



MPA Integrated Assurance Toolkit for Major Projects

From 1 April 2011 the Integrated Assurance and Approvals Framework for projects and programmes in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) will include the following:

1. Integrated Assurance Strategies (IAS) and Integrated Assurance and Approval Plans (IAAPs), which should include:
 - a. Independent assurance reviews provided by the MPA
 - b. HM Treasury approval points and processes
 - c. Departmental assurance, auditing and investment approval processes
2. Consequential assurance and/or intervention by the MPA for Major Projects seen to be in difficulty or having a poor delivery confidence
3. Government Major Project Portfolio (GMPP) reporting.

HM Treasury approval points and processes, and how they integrate with MPA assurance processes, are outlined in the joint HM Treasury and Cabinet Office Major Projects Approvals and Assurance Guidance (April 2011). Departmental assurance and approvals processes differ from Department to Department and are not detailed here. The integrated assurance toolkit used by the MPA is outlined in the tables overleaf.

Further Information

Detailed information and guidance will be issued periodically to departmental Heads of Profession for Programme and Project Management (PPM) and to “PPM Leaders” with responsibility for their organization’s PPM Centre of Excellence, Portfolio Office or equivalent. Copies can be requested from them, or via MPA-Info@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

MPA Planned Assurance Toolkit

The following assurance options should be included by Major Project teams in their Integrated Assurance and Approvals Plans (IAAPs), to meet the project's needs. The MPA can advise Major Projects on the most applicable review to plan under which circumstances.

Review Type	Objective	Deployment	Trigger	What it involves
Starting Gate Review	To assure the deliverability of a major new initiative before public commitments are made – may be policy, business change, ICT, infrastructure, etc.	All major new initiatives which are expected to deliver the Coalition Government's priorities through a Major Project (including but not limited to those with a significant ICT investment).	EITHER The Department actively engages with the MPA by requesting a Starting Gate. OR Intelligence from Cabinet Office, HMT or departmental colleagues about an emerging initiative likely to result in a Major Project	An interview-based review to test emerging assumptions on deliverability, eg. around timetable, resources, commercial strategy, etc. Completed in 3 to 5 days. Interviewees are likely to include Ministers, Permanent Secretary, relevant Directors General and Policy Leads.
OGC Gateway™	To assure that the delivery of outcomes (benefits) is on track.	Mandatory for all Major Projects and recommended best practice for other projects commensurate with the degree of project risk (high, medium or low).	Should be scheduled in advance within the project's IAAP in relation to key decision and HMT approval points in the project lifecycle. The project's SRO submits a Risk Potential Assessment (RPA) form to the MPA before the decision point is reached.	OGC Gateway™ is the mainstay of the MPA assurance process. It is a peer review of progress and delivery confidence at key "gates" in the project lifecycle, and provides recommendations to the SRO on which he/she is accountable to the MPA. This is an interview-based review completed, including the report, in less than a week.

Review Type	Objective	Deployment	Trigger	What it involves
Project Assessment Review (PAR)	<p>ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide assessment and intelligence required by a scheduled Major Project Review Group (MPRG) Panel. 2. To provide information to an HMT Spending Team prior to a Treasury Approval Point (TAP) 3. To provide information on deliverability and value for money prior to the Major Projects Annual Report. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For Major Projects on the Treasury's MPRG list 2. For Major Projects in the GMPP - if the PAR is agreed by the MPA as a more appropriate review, given timing and project circumstances, than a Starting Gate or OGC Gateway™ Review. 3. For Major Projects in the GMPP If no other recent assurance information is available prior to completion of the Annual Report. 	<p>Should be scheduled in advance within the IAAP.</p>	<p>The MPA collaborates with the SRO and Project Team on a “deep dive” to establish project viability and its likelihood of successful completion, and may generate recommendations to Ministers to Stop, Re-Scope, or further support the project.</p> <p>To inform an MPRG Panel a PAR will take up to 10 days, to meet other objectives a PAR lasts a maximum of 5 days. Largely interview-based, often covering similar ground to an OGC Gateway™, but with deeper exploration of commercial and financial matters and alignment with Government policy. The MPA will take standard review approaches and tailor them, as necessary, to fulfil the specific purpose of each PAR.</p>

MPA Consequential Assurance and Intervention Toolkit

When appropriate, the relevant team in the MPA will, liaising with departmental and (where appropriate) MPA partner contacts, establish and implement a tailored set of consequential assurance and interventions. The suite of available tools and approaches are outlined below, but for each Major Project in difficulty, the combination of tools, approaches and actions used will reflect the significance, scale, and nature of the project itself, and the nature and urgency of the issues to be overcome.

What is it?	Objective	Deployment	Trigger	What it involves
Assurance of Action Plans (AAP)	To assure that Delivery Confidence in Major Projects is raised to an appropriate level that will enable delivery of aims to time, cost and quality.	All GMPP projects and other High Risk projects within the Department's delegated authority.	Red or Amber-Red Gateway assessment of Delivery Confidence, or other form of assurance requiring the project team to develop an action plan.	A planning meeting, pre-reading, and arrangement of interviews. The AAP is then completed within a day, resulting in a report on findings and recommendations – including whether or not the action plan is sufficient to get the project back on track. The MPA will provide guidance to Departments to enable them to implement AAPs independently. A member of the previous assurance review team should be included in the AAP team.
Case Conference	To support “at risk” Major Projects by sharing information, discussing issues and key risks, and by identifying actions and solutions to get the project out of difficulty.	MPA priority projects within the GMPP	MPA conclusion that a Major Project is “at risk” and that the most appropriate Consequential Assurance and Intervention next step is a Case Conference.	A 90 to 120 minute meeting between the MPA and relevant partners, and key members of the project team. Usually some pre-meeting work or reading is required. The agreements made are confirmed in writing and shared with all participants and the MPA's Executive Director. Fulfilment of the agreements is then monitored by the MPA.
Project Assessment Review (PAR)	Depending on assurance need, according to the specific issues and risks to be explored.	MPA priority projects within the GMPP	Identification through planned assurance and/or Case Conference that the project requires further assurance to understand delivery issues and provide recommendations to address these.	Similar to a PAR within Planned Assurance, but with greater focus on exploring the identified issues to be addressed. If the PAR recommendations are to Stop or Re-Scope the project, the MPA Executive Director may escalate this project for review by the HM Treasury MPRG Panel.

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Applied Support	To support “at risk” projects by providing skilled and experienced capability from the Centre for targeted pieces of work.	MPA priority projects within the GMPP	Recommendation from a Case Conference, approved by the MPA Management Team.	Each authorised piece of Applied Support will be unique and tailored appropriately to the project and its identified needs. Applied support assignments will have defined objectives and timescales, including an exit strategy that will enable the project to move forwards independently after a specified period of time.
Managed Early Closure (MEC)	To provide assurance that projects terminated before their due date are closed down in a timely and controlled fashion.	Following termination of a High Risk project and/or for closure of an organisation – when the project to close it is in itself High Risk.	MPRG Panel or Department’s decision to close a project ahead of schedule.	A planning meeting, pre-reading, review of the project’s closure plan, and a series of interviews. Completed within 3 days, resulting in a findings and recommendations report. The MPA will provide guidance to Departments to enable them to implement MECs independently.
Escalation	To engage a higher level of management in order to resolve problems which are intractable at normal working levels.	MPA priority projects within the GMPP.	MPA Cluster Team judgement that problems are not being resolved.	This includes escalation to the MPA Executive Director and potential further escalation by him to the relevant Permanent Secretary and/or to the ERG Board, which is jointly chaired by ERG Ministers. May ultimately involve departmental Secretaries of State. Escalation will be used in exceptional circumstances, on a case by case basis.

GMPP Reporting

Major Projects in the Government Major Projects Portfolio are required to provide quarterly progress reports to the Major Projects Authority and HM Treasury.

What is it?	Objective	Deployment	Trigger	What it involves
Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) Reporting	To achieve a cross-Government understanding of the cost and viability of Major Projects and to provide regular reporting to Ministers.	Applies to all Major Projects in the GMPP.	The MPA issues a quarterly request to Departments to complete a GMPP return for all projects in the GMPP portfolio.	Departments complete a brief quarterly report providing high level information on Delivery Confidence, performance against budget and benefit targets, and high level project, procurement, assurance and approval milestones.