

Chapter 3

Decision Packages

3.1 WHAT IS A DECISION PACKAGE?

What is a decision package?

Decision packages are the key set of building blocks to construct the budget request. The decision package is the place for the agency to make a persuasive case for any proposed changes. OFM will rely upon this information when evaluating the request.

Decision packages organize and describe proposed cost changes in a way that highlights the budget decisions. The decision package consolidates financial information, supporting justification and statement of impact for a specific action or policy proposed in the budget. One decision package describes a proposed item of change listed on the RecSum.

BDS assists agencies in developing budget decision packages. It also automatically displays the expenditure, revenue and FTE detail that agencies enter into the system rolled up to the selected level (agency or program) for the decision package report.

When is a decision package needed?

A decision package is required for all incremental changes to the current biennial budget except for carry-forward roll-up and the maintenance level adjustment to activities.

Agency request legislation decision packages must be submitted with the budget

If an agency submits proposed agency request legislation with a budget impact, a corresponding decision package must be included in the agency budget submittal. Decision packages should be prepared at the required *budget* level (agency level except for those agencies listed in Chapter 1.2), but should always describe which *programs* and *activities* are affected by the request.

Decision packages should represent discrete decisions

Each decision package will appear as one line with a *positive* or *negative* amount in the RecSum and should represent a discrete budget decision. Craft your decision packages so related items are grouped together, but do not obscure or combine separate decisions. The budget decision hinges on the stated performance objective or outcome being addressed.

Example: Seven new driver's license examining stations are proposed to expand geographic coverage and reduce client waiting time.

The performance objective in this case is singular (e.g., expanding coverage and reducing wait times). While the location of the examining stations is a necessary component of meeting the objective, the location of each station is not a separate budget decision. In this case, the agency would submit one decision package.

Contact your [assigned budget analyst](#) if you have questions about how best to organize budget requests into decision packages.

Budget requests should be anchored to the agency’s strategic plan

OFM expects agency budget requests, including budget reductions, to be anchored to the agency’s strategic plan and clearly support the implementation of these strategies and achievement of performance targets.

Use Plain Talk principles

Your decision packages will be persuasive only if OFM analysts and decision makers can understand them. Use Plain Talk principles. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Keep your writing brief and clear.

Be clear and complete, and anticipate questions

The time available for budget review is scarce and the capacity for rounds of questions on agency decision packets is very limited. OFM is likely to require agencies to rework decision packages if they are unclear, if requested information is missing, if assumptions are incomplete or if expected performance impacts are not explained.

3.2 REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A DECISION PACKAGE

OFM uses the decision package information to evaluate the merit of your requests

Decision packages are composed of elements for key information OFM needs to analyze the request. We expect justification materials to vary in length and complexity, depending on the proposal.

Make your decision package concise and compelling. Avoid jargon and acronyms. This document should be understandable by an audience that is not expert on your agency or the issues.

BDS will export the decision package metadata, financial detail and RecSum text that agencies will copy to the Decision Package Template found at Template.



Use approved codes to designate change items

With few exceptions (see following note), agencies are free to use any combination of two-digit RecSum codes (e.g., Alpha/Alpha, Alpha/Numeric, Numeric/Numeric and Numeric/Alpha). RecSum codes are called decision package codes in BDS, and the terms are used interchangeably in this document.



Note: OFM designates codes that must be used for certain types of maintenance and performance level changes (see Chapter 5.2). RecSum codes containing the letter O or the letter I are not allowed to prevent confusion with zero and one.

Note: BDS reports will sort RecSum codes as follows:

1. AA to ZZ
2. A0 to Z9
3. 00 to 99
4. 0A to 9Z



The decision package has the following required elements

- BDS (BASS – BDS017 Report) will export the following data for inclusion in your Word-created decision package document:

- ✓ **Agency:** Agency number and name (BDS)
- ✓ **Decision Package Code/Title:** 2-digit RecSum code and short, descriptive title, limited to 35 characters. This will appear on RecSum reports (BDS)
- ✓ **Budget Period:** Biennium for which appropriation is requested (BDS)
- ✓ **Budget Level:** Maintenance level or policy/performance level RecSum code (BDS)
- ✓ **Agency Recommendation Summary Text:** Brief description of the decision package, written in complete sentences. This text will be loaded into the OFM Budget System and be the starting point for the text that describes items funded in the Governor’s budget. (BDS)
- ✓ **Fiscal Detail:** The operating expenditures by account and objects of expenditure; staffing detail by FTEs and revenue detail by account that agencies have entered into BDS for each decision package.

The agency must then also complete the required elements of the decision package in the Word template:

Package description

Detailed description of the proposal, including background or context for the proposed change, the current state, what is proposed and how it will improve the lives of Washingtonians. Agencies are strongly encouraged to use high-quality narrative descriptions, informative tables, charts, logic models, graphs, timelines, flowcharts, maps or other graphics to thoroughly describe the package and its justification.

High-quality descriptions will address the following questions:

- ✓ **What is the relevant history or context in which the decision package request is being made?**
- ✓ **Problem statement/current situation: What is the problem, opportunity or priority the agency is addressing with the request?** This description should allow OFM, the Governor and the Legislature to understand the nature of the proposal, including what is driving it, why it is important, who is affected by it and how they are affected.
- ✓ **Proposed solution: How does the agency propose to address this problem, opportunity or priority?**
- ✓ **How does the package relate to the agency’s strategic plan?**
- ✓ **Purchase description: What will the funding package actually buy? What services and/or materials will be provided, when and to whom? How will the purchases achieve the desired outputs, efficiencies and outcomes?**

Base budget

If the proposal is an expansion or alteration of a current program or service, provide information on the resources now devoted to the program or service. Include annual expenditures and FTEs by fund and activity (or provide working models or backup materials containing this information).

Decision package narrative expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions, calculations and details

Agencies must clearly articulate the workload or policy assumptions used in calculating expenditure and revenue changes proposed. Note: Use of separate attachments of fiscal models or detailed fiscal backup information is strongly encouraged.

Outline, in detail, the workload and policy assumptions the agency is making over the ensuing four fiscal years. Please identify:

- ✓ Expenditure information by fund source and object by fiscal year
- ✓ FTE information by job classification, including salary and FTEs by fiscal year
- ✓ Identify multiple cost/revenue components. Many decision packages contain multiple components to achieve a desired outcome. If this package contains discrete funding proposals, the fiscal models or details must break out the costs/savings of each component part.
- ✓ Identify one-time costs/revenues. Also clearly articulate all one-time expenditure or revenue components.

Decision Package Justification and Impacts

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

Describe and quantify the specific performance outcomes the agency expects as a result of this funding change, including which Results Washington goal areas will be affected. What outcomes and results will occur? What undesired results will be reduced or mitigated? How will efficiency increase? Will outputs change? How?

Performance measure detail

If one or more activity performance measures the agency reports in Results Washington or in the Results through Performance Management system are affected by the decision package, identify the expected incremental change in performance targets for each measure and for each applicable fiscal year if the decision package is adopted. Include any new performance measures and targets proposed. How will the agency measure its performance related to this decision package?

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents and specific populations served

Who will be affected by the package and how? How many clients will/will not be served? Include annual estimates when a service is expected to grow or decline over time.

What are the important connections or impacts related to this proposal?

Complete the following table and provide detailed explanations or information:

Impact(s) To:		Explanation/Information
Regional/county impacts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Other local gov't impacts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Tribal gov't impacts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Other state agency impacts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Responds to specific task force, report, mandate or exec order?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Does request contain a compensation change?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Does request require a change to a collective bargaining agreement?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Facility/workplace needs or impacts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Capital budget Impacts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Is change required to existing statutes, rules or contracts?	Select Y/N	Identify:_____
Is the request related to or a result of litigation?	Select Y/N	Identify lawsuit (please consult with Attorney General's Office):_____
Is the request related to Puget Sound recovery?	Select Y/N	If yes, see Budget Instructions Section 14.4 for additional instructions.
Identify other important connections		

Provide a detailed discussion of connections/impacts identified above.

What alternatives were explored by the agency and why was this option chosen?

What other options were explored? Describe the pros/cons of the alternatives and why they were not selected. Explain why this request is the best option.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

How has or can the agency address the issue or need in its current appropriation level?


Is this package a high-enough priority that the agency has or would reprogram current resources to accomplish it? If yes, what programs or services were/would be reprogrammed? How? With what consequences? What process improvements and best practices have been or will be undertaken to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process/program affected by this proposal?

Other supporting materials

Attach or reference any other supporting materials or information that will help analysts and policymakers understand and prioritize your request.

Information technology

Does this decision package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, services (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No 

Yes. Continue to IT Addendum below and follow the directions on the bottom of the addendum to meet requirements for OCIO review.

2017–19 IT Addendum

Part 1: Itemized IT Costs

Please itemize any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, services (including cloud-based services), contracts (including professional services, quality assurance, and independent verification and validation) or IT staff. Be as specific as you can. (See Chapter 12.1 of the Operating Budget Instructions for guidance on what counts as “IT-related costs.”)

Information Technology Items in this DP (insert rows as required)	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Item 1	xxx	yyy	zzz	aaa
Item 2	xxx	yyy	zzz	aaa
Total Cost	Enter Sum	Enter Sum	Enter Sum	Enter Sum

Part 2: Identifying IT Projects

If the investment proposed in the decision package is the development or acquisition of an IT project/system, or is an enhancement to or modification of an existing IT project/system, it will also be reviewed and ranked by the OCIO as required by Chapter 43.88.092 RCW. The answers to the questions below will help OFM and the OCIO determine whether this decision package is an IT project or enhances/modifies one:

1. Does this decision package fund the development or acquisition of a new or enhanced software or hardware system or service? Yes No
2. Does this decision package fund the acquisition or enhancements of any agency data centers? (See [OCIO Policy 184](#) for definition.) Yes No
3. Does this decision package fund the continuation of a project that is, or will be, under OCIO oversight? (See [OCIO Policy 121](#).) Yes No

If you answered “yes” to *any* of these questions, you must complete a concept review with the OCIO before submitting your budget request. Refer to Chapter 12.2 of the Operating Budget Instructions for more information.