WHY A GREEN PROJECT STATUS REPORT CAN HIDE A FAILING PROGRAM



HIDDEN DELIVERY RISK

Beyond reassuring dashboards: building evidence-based delivery confidence.

Executive presentation • 3 November 2026

Cognicions

The dashboard can be correct — and still mislead.

THE REPORT

Schedule	GREEN
Budget	GREEN
Scope	GREEN
Overall	GREEN

THE DELIVERY REALITY

Critical interface	Delayed
Test environment	Unstable
Business decisions	Unresolved
Supplier delivery	At risk

The gap between reporting and reality becomes a governance problem.

How a green program reaches a crisis

Illustrative example — not a specific client engagement.



The critical question: why did the reporting fail to trigger action earlier?

Progress is not delivery confidence.

They answer different questions — and executives need both.



PROGRESS REPORTING

What have we completed?

• Milestones • Spend • Activity
Previous reporting period



DELIVERY CONFIDENCE

Can we still deliver the intended outcome?

• Evidence • Forecast • Readiness
Remaining delivery horizon

Five routes to false confidence

Each one can keep the dashboard greener than the underlying delivery position.

01



The plan drifts

Dates stay fixed as remaining work becomes less achievable

02



Dependencies vanish

Green workstreams conceal red cross-team integration

03



Bad news is filtered

Escalation becomes uncomfortable or delayed

04



Activity wins

Percentage complete replaces proof of readiness

05



Assumptions harden

Unvalidated beliefs are treated as facts

The committed date survives; the credible plan does not.

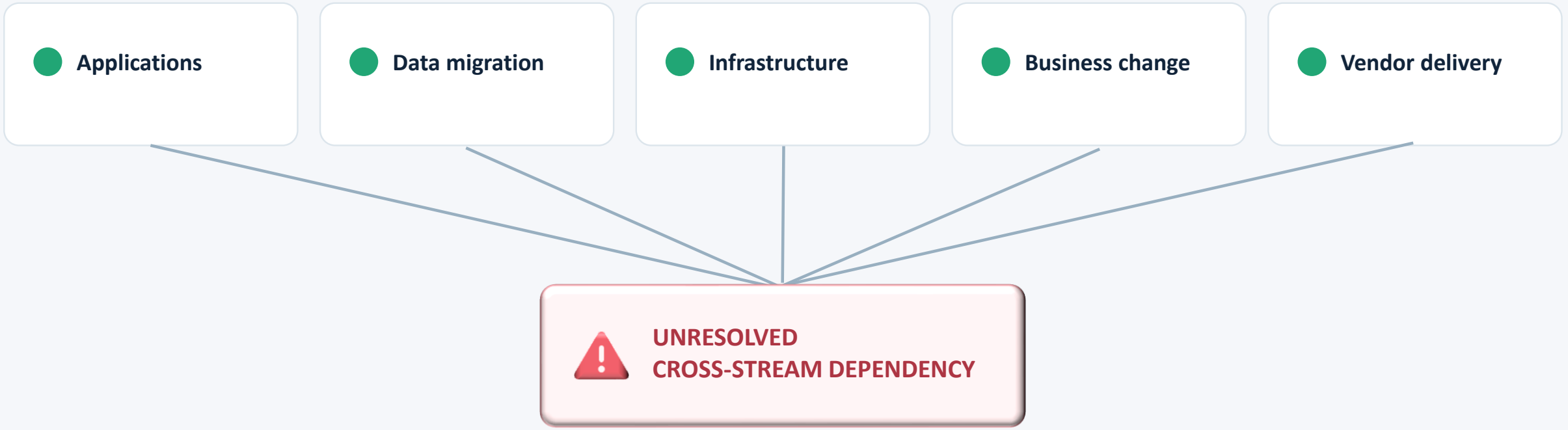
Illustrative schedule: the target milestone remains fixed while incomplete work is compressed.



A green schedule requires a viable remaining path — not merely an unchanged deadline.

Five green workstreams do not make a green program.

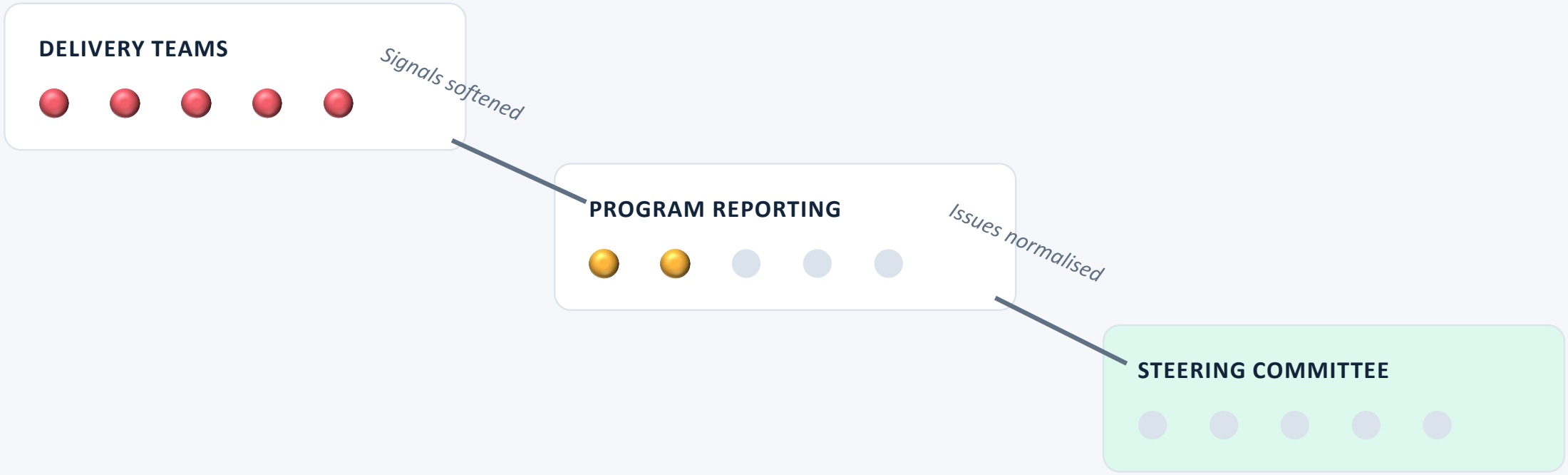
The risks often sit between teams, suppliers and interfaces.



Aggregation hides relationships; assurance tests them.

When status becomes a performance target, risks travel slowly.

Culture and incentives change what reaches the steering committee.



Early escalation is responsible governance — not a sign of failure.

A manager can change the colour. Not the risk.

When a PM is pressured to recast an amber/red assessment as green, reporting becomes reassurance — not assurance.



An undisclosed status override creates false confidence — it does not resolve a delivery problem.

SAFEGUARDS • Defined RAG thresholds • Preserve the original assessment • Record overrides, rationale and owner • Escalate material risk

85% testing complete: impressive, but what does it prove?

Activity metrics are useful only when connected to business-critical outcomes.

85%

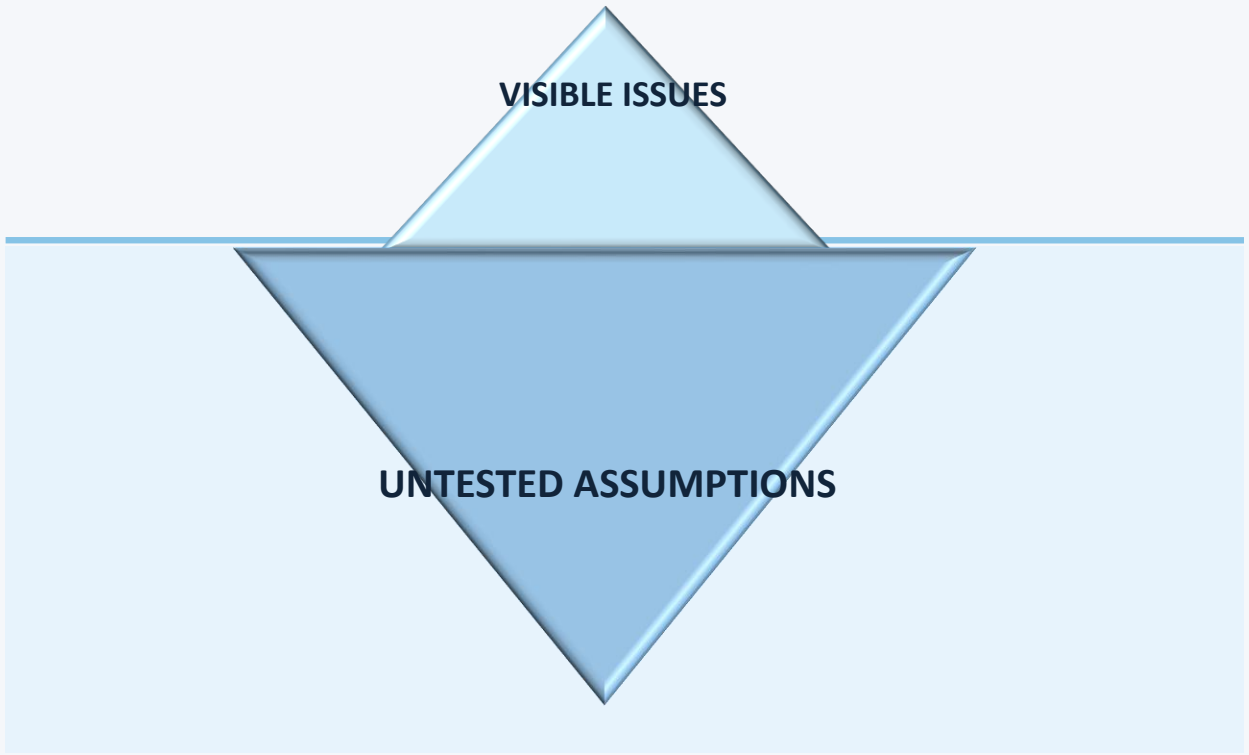
TESTING COMPLETE

The number alone is not assurance.

- **Have critical business journeys passed?**
- **Are major defects resolved and retested?**
- **Is the test environment stable?**
- **Have integration and data risks been exercised?**
- **What does the last 15% of testing contain?**

The largest risks can be assumptions no one has tested.

Visible issues are only part of the delivery picture.



DATA
Migration can fit the window

SUPPLIERS
Promises will be met

BUSINESS
Users will be ready

OPERATIONS
Support will be effective

Ask: Which assumptions would invalidate our go-live decision if they proved false?

Green is a conclusion — not an absence of bad news.

An evidence-based green status combines three tests.



VERIFIED OUTCOMES

Critical deliverables and business processes demonstrated



CREDIBLE FORECAST

Remaining work, capacity and dependencies realistically assessed



OPERATIONAL READINESS

People, processes, data and support ready to operate

GREEN = EVIDENCE + FEASIBLE FORECAST + READINESS

Seven questions that improve the conversation.

Use these in the next steering committee — particularly when everything appears green.

01 **What evidence supports the current status?**

Verified outcomes or subjective optimism?

02 **What has materially changed?**

Dependencies, assumptions and forecast?

03 **Which milestones have the least flexibility?**

Critical path, contingency and capacity?

04 **What remains unresolved between teams?**

Cross-supplier integration and ownership?

The questions that reveal the go-live truth.

These move the discussion from activity tracking to outcome readiness.

05 **Are testing and operational readiness genuinely proven?**

06 **If implementation were tomorrow, what would stop us?**

07 **What exactly would change our status to amber or red?**

If the threshold for changing colour is undefined, the colour is not a control.

Amber is not failure. Hidden risk is.

Early transparency gives executives more options.

UNEXPLAINED GREEN

“Everything is on track.”

No measurable thresholds.
Weak evidence. Surprises later.

ACTIONABLE AMBER

“Here is the issue and plan.”

Clear impact, owner, decision
and recovery path.

A healthy governance culture makes uncertainty visible early.

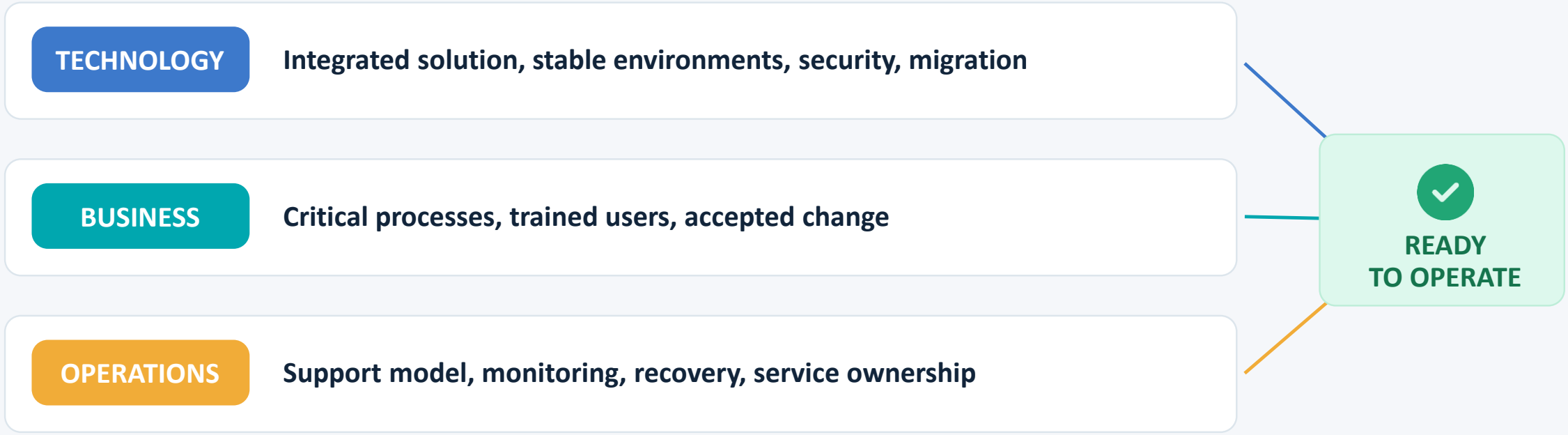
Independent assurance exposes the spaces between reports.

The objective is not more paperwork. It is better-informed decisions.



Go-live is an operational outcome — not a calendar event.

Technical deployment is only one dimension of successful delivery.



Success is the organisation using the change safely and sustainably.

Move from status presentation to decision support.

Fewer measures. Better evidence. Earlier decisions.

FROM

- Activities completed
- RAG colours without clear thresholds
- Workstream summaries
- Historical milestone performance
- Optimism and caveated confidence

TO

- Verified business outcomes
- Explicit evidence and escalation criteria
- Integrated delivery dependencies
- Realistic forward-looking forecasts
- Risks, options and decisions required

Cognicions Delivery Confidence Review

An independent, structured view of the program's position, risks and required decisions.

01



UNDERSTAND

Review the program context, baseline, controls and delivery evidence.

02



ILLUMINATE

Test assumptions, dependencies, readiness and forecast credibility.

03



ENABLE

Prioritise actions and provide a clear executive decision brief.

OUTPUT: CONCISE FINDINGS + PRIORITISED RISKS + EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

A 30-day reset for delivery confidence.

Practical actions before the next critical implementation decision.

WEEK 1

Define evidence

Clarify RAG thresholds, key outcomes and evidence owners.

WEEK 2

Stress-test the plan

Revalidate critical path, capacity and remaining work.

WEEK 3

Expose dependencies

Map cross-team, supplier and readiness constraints.

WEEK 4

Decide deliberately

Put options, consequences and priorities before sponsors.

An independent review can accelerate this process when the consequences of error are high.

The dashboard is not the destination.

The real measure of success is whether the organisation achieves the outcomes the program was created to deliver.

Discuss an independent delivery confidence review cognicions.com

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Independent Technology Advisory | Delivery Assurance | Transformation Leadership



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...Technology enablers & facilitators

Independent Technology Advisory | Delivery Assurance | Transformation Leadership

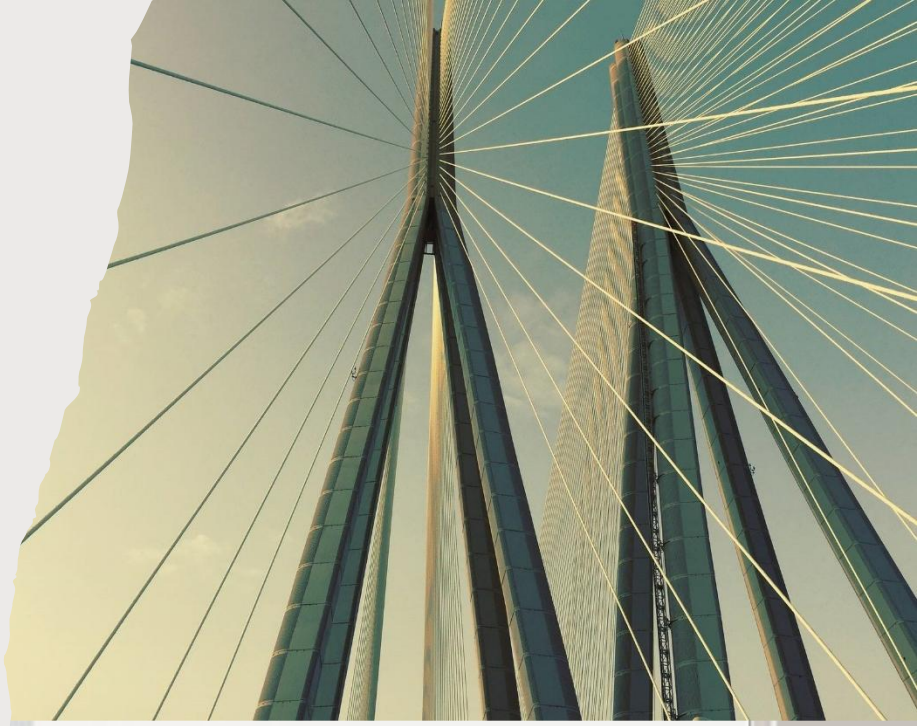
- Cognicions helps organisations navigate complex technology change with confidence.
- Drawing on decades of enterprise technology and program delivery experience, we specialise in independent delivery assurance, go-live and operational readiness, program recovery and transformation leadership.
- Our approach is grounded in practical experience, objective assessment and evidence-based decision-making — helping organisations identify risks, strengthen governance and achieve successful business outcomes.
- “We independently assess complex technology initiatives, identify delivery risks and establish practical pathways to recovery, readiness and successful implementation.”

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About Ronald

- With more than four decades of ICT experience, Ronald Kohlman specialises in technology delivery assurance, complex program recovery, operational readiness and transformation leadership.
- His extensive experience across government, utilities, financial services and international enterprise environments provides a practical, independent perspective on the challenges organisations face when delivering critical technology change.
- Ronald helps executives understand delivery risks, strengthen governance, challenge assumptions and make informed decisions that improve delivery confidence and business outcomes.
- An established author and technology adviser, he combines strategic thinking with practical delivery experience, guided by a simple philosophy:





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