

Project Assurance Framework



Document control and approval

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Assurance reviews	Refers to gateway, health check and deep dive reviews.
Deep dive reviews	Deep dive reviews are similar to health check reviews but focus on a specific and often specialised or technical issue. These reviews are usually undertaken in response to an issue raised by stakeholders.
Delivery agency	The Government agency tasked with developing and/or delivering a project applicable under this framework.
Gate	Key decision point(s) in a project/program's lifecycle when a gateway review may be undertaken.
Gateway review	<p>A review of a project/program by an independent team of experienced practitioners at a specific key decision point (gate) in the project/program lifecycle.</p> <p>A gateway review is a short, focused, independent expert appraisal of the project/program that highlights risks and issues, which if not addressed may threaten successful delivery. It provides a view of the current progress of a project/program and assurance that it can proceed successfully to the next stage if any critical recommendations are addressed.</p>
Health check	A health check is an independent review carried out by a team of experienced practitioners seeking to identify issues in a project/program which may arise between gateway reviews.
Program	<p>Programs provide an umbrella under which related projects and activities can be coordinated. A program is likely to be longer term and have a life that spans several years.</p> <p>Projects that form part of a program may be grouped together for a variety of reasons including co-location, similar nature (for example, agency capital program or road upgrades) or shared outcome.</p> <p>The component parts of a program are usually individual projects or smaller groups of projects (sub-programs). In some cases, these individual projects or sub-programs may have a different project tier to the overall program.</p>
Project	<p>A project is a group of interrelated activities that are planned and then executed in a particular sequence to achieve planned and agreed outcomes, within a predetermined timeframe. A project has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defined scope and finite resources • has a definable start and end dates • introduces a change • creates a unique result, product or service • has its own governance structure <p>A particular project may or may not be part of a program.</p>
Project assurance	The governance, reporting and expert project review process that assesses the health and viability of a project. Project assurance can provide investors and other stakeholders with the confidence that the project can deliver to time, budget and quality.
Project Assurance Services Panel	Established and managed by Infrastructure Tasmania, the panel includes experts with skills, experience and capability across infrastructure sectors and project delivery. The project assurance service panel ensures quick mobilisation and coordination of review teams and the consistent application of the project assurance framework.
Project tier	The project tier classification is comprised of three project tiers, where Tier 1 encompasses projects deemed as being the highest risk profile (Tier 1 – high value, high risk projects), and Tier 3 with the lowest risk profile. Tier classification considers a project's overall risk profile and the project's estimated total budget.
Regular infrastructure project reporting	Routine reporting of projects prepared by the Department of Treasury and Finance and provided to Government.
Assurance Review Team	A team of expert independent reviewers, sourced from the project assurance services panel engaged by Infrastructure Tasmania to undertake a gateway review, health check or deep dive review.
Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)	The delivery agency executive with strategic responsibility and the single point of overall accountability for a project/program. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) is the owner of the business case, accountable for all aspects of governance and delivery of benefits. Some project management methodologies refer to this role as the Project Executive, Sponsor or Client.

Background and purpose

Over the past two decades jurisdictions across Australia have adopted the gateway process to project assurance to inform investment decisions and obtain increased oversight throughout project development and delivery.

The Tasmanian Government expanded Infrastructure Tasmania's (ITas') role in November 2020 to include a project assurance function to monitor infrastructure delivery and delivery capacity.

Key objectives of this function include:

- the establishment of a framework for undertaking project assurance activities across the Government's infrastructure investment projects
- regular monitoring and reporting of infrastructure project/program delivery
- coordination and commissioning of assurance activities in line with a newly defined framework.

This document outlines the ITas Project Assurance Framework (the Framework), ITas' role in coordinating project assurance activities and its responsibilities for the management and delivery of the Framework.

Purpose of the Framework

Project assurance is a critical part of identifying and managing project and program risk to ensure objectives and outcomes are being delivered.

For the purposes of the Framework, project assurance is defined as the governance, reporting and independent expert project review process that assesses the health and viability of a project. Project assurance helps manage risk and improves delivery confidence.

This Framework provides a structured approach for the independent assessment of the health and viability of projects/programs and focuses on the following assurance activities:

- gateway assurance reviews
- health checks and deep dives
- infrastructure project reporting.

Project assurance is not an audit, approval or endorsement process. It is a process that supports project development and delivery to minimise the risk of project failure and improve project management skills and systems.

Considerations in developing this Framework

- Building on and leveraging from existing processes where possible.
- Considering constraints in terms of agencies' capacity to implement and participate in new processes.
- Ensuring proposed activities and structures are discussed with key stakeholders and reviewed on a regular basis.

Assessment of existing processes and resources

Throughout the development of this Framework existing processes and guidance material was leveraged where possible. Infrastructure bodies such as iNSW, the Victorian Government and Infrastructure South Australia have published extensive guidance material and have well established processes in place. In addition to material published through interstate agencies, this Framework was informed by documentation from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority of the United Kingdom Government.

Framework implementation

Acknowledging the constraints in capacity and resource availability, this Framework will be implemented through a staged approach. This allows stakeholders to provide feedback early and enables ITas to consider improvements throughout the implementation.

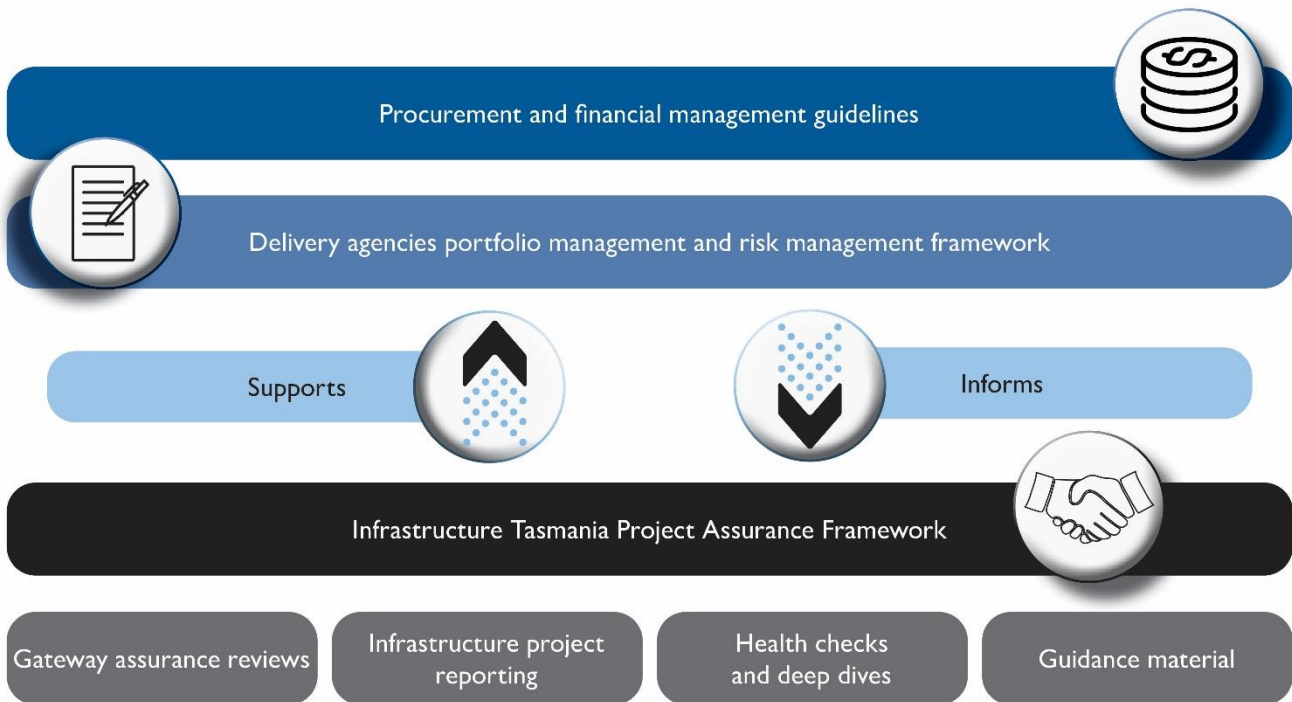
Framework objectives

This Framework has been developed to achieve the following objectives:

1. A single source of independent assurance across all infrastructure projects/programs - providing strong advice to Government.
2. Informed decision making – supporting Government as an investor through improved data collection and analytics.
3. A flexible risk-based approach – to focus on what matters considering project/program specific needs.
4. Continuous improvement – monitoring and reporting allows the review and improvement of existing processes and policies.
5. Collaboration and support for agencies – sharing resources, processes and insights across agencies to improve delivery and to learn from experience.
6. Value to agencies – identifying issues early and providing practical advice.

The Framework does not take away from delivery agencies' requirements to comply with Government governance and procurement requirements.

Infrastructure Tasmania Project Assurance Framework in the context of existing guidelines



Benefits

Implementing a consistent approach to project assurance across all major government infrastructure projects will achieve the following benefits for the Tasmanian Government and the public.

- Transparency in project/program planning and delivery risks and progress, which allows for informed decision making.
- Consistent application of good practice methodologies and principles in delivery, which improves project and program management capability within the public sector.
- Early identification of risks and issues that may impact project/program outcomes or viability.
- A focus on delivering outcomes from infrastructure investments, rather than just outputs.
- Experience and lessons learned can be shared across Government.
- Increased confidence in the timely provision of value for money infrastructure that meets community needs.

Framework application

The Framework application is not mandatory, however it provides guidance in line with good practice and reflects assurance practices that are already in place across other states. Over the years assurance requirements have evolved in other states and have highlighted the benefits from implementing overarching assurance functions specifically for infrastructure projects/programs.

The Framework was developed to focus on infrastructure projects with a total estimated cost above \$5 million. Agencies can elect to participate in the assurance activities outlined in this Framework at their discretion throughout the life of their project.

The Framework does not operate in isolation and is intended to complement existing risk controls that are already in place at an agency level. It has been developed with the objective to support better outcomes when delivering infrastructure projects and programs.

Infrastructure Tasmania's role

ITas will be responsible for the phased implementation and trial period. A detailed review will be undertaken with feedback from participating agencies, panel reviewers and project leads to inform the next iteration of this Framework.

ITas reports to the ITas Steering Committee which advises Government on the current and emerging Tasmanian Government Infrastructure Investment Program. This will include common trends and insights identified through the implementation of the Framework.

The following aspects of the Framework will be phased in, depending upon the resources available to ITas and the support of delivery agencies:

- risk profile assessment tool
- assurance reviews (gateway reviews and deep dives) across all stages of the project lifecycle
- project health checks
- regular infrastructure project reporting.

Assurance reviews

The Framework includes four key components:

- gateway reviews (Gate 0-6)
- health checks
- deep dives
- regular infrastructure Project Progress Reporting.

Reviews are linked to specific stages of the project lifecycle to inform key decisions before progressing to the next stage. Similarly, health checks can have a specific focus in common delivery issues or risks to inform the readiness for the next project stage.

Assurance activities across the project lifecycle

Project stage	Initiate	Plan and development		Procurement		Execute	Close
Lifecycle phase	Establish mandate	Strategic analysis	Investment decision	Procurement		Delivery and initial operations	Benefits realisation and lessons learned
Gateway reviews	Gate 0 – Project registration	Gate 1 Project justification	Gate 2 Business case	Gate 3 Readiness for market/ Delivery strategy	Gate 4 Tender evaluation	Gate 5 Readiness for service	Gate 6 Benefits realisation
Health checks	Preferred options			Market engagement Procurement strategy	Preferred options	Delivery	Lessons learned
Deep Dives	Technical and specific scope as required						
Reporting	Infrastructure projects progress reporting						

Treatment of projects and programs

The Framework applies to programs as it applies to projects. An initial risk profile assessment provides an indication of the overarching assurance needs.

However once programs are more progressed and have an approved business case in place (Gate 2) the program can be separated into individual projects with each having individual timing, funding and staging requirements. The individual projects will be assessed using the risk profiling tool to assess their assurance requirements. The separated projects will then be consolidated back into a program at Gate 6 to assess the benefits of the program in its entirety.

Project registration and risk profile assessment

Assurance activities can be tailored to the specific projects using a risk-based approach. To do this, a risk profile assessment is conducted as part of projects registering for assurance reviews with ITas. The assessment considers the following criteria:

- government priority
- agency capability and capacity
- funding and procurement complexity
- project interface complexity
- stakeholders and approvals complexity
- environmental and sustainability complexity.

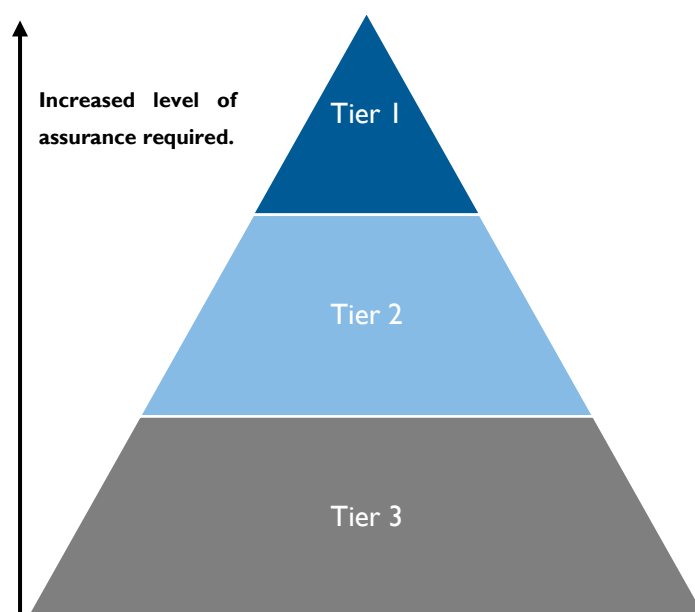
Based on the weighted risk score across these criteria and the total estimated budget, projects can be grouped into risk-based tier.

The risk-based tiers are as follows:

- Tier 1 - High value and high risk
- Tier 2 - Medium risk
- Tier 3 - Low risk

Based on the tier, an assurance plan is developed to outline which gateway reviews, number of health checks and deep dives are relevant to the individual project or program. Following this structure, a higher level of scrutiny is recommended for Tier 1 - High value and high risk projects.

See **Appendix C** for the project tier weighted risk score matrix and detailed risk criteria.



Example: This means a 'community centre upgrade' project with a budget of \$30 million, delivered by an agency with significant experience successfully delivering similar projects, and minimal project risks may be classed as a Tier 3 project. At the same time, a new 'stadium upgrade' project with a \$30 million budget could be classed as a Tier 1 project based on multiple external stakeholder partners involved in delivery and uncertain approval and procurement complexities adding to the project risk profile.

Gateway reviews, health checks and deep dives

Gateway reviews are intended to provide a series of short, focused, independent expert reviews at key decision points of the project lifecycle. The reviews will highlight risks and issues which are likely to threaten successful delivery. The reviews are supported by guidance material to ensure a standardised and robust approach is applied consistently.

Health checks may be conducted at any stage of the project lifecycle but are most likely to be of value when there are long durations between gateways. Health checks are relevant to identify any emerging issues between key decision points and are undertaken by an independent Assurance Review Team.

Deep dives focus on more project specific issues at a certain point in the project lifecycle and can provide a more technical assessment of issues faced by a project.

Recommended Assurance Reviews across project tiers

There is currently no mandatory requirement for projects to complete gateway reviews. This framework identifies key gates that are recommended to be completed (in line with the assessed project tier).

Gateway reviews	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Gate 0 – Project registration	R	R	R
Gate 1 – Project justification	R	R	O
Gate 2 – Business case	R	R	O
Gate 3 – Readiness for market/ Delivery strategy	R	O	O
Gate 4 – Tender evaluation	R	O	O
Gate 5 – Readiness for service	R	O	O
Gate 6 –Benefits realisation	R	R	R
Health checks			
Delivery	R	R	O
Deep dives			
Any phase	O	O	O
Other assurance activities			
Regular progress reporting	R	R	R

R= Recommended; O= Optional

Overview of gateway review focus across project and program delivery

Initiate	Activities	Gate 0 – Project registration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registration with ITAs • completion of risk profile assessment • preliminary project assurance plan
	Establish mandate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go/No Go decision to initiate project 	
Plan and development	Activities	Gate 1 – Project justification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of how project scope meets service need • appropriate level of options and cost/benefit analysis
	Strategic analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop strategic case • consider options • conduct investment logic mapping 	
	Activities	Gate 2 – Final business case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final business case
Procurement	Activities	Gate 3 – Readiness for market/ Delivery strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear scope definition • procurement documentation and commercial approach • evaluation strategy/plan • probity plan
	Prepare for Market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specify requirements and update business case accordingly • finalise procurement documentation 	
Execute	Activities	Gate 4 – Tender evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation report • probity report • evidence of delivery readiness and handover approach
	Competitive Procurement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • release tender • evaluate bids and select or confirm supplier • confirm final costing include contingencies and update business case 	
Close	Activities	Gate 5 – Readiness for service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independent verifier reports confirming scope delivery • testing and commissioning documentation • operational readiness documentation • handover strategy
	Award Contract and deliver project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • award contract and commence contract management • construct or deliver asset • establish handover plans • obtain independent verifier reports confirming scope delivery 	
Close	Activities	Gate 6 – Benefits realisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of operational performance • records of lessons learnt • benefits realisation plan and reporting against benefits
	Project Finalisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of operational performance • records of lessons learnt • report against benefits realisation plan 	

Improving infrastructure outcomes

ITAs will use trends and insights from assurance reviews to work with agencies, industry and review teams to identify how to best address challenges at a whole of government level. Throughout the implementation of this framework ITAs will explore opportunities to share lessons and insights across government agencies and the project management community.

Framework operations

Assurance review process

The process flow below provides a high-level overview of the key steps involved from project registration to finalising an assurance review.

1. Project registration

- Risk profile assessment tool shared by Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) with ITas.
- ITas validates assessments and confirms project Tier with agency/SRO.

2. Assurance plan agreed

- ITas proposes set review as part of assurance plan and confirms with SRO.
- Assurance plan includes timeframe and proposed number of reviews.

3. Assurance reviews initiated

- ITas confirms readiness for review with SRO/project manager.
- ITas selects Assurance Review Team in consultation with SRO/project manager and initiates Terms of Reference.
- ITas coordinates planning meeting between review team, SRO and project manager.
- Agreement of interview schedule, key issues to consider, timing of review completion.

4. Assurance reviews conducted

- Project documentation and interview schedule provided to review team by agency/SRO.
- Review preparation meeting held with project manager and SRO.
- Review conducted and daily debriefs with SRO/project manager held as agreed.
- Review report finalised including agency response to recommendations.

5. Review outcomes

- ITas tracks progress against recommended actions.
- Review feedback survey results consolidated.
- Analysis of common themes and trends reported to Government.
- The assurance review report will be shared with the review team of the next gateway review.

Assurance roles and responsibilities

Function	Roles and responsibilities
ITas assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration and review of the Framework. Regular performance reporting on infrastructure delivery to Government. High level reporting on common themes and number of recommendations made. Establish and administer project assurance services panel for the delivery of assurance services across infrastructure projects. Review and monitor project risk profiling assessment and subsequent assurance requirements. Monitor quality and consistency of conducted assurance reviews. Administer the engagement of Assurance Review Teams through Terms of Reference for every review. Provide funding for assurance reviews in line with project or program assurance plans.
Assurance Review Team	<p>The Assurance Review Team is comprised of independent expert reviewers selected from ITas project assurance services panel.</p> <p>ITas appoints each Assurance Review Team in consultation with the Project's Senior Responsible Officer. The Assurance Review Team responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking the assurance review in line with the agreed Terms of Reference Sharing draft final reports with ITas and the Senior Responsible Officer.
Delivery agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-register qualifying projects by completing the project risk profiling assessment tool and sharing this with ITas. Liaise with ITas as a point of contact where there may be a change in the project impacting its risk profile and/or assurance needs. Provide requested documentation to the Assurance Review Team. Actively engage with ITas and with the Assurance Review Team, which includes supporting the Assurance Review Team with fact checking queries. Provide a Senior Responsible Officer for assurance review. Provide responses to recommendations within assurance review reports. Complete feedback survey on Assurance Review Team performance for ITas reporting purposes. Regular reporting through Treasury's reporting process. Provide timely and comprehensive project reports consistent with reporting requirement set out by Treasury.
Interviewees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for providing full and frank feedback to the Assurance Review Team.
ITas Steering Committee	<p>ITas Steering Committee receives regular reporting on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of assurance reviews conducted. Common issues and themes identified across reviews.
Interdepartmental Infrastructure Delivery Committee (IDC)	<p>The IDC was established to facilitate inter-agency sharing and collaboration in relation to mutual challenges and improvement opportunities in delivering the Tasmanian Government's Infrastructure Investment Program.</p> <p>The IDC's assurance role includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active engagement in the definition of potential solutions to challenges in infrastructure project delivery. Providing feedback on common themes identified through assurance reviews.
Department of Treasury and Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with ITas on leveraging existing reporting to facilitate improvements to existing reporting/data available. Owner and facilitator of the Structured Infrastructure Investment Review Process (SIIRP).

Assurance review confidentiality

The assurance review and associated documentation is confidential between the delivery agency's SRO and ITas.

The assurance review report is also confidential. Only two copies of the report are made: one for the SRO and the other for ITas to extract common themes, lessons learned and check report quality and compliance with the process. The SRO is encouraged to share the report with the project delivery team and internal governance bodies as they find appropriate.

Assurance review distribution protocols for review reports

For consistency and quality purposes the following three protocols will apply across all types of assurance reviews:

Protocol 1 - Draft review for report (for discussion)

The review team prepares a preliminary draft review report for discussion with the SRO and ITas at the completion of the review.

Protocol 2 - Final draft review report (for agency response)

Review team provides updated final draft review report including recommendations to ITas and the SRO.

SRO provides delivery agency response to recommendations (recommendation action plan) to review team.

Protocol 3 - Final review report - including response (for submission to Government)

Review team provides final review report (including agency responses) to ITas and SRO or agency Secretary.

ITas reports to Government on completion of review and as relevant, outcomes of assurance reviews.

Recommendation action plan

The Final draft review report (Protocol 2) will include a set of recommendations supported by a report outlining key findings. A recommendation action plan is prepared by agencies to address these recommendations. The objective of the recommendation action plan is to provide detail of how the project/agency will close-out recommendations.

Over time, ITas will monitor progress towards the closing out actions and recommendations. Common themes across recommendation action plans will also inform regular reporting to Government.

Appendix A - Assurance review reporting and rating

Every Review Report will provide an overall confidence rating and include recommendations with a criticality rating using a Red, Amber, Green status.

Red Amber Green (RAG) definition

There are two levels of RAG Status for a project that must be given, using the colour-coded indicators Red, Amber or Green described below.

- Red, Amber or Green delivery confidence assessment for the overall project.
- Red (critical), Amber (essential) and Green (good practice) for individual recommendations.

Overall rating key

Low	Successful delivery of the project is in doubt, with major risks or issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent additional action is needed.	The project may need re-baselining and/or the overall viability reassessed.
Medium	Successful delivery is feasible but significant issues exist which require timely management attention.	These issues appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not impact on cost, time or quality
High	Successful delivery of the project to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten the successful delivery.	There are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery significantly.

Individual recommendations (criticality)

Individual recommendations are now classified as either critical (red) or essential (amber) as per the diagram below. Green is used for recommendations strengthening good practice.

Critical	Action required. This item is critical and urgent. The project team should take action immediately.
Essential	The recommendation is important but not urgent. The project team should take action before further key decisions are taken.
Good practice	The recommendation is not considered critical or urgent but the project development may benefit from implementing this recommendation.

This ensures recommendations are focussed on criticality for project success while still capturing opportunities to embed good practice across project delivery and leadership.

Key focus areas

Each report will provide an assessment of the following key focus areas:

- service need, value for money and affordability
- governance
- risk management
- stakeholder management
- asset owner's needs and change management
- social, economic and environmental sustainability
- review of current phase and readiness for next phase

Appendix B – Role of the SRO

Good governance and project/program assurance highlight the need of a single point of accountability and strategic responsibility. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) of a project or program holds this position.

Infrastructure projects generally include three key parties with a governance and oversight function. These include a sponsor, a deliverer and an asset owner/manager or operator. The SRO may come from either the sponsoring agency, delivering agency or the asset manager/owner agency depending on the stage of the project lifecycle. At any point in time it should be easy to identify who holds the role of SRO.

The SRO is also a key stakeholder for the successful delivery of gateway reviews. They are expected to be available to meet with the review team as well as support the review of all necessary information requested.

Typical holder of the SRO role across the project lifecycle

Project stage	Initiate	Plan & Development	Procurement	Execute	Close		
	Gate 0 Project Registration (alternative start Gate)						
Gateway Reviews	Gate 0 Project registration	Gate 1 Project justification	Gate 2 Final business case	Gate 3 Readiness for market/ Delivery strategy	Gate 4 Tender evaluation	Gate 5 Readiness for service	Gate 6 Benefits realisation
SRO	Sponsor agency			Delivery agency		Asset manager / owner operator	

Appendix C - Overview of risk profile criteria

Project-tier weighted risk score matrix

ITas has developed a Risk Profiling Assessment Tool which is completed by delivery agencies when registering a project for assurance reviews. The process involves giving each project a score against a set of risk assessment criteria and providing key information such as total estimated cost.

The assessment considers the following criteria:

- government priority (20%)
- agency capability and capacity (20%)
- funding and procurement complexity (15%)
- project interface complexity (20%)
- stakeholders and approvals complexity (15%)
- environmental and sustainability complexity (10%).

The six risk assessment criteria are scored (ranging from 5 (very high) to extremely low (0)) using the Risk Profiling Assessment Tool. To assist agencies, indicators are provided to consider when defining a score. The Risk Profiling Assessment Tool calculates the weighted risk score and determines the risk based project tier in line with the matrix below.

Weighted risk score	Estimated total cost range				
	\$5M – \$10M	\$10M-\$50M	\$50M-\$100M	\$100M-\$500M	>\$500M
0.0 - 2.0	Tier 3	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 2
2.1 - 2.2	Tier 3	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 1
2.3 - 2.4	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 1
2.5 - 2.9	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
3.0 – 3.9	Tier 2	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1
4.0 – 5.0	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1	Tier 1

Table 1 weighted risk score matrix



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