

Top 12 tips for writing your Decision Package that include IT investments

1. Do not assume readers already understand your agency's business, technology or acronyms. Use plain talk principles. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Keep your writing brief and clear. Have your agency communications and legislative liaison personnel review the writing with the state authorizing environment as the primary audience making the final funding decisions.
2. Make sure the answers to these five big questions come through:
 - Why this the right technology investment to make and why now?
 - What is the urgency of this investment?
 - What alternatives were explored and why was this option chosen?
 - How did you arrive at the estimated cost amounts?
 - What are the consequences of not making this investment? Emphasize impacts to the safety, health and economic well-being of citizens/constituents.
3. Beware of the business case that echoes "our technology is old, and people dislike it." Instead, describe the value and benefits of your investment in business terms.
 - Anchor your investment in your agency strategic plan and agency and statewide business priorities.
 - Tie measures to progress on agency goals.
 - Include real-life examples that show the benefit to everyday people of Washington state.
 - If the primary uses are internal to your agency, tie the benefits to how it benefits your customers, and therefore advances agency goals.
 - Look for ways to tell and illustrate the "before and after" story associated with approving this funding request.
4. Focus on performance and outcomes, especially as they relate to safety, health and economic well-being of Washington citizens. What will your investment accomplish? Who will be served and at what level? How will you know when planned outcomes are achieved? What are your performance targets? How likely are the targets to be met?
5. Demonstrate a preparedness to be successful. Consider agency readiness for the project, competing priorities for state and agency resources and other factors.
6. Include your plan to maintain your investment into the future. What are the estimated costs?
7. Ensure engaged sponsorship and clear governance. Clearly describe the governance structure, decision making process and approach to stakeholder engagement (agency leadership, business areas, other agencies, external stakeholders, customers, end users and IT).
8. Make sure the investment plans provide for qualified project management. If the investment project manager is an internal resource who will be managing multiple projects, describe how competing priorities for their time will be handled. If your project intends to procure an external project manager, include the appropriate estimates in your budget request.
9. Assume you will need funding for external quality assurance (QA). All IT projects under WaTech oversight require independent project QA per Technology Policy 132 Project Quality Assurance.

10. Be prepared for organizational change management (OCM). Describe how you have considered the impacts on stakeholders and how you will incorporate OCM to maximize the adoption of change. Include all necessary OCM resources in your budget request.
11. Describe your approach to vendor and contract management. Ensure you have thought about how to keep vendors accountable for performance, deliverables, costs and timelines.
12. If you have previously submitted a decision package and IT addendum for this investment and it was not funded, understand why and be sure to incorporate feedback and comments to align your new request with that feedback.