Ethical Decision Making Framework

by Reason Digital

The 5-Steps of the Reason Digital Ethical Decision-Making Framework*

Let's say you are faced with a problem:

"Should my charity adopt ChatGPT for content writing?"

Our question to begin examining the problem within the framework should not be "should we?" but "When and under what circumstances should we"? With this, we can rephrase our problem:

> **"When and under what circumstances should my charity adapt ChatGPT for content writing?"**

Built-in biases to be aware of 💥

Before delving into the framework itself, it's important to take a step back and consider natural biases and influences that certain societal norms have on all of us. Academic literature on ethics has always caveated that any decision made within or outside of a framework is influenced by cultural norms, personal values and individual circumstances including but not limited to age, sexuality, gender, religion, income level, social status etc. - Keeping these in mind will help you anticipate that different cultural and societal backgrounds have different expectations, can become expressed in distinct ethical norms. This in return will influence individual decision-making choices that may result in different behaviours and views expressed from what you are used to.

If you have any questions regarding the Ethical-Decision Making Framework or anything else regarding your charity's digital journey, please do not hesitate to contact us:
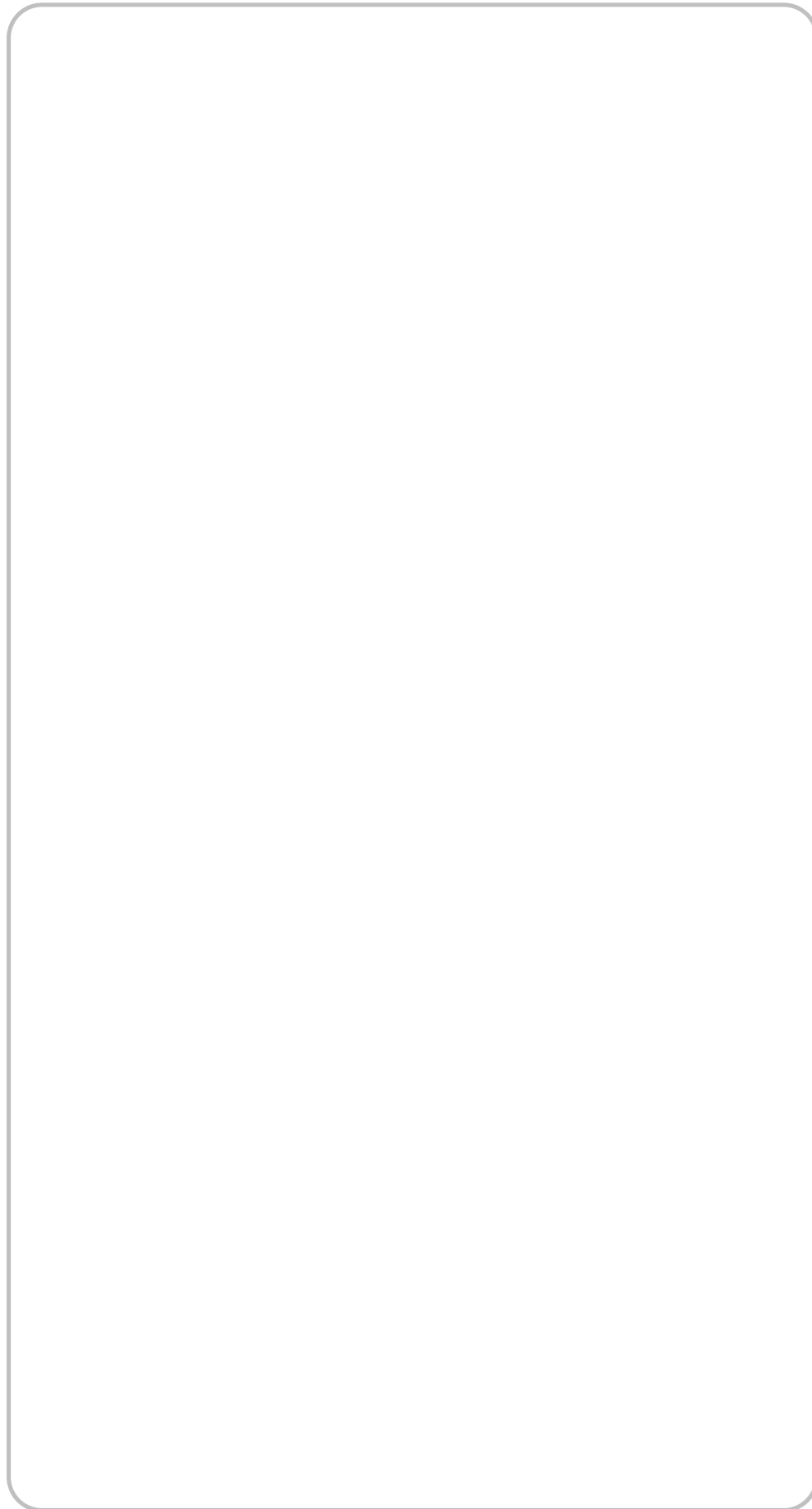
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*The Reason Digital Ethical Decision-Making Framework is adapted from "The Power of Ethics: How to Make Good Choices in a Complicated World" by Susan Liautaud, "A Unified Framework of Five Principles for AI in Society" by Luciano Floridi and Josh Cowls and "Culture's Role in Marketers' Ethical Decision Making: An Integrated Theoretical Framework" by Katharina J. Srnka
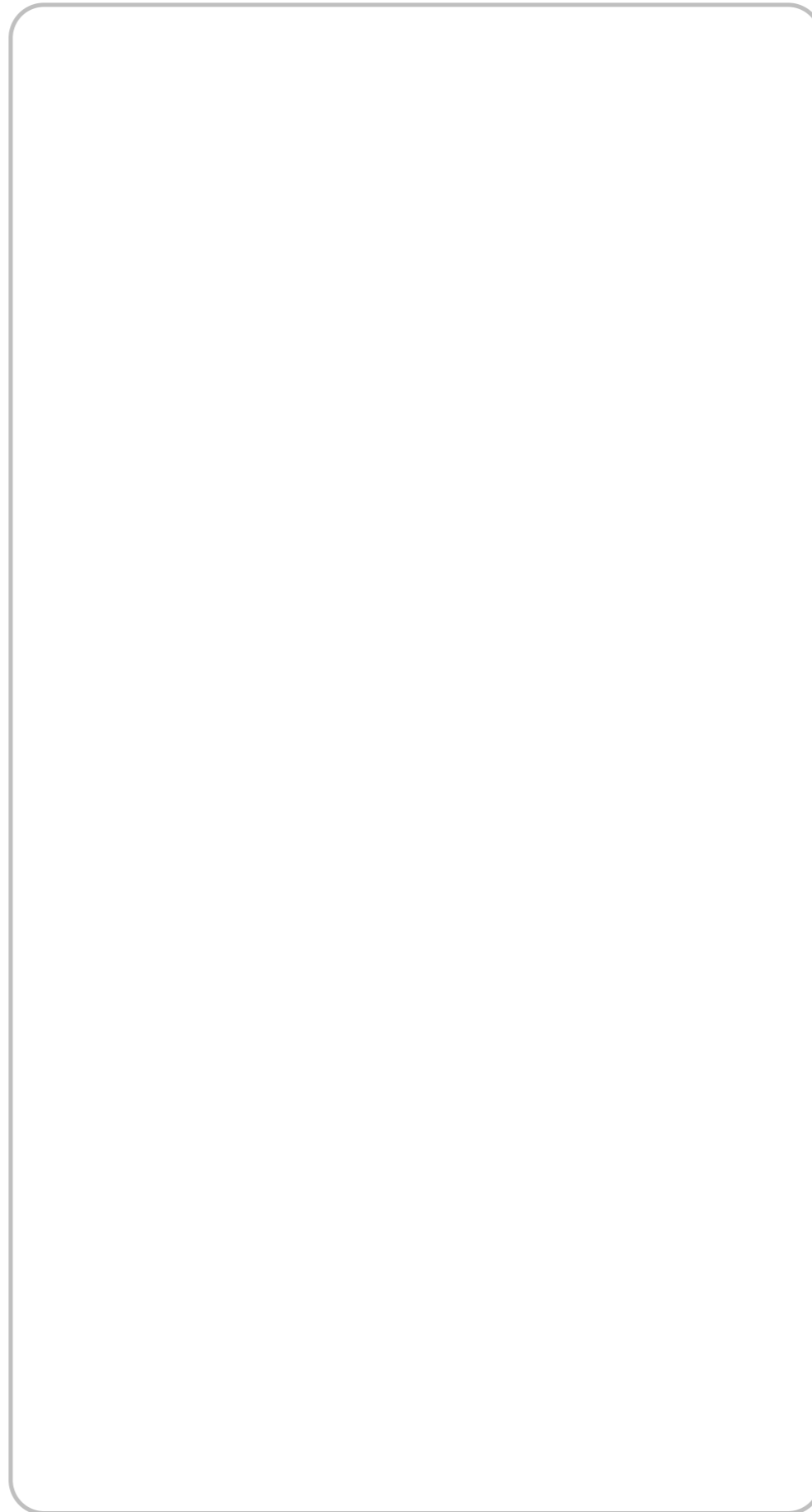
Reason Digital's Ethical Decision Making Framework

Step 1: Identify the issue and examine the facts
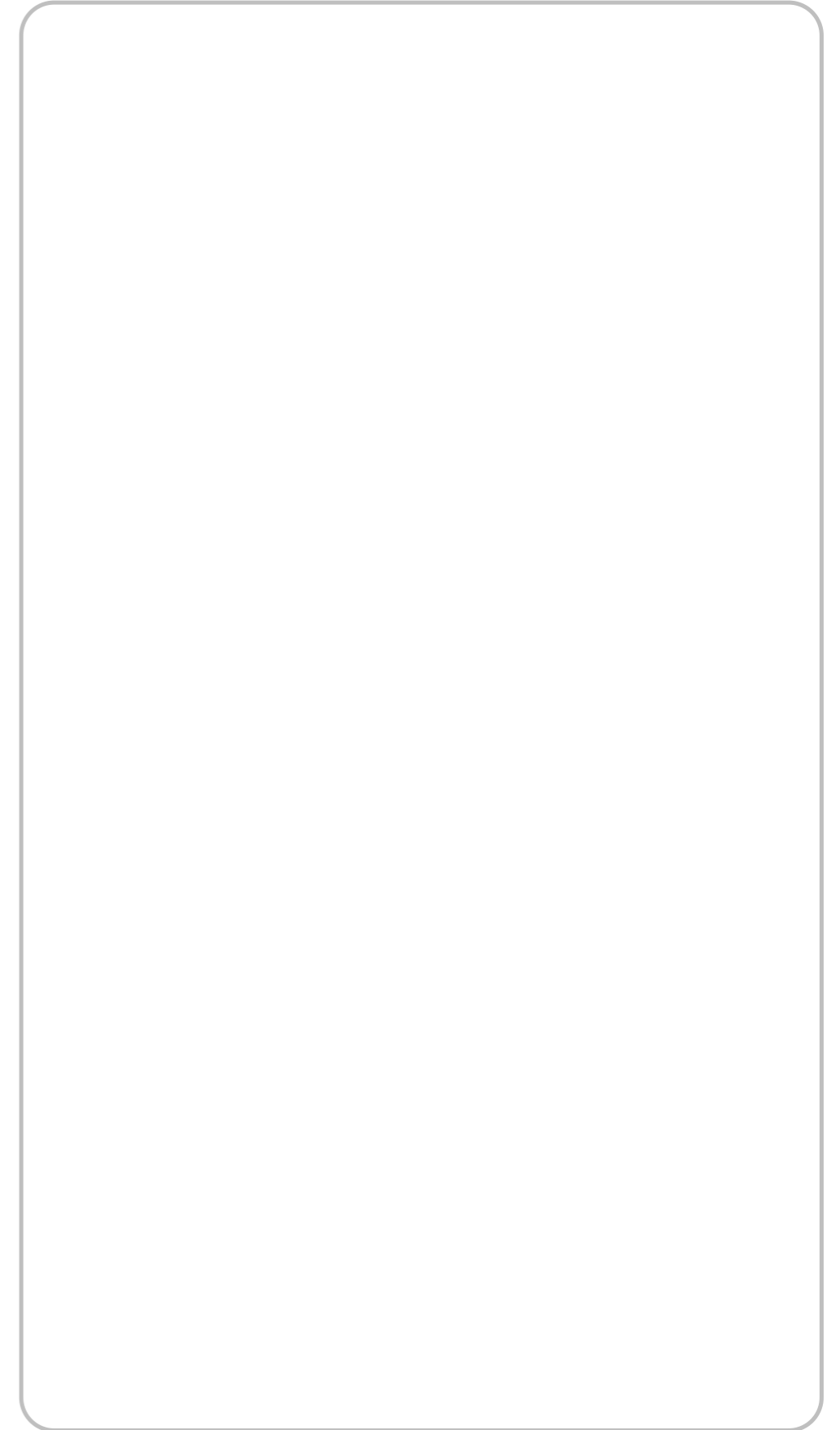
- Identify all stakeholders involved
- Identify all stakeholders impacted
- Identify values involved – are they are in conflict?

Step 2: Apply Guidelines and standards

- Look at your Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct/Standards of Practice
- Look at internal policies, processes and guidelines for additional clarification on certain problems

Step 3: Evaluate possible resolutions

- Resources consulted in *Step 2* can help with possible resolutions to the problem
- Write down the different decision options you've come to (Option A/Option B/Option C) etc.

Step 4: Implement and document your decision making

- Do we have the information we need to make a decision?
- Select option
- Document specifics of information and why it concerned you
- Record: dates, conversations, meetings etc.

Step 5: Review and Reflect

- What are the potential consequences of our decision in the short, medium and long term?
- Consider outcome and reflect on it
- Review outcome in relation to Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct/Standards of Practice
- How do you decide potential consequences?

Step 1: Identify the issue and examine the facts

1 Identify all **stakeholders involved**.

2 Identify all **stakeholders impacted**.

3 Identify **values involved** – *are they are in conflict?*

Step 2: Apply Guidelines and standards

1   Look at your Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct/Standards of Practice that might outline certain **behaviours and conduct** your organisation subscribes to in relation to:
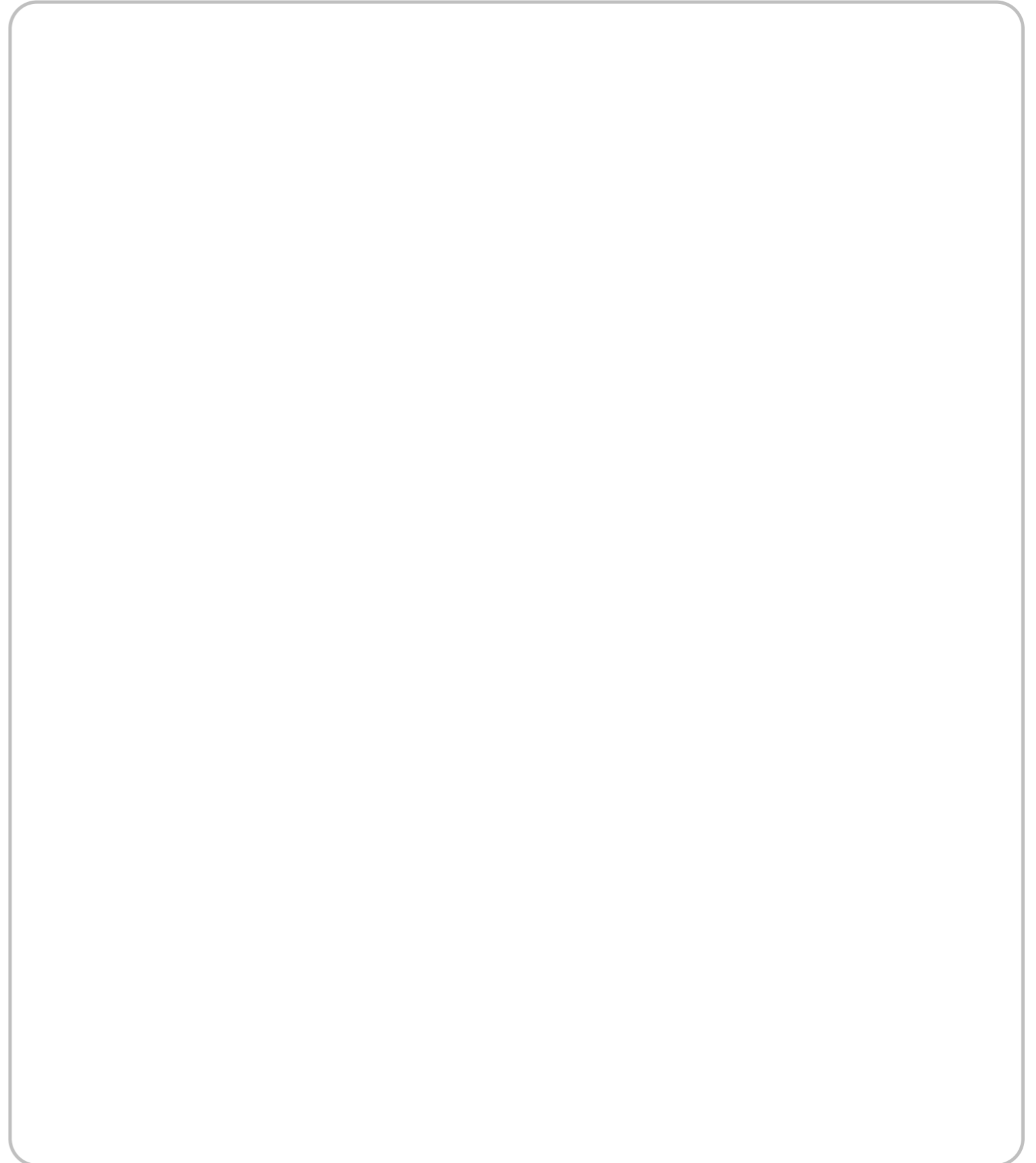
Knowledge   Skills   Judgement   Attitudes

2   Look at internal policies, processes and guidelines for **additional clarification** on certain problems.

Step 3: Evaluate possible resolutions

1 Resources consulted in *Step 2* can help with possible resolutions to the problem

2 Write down the different **decision options** you've come to (Option A/Option B/Option C) etc.

Option A: _____

Is Option A

☐ Consistent with conducts/processes and policies?

☐ Consistent with mission, vision, values, and strategic directions?

☐ Consistent with ethical principles identified in Step 2?

Benefits/Strengths:

Harms/Limitations:

Option B: _____

Is Option B

☐ Consistent with conducts/processes and policies?

☐ Consistent with mission, vision, values, and strategic directions?

☐ Consistent with ethical principles identified in Step 2?

Benefits/Strengths:

Harms/Limitations:

Option C: _____

Is Option C

☐ Consistent with conducts/processes and policies?

☐ Consistent with mission, vision, values, and strategic directions?

☐ Consistent with ethical principles identified in Step 2?

Benefits/Strengths:

Harms/Limitations:

Step 4: Implement and document your decision making

1 Do we have the **information** we need to make a decision?

- *Have we consulted multiple sources and cross-checked views with others?*
- *Might new information come to light in the future that would change our understanding in a meaningful way?*
- *Are you seeking out facts or hearing and seeing only what we want to support a biased view or to get to a quick-fix binary answer, like do it / don't do it?*

2 **Select one** option from your Option A, B and C.

3 **Document** specifics of information and why it concerned you.

4 **Record:** dates, conversations, meetings etc.

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Step 5 Continued: Review and Reflect

4 How do you decide potential **consequences**?

Beneficience   *"Will it bring about good, e.g., curing the patient's illness?"*

Non-Maleficience   *"Will it avoid harm, e.g., unnecessary or disproportional side-effects?"*
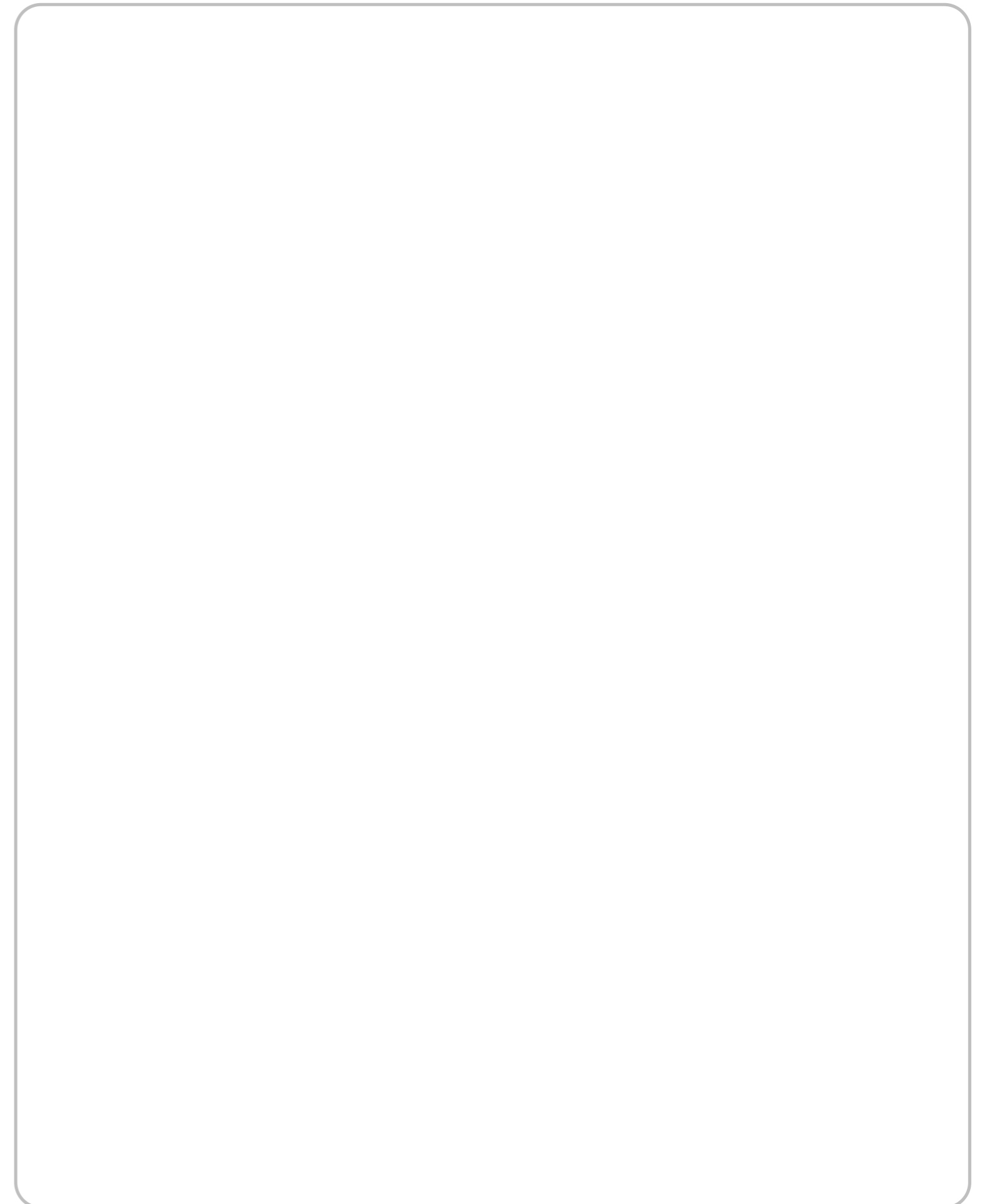
Justice   *"Are we treating this patient impartially and fairly with respect to other patients, i.e., through a Rawlsian veil of ignorance?"*

Autonomy   *"Does the patient support this action out of her own will, e.g., through informed consent?"*

+1   *If, for example, a medical decision support system based on machine learning is supposed to help with the above therapeutic decision, then the additional questions of "How does it work?" and "Who is responsible?" need to be addressed.*
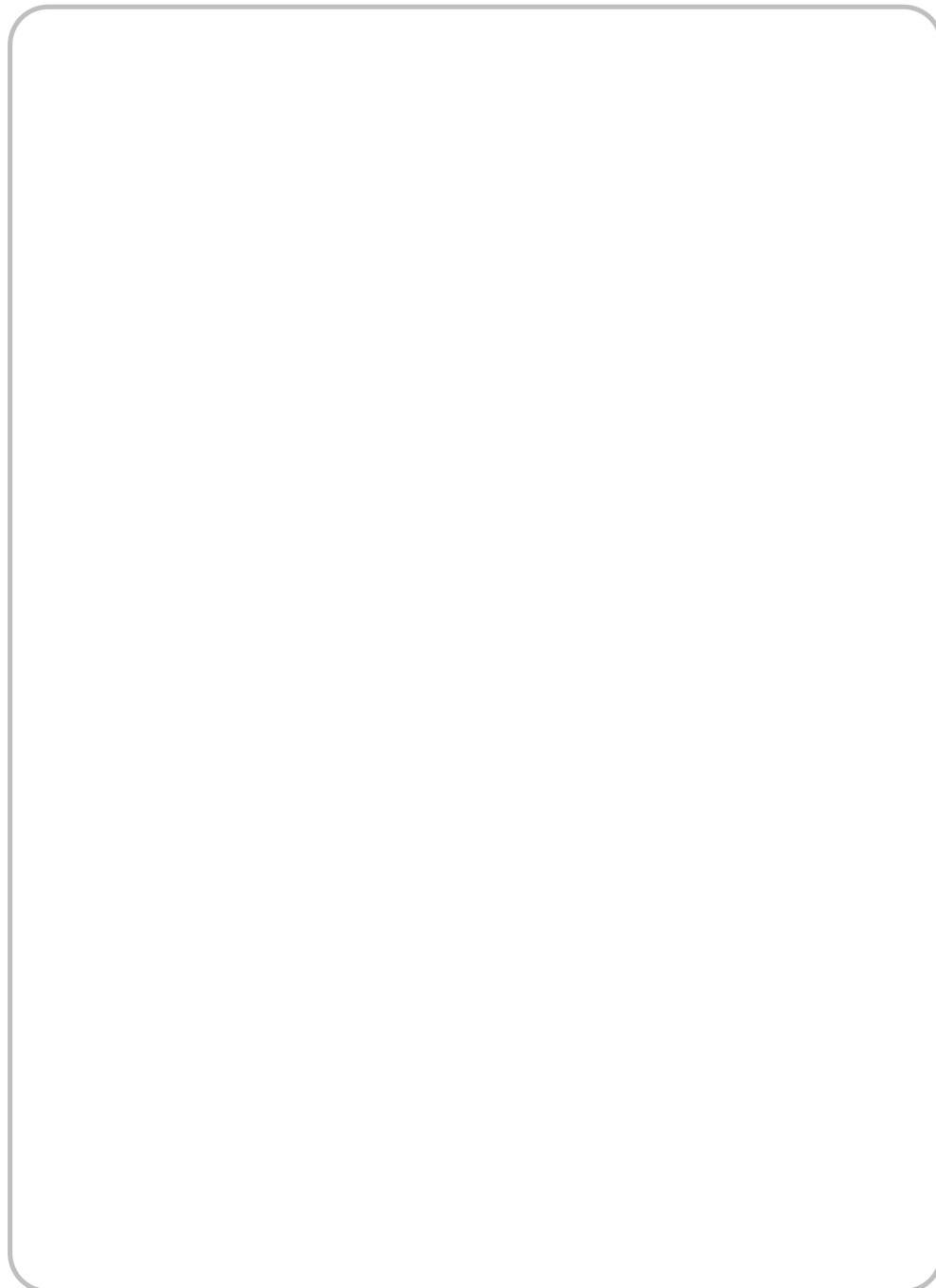
Explicability   *"How does it work?" (intelligibility) and "Who is responsible?" (accountability)*
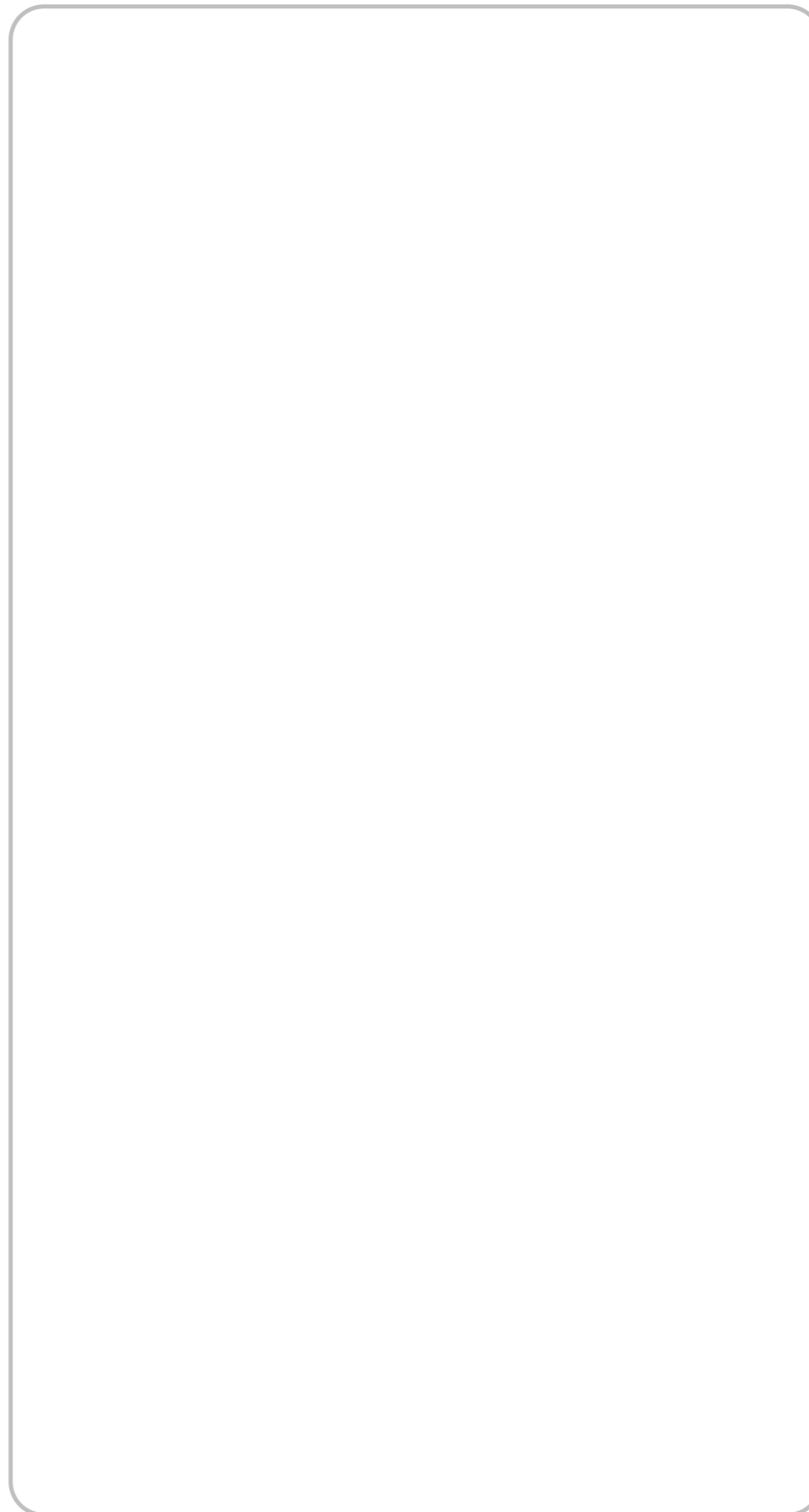
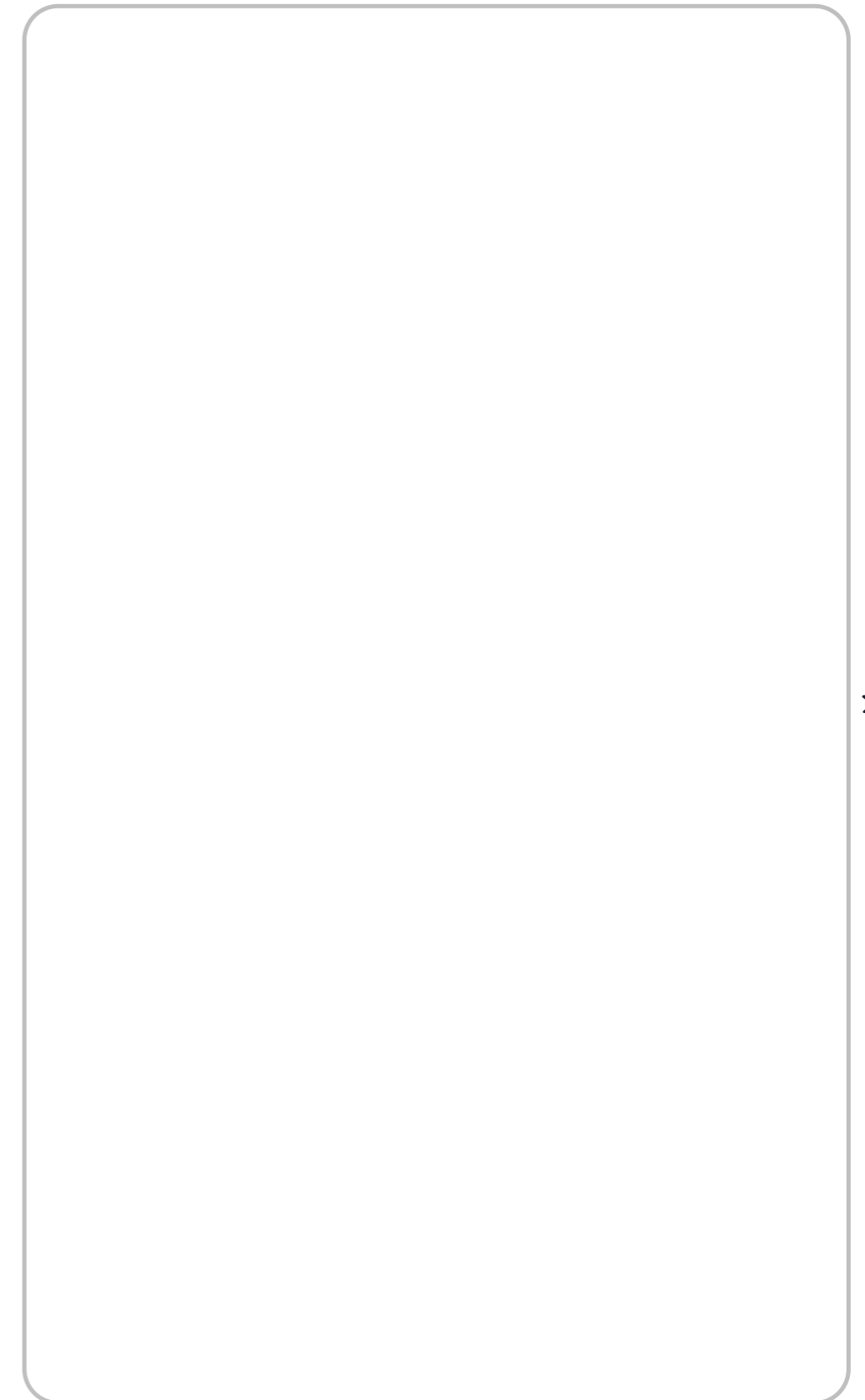5 **Review** and reflect

Step 5: Review and Reflect

1 What are the potential **consequences** of our decision in the short, medium and long term?

- *What potential consequences are important and irreparable?*
- *What opportunity for doing good might be lost?*
- *How would we feel if we were directly affected by the decision?*

2 Consider **outcome** and reflect on it

3 Review **outcome** in relation to Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct/Standards of Practice

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Conclusion

To conclude, the Reason Digital Ethical Decision-Making Framework can help you and your charity to make decisions when internal policies and codes cannot provide a clear direction for decision making.

To caveat – by using this framework, you still won't be able to make everyone happy, whether it's stakeholders, beneficiaries, employees or the general public, somebody could always disagree with you, but by going through the framework, you will be able to defend and explain your decision.

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