UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Author's Guide for Board Document Preparation

Preparing a High-Quality Request for Decision (RFD)
This guide is intended to help authors prepare clear, concise, decision ready materials for the Board of Governors. The RFD must not exceed **2 pages** and must focus strictly on what the Board needs to decide — not operational detail.

1. **Start with the Decision**
   Before writing answer the following:
   - What exactly are we asking the Board to approve?
   - Why does this require Board authority (policy, financial threshold, risk)?

2. **Write an Executive Summary Last**
   Provide 3-5 concise points that summarize:
   - The issue
   - Your recommended decision
   - Why it matters

   If this section is clear, the whole RFD will be clear.

3. **Be Strategic, Not Operational**
   The Board governs at a strategic level, please avoid including:
   - Process descriptions
   - Technical explanations
   - Internal workflow details
   - Historical narrative beyond what informs the decision

   Aim for context, recommendation and impact.

4. **Focus on Impacts and Alignment**
   In the Strategic Alignment section, please address only:
   - How does this advance university priorities?
   - Who is affected and how?
   - What are the financial implications?

   Keep the total under 200 words.

5. **Alternatives: Be Brief and Objective**
   Show that other options were considered, for each alternative provide:
   - 1 line describing the option
   - 1 line explaining why it isn't recommended

   Keep to 2-3 options maximum. The Board indicated that they would like to see what other options were considered and reasoning behind not selecting them.

6. **Identify Risks Clearly**
   Every Board Decision carries risk, please use categories:
   Financial, Reputational, Operational, Compliance, Strategic
   For each identified risk write:
   - What could go wrong?
   - How will we mitigate it?

   Avoid long lists, highlight only the most material risks.

7. **Summarize Decision Process**
   Include only:
   - Consultation undertaken
   - Endorsements or committee paths
   - Previous Board consideration (if applicable)

   No need to describe meeting timelines or operational process steps.

8. **Post Decision Plan**
   Help the Board understand what happens next, please include:
   - Who will implement the decision
   - High level timeline
   - Communication plan
   - Success indicators (optional)

   This should be short and practical, not a project plan.

9. **Attachments (max 5 pages)**
   Include only materials essential for the decision.
   If background documents are lengthy, place them in the reference materials section of the Board package not the RFD document.

10. **Writing Expectations**
    - Use clear, plain language
    - Keep paragraphs short, be concise focusing on key points
    - Avoid jargon and acronyms unless essential (spelled out in full in the first instance)
    - Use visuals - charts and graphs can effectively convey information and trends
    - Keep the total RFD under 2 pages, not including attachments
    - Assume readers will skim first, then read selectively
    - If you have any question when drafting FRD please reach out to the Governance Office

Summary of Key Differences: Board vs Committee Templates

Board RFD	Committee RFD
Highly concise, governance-level	More analytical, risk-focused
Emphasizes strategic alignment	Emphasizes due diligence and options
No operational detail	Some operational detail allowed
Short decision statements	Decision, recommendation, or advice
Light on background	More context and history