

River Scout Services: 7 Keys to Effective Project Decision Making

When determining how to make effective decisions on a project, it's important the decisions are made at the lowest possible level meaning those closest to the information, or in accordance with the levels of accountability defined in the RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) matrix. It's also important that once all decisions are made, they are documented in the RAID (Risks, Actions, Issues and Decision) log with the date, decision maker, supporting documentation and impacts as needed.

Should a conflict arise, we recommend the following chart will be used to guide where decision making should ultimately occur. All decisions must be supported by facts and understanding of the participant context and point of view, detailed options, and any specific recommendations.

Conflict Type	Stakeholders	Severity
Negotiation	Parties Decide	Simple Decision, Low Impact
Arbitration	Single Decision Maker	Complex decision, medium impact
Escalation	Committee/Stakeholder	Very complex decision, high impact

Because timely and effective decision making is so critical to any project, here are some guidelines to follow when making decisions.

1. **Aligned objectives:** Effective decision making requires clear understanding of the result and its impact and confirming that it is aligned to the project or organizational goals.
2. **Key information:** Effective decision making requires not only relevant but accurate information. Gather all the relevant information and data before making any decision and validate the sources before weighing its impact on the decision.
3. **Have alternatives:** Effective decision making requires evaluating alternatives which may be different than expected. Considering multiple options provides the best opportunity to assure the decision is informed, balanced and unbiased. Make sure to weigh the pros and cons of each alternative before deciding.
4. **Involve impacted stakeholders:** Effective decision making assures that you consult with those who are most impacted by the decision. This will ensure that all perspectives are included equally, especially those of which you may not be aware.
5. **Know the risks and possible consequences:** Effective decision making requires you to evaluate the potential risks and consequences for each option. These risk factors, weighed by the impact and the probability of the risk materializing will help you with the project and/or organization goals.



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6. **Timeliness:** Effective decision making must be done in the right timeline for the urgency of the situation. Prioritize based on the urgency, impact and alignment with the goals and objectives of the project or company.
7. **Action plan:** Effective decision making requires clear next steps to enact any actions resulting from the decision. Once the decision is made and the action plan is in place, make sure it is documented and communicated to all key stakeholders and all those who are impacted.

In summary, effective decisions consider many factors, information, and perspectives. Once made, documenting, and communicating the action plan are critical next steps.

