



Infrastructure
and Projects
Authority

Becoming an Assurance Reviewer for the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

This guidance provides information on how to become an Assurance Reviewer for the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, including details of the application process. The guidance is aimed at serving civil servants/public sector employees.

Applicants outwith the public sector should refer to “Becoming an External Assurance Reviewer”.

Version: 1

Date of Publication: 12 February 2016

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1. Overview - What do IPA Assurance Reviewers do?

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) reviews the Government's most complex and high risk projects, initiates and manages major project assurance, provides independent assessment of project performance at critical points in the life-cycle, allows projects to take appropriate corrective actions and informs central government of project risks. Review teams comprising independent delivery experts from across government and the private sector are brought together to scrutinise a project and make recommendations to improve the chances of successful delivery.

IPA reviews carry significant weight and can change the course of major programmes, making better use of tax payers' money, and in some cases, stopping failing programmes. They often inform key decisions, for example, approval of HMT funding, awarding of contracts or go-live of a new service. This is only possible with a strong community of active reviewers working on behalf of the IPA.

Reviewers directly contribute to the successful delivery of Government's most complex and high-profile projects. In releasing their staff to undertake reviews, departments make a significant investment in their people and the growth of Government's delivery capability. Reviews also give staff the opportunity to reflect on their own skills and how they can be improved. This peer to peer learning is key to growing a strong, government wide delivery capability.

Reviews are intense, hard work and incredibly rewarding. Meeting other reviewers and becoming an effective unit in a short space of time requires exceptional teamwork. Review teams are required to quickly absorb a wealth of information, probe teams to uncover potential issues and develop evidence based recommendations. As a reviewer you may interview permanent secretaries and ministers, as well as subject matter experts, providers and users, so you must have the confidence to question and challenge stakeholders as well as the experience to develop recommendations that will really make a difference.

“I get real satisfaction from the knowledge that I am participating in the successful delivery of some of the government's most challenging projects.”

Following accreditation and training, you will participate in your first review as a “rookie” under the auspices of an experienced team leader. With experience you can also progress to become a team leader yourself and lead larger, higher risk projects (see chapter 5 below). Our most senior review team leaders advise the Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) which makes investment decisions on the highest risk projects such as HS2 and Universal Credit.

As a reviewer you can take personal satisfaction in helping peers deliver their projects. Undertaking a review provides the opportunity to tackle a task from start to finish and deliver a high quality outcome in a very short space of time. There's no better way to connect with other delivery professionals from across government and beyond, and to learn from their experience.



2. Criteria - What skills and experience does a reviewer need?

For all reviewer roles you must have a demonstrably strong background in delivering projects or initiatives, with practical expertise in one or more of the following core business areas:

- change management
- construction
- commercial & procurement
- digital & technology
- estates, properties & facilities
- operational delivery
- operations management
- policy
- project delivery

You must also have the skills and the attitude to thrive in intense and sometimes challenging situations, incisively getting to the heart of issues, delivering difficult messages and being robust and resilient in the face of challenge and delivering and receiving feedback.



You should be:

- a team player who is content to be led by less senior staff where appropriate;
- able to draft logical, clearly-expressed prose to a tight deadline;
- a sound communicator with the ability to engender trust and openness among peers; and
- a forward looking and objective independent thinker.

As a reviewer you will be expected to actively contribute to the effective delivery of the review and will be required to:

- complete the agreed pre-reading in advance of the review - most reviews set aside one day for pre-reading and project familiarisation;
- follow the Code of Conduct (defined at the planning meeting) throughout the course of the review;
- give your uninterrupted contribution for the entirety of the review, including the initial planning meeting. This means no disruption from your usual role;
- participate in interviews, particularly contributing knowledge of your particular specialist core skill area(s) and leading interviews where required; and
- contribute to (and in some areas lead on) the drafting of a clear and rigorous final report that includes evidence-based findings and challenging recommendations and, where appropriate, examples of exemplary practices.

A guide to the skills and experience required for each of the different reviewer roles is set out below.

Medium Risk Review Team Member (MR RTM)

Medium Risk Review Team Members participate in the assurance of medium risk Government programmes and projects. Medium risk reviews are usually organised by your Departmental Assurance Co-ordinator (DAC) or Centre of Excellence (CoE) rather than IPA and they offer the opportunity for you to work both within your own department and across the wider service. Some projects, whilst falling into the “medium risk” category, may be of sufficient complexity to be listed on the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) and reviews of these projects will be managed by IPA.

To become a Medium Risk Review Team Member you should be able to evidence in your application that you have:

- as a guideline, circa 5 years’ delivery experience and a practitioner level of understanding of project and programme methodologies or if less experienced, be on a recognised delivery career path with the support of your Head of Profession;
- experience in roles with substantial responsibility, demonstrating an ability to manage non-standard problems and issues;
- recent practical experience in delivering high value business change, savings driven, procurement based or unique and innovative projects or developing policy that was delivered through a medium risk change programme or project;
- experience of engaging with, influencing and challenging senior stakeholders without disturbing wider relationships; and
- the ability to assimilate and evaluate information from both documentation and interviews to reach conclusions.

Medium Risk Review Team Leader (MR RTL)

To become a Medium Risk Review Team Leader you should be able to evidence in your application that you have:

- as a guide, circa 8 years’ substantial experience in managing business or operational change or if less experienced, have strong support from your Head of Profession;
- experience, at a senior level, of managing programmes and projects with, on average, a value of £10+m;
- proven leadership and communications skills;
- experience of participating in medium or high risk reviews or equivalent, with positive feedback that supports progression to leader; and
- a sound understanding of the assurance process.

High Risk Review Team Member (HR RTM)

High Risk Review Team Members participate in the assurance of complex high risk Government programmes and projects. For the majority, these projects are listed on the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) due to their high cost, complexity or risk, and review outcomes may be explored further by a Major Project Review Group (MPRG) Panel. These Panels are co-chaired by HM Treasury and the CE of the Civil Service, working in partnership with the IPA, to challenge projects on deliverability, affordability and value for money.

High Risk Review Team Members may also be approached by the IPA to participate in intervention activity where a project is struggling to deliver and/or where specialist skills and knowledge is required.

To become a High Risk Review Team Member you should be able to evidence in your application that you have:

- as a guide, circa 8 years' substantial delivery experience with a strong background in project and programme management or if less experienced, have strong support from your Head of Profession;
- experience which comprises a range of roles with accountability at a senior level, demonstrating an ability to manage complex and non-standard issues;
- recent practical experience in delivering high value/high profile major change, savings driven, procurement based or unique and innovative programmes or projects, or developing policy that was delivered through a high risk change programme or project;
- experience and evidence of engaging with, influencing and challenging senior stakeholders (such as Ministers, Director Generals and Permanent Secretaries) without disturbing wider relationships; and
- the ability to assimilate and evaluate information from both documentation and interviews to reach conclusions.

High Risk Review Team Leader (HR RTL)

To become a High Risk Review Team Leader you should be able to evidence in your application that you have:

- as a guide, circa 10 years' substantial experience in managing business aspects of major change or procurement programmes or projects with, on average, a value of £100m+;
- recent and substantial experience as an SRO or programme manager/director of high risk or high cost change programmes or projects;
- a familiarity with handling major strategic initiatives;
- experience of policy development which may include dealing with Ministers and managing new legislation;
- proven leadership and communications skills;
- experience of participating in high risk reviews or equivalent, with positive feedback that supports progression to leader; and
- a familiarity with both MPRG requirements and the HMT approvals processes.

3. Application - Count me in, where do I sign?

Applicants should complete the IPA Assurance Reviewer Skills Form and provide a comprehensive CV and a brief pen portrait. The purpose of the skills form and CV is to help you set out your skills and experience so that we can assess whether you meet the criteria to become accredited as an IPA Assurance Reviewer, and if you do, what role you could take in a review team and the scale of programme and project you can most usefully review. Therefore it is important that **your application adequately demonstrates your skills, experience and involvement in the delivery of projects and programmes and related areas of work.** A template CV and pen portrait is attached at Annex A but it is not imperative that the templates be used, rather, that the documents suitably convey the required information.

The pen portrait will be used as a method of quickly introducing you to the project and other review team members, once accredited.



When complete please pass the skills form to your line manager for their endorsement and completion of Section 4. This endorsement confirms to us that your line manager agrees to release you to undertake reviews and understands that you will need to be fully committed to the review for its duration.

For those applying for re-accreditation to progress to another reviewer role, you should also provide copies of feedback from the last three reviews you have participated in.

Dependent upon arrangements within your organisation, you should then forward the skills form, along with your CV, pen portrait (and review feedback where appropriate) to your departmental Centre of Excellence (CoE) or Departmental Assurance Coordinator (DAC). They will then check and seek endorsement from the Head of Delivery Profession of the application and provide any other supporting information which may be of relevance (such as confirming a PPM delivery career path) and will make a recommendation to the Accreditation Panel as to the level of accreditation they think your skills and experience warrant.

The IPA Gateway Helpdesk (Gateway.Helpdesk@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) can provide you with the relevant CoE or DAC contact details.

4. Accreditation - Congratulations, you're an accredited reviewer!

Accreditation Panels are held every two to three weeks. Your CoE/DAC will pass your application to the IPA Accreditation Team for presentation at the next available panel.

The panel is comprised of members of the IPA Operations Leads, DACs and Resourcing Team members and operates on a "blind" basis which means that the panel will not be in possession of any personal details of the applicants to be considered and will assess your application based solely on your skills and experience against the criteria set out above. The panel will look for evidence of delivery experience, soft skills and whether you have a particular subject matter expertise.

You will be contacted shortly after the panel with the outcome. If your application has not been successful you will receive feedback from the panel and you will either be asked to resubmit your application with some more information or you will be informed that you need to obtain more experience.

If your application is successful, you will receive an email confirming your status as a reviewer. If you have been accredited as a Medium Risk Review Team Member, your CoE/DAC will be informed so that they can add you to their cadre of departmental reviewers and it is they who will contact you to arrange your participation in reviews. If you are accredited as a High Risk Review Team Member, in addition to your CoE/DAC being informed of the outcome and adding you to their cadre of reviewers, the IPA will add you to their reviewer database and will make contact as appropriate high risk review opportunities arise.

Accreditation lasts for three years and re-accreditation after the initial period is dependent upon your having participated in at least one review per year, and securing positive feedback from your review team peers.

At the 30 month point, the IPA Accreditation Team will contact you to ask if you wish to be reaccredited as a reviewer for a further three year period. If so, we will contact your CoE/DAC to obtain copies of your feedback and you will be asked to provide an updated CV and skills form which will then be put to the next available accreditation panel. Your accreditation status will either be reconfirmed for another three year period (and you will be invited to attend a refresher training session) or will cease.

5. Progression - How do reviewers progress to different roles?

As a Review Team Member, you have the opportunity to progress to different reviewer roles. Progression can be from:

- Medium Risk Review Team Member to either Medium Risk Review Team Leader or High Risk Review Team Member;
- High Risk Review Team member to either Medium Risk Review Team Leader or High Risk Review Team Leader.

To submit an application for progression, you will need to be able to evidence that you have the required skills and experience, and have received positive feedback that supports progression from at least three reviews you have participated in. You should speak to your CoE/HoP/DAC as appropriate, and they will submit an application for re-accreditation (updated CV and endorsed skills) to us for consideration.

6. Training - A helping hand to get you started

If your application is successful, IPA provides a number of training activities to prepare you for participation in your first review:

- An e-learning module - this provides a basic introduction to reviewing, with a case study and scored assessment which you will need to pass prior to participating in your first review. You will be invited to complete the e-learning module upon being notified of your successful accreditation but you may feel free to access the e-learning module now if you wish. The e-learning module can be accessed here: <http://www.governmentprojectassurancereviewertraining.co.uk/Content/Login.aspx> Please ensure you use an up to date browser to access the site.
- Becoming a Reviewer - this provides a “hands-on”, immersive reviewer training experience, allowing you to participate in a review in a practice environment. This course runs from 09:15 - 16:00 and is delivered jointly by the IPA and the DAC Community. Ostensibly for newly accredited medium risk and high risk review team members, you will be invited to attend a training session upon being notified of your successful accreditation.
- Member to Leader Workshop - this is a short workshop aimed at newly accredited medium and high risk review team leaders, or those considering applying for progression to the leader role. The workshop highlights the difference between the team member and team leader roles and covers in detail what is expected of a review team leader. Newly accredited team leaders will be invited to attend a workshop upon notification of their successful accreditation. For those thinking about applying for progression who wish to attend, you should contact your DAC initially.

In addition, your DAC will provide you with any further information around any additional in-house training your department offers.

7. Any questions?

If you have any questions about becoming a reviewer please contact the Gateway Helpdesk at gateway.helpdesk@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. We'll be happy to help.

Name

CV

Contact details (telephone number, email, address).

Profile

A short paragraph (approximately 250 words) summing up your experience (this can be used as your pen portrait). Please be aware that this will be used as a quick way of introducing you to the project and review team and so **really needs to succinctly convey your experience and areas of expertise.**

Expertise

Five or six bullet points denoting your skills

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-
-
-

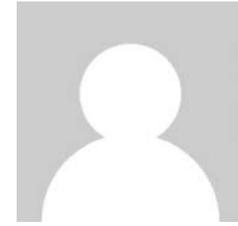
Selected achievements

Two or three relevant examples

Career history

For each role, please include details of your specific responsibilities and achievements, with particular reference to PPM, delivery and the core business areas. **Please ensure you provide evidence of how you have applied your skills.**

Name Name



Operations Lead, Tax and Growth, IPA

Departments: Cabinet Office and Treasury

Name joined the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, Cabinet Office as an Operations Lead within the Tax and Growth Cluster. His work involves supporting, challenging and undertaking assurance activities for the Government's Major Projects and Programmes within the Departments' of the Cabinet Office and Treasury. He joined the CO in January 2014 as a Senior Policy Advisor responsible for Commercial Engagement. Key areas of work included running efficiency reviews across departments. He is a Chartered accountant.

Immediately prior to joining the civil service, he ran his own business providing consultancy services to small and medium sized professional service organisations (particularly legal), specialising in strategy setting, business planning, programme & project management and organisational design.

He has worked at executive board level within global professions, particularly legal, for a number of years where he held several COO level positions including responsibility for strategy development and implementation, business planning, programme and project management, financial performance and operational efficiency. This included working as Head of Administration for the Middle East as well as Head of Infrastructure Projects for Eversheds.

He has particular skills in change management; mergers & acquisitions; organisational design and change; business process re-engineering; contract negotiation and management; programme management; strategy and business planning; financial planning, budgeting and performance as well as due diligence; and running businesses in Europe and the USA. His sector experience is particularly strong in professional services (accountancy and law).

Guidance:

Pen portraits are used both in assigning the right Reviewers to a role and as an initial way to introduce review teams, prior to a planning meeting. A pen portrait should give a brief outline of someone's career history, with their particular strengths, interests and experiences illustrated in a clear and concise way, differing from a CV in that it can have a more conversational tone and provide a little more detail about experiences and roles. Pen portraits are used widely within the Civil Service. A pen portrait should be around 250 words.