PROJECT 4 OF 5 | START HERE LEARNER GUIDE

Executive Risk Decision

Engineer executive decision support

Harborline Health has five competing operational-risk issues and not enough capacity to fully fund them all before a readiness review in August 2027. Leadership needs a decision, not another findings list. As GRC lead you will frame the decision, recommend what to fund, what to treat on an interim basis, and what leadership is intentionally accepting.

> **Companion video**
> Watch the walkthrough before you begin: https://youtu.be/Ew5_te9fxPo

Your project folder

Item	What it is for
START_HERE_Learner_Guide.pdf	This guide.
Master_Workbook.xlsx	Your workspace for every stage except the memo and the brief.
1_Assess_Evidence	The eight-file decision packet for Stage 1.
3_Build_Source_Data	Engineering estimates as a convenience copy (not a scorecard), and review dates.
4_Break_Incident_Evidence_Open_After_Build	New facts for Stage 4. Do not open until your initial recommendation exists.
Deliverable_Templates	Word templates: the one-page memo and the 3-Minute Executive Brief (Stage 6).

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Welcome to Project 4

Read this once before Stage 1.

The engagement

Your role	GRC lead supporting security and risk leadership. You recommend. You do not personally accept residual business risk.
Review freeze	2027-02-02 12:00 UTC (`2027-02-02T12:00:00Z`)
Product freeze pressure	About 2027-06-15
Readiness milestone	Week of 2027-08-03
Audience	CFO, CTO, CISO, General Counsel, VP Clinic Operations. The CISO chairs steering; CFO and CTO are required.
Not the topic	IPO mechanics, SOX program design, or building a GRC application

The decision (exact)

1. Exactly **two** issues to **fully fund** as major remediations before August 2027.
2. Exactly **one** issue to receive **only limited interim treatment** (not a third full program).
3. How the remaining issues are **deferred or temporarily accepted**, by whom, with what residual risk and next checkpoint.

You must also name dependencies, sequencing assumptions, whether one treatment enables another, and what happens if a dependency slips.

ID	The five issues (do not add a sixth)
R1	Centralized security logging gap (clinic-ops production and patient portal)
R2	Disaster-recovery restore assurance for clinic-ops
R3	Patient-portal vulnerability backlog
R4	Legacy Clinic-West uncertainty (inventory, standing local admin, production path unclear)
R5	Change-management evidence for production releases

How to think in this project

- Leadership needs **decision-useful information**, not every true fact. Executive communication is choosing what this decision requires, not just shortening.
- A finding is not a recommendation. Offer **options**: fully fund now, scoped interim treatment, or defer and temporarily accept.
- Write risk as **Condition, then Exposure, then Business consequence**.
- The best portfolio is not necessarily the two highest-rated risks. Timing, dependencies, feasibility, and sequencing matter.
- Interim treatment must **meaningfully reduce or monitor** risk. It is not a label for whatever you did not fund.
- There is no official required pair. More than one interim approach can be defensible.

Condition, exposure, consequence: a generic illustration (not your answer)

A restore test has never been completed (condition). Recovery time is therefore unknown (exposure). A multi-day clinic-scheduling outage could miss contractual delivery and erode customer trust (business consequence).

One dependency to know before you start

Centralized logging (R1) depends to some degree on understanding the production footprint. Full Clinic-West remediation (R4) is **not** a prerequisite for starting logging on confirmed clinic-ops and portal systems. Other sequences can also be defensible. Name your assumption and what happens if it slips.

Words you need first

Term	Meaning
Decision-useful information	Facts leadership needs to make **this** decision. True facts can still belong in Q&A; or engineering notes instead of the memo.
Interim treatment	A scoped, time-boxed action that meaningfully reduces or monitors a risk when a full program is not funded.
Readiness milestone	The review in the week of 2027-08-03. It constrains what can be fully funded. Not a claim that an IPO will occur.
Executive Decision Frame	The Design artifact stating the decision, deadline, options, constraints, dependencies, and authority before anyone picks a favorite.
Deliberate omission	Information you had and intentionally kept off the memo because the steering decision did not need it.

Depth, tools, and outputs

Option	Time	What it includes
Standard	About 4 to 6 hours	Full loop, two-plus-one recommendation, Break, memo, brief, Q&A;, omission reflection, Career Translation.
Deep Dive	About 8 to 12 hours	Standard plus an alternate portfolio, a CFO versus CISO appetite write-up, KRIs for a deferred issue, extra Q&A;, and interview defense.

There is **no Python path**. Written decision support is the scored work. The **3 Comparison (optional)** tab is an optional thinking aid. It has no formulas that rank issues or pick the portfolio, and using it cannot raise your score.

#	Artifact	Where it lives
1	Decision-Relevance Assessment	**1 Decision Relevance**
2	Executive Decision Frame	**2 Decision Frame**
3	Risk / Option Analysis	**3 Risk Option Analysis**
4	Initial two-plus-one recommendation	**3 Initial Recommendation**
5	Break reassessment	**4 Break Reassessment**
6	Revised prioritization	**5 Revised Prioritization**
7	One-page Executive Risk Decision Memo	**Deliverable_Templates/6_Defend_Executive_Risk_Decision_Memo.docx**
8	3-Minute Executive Brief	**Deliverable_Templates/6_Defend_Three_Minute_Brief.docx**
9	Executive Q&A;	**6 Executive Q&A**
10	What I Deliberately Left Out (learner only)	**6 Left Out (learner only)**
11	Career Translation (Standard set)	**7 Career Translation**

Stage 1: Assess

Decide what leadership actually needs to know.

What you are trying to accomplish

Read the decision packet and sort each fact by how it serves the two-plus-one decision, including what to keep off the memo on purpose.

Why this matters

The packet is short, uneven, incomplete, and occasionally precise-looking where confidence is low. You are not redoing technical testing. You are filtering for decision-useful information.

Open these

What	Where to find it
The eight packet files	**1_Assess_Evidence**
Engineering estimates (convenience copy)	Tab **Issue_Estimates**
Your assessment	**Master_Workbook.xlsx**, tab **1 Decision Relevance**

File	What it is
1_Assess_Evidence/Exec_Request.pdf	CISO request to GRC
1_Assess_Evidence/Security_Risk_Summary.pdf	Security's five-issue summary
1_Assess_Evidence/Engineering_Estimates.pdf	Effort, disruption, dependencies
1_Assess_Evidence/Finance_Capacity_Note.pdf	Capacity and spend constraints
1_Assess_Evidence/IA_Readiness_Note.pdf	Internal audit and readiness view
1_Assess_Evidence/Operational_History.pdf	Recent operating experience
1_Assess_Evidence/Exec_Priority_Notes.pdf	CFO, CTO, CISO, Legal, Operations
1_Assess_Evidence/Inventory_Caveat.pdf	What is and is not known about Clinic-West

Labels (one primary label per row)

Label	Use when
executive decision fact	Leadership needs this to choose among options now.
supporting detail	True and useful later (Q&A;, appendix, engineering) but not required on the memo.
technical detail	Implementation how-to that belongs with owners.
uncertainty	A material unknown that should be named.
assumption	Something a recommendation would rest on.
dependency	One treatment or fact affects whether another can succeed.
distraction / not material	True, loud, or precise-looking, but it should not drive the choice unless you can explain why.

Do this

1. Read all eight files in **1_Assess_Evidence**. Start with **1_Assess_Evidence/Exec_Request.pdf**.
2. On **1 Decision Relevance**, write the decision in your own words: what must steering decide before August 2027?
3. Add at least twelve rows: source (file and cue), fact or claim, one primary label, why, and whether you would keep it on the one-page memo. Use more than two labels, including at least one distraction and one uncertainty.
4. Complete the filtering prompts: one item that looks important but is not material to this decision, one uncertainty that still belongs in the memo, and one dependency that could change sequencing.
5. Write two sentences on the appetite conflict: where executives disagree and why that matters for a two-plus-one recommendation.
6. Use **Issue_Estimates** as a convenience only. It is not a scorecard.

What you produce	You are done when
• Completed **1 Decision Relevance**.	☐ You can state the decision in one or two sentences without starting from a risk rating. ☐ You can point to at least one item you would keep off the memo on purpose. ☐ You have not opened Break.

Next: Move to Stage 2: Design.

Stage 2: Design

Frame the decision before anyone picks a favorite issue.

What you are trying to accomplish

Complete the Executive Decision Frame: decision, deadline, objective, appetite and conflicts, options, constraints, dependencies, uncertainty, criteria, authority, and the cost of delay.

Why this matters

Do not start with a risk rating. Start with the decision. A new reader should see what is being decided before they see your favorite issue. This is the only Design artifact; do not build an enterprise risk register.

Open these

What	Where to find it
Executive Decision Frame	Tab **2 Decision Frame**
Your Assess work	**1 Decision Relevance**

Do this

1. On **2 Decision Frame**, state the decision required and why the deadline exists.
2. Write the business objective for this cycle.
3. Record each executive's appetite or tolerance (CFO, CTO, CISO, Legal, Operations) and where they disagree.
4. List credible portfolio-level options without picking winners: two full plus one interim with the rest deferred, a product-freeze exception, completing after August, scoped versus full.
5. Complete constraints, dependencies (R1 and R4 without treating full R4 as mandatory for R1), uncertainty that would change the decision, criteria (not a hidden score), who recommends versus who accepts, and the consequence of no decision.

What you produce	You are done when
• Completed **2 Decision Frame**.	☐ The frame names the decision, deadline, objective, appetite and conflicts, options, constraints (exactly two full, exactly one interim), dependencies, uncertainty, criteria, authority, and the consequence of delay.

Next: Move to Stage 3: Build (Analyze).

Stage 3: Build (Analyze)

Analyze the five issues and make an initial two-plus-one recommendation.

What you are trying to accomplish

Write each issue as condition, exposure, and business consequence with three options, then commit to exactly two fully funded initiatives and one interim treatment.

Why this matters

In this project, Analyze is the Build stage: you build written decision support, not a tool. Committing before Break lets you show later how new facts changed (or did not change) your thinking.

Open these

What	Where to find it
Risk / Option Analysis	Tab **3 Risk Option Analysis**
Initial recommendation	Tab **3 Initial Recommendation**
Optional thinking aid	Tab **3 Comparison (optional)**
Estimates	Tab **Issue_Estimates**

Do this

1. On **3 Risk Option Analysis**, complete every cell for R1 to R5: condition, exposure, business consequence, Option A (fully fund now: what you would buy, earliest realistic finish, disruption), Option B (scoped interim), Option C (defer or temporarily accept: residual, owner, checkpoint), and dependency notes.
2. Below the grid, name one packet item you will **not** treat as a steering-level initiative, and write your sequencing hypothesis: which treatments enable which others, and what happens if that dependency slips.
3. **Optional:** use **3 Comparison (optional)** to compare issues qualitatively. It does not decide anything.

4 On **3 Initial Recommendation**, complete the constraint check (two full, one interim, the rest deferred with owner and checkpoint), why this mix, why the interim meaningfully reduces or monitors risk, what you intentionally accept and who accepts it, sequence, feasibility before August (state assumptions, including the overrun history), residual risk, and authority.

5 If you listed more than two full programs or more than one interim, rewrite before you continue.

What you produce	You are done when
• Completed **3 Risk Option Analysis** and **3 Initial Recommendation**.	☐ Exactly two fully funded and exactly one interim. ☐ Each issue has condition, exposure, consequence, and three options. ☐ Dependencies and the slip consequence are named. ☐ You have not opened Break.

Next: Only now open the Break evidence and move to Stage 4.

Stage 4: Break

New facts arrive and capacity shrinks. The milestone does not move.

What you are trying to accomplish

Reassess risk priority and execution feasibility, decide how your portfolio responds, and outline the residual-risk position steering needs within 10 days.

Why this matters

Executives do not need a panic rewrite. They need to know whether the plan still works, what changed, and what they are now accepting. The packet contains facts; it does not contain the new portfolio.

Open these

What	Where to find it
Break evidence	**4_Break_Incident_Evidence_Open_After_Build/Incident_Update.pdf**
Your reassessment	Tab **4 Break Reassessment**
Your initial position	**3 Initial Recommendation**

Open this evidence only after your initial recommendation

Do not open **4_Break_Incident_Evidence_Open_After_Build** until **3 Initial Recommendation** is complete.

Break work is structured, so it lives entirely in the workbook.

Do this

1. Read **4_Break_Incident_Evidence_Open_After_Build/Incident_Update.pdf**.
2. On **4 Break Reassessment**, list the facts you are using and what the facts do **not** say.
3. Answer the feasibility question: after losing about three weeks of capacity, can the original two fully funded initiatives still realistically finish before August? Yes, no, or only with changes, with assumptions. If not, say what is at risk.
4. Choose one response from the dropdown (or describe another defensible one), write what you would do in one paragraph, and state the consequence.

5 Say whether the incident changed which exposures matter most for this decision, and what did not change.

6 Outline the 10-day residual-risk position: fully fund, interim, defer or accept, and the named acceptor.

What you produce	You are done when
• Completed **4 Break Reassessment**.	☐ You can explain what changed in the environment, what it does to capacity and priority, and what you would tell steering within 10 days.
Next: Move to Stage 5: Improve.	

Stage 5: Improve

Revise without panic.

What you are trying to accomplish

Record what changed and why, what did not change, the weakest original assumption, and a revised two-plus-one with sequencing and an honest August feasibility statement.

Why this matters

The first recommendation is not automatically wrong. New facts can confirm it, force a scope change, or change sequencing without rewriting the whole risk picture.

Open these

What	Where to find it
Revised prioritization	Tab **5 Revised Prioritization**
Your Break reassessment	**4 Break Reassessment**

Do this

1. On **5 Revised Prioritization**, write what changed and why, and what did not change and why.
2. Name the original assumption that proved weakest.
3. Write the revised two-plus-one: two fully funded, the interim (what it actually does), and deferred or accepted items with owner, residual, and checkpoint.
4. Describe sequencing after the capacity loss and state whether the funded work can still finish before the week of 2027-08-03. If not, say what you are asking steering to accept.
5. Tick the constraint check.

What you produce	You are done when
• Completed **5 Revised Prioritization**.	☐ The two-plus-one shape still holds (or you explicitly converted or replaced an item and still show two-plus-one). ☐ Remaining issues have owners and residual risk.

Next: Move to Stage 6: Defend.

Stage 6: Defend

Write for steering, then reflect privately.

What you are trying to accomplish

Produce the one-page memo, the 3-Minute Executive Brief, concise Q&A; answers, and a learner-only note on what you deliberately left out.

Why this matters

A CFO should be able to read the memo in a few minutes, a CTO should be able to hear the brief, and you should be able to answer Q&A; without reopening the packet. Choosing what to leave out is part of the skill.

Open these

What	Where to find it
One-page memo	**Deliverable_Templates/6_Defend_Executive_Risk_Decision_Memo.docx**
3-Minute Executive Brief	**Deliverable_Templates/6_Defend_Three_Minute_Brief.docx**
Executive Q&A;	Tab **6 Executive Q&A**
Learner-only reflection	Tab **6 Left Out (learner only)**

Do this

1. Open **Deliverable_Templates/6_Defend_Executive_Risk_Decision_Memo.docx**, save a copy, and answer each heading in a few sentences from your **revised** position. It must fit on one page. Do not paste the risk/option analysis.
2. Open **Deliverable_Templates/6_Defend_Three_Minute_Brief.docx** and write 300 to 450 words of spoken prose in five beats: the decision, what matters most, the two-plus-one, residual risk and uncertainty, and what to approve in the room (including any freeze exception or post-August completion). Time yourself.

3 On **6 Executive Q&A**, answer the six questions in short paragraphs (about 4 to 8 sentences). If an answer needs a log query, it is a mini-essay: cut it.

4 On **6 Left Out (learner only)**, name three pieces of information you had and did not put in the memo, why each was not needed for this decision, and where it still lives. This is never sent to steering.

What you produce	You are done when
• Your memo and brief copies, plus **6 Executive Q&A** and **6 Left Out (learner only)**.	☐ The memo fits on one page and answers every heading. ☐ The brief is about 300 to 450 words. ☐ Q&A; answers are concise. ☐ The omission reflection is not attached to the memo.

Next: Move to Stage 7: Career Translation.

Stage 7: Career Translation

Turn the decision into an honest professional story.

What you are trying to accomplish

Write the Standard career set: honesty sentence, description, bullets, 30-second explanation, and STAR.

Why this matters

Interviewers test whether you can explain why a high-rated risk is not always fundable this quarter, and how you adapted when capacity disappeared.

Open these

What	Where to find it
Prompts and writing areas	Tab **7 Career Translation**

Do this

1. Say the honesty sentence: *"This was an independent portfolio project where I simulated an executive risk decision for a fictional company. I filtered a short, conflicting packet for decision-useful information, framed the decision, recommended exactly two fully funded remediations and one interim treatment, reassessed after new operational facts and a capacity loss, and wrote a one-page memo, a three-minute brief, and Q&A.;"*
2. Complete the Standard set on **7 Career Translation**. Use the portfolio you actually chose.
3. **Deep Dive (optional):** README paragraph, skills, the ten interview questions, and the defense drill.

What you produce	You are done when
• The Standard career set on **7 Career Translation**.	☐ You can say the honesty sentence and STAR without reading. ☐ No invented employment, savings, or IPO claims.

Next: Complete the final checklist.

Before you call this finished

A final check across all seven stages.

- ☐ Decision-Relevance Assessment
- ☐ Executive Decision Frame
- ☐ Risk / Option Analysis
- ☐ Initial two-plus-one recommendation
- ☐ Break reassessment
- ☐ Revised prioritization
- ☐ One-page memo
- ☐ 3-Minute Executive Brief
- ☐ Executive Q&A;
- ☐ What I Deliberately Left Out
- ☐ Career Translation Standard set

Reasoning questions

- Why are these two fully funded and that one interim?
- What did I treat as a distraction or true negative, and why?
- Can the original two still finish before August after Break?
- What residual risk remains, and who accepts it?
- What alternative portfolio did I reject, and why?
- What would cause me to reopen this two-plus-one decision?