assessments

93. A significant lag can sometimes occur between Gateway reviews. This is most obvious in complex ICT and construction projects – during the critical 'build' stages of implementation (between Gate 3 and Gate 4).
94. Intermediate assessments are based on the principles existing in the Gate 0 – Business need review, and provide entities with interim assurance focussed on strategic alignment, the strength of the business case, and effort to optimise benefits to government. Additionally, intermediate assessments can assist to highlight key risks and reconfirm stakeholder commitment.
95. The timing of intermediate assessment reviews will take into consideration planned reviews and key decision points, ensuring that no more than 18 months' elapse between reviews. This promotes better implementation by entities and provides the opportunity for earlier intervention by government where delivery significantly slips.

Delivery Confidence Assessments (DCAs) for Gateway

96. The DCA represents the collective view of the Assurance Review Team on the overall likelihood of success for the program/project, taking into account the timing of the review and the stage within the program/project lifecycle. Delivery Confidence is the confidence in the project or program's ability to deliver its aims and objectives:
- within the timescales
 - within the cost envelope
 - and to the quality requirements including the delivery of benefits, both financial and non-financial
 - all as laid down in the most recent formally approved mandating document (e.g. NPP, implementation plan or business case).
97. The following five-tiered rating system provides a level of granularity to help entities focus on emergent issues and appropriate mitigation strategies:

Assessment	Description
Green	Successful delivery of the program/project to time, cost, quality standards and benefits realisation appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery significantly.
Green/Amber	Successful delivery of the program/project to time, cost, quality standards and benefits realisation appears probable however constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not become major issues threatening delivery.
Amber	Successful delivery of the program/project to time, cost, quality standards and benefits realisation appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These need to be addressed promptly.
Amber/Red	Successful delivery of the program/project to time, cost, quality standards and benefits realisation is in doubt with major issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent action is needed to address these.
Red	Successful delivery of the program/project appears to be unachievable. There are major issues on program/project definition, schedule, budget, quality or benefits delivery. The program/project may need to be re-baselined and/or overall viability re-assessed.

Key focus area assessment ratings

98. The Assurance Review Team will also provide an assessment against each of the "key focus areas" probed using the following rating scale.

Assessment	Description
Green	There are no major outstanding issues in this key focus area that at this stage appear to threaten delivery significantly.
Amber	There are issues in this key focus area that require timely management attention.
Red	There are significant issues in this key focus area that may jeopardise the successful delivery of the project.

Report recommendation categories

99. The recommendations made within Assurance Review reports are critical for both highlighting strategies required to address potential issues, and for establishing the priority of the key actions to be taken. The Assurance Review Team provides recommendations which are prioritised in terms of urgency using the following categories:

Assessment	Description
Critical (Do now)	To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome, it is of greatest importance that the project take action immediately
Essential (Do by)	To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome, it is important that the project take action in the near future. Whenever possible, link essential recommendations to project milestones (e.g. before contract signature and/or a specified timeframe i.e. within the next three months).
Recommended	The project would benefit from the uptake of this recommendation. If possible, link recommendations to project milestones and/or a specified timeframe.

Previous recommendations and action taken

100. The SRO is responsible for implementing recommendations and taking remedial action. The SRO is encouraged to maintain an official record of how review recommendations have been implemented, or why recommendations haven't been implemented.
101. Prior to a review, the entity will complete the 'Actions Taken' section of the review report, demonstrating the remedial actions taken in response to the previous review recommendations.
102. In reviewing the actions taken, the Assurance Review Team will indicate in the 'Review Team Comments' section whether recommendations have been addressed (as defined below), and where appropriate, provide further comments to explain the action taken.
- Fully – the recommendation has been fully implemented by the entity.
 - Partially – the recommendation has been partially implemented by the entity.
 - Not Addressed – the recommendation has not been implemented by the entity.

Enhanced Notification process

103. An Enhanced Notification (EN) process is in place so that early remedial intervention can occur if a program/project is experiencing significant problems.
104. The EN is a staged escalation process which involves the Finance Secretary writing to the relevant accountable authority to advise that the Assurance Review Team has raised concerns, which may affect the likelihood of program/project achieving the intended outcomes and benefits. This advice, which includes notification of all recommendations made in the Gateway review report, asks the entity to consider appropriate escalation action.

105. The EN process applies throughout the program/project lifecycle, and is triggered by incidences of Red or sequential Amber or Amber/Red DCA ratings. The EN process involves the following three levels of escalation:
- First level – triggered by one Red or two sequential Amber or Amber/Red DCA ratings.
 - The Secretary of Finance will write to the relevant NCE accountable authority escalating awareness that the program/project has issues to address and that early rectification is required.
 - While it is better practice to advise the responsible Minister/s, it would be a matter for the NCE accountable authority to decide.
 - Second level – triggered by two sequential Red DCA ratings, or three sequential Amber or Amber/Red DCA ratings.
 - The Secretary of Finance will again write to the NCE accountable authority advising that the issues remain.
 - The NCE accountable authority is required to seek an action plan from the SRO within 30 business days, advising how the issues will be addressed.
 - The NCE accountable authority is required to inform the responsible Minister/s and the Secretaries of PM&C and Finance.
 - If the Secretary of Finance considers that the issues are significant enough to warrant stronger intervention, the letter may also suggest that the NCE accountable authority commence an independent review to assist them to decide on how to proceed.
 - Third level – triggered by three sequential Red DCA ratings, or four sequential Amber or Amber/Red DCA ratings.
 - The Secretary of Finance will write to the NCE accountable authority for the third time, advising that very significant problems continue to exist.
 - The NCE accountable authority is required to undertake an independent external review immediately.
 - The NCE accountable authority is required to inform the responsible Minister/s and the Secretaries of PM&C and Finance on the action being taken following receipt of the third letter.
106. The independent review in the second and third level of the EN process can refer to either an internal or external review, conducted by reviewer/s independent of the program/project and outside of the governance framework. The purpose of the review is to provide an expert assessment of the program/projects progress and to recommend course corrections.

Action plan

107. The second level of the EN process requires the accountable authority to seek an action plan from the SRO within 30 business days (of receipt of the Secretary of Finance's letter) to address the issues raised in the review.
108. Action planning is the process that guides the activities of a program/project. It is the process of planning what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, by whom it needs to be done, and what resources or inputs are needed to do it.

109. In the context of the EN process, the action plan ensures that key issues which affect the DCA are being effectively addressed. An action plan may include (but is not limited to) the following elements:

Rationale	A statement of what must be achieved, the purpose, objective/s and the context which brought about the need for the action plan. This would also include the recommendations made in the preceding Gateway review which initiated the need for the action plan.
Action proposed	Actions proposed to mitigate the issues raised by the preceding Gateway review. Being specific about what the entity is trying to achieve makes it easier to undertake corrective or maintenance actions and evaluate success.
Accountability	It is important to nominate an Action Officer responsible for each action, championing the specific actions and ensuring outcomes are met. Once completed, the action plan would need to be endorsed by the accountable authority.
Budgeting/Resourcing	Where applicable, consider any resources required for the actions proposed.
Timing	Ensure that you consider when the activity needs to be in place and for how long it is required. Also provide a current status report of the proposed actions.
Challenges/Risks associated in achieving intended outcomes	Identify the challenges/risks associated with the proposed actions, what is their likely impact and how will they be managed/mitigated.
Stakeholders/ Consultation	Identify key stakeholders and how/when key stakeholders will be consulted.
Action/Progress update	The action plan is a living document and would be regularly reviewed ensuring that actions are on track and emerging issues are managed.
Evaluation/Performance indicator	Evaluation is an opportunity to examine how well you are implementing the activities, to take stock of the progress, and to formulate lessons learned. How will you know what success looks like?

Assurance of Action Plan (AAP)

110. Entities may be offered an Assurance of Action Plan review at the second stage of the EN process.
111. An AAP review is an optional (at the SROs discretion), one-day onsite review, led by the RTL from the previous Gateway review, aimed at providing constructive and timely assistance to the SRO to finalise the entity's action plan. The Assurance Review Team will provide a confidential report to the SRO of the entity and ARU.
112. The action plan together with the previous Gateway review recommendations form the terms of reference for the AAP. The object of the AAP is to:
- assist the SRO to better understand the issues raised during the previous Gateway review

- provide input to the remedial action plans put in place to get the program/project implementation back on track; and
- provide an early opportunity for entities to receive assurance that their action plans address the issues identified in the previous Gateway review.

113. AAP reviews are generally concluded within two days, inclusive of a planning meeting and the final report handover.

1. Initiation stage

114. Once an EN letter has been signed, a meeting can be organised between ARU and the SRO (at the discretion of the SRO). The purpose of the meeting is to clarify the purpose of the AAP review, discuss the AAP Assurance Review Team membership, and discuss the timing and logistics of the review.

115. Following the meeting, ARU will finalise the Assurance Review Team, confirm timing and logistics of the review, and brief the Assurance Review Team on their role in the AAP review.

116. ARU will continue to support the conduct of the review and be available to provide advice throughout the duration of the review.

2. Planning meeting

117. Prior to the AAP review, the RTL will contact the RTM/s, the Program/Project Manager and the SRO. This could be a formal planning meeting or a teleconference to discuss:

118. the program/project's progress since the last Gateway review

119. the progress of the action plan; and

120. the list of interviewees and the documents that will be required during the onsite review.

121. Where a brief planning meeting takes place, it is good practice for the meeting to be conducted within a reasonable time, i.e. within two weeks prior to the onsite review.

3. Onsite review

122. Evidence gathering for an AAP review is normally conducted during a one-day onsite review. The confidential AAP report is prepared on the review day, in consultation with the SRO and the entity's program/project team and stakeholders.

123. At the conclusion of the review day, the Assurance Review Team meets with the SRO to present the draft report and discuss its contents. Any changes/updates to the report can be finalised the following day before the final report is submitted to the SRO. A copy of the final report is also provided to ARU to identify lessons learned and evidence of best practice and provided to subsequent Assurance Review Teams as pre-reading material.

Appendix A: Example document list required for a Review

- Program/project overview including objectives, key policy assumptions, background material, press releases
- Key review(s) that underpin the policy proposal
- Program/project budget documentation i.e. cabinet submission/NPP, costing templates including staffing resources
- Statistical and/or research material used in the development of the program/project policy
- Implementation plans
- Benefits management strategy
- Program/project timeline, showing critical path, dependencies and key milestones
- Risk matrix and risk management approach
- Performance measures and reporting regime
- Evaluation and communication plan
- List of other entities involved in the program/project
- List of stakeholders
- List of relevant files
- Details of the consultative process showing who was consulted and key submissions/discussion papers
- Governance model including minutes from any steering or program/project management committees
- Issues log
- Organisation chart for relevant areas of the entity
- Details of the implementation team
- List of entity contacts and phone numbers for the program/project

Refer to [Appendix C](#) for specific document lists for each Assurance Review Process.

Appendix B: Skills profile of an Assurance Reviewer

ARU maintains a register of potential Assurance Reviewers, including information on their experience and qualifications relevant to Assurance Reviews. RTLs and RTMs will be matched to reviews based on their skills and experience, and the requirements of the review.

Potential reviewers may wish to provide information to ARU on their skills, expertise and experience in the following areas to be considered for future reviews include:

- Public sector senior executive experience
- Portfolio/program/project management expertise and experience such as:
 - program/project/portfolio management
 - business analysis
 - business change management
 - risk management
 - benefits realisation
- Business and policy expertise and experience such as:
 - policy design and implementation
 - financial analysis
 - procurement
 - legal and contracting
- ICT expertise and experience such as:
 - IT project management
 - systems integration
 - enterprise architecture
 - system delivery and management
 - electronic documents and records management systems
- Infrastructure expertise and experience such as:
 - construction / property project management
 - facilities management
- Operational expertise and experience such as:
 - operations support experience
 - service delivery experience
 - government program /project and grants administration

- Specialised skills or qualifications or experience such as:
 - Public Private Partnerships
 - logistics
 - Gateway reviews undertaken in other jurisdictions
 - other relevant skills or qualifications.

Appendix C: Handbook for conducting Assurance Reviews

This Appendix is designed to complement the expertise of Assurance Reviewers and the information outlined in the body of this guide, providing a consistent framework from which to conduct Assurance Reviews across a range of different programs and projects. It contains examples of areas to probe and the types of evidence expected at key stages throughout program/project design, implementation and delivery.

A well-conducted review focuses on areas that are critical to a program/project's success while ensuring that the review is thorough. In order to achieve this, Assurance Review Teams are encouraged to:

- conduct reviews in an organised way, covering, but not limited to, the issues identified in this Appendix and adhering to the key steps in the review process as outlined in the body of this guide
- be united in purpose, following the principles and objectives of the Assurance Review process, not unnecessarily focused on any individual RTM's concerns
- involve participants in professional, focused, and harmonious peer discussions, and avoid a confrontational, inquisitorial approach to find problems and mistakes
- recognise and respect examples of good practice in the work done to date; and
- provide recommendations that are clear and action-oriented.

Gateway for projects

Gate 0 – Business need review

Purpose

A Gate 0—Business need review is a broad, strategic review that occurs at the start-up stage of a project to inform decision-making.

In a broader sense, this type of review provides assurance to the SRO that the scope and purpose of the project has been adequately assessed and communicated to stakeholders, and fits within the entity's overall business strategy and/or whole-of-government strategies/policies. It also aims to test whether stakeholders' expectations of the project are realistic in relation to planned outcomes, resource requirements, timetable and achievability.

A Gate 0 review occurs when the preliminary justification for the project is drawn together. It is based on a strategic assessment of business needs, an analysis of the stakeholders whose commitment is needed to achieve the objectives, and a high level assessment of the project's likely costs and potential for success. In this case, a Gate 0 review comes after the business need has been identified but before a proposal goes forward for approval.

Better practice identifies that a Benefits Management approach be applied at the start of the policy and maintained all the way through the life of the new capability. Benefits management is a key part of strategic delivery of business change. Applying a benefits approach assists the justification of the initiative by clearly showing where the expected improvements are to be found.

At this stage the NPP and business case are developed. Entities are encouraged to include benefits statements in the implementation plan supporting the NPP. The benefits statement provides a clear description of the intended beneficiaries and expected benefits of the policy measure⁶.

Review Team expectations in Gate 0 reviews

- Ensuring that the project contributes to the entity's business strategy and to high-level government policy objectives and outcomes
- reviewing the business need to determine whether it be structured as a single project or a program of smaller component projects
- confirming that the project's potential to succeed has been considered in the wider context of the entity's delivery plans
- checking that there has been an assessment of the market's capacity to achieve the required outcome
- ensuring that benefits analysis has taken place
- ensuring the project is clearly understood and supported by users and stakeholders
- reviewing the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the project
- reviewing the arrangements for identifying and managing the risks of the project, including external risks such as changing business priorities

⁶ The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), Guide to Implementation Planning August 2001, p. 10

- where the Gate is integrated with the ICT Investment Approval/Two Stage Capital Works Approval processes, ensuring that the review supports development of the first pass business case
- checking that financing has been adequately assessed for the project; and
- checking that the project is realistic, properly resourced and has authorised work plans through to the next stage of the project.

Documents required in Gate 0 reviews

In order to undertake a Gate 0 review, the Assurance Review Team may require access to the following documentation:

- the NPP or cabinet submission/decision (if applicable).
- the NCE's Portfolio Budget Statement, business plan or equivalent documents. These documents set out the entity's outcomes and outputs, strategic direction, high level aims and objectives.
- a project brief that provides information about:
 - objectives—a high-level description of the purposes, outcomes sought, key deliverables and timelines,
 - critical success factors—the main criteria against which the success of a project will be measured. This could include a benefits management plan showing that the project is required, the expected benefits and the business changes and enablers that will be required for the anticipated benefits (these could be linked to the objectives),
 - background—an outline of the key drivers for the project, showing how it will contribute to policy outcomes and/or the business strategy
 - scope—a high-level view of the boundaries of the project, the main assumptions, possible constraints and dependencies
 - stakeholders —and how they will be engaged
 - finance—the assessed costing and budget for the project and its components
 - organisation—the way in which the project is to be organised, led, managed and monitored
 - risks—the main risks identified so far and how they will be managed
 - issues—a strategy for capturing and resolving issues
 - evaluation – an approach for measuring results and achieving outcomes; and
- a work plan for the short to medium term, which:
 - identifies the components of the project
 - shows the main deliverables and milestones for each component
 - shows the contribution each component makes to the overall project outcomes; and
 - contains estimates of resource requirements.

These documents, and any other information the Assurance Review Team deems relevant, will be required prior to the onsite review.

Key focus areas for Gate 0 reviews

The following topics would commonly be considered during a Gate 0 – Business need review. Review teams are expected to use their own expertise in determining the relevance and appropriateness of these topics for the specific project under review. Review teams may determine that additional topics are critical to the assessment of the project.

1. Policy and context

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Is the project innovative in planning to succeed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New approaches have been explored and existing systems challenged. Confirmation that the project is structured to allow responsiveness and flexibility in achieving outcomes.
1.2	Is there a clear understanding of the required outcomes of the project and are they soundly based?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the project policy drivers and outcomes and how they contribute to the business strategy and objectives. An outline of the required outcomes, benefits derived and their relationship to outputs. Confirmation that the way forward is likely to achieve the required outcomes, the expected benefits and the business changes and enablers required for the anticipated benefits.
1.3	Does the project demonstrate a clear link with wider government objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An analysis which shows the relationship between the project and major government policies and objectives. A demonstrated link between strategic objectives and outcomes and the deliverables of the project.
1.4	Is the business strategy to which this project contributes robust?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear direction set out in the business strategy, which is approved by all key stakeholders.
1.5	Does the project, program or policy require new governance arrangements e.g. cross-portfolios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For cross-portfolios projects, programs or policy, confirmation that all parties involved know how they are engaged in the project and are committed to its delivery. Clear governance arrangements to ensure sustainable alignment with the business objectives of all organisations involved.
1.6	Does the project align with government policy and initiatives, the broad environment of the entity and the entity's strategic objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented links between the proposed project and the entity's policy, environment and strategy.
1.7	<p>Is the governance framework fit for the purpose?</p> <p>Is there commitment to key roles and responsibilities for this project?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented commitment from top management and, where appropriate, minister(s) and a clear understanding of their continuing roles in achieving successful outcomes. Clear allocation of key roles of responsible minister, SRO, and project managers. Confirmation that all parties understand their roles in the project and are committed to the delivery of the project.

1.8	Are the required skills and capabilities for this project available, taking into account the entity's current commitments and capacity to deliver?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the entity has brought together (or has credible plans for bringing together) the skills and capabilities it needs to plan and achieve the desired outcomes. • Confirmation that the entity is realistic about the complexity of the project deliverables and how they can be managed. • Documentation of allocation to individual officials of key roles within the project .
1.9	Is the entity able to learn from experience with this project and other projects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the entity has processes in place to incorporate lessons learnt from this project, and its components, into wider best practice. • Confirmation that the entity learns from the experiences of others.
1.10	Does this project have a risk management framework?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined roles, responsibilities and processes for managing risk across the entity and within the project, with clearly defined routes for escalating risk concerns to senior management.

2. Business case: scope and stakeholders

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	Is the scope of the project understood?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the project scope as far as it is known clearly showing what is in scope.
2.2	What is the full extent of the project envisaged and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of all project components and outputs, explaining how each will contribute to the required outcomes.
2.3	What will constitute success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of key critical success factors and how the required quality of performance will be measured. • A description of the main outcomes and an analysis of the leading and lagging indicators. • A relationship between project outcomes and government targets, or major policy initiatives. • Projected performance over the life of the project, with key performance targets and measures agreed with stakeholders. • The project can be evaluated in a practical and affordable way.
2.4	Who are the stakeholders and do they support the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of principal stakeholders and statements of their needs and support for the project. • A plan for communicating with and involving stakeholders in appropriate ways. • Clear lines of accountability for resolving any conflicting stakeholder requirements. • Recognition of the need to involve external delivery partners, industry and the supplier.
2.5	Is the proposed project affordable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An estimate of the project cost, and the basis of costing (e.g., based on previous experience and/or comparison with similar projects). • An estimate of returns/value of the project versus potential alternatives. • Sources of funding and amount of project funding currently included in forward estimates (if any).

2.6	What assumptions is the project based on? What are the major constraints for the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of dependencies/other factors already underway that could affect the required outcomes.
2.7	Has the supplier market been considered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with the market to determine capability to meet the need and, where appropriate, to identify suitable delivery options. Where suppliers/partners are already in place, confirmation that their ability to deliver has been considered.
2.8	Have project controls been determined, especially where constituent projects will be connected with other entities, jurisdictions or the private sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall project controls (progress tracking, issue identification and resolution, impact assessment) defined. Interdependencies between project defined, with high-level plans for managing them. For collaborative projects, accountabilities for different parties defined and agreed. Parties in the delivery chain identified and an approach to them working together has been established.
2.9	What else could affect success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main risks identified at the outset, with nominated risk owners, options for mitigating these risks considered, and the need for contingency plans and business continuity plans.

3. Review of current phase

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	Does the project need to comply with broader government or departmental timing requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to government or entity commitments on delivery.
3.2	Is the project on track?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project report and plan updated. Milestones achieved as planned. A plan for benefits measurement has been developed and achievement of benefits is on track. The risk register is current. Highlight reports created for constituent work-streams. Reports on resources and funding used to-date are current. Reposts on issues being resolved maintained. Confirmation of confidence from delivery partners that future milestones and plans are realistic. Interdependencies with other projects are being managed.
3.3	Have options for potential ways forward been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A listing of high-level options for meeting the business need is maintained. Options analysis or feasibility studies, are maintained, if available.

4. Management of intended outcomes

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Have the required outcomes from the project been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current list of the main outcomes and desired benefits, linked to strategic outcomes and to the deliverables from specific projects.

4.2	<p>Are the planned outcomes still achievable, or have any changes in scope, relationship or value been properly agreed, and has the business case been reviewed?</p> <p>Is the project time critical?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes identified, together with their relationships to each other. • Credible plans for the achievement of outcomes. • Documentation showing ongoing commitment from stakeholders to the outcomes and their achievement. • Documentation showing ministerial agreement to scope changes.
4.3	<p>Are key stakeholders confident outcomes will be achieved when expected?</p> <p>Is it on track to deliver?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of time-critical issues and a realistic schedule to achieve them. • Mechanisms for collecting performance data are in place and a plan for evaluating the impact of the project is in operation. • Confirmation that the project board is confident that planned milestones will result in good quality deliverables that will achieve the necessary outcomes. • A commitment from key stakeholders that project deliverables will achieve the desired outcomes.
4.4	<p>Is there a plan for achieving the required outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A benefits management plan and a plan to ensure that outcomes are delivered in terms of performance measures and/or key performance indicators. • Plans identify appropriate baseline measures against which future performance will be assessed. • Plans to carry out performance measurement against the defined measures and indicators. • Where planned outcomes have not been achieved, confirmation that the problems have been identified and plans are in place to resolve them. • There is clarity on how the objectives from the projects link to the outcomes of the program.

5. Risk management

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
5.1	Have the major risks been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current list of the major strategic, political and/or reputation, environmental and legislative risks to the overall project, analysed by likelihood and impact. • Early warning indicators identified. • Consideration of the risks of success, e.g. take-up or usage greater than expected and contingencies identified. • Confirmation of regular review of risks, mitigation options and contingency plans.
5.2	How will risks be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the risks to the success of the project (e.g. take-up or usage greater or less than expected) have been considered and mitigation strategies and contingencies identified. • Documentation of regular review of risks, mitigation options and contingency plans. • Details of the risk allocation (to whom allocated and why) with high-level plans for managing risks. • Action to manage the risks identified and, where appropriate, action taken.
5.3	Have assurance measures for the project been put in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Critical friends' to the project (e.g. probity auditors, internal audit, specialists and/or peer reviewers) appointed, with documentation showing that they challenge assumptions, decisions and risks.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that advice from 'critical friends' is acted on. • Gateway reviews, health-checks and/or policy reviews incorporated into plans.
5.4	Is there a contingency plan and business continuity plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions about contingency and necessary business continuity arrangements are made with appropriate plans. • The project's effects on public services is analysed and decisions taken about those for which contingency arrangements will be needed. • Confirmation that milestones relating to contingency measures are in plans and the milestones are being achieved as expected.
5.5	Have lessons from similar projects been considered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details documented of issues identified from previous, or similar projects and their application to the current project. • Consideration of findings from P3M3© or within Capability Reviews and Capability Improvement Plans.

6. Readiness for next phase (business case)

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
6.1	Affordability: Are the funds to reach the next phase of the project available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget provision for initiating project(s) and preparing the high level business case. • Agreed costings from Finance to validate estimates, where appropriate.
6.2	Are the required internal/external resources available, suitably skilled, and committed to undertake the work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources management plan including documentation on resources identified showing, e.g., who needs to be involved, when, and what they must deliver as well as any additional training needs required for their role. • Allocation of identified individuals who will fill key roles (such as SRO, project steering committee, and project manager). • Confirmation that these resources will be available when needed throughout the next phase.
6.3	Achievability: Are the plans for the 'business case' phase realistic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan showing deliverables/milestones, activities, timescales, resources, costs and stakeholder involvement. • Plans for managing the transition to new ways of working/structures/policies, with key barriers identified (such as cultural resistance to change) and the approach to overcoming them agreed.
6.4	Are appropriate management controls in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined project management controls and reporting mechanisms.

Where a Gate 0 review is undertaken at a stage in the project later than the start-up stage, the areas to consider in the topic 'Readiness for Next Phase' are likely to vary from those listed above. Suggested areas to consider are provided in the following table.

The reason for undertaking a Gate 0 review will be dictated by the circumstances of the particular project, more so than for other reviews. Consequently, the review approach is likely to require more development by the Assurance Review Team than at other Gates.

7. Readiness for next phase (post-business case and beyond)

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
7.1	Is there a continuing need for the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project outcomes still aligned to ministers' and entity's strategy. Confirmation of continuing commitment from stakeholders. Demonstrated confidence that the project is organised to deliver the outcomes when needed and the benefits management plan is robust.
7.2	What assumptions have been made about the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A listing of major assumptions made in preparing the project business case, updated to reflect any changes that could affect success. Current assessments of the validity of all assumptions.
7.3	How will change be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for managing the transition to new ways of working/structures/policies, with any key barriers identified (such as cultural resistance to change) and the approach to overcoming them agreed.
7.4	Affordability: Are the funds to reach the next phase available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget provision for the project.
7.5	Are the required internal/external (individuals and organisations) suitably skilled, available and committed to carrying out the work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information showing who needs to be involved, when and what they must deliver. Key roles in place, with skills matched to the nature of the work. Confirmation that these resources will be available when needed throughout the next phase.
7.6	Achievability: Are the plans for the next phase realistic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A plan developed showing: streams of work (sub-program, projects, etc.), deliverables/milestones and the 'roadmap' to achieve them, timescales, organisation, costs and resourcing, stakeholder involvement.
7.7	Are appropriate management controls in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountabilities allocated to SROs. Program management controls and reporting mechanisms defined. Plans for ongoing management of the delivery chain.

Gate 1 – Business case review

Purpose

At the commencement of a project, an entity will develop a document (typically a business case) that articulates the impetus and business need for the project, together with an assessment of the project's likely costs, benefits and potential for success. The Gate 1—Business case review comes after a business case has been prepared.

The Gate 1—Business case review focuses on the robustness of a project's business case. It provides assurance to the entity, through the SRO, that the proposed approach:

- has been adequately researched
- can be delivered within the allocated time; and
- can be delivered with the proposed resources.

At this Gate, understanding and articulating expected benefits guides options analysis and potential delivery approaches. This approach helps increase confidence in decision makers. It also allows a risk assessment to be undertaken against options and their likelihood to achieve the pre-defined benefits.

Review Team expectations in Gate 1 reviews

- Confirming that the business case is robust (that is, it meets the business need, is affordable and achievable, with appropriate options explored and is likely to achieve value for money)
- confirming that potential options for the delivery of desired outcomes have been identified and analysed and appropriate expert advice has been obtained as necessary
- establishing that the feasibility study or assessment has been completed satisfactorily and a preferred way forward has been determined
- confirming that the market's likely interest has been assessed
- ensuring there is internal and external authority, if required, and that support exists for the project
- ensuring major risks have been identified and a risk management plan has been developed
- confirming quality and benefits management plans are in place, including key performance indicators for the project and its outcomes
- establishing that the project is likely to deliver its business goals and that it supports wider business change where applicable
- confirming that the impact of business process changes on internal and external stakeholders have been assessed
- confirming that the scope and requirements are realistic, clear and unambiguous
- ensuring that the full scale, intended outcomes, timeframes and effect of relevant external issues have been assessed
- ensuring plans exist for the next phase

- validating assumptions in the plan to confirm the project team can deliver the next stage
- confirming that overarching and internal business and technical strategies have been assessed; and
- establishing that quality assurance strategies/plans for the project and its products are in place.

Documents required in Gate 1 reviews

In order to undertake a Gate 1 review, the Assurance Review Team may require access to the following documentation:

- the project brief or mandate with the project's scope and an explanation of the need for the project
- a project initiation document or equivalent
- details of the project approach, including how to deliver the intended outcome
- a strategy outlining the approach to business change arising from the project (including staff training, new facilities etc. as appropriate)
- an initial assessment of the current and proposed physical and technical environment (e.g. IT infrastructure, workspace facilities)
- a report on the project's expenditure to date versus its forecasted budget (e.g., cost of scoping or feasibility study versus budget)
- a high-level definition of the business requirements and total scope of the project
- a description of how the project's success will be evaluated
- a business case addressing business need, affordability, achievability, value for money and range of options estimating the project's costs and benefits, including some form of feasibility study, sensitivity analysis and market research
- a communications strategy to keep stakeholders informed of the project's progress
- a quality assurance management strategy
- a list of the major risks, with draft plans for managing them
- a high-level activity, time and resource plan for the whole project
- plans to move the project through to the next stage, Gate 2—Delivery strategy
- how performance is to be reported and monitored
- project organisation—key roles and governance/reporting arrangements
- business impacts, for IT-enabled projects
- estimates and source of funds to cover all work to Gate 2—Delivery strategy
- the authority and approval to proceed
- a benefits management plan; and
- benefits profiles.

These documents, and any other information the Assurance Review Team deems relevant, will be required prior to the onsite review.

Key focus areas for Gate 1 reviews

The following topics would commonly be considered during a Gate 1 – Business case review. Assurance Review Teams are expected to use their own expertise in determining the relevance and appropriateness of these topics for the specific project under review. Assurance Review Teams may determine that additional topics are critical to the assessment of the project.

1. Business case

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Is there a clear and agreed understanding of the business objectives and how they will be delivered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business objectives for the project clearly stated and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely). A strategy for achieving business objectives defined and agreed with the stakeholders. Total scope, including timeframes, documented and agreed with stakeholders (including end users or their representatives) and technical authorities. Delivery approach and mechanisms defined and agreed with stakeholders. For IT-related projects: IT developments defined as component(s) of wider program of business change. Documentation showing options reviewed and a case for their selection.
1.2	Is the impetus for change described in the business case?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive justification of any changes to existing arrangements, including input from stakeholders. References to related project approvals, where appropriate.
1.3	Are all relevant government initiatives being addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented links to relevant government strategies and policies.
1.4	Is the business case sufficiently linked to the entity outcomes and project with the investment objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that the investment fits within the organisational objectives of the entity. How the business case contributes to the entity outcomes and project objectives and how the investment affects the efficiency and/or effectiveness of project delivery.
1.5	Have internal and external factors affecting the project been identified and assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of the objectives, timeframes and scale of the project. Legislative, policy and regulatory issues taken into account. Assessment of the stability of the current business environment and strategic direction. Assessment of internal and external dependencies (e.g. other program and projects) that could affect current priorities or the project. Assessments of the impact on existing physical and technical environment (e.g. brownfield site, current infrastructure and legacy systems). Identification of key external (non-government) dependencies, if any, likely to impact on the project.
1.6	What factors are critical to ensure success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The critical success factors for each of the main objectives are documented.
1.7	Can the critical success factors be quantified or measured?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explanation of how the factors will be measured. Identification of what constitutes success.

1.8	For IT projects, will the business case make a significant contribution to entity IT objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate documentation and consideration of the flow-on effects from IT investment, especially where it represents a significant change in the entity's IT direction. • Documented links to the entity's IT strategy.
1.9	Has the business case examined a wide range of options that will meet the business need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options explored for collaboration with other government entities and projects. • Range of options considered includes maintaining the status quo. • Rigorous assessment of the pros and cons of each option to determine its potential to meet the critical success factors. • Thorough assessment of options for the procurement process. • Market research indicating that suitable solutions can be provided.
1.10	Is there a clear 'best option', or would several options meet the business need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options appraised in accordance with principles which are relevant and appropriate for responding to the business need. • Examination, and ranking, of all options that are acceptable in principle. • Clear analysis of whole-of-life costs for each option. • Use of software metrics to test robustness of costs for IT projects.
1.11	If there are several options, how was their robustness tested?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitivity analysis of all appropriate options. • Major sensitivities included in the list of identified risks. • Cost-benefit analysis performed accurately and consistently across all options. • Economic analysis is supported by clear and unambiguous assumptions.
1.12	Is the argument for the 'preferred option' sound?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence that the preferred option has been selected from an appropriately wide range, rigorously assessed and satisfies the project objectives (including contribution to the business strategy), is likely to offer value for money, and is affordable and achievable. • Confirmation that appropriate sources of expert advice have been consulted. • Confirmation that it is possible to align the contracting strategy with the entity's overall objectives.
1.13	Does the preferred option meet wider government and entity objectives, standards and business change program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment against a list of wider government and entity objectives, policies, business change program and standards. • Assessment of the business need justification as stated in the high-level business case. • For construction projects, compliance with the Australian Government Implementation Guidelines for the National Code of Practice for the Construction Industry, occupational health and safety standards, and sustainability initiatives.
1.14	Does the business case demonstrate that the opportunities for sharing services across entities have been investigated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options to share services considered and if rejected, justification for rejecting the option.
1.15	Has contract management been considered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements for the contract management capability have been considered. • Arrangements for managing single/multiple suppliers have been considered. • Where multiple suppliers are likely to be appointed, high-level plans for managing the liaison.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The appropriate relationship has been determined, with the optimum scale of contract(s) appropriately considered.
1.16	Were the feasibility study and business case completed within time and cost budgets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project budget and timetable reports.
1.17	Have assumptions been identified and their validity checked?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions identified and accepted. Plans to verify the assumptions, if any, that are included in plans for the next stage.
1.18	Has Finance agreed the costings for the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of consultation with Finance on costings and sign-off, where relevant.

2. Project governance and planning

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	Has the project governance been considered and is there an overall project management process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions made on reporting/authority boundaries, composition of the project team, and external resources/people needed, if any (e.g. expert advisers). Clear articulation of the roles and responsibilities of key players in the project. Agreed project management process and project organisational structure, including a design methodology where appropriate. Senior management's commitment to the project and their key role in decision-making.
2.2	Has a steering committee, or equivalent, been established to oversee the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear articulation of the role and decision-making power of the steering committee. Details of the process for providing information to the steering committee and frequency of meetings. Details of the type of information to be provided to the steering committee, such as budget reports, risk management reports and action items.

3. Stakeholders

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	Have all the likely stakeholders been identified and are their interests clearly understood?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and external stakeholders identified and documented. Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities defined and agreed. End-users for the project identified and documented. Confirmation that the decision-making process includes all the relevant stakeholders and is both efficient and effective. Analysis of potential conflicts between stakeholder groups and contingency plan for dealing with such conflicts. Results of consultations documented as part of the communications strategy.
3.2	Do stakeholders support the preferred option? (This includes the potential or recommended delivery approach and mechanisms.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation supporting the consultation, involvement, support and endorsement of stakeholders.
3.3	Are stakeholder issues being addressed? These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communications public relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A communication plan for dealing with various stakeholders showing responsibilities. Plans for dealing with statutory consultation requirements.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • environmental issues • personnel • statutory processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and ability to react to changes in stakeholder interests and concerns. • Governance arrangements clearly articulate opportunities for stakeholder concerns to be aired and addressed.
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4. Risk management

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Are there processes in place to identify, assess and monitor current, anticipated and emerging risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of risks and key issues, categorised as strategic, political and/or reputational, legislative, implementation and operational service risks including business, technical, financial and commercial and/or contractual risks. • For IT-enabled projects, information security risks; for e-government, risks relating to poor take-up. • For construction projects, risks relating to health and safety. • For policy projects, regulatory impact assessment carried out. • A risk management strategy developed in accordance with best practice. • An individual identified as responsible for managing risk across the project, mitigation options and contingency plans. • Defined roles, responsibilities and processes for managing issues and risk with clearly defined routes for bringing issues and risks to the attention of senior management.
4.2	Have any issues raised in a previous review been resolved satisfactorily?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated issue and risk logs, with details of actions taken.
4.3	Have the risks for each of the options been evaluated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current, emerging and anticipated risks classified by likelihood, consequence, mitigation strategy and residual risk.
4.4	Have the risks for the preferred option been fully assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of senior stakeholders in assessing strategic risks. • An assessment of risks, costs and benefits to demonstrate the appropriate balance of risk and reward in the preferred option, demonstrating planned risk taking and support for innovation where appropriate. • Plans for managing the risks with the preferred option. • For IT-enabled projects, information security risks and risks relating to poor take-up considered. • For construction projects, risks relating to occupational health and safety considered. • For Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects, compliance with the qualitative and quantitative methodologies set out in National Public Private Partnership Policy and Guidelines http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public_private/ppp_policy_guidelines.aspx.
4.5	Have the 'worst case' costs associated with risks been assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete cost assessments of the risks documented. • Contingency funding based on assessment of financial implications of risks.
4.6	Are risk management costs and time implications included in the cost and time estimate or are they treated as a contingency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs and time for managing risks separately identified. • Where risks cannot be reduced, the costs of managing these risks separately identified and included within the base estimate, or as contingency funding. • For construction projects, decisions on how residual risks are being insured.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For PPP projects, compliance with the methodology set out in National Public Private Partnership Policy and Guidelines http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public_private/ppp_policy_guidelines.aspx.
4.7	Does the project break new ground?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of leading-edge projects to assess the project's effect on the business, stakeholders and end-users. Information from similar projects or activities from which lessons may be learnt. Innovative solutions assessed by experts. Consultation with the market to help refine the approach, and identify risks and ways in which risks might be mitigated. For PPP projects, evaluation of project consistent with methodology in National Public Private Partnership Policy and Guidelines http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public_private/ppp_policy_guidelines.aspx.
4.8	Would it be better to break the project down into a series of small steps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of the chosen approach and justification for taking that decision. The business case details any phased delivery or expected improvements over time.

5. Readiness for next phase (delivery strategy)

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
5.1	Is there an overall project structure for the delivery stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A definition of the procurement approach to be adopted. A draft procurement plan, including details of how proposals will be evaluated.
5.2	Is there a realistic plan to reach the next stage of the project (Gate 2—Delivery strategy)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives, planning assumptions, constraints, activities, deliverables and milestones defined and agreed for the next phase as well as for the remaining phases. Information demonstrating that the project addresses both short-term and long-term business requirements. Information confirming that suitable solutions are available from the market and that it has sufficient capacity. Information confirming that the proposed procurement strategy is consistent with the PGPA Act and rules, Accountable Authority's Instructions (AAIs) and entity Operational Guidelines.
5.3	<p>Have any requirements for external specialist advice been determined?</p> <p>Are the necessary internal and external skills available at the right time and in the right numbers?</p> <p>Is there a training need, and if so, what is it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirements for specialist expertise considered and resourced. A resource plan for internal staff, including an assessment of training needs, if any. Skills appraisal and plans for addressing shortfalls. Training assessment and plans, with training sources identified. Information demonstrating that external advice is being used appropriately.
5.4	<p>Is the project timetable realistic?</p> <p>Does it take into account any statutory lead times and time required for approvals?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A timetable identifying statutory lead times and a realistic assessment of the time needed for approvals and pre-procurement activities. Senior management commitment to the timetable. A procurement timetable justified and not longer than necessary.
5.5	Is there a clearly defined project organisation for the next stage of the project, with agreed roles and responsibilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project organisation and methodology governance/ reporting arrangements. Roles and responsibilities of personnel involved, with the project clearly defined and understood. For collaborative projects, a single SRO assigned and senior officials from each collaborating entity. Individuals named in the following key positions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project sponsor/SRO. Project manager. Stakeholder manager. User representative. Project steering committee.
5.6	Are the necessary funds to reach Gate 2—Delivery strategy identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation on appropriate budget provision. Financial controls for expenditure are documented and in place.

Gate 2 – Delivery strategy review

Purpose

Following the Gate 1—Business case review, the project governance board or steering committee and/or SRO will have determined whether the project is feasible and has a robust high-level business case.

The Gate 2 review focuses on evaluating the delivery strategy to provide assurance to the project steering committee and/or SRO that the selected delivery approach is appropriate and that it:

- establishes a clear definition of the project
- establishes a plan for its implementation; and
- has made an assessment of the project's potential for success.

Where it includes an acquisition strategy it also provides assurance that the project is ready to invite proposals or tenders from the market.

During the delivery stage of a project, a clear understanding of the expected benefits helps focus on the delivery of the activities that will achieve the expected benefits. Some interim benefits may be achieved during this stage, which provide an excellent indicator for the ongoing viability of the project.

Review Team expectations in Gate 2 reviews

- Confirming the business case, now that the project is fully defined
- ensuring that the project's plan is appropriately detailed and realistic, through to completion, and includes a change management strategy
- ensuring that the project's controls and organisation are defined (financial controls are in place and the resources are available)
- confirming funding availability for the whole project
- confirming that the development and delivery approach and mechanisms are still appropriate and manageable
- ensuring that the procurement strategy is robust and appropriate and provides an exit strategy, if necessary
- checking that the supplier market capability and track record (or existing supplier's capability and performance) are fully understood
- confirming that the procurement approach will facilitate good client/supplier relationships
- confirming that the procurement plan facilitates an outcome providing value for money
- confirming that appropriate project performance measures and tools are being used
- confirming that quality assurance procedures have been applied consistently with the previous review
- ensuring that delivery outputs are being mapped to expected benefits
- confirming compliance with IT infrastructure and security requirements, as appropriate for IT projects; and

- confirming compliance with building codes, occupational health and safety and sustainability requirements, as appropriate for construction projects.

Documents required in Gate 2 reviews

In order to undertake a Gate 2 review, the Assurance Review Team may require access to the following documentation:

- an updated business case containing a plan for realising benefits
- a report on the project's expenditure to date versus its forecasted budget, where appropriate
- a plan for managing the business change
- specifications of the project's expected outputs and outcomes
- the procurement strategy and justification for the approach
- draft tender documents, including the evaluation plan and draft contract
- a description of the high-level requirements of the project
- the proposed implementation strategy for implementing the new service/works contract
- a current risk management plan, risk register and issues register
- current and planned business/technical policies, strategies and constraints (e.g., occupational health and safety standards)
- an outline of project plans to completion, and detailed plans for the next stage
- the results of any business, commercial or technical benchmarking
- market intelligence and research material
- the current communications strategy and plan
- project quality documentation
- a strategy for measuring project performance, including occupational health and safety, as appropriate for construction projects
- benefits management strategy
- benefits profiles; and
- benefits realisation plan.

These documents, and any other information the Assurance Review Team deems relevant, will be required prior to the onsite review.

Key focus areas for Gate 2 reviews

The following topics would commonly be considered during a Gate 2 – Delivery strategy review. Assurance Review Teams are expected to use their own expertise in determining the relevance and appropriateness of these topics for the specific project under review. Assurance Review Teams may determine that additional topics are critical to the assessment of the project.

1. Business case and stakeholders

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Strategic fit: Does the business case continue to demonstrate the business need and contribute to the business strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued confirmation that the project will meet business needs (including confirmation that priorities remain unchanged where any external factors might have an effect).
1.2	Options explored: Is the preferred way forward still appropriate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued confirmation of the way forward, supported by an assessment based on indicative assumptions about factors such as interdependence with other projects, reliance on partners to deliver etc.
1.3	Value for money: Is the proposed commercial arrangement likely to achieve value for money?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bases for calculating costs (value of requirements) and comparison of tenders agreed with key stakeholders. The business case updated on the basis of the full project definition, market assessment and initial benefits plan. The procurement strategy reflected in the business case. An assessment of value for money consistent with the procurement plan. Examination of the sensitivities and financial implications of handling major risks, and an assessment of their effect on project return.
1.4	Affordability: Are the costs within current budgets? Is the project's funding affordable and supported by key stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconciliation of projected total project costs with available budget, reviewed and accepted or approved by key stakeholders (e.g., appropriate approval provided in accordance with the PGPA Act and Rules • Project costs are within forecast entity spending plans as agreed by government.
1.5	Achievability: Is the entity still realistic about its ability to achieve a successful outcome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison with similar projects (and similar entities), assessment of track record in achieving successful change, plans to manage known weaknesses, plans for incremental/modular approaches where applicable, contingency plans in place.
1.6	Is there a clear definition of the total project scope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A document showing the updated total project scope including business change, where applicable (Gate 1— Business case review).
1.7	Are the issues relating to business change understood? Is there an initial plan to address these issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change management strategy documented, with key stakeholders' views, business process implications and communication requirements clearly understood. Issues relating to business change logged, with a plan for each.
1.8	Is the entity fully committed to the project? Do stakeholders support the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented involvement of, and endorsement by, the entity itself and all stakeholders.

1.9	<p>Are the benefits to be delivered by the project understood and agreed to with stakeholders?</p> <p>Is there an initial plan for realising benefits?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan for realising benefits, showing costs offset by improved quality of service.
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2. Delivery and procurement approach

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	Will the project be attractive to the market?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed market research, including an examination of recent similar procurements by others, or a commentary on the capacity of the market to deliver and the nature of the project's possible suppliers. • Initial assessment of possible suppliers.
2.2	Are the business objectives clearly understood by the entity and likely to be understood by suppliers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed output/outcome-based specifications, including key success factors to show how the outputs/outcomes will be assessed.
2.3	Are the project outputs/outcomes accurately reflected in the requirement specification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the nature of the procurement, an appropriate specification of requirements that has been reviewed and endorsed by stakeholders. • An appropriate mechanism to articulate the requirement to potential suppliers, quality assured to ensure that suppliers will understand what is required.
2.4	Have options for the proposed procurement approach been evaluated, including sources of supply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All appropriate sourcing options examined (e.g. single or multiple suppliers, opportunities for collaboration); for infrastructure projects, documentation showing that integrated procurement approaches have been fully evaluated. • For IT-enabled projects, a sound decision to contract for an output. • Where a PPP is the proposed option, confirmation that it is appropriate. • Comparison with similar projects and analysis, supported by commercial intelligence on market capability. • Reasons for selecting sourcing options justified and documented.
2.5	Is the procurement strategy consistent with the approved business case?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented material showing that the procurement strategy aligns with the business case.
2.6	Is the selected procurement strategy defined and endorsed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearly defined procurement strategy, showing reasons for selection, and agreement by stakeholders. • Confirmation that business continuity and a future exit strategy have been considered at a high level. • Confirmation of development, involvement and endorsement of the procurement strategy by appropriate individuals. • Strategy to include: sourcing option (e.g. PPP); procurement approach (e.g. open tender); timetable (with milestones) consistent relevant procurement rules, plus time needed for pre-procurement activities, implementation and contingency in the event of unavoidable slippage; assessment of market place/potential suppliers, roles, resources and skills needed to manage the procurement strategy; alignment with plans for implementation.

2.7	Have factors that may affect the procurement strategy been addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that key factors influencing the procurement strategy have been taken into account. • Confirmation that the efficiency and predictability of the procurement process have been considered, with a process in place for addressing the effect of any deviation from the plan and timetable, plans for two-way communication with stakeholders and suppliers.
2.8	Will the procurement strategy facilitate communication and co-operation between potential suppliers and the client?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy and support mechanisms in place. • Confirmation that the procurement strategy will include: the early involvement of suppliers to ensure the design is fully informed by the delivery process, and clearly defined performance criteria with key performance indicators and a system for measuring performance.
2.9	Has the proposed procurement procedure been evaluated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open, select or direct route is identified. • Reasons for following the procedure are understood; related risks (such as effect on timescales and tender costs for suppliers) are evaluated, and the decision is justified and documented.
2.10	Is there adequate knowledge of existing and potential suppliers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that adequate knowledge of existing and potential suppliers has been considered. • Confirmation of commercial market intelligence, market sources and potential suppliers. • Documentation of the consideration of track records from the public and private sectors, showing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The public sector's ability as a client to work in this way. ◦ The private sector's track record in meeting similar or equivalent business need). ◦ Indications of the types of suppliers most likely to succeed in delivering the required outcomes.
2.11	Is the contract management strategy robust?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract management strategy takes account of key factors such as the required skills, proposed relationship, and management of single or multiple suppliers. • Documentation showing the continuity of key project personnel.
2.12	Has the project team complied with the relevant procurement policies and guidelines in preparation of the tender documents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of the procurement process complying with the PGPA Procurement Rules and the entity's AAls. • Tender documents reviewed, and shown to be complete and containing an accurate description; for construction projects, include requirements for suppliers to provide relevant occupational health and safety information.
2.13	Is the evaluation strategy (including how to demonstrate value for money) accepted by stakeholders and compliant with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation criteria and model(s) approved by stakeholders. • Key evaluation criteria linked to business objectives and given appropriate weighting. • Separated financial and non-financial aspects of the evaluation. • Evaluation criteria and weightings included in tender documents. • For construction projects, adherence to building code, occupational health and safety guidelines, and sustainability requirements.

3. Review of current phase

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	Is the project being managed in accordance with its governance framework, stakeholder engagement plan, project plan and other critical documents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project running to schedule and costs within budget, as shown in project budget and timetable reports. A governance framework in place and the project is managed accordingly.
3.2	What caused any variations such as over-runs or under-runs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconciliations made against the budget and timeframe, according to risk allowances. Reconciliations supported by variance reports which explain the reasons for, and actions taken in response to, variances.
3.3	What actions are necessary to prevent variations recurring in other phases?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project management documentation, showing current analysis and plans which are continually reviewed and updated.
3.4	Were there any assumptions made at Gate 1, or earlier reviews that have not been verified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A log of outstanding assumptions, with plans to verify them (categorised and managed as issues where applicable).

4. Risk management

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Are the major risks identified, understood, financially evaluated and considered in determining the procurement strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A log of major issues and risks. Interdependencies with other projects and programs identified. For construction projects, occupational health and safety risks identified. For IT-related projects, risks relating to IT innovation, infrastructure, security and take-up identified. Each risk assessed financially and included in business case as a sensitivity or contingency. An escalation process is in place for upward referral of risks. A log of issues and risks regularly reviewed by project team; evidence of appropriate action taken.
4.2	Are there risk management plans in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management plans for each risk, with responsibilities for managing them clearly identified and allocated; plans are approved by stakeholders. A process for the ongoing identification, allocation and management of risks, approved by stakeholders, where appropriate. A risk reporting process in place for upward referral of risks. A contingency plan, if required.
4.3	Have all issues raised in previous review(s), and during the course of the project, been satisfactorily resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risk management plan and issues register/log is regularly reviewed by the project team; with evidence of appropriate action taken.

4.4	<p>Are the following external issues being addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statutory processes • communications • public relations • environmental issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of external issues and related stakeholders. • An external relations plan developed and implemented as part of communications plan/ strategy.
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5. Readiness for next phase (investment decision)

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
5.1	Is the project plan for the remaining phases realistic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project plan detailing clear objectives, deliverables, resourcing and milestones for the remaining phases.
5.2	Are the project's timelines reasonable and compliant with relevant procurement policies and guidelines?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timelines likely to meet business and legislative needs. • Documentation showing that timelines have been verified with suppliers. • Comparisons with similar projects. • Relevant procurement policies and guidelines and their effect on timelines taken into account. • An analysis of the effects of slippage that could affect the project or its suppliers, with a supporting sensitivity analysis.
5.3	<p>What are the arrangements for the next stage of the project?</p> <p>Have its activities been defined and resourced?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan showing the roles, responsibilities, training requirements, internal and external resources, skills requirements and any project management mentoring resources available. • Involvement and perspectives considered from business, user and technical stakeholders. • Appropriate plan for the selected procurement approach, identifying all key review and decision points, and preliminary reviews, if any.
5.4	Does the project have resources with the appropriate skills and experience where required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment to provide the required internal and external resources. • Job descriptions for key project staff. • A skills audit and plans for addressing, shortfalls if any. • Project relationships such as teamwork and partnering considered, with a plan to implement them where appropriate.

Gate 3 – Investment decision review

Purpose

The Gate 2—Delivery strategy review considered the procurement strategy prior to inviting proposals or tenders against the fully developed requirements specification. Prior to the Gate 3—Investment decision review, in most cases potential suppliers and partners will have submitted their proposals or tenders, and the evaluation panel will have analysed these and recommended the proposal that offered the best value for money.

The Gate 3—Investment decision review is usually conducted before taking the procurement action recommended by the evaluation panel. This review assesses the appropriateness of the supplier selection process, how business needs are being met and the processes in place for contract delivery. It also determines:

- how well the process has been managed
- the approach undertaken to determining value for money is consistent with the procurement plan criteria for doing so
- how both the entity and the supplier can implement and manage the proposed solution; and
- that processes are in place to achieve a successful outcome after contract award (or equivalent).

Review Team expectations in Gate 3 reviews

- Confirming the business case and benefits realisation plan, now that firm proposals have been received
- checking that all the policy, statutory and procedural requirements were followed throughout the procurement process
- confirming that the recommended contract decision is likely to deliver the specified outputs/ outcomes on time, within budget and that value for money has been adequately assessed
- confirming the existence of an exit strategy and arrangements for retendering
- ensuring that management controls are in place to manage the project through to completion
- ensuring there is continuing support for the project
- confirming that the approved procurement strategy has been followed
- confirming that the development and implementation plans of both the entity and the supplier/ partner are sound and achievable
- checking that the entity has prepared for developing new business processes, where needed, and for implementing and operating new services or facilities, as well as the transition process
- confirming that there are plans for risk management, issue management, quality management, key benefits management and change management (technical and business) and that these plans are shared with suppliers
- confirming that technical implications of a project have been addressed; and

- confirming that the proposed procurement is within the approved financial limits.

Documents required in Gate 3 reviews

In order to undertake a Gate 3 review, the Assurance Review Team may require access to the following documentation:

- project management information, including:
 - strategies for managing the risks and issues, including plans and risk log showing that risks are being identified and managed
 - the plans for implementing business process change and handling changes in requirements
 - the quality management plan describing the how the quality of project deliverables will be assured
 - the service management arrangements defining service management responsibilities for the entity and supplier, service delivery procedures and supplier performance is to be measured
 - the benefits management strategy, plans and responsibilities for delivery
 - the procurement strategy
 - any operational requirements; and
 - the draft contract.
- confirmation that the procurement strategy approved at the Gate 2 review has been followed
- confirmation that the negotiated and agreed solution(s) remain within the original criteria
- plans and assessments of probity throughout the procurement process
- adequate plans from the supplier for development and implementation
- an evaluation report containing recommendation and justification of the selected supplier and plans for debrief of unsuccessful suppliers
- draft project plans through to completion and detailed plans for the next stage
- a project timetable proposed by suppliers as part of their tender
- an updated communications plan
- confirmation of adequate financing and budget, and authority to proceed
- benefits management strategy
- benefits profiles; and
- benefits realisation plan.

These documents, and any other information the Assurance Review Team deems relevant, will be required prior to the onsite review.

Key focus areas for Gate 3 reviews

The following topics would commonly be considered during a Gate 3 – Investment decision review. Assurance Review Teams are expected to use their own expertise in determining the relevance and appropriateness of these topics for the specific project under review. Assurance Review Teams may determine that additional topics are critical to the assessment of the project.

1. Business case and stakeholders

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Is the project still required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that the project still aligns with strategic objectives, including government/entity objectives. Confirmation that external factors or findings from the procurement process have not affected current priorities.
1.2	Are the requirements of the business case complete or does the tender decision require the business case to be amended and/or re-assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reassessment of the business case requirements, including strategic, economic, financial, commercial and project management factors. An updated business case if required.
1.3	Does the recommended way forward meet the business need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key objectives revisited against final tender and proposed solution.
1.4	Has the most appropriate option been selected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cost-benefit and risk analysis against final bid information and results of evaluation, including sensitivity analysis. The preferred option complies with the requirements/ specifications and meets evaluation criteria.
1.5	Does the commercial arrangement represent value for money, with an appropriate level of quality over the whole life of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market assessment, other entity benchmarks and previous experience. Results of evaluation, demonstrating how value for money is achieved. An assessment of the supplier's funding arrangements, if appropriate. For PPP projects, PPP guidelines.
1.6	Is the entity realistic about its ability to manage the change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A documented understanding of cultural implications, where appropriate. Comparison with other similar projects.
1.7	Does the business case still demonstrate affordability when incorporating the proposal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An updated business case incorporating the following bid information. Changes to established budget. Returns and value recalculated with a new benefits plan. Costs compared with budget and pre-tender estimates.
1.8	Is there an agreed plan for the realisation of anticipated benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A benefits management strategy and plans. Critical success factors. A list of the individuals responsible for delivering and achieving benefits identified. The agreed process for measuring benefit. A post-implementation review plan identifying areas to be assessed. Payment mechanisms linked to benefits realisation, where appropriate.

1.9	Have suitable stakeholders been involved and, if so, what has been their involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of stakeholders and business or user representatives in the quality and proposal reviews. • Stakeholder representation on the evaluation team. • Approval by the project steering committee and SRO.
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2. Assessment of the proposed solution

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	Does the proposed solution still meet the business needs and government and entity objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommended bid fully complies with all requirements. • Documented consultation with stakeholders during evaluation.
2.2	Have the suppliers proposed any alternatives or other options in addition to a fully compliant bid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment of options showing how they are beneficial to the project's outputs/outcomes and are still within the scope of the tender documents.
2.3	Will the proposed bid deliver the business need described in the business case?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis showing the proposal is defined in terms of the required outcomes. • Confirmation that the business can achieve the necessary organisational and business process changes. • Confirmation that the proposed services and service levels as defined in the contract will meet the agreed business requirements.
2.4	Has the proposed solution affected the strategy for business change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated plan for managing the business change on the basis of the proposed solution, which is agreed by project steering committee, and SRO. • Analysis of differences from the original plan.
2.5	Has the proposed solution affected the expectations of business benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated plan for benefits realisation and benefits profiles. • Analysis of differences to the original position. • Changes documented and agreed with users and stakeholders.
2.6	Are the entity and supplier prepared for the development (where there are new systems and processes), implementation, transition and operation of any new services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed supplier's development and implementation plans are included in the bid and presented to the appropriate entity endorsement and governance bodies/committees. • The entity's implementation plan is agreed by users and other internal/external stakeholders.
2.7	Are there plans and processes to address future issues, both business and technical?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategy for managing change is agreed by all parties, including the supplier.
2.8	Is there clear allocation and understanding of responsibilities between all parties, in addition to any contractual obligations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities defined and allocated among the entity officials, the supplier organisation and personnel. • For cross-portfolio projects, a Memorandum of Understanding (or equivalent), defining responsibilities, relationships and interaction between entities. • Documentation identifying internal relationships and interactions (describing 'who does what') with the supplier. • A statement from the supplier outlining reciprocal arrangements, including senior management roles. • If a single supplier, a description of how the project management team will manage the supply chain. • If multiple suppliers, details of how the entity will manage the interaction.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation confirming that the entity and supply team will work together as an integrated project team. A documented exit strategy exists.
2.9	Are resources available for the supplier to fulfil its obligations within the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A plan for implementing the new contract, identifying the quantity, type and quality of resources required. Formal management acceptance of resource requirements.
2.10	Have the technical implications been assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation demonstrating that the proposal is technically acceptable and has considered relevant implications such as sustainability and legacy systems etc.
2.11	Does the project have resources with the appropriate skills and experience to achieve the intended outcomes of the investment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for building client capability, with nominated staff allocated to the major roles. Confirmation of internal and external commitment to provide the resources required. Job descriptions for key project staff. A skills appraisal undertaken, with plans for addressing shortfalls, if any.
2.12	Is the proposed procurement within financial approvals and is there adequate budget to accommodate the procurement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation confirming that required financial approvals exist. Documentation detailing the required budget and timing of milestone payments, referring to the relevant budget measure(s).

3. Review of current phase

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	Is the project under control? (i.e. running to plan and budget)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that project is running to schedule and costs are within budget. Confirmation that project governance entities/structures are fulfilling their roles and actively overseeing the project.
3.2	What caused any variations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconciliations against budget and timetable criteria. Advice provided to the project steering committee or SRO, where appropriate.
3.3	What actions are necessary to prevent variations recurring in other phases?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis and plans are included in project documentation and documentation is continually reviewed and updated.
3.4	Have all the assumptions from Gate 0, 1 and 2 reviews been validated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation of project assumptions, with assumptions that cannot be validated being stated in the risk management plan/issue register, assessed and discussed with potential suppliers.
3.5	Have all the required entity procurement and technical checks been undertaken?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of tender management and approval processes. Confirmation of compliance with the AAls, procurement policies and operational guidelines. Confirmation that the evaluation strategy, underpinning models and criteria has been followed. Demonstration of compliance with statutory requirements (e.g. planning and building regulations).
3.6	Did the project team follow the planned steps in the procurement strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation confirming that the activities and processes in the procurement strategy and plan have been followed.

3.7	Has the procurement process adequately managed probity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of compliance with an entity probity management plan or probity processes. • Sign-off by a probity auditor (where appropriate).
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4. Risk management

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Are risk and issue management plans up to date? Are they being monitored?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk management plan and the issue register/log are regularly reviewed, updated and actioned.
4.2	Have all major risks that arose during this stage been resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated risk management plan and risk register contains appropriate methods for dealing with risks. • All risk issues assigned and dealt with by specified team members.
4.3	Are there arrangements to minimise risks to the business in the event of major problems during implementation and rollout?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A documented business continuity and contingency approach, agreed with stakeholders and suppliers. • Business or entity continuity and contingency plans. • An assessment of the supplier's continuity and contingency plans.

5. Readiness for next phase (readiness for service)

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
5.1	Is the working relationship likely to succeed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A realistic assessment of management style/ behaviours of entity and supplier. • Reporting arrangements identified at appropriate levels of entity and supplier. • Plans for integrating the project team, where appropriate.
5.2	Are all resources and internal funds in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget provision (including provision for future years). • The provision of human resources is agreed. • An authorisation/approval process for payments to suppliers. • A process for expenditure reporting and reconciliation.
5.3	Are the supplier's project, risk and management plans adequate and realistic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the supplier's project plan meets timeframes for achieving the outcome of the investment. • Confirmation that the supplier has adequate insurance arrangements. • Confirmation that the supplier has realistic implementation and risk management plans.

5.4	Does the entity's plan reflect the supplier's plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated project management plan reflects tender proposals. • Personnel and responsibilities have been defined and organised for the entity. • Supplier's personnel have been vetted to meet project requirements. • A process exists for resolving issues, and is agreed with supplier. • Confirmation that all plans have been reviewed, agreed and included in the contract.
5.5	Are the long-term contract, administration plan and performance measurement process complete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A long-term plan with a contract management strategy and a detailed service delivery plan exists. • Key performance measures agreed with supplier. • An analysis of the project plan showing that resource requirements are identified, planned, budgeted and available when required. • Required resources and sourcing identified. • Roles and responsibilities have been defined.
5.6	Are all mechanisms and processes for the next phase in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project plan confirms arrangements for management, monitoring, transition and implementation.
5.7	Are the service management plan, administration and service level arrangements complete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A documented service management strategy and plan for the entity. • Defined and agreed service level management, service levels, service quality and measurement between the entity and supplier is confirmed. • Responsibilities for each party agreed. • Defined and agreed standards for services exist. • Defined and agreed monitoring, reporting and review mechanism exists.
5.8	Is the management process for service change complete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change control procedures (both technical and business) defined, agreed and included in the contract. • Management process and responsibilities are defined and agreed.
5.9	Is there an acceptance strategy or commissioning strategy, as applicable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An acceptance/commissioning strategy and plan exist with fully documented and timetabled decision paths. • Decision-makers are clearly identified and informed about their role in acceptance. • The acceptance criteria are agreed with supplier. • A validated acceptance testing plan, including technical and business components exists.
5.10	Is there an implementation strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An implementation strategy and plan exist. • Users, stakeholders and the entity's business management team are involved in developing the strategy. • Where applicable, plans for transition to new ways of working exist.

Gate 4 – Readiness for service review

Purpose

The Gate 3 – Investment decision review covered the activity leading up to contract, including the assessment of the process for arriving at the procurement decision prior to commitment. Once the investment decision has been executed, the project can be delivered in accordance with the business requirement specifications.

The Gate 4—Readiness for service review determines:

- that the solution is robust before delivery
- how ready the entity is to implement the business changes that occur before and after delivery; and
- that there is a basis for evaluating ongoing performance.

For infrastructure projects, this review takes place as soon as practical (preferably before commissioning), to take advantage of the availability of the procurement team. For IT-supported business change, this review takes place after all testing has been completed, including business integration and assurance testing, and before roll-out or release into production.

As the outputs are ready to be embedded into the entity, business change effort ramps up to ensure that the outputs can be effectively implemented, with as little impact on current operations as possible. A benefits focus ensures that business change can be linked directly to achieving the stated benefits. Not only does it help drive the change effort, measuring benefits before and after business change also shows the effectiveness of the change.

Review Team expectations in Gate 4 reviews

- Checking that the contractual arrangements are up to date, and that the current phase of the contract is properly completed and documented
- confirming that there are plans for managing the working relationship with the supplier, with agreement at appropriate levels
- confirming that all parties have agreed plans for managing risks
- confirming key benefits documentation has been aligned to delivery
- checking that risks and issues are being managed effectively and do not threaten implementation, and evaluate the risk of proceeding with the implementation, if there are any unresolved issues
- confirming that commissioning plans have been developed and that they identify and address key areas such as business integration, change management and business continuity management. Entities are encouraged to refer to internal policies and industry best practice in preparing these plans
- checking that the commissioning plans have been assessed for risks, affordability and robustness
- confirming that the business process changes are being implemented
- confirming that entity and supplier implementation plans are still achievable

- confirming the business has the necessary resources and is ready to implement the services and the business process change(s)
- confirming that there are management and organisational controls to manage the project through implementation and operation
- confirming that all parties have agreed plans for training, communication, roll-out, production, release and support
- confirming that any required testing (e.g. commissioning of buildings, business integration and user acceptance testing) is done to the end-user's satisfaction and that the project's Senior Responsible Official is ready to approve implementation
- checking that there are feasible and tested contingency and exit arrangements
- confirming that defects or incomplete works are identified and recorded
- checking that the business case is still valid and unaffected by internal and external events or changes, and that the original projected business benefit is likely to be achieved
- checking that lessons for future projects are identified, recorded and are proposed for dissemination; and
- ensuring processes and procedures are in place to ensure the long-term success of the project.

Documents required in Gate 4 reviews

In order to undertake a Gate 4 review, the Assurance Review Team may require access to the following documentation:

- an updated requirements definition, with any changes agreed during the period up to Gate 3 review
- an updated business case and plans for benefits realisation which reflect the effect of any requirements changes, and the plans for service delivery
- a plan for performance measurement
- a risk management plan
- a benefits management plan
- close-out documentation (if the project ends at implementation and a new one begins) and status reports and reconciliations for
- cost versus budget
- actual versus planned schedule
- risk management plans
- communication and external relations plans
- environmental performance documentation
- adherence to statutory requirements
- the updated contract
- an assessment of contractual issues during the project to date

- details of any facilities not provided to the required specification and any missing or deficient items, with agreed plans for addressing any outstanding issues
- draft project plans through to the completion stage and detailed plans for the next stage
- a test plan and test reports
- progress reports on development and construction
- updated risk and issues logs, including residual risks
- updated contingency and reversion plans
- the plan for managing change, including expected changes to requirements over time
- an updated occupational health and safety file, for construction projects
- records of building site visits
- updated contingency and reversion plan and information assurance documentation (accreditation), for IT-enabled projects
- lessons learnt during the project (if the project ends at implementation)
- operational and maintenance instructions and warranties
- capability assessment for operating and maintaining the solution
- operational governance models
- deployment/transition plan
- implementation strategy and plan
- operational resource plan
- operational plans:
 - business/technical support models,
 - business continuity and disaster recovery, and
 - back-up, restore, archive and retention procedures.
- data management, and data quality plan
- architecture and design specs – particularly those relating to the following and how they will be maintained, monitored and reported:
 - specifications for externally available interfaces
 - availability requirements
 - performance requirements
 - capacity requirements.
- security threat and risk assessment
- security support model – covering monitoring, reporting, denial of service attacks, user access controls
- application software maintenance plan, strategy, manuals covering installation, configuration and maintenance documentation; and

- updated benefits realisation plan.

These documents, and any other information the Assurance Review Team deems relevant, will be required at the planning meeting or during the onsite review.

Key focus areas for Gate 4 reviews

The following topics would commonly be considered during a Gate 4 – Readiness for service review. Assurance Review Teams are expected to use their own expertise in determining the relevance and appropriateness of these topics for the specific project under review. Assurance Review Teams may determine that additional topics are critical to the assessment of the project.

1. Business case and stakeholders

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Is the project still required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of changes to requirement defined at Gate 3 Review (Investment Decision), which remain within the scope of the original tender specifications. • Reconfirmation with stakeholders. • Project steering committee endorsement of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updated business case and benefits plans. ○ Reviews with evidence of the solution against the requirement. ○ Where appropriate, a review of the supplier's IT solution for its effect on the business change project. ○ Reconciliation of current government and entity objectives with those defined at Gate 3 Review (Investment Decision); and plans for modular/incremental implementation, where required.
1.2	Does the project still meet the business needs and objectives of the relevant users and stakeholders (i.e. government departments, interest groups etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the operational service or facility is approved by stakeholders.
1.3	Is the business case still valid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated project plan and business case justifying implementation that the deliverable(s) are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Likely to meet the business need. ○ Likely to deliver value for money. ○ Affordable. ○ Achievable, with implementation broken down into modules/increments where appropriate.
1.4	Are there any changes between contract execution and completion of transition/testing stages that affect the business change project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change management documentation exists for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The impact analysis. ○ Products, design or operational changes. ○ Justified and approved changes. ○ An updated business case and benefit plan for the business change. ○ Updated processes, procedures and activities.

1.5	Is the entity ready for business change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed plans exist for business preparation, transition and operational phases. and, where appropriate, for information and communications technology. • Communications plan exists. • Informed and trained staff are available to undertake the business change activities.
1.6	Can the organisation implement the new services whilst maintaining existing services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resource plan, exists showing that the entity can demonstrate capacity and capability and that resources are available to meet commitments.
1.7	Are there appropriately skilled and experienced staff available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that there is internal and external commitment to provide the staff required. • Job descriptions exist for key project staff. • Skills appraisal and plans exist for addressing any staffing shortfalls.

2. Review of current phase

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	Do the products and/or services delivered meet the acceptance criteria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification and authorisation of any changes to original specification (Gate 3 Review). • Analysis of products and/or services to show how the solution complies with acceptance criteria.
2.2	Is the project under control (i.e. running to plan and budget)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliations of cost with budget and actual with planned schedule. • Updated risk and issue logs, apart from commissioning issues. • Status reports for communication and external relations activities. • Reports on environmental performance, where applicable. • Compliance with statutory requirements (e.g. occupational health and safety, data protection). • Confirmation that contractual issues are resolved and recorded.
2.3	Have all the stakeholder issues been addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports completed detailing resolution of issues, and circulated as part of the communication plan for stakeholder information.
2.4	Are all testing and commissioning/ acceptance (or transition) procedures complete?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning/testing team with relevant skills and experience. • Commissioning/testing plans, results and analyses of products and/or services against acceptance criteria. • Ratified test reports and logs. • Confirmed 'end-to-end' testing, including changed or new business processes. • Testing documentation exists, taking into account future modules or deliveries. • Where there are missing or incomplete items; agreed corrective action is documented. • For IT-enabled projects, information assurance tests exist.
2.5	Have all parties accepted the commissioning/test results and any required action plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented acceptance of plans, procedures and results by supplier and entity.

2.6	Are there workable and tested contingency and back-out plans for roll-out, implementation and operation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fully documented approach with timetables, for key aspects and events, e.g., IT components and decisions about roll-out. • Decision-makers to be informed and clearly identified in the documentation. • Roles and responsibilities listed; resources allocated and staff trained. • Commissioning/testing documented and showing they represented the expected scenario(s). • Plans for the transition to new ways of working, where applicable. • Plans for handover to facilities management, where applicable. • Training plans and relevant supporting material exist, if required.
2.7	Have the supplier and all internal and external parties agreed on the implementation plans? These could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management of change • migration and data transfer • client and supplier implementation • roll-out • post-implementation review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All required plans in the contract have been agreed. • All parties, or their representatives, are aware of their responsibilities and have agreed to them.
2.8	Have any changes to the contract been previously forecast, accurately recorded and approved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contract documentation shows appropriate authority for all changes since the awarding of the contract, including rationale for the change.
2.9	Is there a training plan and curriculum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training plans and relevant supporting material exist.

3. Risk management

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	Have the risks and issues that arose in the awarding of the contract and implementation phase been properly managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that risks are resolved—no outstanding issues. • Any remaining risks are associated only with commissioning and service delivery - these risks are to be fully quantified, and dealt with by applying suitable risk management plans.
3.2	If there are unresolved issues, what are the risks of implementing rather than delaying?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment of all remaining issues and risks, with responsibility for management of residual risks clearly defined. • An evaluation report on the risk and effect of cancelling, delaying or proceeding with implementation that considers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The project outcome and wider program of change; ○ Benefits realisation. ○ The consequences for supplier, client, business, stakeholders, users etc. ○ Options and management plans for all scenarios, and a recommendation based on the sensitivity analysis.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate process followed, through project governance mechanisms, for any recommendation to delay or proceed with implementation.
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4. Readiness for next phase (benefits realisations)

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Are all project elements ready for service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated schedules. • Occupational health and safety file. • Handover certificates. • Testing and commissioning data. • Plans for transition in place. • Plans for 'operate contract'/service phase available. • Business continuity and contingency plans in place, if required. • Technical documentation available, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drawing. ○ Operating manuals. ○ Maintenance manuals. ○ Instructions. ○ Information assurance documentation.
4.2	Is the entity ready to adopt new ways of working, where applicable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business processes have been thoroughly worked out, tested and are ready to be implemented. • Information and support is available (e.g. client information at call centres). • Where applicable, members of the public/end-users are aware of the new service and can obtain further information.
4.3	Is the long-term contract management process in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed and aligned plans, roles, responsibilities and organisation in place for client and supplier, with reporting arrangements at appropriate levels. • An appropriate number of suitably qualified staff are appointed by client and supplier, with continuity planned, skills appraised and plans made for addressing shortfalls, if any. • Staff managing the contract are aware of and trained for their contract management role; they are familiar with the contract's aims and purpose. • Plans for managing service delivery, changes to the contract, and the relationship with the supplier.
4.4	Is there a process to manage and measure performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management plans in place. • The performance enhancement process is agreed with the service provider and documented in the contract before awarding of the contract. • The means of measuring performance is agreed with the service provider/partner.

4.5	Is there a process to manage measure and report benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits management plans are in place, linked to intended project outcomes, where applicable. • Means of measuring benefits are agreed with the service provider/partner. • Reporting lines are clear, with stakeholder involvement clarified. • For collaborative projects, all parties understand and agree to their responsibilities and arrangements for benefits realisation.
4.6	Have ongoing operation and maintenance been considered in detail?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues and ongoing costs relating to maintenance (buildings, physical and/or IT infrastructure and applications as appropriate) are addressed and monitored against expectations.
4.7	Is there a process for post-implementation reviews?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for post-implementation reviews are endorsed by the supplier and internal and external stakeholders.

Gate 5 – Benefits realisation review

Purpose

The Gate 4—Readiness for service review assessed whether the solution was robust before delivery, and that the entity was ready for the implementation and had a basis for evaluating ongoing performance.

A Gate 5—Benefits realisation review is not a post-implementation review. It takes place after the entity has carried out a post-implementation review or similar major review. It makes use of findings from that internal review, together with an assessment of organisational learning, as evidence of good practice but may or may not include a full review of plans for the future.

The Gate 5—Benefits realisation review focuses on ensuring that the project delivered the benefits and value for money identified in the business case and benefits realisation plans. A Gate 5 review is generally held six to twelve months after commissioning of the product(s) or introduction of the service, when evidence of the benefits is available.

The scope and frequency of Gate 5 reviews will vary depending on the project and contract characteristics. A single Gate 5 review is generally enough for most projects, however, the Assurance Review Team will make this determination.

Review Team expectations in Gate 5 reviews

- Assessing whether the business case for the project at Gate 3 and at Gate 4 was realistic
- assessing whether the anticipated benefits are being delivered
- confirming that the responsible entity or supplier continue to have the necessary resources to successfully manage the contract
- confirming continuity of key personnel involved in contract management roles
- assessing the ongoing requirement for the contract to meet the business need. Ensure that if circumstances have changed, the service delivery and contract are adapting to the new situation. Changing circumstances could affect partner, relationship, service, change, contract, benefits and performance management
- where changes have been agreed, ensuring they do not compromise the original contract
- ensuring there is ongoing contract development to improve value for money
- assessing the application of the contract management procedures to date to manage the contract
- confirming that there are plans to manage the contract to its conclusion
- assessing lessons learnt and methodology for sharing these with peers within the NCE and across government; and
- confirming the validity of the exit strategy and arrangements for retendering, where applicable.

Documents required in Gate 5 reviews

In order to undertake a Gate 5 review, the Assurance Review Team may require access to the following documentation:

- an updated business case that reflects actual operating conditions, compared with the business case reviewed at the Gate 4—Readiness for service review
- report on the findings of any post-implementation reviews (or equivalent major post-project reviews)
- an assessment of the benefits delivered to date and expectations for the future
- a summary of contract changes since the Gate 4 review
- plans for contract and service improvement
- resources, skills appraisals and personnel plans to continue managing the contract
- reports on stakeholder issues
- plans for disposal of any assets at the end of the contract (e.g. resources, buildings, staff, intellectual property rights)
- adherence to building code, occupational health and safety, and sustainability requirements, for construction projects
- adherence to security documents, for IT-enabled projects
- contract management reports; and
- project records regarding change and dispute management.

Key focus areas for Gate 5 reviews

The following topics would commonly be considered during a Gate 5 – Benefits realisation review. Review teams are expected to use their own expertise in determining the relevance and appropriateness of these topics for the specific project under review. Review teams may determine that additional topics are critical to the assessment of the project.

1. Business case and benefits management

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Is the business case still valid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that the business case still fits with the strategic objectives priorities of the entity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The business case is still achievable and affordable. ○ There is ongoing stakeholder commitment.
1.2	<p>Have the business benefits been realised as set out in the business case?</p> <p>Did the entity achieve other benefits?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from the post-implementation review, or the post-project review or equivalent major review, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The project's success criteria were met. ○ Project performance criteria and key performance indicators met or exceeded. ○ Total project value targets achieved. ○ Contribution to program/project benefits (as appropriate) and strategic outcomes tracked. ○ Updated business and benefits realisation plans are compared to the Gate 3— Investment Decision Review and the Gate 4—Readiness for Service Review.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessment of benefits in current operating regime using the benefits measurement basis defined in the Gate 4 Review. ○ Anticipated future benefits identified.
1.3	Have the needs of the business and/ or end-users changed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comparison of current business and end-user needs with those identified in the Gate 3 and Gate 4 Reviews. • Periodic reviews of business and end-user needs and a projection of future changes.
1.4	Have all the governance and stakeholder issues been addressed? These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the statutory process • communications • external relations • environmental issues • personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated operational communications strategy, communications plan and issues log. • Governance structure reciprocated in both client and provider organisation. • Issues addressed at the appropriate level in client and provider organisations. • Staff empowerment to make decisions and stakeholder involvement.
1.5	Are the users satisfied with the operational service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of user groups, outputs and the feedback process. • Indication of advance preparation for changes in way services are delivered. • User-friendly guide to the services provided.

2. Review of operating phase

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	Is the service/facility operating to defined parameters?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented operating parameters, updated as needs change. • Updated service level agreements, where applicable. • Service delivery is measured against defined parameters. • Confirmation that the measures used to address poor or non-performance are effective • The facility is safe to operate and maintain. • Sustainability targets are met or exceeded. • Client/stakeholder satisfaction and experiences are assessed.
2.2	Have the project documentation, training material and training program been delivered and kept up to date?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff trained and existing staff skills updated. • Updated training material. • Responsibilities for updating training material and documentation defined. • The occupational health and safety record updated as required.
2.3	Are the contractual relationships satisfactory?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project records demonstrating effective contract management procedures. • Supplier and client staff who are enthusiastic, mutually respectful and united in their objectives. • Improvements to the contract. • Regular reviews between supplier and client. • Action plans exist.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurement of contract improvements. • Reports on work done and plans for expected work.
2.4	Are there plans for continued contract management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing forward resource plans, as required. • Succession planning for key roles. • Skills appraisal and plans for addressing shortfalls.
2.5	Are plans for ongoing risk management up to date?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated risk register, risk reporting and management. • Business continuity/contingency plans are updated as required. • Occupational health and safety aspects considered.
2.6	Have the contract management procedures been successful to date?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract management reports, which demonstrate successful project implementation. • Project documentation recording plans for change management and dispute management.

3. Plans for ongoing improvements in value for money

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	<p>What is the scope for improved value for money?</p> <p>Can more be done for less?</p> <p>Could the provider deliver better service quality at the same price?</p> <p>Can maintenance costs be reduced?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of value for money to date against scenarios for future service use. • Commercial intelligence about the supplier's track record on other projects and/or comparison with supplier's offering similar services. • Details of efficiency gains, both expected and achieved.
3.2	Has the entity benchmarked its contract-related processes by comparing them with other equivalent organisations involved in similar relationships?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking assessments of processes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demand management. ○ Service planning and development. ○ Service quality. ○ Investment decisions/project justification. ○ Benefits management.
3.3	Are commercial mechanisms providing appropriate incentives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments to the provider are dependent on benefits derived from implementing a particular program of change. • The provider has incentives to deliver and to ensure that individual investments are well planned, achievable and will deliver value. • A clear business case with robust benefits identified on each occasion. • Target incentive mechanisms, where work is task-based. • The provider is given incentives to submit optimum resource estimates for a task, with equitable sharing of risks and benefits, between the entity and supplier, in exceeding or undercutting those original estimates.

4. Plans for ongoing improvements in performance

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Is the entity setting realistic targets for continuous improvement year-on-year from this service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and use of key techniques such as Balanced Scorecard, ongoing stakeholder analysis, benchmarking etc.
4.2	Is the entity tracking its progression to improved performance and the flow of results through key milestones and the business planning cycle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented performance information which is clearly linked to planned outcomes and enables ready assessment of effectiveness, efficiency and service quality. Core sets of performance information that meet multiple purposes, are consistent and complementary. Ongoing assessment of the appropriateness of performance information. Responsibilities for performance management are defined and understood by the entity and supplier. Direct links exist between planning and results. Ongoing monitoring of performance and periodic evaluation. Integration with corporate and business planning. Consistency with the principles set out in the operational strategies of the business.
4.3	Does the entity have performance measures to cover all aspects of the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance measures exist in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost and value obtained. Performance and client satisfaction. Delivery improvement and added value. Delivery capability. Benefits realised. Relationship strength and responsiveness.
4.4	Do the performance measures selected offer clear and demonstrable evidence of the success (or otherwise) of the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance measures chosen have the following attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are meaningful and visible to an entity's management group. Properly reflect user and stakeholder perceptions. Can be used to identify the need for support or remedial action as part of contract management activity.
4.5	Are performance measures related to delivery or capability improvement tracked against an existing baseline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A baseline has been established in the business case for the contract. Performance measures are tracked against that baseline.
4.6	<p>Are there performance assessment measures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing service delivery the desired results of individual programs of change or improvement, the implementation of projects the overall results or effect of the deal? <p>What does the entity want to have achieved by the end of the contract period?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service level agreement approaches and related measures. Investment appraisal and benefits management techniques are constructed on a case-by-case basis. Objectives are identified during project scoping and in preliminary business analysis activity, rooted in the organisation's long-term business strategy. For construction projects, confirmation that user satisfaction has been or will be monitored as required.

5. Readiness for the future

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
5.1	Is there an ongoing need for the service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An updated business case, linked to the current business strategy.
5.2	If the service will be needed in the future, what is its likely scope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The options appraisal to include some or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Do nothing'. Retain the scope of the existing contract. Split the scope of the existing contract. Broaden the scope of the existing contract. Completely rethink the requirement for the contract. Consider single/multiple sources of supply. Combine new services with similar or complementary services.
5.3	<p>Are there any major issues with the current contract that could affect the approach to retendering the service? Factors to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of services—could the provider cope with the range of services provided or were there significant weaknesses? the flexibility of the contract—how adaptable was the relationship to both foreseen and unexpected changes in the nature and level of demand? clients' reaction and adjustment to outsourcing—how well did users adapt to services provided by a third party? Was management confident that the provider could be relied on to provide the service? Is the organisation now ready for a greater dependence on outsourcing? an exit strategy—will the retendering be straightforward or is there a danger the client is now 'locked in'? Have agreements been made to ensure the handover is as smooth as possible? the benefits and costs of delivering the service through alternative delivery models (e.g., using in-house sourcing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An updated risk management plan and issue register/ log. Exception reporting from regular client/ provider progress meetings. Reports from contract and service management functions. An exit strategy and details of handover arrangements.

6. Review of organisational learning and maturity targets

Areas to probe		Evidence expected
6.1	Does the entity have a well-defined and effective process implemented for identifying lessons learnt from the project, embedding them internally and sharing them across government?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mechanism for capturing and recording the initial data. • An internal evaluation of lessons learnt. • Mechanisms and policy for making information available within and outside the organisation. • A process for providing feedback to entity project teams. • Relevant feedback is considered in the context of the business case. • Entity staff participation in knowledge-sharing forums.
6.2	Has there been a review of how well the project was managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation from a formal review that is conducted at project closure.
6.3	Are suppliers encouraged to learn from experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives for suppliers to improve project delivery exist. • A commitment to long-term relationships with integrated project teams exists.

Gateway for programs

Purpose

The primary purposes of a Gateway program review are to review the outcomes and objectives for the program and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to the overall strategy of the organisation and its senior management; and align effectively with broader high level government policy objectives and initiatives.

First stage program reviews

First stage program reviews are conducted before government approval to ensure that any pertinent outcome/s can be addressed in time to contribute to the government's deliberations. Where this is not practical, (e.g. rapid/urgent decisions) the review can be conducted as soon as possible after the government's approval, but before substantial program design, definition and implementation. This review would also help to define the program by examining the business need and business case.

These reviews will assess whether stakeholders' expectations of the program are realistic, in relation to outcomes and benefits, resource requirements and capability, and timetable and achievability.

A program review conducted at the start up or Budget pre-decision stage is particularly valuable as it helps to confirm the way forward is achievable before implementation plans have been finalised and major investment occurs. These reviews will assess whether stakeholders' expectations of the program are realistic, by reference to outcomes and benefits, resource requirements, capability, timetable, and achievability.

This type of review may assist entities in defining the program by examining the business need and formulation of the business case and can be conducted whenever the priority or the scope of the program changes significantly.

Mid stage program reviews

Mid-stage program reviews will assess the program execution with the number of these reviews being determined by the complexity, timeframe and risks attached to the program.

These reviews may be conducted multiple times and on a regular basis (generally at intervals of no more than 12-18 months), depending on the outcomes of previous reviews and/or where there is a lengthy period between decision-points, staged implementation or an opportunity to assess the programs' maximisation of benefits.

The scope of each review is determined through discussions between the entity, the Assurance Review Team and Finance.

End stage program reviews

End stage program reviews will focus on the realisation of benefits. The review will confirm links to the business case are still robust and that senior management support clarity of understanding about the required outcomes. The review also confirms that expected outcomes are being achieved against the entity's performance indicators and targets (i.e. as set out in the Portfolio Budget Statement) and that no outstanding issues remain.

These reviews focus on program closure including program controls, records management and the identification and application of lessons learned as well as the delivery of the intended outcomes and benefits.

Key focus areas for program reviews

This section outlines the six key focus areas, the context and scope for each review stage, and guidance on areas to probe, including examples of the types of evidence expected. Note that the six key focus areas remain constant between the three stages (First, Mid and End), with the emphasis for the review reflecting the stage of development for the program.

Recognising that each program is unique and that as circumstances change, the areas to probe tabled below are designed to be used as a guide rather than a complete checklist of mandatory items.

Review teams are expected to apply their own expertise to determine the relevance and appropriateness of each topic for each review stage.

1. Policy context and strategic fit

How to use this section for:	
First stage program review	<p>When this review is conducted very early in the program lifecycle, information may be uncertain as options are being explored. Plans for achieving outcomes are likely to be unclear; however, there needs to be evidence of high-level plans for the way forward or a set of options for consideration, with a preferred option identified and a reasonably clear indication of critical success factors and how they will be measured.</p> <p>Strategic fit: there must be a demonstrable link to the entity corporate strategy. For instance, why is this program needed?</p> <p>Governance: the governance framework will be in outline, but a clear owner for the program.</p> <p>Delivery: capability to deliver will be considered at a high level, ideally supported by estimates based on evidence from similar initiatives.</p> <p>Lessons learned: mechanisms put in place to learn lessons regardless of the stage in the program lifecycle.</p> <p>Risks: major risks identified at a high level, even at this early stage, with an indication of how they will be managed, including requirements for contingency plans. Implementation risks that may undermine the timely and effective achievement of intended outcome as is advice on mitigation strategies to reduce these risks.</p> <p>At program initiation, all areas in this section will need thorough investigation as they provide the foundation for successful delivery.</p>

Mid stage program review		The focus at this stage is whether assumptions or circumstances have changed, e.g. a change in policy direction, continued availability of skilled resources.
End stage program review		The critical area at the final-stage review is to confirm the link to business strategy is still robust and supported by senior management.
Areas to probe		Evidence expected
1.1	Is there a clear understanding of the required outcomes and are they soundly based?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program is structured to allow responsiveness and flexibility in achieving outcomes.
1.2	Does the program break new policy ground?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative solutions are assessed by experts. There are similar initiatives from which lessons may be learnt. Consultation with the market to help refine the approach, identify risks, and ways in which risks might be mitigated. For PPP initiatives, evaluation of the program is consistent with methodology.
1.3	Does the program sponsor and governance group agree with the business strategy and is the strategy robust?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear direction set out in the corporate and business plans, government policy documents, e.g. the Administrative Arrangement Orders or entity objectives.
1.4	Does the program demonstrate a clear link with wider government and the NCE's objectives – does it reflect the current business policy and environment and is it aligned with the business strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents showing the program owners/accountable authority/responsible minister, have agreed the scope of the program and its alignment with policy objectives, entity strategy and/or change priorities, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPP / cabinet submission, endorsed by the responsible minister and accountable authority. Business case/s, including ICT Investment Approval/two stage approval business cases. Where there are significant changes in policy priorities, in stakeholders' views, or the key objectives: details of a reappraisal of the program.
1.5	Is there a continuing need for the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The desired outcomes of the program remain aligned to the entity strategy. Continuing commitment from stakeholders demonstrated. Confirmation that the program is organised to deliver the outcomes as needed. The program brief or program business case has been updated and remains valid.
1.6	Have other delivery options been considered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An analysis of delivery options.
1.7	Are there any strategic risks arising from the implementation of this program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main risks identified at the outset with nominated risk owners', options for mitigating these risks considered, and the need for contingency and business continuity plans recognised. Risks identified in the NPP, business case and risk documentation.
1.8	Does the program involve other entities or portfolios?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For cross-entity or portfolio policy or programs, confirmation that all parties involved know how they are engaged in the policy or program and are committed to its delivery. Clear governance arrangements exist to ensure sustainable alignment with the business objectives of all entities involved,

		including where relevant the objectives of the appointed lead entity.
1.9	Has the entity managed similar programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entity has processes in place to incorporate lessons learned from this program and its components into wider best practice. The entity has demonstrated that it learns from the experiences of others.
1.10	Are the key program assumptions explicit and are they still valid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A list of major assumptions made in preparing the program brief, updated to reflect any changes that could affect success and current assessments of the validity of all assumptions.
1.11	Are the program's milestones defined by legislation or by government commitment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that there is an ongoing commitment from stakeholders to the achievement of the outcomes..

2. Business case and stakeholders

Assess the program's business case which sets out overall costs and the planned benefits realisation. Ensure the program is supported by a business case and stakeholders, and takes into account the risks, potential change impacts and integration with other internal and external programs.

How to use this section for:	
First stage program review	<p>The level of detail and completeness of the business case will reflect that amount of certainty associated with the program at that point. Initially, the program may tolerate high levels of uncertainty; estimates will be very approximate, with high levels of potential variance. The business case is recommended to be developed in tandem with the program and benefits realisation plans.</p> <p>There must be a clear understanding of the program outcomes from the early stages, even though the overall scope and the way forward may not be clear. The measures of success will be in the program outline.</p> <p>Key stakeholders identified and engaged, especially for those programs, which involve several entities.</p> <p>The components of the program, sub-programs and projects and their resource requirements will not be certain at this stage.</p> <p>Consider early indicators of the additional factors affecting success, which will vary significantly depending on the program.</p> <p>Program controls will not have been established in detail.</p> <p>At program initiation, all areas in this section will require thorough investigation.</p>
Mid stage program review	<p>These reviews provide an opportunity to revisit program assumptions such as stakeholder support, program affordability and the effectiveness of program controls.</p> <p>It is essential to have effective change control mechanisms in place relating to program scope, interdependencies, master program schedule development and resources (e.g. a change in policy direction, capability and continued availability of skilled resources).</p> <p>Assumptions will need to be revisited, in particular:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether stakeholders remain supportive. • Whether the program is still affordable. • Management of issues relating to additional factors that could affect success. • The effectiveness of program controls.
End stage program review		The main areas to investigate are continued clarity of understanding about the required program outcomes and support for stakeholders as the program closes. Consider program controls and records management.
Areas to probe		Evidence expected
2.1	<p>Is there a robust business case for the program, with links to the individual sub-programs and projects?</p> <p>Is it up to date?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the program's business or policy drivers and objectives and how they contribute to the overall objectives. • An outline of the required outputs or outcomes and their relationship to each other. • A definition of the benefit profiles for the program for each of the benefits expected. • Confirmation that the way forward is likely to achieve the intended outcome. • A business case with, a rationale and objectives statement, appraisal of options and evaluation plan for the option being pursued, and the key performance indicators – e.g. as stated in the Portfolio Budget Statement.
2.2	<p>Is the scope of the program clear?</p> <p>Does it overlap or interface with other internal or external policies or programs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the program scope to date. • Details of any overlap or link with existing internal or external programs or policies.
2.3	Have the stakeholders been identified and do they support the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of key stakeholders and statements of their needs and support for the program. • A plan for communicating with and involving stakeholders and securing common understanding and agreement.
2.4	<p>Does the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rely on complex dependency relationships with other projects or entities, or have • complex cross-entity funding arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For cross-entity programs, clear lines of accountability to resolve any conflict with stakeholder requirements. • Recognition of the need to involve external delivery partners e.g. the not-for-profit sector, industry and suppliers.
2.5	Are key stakeholders confident outcomes will be achieved when expected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A confirmation that planned outcomes have been achieved to date. • Mechanisms for collecting performance data are in place and a plan for evaluating the impact of the program is in operation. • The entity's accountable authority, SRO or a steering committee, program coordination group or equivalent (e.g. inter-department committee), is confident that planned milestones will result in good quality deliverables and the desired outcomes. • Commitment from key stakeholders that program deliverables will achieve the desired outcomes.

2.6	Have the program sub-components been appropriately identified and structured?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of program strands and/or sub-programs and main projects with an explanation of how each will contribute to the required outcomes. • Key deliverables and identification of key interdependencies. • Implementation will be broken up into manageable steps and phased delivery where appropriate and will avoid 'big bang' approaches.
2.7	Have program controls been determined, especially where constituent projects will join other entities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of overall program controls such as progress tracking, risk management, issue identification and resolution and impact assessment. • Interdependencies between other programs and projects defined, with high-level plans for managing them. • For collaborative programs, accountabilities and governance arrangements for different entities defined and agreed. • Processes to manage and record key program information and decision making.
2.8	Has a delivery strategy been developed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis of delivery options. • The parties in the delivery chain are identified and an approach for working together established.
2.9	Is there a clear understanding of what constitutes success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition of key critical success factors and how the required quality of performance will be measured. • A description of main outcomes and an analysis of the leading and lagging indicators. • The relationship between program outcomes and government objectives. • Projected performance over the life of the program with key performance targets and measures agreed with stakeholders. • The program can be evaluated in a practical and affordable way.
2.10	<p>What are the additional factors that could affect success?</p> <p>Are there risks associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple suppliers or complex/volatile supply or logistical chains • economic conditions likely to affect options of availability; or • environmental issues such as volatility and/ or significant external change factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main risks identified at the outset with nominated risk owners' options for mitigating these risks considered, and the need for contingency and business continuity plans recognised. • A description of dependencies and/or other factors and/or programs already under way that could affect the outcomes of the program. • Engagement with delivery chains, the not-for-profit sector and/or the market to determine capability to meet the need and to identify suitable options for delivery. • Where suppliers and/or partners are already in place, confirmation that their ability to deliver has been considered. • The legal framework for the program and its projects exists, is comprehensive and sound.

3. Risk management

Review the risk management arrangements for identifying and managing program and project level risks, including external risks such as changing business priorities and competing government priorities.

How to use this section for:		
First Stage Program Review		<p>If the first review is very early, the major risks may have just been identified at a high level with an indication of how they will be managed and initial consideration of the requirements for contingency plans.</p> <p>At program initiation all aspects of risk management must be probed thoroughly.</p>
Mid Stage Program Review		<p>The focus is checking that risk management remains effective and appropriate. Implementation risks inherent in working with other entities, jurisdictions and contracted service providers adequately identified, assessed and treated.</p>
End Stage Program Review		<p>The status of the risk register at program closure will be the principal area to investigate and will consider which risks have now been closed/removed and which will be transferred to the risk register for a new initiative or corporate risk log.</p>
Areas to probe		Evidence expected
3.1	Is there a framework for managing issues and risk to this program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined roles, responsibilities and processes for managing issues and risk across the program, with clearly defined routes for bringing issues and risks to the attention of senior management.
3.2	Have the major risks been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current list of major strategic, political and/or reputation and legislative risks to the overall program analysed by likelihood and impact. Identified early warning indicators. The risks of success (e.g. take-up or greater than expected usage, and impact and capability of market) have been considered and contingencies identified. Confirmation that regular reviews of risks, mitigation options and contingency plans are carried out.
3.3	Have assurance measures for the program been put in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that the program is subject to the NCE's assurance framework for its portfolio of programs and projects. Program governance arrangements include individuals who can challenge assumptions, decisions and risks and, where necessary, advice acted upon, such as representatives from internal audit, procurement specialists, the central entities, the policy and service delivery entities and peer reviewers, as required. Gateway reviews, health checks and/or policy reviews are incorporated into the plans. Review recommendations are turned into action plans. An audit, arranging for complementary assurance about control and processes from audit functions through the delivery chain, is undertaken. Market and/or supply considerations are understood and acted upon.
3.4	Is there a contingency plan and business continuity plans?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions about contingency and business continuity arrangements made with appropriate plans. The program's effects are analysed and decisions taken about those for which contingency arrangements will be needed. Milestones relating to contingency measures are in the plans and the milestones are being achieved as expected.

3.5	Have lessons from similar programs been considered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of applicable issues identified from previous similar programs are considered in the current program.
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4. Review of current phase

Review the current status of the program in terms of budget, schedule and progress with outcomes, against the performance measures set out in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statements, the approved business case and benefits management plans.

How to use this section for:		
First Stage Program Review		This section would not normally apply but some of the topics may need to be considered.
Mid Stage Program Review		All areas need to be investigated thoroughly to confirm the program remains on track and issues are being managed effectively.
End Stage Program Review		Confirm the expected outcomes have been achieved against the performance indicators and targets, as set out in the relevant Portfolio Budget Statements, and the Business Plan and that no outstanding issues remain.
Areas to probe		Evidence expected
4.1	Are the program's key milestones compliant with broader government or entity timing requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timelines for processes are identified and lead times are factored into the program schedule.
4.2	Is the program on track in relation to planning and/or delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program report and plan are updated. Milestones are achieved as planned. The plan for benefits measurement and achievement is on track. The risk register is current. There are highlight reports for constituent work streams. The resources and funding used to date. Issues being resolved. Documented confidence from delivery partners that future milestones and plans are realistic. Confirmation that interdependencies with other programs are being managed satisfactorily.
4.3	Have problems occurred and if so how have they been resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues and details of action taken are documented. Governance framework with escalation routes to senior management, ministers and responsible interdepartmental committees and central entities. The program plan is updated to reflect changing issues and risks. Recommendations from previous Gateway reviews are addressed.
4.4	Have options for potential ways forward been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of various solutions including policy, asset and non-asset options. A comparison of retention maintenance and replacement indicative costs. Options analysis or feasibility studies.

4.5	Have lessons learned been shared?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of lessons learned and shared across the entity and across programs.
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5. Assessment of intended outcomes and benefits

Review the management of intended outcomes and benefits by analysing governance arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the program, including roles and responsibilities for managing risk, interdependencies between other programs/projects, including those of other entities.

How to use this section for:		
First stage program review		<p>If the first review is very early, the key aspects to investigate thoroughly are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main outcomes and benefits identified. The relationships between the outcomes. <p>Plans for achieving the outcomes are likely to be unclear at an early stage. There needs to be evidence of high-level plans for the way forward or a set of options for consideration, with a preferred option identified and a reasonably clear indication of how success will be measured, e.g. a trajectory for take-up of a service.</p> <p>At program initiation, all areas must be investigated thoroughly to confirm expectations for delivery are realistic and performance can be measured with reasonable accuracy.</p>
Mid stage program review		<p>The Mid-Stage review checks plans to deliver outcomes and ensure benefits remain achievable. It focuses on ensuring that everything is in place to deliver the required outcomes and that information obtained will be acted on to improve the quality of the implementation.</p> <p>At this stage, a benefits realisation strategy and plan needs to clearly show what will happen, where and when the benefits will occur and who will be responsible for their delivery. It is important to be clear about handover and responsibilities for ongoing operations in the changed state (for instance when the benefits will actually be harvested). Integrating this strategy with the overall Program Master Schedule will help to ensure ownership and ongoing management of benefits is maintained after the program has been closed and/or handed over to its business owner.</p>
End stage program review		<p>The topics in this section would primarily be on benefits realised and lessons learned at program closure.</p>
Areas to probe		Evidence expected
5.1	Have the policy/program outcomes been identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A current list of the main outcomes and desired benefits. Information on links to strategic outcomes and to deliverables from specific projects.
5.2	Are the planned outcomes achievable, or have any changes in scope, relationship or value been properly agreed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcomes and their relationship to each other have been identified. Credible plans for the achievement of the outcomes. Documentation of an ongoing commitment from stakeholders to the outcomes and their achievement. Confirmation that the business case has been reviewed and approved.

5.3	Is the program on track to deliver?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that planned outcomes have been achieved to date. • Mechanisms for collecting performance data are in place and a plan for evaluating the impact of the program is in operation. • Confirmation that senior management is confident that planned milestones will result in good quality deliverables and the desired outcomes (e.g. senior officials such as the entity's accountable authority, the SRO, a steering committee, a program coordination committee or an interdepartmental committee). • Documented commitment from key stakeholders that program deliverables will achieve the desired outcomes.
5.4	Is there a plan for monitoring and achieving the required outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A benefits management strategy and a plan to ensure that outcomes are delivered in terms of performance measures and/or key performance indicators. • Appropriate baseline measures identified to assess future performance. • Actual performance is to be assessed against the defined measures and indicators. • Processes are established for identifying and resolving issues and problems which may result in non-achievement of planned outcomes. • Clear documentation outlining how the objectives from the sub-programs and/or projects link to the outcomes of the program.
5.5	How will change be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program management controls and reporting mechanisms are defined and operational (e.g. to the accountable authority, responsible minister, and interdepartmental committees).
5.6	Is a benefits management plan active and are benefits being monitored and reported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits management plans are in place and linked to intended outcomes, where applicable. • Methods of measuring benefits are agreed with service providers and stakeholders. • Reporting lines are clear, with clear roles and responsibilities assigned.
5.7	Is granting activity part of the program? Do the grants management processes align with the seven key principles prescribed in the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines? ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granting activity operates best under clearly defined and documented operational objectives. • These objectives are recommended to be concise, unambiguous, realistic, and outcomes orientated.
5.8	Where procurement is part of the program, how is capability and capacity for acquisition to be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A procurement strategy is in place and its application to the program and its projects is adequately documented. • A market management plan is in place, demonstrating a good understanding of supply side capability and capacity.

6. Readiness for next review stage

Assess the entity's readiness and transition to the next review stage phase by considering how the entity plans to achieve the required outcome, including detailed measures for the management of other entities, jurisdictions or other parties contributing to the outcome.

⁷ Commonwealth Grant Guidelines 2009, Part II, pp 13-26

This section will provide a stocktake of what has been achieved to date and what will be required to move to the next stage. It will assess resources, capabilities and inter-dependencies.

How to use this section for:		
First stage program review		If the first review is very early, plans may be in too early a stage of development to provide reliable evidence. Where this is the case, this review would examine planned steps to program initiation; all areas would apply to strategic thinking and scope.
Mid stage program review		All areas probed thoroughly with the focus on ensuring everything is in place to start delivering the required outcomes.
End stage program review		This section would not normally apply at program closure stage but some of these areas may need to be considered.
Areas to probe		Evidence expected
6.1	Are the funds available to undertake the next phase?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget provision for the program is appropriately documented. Information is provided, setting out adequate approaches for estimating, monitoring and controlling the expenditure on the program.
6.2	Are the program's resources, including inter/intra departmental resources, suitably skilled, available and committed to carrying out the work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information showing who needs to be involved, what they must deliver and when it must be delivered. Identification of the key specialist and management skills required for the next phase of the program. Confirmation of the key roles in place with skills matched to the nature of the work. Information on the resources that will be made available in the next phase.
6.3	Are the plans for the next phase realistic and achievable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for the next phase would vary depending on the program/project but would generally include the items in the following list. Information on streams of work such as sub-programs and projects. Deliverables and/or milestones and the route map to achieve them. Timescales. Organisational and governance structure. Communication and stakeholder engagement strategy. Information on costs and resources. Risk management strategy. Benefits management strategy. Confirmation that the plans have been tested and found to be robust.
6.4	<p>Are appropriate governance controls and approvals in place?</p> <p>Has the entity assessed its readiness to proceed to the next stage?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of accountabilities allocated to the SRO. Program management controls and reporting mechanisms are defined and operational (e.g. to the accountable authority, responsible minister, and interdepartmental committees). Plans for ongoing management of the delivery chain are in place.

6.5	Is the governance framework fit for purpose for the next stage; and is there commitment to support key roles and responsibilities for this program within current corporate priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment from the owner and governance group, a willingness to take ownership, and a clear understanding of their roles in achieving successful outcomes. • Key roles and individuals have been identified and assigned, with responsibility for the transition to new ways of working (e.g. responsible minister, SRO, program director, program manager, business change manager and sub-program and/or project managers).
6.6	Are the required skills and capabilities for this program available, taking account of the entity's current corporate commitments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The entity has brought together, or plans to bring together, the skills and capabilities it needs to plan and achieve the desired outcomes and has access to external sources of expertise. • The program/project team is realistic about the complexity of the changes and how they can be managed and can demonstrate learning from previous and/or other programs. • Key roles within the program are identified with named individuals. • Key individuals have an appropriate track record of successful delivery. • The program has access to expertise which can benefit those fulfilling the requisite roles. • There is an appropriate allocation of key program or project roles between internal staff and consultants or contractors.

Implementation Readiness Assessments

The IRA is designed to assess the program/project implementation strategy against its specified objectives, provide early identification of any areas that may require corrective action, and increase confidence that a program/project implementation strategy is effective and conclusive.

Key focus areas for IRA reviews

The IRA focuses on six key focus areas to determine how well an entity is planning for future implementation of a policy initiative.

The key focus areas have been designed to be applied to a range of proposals and not every element in the table may be applicable to a particular proposal. The Assurance Review Team will focus on the areas specific to a policy initiative and flag areas which are not relevant as 'not applicable'. An assessment between 'Low, Medium or High' will be made against each of the key focus areas reflecting the level of issues and risks affecting successful implementation.

The summation of all the issues identified in each key focus area will be included in the body of the report and will establish an overall assessment on whether the initiative is likely to be implemented successfully.

1.	Policy design
1.1	Has there been a systematic focus on implementation during the policy development stage?
1.2	Is there a clear and concise description of the program/project objectives and how it will work?
1.3	Is this commonly understood between relevant entities?
1.4	Have all delivery challenges been identified and documented?
1.5	Have the critical implementation assumptions been identified?
1.6	Are the assumptions supported by data?
1.7	Have the assumptions been tested?
1.8	Is there a process for monitoring and retesting the assumptions during the design and implementation phases?
1.9	Has a sensitivity analysis been applied to the assumptions and how has this been reflected in program/project design?
1.10	Are arrangements in place to adequately resource implementation planning for the program/project?
1.11	To what extent does the entity consider this is the best way to achieve the policy objectives?
1.12	Has consideration been given to alternative/other options for program/project delivery?
1.13	Have all the options under consideration been adequately tested?
1.14	Is this a demand driven program/project?
1.15	What are the key factors that may influence demand?
1.16	How will funding be impacted by changes in demand?
1.17	How will this emerging cost be managed?
1.18	Is this policy initiative outside the entity's traditional area of expertise or experience?
1.18.1	If so, how will additional expertise and experience be sourced?
1.19	Has the financial impact of the policy been formally costed?
1.19.1	If so, has the costing been agreed with Finance?

1.20	Is the financial profile appropriate?
1.21	Is there a need for additional capital as well as recurrent costs?
1.22	How have these capital costs been assessed?
1.23	Does the entity have a property management plan in place?
1.24	Are there any gaps in critical information?
2.	Implementation planning
2.1	Is there sufficient time to safely implement the program/project?
2.2	Is there an implementation plan?
2.3	Is there a detailed program/project timeline including critical paths, dependencies and milestones?
2.4	Is implementation of the program/project appropriately phased over the forward years and does it reflect manageable stages?
2.5	How have lessons from similar programs/projects been drawn upon?
2.6	Is there a Program/Project Management Office?
2.7	Does the program/project require a corporate Program/Project Management Office function?
2.8	Are there structured change management strategies in place?
2.9	Do financial reporting arrangements provide effective monitoring and forecasting of expenditure?
2.10	Is there an overall ICT plan?
2.11	Has the ICT plan been subject to external scrutiny?
2.11.1	If so, what feedback has been provided?
2.12	How will the appropriate ICT expertise/resources be marshalled?
2.13	Are the ICT requirements clearly within the entities' existing competencies?
2.13.1	If not, are they novel or leading edge?
2.14	Are there opportunities to leverage existing or developing ICT capability within the Commonwealth?
2.15	Do implementation plans provide for structured testing of IT systems, and formal acceptance sign-off, prior to system implementation?
2.16	Does the entity have the necessary skills available or can they be sourced?
2.17	Does the entity have the capacity to implement the policy without impacting negatively on existing programs/projects?
2.18	Are there appropriately skilled and experienced financial management personnel available?
2.19	Is delivery of the program/project dependent on another government entity?
2.19.1	If so, how mature are the arrangements for accessing this support?
2.20	Does the service delivery entity have demonstrated capability to deliver?
2.21	Has consideration been given to cross-organisational functions and funding arrangements?
2.22	Is delivery of the program/project reliant on third party suppliers?
2.23	Is the external to government supplier market limited and/or very specialised?
2.24	Has a high-level procurement strategy been developed?
2.25	How does the procurement strategy support value for money?
2.26	Does implementation depend on complex or innovative procurement processes?
3.	Governance arrangements
3.1	Is there an established and documented formal governance structure in place?
3.2	Is the governance plan appropriate for this policy initiative?
3.3	Do governance arrangements for the program/project require a change in corporate governance arrangements?
3.4	Does the size and complexity of the initiative require a formal or separate governance structure? (E.g. steering committee or task force to assist in implementation).

3.5	Do members of the formal or separate governance structure have the required skills and are they at the right level?
3.6	How will the entity's senior management officials monitor the development and implementation of the initiative?
3.7	Is there a senior official responsible for the delivery of this policy initiative?
3.8	How has senior management commitment for this policy initiative been demonstrated?
3.9	Is there independent input to the governance process?
3.10	Will the governance arrangements be effective in providing leadership and direction for the delivery of the policy initiative?
3.11	Have roles and responsibilities been defined?
3.12	Are financial delegations well understood and appropriate?
3.13	Are there records of key program/project design decisions including the basis for those decisions?
3.14	Are appropriate monitoring and reviewing processes in place?
3.15	Are monitoring arrangements linked to the critical implementation risks?
3.16	Is the policy initiative likely to involve probity issues?
3.17	If so, has a probity plan been prepared?
3.18	How will key probity concerns be managed?
4.	Risk management
4.1	Is there a risk management policy within the entity, including processes for the monitoring, escalation and ownership of risk factors on a day-to-day basis?
4.2	Is there a specific risk management plan for the program/project?
4.3	Is there a common understanding of the risks and who carries the specific risks between the delivery entity, central entities and partner entities?
4.4	Have all the risks been identified?
4.5	Have treatments for these risks been identified?
4.6	Is the risk management plan based on current and appropriate guidelines?
4.7	Are there contingency plans, including an exit strategy, for extreme risk implementation scenarios?
4.8	Is there an effective escalation strategy in place and how will this work in practice?
4.9	Has the accountable authority been briefed on the risks to implementation?
4.9.1	How has this been documented?
4.10	Has the responsible Minister and government been briefed on the risks to implementation?
4.10.1	How has this been documented?
4.11	Are there planned measures in place to deal with fraud and abuse?
5.	Stakeholder management and communications
5.1	Have all the key stakeholders been identified?
5.2	Is there clear responsibility for stakeholder management, and the outcomes required from stakeholder engagement?
5.3	Have stakeholders already been engaged?
5.4	What is the strategy for stakeholder engagement?
5.5	Have senior management provided input into the analysis of key stakeholders?
5.6	How has stakeholder feedback been reflected in program/project design?
5.7	If stakeholder resistance is likely, how will it be managed?
5.8	How will stakeholder expectations be managed?
5.9	How do the key stakeholders interact with governance arrangements?
5.10	Is there a communication plan encompassing both internal and external stakeholders?
5.10.1	Is there an alignment between the communication strategy and stakeholder analysis?

5.11	Are resources targeted to maximise the necessary messages to all stakeholders?
5.12	Is whole-of-government consultation required?
5.13	Are arrangements in place to ensure shared implementation activities are aligned?
6.	Evaluation and performance
6.1	Is there a clear articulation of the expected outcomes and benefits and how these will be realised?
6.2	Have key performance indicators been developed for the program/project?
6.3	How will the key performance indicators be applied in on-going program/project management?
6.4	Will the policy initiative be formally evaluated?
6.5	Is there an evaluation strategy?
6.6	Do arrangements for data collection support effective evaluation?
6.7	How will results of evaluation be used to inform future implementation?

Glossary and definitions

Assurance of Action Plan (AAP) - An additional assurance offering that will provide an opportunity for entities to take remedial action and receive early assurance that their action plan is addressing issues.

Assurance Reviewer - An Assurance Reviewer is an individual with extensive relevant experience in a particular field, who has been engaged by ARU. Reviewers may be sourced from the public or private sectors, depending upon their suitability and availability for a project

Assurance Reviews Unit (ARU) - ARU is responsible for supporting the Assurance Reviews function within Finance.

Blended reviews - A combined focus of program and project reviews, which simultaneously provides program strategic alignment and milestone delivery assurance.

Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA) - The DCA represents the collective view of the Assurance Review Team on the likelihood of overall success for the program/project. This will be their consensus view and the reasons for it will be set out in the review report. The DCA is designed to be considered alongside the specific recommendations the Assurance Review Team has provided. The DCA uses a five-tier rating system (Red, Amber/Red, Amber, Amber/Green, and Green) and the criteria are outlined under 'The review report' section.

Enhanced Notification (EN) - A process to ensure that key stakeholders are assured of the earliest possible warning of increased risk of delivery failure, and provide an opportunity to initiate prompt action to get things back on track.

Entity - The non-corporate Commonwealth entity which has responsibility for delivery of the program/project that is the subject of the review.

Gate(s) - Gates are particular point(s) in a project's lifecycle when a Gateway review is undertaken for projects.

Gateway - The United Kingdom's Office of Government Commerce Gateway Review Process™, which is a program/project assurance methodology that involves short, intensive reviews at up to six critical stages in a programs/projects lifecycle.

Implementation Readiness Assessment (IRA) - A review that provides assurance to the responsible minister, accountable authority and the cabinet on the implementation readiness of certain proposed government programs/projects

Information Communications Technology (ICT) - is often used as an extended synonym for information technology (IT) but is usually a more general term that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone and wireless signals), computers, middleware as well as necessary, software, storage and audio visual systems, which enable users to create, access, store, transmit and manipulate information.

Infrastructure - Basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communications systems and public institutions such as schools. Infrastructure projects typically involve the introduction or enhancement of facilities, services, and installations to meet a particular community need.

Lessons Learned - A tool for sharing information on how program/project obstacles were overcome, and what could be done better on the next phase/gate or next projects. Finance produces a 'Lessons Learned Report', on a periodical basis, which promulgates in an aggregated form, observations and evidence of good practice gained from conducting Assurance Reviews.

Onsite review - The Assurance Review conducted over five working days, at the entity's premises. The onsite review includes an examination of the requested documentation and interviews with key program/project participants.

Outcomes - Identify the key purpose or objectives of the entity, including strategies central to the achievement of the outcomes over the Budget and forward years.

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) - entity or entities refers, for the purpose of this *Guide*, to Commonwealth entities as set out under section 10 of the PGPA Act).

Planning meeting - A meeting between the Assurance Review Team, the entity's SRO, project manager and other key stakeholders. The planning meeting is held to clarify the intent, scope, logistics for the Assurance Review.

Private financing - A form of government procurement involving the use of private sector capital to wholly or partly fund an asset—that would otherwise have been purchased directly by the government—used to deliver Australian Government outcomes. Private financing is generally an option to be considered only for major asset and infrastructure procurements.

Procurement - The acquisition of property, goods or services through purchase, hire, lease, rental or exchange.

Program - In the context of an Assurance Review, programs can represent a series of interrelated projects or activities with a common objective, or a broad framework or policy concept that may result in a series of largely independent smaller projects (potentially at different stages of implementation). A program is likely to have a life that spans several years. A group of government-mandated activities that contribute to a common strategic or operational objective that can clearly be linked to an outcome statement as articulated in the Appropriation Acts.

Project - Process undertaken by a project team, which is guided by a project management framework, to achieve a new one-off product or service within a finite period of time, in contrast to ongoing work.

Project Management Framework - A set of integrated, cohesive and related tools, procedures and techniques that can be used to guide the execution of a project.

Project Manager - The official within or engaged by the entity, with overall responsibility for the delivery of a project. The project manager typically reports to the SRO.

Project Team - The team of individuals engaged by the entity to assist the project manager in the delivery of a project.

Property - Every type of right, interest or thing that is legally able to be owned. This includes, but is not restricted to, physical goods and real property as well as intangibles such as intellectual property, contract options and goodwill.

Review report - The report issued by the Assurance Review Team at the conclusion of the Assurance Review to the entity's SRO.

Review Report Template - The template issued by ARU to the Assurance Review Team to assist in the preparation of the Assurance Review report.

Review Team - A team of expert reviewers engaged to undertake an Assurance Review. Members of an Assurance Review Team must not have worked on the program/project under review, except in the capacity as a reviewer at previous gates or stages.

Review Team Leader (RTL) - The member of the Assurance Review Team engaged for their expertise and experience, who has broader responsibility for managing the Assurance Review and is the key point of contact with ARU and the entity's SRO.

Review Team Member/s - The member/s of the Assurance Review Team engaged for their expertise and experience to contribute to the assessment of a program/project's progress against its stated objectives.

Reviewer training - Approved training programs that must be completed as part of the process of becoming an Assurance reviewer.

Risk Potential Assessment Tool (RPAT) - The risk assessment tool used by entities to assess the inherent risk of NPPs. It provides a standard set of high level criteria against which SROs and entity project managers can assess the characteristics and degree of complexity of a proposed program/project. It also assists an entity to determine a risk rating for a proposal or package of proposals and communicate the potential risk of that proposal to the responsible minister before seeking the cabinet's agreement. The risk rating will help determine whether additional assurance such as Gateway reviews or Implementation Readiness Assessments may be required.

Senior Responsible Official/SRO - The official within the entity that has overall accountability for the realisation of the program/project outcomes and objectives for the program/project that is under review.

Stage(s) - A particular point(s) in a program's lifecycle when an Assurance Review is undertaken.

Stakeholder - An individual or entity who is either potentially affected by the program/project or who has a potential effect on the program/project.