WHITE PAPER

Achilles
Global Risk Management

Supplier Assurance and Business Resilience

PRACTICAL USE CASES, BUSINESS VALUE AND IMPLEMENTATION

How procurement leaders can use supplier intelligence and verified evidence to protect delivery, strengthen supplier performance and build a more resilient business.



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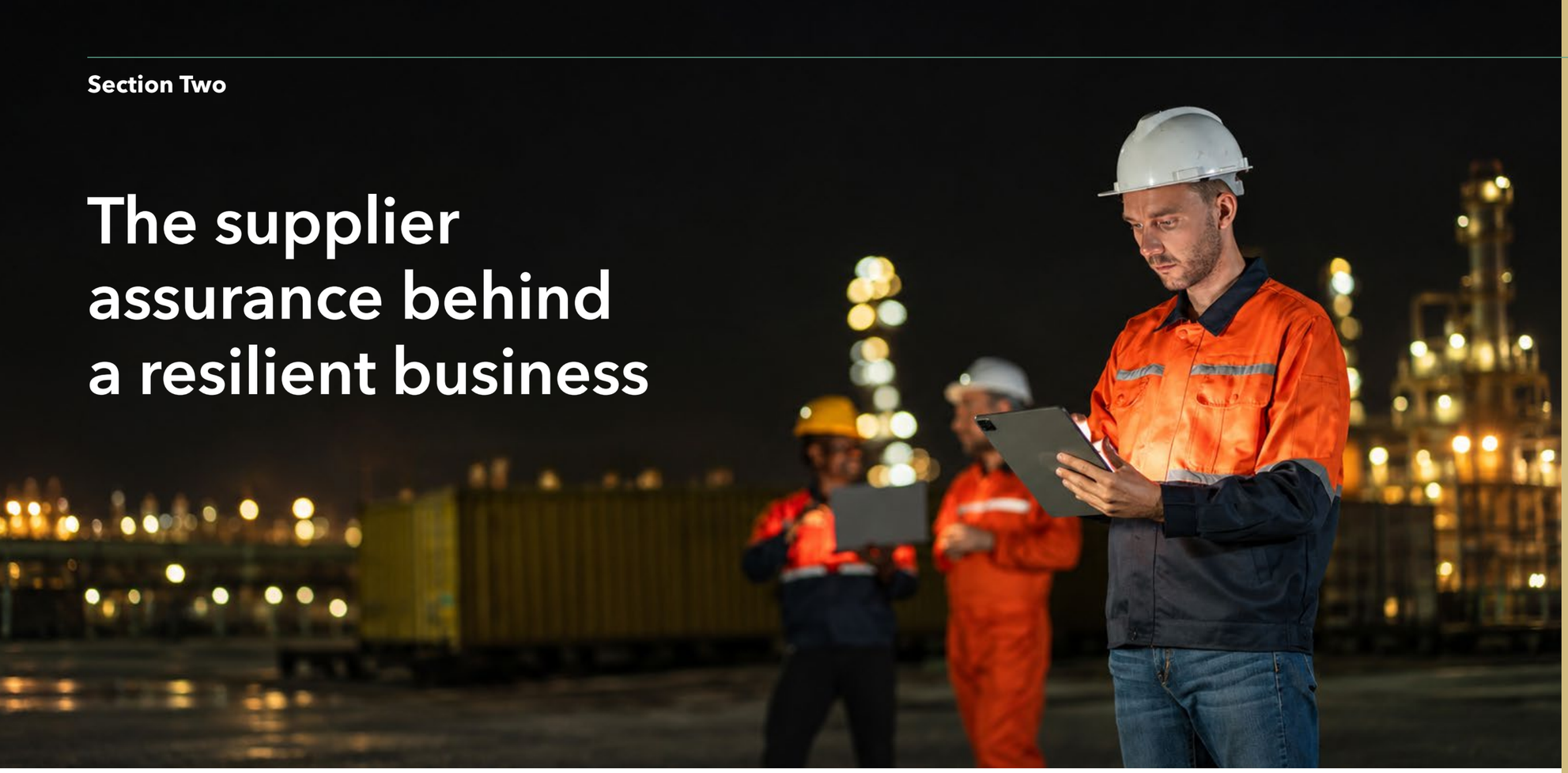
At a glance

- Business resilience depends partly on suppliers' ability to maintain essential services, work safely and respond to disruption.
- Supplier assurance provides evidence about whether suppliers have the capabilities and controls required for their work, and where improvements are needed.
- Practical applications include assessing financial exposure, verifying contractor safety arrangements, checking insurance and reviewing business continuity plans.
- Its value comes from reducing avoidable disruption and financial exposure, strengthening supplier performance and reducing duplicated administrative work.
- Assurance contributes to resilience when findings inform decisions, corrective actions and contingency arrangements. Collecting information alone is insufficient.



The supplier assurance behind a resilient business



An organization's ability to keep operating depends on businesses beyond its direct control. Suppliers and contractors maintain essential equipment, run facilities, provide technology and deliver projects. Their financial health, working practices and ability to respond to disruption all contribute to the resilience of the organization they serve.

For procurement leaders, this creates a strategic responsibility: understanding those dependencies well enough to identify vulnerabilities, challenge assumptions and recommend action before disruption limits the choices available.

Supplier assurance provides an evidence base for those decisions. It brings together information and intelligence about financial stability, insurance coverage, safety, quality, workforce practices, sustainability and operational controls. Validation, assessment and ongoing monitoring help establish where confidence is justified and where improvement, closer oversight or contingency planning is needed.

Most organizations already hold information that provides a useful starting point. But it is often incomplete, fragmented across teams or difficult to interpret. Enriching existing records with supplier intelligence, assessment history and benchmarking creates a clearer picture of supplier capabilities and emerging pressures. Integrating that insight into procurement and operational systems helps teams act on it, strengthening resilience and reducing exposure to supplier risks that can affect operational performance, reputation and business growth.

This guide explores how that approach works in practice. It examines the business problems supplier assurance helps address, its applications across key risk areas and the value it can create. It also considers how organizations can focus assurance effort where it matters most and build on the data and systems they already have.

Procurement is on the front line of business resilience in a volatile and unpredictable global market. Supplier assurance strengthens its ability to lead: focusing resources where they matter most, bringing informed recommendations to leadership conversations and driving action to protect operations, reputation and growth.

What does this guide cover?

This guide explains how procurement, risk, operations and health and safety teams can use supplier assurance to support business resilience.

It covers:

- **The business problems supplier assurance helps address**
- **Practical applications across common supplier risks**
- **How to match assurance requirements to business exposure**
- **Where the potential economic value comes from**
- **How to implement and evaluate an assurance program**



What problems does supplier assurance help address?

Organizations depend on suppliers and contractors whose capabilities, working practices and changing circumstances they may only partially understand. This makes it difficult to identify vulnerabilities, assess their significance and act before they affect the business.

Supplier records may be spread across procurement, finance and operational teams, leaving findings from one part of the organization unknown elsewhere. Assessments may rely on supplier declarations, with limited checking of supporting evidence. Different sites may apply different standards and information collected at onboarding can become outdated as the relationship develops.

Even where information is available, a lack of benchmarking against comparable suppliers can make it difficult to interpret performance, identify relative weaknesses and prioritize improvement. Together, these gaps limit the organization's ability to make informed supplier decisions, coordinate action and establish a reliable view of its exposure.

These weaknesses create several practical problems.

Supplier selection may overlook material exposures. Commercial and technical evaluations may establish price and suitability without adequately examining financial stability, safety practices or other controls relevant to delivery.

Problems may remain hidden until they affect operations. A supplier's circumstances can change between periodic reviews, leaving the buyer with less time to investigate and respond.

Lessons learned in one team may not reach another. A supplier concern identified by one department, site or region may remain unknown elsewhere. Other teams can continue using the same supplier without that knowledge, repeat assessments or encounter problems already experienced by colleagues.

Reporting may be incomplete or unreliable. Duplicate records, inconsistent definitions and multiple systems make it difficult to consolidate supplier information. Teams spend time reconciling data, while leadership struggles to establish a reliable view of supplier exposure, performance and outstanding actions.

Assessment findings may not lead to improvement. Identifying a weakness provides limited protection if nobody owns the action, agrees a deadline or checks that it has been resolved.

Assurance effort may be poorly allocated. Teams can spend considerable time collecting routine documents while having insufficient evidence about suppliers whose failure would seriously affect the business.

A structured assurance program helps address these problems through consistent requirements, shared supplier information and clear responsibilities for action. It gives teams a way to apply findings across the organization and build a more reliable basis for oversight and reporting.

What are the practical use cases?

Supplier assurance supports decisions throughout the supplier relationship: whether to appoint a provider, investigate an emerging concern, require improvements or prepare an alternative. Its contribution to resilience comes from connecting evidence about supplier capabilities and controls with the action needed to protect the business. The following use cases show how this works across financial health, safety, insurance and continuity and how findings can inform a coordinated response from procurement, risk and operational teams.

1. Assessing financial exposure in important suppliers

Financial difficulties can affect a supplier's ability to retain staff, maintain equipment, pay subcontractors or continue providing a service.

Supplier assurance incorporates financial intelligence alongside other supplier information, potentially providing a more cost-effective way to access it than purchasing a standalone financial risk solution. It also provides context for interpreting financial findings alongside other indicators of supplier health. Deteriorating safety performance, recurring quality failures or rising employee turnover may reveal operational pressures that financial data alone does not capture.

For example, a decline in a supplier's financial position alongside increasing safety incidents, overdue equipment maintenance and the loss of experienced staff may warrant closer investigation. Considering these signals together helps teams assess whether financial pressure is affecting the supplier's ability to operate safely and reliably.

A concern can then be investigated with finance, operational owners and the supplier. Depending on the findings, the buyer might introduce closer oversight, work with the supplier to support continuity or begin qualifying an alternative.

The value comes from connecting financial intelligence to the supplier's role in the business and using that understanding to guide action.

2. Verifying contractor health and safety arrangements

Contractor failures can cause serious injury or fatalities, interrupt operations and delay projects. Serious incidents or a pattern of poor safety performance can also damage the reputation of the organization engaging the contractor. The relevant exposure depends on the activity: working at height, maintaining electrical equipment and providing office-based advice require different controls.

Supplier assurance assesses how a company manages health and safety across its operations. This can include its policies, management responsibilities, training, incident history and corrective actions. Reviewing supporting evidence and, for higher-risk activities, undertaking audits helps establish whether those arrangements are applied in practice.

Where contractors undertake work on the buyer's sites, an additional level of assurance is needed. Relevant checks can cover the qualifications and competencies





of assigned workers, vehicle inspections, and equipment maintenance and testing records.

Together, these provide evidence of both the contractor's ability to manage safety and whether the people and equipment deployed meet the requirements for the work. Findings can inform supplier improvement, mobilization and site access decisions, helping reduce the risk of incidents and disruption.

3. Checking insurance against business requirements

Insurance is one part of the financial protection behind a supplier relationship. Missing, expired or insufficient cover can leave the buyer exposed when an incident occurs.

Supplier assurance checks insurance information against the buyer's requirements. Where digital insurance verification is available, it can also monitor for changes such as cancellation, expiry or reduced coverage during the relationship.

For example, a contractor may meet insurance requirements when appointed but subsequently allow a policy to lapse. Identifying that change promptly enables the buyer to seek renewed cover or take other appropriate action.

This helps maintain the risk transfer intended when the supplier was appointed, rather than relying on insurance evidence collected only at onboarding.

4. Reviewing business continuity and recovery arrangements

A supplier's confirmation that it has a continuity plan leaves important questions unanswered. Does the plan cover the service being purchased? Has it been tested? Does it depend on another organization that could be affected by the same disruption?

For critical suppliers, assurance can examine the scope of continuity arrangements, evidence of testing and recovery assumptions.

If a provider expects to restore service within five days but the buyer can tolerate only one day, the assessment has identified a specific gap. The buyer can then consider additional arrangements, revised commitments or an alternative source of support.

The useful outcome is an understanding of whether the arrangements fit the buyer's needs and what remains to be addressed.

5. Assessing alternative suppliers before they are needed

Alternative suppliers strengthen resilience when the business has evidence that they can take on the work and meet the required standards. A list of potential providers leaves important questions unanswered about capability, compliance, financial stability and previous performance.

Supplier assurance helps build that understanding before an alternative is needed. Assessment can examine relevant experience, qualifications, safety and quality controls, insurance and continuity arrangements. Available performance history, audit findings and corrective actions can provide further insight into how the supplier operates and whether previous weaknesses have been addressed.

An established prequalified supplier network can make this preparation more efficient by providing access to existing information and assessment history. Teams can use that evidence to identify credible candidates and focus further checks on the requirements specific to their business.

For example, an alternative maintenance contractor may have the technical expertise required but still need to demonstrate experience with particular equipment, provide qualified personnel or meet site-specific safety requirements. Identifying those gaps early creates time to resolve them. Alongside confirming capacity, commercial terms and transition arrangements, this gives procurement a more credible contingency option.

The result is a better-prepared choice, with clearer evidence of what the supplier can deliver and what remains to be done before it can take over.

6. Turning weaknesses into supplier improvement

Replacing an important supplier may be costly, disruptive or impractical. Improving its controls can sometimes provide a better outcome.

Assurance findings can support a corrective action plan with clear responsibilities, deadlines and evidence requirements. This might address gaps in safety management, continuity planning or other relevant practices.

Tracking performance helps the buyer distinguish between an issue that has been acknowledged and one that has been resolved. Significant overdue actions can then be escalated or reflected in decisions about future work.

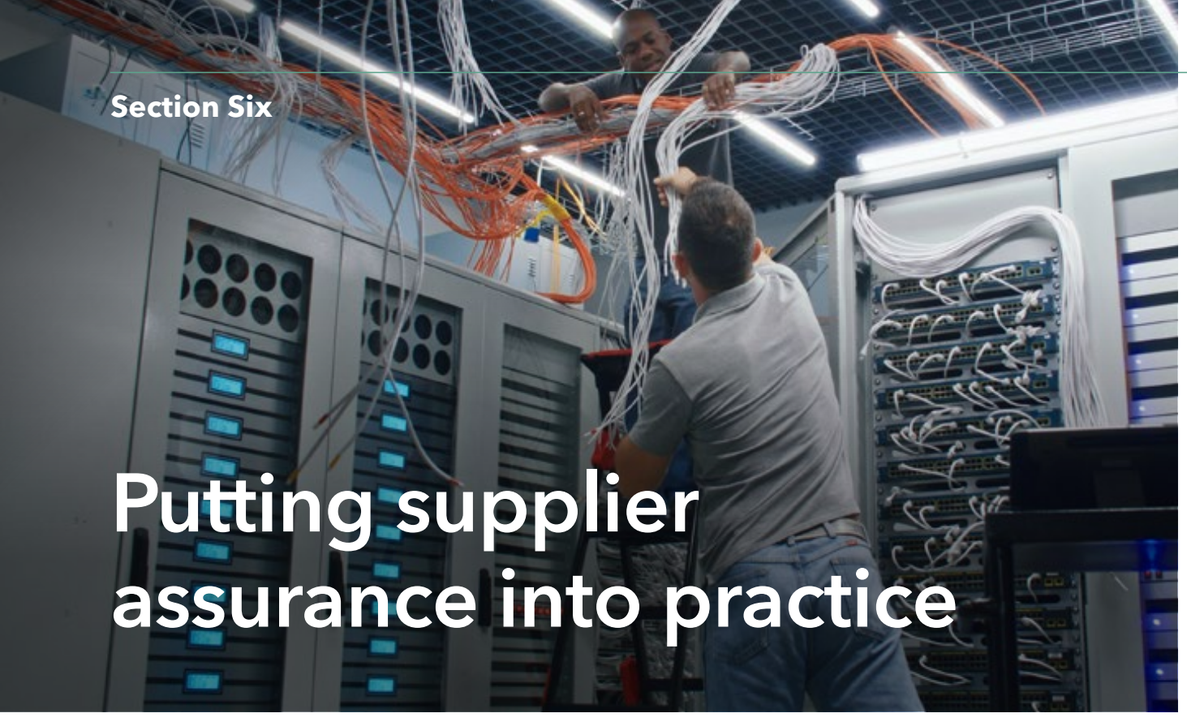
Where does supplier assurance create business value?

Supplier assurance can help procurement protect delivery, simplify supplier management and make better use of specialist resources. Bringing information and assessment together gives teams a clearer basis for deciding where to act and reduces the effort spent collecting and reconciling evidence.

The following areas provide a practical starting point for identifying value and demonstrating progress.

Source of value	Business benefit	How to demonstrate progress
More efficient assessment	Reusable evidence and coordinated reviews release time for supplier engagement and improvement	Time released, fewer duplicate requests and lower assessment costs
Smoother onboarding and mobilization	Earlier identification and resolution of gaps help suppliers become ready to start work	Faster resolution of outstanding requirements and fewer delays
Stronger supplier controls	Targeted improvements support safer, more reliable delivery	Corrective actions completed, fewer repeat findings and improving performance
Better-prepared alternatives	Assessed suppliers give the business more practical options when circumstances change	Qualification steps completed and greater readiness to transition work
More focused oversight	Teams direct expertise towards suppliers and issues with the greatest business significance	Stronger coverage of critical suppliers and timely action on material concerns





Section Six

Putting supplier assurance into practice

Introducing supplier assurance often means connecting and enriching information the business already holds. Supplier records, operational knowledge and previous assessments provide a foundation. The opportunity is to combine them with wider intelligence and verified evidence, then make that insight available to the teams making decisions.

This creates a progressive approach: establish what is known, investigate the gaps that matter and deepen assurance as the evidence warrants. Existing ERP and procurement systems remain central, supported by a richer understanding of suppliers and their changing circumstances.

1. Establish a more complete supplier picture

Supplier information often sits across several systems and teams. Finance holds payment and company records, procurement holds contracts and assessments, and operational colleagues understand the work being delivered. In global organizations or those with divisional structures, this complexity increases as regions and business units use different systems, standards and processes. Connecting these sources helps reveal where information is missing or inconsistent, and where findings from one team could inform decisions elsewhere.

Achilles enriches that starting point with millions of supplier data points drawn from over 35 years of experience across 142 countries. Matching records against the Achilles network can provide access to existing supplier information, validated evidence and assessment history, helping teams establish what is already available before requesting more.

That history adds context to individual findings. Audit outcomes, corrective actions and performance trends can help distinguish a recurring weakness from one that is being addressed. Benchmarking against comparable suppliers provides a further basis for interpreting performance and identifying areas for improvement.

The result is a stronger foundation for deciding what needs further attention.

2. Use the evidence to focus deeper assurance

A more complete supplier picture allows procurement to bring business dependency and supplier risk into the same assessment. Operational knowledge explains the potential consequences of failure; supplier intelligence helps identify weaknesses that could contribute to it.

These perspectives are most useful together. Deteriorating financial indicators may warrant closer investigation when accompanied by rising employee turnover, recurring quality failures or worsening safety performance. The response will also depend on the service involved and the organization's ability to maintain delivery if that supplier encounters difficulties.

External screening can establish an initial view across a broad supplier population. Targeted engagement and evidence review can then investigate specific concerns, with independent assessment or audits providing greater depth where needed.

This directs effort towards unresolved questions and significant exposures. It also helps make supplier engagement more purposeful: requests for information follow from what is already known and what the business needs to establish.

3. Connect findings to improvement and oversight

Assurance findings should shape how the supplier relationship is managed. A gap may call for additional evidence, a corrective action plan, specialist review or closer monitoring. A more significant concern may inform contract conditions, contingency preparations or decisions about further work.

A shared view allows procurement, operations and specialist teams to coordinate that response. It also helps ensure that a concern identified at one location is considered wherever else the supplier operates on a company's behalf.

As improvements are completed, the evidence becomes part of the supplier's history. Subsequent reviews can examine whether the underlying weakness has been addressed and whether performance is being sustained. Changes in scope or emerging concerns can prompt further assessment, keeping oversight relevant throughout the relationship.

4. Integrate supplier intelligence where decisions happen

Integration with ERP and procurement systems brings supplier intelligence into the workflows teams already use. Relevant supplier status, risk indicators and assessment findings can inform sourcing, contract renewal and operational decisions, with direct data feeds supporting a more current and consistent view across the organization.

Achilles augments existing systems with additional intelligence and assurance. Linking that evidence to established supplier records helps teams apply a more consistent view across departments and sites, reduce manual reconciliation and strengthen reporting.

For procurement leaders, the result is a richer foundation for action and leadership conversations: clearer evidence of supplier vulnerabilities, their potential business implications and where intervention would make the greatest difference.

Putting procurement at the forefront of organizational resilience

Procurement is on the front line of managing the supplier relationships that keep the business operating. Supplier assurance strengthens its ability to lead that work, providing evidence of where vulnerabilities lie, which suppliers need attention and what action could protect delivery.

That insight supports a more strategic conversation with leadership colleagues. Procurement can explain how supplier weaknesses could affect business priorities, where investment is justified and which options would give the organization greater flexibility. It creates an opportunity to act before disruption forces the decision.

At Achilles, we support this role through a risk-based approach: bringing supplier information together, applying appropriate validation and assessment, and helping teams turn findings into improvement and closer oversight. This gives procurement a stronger foundation for building organizational resilience—and demonstrating its contribution to the business.



Build the evidence for your next step

A focused pilot can help procurement demonstrate where supplier assurance would make a difference. Start with a category, site or project where supplier failure could materially affect delivery or where your team lacks confidence in the information available.

Working with Achilles, bring together existing supplier records, establish what information is already available through our network and use initial risk screening to identify concerns for further investigation. Together, we can agree where deeper assessment would be useful and which findings warrant action.

The pilot gives you a practical basis for a leadership conversation: the weaknesses identified, their potential business implications, the actions recommended and the resources needed. It can also help establish the scope and business case for a wider program.

Talk to Achilles about an exploratory pilot built around a supplier challenge that matters to your business.



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