

Sample report cover sheet

Guidance note

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If you have any feedback on the content of these resources, or additional questions that you'd like to discuss, please contact the SGA:
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Introduction

Good decision making is the cornerstone of effective governance. The quality of information presented to boards is essential as a catalyst for critical, constructive discussion, resulting in high-quality decisions. Board members should receive – and insist on – sufficient information and appropriate detail to be confident that they are making the most informed decisions possible.

Board papers should provide the necessary levels of information without straying into operational matters or presenting excessive amounts of detail. Information should be framed in a manner that supports the board's decision making and should give an appropriate balance of historical data, forecasts of future trends and analysis. Their focus should be forward-looking.

Where a meeting contains several items for discussion, a cover sheet for each item up for discussion and decision can enable senior managers and other staff to present information in a consistent manner and to highlight key issues, including (if relevant) pertinent changes in circumstances since the board last discussed a topic.

A consistent format is helpful to boards as it enables more effective working, clarity and familiarity, ensuring that key impacts are explicitly addressed.

A standard and consistent format for reports may prove beneficial to board members trying to understand the information provided and its purpose. Reports with an executive summary at the start, risk implications (including opportunity loss), anticipated outcomes and conclusions or clear recommendations, especially for lengthy papers, will provide the highlights for those board members that want to prioritise their deliberations.

Board members should, of course, endeavour to read all the information presented to them and not rely solely on an executive summary

The following is a sample board report/pack cover sheet that can be adapted by organisations to suit their needs. It is recommended that a completed cover sheet take up no more than one side of A4.

Report cover sheet

Meeting title		Date				
Report title		Agenda item no.				
Lead director: Report author: Sponsor(s):	Name/Title: Name/Title: Name/Title:	Tel/Email: Tel/Email: Tel/Email:				
Confidentiality	An explanation as to why the paper should remain confidential, where that is the case, including any 'reserved business' not subject to the organisation's disclosure policy.					
Report summary	A précis of the contents of the report. Clear signposting of any aspects that board members should take particular note of.					
Purpose (Tick one only)	Information <input type="checkbox"/>	Approval <input type="checkbox"/>	To note <input type="checkbox"/>	Decision <input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion <input type="checkbox"/>	
Recommendation	A clear articulation of what the board is being asked to agree/discuss/note. Items for information will not be allocated time for consideration within the board/committee meeting.					
Link to organisation objectives/ strategy	Highlight which organisational/strategic goal(s) this recommendation aims to support.					
Board assurance links to include identified risks and risk management actions	Provide guidance as to where board members can cross-reference the information in this report. List the major risks identified and cross-reference to risk register and risk score, if appropriate. Include the risk of not adopting the recommendation.					
Resource implications	Outline the resources, financial and non-financial, required to implement this recommendation.					
Legal and ethical implications	Briefly identify the known and/or potential legal or regulatory considerations of the recommendations and ethical considerations covered by the proposal, including its potential impact on key stakeholders.					
Report history	Refer to previous reports presented on the same issue/item, including any stakeholder involvement. If this paper has been considered by other committees, the dates and name of the committee that considered it should be detailed.					
Next steps/ timeline	State whether this report needs to be referred to at another meeting or requires additional monitoring. When is the target date for completion/implementation?					
Appendices	Supporting information to the report should be listed here.					