

---

# DECISION GATE STANDARD v2.0

## The Impact-First Decision Standard

---

### Status of This Document

This document defines **Decision Gate** as an **open, educational standard for responsible decision-making**.

It may be cited, taught, translated, and adapted, provided that its meaning, structure, and intent are preserved.

Decision Gate:

- is not privately owned,
- does not require a license,
- is not a commercial product.

The authority of Decision Gate comes from **clarity, simplicity, and responsible use**, not from hierarchy or formal power.

---

## 1. Canonical Definition

Decision Gate is a **conscious decision pause** — a clearly named moment in which a team, an organization, or an individual **makes a responsible decision before committing time, money, energy, attention, or other people**.

Decision Gate marks the moment when **responsibility enters the system**.

Decision Gate:

- is not a process,
- is not a methodology,
- is not a framework.

Decision Gate is a **decision act** that **precedes action**, sets direction, and reveals consequences.

Without a Decision Gate, action may begin, but **responsibility remains undefined**.

---

## 2. Purpose and Origin

Modern systems operate:

- fast,
- at scale,
- with increasing levels of automation.

Organizations:

- deliver continuously,
- decide quickly,
- automate aggressively.

At the same time, they increasingly fail to ask the fundamental question:

**Should we do this?**

The consequences are systemic:

- products cause unintended harm,
- teams experience burnout,
- decisions have no owner,
- AI systems are deployed without accountability,
- activity replaces real value creation.

Decision Gate was created as a **minimal standard of responsibility** in a world of:

- complexity,
  - irreversible consequences,
  - scaling impact,
  - human–algorithm interaction.
- 

### 3. What Decision Gate Is NOT

Decision Gate:

- is not backlog refinement,
- is not a review or approval meeting,
- is not managerial consent,
- is not bureaucracy,
- is not a compliance or governance checklist.

Decision Gate **does not prescribe solutions**.

Decision Gate asks two fundamental questions:

**Should we act?**

**Are we ready to take responsibility for the consequences?**

Decision Gate does not decide **WHAT** to do.

Decision Gate decides **WHETHER** to act and **WHY**.

---

## 4. When to Use Decision Gate

Decision Gate should be considered whenever a decision:

- affects other people,
- consumes time, money, energy, or attention,
- is difficult or costly to reverse,
- scales beyond a single team,
- involves automation or artificial intelligence,
- changes the reality of users, customers, or employees.

If a decision has **impact**, it deserves a **Decision Gate**.

---

## 5. Placement Rule

Decision Gate is **always placed BEFORE commitment**, never after delivery.

Commitment includes, but is not limited to:

- locking a backlog,
  - releasing funding,
  - scaling a solution,
  - finalizing architecture or design,
  - announcing an organizational change,
  - delegating a decision to an algorithm or AI system.
- 

## 6. The Four Mandatory Decision Questions

Every Decision Gate is based on **four questions** that **must be answered**.

### Why?

What real problem are we trying to solve?

What happens if we do NOT make this decision?

---

### For whom?

Who will experience the consequences of this decision?

Who benefits?

Who may lose — directly or indirectly?

---

## What cost are we willing to accept?

What costs do we incur now, later, and in hidden forms?

Costs may be:

- technical,
  - human,
  - organizational,
  - social,
  - ethical.
- 

## Who takes responsibility?

Who **specifically and by name** takes responsibility for the consequences — including negative, unintended, and delayed ones?

Responsibility:

- cannot be anonymous,
- cannot be collective,
- cannot be abstract.

If any of these questions remains unanswered, the **Decision Gate is invalid**.

---

## 7. The Decision Gate Process (Non-Modifiable)

Decision Gate always follows five steps:

1. Name the decision
2. Assess the impact
3. Assess risk and potential harm
4. Check alternatives (including “do nothing”)
5. Make the decision

Steps must not be skipped or reordered.

---

## 8. Roles

Every Decision Gate requires:

- a **Decision Owner** — accountable for the decision and its consequences
- a **Facilitator** — responsible for process clarity and timeboxing
- **Contributors** — people providing facts and input

No Decision Owner means **PAUSE**.

---

## 9. Decision Gate Outcomes (Exactly Four)

Every Decision Gate ends with **one and only one** outcome:

### **GO**

The action is conscious and accepted. Execution begins.

### **CHANGE**

The direction is valid, but conditions, scope, or form must change.

### **PAUSE**

The decision is postponed until missing information is obtained (with a return date).

### **KILL**

The decision is stopped and resources are released.

There is no fifth option.

Lack of a decision **is not an outcome**.

---

## 10. Decision Discipline

- the outcome must be stated explicitly,
- the outcome must be recorded,
- the outcome must have an owner.

If there is no record, **no decision was made**.

---

## 11. Decision Gate and Speed

Decision Gate does not slow organizations down.

Decision Gate:

- eliminates false acceleration,
- reduces rework,
- prevents irreversible harm.

The greatest cost is not slow action, but **fast wrong decisions**.

---

## 12. Decision Gate in Teams and Organizations

Decision Gate:

- requires no certification,
- requires no tools,
- requires no formal structure.

It can be used:

- individually,
- by teams,
- at executive level.

The only requirement is **willingness to take responsibility**.

---

## 13. Decision Gate and Artificial Intelligence

In AI-driven systems, Decision Gate is critical.

AI:

- accelerates decisions,
- obscures causality,
- diffuses responsibility.

Decision Gate establishes the rule:

**Responsibility always remains with a human.**

If an algorithm executes a decision, the Decision Gate must belong to a human.

This is not a technical pattern.

It is an ethical requirement.

---

## 14. Canonical Statements

Decision Gate marks the moment when responsibility enters the system.

Without a decision, there is no gate.

Without a gate, there is no impact.

If there is no responsible decision, the gate remains closed.

---

## 15. Minimal Usage

Minimal use of Decision Gate consists of five actions:

Stop before acting.  
Ask the four questions.  
Name the decision.  
Assign responsibility.  
Act — or do not act.

Nothing more is required.

---

## 16. Legal Status and Openness

Decision Gate is an **open educational standard**.

This document may be used organizationally and educationally, provided that its meaning and intent are preserved.

Decision Gate is not a process.

Decision Gate is a **responsible decision**.

---

## 17. Closing

Decision Gate does not end decision-making.

Decision Gate begins responsibility.

In a world where decisions scale instantly, AI amplifies consequences, and outcomes extend beyond intent, Decision Gate is not optional.

**It is the minimal standard of responsibility.**

---

20.12.2025