Australian Government
Department of Finance

The Role of the Sponsoring Entity

Australian Government Assurance Reviews

Gateway Reviews are a series of independent, short, intensive assurance reviews commissioned by Cabinet through the budget process and conducted at critical points during a project or program's lifecycle. Each review results in a review report and delivery confidence rating and is in place to strengthen an agency's existing governance and assurance practices and improve project and program management capability.

Gateway Reviews take place on the sponsoring entity's premises and typically involve a half-day Planning Meeting and a five-day Review. During a Review, the Review Team will examine key documentation provided by the sponsoring entity and interview relevant stakeholders to inform the findings of the Review.

In order to make Gateway Review successful, there are a few requirements of the sponsoring entity that will ensure the Review Team is adequately informed and the Review is finalised within the allocated timeframe. Please note that the information below is provided as a guide in preparation for the Review and should not be taken as an exhaustive list.

What to expect

In preparation for the Gateway Review, the Senior Responsible Official (SRO) should consider what critical information will be provided to the Review Team. The Review Team appreciates that not all documents will be available in a mature or finished state. It is not the intention that documentation be created for the purpose of the Review, rather that the Review Team be provided with access to existing working documents.

Leading into the Review, the entity should allocate resources to prepare documentation, organise appropriate facilities, catering and security passes, and provide onsite support for the Review Team. This will also provide the Review Team Leader with a designated person taking responsibility for the preparatory work prior to the Review. The designated person should also have a good understanding of the key contacts related to the Program/Project.

The Assurance Reviews Unit (ARU) in the Department of Finance (Finance) is available to meet with the SRO and/or entity representatives, to provide an overview of the process and answer any questions prior to the Review.

Pre-Planning Meeting

Assurance Reviews publications are available on the Finance website. The sponsoring entity should familiarise themselves with this material, and if necessary, contact the ARU to discuss any aspect of the Gateway Review process.

Prior to the Planning Meeting, the sponsoring entity will need to:

- Organise access to any relevant New Policy Proposals and Business Cases, including the Cabinet Decision, noting these are likely to be PROTECTED Cabinet Documents.
- Prepare a list of existing key documentation related to the Program/Project to provide to the Review Team;
- Prepare a list of potential interviewees/key stakeholders for the Review Team to interview during the Review (the list should include their position, role in the program, the name of their entity/company); and
- Provide the Review Team with pre-reading material one week prior to the Planning Meeting to give them an understanding of the Program/Project – a GovTeams community will be created to distribute information classified at OFFICIAL or below. Documents classified at a higher classification e.g. PROTECTED will most likely need to be read on premises.
- In the event of unforeseen circumstances, e.g., Illness. Please ensure there is a backup videoconference invite available for all attendees.
- Allocate time in the SRO's diary for the following meetings with the Review Team:
  - Between one hour and three hours for the Planning Meeting.
  - Between 45 minutes and 1 hour on the morning of the first day of the Review to be interviewed by the Review Team.
  - Between 15 minutes and 30 minutes at the end of each day (approx. 5pm), on the first three days of the Review to discuss how the Review is tracking.
  - Between 30 minutes to 1 hour in the afternoon (approx. 5pm) of the second last day of the Review to discuss the draft Review report.
  - Between 30 minutes to one hour throughout the final day of the Review to discuss:
    - Feedback on the draft report - morning (approx. 10am).
    - The final Review report - lunchtime (approx. 1pm).
    - Further refinement to the final report - afternoon (approx. 4pm, contingency only and may not be required).

  (*Please note this is an indicative schedule and will most likely be adjusted by the Review Team Leader in the Planning Meeting or as required throughout the Review)*

Planning Meeting

The review team will arrive 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the Planning Meeting for a pre-meeting with the Assurance Reviews Unit to finalise administrative matters. The sponsoring entity will be required to provide a meeting room to facilitate this meeting.

The planning meeting provides the Review Team, the Senior Responsible Official and the Program/Project Team with an opportunity to meet and discuss the review agenda and resource requirements, and agree on protocols for the review.

During the planning meeting, the Review Team will request additional documentation and interviews with key stakeholders. The Program/Project Manager is responsible for organising the interviews prior to the review.

During the planning meeting, the sponsoring entity will:

- Provide a 1-2 hour presentation on the program/project and answer any questions from the Review Team. Some examples of what may be covered in the presentation, include:
  - Overview of Department and program/project
  - Program/project drivers
  - Any graphs, statistics, trend forecasts
  - Service results and outcomes to be delivered (and how they will be measured)
  - Context of the program/project (strategic, policy, contractual, stakeholders)
  - Governance structure
  - Summary of various options considered for the program/project
  - Assumptions, benefits and disadvantages of program/project
  - Program/project plan including an outline of the resource and funding.
  - Financial estimates
  - Program/project's status, progress to date and next steps
  - Key stakeholders
  - Key risks
  - Considerations for the review
  - List of names for potential interviewees (including position and name of entity/firm)
  - List of key program/project documentation.
- Run through the list of key documentation related to the program/project and update the list as necessary;
- Run through the list of potential interviewees and update the list as necessary; and
- Provide the Review Team with pre-reading to give them an understanding of the program/project (if this hasn't already been done prior to the planning meeting)

Prior to the Review Week

Prior to the Review week, the sponsoring entity will:

- Organise appropriate facilities for the Review Team for the duration of the Review. This includes:
  - A large meeting room – the Review Team will not leave the room all week as most interviews will be held in the room. The room should have the following capability:
    - Access to Video/teleconference equipment (MicrosoftTeams).

    - » Ability to connect personal laptops to AV equipment to allow the team to share their screen to collaborate on the draft report.
    - » Ensure there is internet (Wi-Fi) access available for the Review Team to connect their personal laptops to for drafting of the report.
  - – Catering (morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, including tea/coffee) for each day of the Review.
  - – Security passes, unescorted access to the entity premises for access to parking and restroom facilities.
  - – Onsite car parking (if available).
- Provide any additional requested documentation to the Review Team either prior to, or during, the Review.
- Schedule and confirm interviews with key stakeholders during the Review and inform interviewees of the time, location and purpose of the interview.
  - – Interviews will generally take between 30 to 45 minutes (with a 15-minute break in-between) unless otherwise requested by the Review Team at the Planning Meeting.
  - – Interviews are best conducted in person (one interviewee at a time), however in some cases, video/teleconferences may be necessary.
  - – Interviewees should also be provided with the interviewee brief and the biographies of the Review Team.

During the Review week

During the Review week, the sponsoring entity will:

- Provide a 'safety induction' for the Review Team so that they know how/where to report incidents and understand emergency evacuation procedures;
- Provide onsite support including a suitable and large meeting room, and access to the required equipment as mentioned above;
- Provide morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea including tea/coffee;
- Maintain the schedule of key stakeholders for interviews and advise the Review Team of any changes, noting that the Review Team has discretion over the list and can request additional interviewees as necessary;
- Provide relevant and/or classified documentation that has been identified as necessary by the Review Team. Where possible, documents should be covered by a brief synopsis as to their purpose and content;
- In the event of unforeseen circumstances, e.g., Illness. Please ensure there is a back up videoconference platform available for interviewees.
- Provide access to a cabinet with the appropriate security classification to secure hardcopy documentation when unattended; and
- Ensure that key program/project members are available for discussions during the Review.

Open and Clear Dialogue

To ensure the Review is successful, the sponsoring entity will:

- Engage fully in the process, demonstrate a willingness to share information openly and honestly;
- Answer any questions asked by the Review Team accurately and completely;
- Communicate the sponsoring entity's role, responsibilities and reasons for actions and decisions as requested; and
- Provide any requested documentation in a timely manner.

Further Information

For further information, please contact:

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