New Zealand Government

Assuring Digital Government Outcomes

All-of-Government Portfolio, Programme and Project Assurance Framework

Version 3.2 May 2019

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Document History

Version	Issue date	Description of changes
Version 1.0	February 2014	Initial version (All-of-Government ICT Projects and Projects Assurance Framework)
Version 2.0	August 2014	Updated assurance plan template (Appendix B)
Version 3.0	August 2018	Refresh of entire framework
Version 3.1	October 2018	Minor updates and addition of links in guidance and templates section to reflect website updates
Version 3.2	May 2019	Updates to website links

"a positive declaration intended to give confidence"

Confidence

Informative

Certainty

"the goal of improving information or the context of information so that decision makers can make more informed, and presumably better, decisions"

"the comfort that can be derived from credible information"

Independence

"an independent and objective oversight of the likely future performance of major investments for those responsible for sanctioning, financing or insuring such undertaking"

AN OBJECTIVE EXAMINATION AND INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF AN INVESTMENT INCLUDING RISKS, CONTROLS, PROCESSES, AND GOVERNANCE.

Assurance is the process of providing confidence to stakeholders that *an investment* will achieve their objectives, and realise their benefits.

Credibility

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Table of Contents

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1 Introduction

1.1 New Zealand's digital environment

Digital government is about putting people first. Focusing on what people need from government in these fast-changing times and how their needs can be met using emerging technologies, data, and changes to government culture, practices, and processes. We want all New Zealanders to thrive in a digital world.

"Digital government is about more than improving IT systems and processes. In the broadest sense, it means doing things differently in an increasingly connected world — using new mind-sets, skillsets, technologies and data to benefit people, government and the economy."

The 2017 Digital Planet report[1], produced by The Fletcher School at Tufts University, places New Zealand among the world's digital elites – along with Singapore and the United Arab Emirates – with high levels of digital development and a fast rate of digital evolution.

The report ranked 60 countries on their digital competitiveness and market potential for further digital economic growth. It tracks the progress that countries have made since the first report in 2014 in developing their digital economies and integrating connectivity.

New Zealand is part of the Digital 9; a network of the world's most advanced digital nations with a track record for leading digital government transformation. In subscribing to the D9 charter[2], New Zealand is committed to the collective goal of harnessing the potential global power of digital technology and to help each participant to become an even better digital government faster and more efficiently through sharing and learning from each other. This means we need to keep the current pace of digital evolution to maintain NZ's standing as a digital leader.

Accelerating New Zealand's government digital transformation will help people access personalised services when, how and where they need them; engage in decisions about the issues they care about; and trust in an open, transparent and inclusive government.

1.2 Role of System Assurance

In June 2013 Cabinet agreed that, as part of the ICT functional leadership role, the Government Chief Digital Officer[3] (GCDO) is responsible for coordinated oversight and delivery of system-wide ICT assurance [CAB Min (13) 20/13][4].

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[1] https://www.digital.govt.nz/news/new-zealands-digital-economy-a-standout-among-standouts/
[2] https://www.digital.govt.nz/digital-government/international-partnerships/the-digital-9/
[3] https://www.digital.govt.nz/digital-government/leadership-and-governance/government-chief-digital-officer-gcdo/
[4] [CAB Min (13) 20/13] Improving Government Information and Communication Technology Assurance

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This was in response to Ministers' concerns about a succession of problems with information and technology management, including privacy and security breaches, and ICT-enabled project delays, cost escalations and failures. This resulted in reduced public trust and confidence in government ICT. As a result the System Assurance team was established within the GCDO.

Our role is to:

*"**Provide Ministers, the GCDO and other key stakeholders with confidence that the system of assurance supporting digital government outcomes is effective.**"*

We do this by:

- Publishing government's formal assurance frameworks and guidance

- Providing independent assurance oversight over high risk digital investments

- Providing independent assurance oversight over how well agencies are managing their ICT risks

- Managing a panel of third party assurance providers giving agencies access to highly qualified providers of assurance services

- Sharing lessons learned and good practice examples

- Managing the government online Self-Assessment Tool which enables agencies to benchmark their enterprise risk maturity and identify improvements

- Providing strategic advice on system-wide risks, capabilities and settings.

1.3 A valued system of assurance

The system of assurance comprises the frameworks, processes, monitoring, capability and culture that, when operating effectively, give stakeholders confidence (assurance) that digital government investments will deliver the right things in the right way to realise the expected benefits.

The system of assurance includes:

- Government agencies and their delivery partners

- Central agencies and functional leaders, including the GCDO

- Third party assurance providers.

Our vision is:

*"**A valued system of assurance that delivers high levels of trust and confidence in digital public services for all New Zealanders.**"*

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As part of a valued system of assurance, we contribute to the following outcomes:

- Improved governance and decision-making as a result of high quality assurance information provided at the right time

- Improved delivery confidence that digital investments are well managed and will deliver the expected outcomes and benefits

- Improved business resilience and management of risk as a result of greater visibility of system-wide digital risks.

1.4 GCDO's role in the investment system

The Treasury's Investment Management and Asset Performance (IMAP) team oversees New Zealand's government investment system with a specific focus on improving the effectiveness of investment management and asset performance in the State sector supported by central agencies and functional leaders, including the GCDO. Working together we operate as a multi-functional group connecting expertise to provide robust advice to Ministers and agencies to inform investment decisions.

The GCDO provides a system view of government's investment in digital, data and technology. As part of our partnership with the central agencies and other functional leaders, we bring a digital perspective and expertise to key investment activities, including:

- Long-term investment planning

- Four-year planning

- Business case development

- Assurance planning and oversight.

The System Assurance team operates as part of the wider team within the GCDO that has a broad and integrated role in the investment system. The diagram below illustrates a typical GCDO engagement during the investment lifecycle.
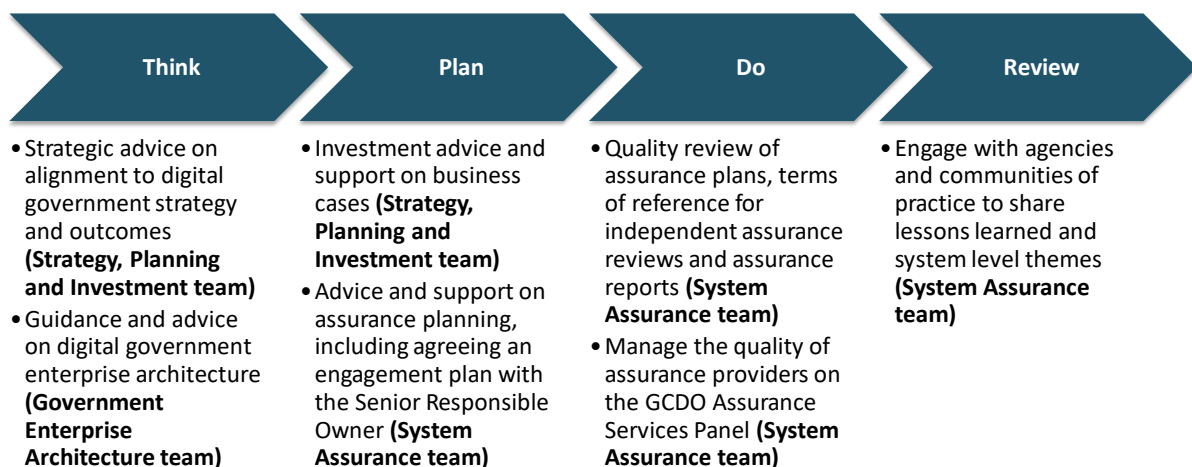
Think	Plan	Do	Review
• Strategic advice on alignment to digital government strategy and outcomes **(Strategy, Planning and Investment team)** • Guidance and advice on digital government enterprise architecture **(Government Enterprise Architecture team)**	• Investment advice and support on business cases **(Strategy, Planning and Investment team)** • Advice and support on assurance planning, including agreeing an engagement plan with the Senior Responsible Owner **(System Assurance team)**	• Quality review of assurance plans, terms of reference for independent assurance reviews and assurance reports **(System Assurance team)** • Manage the quality of assurance providers on the GCDO Assurance Services Panel **(System Assurance team)**	• Engage with agencies and communities of practice to share lessons learned and system level themes **(System Assurance team)**

Figure 1: GCDO engagement across the investment lifecycle

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Further detail on how to engage with the central agencies and other functional leaders can be found using the links below:

- The Treasury, Investment Management and Performance[5] (IMAP) team

- State Service Commission[6] (SSC)

- Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE), New Zealand Government Procurement and Property team[7] (NZGPP).

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[5] https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/state-sector-leadership/investment-management/review-investment-reviews/about-imap-team

[6] https://www.ssc.govt.nz/about-us

[7] https://www.procurement.govt.nz/

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2 Value of Assurance

2.1 Assurance is integral to good governance

> ### Case study – Canadian Federal Government
>
> *The objective of Transformation of Pay Administration initiative was to transform the way in which the Canadian Government processed its pay for its 290,000 employees.*
>
> *An independent report completed 18 months after go-live by the Auditor-General of Canada found that:*
>
> - *There were over 494,500 outstanding pay requests*
> - *About half a billion dollars was owed to staff who had been paid incorrectly*
> - *49,000 employees had been waiting for more than a year to have a pay request processed.*
>
> *The audit found that "there was <u>no real or independent oversight</u> of the massive project; that executives did not understand the importance of the warnings they received; and that the decision to implement the system was unreasonable."*

Whilst assurance itself does not deliver outcomes, effective risk management and assurance are critical components of good governance. Good governance helps to build trust and confidence in public services.

The governance body plays a key role in supporting the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) to exercise their decision-making authority. An effective governance body provides oversight and challenge with a focus on key risks and issues. This includes ensuring that there is a robust assurance regime in place.

High quality assurance information enables better conversations about the risks to successful delivery and helps governance bodies to focus on actions that will 'make the difference'.

2.2 Role of the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)

The SRO has overall accountability for the success of the investment and is the key decision maker. Their role is to ensure that the delivery team is focused on achieving its objectives and provide confidence to the Chief Executive that the investment will deliver the expected outcomes and benefits.

A key responsibility of the SRO is to ensure the assurance approach is fit-for-purpose. This means the SRO needs to engage with and approve assurance artefacts, including the assurance plan, terms of reference for independent assurance reviews and assurance reports.

Being engaged in assurance planning enables the SRO to insist on a tailored and insightful review. This means that they can be confident in making an informed decision based on accurate information about risks and issues and their impact on outcomes.

> ### Case study – NZ Police HRMIS Programme
>
> *In July 2014 New Zealand Police commenced the implementation of a new payroll and HR management information system.*
>
> ### John Bole – Senior Responsible Owner:
>
> *"It would be difficult to overstate the value which independent assurance brought to this project. It was a vital tool for the project governance team and an important consideration for the Ministerial oversight.*
>
> *Assurance not only had a key role in the delivery of the project but in addition greatly upskilled the Police team.*
>
> *I would never consider undertaking such a project without comprehensive independent assurance."*

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2.3 Improving delivery confidence

It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day activity of delivery. We are managing issues every day and have them under control. So why do we need assurance? The reality is that we often cannot see the 'wood for the trees' and underestimate the likelihood of risks impacting on us (optimism bias).

Assurance can help us step back from the day-to-day activity and identify potential 'blind spots' so that we have early warning and can rectify them before they start to impact on outcomes.

Assurance can help to reduce optimism bias by providing an objective and evidence-based view of the likelihood of key risks occurring and their potential impact on outcomes. By focusing on the areas of greatest risk and ensuring that actions are in place to manage them, delivery teams will be in a stronger position to provide delivery confidence to key stakeholders.

2.4 Value of an integrated assurance approach

Assurance is most effective when you adopt an integrated approach to planning and coordinating assurance activities that takes into account a range of different stakeholder needs.

This is becoming increasingly important where there are a number of agencies and other partners involved. Multiple stakeholders are likely to have different assurance needs and an integrated approach to assurance planning can help to establish a single set of requirements that will meet all stakeholders' needs.

An integrated approach, based on a shared view of risk across all stakeholders, helps to avoid assurance gaps and ensures focus is on the key risks. It also helps to reduce the compliance burden on delivery teams and maximise value for money.

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3 Overview of framework

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the All-of-Government (AoG) Portfolio, Programme and Project Assurance Framework is to support agencies to implement a fit-for-purpose assurance approach for digital investments.

"Effective assurance provides confidence to the Chief Executive and other key stakeholders, including Ministers, that the expected investment outcomes and benefits will be achieved."

The framework is supported by detailed guidance and templates to help agencies apply the principles of good assurance. Links to the guidance can be found at the end of this document.

3.2 Audience

The target audience for the framework is:

- Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) and governance bodies
- Project and programme managers
- Internal Audit functions
- Enterprise Portfolio or Programme Management Offices.

3.3 Our definition of assurance

"An independent and objective assessment that provides credible information to support decision-making."

The key words in our definition are 'independent and objective'. There are varying degrees of independence and objectivity but assurance is most effective when it is integrated across all 'three lines of defence':

- The first line of defence is the day-to-day project management processes and controls you have in place, including quality management
- The second line of defence is the governance and oversight arrangements that exist, including clear and signed off terms of reference for all governance bodies
- The third line of defence is the independent assurance you obtain from internal (e.g. Internal Audit) and third party assurance providers.

The focus of our framework is on assurance that is performed by competent and impartial people outside of the delivery team (i.e. at the second and third lines of defence). Examples of assurance activities within the scope of our framework include:

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- Regular governance and oversight activities e.g. governance meetings, executive project status reports, Audit and Risk Committee oversight

- Health checks performed by an internal EPMO

- Risk reviews performed by an internal Risk function

- Internal audit reviews

- Third party assurance reviews, including Independent Quality Assurance (IQA) and Technical Quality Assurance (TQA) reviews

- Quantitative risk analysis

- Gateway reviews.

3.4 Applicable agencies

The framework is mandated for the following agencies:

- Public service departments

- Non-public service departments

- District health boards

- Certain crown entities (ACC, EQC, NZQA, NZTA, HNZC, NZTE, TEC).

Note that the framework is not limited to the above agencies. It can be used by any agency or organisation as a guide to good assurance practice to support the successful delivery of investments to grow New Zealand's economy and enhance the wellbeing of its people.

3.5 Applicable investments

The framework applies to all digital investments. As a guiding principle:

"An investment is defined as a digital investment if it utilises technology as the primary lever for achieving the expected outcomes."

This is typically an investment that has a significant technology component. Note that for the purposes of the framework, digital investments are assumed to include the following types of investments:

- Investments that are looking to transform the way in which citizens interact with government – these investments will likely use technology to provide services in new and innovative ways

- Investments that are looking to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business operations – these investments will likely use technology in more traditional ways to automate tasks.

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3.6 GCDO assurance oversight role

The GCDO has a core responsibility to provide Ministers and other key stakeholders with confidence that the system of assurance supporting digital government outcomes is effective. To enable the GCDO to fulfil this responsibility, the System Assurance team has an independent assurance oversight role over high risk digital investments to ensure:

- They have fit-for-purpose assurance plans in place

- They obtain high quality assurance information to support decision-making.

This requires us to work closely with SROs and the monitoring agencies of high risk digital investments to provide assurance planning advice and support.

Whether an investment falls into the high risk category will be assessed as part of the Treasury's Risk Profile Assessment[8] (RPA) process. While the RPA process assesses the inherent risk to the system, we encourage agencies to follow the principles of good assurance and supporting guidance and templates for all of their digital investments, regardless of whether they are high risk or not.

3.7 Core expectations of agencies

The following core expectations of agencies apply to high risk digital investments. However, the System Assurance team is happy to provide assurance planning advice and support to agencies for non-high risk digital investments. In particular, we encourage agencies with an Investor Confidence Rating of C or below to contact us.

All high risk digital investments *must*:

- Attend an initial SRO briefing with the System Assurance team and agree an ongoing engagement plan

- Have an up to date and fit-for-purpose assurance plan in place that has been endorsed by the governance body and Internal Audit and approved by the SRO

- Submit the following artefacts to the System Assurance team for a quality review to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and meet the GCDO's quality standards:

    o Assurance plans

    o Terms of reference for independent assurance reviews

    o Assurance reports

- Use the GCDO Assurance Services Panel[9] for third party assurance reviews.

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[8] https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/state-sector-leadership/investment-management/think-investment-possibilities/risk-profile-assessment

[9] All applicable agencies are required to use the GCDO Assurance Services Panel regardless of whether the digital investment is high risk or not.

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4 Principles of good assurance

In moving to a principles-based framework, assurance becomes less about compliance and more about demonstrating good assurance thinking based on a clear understanding of risk and the outcomes being sought.

The System Assurance team has developed a set of principles for good assurance practice based on our lessons learned. When applied, these principles support agencies with good practice assurance planning.

The principles should be tailored to enable a fit-for-purpose assurance approach based on the risk and complexity of the initiative.

"A principles-based approach provides confidence in the delivery of outcomes without resulting in excessive levels of assurance."

Figure 2: Principles of good assurance

4.1 Assurance by design

"Assurance is not a one-time activity. It's the way we do things here…"

- Assurance is planned from the outset and is monitored and iterated throughout the investment lifecycle.

- All business cases are supported by an assurance plan.

- Assurance activities are budgeted for in your business case!

- Assurance is integrated and operating effectively across all 'three lines of defence':

    o The first line of defence is the day-to-day project management processes and controls you have in place, including quality management

    o The second line of defence is the governance and oversight arrangements that exist, including clear and signed off terms of reference for all governance bodies

    o The third line of defence is the independent assurance you obtain from internal (e.g. Internal Audit) and third party assurance providers.

- Lessons learned from similar initiatives are incorporated into the assurance approach.

- Roles and responsibilities across assurance providers are clearly defined and coordinated to reduce the compliance burden on delivery teams.

- Risk assessments are undertaken when designing new systems, processes and policy, including for core delivery partner activities.

4.2 Flexible

"Assurance is adaptable to meet changes in scope, approach, solution, or risk profile."

- Significant changes to the scope, approach, solution, or risk profile of the initiative trigger a review of the assurance plan by the governance body.

- Assurance is tailored to the delivery approach e.g. in an Agile or DevOps environment there may be greater reliance on assurance activities embedded into day-to-day project management and governance activities.

- The results of assurance activities are used to inform the forward assurance plan.

- Assurance covers inter-agency, sector and All of Government impacts, including stakeholder engagement activities, where a change initiative goes beyond the boundaries of the lead agency.

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- The assurance plan is regularly reviewed by the governance body to ensure that it continues to be fit-for-purpose and that the agreed assurance activities are undertaken.

4.3 Informs key decisions

"Assurance provides timely, credible information to inform key decisions."

- There is a clear relationship between the planned assurance activities and key decision points:
    - Critical milestones/off-ramps
    - Contract stage gates
    - Key dependencies.
- Assurance reports are unambiguous and support informed decision-making based on an assessment of delivery confidence.
- Ongoing viability and alignment to strategic outcomes is assessed before moving to the next phase.
- Technical quality assurance is vital in assessing progress and quality, and should be planned for as early as possible in the lifecycle.
- Assurance covers business readiness to accept the change as well as technical implementation readiness.

4.4 Risk and outcomes-based

"Assurance assesses the risks to successful delivery and their impact on outcomes."

- Assurance is risk-based; there is a clear link between the risks to achieving the investment outcomes and the planned assurance activities.

- Assurance is forward-looking and assesses delivery confidence rather than focusing solely on adherence to methodology.

- Due diligence is undertaken on vendors to identify risks to delivery such as capacity, capability, over-reliance on key people, location of vendor (offshore, onshore), etc.

- Delivery is phased with clear and agreed off-ramps and acceptance criteria that measure real progress against outcomes.

- The governance body regularly reviews risks to ensure they are being managed in accordance with the agency's risk tolerance level.

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4.5 Independent and impartial

"Assurance is performed by competent people outside of the delivery team who are not unduly influenced by key stakeholders."

- Key members of the review team are identified in the terms of reference that have the experience to effectively assure an investment of your scale and complexity.

- Third party assurance providers are subject to formal procurement processes[10].

- Any conflicts of interest are clearly identified and effectively managed, including:

    o Personal relationships between agency and provider personnel.

    o Performing an assurance review where the provider has or is currently providing project management or technical services.

    o Fixing issues identified during the course of an assurance review.

4.6 Accountability

"Assurance roles and responsibilities at the governance level are understood."

- Assurance roles and responsibilities are clearly documented in the governance body terms of reference.

- The composition of the governance body is regularly reviewed to ensure that it has the right skills and experience.

- Assurance artefacts (e.g. assurance plans, terms of reference for independent assurance reviews and assurance reports) are endorsed by the governance body and approved by the SRO.

- The SRO includes a management response to accept the findings in the assurance report or to record if there is a disagreement over a finding or recommendation.

- The governing body receives copies of all assurance reports in full.

- The status of issues raised in assurance reports is tracked and regularly reported to the governance body.

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[10] All applicable agencies are required to use the GCDO Assurance Services Panel regardless of whether the digital investment is high risk or not.

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5 Engaging with us

The nature and frequency of engagement with the System Assurance team is based on a number of factors. We consider the complexity and risk of the investment, the agency's ICR rating and previous experience, the level of oversight by Internal Audit and our previous experience of similar initiatives. The level of engagement will be tailored to suit the needs of the investment. For example, an increase in the risk to delivery may require an increase in System Assurance oversight.

5.1 How to contact us

The System Assurance team can be contacted for queries, advice and guidance at systemassurance@dia.govt.nz

5.2 Triggers for engagement

Risk Profile Assessment (RPA)

The most common trigger for GCDO engagement is the RPA[11]. Agencies must complete an RPA for all significant investments identified in multi-year plans and provide any RPA that has a medium or high risk rating to the Treasury Investment Management and Asset Performance (IMAP) team. The IMAP team engages with the GCDO, central agencies and other functional leaders to agree the final risk rating. If you are unsure whether your initiative meets this criterion, you should complete an RPA.

High risk investments begin their engagement with the GCDO during business case development. Early engagement is led by the Strategy, Planning and Investment team in the GCDO who provide advice on alignment to digital government strategy and enterprise architecture standards. Once the investment decision has been approved, the System Assurance team takes over the GCDO lead role and provides independent assurance oversight to ensure the assessment of delivery confidence is robust throughout the remainder of the investment lifecycle.

Link to Investor Confidence Rating (ICR)

ICR[12] incentivises investment-intensive agencies to invest in mature governance, investment management and assurance practices. We recognise that agencies with higher levels of organisational maturity and performance in managing their investments generally require less assurance oversight as shown in the table below.

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[11] https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/state-sector-leadership/investment-management/think-investment-possibilities/risk-profile-assessment

[12] https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/state-sector-leadership/investment-management/review-investment-reviews/investor-confidence-rating-icr

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ICR rating	Total score	Implications of ICR rating	Implications for GCDO engagement
A	81	More authority, fewer corporate requirements	Assurance plans, terms of reference and assurance reports are submitted after internal approval (agreed with SRO as part of the engagement plan). Engagement takes the form of feedback for continuous improvement
B	66	More authority, fewer corporate requirements	As for A above
C	51	Current arrangements stand	For C and below, assurance plans, terms of reference and assurance reports must be submitted before internal approval. Engagement takes the form of proactive feedback to meet the GCDO's quality standards
D	26	More corporate requirements, less authority	As for C above
E	0	More corporate requirements, less authority	As for C above

5.3 Initial SRO briefing

As the key decision maker, it is vital that the SRO has a clear understanding of the value of assurance and the GCDO's core expectations for good assurance. To support the SRO to fulfil their core assurance accountabilities, the System Assurance team will run an initial briefing to ensure that the SRO has a clear understanding of their key responsibilities and how to apply the principles of good assurance.

As an output of the briefing, we will agree an engagement plan with the SRO. The nature and frequency of engagement will depend on a number of factors, including the complexity and risk of the investment, the agency's ICR rating and previous experience, the level of oversight by Internal Audit and our previous experience of similar initiatives.

5.4 GCDO Assurance Services Panel

The GCDO Assurance Services Panel (GCDO Panel) makes it easy for agencies to access highly qualified providers of independent assurance services (including IQA and TQA) for digital investments.

The objective of the GCDO Panel is to improve the quality, consistency and independence of assurance services provided to agencies in order to achieve the following outcomes:

- Helping agencies to make better informed investment decisions

- Providing confidence to the Chief Executive and other key stakeholders that the expected investment outcomes and benefits will be achieved

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- Delivering value for money and efficiencies for agencies by not having to maintain their own panels or perform lengthy tender processes.

All applicable agencies are required to use the GCDO Panel regardless of whether the investment is high risk or not. More information on the GCDO Panel can be found in the guidance and templates at the end of this document.

The GCDO Panel is a sub-panel under the MBIE's AoG Consultancy Services Panel (AoG Consultancy Panel). Agencies that are eligible to participate in AoG contracts can automatically access the GCDO Panel provided they have signed up for the AoG Consultancy Panel.

Providers appointed to the GCDO Panel must meet the GCDO's quality requirements covering:

- Lead Reviewers responsible for delivering assurance engagements

- Engagement terms of reference

- Maintaining the independence of providers

- Assurance reports.

You can choose to source a provider directly from the GCDO Panel or undertake a secondary selection process. In making this decision consider the budget, timeframes, specific nature of your requirements and any existing or past relationships as well as any internal financial delegations and processes your agency may have.

A secure web-based online panel directory is available to assist with searching and identifying a suitable provider for your assurance engagement. You are able to search by IQA/TQA assurance services category, GCDO quality rating, AoG tier status, and daily rate range.

The online panel directory is only available to agencies participating in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Consultancy Panel. You should contact your approved agency procurement representative to obtain the login details for your agency.

5.5 Lifting risk management and assurance capability

The System Assurance team works collaboratively with agencies to lift risk management and assurance capability. We can provide advice and support on governance, risk management, and assurance practices. For example:

- As a system-wide team, we endeavour to share insights and lessons learned for the benefit of all agencies to improve the performance of digital investments. By applying lessons learned, agencies can work smarter and avoid similar pitfalls for their investments.

- We manage the government online Self-Assessment Tool which enables agencies to benchmark their risk maturity and identify improvements using the AoG Enterprise Risk Maturity Assessment Framework. The tool also enables agencies to complete their annual self-assessments and other reporting requirements online, such as privacy, ICT maturity, and procurement capability.

All-of-Government Enterprise Risk Maturity Assessment Framework
https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/enterprise-risk-maturity/

- We attend forums, including communities of practice, to educate and raise awareness of good practice assurance. If you are interested in System Assurance presenting to your community or functional group please contact us at: systemassurance@dia.govt.nz

Guidance and templates

1 **Understanding your assurance accountabilities**

To support SROs to fulfil their core assurance accountabilities, we have developed a pocket guide that explains their key responsibilities and how to apply the principles of good assurance:

- **SRO pocket guide** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/89-senior-responsible-owner-sro-pocket-guide

2 **Developing your assurance plan**

We have a number of resources to support you to develop a fit-for-purpose assurance plan based on a clear understanding of risk and the outcomes being sought:

- **Principles of good assurance pocket guide** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/88-principles-of-good-assurance-pocket-guide

- **Assurance guidance for Agile delivery** https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/all-of-government-portfolio-programme-and-project-assurance-framework/assurance-guidance-for-agile-delivery/

- **Assurance plan quality review checklist** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/78-assurance-plan-quality-review-checklist-version-3

- **Assurance plan template** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/58-assurance-plan-template-version-3

- **Lessons learned** https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/lessons-learned-and-case-studies/

3 **Maximising the value of independent assurance**

The following resources will help you to create an engagement terms of reference that reflects the complexity and risk of your investment, and select the right provider with the right experience to deliver a high quality review:

- **GCDO Panel pocket guide** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/90-gcdo-assurance-services-panel-pocket-guide

- **GCDO assurance services guide** https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/gcdo-assurance-services-panel/assurance-report-executive-summaries/gcdo-assurance-services-guide/

- **Terms of reference quality review checklist** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/80-terms-of-reference-quality-review-checklist

- **Terms of reference plan template** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/62-terms-of-reference-template-version-3

- **Assurance engagement terms of reference lessons learned** https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/gcdo-assurance-services-panel/assurance-engagement-terms-of-reference/

4 **Ensuring high quality assurance information**

The quality of assurance reports is critical to make well informed decisions. Use these resources to review the quality of assurance reports:

- **Assurance report quality review checklist** https://www.digital.govt.nz/dmsdocument/79-assurance-report-quality-review-checklist-version-3

- **GCDO Report Rating System** https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/gcdo-assurance-services-panel/assurance-report-executive-summaries/gcdo-report-rating-system/

- **Assurance report executive summary lessons learned** https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/governance/system-assurance/gcdo-assurance-services-panel/assurance-report-executive-summaries/

5 **Overseeing assurance activities and recommendations**

Consider:

- How will progress against the assurance plan be monitored at the governance level?

- How will the status of issues raised in assurance reports be tracked and reported at the governance level?

6 **Capturing lessons learned**

At the end of a stage (tranche/phase/iteration/increment) a post implementation review should be held to identify lessons learned. We would like you to share your lessons learned with us to help inform a system-wide view of trends and share examples of working 'smarter' for other government agencies to use.

If you are keen to share your lessons contact us at systemassurance@dia.govt.nz

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Glossary of abbreviations and terms

Term or Abbreviation	Definition
AoG	All-of-Government
EPMO	Enterprise Portfolio or Programme Management Office
GCDO	Government Chief Digital Officer
ICR	Investor Confidence Rating. The ICR is a three-yearly assessment of the performance of investment-intensive agencies in managing investments and assets that are critical to the delivery of NZ government services.
IQA	Independent Quality Assurance
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
SRO	Senior Responsible Owner. This role can also be described as a sponsor, executive or executive sponsor. It describes the role with overall accountability for the success of the investment and as the chair of the governance body, the key decision maker. Within this framework, the SRO or equivalent has accountability for ensuring that the assurance approach is fit-for-purpose.
TQA	Technical Quality Assurance

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