



Driving success in publicly-funded programmes and projects

Using independent assurance to mitigate common risks in publicly-funded programmes or projects before they can impact project success

What is programme and project assurance?

Programme and project assurance is the process of providing confidence to stakeholders that programmes and projects will achieve their scope, time, cost, quality objectives, and realise their full potential.

Assurance also identifies improvements which can help to mitigate the risk of issues materialising, which could impact on the project's time, cost, scope or benefits realisation.

Programmes and projects can benefit from assurance at any stage in their lifecycle. Assurance reduces the risk of scope creep, time overruns and cost escalations. It guarantees that the right resources and tools are in place to allow for successful delivery and ensures that the benefits' end recipient is engaged to allow for full and successful benefits realisation and return on investment. Assurance is collaborative, and it works best when it is flexible and targeted to the needs of the project or programme.

Why is specialist assurance needed for public and social sector clients?

The Cabinet Office Major Projects Review found that key reasons for public funded project failure are:

- Unrealistically tight timescales.
- Lack of business case to establish goals.

- Scope not finalised before procurement commences.
- Absence of, or limited, options analysis.
- No agreed budget or contingency planning
- No implementation of strategic risk management plan.
- Weak commercial and contract management.

By providing the right assurance at the right time, Mazars can advise and support public and social sector clients to mitigate the risk of programme or project failure and inform key stakeholders of chances of success using a sound, irrefutable evidence base.



Our approach to programme and project assurance

We have produced a number of flexible, proportionate and targeted tools that enable us to provide the most relevant assurance to your programmes and projects, no matter where they are in their lifecycle. These tools are grounded in industry and public spending best practice as an evidence base and are fully adaptable to the complexity and risk profile of all programmes and projects. The tools will shape detailed, well-planned and all-encompassing recommendations relevant to each programme and project's specific needs.

Lifecycle stage 1

Strategy definition/idea/initiation



During the initial stages of the programme/project, it is important to determine the complexity of the programme/project so that assurance and recommended best practice is proportionate. Considering what the change will achieve and how it will benefit end users can help ensure that the programme/project starts off in the right way before substantial funding is committed.

 Assurance tool	 Key lines of enquiry
Complexity matrix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the initiative be managed as a project or a programme? • How contentious or novel will this initiative be?
Initiation review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the objectives and outcomes meet the overall organisational/ Government strategy? • Have all relevant key stakeholder groups been identified and initially engaged with? • Are there any similar or dependant projects or programmes ongoing? • Are initial governance, planning and risk controls in place? • Have funding streams and any applicable grants been considered?

Lifecycle stage 2



Development/design/requirements/business case

As objectives, goals, scope and procurement options, financials and management controls are developed and defined to ensure return on investment, optimisation of benefits and programme/project success, assurance needs to be adaptable to suit this development stage of the programme/project. Within a programme there are projects which all need separate assurance as follows:

 Assurance tool	 Key lines of enquiry
Feasibility review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the result of any feasibility studies? • What are the high-level benefits and how will they be measured? • Has a long list of options for scope and delivery been considered and are there any other options? • Has any market testing been completed? • What work has been done to date to ensure funding? • What controls and capability are in place to move the project forward?
Deliverability review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the objectives and outcomes still relevant following stakeholder engagement and market testing? • Are detailed benefits now defined? • Has a shortlist of options been determined with economic analysis of each? • Are commercial management strategies and plans defined? • Have funding sources been identified for the life of the project? • Are delivery strategies in place for management of the project?



Lifecycle stage 2 cont.

Development/design/requirements/business case

 Assurance tool	 Key lines of enquiry
Investment review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there still continuing support for the programme/project? • Has a preferred option been analysed and selected following the procurement process? • Have plans been put in place with chosen supplier(s)? • Has financial information been completed to detail how the investment will be spent during delivery? • Have the correct tools and processes been put in place to control the project during delivery? • Are monitoring and evaluation processes in place to track KPIs and outcomes throughout delivery?
Development review	<p>This is a combination of Feasibility, Deliverability and Investment Reviews for programmes/projects identified as low risk and low complexity. It seeks to ensure that the project has baseline scope and controls and processes in place without the need for lengthy development where it is not needed.</p>

Lifecycle stage 3

Delivery/build and test

 Assurance tool	 Key lines of enquiry
Delivery review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are deliverables being delivered as per agreed scope and requirements? • Are risks and issues being managed effectively? • Are plans being followed and any slippage reported on? • Are the right people and processes in place to deliver the project? • Are suppliers delivering to scope? • Is the project remaining within budget? • Is performance being measured effectively throughout delivery? • Are stakeholders effectively engaged? • Are governance processes working as they should?



Types of delivery review:

- **Light health check** – general assurance view given on these nine areas to give a snapshot picture of how well the project is doing and any ‘red flags’
- **Full deep dive health check** – delves into these nine areas in much more granular detail to give recommendations if the project is not on track
- **Specific deep dives** – delves into specific areas based on risk in granular detail as per project needs to get certain controls back on track

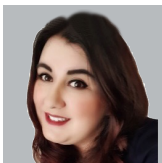
Lifecycle stage 4

Handover/Business readiness/Go-Live

When delivery comes to a close, it is important that the project is handed over successfully into an operational setting to be managed. This is then when benefits can start to be truly realised and lessons learnt can be collated to be used for future programmes/projects.

 Assurance tool	 Key lines of enquiry
Business readiness review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have all the expected deliverables been delivered as per requirements and are they as intended?• Have end of contract arrangements been agreed and followed?• Do those who will manage the project deliverables in an operational setting have what they need to manage them?
Closure and benefits review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has a lessons learnt review been complete with actions being stored in a place that future organisational projects can review from?• Have all outstanding actions and risks been closed/transferred?• Are processes to continue monitoring of benefits in place?

For more information on how Mazars can advise and support your organisation to mitigate the risk of programme or project failure, please get in touch.



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