Engagement Conditions

Sattari · Systems Ontology · Version 1.0, November 3, 2026

What these conditions are

Every engagement Sattari takes on is governed by these eight conditions. They are not terms negotiated case by case. They follow from what the work is.

An engagement promises a true account of a system, made independently, for someone in a position to act on it. The conditions are what must hold for that promise to be kept. Some settle what the account can see, some keep it independent, and some make sure that what it finds can be used.

The conditions are published so that a sponsor knows them before the first conversation. They are tested at Charter, sponsor by sponsor, recorded in the charter, and confirmed in the first deliverable.

The eight conditions

1. **The sponsor owns the whole.** The sponsor holds authority over the whole of the system under reading: an agency head, a provost, an operating chief, a board. Faults are often found where parts meet, between units with different owners. A finding there can be acted on only by someone whose authority spans them. An engagement commissioned from within one part tends to draw the boundary where that part's authority ends, and its findings stop at that edge rather than reaching the fault. Where the parts answer to separate authorities with no common head, authority can be assembled: the sponsor holds authority over the organization or jurisdiction the system sits within, enough to commission a reading of the whole though not to direct every part, and every holder of a part essential to the whole commits in writing to give access to it and to receive the findings unedited. The boundary follows the system, not the commitments. If authority cannot be assembled, the engagement ends at the first deliverable, which says why.
2. **The purpose and the boundary are settled before analysis.** The first deliverable is the purpose and boundary judgment, in writing. It states what the system is for, from the sources that establish it, including any purposes that pull against each other. It states where the system ends for this engagement, why, and what lies just outside it. With it comes an inventory of what the work will need access to. It is made with the sponsor before any analysis begins, because the purpose is what the system is read against, and the boundary decides what can and cannot be seen. If they cannot be settled, the engagement ends there. Once they are settled, a change to either is a change order.
3. **Findings are delivered unedited.** A finding may land outside the department that raised the problem, and it must be allowed to. Because the boundary was drawn with the sponsor, both parties know in advance that this can happen. Before the report is final, the sponsor reviews a draft. Within the review period the charter sets, the sponsor may identify errors of fact in it (a date, a figure, a description of how something works) and give a written response to the

draft on any finding or point of fact. We correct the errors of fact the evidence confirms. Where a finding is located and what its nature is are matters of judgment; they change only on new evidence, not on request. Our written reply answers the response and says why we did not correct anything else the sponsor identified as an error. The response and our reply travel with the report. If the sponsor does not respond within the review period, the report is issued and states that no response was received.

4. **The purpose is one the engagement can honestly serve.** Every organization has a stated purpose and an operative one, and the two can diverge in any sector. In a public body the stated purpose is written in law (a statute, charter, court order), and the operative one may be preserving a budget or meeting a reporting target. In a company it may be a fiduciary obligation that overrides what the company says it is for. A reading of such a system names the divergence as its primary finding. If the sponsor's position prevents them from acting on that finding, the engagement cannot deliver what it promises. So the condition is tested at Charter, sponsor by sponsor, and again when the purpose is settled in the first deliverable: can this sponsor receive that finding and act on it? Where the answer is yes, we take the work.
5. **The conclusion is not reached in advance.** Where a conclusion about a person, a unit, or a vendor has already been reached and an engagement is wanted to support it, the engagement is declined. A reading locates findings. It does not confirm them. Commissioned to validate a conclusion already reached, it would be either dishonest or unwelcome, and neither serves the sponsor.
6. **The remedy is not chosen in advance.** Where the platform, vendor, or reorganization has already been chosen and an engagement is wanted as validation, it is declined. The direction of a remedy follows from the nature of the finding. If the remedy is already decided, the findings cannot change it, and findings that point elsewhere produce a report no one will use. A sponsor who wants a committed design reviewed on its merits is asking for a Design Derivation, and the engagement is framed as one.
7. **Access is given.** An engagement requires access to the documents, the people, and the system in operation. Without these it rests on representations, which is the condition it exists to diagnose. The charter names a point of contact for access and the time within which requests are met. The first deliverable then sets out the access the work requires, including any limits the law places on it; those limits are not a refusal. Where access is refused or materially restricted, the engagement is either rescoped to what can be read, stating what it could not see, or declined.
8. **Independence is kept, and stated.** We take no payment, commission, or other benefit from any vendor, integrator, or firm for a finding that points toward its products or services. Our fees are fixed before the work they pay for, and are never contingent on the content of a finding or on any outcome. We do not oversee the construction of a system we specified, or grade a system on which we hold an advisory seat, without disclosure and the sponsor's informed consent. Any prior role we have had in the system under reading is stated in the charter, and the sponsor decides whether to proceed.

How the conditions are applied

The conditions are tested before work begins and written into the charter (for a public body, the scope of services attached to the agency's own agreement). The charter records the sponsor and their authority over the system, the purpose as the sponsor gives it, the boundary as first proposed, the access arrangement, and any prior role we have had in the system. The first deliverable settles the purpose and the boundary and confirms that the conditions hold. Specialists we engage are bound by these conditions. Where these conditions and our Standard Terms of Engagement differ, these conditions govern how the work is done. They are not a warranty or a guarantee that every finding is correct. Questions of legal responsibility, including the care we owe, the limits of our liability, and how a pause or an ending takes effect, are settled by the terms of the engagement.

A condition can also fail after the work has begun. The sponsor may leave their post with no successor named, access may be withdrawn, the client may refuse to accept the report unless a finding is changed, or it may turn out that the engagement was commissioned to confirm a conclusion or remedy already decided. When that happens:

- The work pauses, and we tell the sponsor, or their successor, which condition has failed and why.
- If the condition can be restored, the work resumes where it stopped.
- If it cannot, the engagement ends. What was completed is delivered as it stands, marked with what it could not finish, and the fee is settled for the work done, as the terms of the engagement set out.

No engagement continues on a condition that has failed. A report finished under those terms would carry the firm's name and none of its independence.