

RELEASE GO/NO-GO DECISION TEMPLATE

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GUIDE

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Purpose

This canvas is designed as a two-panel decision aid for release governance. It forces a balanced discussion between evidence of delivery readiness and the operational guardrails required to deploy safely.

Intended output

Use this markdown as source content for a final artefact that becomes:

- A two-panel printable PDF.
- A digital collaboration board.
- A structured release review worksheet.

Assumptions

- The final artefact is intended for release managers, service owners, technical leads, delivery leads, and approvers.
- The printable version should follow the white-page guide style rather than the dark slide-deck style.
- The digital board should preserve the same section structure, wording, and scoring logic.
- The release decision is made per deployment window, not as a generic programme status review.

Core decision rule

A release is only marked **GO** when readiness evidence is credible, risk is understood, required approvals are present, and rollback or containment options are defined. If any critical control is missing, the release remains **NO-GO** or is escalated for explicit risk acceptance.

Readiness signals

01 OUTCOME BEING RELEASED

Capture the exact scope of the release.

- Release name.
- Services, products, or platforms affected.
- Change window.
- Business outcome expected.
- Customer or user groups affected.
- Change owner.

02 DELIVERY COMPLETENESS

Assess whether the work is actually complete enough to release.

- Planned scope delivered.
- Deferred items documented.
- Known defects reviewed.
- Dependencies met.
- Configuration complete.
- Documentation updated.

03 VALIDATION EVIDENCE

Record the evidence that supports release confidence.

- Functional testing complete.
- Integration testing complete.
- Regression testing complete.
- Non-functional checks complete where relevant.
- Security checks complete where required.
- Business validation or user acceptance complete.

04 OPERATIONAL READINESS

Confirm support and service operations are prepared.

- Monitoring in place.
- Alerting thresholds reviewed.
- Service desk briefed.
- Support teams scheduled.
- Runbooks available.
- Knowledge articles updated.

05 CONFIDENCE SCORE

Rate overall release confidence on a simple scale.

SCORE	DELIVERY CONFIDENCE
1	No meaningful evidence; significant unknowns remain
2	Early signals present; material gaps need closure
3	Sufficient evidence to proceed under controlled conditions
4	Strong evidence; minor residuals acceptable
5	Comprehensive evidence; release is low-risk and clearly scoped

06 READINESS PROMPTS

Use these prompts during the review.

- What evidence is strongest.
- What evidence is weakest.
- Which assumptions are still unproven.
- Which defects are accepted and why.
- Which teams are carrying residual risk.

Risk guardrails

07 DEPLOYMENT CONSTRAINTS

Define the conditions that limit or shape the release.

- Approved deployment window.
- Freeze periods or restricted timings.
- Staffing constraints.
- Third-party dependencies.
- Customer communication constraints.
- Regulatory or audit constraints.

08 FAILURE IMPACT

Describe the downside if the release fails or degrades service.

- Service impact.
- Revenue impact.
- Customer impact.
- Operational workload impact.
- Reputational impact.
- Recovery complexity.

09 ROLLBACK AND CONTAINMENT

Confirm there is a practical route to recover.

- Rollback method defined.
- Rollback owner named.
- Rollback trigger agreed.
- Backout time estimate known.
- Data recovery implications understood.
- Manual workaround or containment available.

10 APPROVAL CONTROLS

List the approvals required for this deployment window.

APPROVAL	REQUIRED	OWNER	STATUS
Technical approval	Yes / No	Name	Pending / Approved / Rejected
Service approval	Yes / No	Name	Pending / Approved / Rejected
Business approval	Yes / No	Name	Pending / Approved / Rejected
Security approval	Yes / No	Name	Pending / Approved / Rejected
Operations approval	Yes / No	Name	Pending / Approved / Rejected

11 RISK SCORE

Rate release risk on a simple scale.

SCORE	OPERATIONAL RISK
1	Negligible impact; recovery is trivial
2	Limited disruption; manageable with standard response
3	Moderate impact; escalation and coordination required
4	Significant consequences; senior oversight mandatory
5	Severe impact; release should not proceed without explicit risk acceptance

12 GUARDRAIL PROMPTS

Use these prompts during the review.

- What happens if the release partially succeeds.
- What is the earliest sign of failure.
- How quickly can the team back out.
- What cannot be rolled back cleanly.
- Which approval is substantive rather than procedural.

Decision block

13 FINAL DECISION

Record one decision only.

- GO
- GO WITH CONDITIONS
- NO-GO
- ESCALATE FOR RISK ACCEPTANCE

14 CONDITIONS AND ACTIONS

Document required actions before release or immediately after deployment.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE BY	STATUS
Action item	Name	Date / Time	Open / Closed
Action item	Name	Date / Time	Open / Closed
Action item	Name	Date / Time	Open / Closed

15 DECISION STATEMENT

Use this sentence pattern.

We have reviewed readiness evidence, operational constraints, deployment risk, approvals, and rollback capability. The decision for this deployment window is **[GO / GO WITH CONDITIONS / NO-GO / ESCALATE]** because **[reason]**.

16 SIGN-OFF RECORD

- Chair or decision owner.
- Date and time.
- Deployment window reference.
- Named attendees.
- Exceptions accepted.
- Follow-up review date if applicable.

Facilitation notes

17 HOW TO RUN THE REVIEW

- Start with release scope, not opinions.
- Review evidence before discussing confidence.
- Review rollback before granting approval.
- Treat missing evidence as a real risk, not an admin gap.
- Separate optimism from proof.

18 ESCALATION RULE

Escalate when the release has material business value but lacks one or more critical controls. Escalation does not remove accountability. It makes risk acceptance explicit.

19 USE IN A DIGITAL BOARD

For a board version, mirror the structure as two side-by-side columns.

- Left column: readiness signals.
- Right column: risk guardrails.
- Bottom row: final decision, actions, and sign-off.
- Use scoring chips for confidence and risk.
- Keep free-text fields short and decision-focused.

Formatting notes for final design

Apply these artefact rules in the final rendered version.

- White page background.
- Black body text.
- ALL CAPS for primary section headers.
- Minimal table borders.
- Horizontal rules between major sections.