

FREE AUDIT TOOL

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PLANNING

Audit Objective Builder Tool

Turn a broad audit request into clear, testable and outcome-focused objectives

1. Purpose & When to Use It

Use this tool when an engagement begins with a vague request such as 'review procurement', 'audit payroll' or 'look at access controls'. It helps convert the request into objectives that state what the audit will assess, against which expectation, and for what business outcome.

Use this tool when

- At the start of engagement planning
- When stakeholders disagree on what the audit should answer
- When scope creep is likely
- When an objective is activity-based rather than outcome-based

Core Inputs

1. Business process or topic	
2. Primary risk(s)	
3. Expected control outcome	
4. Applicable policy / rule / target	
5. Stakeholder concern	
6. Time period / entities	
7. Available evidence and data	

2. Decision / Scoring Matrix

Use this matrix as a disciplined prompt for professional judgment. Adapt thresholds to the organization, engagement risk and available evidence.

Dimension	Question	0	1	2
Outcome focus	Does the objective describe an outcome to assess?	No	Partly	Yes
Risk linkage	Is the objective linked to a specific risk?	No	Weak	Direct
Criteria	Is there a basis for judging performance?	None	Implied	Clear
Testability	Can evidence support a conclusion?	No	Somewhat	Yes
Scope fit	Can it be answered within the agreed scope?	No	Maybe	Yes

Judgment Notes

RECORD THE RATIONALE BEHIND YOUR DECISION

3. Working Sheet

Complete this page during planning or fieldwork. Keep entries brief, evidence-based and specific enough for another auditor to understand your reasoning.

Draft audit request	
What decision should the audit support?	
Primary risk to address	
Expected control / business outcome	
Criteria or benchmark	
Evidence likely to be available	
Draft objective	
Final objective after challenge	

4. Worked Example

The example shows the level of detail the tool is designed for. Replace it with your own engagement information.

Audit request	Review supplier management.
Risk	Unapproved or poorly performing suppliers create quality, cost and continuity exposure.
Criteria	Approved supplier policy, performance thresholds and contractual requirements.
Weak objective	Review supplier management process.
Improved objective	Assess whether supplier onboarding, approval and performance monitoring controls are designed and operating to keep supplier risk within approved requirements.

Auditor Reflection

What conclusion would you draw from this example? What evidence, challenge or additional test would you need before relying on it?

REFLECTION / NEXT STEP

5. Quick Reference

Five reminders to keep the tool practical and audit-ready.

- 1 Start with the business outcome, not the audit activity.
- 2 Use one main verb: assess, determine, evaluate or conclude.
- 3 Connect each objective to a risk and a criterion.
- 4 Avoid objectives that can only be answered with “we reviewed”.
- 5 If one objective needs five unrelated tests, split it.

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