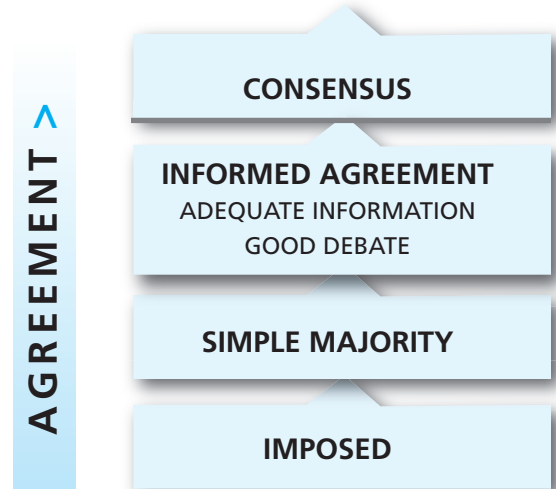# Decision-Making
GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

These guidelines are premised on an 'informed agreement' decision making model (*see below*). This approach acknowledges the time it takes to build consensus or 'unanimous agreement' while rejecting the potential conflicting nature of a 'simple majority'. It provides a transparent process to achieve 'informed agreement' in that everyone can support implementation of the decision even if they didn't vote for it because there was:

- **Adequate information** available for decision makers
- **Good debate** to ensure views are heard and examined

AGREEMENT >

CONSENSUS
INFORMED AGREEMENT   ADEQUATE INFORMATION   GOOD DEBATE
SIMPLE MAJORITY
IMPOSED

These guidelines include the following:

INFORMATION	TOOLS
1. The decision-making process	1. Decision-making Flow Chart
2. Decision-making information	2. Follow-up Action List (FUAL)
3. Business meetings of the Board	3. Request for Decision (RFD)
4. Criteria for strategic decision-making	4. Council Direction Request (CDR)

1 THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

To clarify the steps of the decision-making process (see attachment 1) – the submission, initial referrals, resolution and follow-up

The Submission

All agenda items should have sufficient information, staff advice and clarity for Council to debate the matter and make a decision – yes, no or refer/defer. It is the right of any councillor to request that more information be available before a decision is made. It is the responsibility of Council to determine if there is adequate information to achieve *informed agreement*; and if not, to *refer* the item for further information.

Regular agenda items are usually brought forward from a previous meeting or they are standing items that reoccur frequently. These items should have a verbal or written staff report as required with adequate information to make a decision. If there is insufficient information the item should be referred to staff for further analysis.

New business items that arise between meetings should be brought to Council through the following process:

All new agenda items must be submitted through the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or designate. Items submitted to the Chief Elected Official (CEO - Mayor) will be forwarded to the CAO.

If an item is submitted by a council member, the item goes on the agenda. The CEO and CAO may review the draft agenda with the elected official submitting the item to maximize the success of the item. It is Council that will determine whether the item is to remain on the agenda for discussion.

All staff submissions are subject to the discretion of the CAO.

Matters arising at the meeting may be introduced by the CAO or council member for inclusion on the agenda at the discretion of Council.

New items and matters arising should be introduced and then **referred** for further analysis if there is any question as to whether the item requires more information.

Responsibilities for agenda items are:

- Council – approval of all agenda items
- CEO – review agenda with CAO and advise councillors on their submissions
- CAO – review draft agenda with CEO and consult with staff

Initial Referrals

The four decision choices for Council on *agenda items* are:

- Accept as information – no decision is required
- Make a decision – yes or no (see 'the resolution')
- Refer the item – more information is required to achieve an informed agreement
- Defer the item – more time is required to ensure a good debate

Referrals to staff occur when more information is required regarding legislative, financial and staff workload implications.

- The referral resolution should state what further information is required
- All staff referrals must go through the CAO

Referrals to a Committee occurs when more information is required regarding policy, public interest and strategic direction implications.

- The referral resolution should state what further information is required
- The CAO assigns staff to prepare the necessary information for the committee
- All committee responses must be reviewed for comment by the CAO

A *Deferral* or tabling motions are used when discussion is moving away from the topic and becoming personal or when there is some distraction preventing 'good debate'.

Responsibilities for referrals and deferrals are:

- Council – state expectations within the resolution
- CEO – ensure clear directions and responsibilities
- CAO – seek clarity regarding expectations at the time of the resolution

The Resolution

All *Council direction* to staff should be given by way of resolution or 'by consent' and noted in the meeting minutes. This ensures clarity as to the intent of the Council, documentation of the direction, and accountability on the part of staff for follow-up.

The key elements of an effective resolution (or notation for minor items) include:

- Why – the key results or outcomes that Council is looking for
- Who – who will take the lead responsibility for actioning the resolution
- When – targets for involvement of Council in the future
- What – the preferred response option to achieve the desired outcome

Responsibilities for resolution clarity are:

- Council – wording for self-initiated resolutions prior to or during the meeting
- CEO – facilitate clarity, closure or deferral of resolutions during the meeting
- CAO – advise Council on resolutions

Follow-up

All *Council directions* can be itemized on a Follow-up Action List (see tool #2) to ensure clear expectations regarding action, monitoring progress, achieving results, and seeing the volume of Council directives. Monitoring the requests of Council is useful to:

- Think about the impact on strategic priorities *and* day-to-day activities
- Avoid expectations Council may have of staff that encroach on their personal time
- Give Council confidence that its directions are being acted upon
- Celebrate achievement and results

The *key features* of a Follow-up Action List (FUAL) include:

- A cumulative list of action items from all meetings (identify source, meeting, date)
- Indicates *What, Who* and *When* for each item
- Each action item should have no more than five words
- FUAL items should be the result of Council consent or resolution
- Items can be ordered by the date of origin, person responsible or target date

The *management* of the Follow-up Action List (FUAL) requires:

- The development of the list and dates by the CAO with staff
- The distribution of the list to staff and Council within three days of the meeting
- Updating of FUAL at each regular council meeting
- Delete items or change targets only with Council's agreement
- Review of the list on a quarterly basis to assess the continued relevance of items
- Review the list when the CAO thinks it is beyond staff's capacity

Responsibilities for the FUAL are:

- Council – review and disposition of FUAL items
- CEO – facilitate review at each business meeting or strategy session
- CAO – preparation and updating with staff

2 DECISION-MAKING INFORMATION

To clarify and provide the appropriate information required for decision makers to debate and decide on an item

Request for Decision

The Request for Decision (see tool #3 RFD) is intended to serve as an *executive summary* of the key information required for decision makers. It is a useful format to:

- Ensure Council is clear and in agreement on what 'adequate information' means
- Establish what is required of staff in preparing staff reports
- Provide a one page summary so there is a quick reference for decision makers
- Ensure that CAO has oversight over all items going to Council

The key aspects of *the issue* include:

- The key problem – how has the issue been defined?
- The desired outcome – if the issue was resolved, what would the result(s) be?
- The preferred option – the best alternative to achieve the desired outcome
- Action Plan – key steps to implement the preferred option

The key implications for *the recommendation* should include:

- Background information – reports and data
- Financial implications – current or future budget
- Organizational implications – Council and staff time
- Strategic implications – consistency with strategic directions and priorities
- Policy implications – legislation, previous resolutions or policies

Responsibilities for the direction request are:

- Council – approval of standard format
- CEO – facilitate reference to the RFD
- CAO – acquire complete information from staff

3 MEETINGS

To describe the key types of meetings of Council

The Business Meeting

The Business Meeting (including closed session or in-camera) is guided by a meeting procedures bylaw. Its primary purpose is to make a decision.

The Strategy Session

The intent of the Strategy Session is to provide a venue for more *informal discussion* of matters that are *not decision items*. Its primary purpose to develop a strategic direction so that:

- Council reaches agreement on its expectations for a strategic topic
- Staff are clear on council expectations to guide its work in advising Council

The Strategy Session should be a regularly scheduled event with the expectation that all members of Council will be present. It may also be referred to as (and is) the Committee of the Whole meeting.

The intent of agenda items for the Strategy Session agenda includes:

- To enhance understanding of an issue by meeting with relevant stakeholders
- To clarify expectations and improve the Council/staff working relationship
- To explore options to deal with an issue and provide direction to staff
- To undertake training to improve organization and individual effectiveness
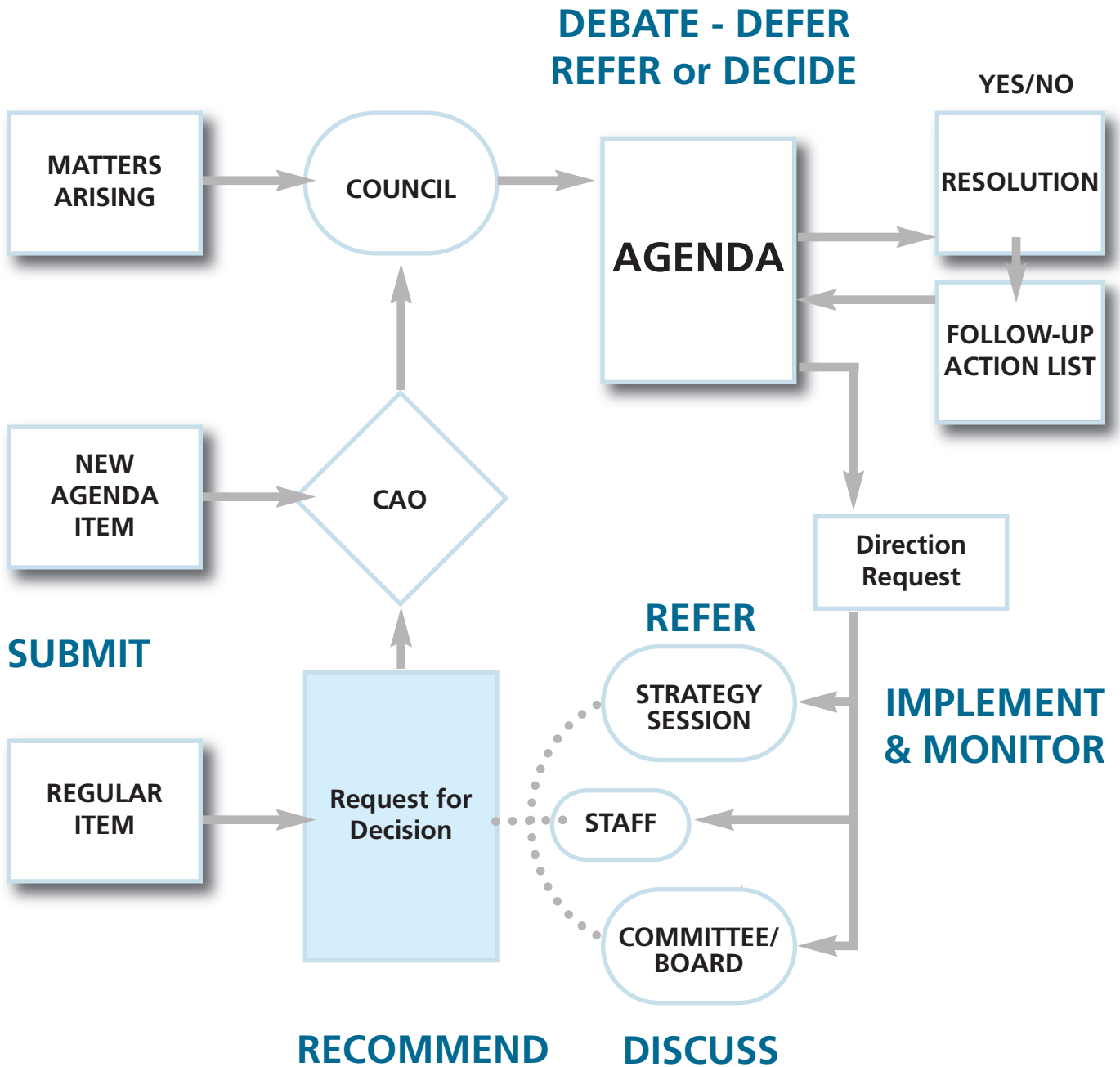- To review and update the strategic plan and priority work programs

The Council Direction Request (CDR) form can be used help Council communicate:

- The key problem – how has the issue been defined?
- The desired outcome – if the issue was resolved, what would the result(s) be?
- The possible preferred options to be pursued

Responsibilities for Strategy Sessions are:

- Council – target dates and outcomes for strategic direction discussions
- CEO – facilitate expectations regarding target dates
- CAO – prepare necessary information and maintain schedule

DECISION MAKING FLOW CHART

DEBATE - DEFER
REFER or DECIDE

YES/NO

MATTERS ARISING → COUNCIL → AGENDA → RESOLUTION

AGENDA → FOLLOW-UP ACTION LIST

NEW AGENDA ITEM → CAO

SUBMIT

Direction Request

REFER

IMPLEMENT & MONITOR

STRATEGY SESSION

REGULAR ITEM → Request for Decision

STAFF

COMMITTEE/ BOARD

RECOMMEND   **DISCUSS**

FOLLOW-UP ACTION LIST (FUAL)

Date: _____

MEETING (Date)/Item/*Notes*	WHO (Lead)	ACTION (to/via)	TARGET (Status)

REQUEST FOR DECISION (RFD)

SUBJECT: *Decision-making topic title*

RECOMMENDATION: *Clear decision-making resolution answering What?, Who?, How?, When?.*

CAO COMMENTS: *Any additional comments regarding the reason for the recommendation*

RECOMMENDATION   Report/Document: Attached ☐ Available ☐ Nil ☐

KEY ISSUE(S)/CONCEPTS DEFINED: *Define the topic, reference background material and state question to be answered*

RELEVANT POLICY: *Cite existing policies, practices and/or legislation*

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE: *To Goals or priorities of current work program*

DESIRED OUTCOME(S): *Main Result along with - highlighted requisites and benefits*

RESPONSE OPTIONS: *Possible ways to achieve the main result with analysis highlights*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

PREFERRED STRATEGY: *Rationale for selected option – including pros and cons*

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION:

GENERAL: *Consequences to community, overall organization and/or other agencies*
ORGANIZATIONAL: *Policy change or staff work load requirements*
FINANCIAL: *Current and/or Future Budget impact*
FOLLOW UP ACTION: *Timelines, decision-making milestones and key products*
COMMUNICATION: *Strategy to inform, consult or involve stakeholders*
OTHER COMMENTS: *By others reviewing this RFD*

Submitted by*: Writer _____   **Endorsed by:** Other _____

Reviewed by: CAO_____   Reviewers _____

COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUEST (CDR)

SUBJECT: *Discussion Topic title*

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP ACTION: *Next steps to develop the topic further discussion or decision?*

CAO COMMENTS: *Any additional comments regarding the suggestion.*

BACKGROUND: Report/Document: Attached ☐   Available ☐   Nil ☐

1. DEFINE THE TOPIC

KEY INFORMATION: *Key summary of existing information to understand the nature of the topic.*

RELEVANT OBSERVATIONS: *Note issues or opportunities related to the complexity of the topic*

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS: *What needs to be known before recommendations can be developed?*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: *The key question to guide the information and recommendation activities*
_____**?**

2. DETERMINE DESIRED OUTCOMES **if the essential question is addressed**

KEY RESULT: *The tangible outcome the organization can achieve to address the essential question.*
    **   _____

DESIRED BENEFITS OF KEY RESULT*: What positive conclusions are expected?*

REQUISITES: *What must happen before the key result can be achieved?*

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES: *Are there possible undesirable effects that could occur?*

3. EXPLORE RESPONSE OPTIONS **to achieve the** <u>key result</u> *(Pros & Cons)*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Submitted by*:*   Writer _____   **Reviewed by:** CAO _____