

SESSION 1 OF 3 · NCCHCA ANNUAL PRIMARY CARE CONFERENCE 2026

Decision Science for FQHC Leaders

A working method for better executive choices under uncertainty.

60-minute executive workshop · Tools included

EP Hughes Consulting

Your 60 minutes

Six working blocks. Each produces something you can use.

Time	Segment	Output
0–7	Set the decision problem	<i>Live decision statement</i>
7–18	Decision quality: six-link framework	<i>Six-link diagnostic</i>
18–33	Build the Decision Canvas	<i>Criteria, options, assumptions</i>
33–47	Sheets + Gemini demo	<i>Weighted matrix + AI prompts</i>
47–56	Bias check + recommendation	<i>Recommendation with caveats</i>
56–60	Commit to a review point	<i>Decision record starter</i>

Hard calls. Imperfect data. Compressed time.

Two forces collide on every consequential FQHC decision.



THE PRESSURE

Policy and reimbursement shifts

Workforce shortages and retention

Technology and digital risk

Access, equity, quality, margin



THE FAILURE MODE

Ambiguous problem statements

Data treated as certainty

Hidden criteria, unstated trade-offs

Conversations that don't end in action

Same calls. Sharper method.

Decision quality $\neq$ outcome luck.

A strong decision is one where the team can answer six questions — clearly, in writing, before the call is made.

1

What are we
deciding?

2

What matters?

3

What are our
options?

4

What do we know?

5

What could change?

6

Who acts next?

The goal is not certainty. The goal is a transparent, testable recommendation that survives executive, board, and operational scrutiny.

Decision Harmony: six links

Weak link → weak decision. Audit every link before you commit.



Every tool in this session strengthens one or more of these links.

Write the decision before you solve it.

THE FORMULA

We need to decide **[WHAT]** by **[WHEN]**, owned by **[WHO]**, because **[WHY NOW]**.

 *Executive test: if two leaders write different statements, you are not ready to analyze options.*

2 min Silent write

2 min Pair share

1 min Refine

One page. Six fields. The Canvas.

The minimum scaffolding to make a defensible recommendation.

Decision

What are we deciding, by when, owned by whom?

Criteria

What matters? Mission, quality, finance, ops, workforce, compliance.

Options

Three to five credible choices — include a hybrid.

Evidence

Facts, forecasts, and assumptions we're relying on.

Trade-offs

What we'll gain, give up, or risk.

Commitment

Owner, next step, review date.

Not every input is a fact.

Four kinds of input. Each deserves different treatment.

Facts

Verified, current information.

EXAMPLE

Q3 denials by payer (from RCM).

Forecasts

Estimated future state.

EXAMPLE

Denials will continue rising.

Assumptions

Beliefs that need testing.

EXAMPLE

Staff can absorb workflow change.

Values

Priorities and trade-offs we hold.

EXAMPLE

Mission access > short-term margin.



Executive risk: treating one kind as another. Log assumptions explicitly — they need owners and verification.

Make trade-offs visible.

A weighted matrix turns a heated debate into a structured comparison.

Criterion	Wt	A	B	C
Mission / access	25%	4	3	5
Financial sustain.	30%	3	5	2
Operational feas.	20%	5	3	3
Compliance / risk	15%	4	2	4
Workforce impact	10%	3	4	5
Weighted score		3.75	3.65	3.65

Illustrative. Numbers below show the result is close — sensitivity testing matters.

LIVE DEMO FLOW

- 1 Paste criteria & options
- 2 Add weights (total 100%)
- 3 Score options 1–5
- 4 SUMPRODUCT → weighted score
- 5 Change one weight. Re-rank.

Backup if Wi-Fi or Gemini is unreliable: narrate this slide. Appendix has step-by-step screenshots.

AI assists. People decide.

Use Gemini in Sheets to structure thinking — never to outsource the call.



WHAT GEMINI DOES WELL

- Build tables and formulas quickly
- Generate first-pass analysis
- Draft charts and visualizations
- Organize messy decision inputs



WHERE HUMANS STAY IN CHARGE

- Use only if your org has enabled it
- Never paste PHI or sensitive data
- Verify every formula and output
- AI structures thinking. It does not decide.

PROMPT

"Create a weighted score formula for options in C:E using weights in B. Identify which criterion most affects the result."

Score, then stress-test.

1

Score

Two or three options against your criteria.

2

Flex

Change one weight by five points.

3

Watch

Did the rank flip? Where?

4

Name

What evidence is still missing?

If small changes flip the answer, you don't have a recommendation yet — you have a coin flip.

Decision science doesn't replace judgment. It tells you where judgment matters most.

Four traps. Four counters.

The biases that quietly distort executive recommendations.

False consensus

Silence read as agreement.

Counter: Independent first take, in writing.

Confirmation bias

Collecting evidence for the preferred option.

Counter: One disconfirming question per claim.

Outcome bias

Judging the call by what happened after.

Counter: Decision record — written before outcome.

Intuition-only

Mistaking confidence for validity.

Counter: Evidence log + stress test.

Capture the why, not just the what.

Five lines, written before the outcome arrives. Your insurance against hindsight bias.



Recommendation

We recommend...



Rationale

Because criteria A, B, C matter most...



Key assumption

If X is wrong, the recommendation weakens...



Owner & next step

Owner: ____ Next step: ____



Review point

Review on ____ using indicator ____

T A K E - B A C K K I T

Five tools. One method.

Everything you built today, in one packet — ready for Monday.



**Decision
Canvas**



**Assumption
Log**



**Weighted
Matrix**



**Bias
Check**



**Decision
Record**

Use when the issue is consequential. When trade-offs are real. When opinion isn't enough.

One commitment. This week.

Small enough to do. Important enough to matter.

01

Choose

One live executive decision
where the Canvas would help.

02

Test

One assumption that deserves
verification before the call.

03

Record

One review point that prevents
hindsight bias and re-litigation.

Volunteers — one sentence each. What's your decision this week?

DISCUSSION



Questions. Hard cases.
What's on your desk.

Thank you.

Sources and further reading

- NCCHCA conference submission packet: Session 1 objectives and outcomes.
- Methling, Abdeen & von Nitzsch (2022). Heuristics in multi-criteria decision-making: decision quality, objectives, alternatives, trade-offs.
- Carmines & D'Amico (2015). Heuristic Decision Making: bounded rationality and the role of decision environments.
- Google Workspace Help. Gemini in Sheets: tables, formulas, analysis, charts. Availability depends on plan eligibility.
- Hastie & Dawes (2010). Rational Choice in an Uncertain World, 2nd ed. Sage.
- Kahneman, Lovallo & Sibony (2011). Before You Make That Big Decision. Harvard Business Review.

A P P E N D I X

Offline AI demo backup

Use these slides if Wi-Fi or Gemini access is unreliable. Never paste sensitive data.

Step 1 — Set up the matrix.

Paste criteria and options. Leave weights and scores blank for now.

Google Sheets · Weighted Decision Matrix Demo				
Criterion	Weight	A	B	C
Mission / access				
Financial sustain.				
Operational feas.				
Compliance / risk				
Workforce impact				
Weighted score		—	—	—

 Gemini in Sheets

P R O M P T

Help me set up a 5-criterion weighted decision matrix for three options labeled A, B, C.

R E S P O N S E

I've drafted column headers and blank rows for weights and scores. Add your criteria in column A and weight totals to 100% in column B.

Step 2 — Add weights and scores.

Weights total 100%. Score each option 1–5 against each criterion.

Google Sheets · Weighted Decision Matrix Demo				
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 Gemini in Sheets

P R O M P T

Add a SUMPRODUCT formula in row 7 to compute weighted scores for columns C, D, E.

R E S P O N S E

Use: =SUMPRODUCT(\$B\$2:\$B\$6, C2:C6). Drag right across D and E. A scores 3.75, B and C tie at 3.65.

Step 3 — Stress-test one weight.

Shift 5 points from Mission to Financial. Watch the rank flip.

Google Sheets · Weighted Decision Matrix Demo

Criterion	Weight	A	B	C
Mission / access	20% ↓	4	3	5
Financial sustain.	35% ↑	3	5	2
Operational feas.	20%	5	3	3
Compliance / risk	15%	4	2	4
Workforce impact	10%	3	4	5
Weighted score	Flip →	3.65	3.85	3.45

Gemini in Sheets

PROMPT

If I shift 5 points from Mission to Financial, which option wins now?

RESPONSE

Option B now scores highest (3.85). The recommendation is sensitive to how you weight financial sustainability versus mission access.

Step 4 — Translate to a recommendation.

Use the matrix to write the decision record. AI drafts. Humans decide.

Google Sheets · Weighted Decision Matrix Demo

Output	
Top option	B (3.85)
Driving criterion	Finance
Sensitivity	High
Hybrid consider.	A + C ops
Assumption to test	Denial trend
Recommendation	Provisional

Gemini in Sheets

P R O M P T

Summarize this matrix as a one-paragraph recommendation with caveats.

R E S P O N S E

Option B leads on financial criteria but the rank is sensitive to weighting. Recommend B provisionally, conditional on verifying denial-trend assumptions; revisit if mission access weighting increases.