

Escalation Protocols FAQ's



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What are the escalation protocols?

The escalation protocols are a form of 'consequential' assurance under the [Assurance Framework for Digital and ICT Investments](#). 'Consequential' assurance means assurance triggered in response to the changing condition of a project (for example, a decline in delivery confidence).

The protocols were introduced in November 2021 as part of a package of Cabinet-mandated reforms designed to improve the success rate of digital projects.

The primary objectives of the escalation protocols are to:

- support agencies in successfully resolving delivery challenges these investments are experiencing; and,
- keep Ministers and senior leaders informed of digital investments experiencing stress.

There are three protocols:

- remediation planning,
- independent health check, and
- investment review meeting.

There is more information about each protocol in the Assurance Framework.

My agency's project has been escalated – what happens now?

The DTA will:

- Provide tailored advice to your agency on the action you must now take to apply the escalation protocols. In some cases, no action will be required as extant assurance and project activities already meet the escalation protocol requirement/s.
- Commence reporting on the status of the project to the Minister for Finance alongside reporting on other escalated projects. This reporting contains the DTA's assessment of all escalated projects across the digital investment portfolio.

Why has my project been identified for escalation?

The DTA identifies projects for escalation primarily (although not exclusively) based on Delivery Confidence Assessments (DCAs) produced through assurance activities.

My project already has an existing remediation plan and activities. Does this mean we are duplicating our work?

The DTA seeks to avoid duplicating existing processes or activities already underway and creating additional impost that takes focus away from project delivery.

If a project already has an existing Return to Green or other remediation plan, the DTA will work with the agency to uplift those plans, if required, to ensure they meet the escalation protocol requirements.

Does my agency need to brief our Minister?

Once a project has been escalated, it will feature in reporting to the Minister for Finance. When the DTA recommends the Minister take any action with regard to a project, advice will be provided to the agency ahead of this recommendation being made to inform any briefing your agency may wish to provide. Your agency may also wish to brief your Minister ahead of a specific recommendation being made to the Minister for Finance – our team can assist in providing advice needed to support this.

Can I see the report the DTA provides to the Minister for Finance?

Generally, no. The DTA is mandated to provide expert advice on digital investment to the Minister and this advice is privileged and held in-confidence. However, when the DTA is recommending the Minister take action in relation to your project, we will engage with you ahead of this advice being provided.

When is the 'escalated' status of the project reviewed?

A project remains in an escalated state until the DTA is satisfied that escalation is no longer warranted. Usually, escalation status is reviewed following an independent Delivery Confidence Assessment which suggests that the investment is now back on track.

What happens when the project is de-escalated?

Once the escalation protocols no longer apply to the project, the DTA will cease reporting on the status of the project to the Minister for Finance and the project will return to the regular assurance oversight that applies under the Assurance Framework. The DTA may seek to work with the agency to document lessons learned that can be shared with other agencies who may experience similar challenges.

Can the DTA second a resource to my agency to support remediation?

The DTA's assurance function provides central oversight of more than 130 projects (and growing) and operates with limited resources. This necessarily constrains our ability to provide hands-on support to each project including seconding resources.

The DTA's focus is mostly on identifying projects at-risk and guiding agencies on applying and following the escalation protocols as outlined in the Assurance Framework. This means, for example, that we will provide templates and high-level guidance on preparing an effective remediation plan.

Subject to capacity, we can also provide support in reviewing draft remediation plans and sharing lessons learned from other agencies who have experienced similar delivery challenges. The DTA has also previously provided support in:

- Convening a forum to review draft remediation plans and provide expert advice in the formulation of remediation actions.
- Reviewing Terms of Reference for independent reviewers.
- Identifying subject matter experts elsewhere in the APS to provide specialist advice and support on remediation.

Contact & Feedback

Please contact us for further information.

We value your feedback and ideas to help improve our processes and information. If you have any comments regarding this document, please share your thoughts with us.

The DTA is actively seeking agency support in ensuring this policy is fit for purpose. If you'd like to be involved, please contact:

portfolio.assurance@dta.gov.au