SRO responsibilities: the checklist

SRO responsibilities for an assurance review start 90 days before the review team arrives

What should an SRO do in the 90 days before the review?

Spend the first month on the decision and the evidence, the second on the people and the record, and the last on access. Booking lead times make 90 days the practical minimum: Victoria asks for six to eight weeks to assemble a team, and the planning session falls about two weeks before the review.

The SRO's 90 days before an assurance review: a checklist, with what each stage should produce

When	What the SRO does	What it produces
90 to 60 days out	Confirm the review and the decision it supports, read its published guidance, book it with the central unit, and tell the board it is coming.	A booked review and a named decision
60 to 30 days out	Bring the business case, benefits register, schedule, cost position and risk and issue logs up to date from existing records. Record the action taken on each recommendation from the last review.	Current evidence and a closed record
30 to 14 days out	Draft the interview list with the programme director, including suppliers and dissenters. Prepare the planning meeting briefing and the document room.	An interview list and a briefing
The last 14 days	Attend the planning meeting, deliver every document requested there before the review, confirm the interviews, and clear the diary for the daily briefings.	Full access for the review team
Review week	Take every briefing, correct facts as they arise, and have requests answered within one business day.	A draft with no surprises
After the report	Decide the response, give each accepted recommendation an owner and a date, and brief the board and the accountable authority.	A response on the record

What evidence will the reviewers ask for?

Evidence that already exists: the business case and its benefits, the plan and its funding, the governance record, the risk and issue position, and what was done about the last review. Infrastructure NSW tells agencies to use existing project documentation and to create nothing solely for the review.

- **The benefits case.** The Commonwealth planning meeting covers the benefits a programme will deliver and how they will be measured, realised and maximised. Expect the reviewers to ask who owns each one.
- **The risk and issue position.** Commonwealth guidance asks for updated issue and risk logs with the actions taken. Present the register as it stands, including the ratings that have worsened.
- **The governance record.** Decision logs and the papers the steering committee actually received.
- **The plan and the money.** Progress to date, resourcing, funding and the work still to come.
- **The last review.** Under the Commonwealth process the entity completes an Actions Taken record before the next review, and the reviewers mark each recommendation fully, partially or not addressed.

What should an SRO never do before or during a review?

Never try to manage the review team. An SRO who lobbies reviewers, narrows their access or treats the review as an audit to pass gets a weaker report and loses the frank advice the process exists to give.

- **Lobby the reviewers.** Infrastructure NSW bars SROs from contacting the review team outside its protocols, including after the review.
- **Narrow the scope or the access.** Commonwealth rules bar the SRO from limiting how the review is run, what it covers, whom it interviews or what it reads, and from altering its recommendations.
- **Ask the review team for more.** The Commonwealth guidance says the SRO should not ask the review team to take on extra work, including presentations about the findings after the onsite review.
- **Write documents for the review.** Papers produced in the fortnight before the planning meeting are easy to spot, and invite the question of what the programme ran on before.
- **Treat it as an audit to pass.** The Commonwealth guidance states that Gateway is not an audit, and that reviews work best when seen as assistance to the programme.
- **Use the fact check to argue the findings.** Victoria invites corrections of fact and minor inaccuracy. Infrastructure NSW says the fact check does not extend to challenging the review team's observations, opinions or recommendations.

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