THE PROGRAMME RECOVERY IMPERATIVE

REBUILDING TRUST AND MOMENTUM THROUGH GOVERNANCE

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The Programme Recovery Imperative

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Rebuilding Trust and Momentum Through Governance

Every year, billions are lost not because teams fail — but because governance fails.
Research from McKinsey, PMI, and KPMG shows that **70 % of transformation programmes miss their promised value**, and **$1 million is wasted every 20 seconds** through poor project control. The crisis is not one of effort — it is one of ownership.

The *Programme Recovery Imperative* addresses this through a structured, evidence-based governance model: **G.R.I.P.S. — Govern, Root, Integrate, Perform, Sustain.**

It redefines recovery not as a technical fix, but as an **executive discipline** that restores trust, authority, and performance predictability.

The Core Principle

> "Project failure is not a failure of effort; it's a systemic erosion of governance and control."

Most large-scale programme failures share the same pathology. They are not caused by weak intentions, poor talent, or lack of resources — they unravel because the mechanics of governance degrade under pressure.
When clarity fades, accountability fragments, and risk ownership blurs, even the best-funded programmes lose traction.

Oak Consult's G.R.I.P.S. Framework (Govern, Root, Integrate, Perform, Sustain) restores order through a structured sequence of interventions that rebuild confidence and visibility — one cog at a time. By applying proven disciplines of early detection, root-cause diagnosis, leadership alignment, performance execution, and long-term sustainability, the framework converts chaos into control, control into accountability, and accountability into measurable performance.

It is not a theoretical model; it is a field-tested governance engine used by executive teams to:

- Detect and neutralise governance drift early.
- Re-establish decision discipline and risk ownership.
- Replace perception with objective evidence.
- Demonstrate progress visibly and credibly to boards, investors, and regulators.

When programmes stall, the question isn't *who failed* — it's *where governance failed to adapt*.
G.R.I.P.S. gives leaders a way to answer that question fast — and fix it permanently.

The Five Phases of the G.R.I.P.S. Framework

Phase	Purpose	Core Output	Executive Impact
G — Govern	Identify systemic indicators of governance drift and re-establish a baseline for recovery.	*Early Warning Checklist* and *Programme Vital Signs Report*.	Creates shared situational awareness and early control visibility.
R — Root	Replace blame with evidence through an independent, politically neutral diagnostic.	*Root Cause Diagnostic Report & Intervention Blueprint*.	Separates perception from fact, authorising objective corrective action.
I — Integrate	Formalise unity through *The Acorn Foundation* and its signed Leadership Alignment Charter.	*Leadership Alignment Charter* (countersigned by Risk/Legal).	Converts intent into enforced authority and 48-hour decision discipline.
P — Perform	Convert authority into momentum via the *S.A.S. Reset* — Stabilise, Accelerate, Sustain.	*90-Day Governance Dashboard*.	Restores confidence through visible progress and measurable control.
S — Sustain	Institutionalise recovery disciplines to ensure long-term Governance ROI.	*Embedded Change Playbook*.	Reduces risk capital, improves forecast accuracy, and transfers control internally.

What Makes G.R.I.P.S. Different

1. **Governance First, Not Project Management:**
   Recovery is driven through sponsorship, cadence, and decision rights — not new tools or headcount.

2. **Independent Diagnostic Authority:**
   Objective assessment separates systemic truth from internal politics, creating a neutral platform for unity.

3. **Financially Defensible ROI:**
   Governance maturity and decision velocity are measured as direct predictors of profit, risk capital, and delivery variance.

4. **Institutional Transfer of Control:**
   The framework's final phase ensures capability ownership moves back inside the organisation — the true hallmark of sustainable recovery.

The Three Dividends of Governance

1. The Executive Dividend

Leaders regain **clarity, control, and credibility**.

- A single version of the truth replaces conflicting narratives.
- Decision-making becomes proactive rather than reactive.
- Visible, measurable progress restores board and investor confidence.

Outcome: Restored authority and confidence at the top.

2. The People Dividend

Teams rediscover **purpose, focus, and unity**.

- Blame culture dissolves as data replaces opinion.
- Clear roles and aligned objectives drive collaboration.
- Collective ownership replaces siloed firefighting.

Outcome: Energy, accountability, and trust rebuilt within the organisation.

3. The Customer Dividend

Customers and partners experience **consistency, reliability, and transparency**.

- Issues are surfaced and resolved before delivery risk materialises.
- Commitments are met predictably because internal chaos is under control.
- Confidence in delivery strengthens relationships and reputation.

Outcome: Predictable delivery, stronger trust, and improved customer loyalty.

The **G.R.I.P.S. Framework** transforms governance from a reporting burden into a **strategic advantage** — a mechanism for control, confidence, and commercial credibility that pays measurable dividends across the entire value chain.

A Reality Check

Frameworks don't fix programmes — **leaders do**.

G.R.I.P.S. gives structure, language, and visibility, but it only delivers results when leaders have the courage to confront what's really happening inside their programmes.
Restoring control isn't about adding meetings or dashboards; it's about **facing facts early**, **owning decisions collectively**, and **protecting delivery discipline when pressure rises**.

The uncomfortable truth is that most failing programmes already have the data they need — what they lack is the **governance muscle** to interpret it honestly and act decisively.

The G.R.I.P.S. Framework forces that honesty. It creates rhythm, accountability, and clarity — but it demands leadership that's willing to listen to the evidence, not just the noise.

Because in the end, recovery doesn't start with a methodology.
It starts when someone says, **"enough — this stops here."**

Section 2 —Why Programmes Fail

Governance Erosion, Decision Latency, and Slow Collapse of Control

Large-scale transformation failure has been studied for decades — and the numbers have barely moved.

McKinsey's 2012 study of 5,400 IT programmes found average cost overruns of 45 percent. More than a decade later, newer research shows that the pattern is not only unchanged — it's more dangerous than ever.

In 2022, Flyvbjerg et al. analysed 5,392 IT projects and found that cost overruns follow a **power-law distribution**: most projects run slightly over budget, but a small percentage experience catastrophic overruns of **200 to 400 percent or more**. In practical terms, this means "average risk" is a myth — extreme loss is not an exception, it's built into the system.

BCG's 2024 analysis confirms that technology and software programmes still "routinely suffer long delays and expensive cost overruns," even in organisations that claim to be agile. The failure mode has shifted from methodology to mindset: complexity has outpaced control, and leadership discipline has not kept up.

Across every sector — digital, infrastructure, and enterprise transformation — the data tells the same story: **programme failure is rarely a failure of effort**. It is a **failure of governance integrity**.

Without unified decision rights, honest risk visibility, and consistent cadence, even the best-intentioned programmes will drift from strategic alignment into operational chaos.

The **Root** phase of G.R.I.P.S. exists to expose these fractures before they compound. It separates fact from narrative, perception from evidence, and restores a single version of the truth — the first step in rebuilding control.

Governance Maturity: A Measure of Control and Culture

Governance maturity describes an organisation's ability to **see, decide, and act consistently** under pressure.
It is less about policy volume and more about behavioural discipline — how reliably people follow the decision pathways they designed.

Low-maturity environments show the same warning signs again and again:

- Ambiguous accountability and blurred decision rights.
- Reactive rather than rhythmic governance cadence.
- Data used to justify positions rather than illuminate risk.

High-maturity governance looks very different. It is defined by:

- Clear, enforced authority structures tied to outcomes.
- Transparent performance data driving fact-based decisions.
- Leadership teams that use governance as a performance engine, not a reporting ritual.

In practice, **governance maturity is the difference between compliance and control**. Organisations at the lower end of the maturity curve don't fail because they lack effort — they fail because they lack the systems and behaviours to sustain clarity when pressure mounts.

The G.R.I.P.S. Framework is designed to accelerate governance maturity — moving leaders from reactive governance to **predictive, disciplined, and data-anchored control**.

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1. Unclear Ownership and Eroded Accountability

When no one owns the truth, everyone owns the problem.

PMI and PwC's PMO Maturity Index (2021) reports an average governance maturity of 61.4 out of 100; only the top 10 % exceed 94.9. Most organisations therefore lack the structural maturity to define who decides, who informs, and who is accountable. In that vacuum, escalation loops multiply, steering meetings swell, and progress reports become performance theatre rather than instruments of control.

"41 % of under-performing organisations cite inadequate sponsor support as the main reason for failure." (PM360 Consulting 2023)

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2. Decision Latency — The Hidden Killer

Jim Johnson's decision-latency theory shows a stark correlation between speed and success: projects where leaders make key decisions within one hour succeed 68 % of the time; when decisions take five hours or more, success drops to 18 % (ScrumInc. 2018).

Decision latency is not a scheduling problem — it is a governance failure. When decision rights are unclear or sponsors are disengaged, teams substitute activity for progress. Each unmade decision compounds cost and delay; each additional month of programme duration adds roughly 15 % more cost overrun (McKinsey 2012).

"Slow decisions destroy confidence faster than fast mistakes."
— *Oak Consult Field Note, 2025*

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3. Technical Debt and Structural Drag

Technology modernisation should enable transformation; instead, it often anchors it. Crucially, high technical debt is not an architectural problem, but a governance failure to enforce architectural standards and prioritise long-term structural health.

McKinsey (2023) estimates that technical debt accounts for 40 % of IT balance sheets, adding 10–20 % to annual costs. Organisations in the bottom quintile for tech-debt management are 40 % more likely to have incomplete or cancelled modernisations. Wellingtone's 2024 *State of Project Management* report cites the same pattern: over-stretched portfolios, poor resource allocation, and constant reprioritisation masking deeper architectural fragility.

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4. Culture and Fear of Visibility

The most expensive symptom of weak governance is silence.

The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (2023) highlights *"green-until-red"* reporting — optimism bias that hides risk until it detonates. Without psychological safety, teams don't escalate early; without transparency, sponsors can't intervene. Programmes drift into a fog of partial truths until performance failure becomes reputational crisis.

The Governance Imperative

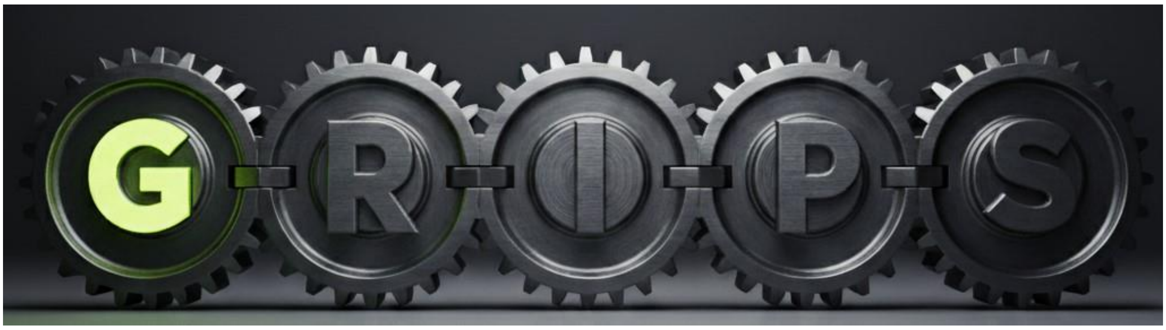
The pattern across every study is consistent: **failure begins when governance becomes informal.**
As portfolios scale and complexity rises, clarity of ownership and pace of decision-making determine survival.

Effective recovery therefore starts not with new tools or extra people, but with a reconstruction of control — the deliberate reinstatement of decision rights, cadence, and sponsorship discipline.

Output: *Governance Drift Heatmap — a visual summary of ownership gaps, decision-latency points, and cultural warning signs to inform the next phase: G → R (Detect → Diagnose).*

The Governance Principle

"Failure begins when governance is outsourced; recovery begins when governance is owned."



Section 3 — Recognising Red Flags

Truth Without Fear: Detecting Early Signs of Governance Drift

Every failing programme speaks before it collapses. **Our G — Govern tool is designed to listen.** Budgets don't suddenly double, timelines don't spontaneously slip, and trust doesn't evaporate overnight. The signals are always there — just rarely believed early enough to act on.

The Early Warning Imperative

The UK's **National Audit Office** found that *most major project failures could have been prevented with earlier intervention*. Similarly, research by the **Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (2023)** shows that recurring red flags — such as unclear escalation paths, turnover in steering groups, and "green-until-red" reporting — appear **months before crisis is declared**.

Independent data reinforces this pattern:

- *69 %* of UK road projects and *66 %* of other infrastructure programmes experience cost overruns (NAO 2023).
- The *average lead time* between first red flag and project cancellation exceeds *six months* (PMI 2024).
- Yet only *32 %* of organisations maintain a formal early-warning process (PwC PMO Maturity Index 2021).

Ignoring these signals transforms manageable issues into systemic risk.

The Four-Lens Early Warning Model

1. Leadership Behaviour
When meetings multiply but decisions do not, governance is already drifting.
Typical indicators include:

- Escalations discussed repeatedly with no resolution.
- Sponsors shifting from "what do we know?" to "who said that?" — signalling a culture of blame over learning.
- Frequent changes in sponsor or steering membership.

2. Decision Rights & Accountability
Red Flag: Critical issues circulate without formal ownership, generating unquantified risk.

- Multiple owners for the same deliverable.
- Informal approval chains replacing documented authority.
- Unclear escalation SLAs, leading to “decision paralysis.”

3. Delivery Control
Red Flag: Scope changes are informal and unquantified, threatening budget integrity.

- Untracked change requests and expanding scope definitions.
- Divergent progress data between PMO and workstreams.
- **Unvalidated dependency closure, where milestones are achieved "on paper" but not validated across workstreams.**

4. Culture & Psychological Safety
Red Flag: Silence in meetings mistaken for alignment.

- Teams under-report risk to protect relationships.
- Success metrics inflated to maintain perceived confidence.
- “Green-until-red” status reporting becoming organisational habit.

From Indicators to Insight

The goal of early detection is not punishment — it’s prevention.
As **Cutter Associates (2021)** notes, independent assurance acts as an *“early-warning mechanism that aligns stakeholders before cost or trust becomes unrecoverable.”*
Independent reviews convert anecdote into data and enable an honest dialogue around systemic causes rather than individual performance.

Output: Early Warning Checklist

A structured, four-lens checklist applied quarterly or at the start of major phases.
Each category is rated Red / Amber / Green and triangulated with evidence from steering papers, risk logs, and stakeholder interviews.

- **3 + Reds** → Immediate escalation to the *Root (Diagnose)* phase.
- **Predominantly Amber** → Initiate targeted intervention through sponsor workshops.
- **All Green** → Confirm governance health; proceed to regular cadence monitoring.

The output is consolidated into the *Programme Vital Signs Report* — a one-page, non-political dashboard summarising governance health for the Executive Sponsor Group.

The Detection Principle

“**A governance failure is not a lack of warnings — it’s a failure to act on the truth.**”

Section 4 — Root Cause Diagnosis

Truth Without Fear: Finding the Real Causes Before the Wrong Fix

When programmes enter the Root phase, speed matters — but truth matters more.
At this stage, panic often drives action. Leaders change suppliers, add headcount, or rewrite timelines before knowing what's actually broken.
The purpose of the R — Root phase is to stop that reflex.
It replaces *blame* with *evidence*, and *noise* with *clarity*.

The Independent Diagnostic Authority

This phase demands an **Independent Diagnostic Authority** — politically neutral, trusted by both delivery teams and sponsors.
Its role is to provide objective evidence that separates perception from fact, allowing the organisation to act decisively without scapegoating.

"When everyone has a story, the truth needs a referee."
— *Oak Consult Field Note, 2025*

The Diagnostic Authority uses structured interviews, document analysis, and governance observation to build a non-partisan view of how control has eroded and where recovery must start.

The Root Cause Interview Framework

Interviews are conducted across three tiers to ensure coverage of both strategy and execution:

Tier	Participants	Purpose
Strategic	Executive Sponsors, Board Representatives	Assess alignment, authority clarity, and sponsor cohesion.
Operational	Programme Directors, PMO Leads, Finance, HR	Identify process bottlenecks, decision latency, and resource flow.
Delivery	Workstream Leads, Architects, Change Managers	Validate data accuracy, technical dependencies, and morale impact.

Each session explores five systemic domains using structured probes:

1. **Governance Design** – How clearly are decision rights defined and enforced?
2. **Leadership Alignment** – Are sponsors unified on scope, budget, and success definition?
3. **Delivery Capability** – Are teams equipped (capacity, skills, authority) to meet the agreed cadence?
4. **Cultural Safety** – Do people feel safe to report risk or failure?
5. **Information Integrity** – Is performance data trusted and triangulated?

Diagnostic Probes (sample):

- "Where does the programme truth live — and who owns it?"
- "What decisions stall most often, and why?"
- "How consistent are answers across tiers when asked to define success?"

These questions surface misalignment patterns and reveal governance blind spots.

Synthesising Findings — The Root Cause Map

The output is synthesised into a **Root Cause Map**, translating interview evidence into five systemic domains of weakness.

Each domain is scored Red / Amber / Green with brief rationale and linked to the next recovery phase in G.R.I.P.S.:

Systemic Domain	Typical Failure Indicator	Linked Phase
Governance Design	Decision rights unclear or ignored	I – Integrate
Leadership Alignment	Sponsors divided on scope or success	I – Integrate
Delivery Capability	Resource or process bottlenecks	P – Perform
Cultural Safety	Fear of escalation or blame culture	I – Integrate
Information Integrity	Data gaps or conflicting reports	S – Sustain

This visual map provides the Executive Sponsor Group with a single, evidence-based view of *why* control failed and *where* intervention must begin.

Output: Root Cause Diagnostic Report & Intervention Blueprint

A concise, board-level artefact containing:

- Executive summary of findings and risk implications.
- Five-domain Root Cause Map.
- Prioritised intervention matrix (immediate / short-term / long-term).
- Independent recommendations with supporting evidence excerpts.

The report becomes the formal bridge from **G → R → I** in the G.R.I.P.S. journey, authorising the move toward rebuilding unity through *The Acorn Foundation*.

The Diagnosis Principle

“Truth is the currency of recovery. It authorises the executive action required to rebuild the foundation.”

Discovery without alignment is theatre.

The Root phase concludes with a complete and unfiltered truth — but until that truth is owned collectively, it remains inert.
Findings only become recovery when leaders are willing to translate evidence into action, abandon individual narratives, and rebuild a shared foundation.

The next phase — **Integrate** — is where that foundation takes form.
Here, insight becomes ownership, and ownership becomes the leadership discipline that fuels recovery.

Section 5 — Integrate

Leadership Alignment / The Acorn Foundation

Rebuilding Unity: Where Recovery Takes Root

Truth without unity fixes nothing.

The moment the diagnosis concludes, organisations face a simple choice — to defend their positions or to rebuild their foundation.

The **Integrate** phase converts independent truth into **shared ownership**. This is where leadership recommits to a single version of the plan, and governance regains its voice.

The Purpose: Establishing The Acorn Foundation

Leadership alignment is the crucial moment where sponsors commit to the **Acorn Foundation** — *Where Recovery Takes Root.*

It transforms fragile consensus into formal governance discipline. The Foundation ensures every decision made, and every resource allocated, follows the single, unified trajectory required to grow a resilient outcome from a fragile start.

“Before you fix the plan, fix the foundation.”
— Oak Consult Field Note, 2025

Until this point, the framework has been analytical — about diagnosing causes and defining truth.
From this moment forward, it becomes **human**.

The Acorn Foundation operates through **three interconnected lenses** that translate governance from a process into a culture:

Lens	**Core Idea**	**Resulting Dividend**
Leadership Lens — Clarity and Courage	Defines how leaders see and act. Sponsors recommit to evidence-based truth, unified direction, and visible ownership. They stop defending silos and start defending delivery.	**Executive Dividend —** Clarity, control, and credibility at the top.
Our People Lens — Purpose and Ownership	Reconnects teams to the "why." Governance becomes empowerment, not oversight. Roles, priorities, and decision paths are clarified, giving people confidence to act.	**People Dividend —** Energy, accountability, and alignment throughout the organisation.
Customer Lens — Confidence and Trust	Links internal discipline to external experience. Predictability of delivery, honesty in communication, and consistency of performance rebuild confidence where it matters most.	**Customer Dividend —** Reliability and renewed trust in delivery and brand.

Together, these lenses form the living root system of the recovery.
When aligned, they transform governance from a compliance exercise into a **shared behavioural contract** — a culture of evidence, ownership, and reliability that anchors every subsequent phase of G.R.I.P.S.

The Acorn Foundation isn't an artefact. It's a mindset — the cultural soil from which recovery grows.

The Leadership Alignment Charter

The Acorn Foundation is codified through the **Leadership Alignment Charter**, a signed artefact that restores executive coherence and decision integrity.

It contains five non-negotiable components:

Charter Component	**Description**	**Governance Impact**
1. The Acorn Foundation Statement	A joint declaration of purpose and recovery ambition, signed by all sponsors.	Establishes visible unity and shared accountability.
2. Scope & Success Definition	Confirms agreed outcomes, budget parameters, and risk appetite.	Eliminates competing definitions of “done.”
3. Decision Rights & Authority Matrix	Defines mandatory decision rights (DACI / RASCI), clarifying who holds final budget and scope authority at each tier, the consequence for bypassing them, and the mandatory 48-hour resolution SLA for all critical escalations.	Restores control, prevents decision latency, and links authority to financial accountability.
4. Governance Cadence	Defines meeting rhythm, reporting transparency, and escalation SLAs.	Creates predictable decision flow and re-establishes tempo.
5. Signatures & Effective Date	All executive sponsors, countersigned by the General Counsel or Chief Risk Officer, and stored as the definitive governance source document.	Converts commitment into enforceable authority.

The Facilitation Process

Alignment cannot be assumed — it must be engineered.

The Charter is developed through a five-stage facilitation process led by the **Independent Governance Lead**:

1. **Evidencing the Truth** – Present Root-phase findings and secure acknowledgement.
2. **Defining the Non-Negotiables** – Establish what cannot change (budget ceiling, time-frame, strategic intent).
3. **Re-defining Success** – Agree the deliverables that will prove the programme is back under control.
4. **Assigning Authority** – Build and validate the Decision Rights Matrix.
5. **Signing the Charter** – Execute formal agreement and launch the integrated cadence.

Once signed, the Charter becomes both a **symbol and a system of unity** — the Acorn Foundation from which all recovery growth stems.

Output: Leadership Alignment Charter (The Acorn Foundation)

Deliverable Summary:

- Signed, legally-recognised Charter establishing recovery governance.
- Enforced Decision Rights Matrix aligned with the G.R.I.P.S. framework.
- Defined cadence and 48-hour escalation protocols for 90-day governance cycles.
- Communication brief for programme-wide rollout.

The Charter is the **governance permission slip** for the next phase, authorising the Programme Director to implement the recovery roadmap under unified sponsorship.

The Integration Principle

"Alignment is the formal conversion of shared intent into enforced authority."

True integration is not agreement — it is the moment leadership decides to act as one.
When the Acorn Foundation takes root through its three lenses, the dividends begin to surface:

- **Clarity for leaders.**
- **Purpose for teams.**
- **Trust for customers.**

With the **Acorn Foundation** established and authority unified, the organisation is no longer reacting to the crisis — it's governing it.
The Charter has transformed intent into enforceable structure, aligning leadership, people, and customers under one coherent rhythm.

Now the work must move from alignment to execution.

The next phase — **Perform** — translates governance discipline into measurable delivery.
It's where decisions harden into actions, reporting becomes evidence, and the organisation learns to measure success by what it achieves, not what it promises.

Section 6 — Perform

Execution & Confidence / The S.A.S. Reset

From Governance to Momentum: The 90-Day Reset

Once unity is restored, momentum must follow.

The *Perform* phase is where recovery stops being a plan and starts becoming a performance. Its purpose is not to rebuild everything at once, but to **prove control is back** — visibly, confidently, and fast.

The S.A.S. Reset — Stabilise, Accelerate, Sustain

The S.A.S. Reset is a 90-day operating rhythm that converts the authority of *The Acorn Foundation* into disciplined delivery.
It provides a predictable cadence that restores confidence by showing the organisation that progress is measurable again.

Phase	**Focus**	**Core Deliverables**
Stabilise (Weeks 1–3)	Establish rhythm, remove blockers, and confirm data integrity.	• Stabilisation Report (validated baseline) • Red-flag remediation plan • Re-forecasted budget under new decision rights
Accelerate (Weeks 4–8)	Deliver visible outcomes that restore executive trust.	• **Three validated, quick-win outcomes (e.g., critical dependency closure, service stabilisation, or budget avoidance achieved)** • Stakeholder confidence survey • Budget variance trend tracking
Sustain (Weeks 9–12)	Embed discipline and prepare for the next 90-day cycle.	• Governance Health Review • Lessons log • Re-confirmation of The Acorn Foundation commitments

"The first 90 days aren't for rebuilding everything — they're for showing the organisation it can move again."
— *Oak Consult Field Note, 2025*

Governance Discipline in Motion

Every action within the S.A.S. Reset is governed by **The Acorn Foundation's 48-hour resolution SLA**.
Escalated decisions that breach this window are reported directly to the Executive Sponsor Group.
This rule reinforces accountability, prevents paralysis, and ensures that the recovery's success cannot be derailed by indecision.

Risk & Change Discipline

- All changes logged with quantified budget impact.
- Issues unresolved within 48 hours → automatic escalation to Sponsor level.
- Variance trends monitored weekly through the 90-Day Governance Dashboard.

Re-Establishing Cadence and Confidence

The Programme Director leads a weekly **Governance Stand-Up** attended by Sponsor Delegates, the PMO Lead, and Workstream Heads.
Focus: decisions made, blockers removed, and visible delivery.
This cadence demonstrates control to both internal and external stakeholders, replacing silence with evidence and politics with progress.

Communication Framework:

- Fortnightly briefing to executive sponsors (showing budget and decision velocity).
- Monthly update to the wider organisation — a visible signal that momentum has returned.

Output: 90-Day Governance Dashboard

A single, board-level artefact that visualises control and confidence:

- **Status Columns:** Stabilise / Accelerate / Sustain.
- **Metrics:** Budget variance, decision turnaround time, delivery velocity, confidence index.
- **Governance Indicators:** Open escalations > 48 hours, number of unvalidated dependencies, Acorn Foundation re-affirmations.
- **Review Cadence:** Every 90 days as part of the S — Sustain audit.

This dashboard becomes the visual proof that governance has translated into performance.

The Performance Principle

"Performance is not activity; it is control made visible."

Section 7 — Sustain

Institutionalising Resilience / Governance ROI

Converting Crisis into Capability

Recovery is not complete when the project stabilises — it's complete when the organisation no longer needs rescuing.
The *Sustain* phase ensures the lessons, disciplines, and controls forged in crisis become permanent capabilities.
It turns the one-off rescue into a measurable **Governance ROI**.

The Purpose: From Recovery to Resilience

Most organisations stop too soon.
They celebrate short-term stability but fail to embed the mechanisms that prevented collapse in the first place.
The *Sustain* phase institutionalises those mechanisms through five continuous governance loops, ensuring that the value of recovery compounds over time.

The Five Mechanisms of Embedded Change

Mechanism	Description	Executive Outcome
1. Governance Audit	Mandatory, independent quarterly review of adherence to *The Acorn Foundation's* decision rights and 48-hour escalation protocols. Findings reported directly to the Executive Sponsor Group.	Maintains visibility, prevents governance drift, reinforces accountability.
2. Decision Velocity Tracking	Measures average turnaround time for key programme decisions, using data from the 90-Day Governance Dashboard.	Sustains the discipline of fast, evidence-based governance.
3. Capability Maturity Tracking	Measures and predicts governance maturity on a 1-to-5 scale across the five systemic domains identified in *R — Root*. Provides a predictive indicator of risk reduction and quantifies Governance ROI.	Quantifies Governance ROI by linking maturity score to risk capital reduction and improved forecast accuracy.
4. Knowledge Transfer & Succession	Formal handover process for governance roles, decision rights, and audit protocols to internal leaders.	Decouples capability from external resources; ensures resilience through internal ownership.
5. Continuous Learning Cadence	Quarterly reaffirmation of *The Acorn Foundation* commitments as part of each S.A.S. cycle, integrating feedback into the governance model.	Keeps recovery behaviours active and self-reinforcing.

Embedding Governance as an Asset

Governance, once restored, becomes an economic asset — reducing wasted spend, improving forecast accuracy, and accelerating decision throughput.
KPMG (2021) shows that organisations with strong project controls improve profitability by **75 %.**
High-maturity PMOs achieve up to **67 % fewer project failures** and are **77 % more likely to meet original goals** (Iseo Blue 2023).

These metrics translate directly into *Governance ROI*: lower variance, reduced risk capital, and improved delivery confidence.
The S — Sustain phase turns these gains from temporary recovery benefits into permanent institutional value.

Output: The Embedded Change Playbook

The final deliverable of the G.R.I.P.S. Framework — a comprehensive guide for the Executive Sponsor Group and PMO, containing:

- Defined roles and responsibilities for governance ownership.
- Templates for quarterly audits, decision-velocity tracking, and maturity scoring.
- Renewal schedule for *The Acorn Foundation Charter*.
- KPI dashboard linking governance metrics to financial outcomes.

This Playbook ensures that every future programme inherits the discipline born from recovery — transforming reactive rescue into predictable performance.

The Sustainability Principle

“The ultimate measure of recovery is the successful institutional transfer of control.”

Section 8 - G.R.I.P.S. Programme Recovery Framework

From Crisis to Capability — A Structured Path to Restored Control

Every failed programme tells the same story twice: what went wrong operationally, and what broke down in governance.
The G.R.I.P.S. Framework turns that insight into a disciplined, five-phase process for diagnosing, realigning, and sustaining delivery under renewed executive control.

Each phase is anchored by a tangible governance tool — a deliverable that converts leadership insight into organisational action.
Together, they form a complete system for transforming failure into resilience.

G — Govern: The Early Warning Checklist

Restoring Control Through Visibility

When governance begins to erode, the early signs are rarely technical — they're behavioural. Meetings lengthen while decisions stall. Reports multiply but insight disappears. Sponsors stop asking *"what do we know?"* and start asking *"who said that?"*

The **Early Warning Checklist** is designed to catch those moments before they become crises. It's not a form to fill out — it's a structured conversation between the PMO, Programme Director, and Executive Sponsors to assess the health of visibility, decision-making, and confidence.

Purpose
To identify and quantify the systemic indicators of governance drift, establishing a politically neutral baseline for immediate recovery planning.

How It Works
Ten governance indicators are assessed across four lenses: Leadership, Decision Rights, Delivery Control, and Culture.
Each question is rated Red, Amber, or Green — not to score performance, but to surface truth without fear.

Example Indicators

- **Sponsor Visibility:** Is the Executive Sponsor visibly engaged?
- **Decision Rights:** Are decision-making roles clear and followed?
- **Reporting Rhythm:** Are progress updates accurate, consistent, and meaningful?
- **Change Control:** Are scope changes quantified before approval?
- **Communication Flow:** Are messages consistent and trusted across teams?

Interpreting Results

- **3+ Reds:** Immediate intervention — activate the *Root* phase.
- **Predominantly Amber:** Initiate *Integrate* (Leadership Alignment).
- **Predominantly Green:** Continue cadence; review quarterly.

Output: *Programme Vital Signs Report* — a one-page, non-political summary of top risks and next steps.
Executive Impact: Shared visibility, early intervention, and accountability without blame.

"The value isn't in the score — it's in the shared governance conversation that restores leadership confidence and forces objective action."

R — Root: The Root Cause Interview Guide

Finding Truth Without Fear

When programmes fail, the instinct is to assign blame. The Root phase replaces blame with evidence.
Its purpose is simple: to understand **why** the governance system failed, not *who* failed within it.

This is the phase that demands an **Independent Diagnostic Authority** — politically neutral, trusted by both delivery teams and sponsors — to uncover the structural, cultural, and leadership realities behind the data revealed in *Govern*.

Purpose
To uncover systemic causes of failure through structured, evidence-based interviews that reveal how governance truly operates versus how it is documented.

How It Works
Interviews are conducted across three tiers:

- **Strategic:** Executive Sponsors and Steering Committees — decision rights, accountability, tone from the top.
- **Operational:** Programme Managers — cadence, reporting integrity, escalation.
- **Delivery & Customer:** Team Leads and Partners — culture, collaboration, and customer focus.

Interview Framework (Examples)

- *"Who makes the final call on major decisions?"*
- *"Do reports reflect reality?"*
- *"How comfortable are you raising bad news upward?"*
- *"What's the one thing leadership could do differently to help you succeed?"*

Findings are synthesised into a **Root Cause Map**, clustering issues into five systemic domains:

1. Governance Design
2. Leadership Alignment
3. Information Integrity
4. Cultural Resilience
5. Customer Connection

Output: *Root Cause Diagnostic Framework* and *Root Cause Map.*
Executive Impact: Objective evidence base for decisions, depoliticised crisis management, and cross-leadership trust.

"Truth without fear is the foundation of recovery."

I — Integrate: The Leadership Alignment Charter

Building The Acorn Foundation — Where Recovery Takes Root

If *Govern* exposed the warning signs and *Root* revealed the causes, *Integrate* is where renewal begins.
This is the pivotal moment when sponsors commit to **The Acorn Foundation** — the unified base from which every future decision, resource, and message must grow.

The **Leadership Alignment Charter** is that foundation. It formalises authority, cadence, and behaviour under a single, signed agreement.

Purpose
To rebuild trust, authority, and shared ownership by codifying the commitments that define the recovery's foundation — *The Acorn Foundation*.

How It Works — The Five Stages

1. **Define The Acorn Foundation** — Reaffirm the shared purpose and outcome of recovery.
2. **Clarify Decision Rights** — Define mandatory DACI/RASCI roles, including budget and scope authority, and the consequence for bypassing them.
3. **Establish Governance Cadence** — Define meeting rhythm, escalation routes, and reporting timelines.
4. **Agree Behavioural Commitments** — Transparency, unity, accountability, and one voice.
5. **Sign & Communicate** — Sponsors sign, **countersigned by General Counsel or Chief Risk Officer**, stored as the definitive governance source document.

Review Cadence
Mandatory reaffirmation at the start of every major phase and quarterly as part of the *S — Sustain* audit.

Output: *The Acorn Foundation — Signed Leadership Alignment Charter.*
Executive Impact: Ends political fragmentation, rebuilds authority, and makes unity visible.

"Before you fix the plan, fix the foundation."
The Acorn Foundation is the shared base from which governance grows — the unshakeable root of recovery.

P — Perform: The Recovery Roadmap Template

The S.A.S. Reset — Stabilise, Accelerate, Sustain

The Perform phase is the engine of recovery. It operationalises the leadership unity and governance clarity established in *The Acorn Foundation* and channels them into measurable progress. It provides a repeatable 90-day rhythm for demonstrating control, delivering quick wins, and maintaining confidence across the organisation.

Purpose
To restore rhythm, rebuild trust, and deliver measurable outcomes through disciplined, time-bound execution cycles.

How It Works — The 90-Day S.A.S. Reset

Phase	Focus	Key Activities	Deliverables
1. Stabilise (Weeks 1–3)	Establish control and visibility.	Confirm scope, verify financial baseline, reset cadence, communicate leadership alignment.	*Stabilisation Report*, *Baseline Dashboard*
2. Accelerate (Weeks 4–8)	Deliver proof through momentum.	Execute critical path items, deliver three visible quick wins, track decision turnaround, enforce change discipline.	*Progress Dashboard*, *Quick-Win Showcase*
3. Sustain (Weeks 9–12)	Lock in rhythm and prepare next cycle.	Conduct lessons learned, plan next 90 days, reaffirm *Acorn Foundation* commitments.	*Next-Cycle Roadmap*, *Governance Review Report*

Core Components

- **Objectives & Metrics:** Confidence Index combining delivery predictability, sentiment, and risk exposure.
- **Risk & Change Discipline:** Logged changes linked to budget impact; issues escalated via *The Acorn Foundation Cadence* **must be resolved within 48 hours.**
- **Communication Framework:** Unified messaging — one truth, one voice.

Outputs:

- *Recovery Roadmap Template*
- *90-Day Governance Dashboard (Aligned to The Acorn Foundation)*

Executive Impact: Converts alignment into disciplined acceleration, restoring delivery confidence and proving control.

“Momentum is the proof of trust.”
The first 90 days aren’t for rebuilding everything — they’re for showing the organisation it can move again, on purpose and on plan.

S — Sustain: The Embedded Change Playbook

Institutionalising Resilience and Governance ROI

The final phase of recovery turns control into capability.
If *The Acorn Foundation* gave leadership its base, and *The S.A.S. Reset* delivered momentum, *Sustain* ensures that success endures — converting crisis into capability and capability into competitive advantage.

Purpose
To embed the governance behaviours, tools, and cadence developed during recovery into the organisation's operating DNA — turning short-term discipline into long-term value.

The Five Continuous Mechanisms

Mechanism	**Purpose**	**Example Activity**	**Deliverable**
1. Governance Memory	Preserve recovery knowledge and artefacts.	Archive Acorn Foundation, S.A.S. Dashboards, Root Cause Map.	*Governance Archive Index*
2. Continuous Audit	Ensure independent oversight of governance discipline.	**Mandatory, independent quarterly review** of adherence to *The Acorn Foundation* Decision Rights and 48-hour escalation protocols. Findings reported directly to Executive Sponsors.	*Governance Audit Report*
3. Capability Maturity Tracking	Quantify Governance ROI and predict risk reduction.	**Measure and predict governance maturity (1–5 scale)** across five systemic domains. Provides a predictive indicator of risk reduction and governance ROI.	*Governance Maturity Dashboard*
4. Knowledge Transfer	Institutionalise learning across teams.	Executive briefings and onboarding using real recovery cases.	*Learning Pack / Case Digest*
5. Cultural Anchoring	Reinforce governance as leadership behaviour.	"Governance Moments" at town halls; public leadership commitment to transparency.	*Cultural Reinforcement Plan*

Outputs:

- *Embedded Change Playbook (Governance Operating Manual)*
- *Quarterly Governance Audit Report*
- *Governance Maturity Dashboard*

Executive Impact:

- Converts governance discipline into measurable ROI.
- Institutionalises resilience and accountability.
- Prevents relapse into crisis management culture.

"The only sustainable dividend of crisis is governance."
The strength of a recovery is measured by the cost of the next crisis it prevents.

The G.R.I.P.S. Loop: Continuous Control

Each phase of the framework feeds the next:

- **G → R:** Early warning triggers diagnosis.
- **R → I:** Diagnosis demands alignment.
- **I → P:** Alignment enables execution.
- **P → S:** Execution delivers lessons for resilience.
- **S → G:** Resilience renews governance oversight.

The result is a closed governance loop — a living system of detection, diagnosis, alignment, acceleration, and sustainability.

Appendix A — Evidence Base: The Facts Behind G.R.I.P.S.

Independent research and board-level benchmarks underpinning The Programme Recovery Imperative.

Overview

The following data synthesises authoritative sources (McKinsey, PMI, KPMG, BCG, UK IPA, and others) from 2012 – 2025 to provide factual evidence for the G.R.I.P.S. Programme Recovery Framework.
These findings confirm that programme failure is not primarily a technical issue, but a governance and leadership challenge — and that disciplined sponsorship, decision rights, and cadence yield measurable ROI.

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1. Executive Summary / The Governance Imperative

Key Statistic	Source & Year
70 % of all projects fail to deliver what was promised.	TeamStage, 2024
$1 million is wasted every 20 seconds globally due to poor project-management practice — ≈ $2 trillion per year.	TeamStage, 2024
Large IT projects (> $15 m) run 45 % over budget, 7 % over schedule and deliver 56 % less value.	McKinsey, 2012
Organisations waste $114 m for every $1 bn spent on failed or delayed initiatives.	KPMG, 2021
Only 48 % of projects are judged successful on value delivered.	PMI NPSS Report, 2024

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2. Why Programmes Fail

Key Statistic	Source & Year
44 % of projects fail due to poor alignment with business objectives; 41 % cite inadequate sponsor support.	PM360 Consulting, 2023
Average cost overrun 27 %; 74 % of projects delivered late.	Project.co, 2024
Decisions made within 1 hour achieve 68 % success vs 18 % after 5 hours.	ScrumInc., 2018
Technical debt = 40 % of IT balance sheets; adds 10–20 % extra cost.	McKinsey, 2023

Key Statistic	Source & Year
Typical PMO maturity 61.4/100; top 10 % reach 94.9.	PMI/PwC Index, 2021

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3. Recognising Red Flags

Key Statistic	Source & Year
UK road projects record cost overruns 69 % of the time — highest in Europe.	IPA / NAO Analysis, 2023
High turnover in steering groups and unclear escalation paths are top causes of failure.	Chartered IIA, 2023
Independent assurance reviews detect and correct major risks early.	Cutter Associates, 2021

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4. Root Cause Diagnosis

Key Statistic	Source & Year
Teams with high psychological safety produce 10× more patents and 50 % more ideas.	Digital Project Manager, 2024
Psychologically safe teams are 25 % more collaborative and 20 % more productive.	Digital Project Manager, 2024
Independent project assurance accelerates benefits realisation and risk reduction.	GOV.UK IPA Guide, 2021

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5. Leadership Alignment / The Acorn Foundation

Key Statistic	Source & Year
Projects with active C-suite sponsors are 30 % more likely to succeed.	Gartner (via Avatier), 2025
Strong sponsorship raises success from 29 % to 72 %.	Prosci (via nBold), 2024
High-maturity organisations have 67 % fewer failures and 77 % higher goal achievement.	Iseo Blue, 2023
Clear decision-rights frameworks deliver 15 % IT, 10 % Finance and 5 % Marketing savings.	BCG OVIS, 2021

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6. Execution & Confidence / The S.A.S. Reset

Key Statistic	Source & Year
Projects delivering measurable value within 90 days are 2.4× more likely to retain sponsorship.	Ping Identity (via Avatier), 2025
High-agility organisations achieve 76 % success vs 67 % for low agility.	PMI Agility Report, 2025
90-day action plans map high-cost problems to ROI and increase technology value alignment.	Food Industry Executive, 2025
Once daily planning cycles are adopted, leaders rarely revert to monthly cadence.	McKinsey Resilience Report, 2021

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7. Institutionalising Resilience / Sustain

Key Statistic	Source & Year
Effective project controls improve profitability by 75.5 %.	KPMG, 2021
Top 10 % PMOs (94.9 maturity) deliver consistently stronger outcomes.	PMI/PwC Index, 2021
High-agility organisations lose 25 % of budget vs 30 % for low agility.	PMI Agility Report, 2025
Quarterly governance audits significantly reduce relapse into crisis management.	Oak Consult Model, 2025 derived insight

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8. Validation / Comparative Frameworks

Key Statistic	Source & Year
The UK IPA Project Routemap improves decision speed and benefits realisation via clearer governance.	GOV.UK IPA Routemap, 2022
Structured decision-rights frameworks (e.g. OVIS) cut costs by 5–15 % across functions.	BCG OVIS, 2021
Proven PM practices reduce wasted resources by ×28.	TeamStage, 2024
High-maturity governance models demonstrate measurable Governance ROI and resilience.	Synthesis of sources, 2025

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Section 2 — Root Cause / The Governance Gap

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The Empirical Reality of IT Project Cost Overruns: Discovering a Power-Law Distribution — Bent Flyvbjerg et al., Journal of Management Information Systems (2022) — Quantitative study proving fat-tailed cost-overrun distributions in IT and infrastructure projects.

Overspend? Late? Failure? What the Data Say About IT Project Risk in the Public Sector — Budzier & Flyvbjerg (2013) — Benchmark paper on public-sector IT risk factors and statistical variance drivers.

Why Your IT Project May Be Riskier Than You Think — Harvard Business Review (2011) — Classic overview of behavioural and governance root causes behind project overruns.

Section 3 / 4 — Diagnostic & Integrate (Governance Maturity / Acorn Foundation)

What You Should Know About Megaprojects and Why: An Overview — Bent Flyvbjerg, Project Management Journal (2014) — Seminal framework defining strategic misrepresentation and optimism bias.

The Art of Project Leadership: Delivering the World's Largest Projects — McKinsey & Company (2020) — Identifies governance alignment and leadership cadence as critical differentiators of large-programme success.

Section 5 / 6 / 7 — Execution / Sustain / Embedded Change

Capital Projects 5.0: Re-imagining Capital-Project Delivery — McKinsey & Company (2023) — Guidance on embedding digital governance dashboards and decision-velocity metrics.

Unlocking the Potential of Public-Sector IT Projects — McKinsey & Company (2021) — Reviews structural reforms to restore delivery confidence and transparency in government programmes.

Improving Project Development and Delivery — Voices on Infrastructure — McKinsey Global Infrastructure Initiative (2021) — Case-based evidence linking governance cadence to measurable ROI.

Different Cost Performance: The Case of Cost Overruns in Dutch Transportation Infrastructure Projects — Cantarelli et al. (2013) — Empirical analysis of cost-performance variance and controllable governance levers.

Cost Overruns of Infrastructure Projects — Distributions, Causes and Risk — ScienceDirect (2025) — Latest meta-study consolidating cross-sector cost-overrun distributions and systemic risk factors.

Appendix B — Glossary of Terms

Acorn Foundation: The formal governance foundation established during the Integrate phase — where leadership alignment, decision rights, and cadence are codified.

Artefact: A tangible governance deliverable produced in each G.R.I.P.S. phase (e.g., Charter, Dashboard, Playbook).

Decision Velocity: The measurable speed at which key programme decisions move from proposal to approval; a core indicator of governance health.

Executive Dividend: The strategic return to leadership clarity and credibility once governance is restored.

G.R.I.P.S. Framework: Oak Consult's five-phase Programme Recovery Framework: Govern, Root, Integrate, Perform, Sustain.

Governance Drift: The gradual erosion of control, visibility, and accountability that precedes project failure.

Governance Memory: The institutional knowledge and discipline preserved through the Embedded Change Playbook.

Leadership Alignment Charter: The signed governance contract defining decision rights, cadence, and escalation protocols across sponsors.

People Dividend: The renewed energy, ownership, and accountability released when governance becomes empowerment.

Programme Vital Signs Report: A one-page early-warning dashboard showing programme health across ten indicators (RAG-rated).

Root Cause Diagnostic Report: The formal evidence pack identifying systemic governance failures and prioritised interventions.

Sustain Phase: The final G.R.I.P.S. phase embedding governance into organisational culture through audits, dashboards, and learning cadence.

Three Lenses of Governance: Leadership / Our People / Customer — the perspectives through which the Acorn Foundation operates.

Three Dividends of Governance: Executive, People, and Customer Dividends — the measurable outcomes of restored control.

Decision Rights Matrix (DACI / RASCI): A governance accountability map defining who makes, approves, consults, and is informed for key programme decisions.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA): A structured method of identifying the behavioural and structural causes of delivery failure, not just technical faults.

Maturity Model: A governance assessment tool measuring process strength and consistency across defined domains on a staged scale.

Early Warning Indicators (RAG): Behavioural and systemic indicators rated Red, Amber, or Green to quantify governance drift and trigger intervention.