Free Competitor Analysis vs Founder-Reviewed Support

ESCALATION DECISION CARD / A68 V1.2.0

Use this card to decide whether the free Competitor Fit Challenge and Decision Snapshot are enough, whether a free Decision Scope Review is justified, or whether the decision must remain at MORE EVIDENCE REQUIRED. Paid work starts only after fit is confirmed.

Start free	Run the Challenge for bounded screening. Use the Decision Snapshot to make supported findings, unresolved evidence and next-evidence actions easy to interpret.
Scope Review before payment	Use the free Decision Scope Review when the decision boundary, evidence burden or accountable ownership genuinely needs founder judgment. The review can return FIT, RESCOPE or NOT FIT.
Paid only after fit	If FIT or a workable RESCOPE confirms a bounded consequential task, paid work may be considered. Current engagement definitions and pricing remain on /services/.
Refusal state	Every stage can still end at MORE EVIDENCE REQUIRED when a decision-critical claim remains unresolved. Additional work can improve the evidence base; it cannot manufacture proof.

1. Match escalation to four decision pressures

Do not add these pressures into a tier score. Ask whether the self-guided path can responsibly carry each one.

Pressure	Low / bounded	Higher / material
Evidence burden	Public signals and participant inputs are enough for orientation.	Independent collection, contradiction resolution or deeper source review may be needed.
Decision consequence	No material budget, positioning or execution action follows.	The result could redirect spend, positioning, roadmap, sales or market action.
Stakeholder coordination	One user can interpret the result.	Several reviewers or accountable decision owners need an inspectable record.
Change / monitoring need	One bounded decision is sufficient.	Repeated evidence collection, follow-up or ongoing monitoring is needed.

Decision rule	If the free path is insufficient, move to the free Scope Review - not straight to a paid package. If evidence remains inadequate, preserve MORE EVIDENCE REQUIRED.

2. What each stage is allowed to carry

Stage	Best-fit task	Permitted boundary
Free Challenge	Screen whether a candidate plausibly belongs and identify what to verify next.	Bounded self-guided analysis. Not independent verification or investment approval.
Decision Snapshot	Interpret the free result as supported / unresolved / next evidence / stop-or-escalate.	Free interpretation layer. Not a paid package or founder-reviewed recommendation.
Decision Scope Review	Test whether a consequential decision is focused and evidence-ready enough for founder-reviewed work.	Free pre-payment review. Output is FIT, RESCOPE or NOT FIT. Not a purchase or guaranteed outcome.
Paid engagement after FIT	Perform agreed evidence, review, recommendation, activation or advisory work for a bounded decision.	Only the agreed scope. Still no certainty beyond the evidence. Current definitions/pricing: /services/.

Commercial anti-pattern	The most expensive route is not the best route. Over-scoping wastes work; under-scoping exports risk. Use the lightest route that can survive the consequence, with free Scope Review before payment when the boundary is genuinely unclear.

3. One fictional decision, three stopping points

A fictional B2B software founder sees three apparent competitors before quarterly planning. The free Challenge finds one plausible direct rival, one contextual marketplace and one unresolved candidate because customer-comparison evidence is missing.

Stop with the free path	If the only question is "Is this worth investigating?", bounded screening plus the Decision Snapshot is enough. Preserve the unresolved evidence and stop.
Request Scope Review	The team must freeze a research set for a planning meeting, several reviewers need the reasoning, and the scope/evidence burden is not yet clear. Use the free Decision Scope Review to determine FIT, RESCOPE or NOT FIT.
Paid work only if FIT	The same set now informs a fictional EUR 50,000 product/GTM allocation and two material sources conflict. If Scope Review confirms a bounded fit, paid work may be proportionate for the agreed evidence/review task. If the conflict remains unresolved, the result is still MORE EVIDENCE REQUIRED.

4. Portable escalation handoff

Copy this structure into a planning note, internal review or scope discussion. Record the decision boundary before discussing price.

Field	Record
Named decision	What action could change because of this analysis?
Starting route	FREE CHALLENGE + DECISION SNAPSHOT / DECISION SCOPE REVIEW / DEFINE DECISION FIRST
Evidence / refusal state	BOUNDED NEXT ACTION or MORE EVIDENCE REQUIRED
Permitted claim	The strongest statement the current evidence and route can responsibly carry.
Commercial boundary	No paid step justified yet, or paid work may be considered only after FIT/RESCOPE confirms scope.
Critical blocker	Which unresolved fact could reverse the decision?
Escalation trigger	What material change in evidence burden, consequence, coordination or monitoring need justifies review?
Authority boundary	Routing is not approval and does not guarantee outcomes.

METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXT

UK Government AQuA Book: assurance should be proportionate to intended-use risk and analytical complexity. Green Book 2026: effort should correlate with scale, cost, complexity and risk. Magenta Book: evaluation should be fit for purpose and proportionate to decision-maker needs. These sources support proportionality; they do not validate SERPIFAI commercial routes, pricing, service superiority or outcomes.