

THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
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# Introduction to Health Policy Analysis

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With many thanks and much credit to the GWU School of Public Health Faculty,  
Professors J Forstenzer Espinoza & SF Wood

Think critically about a new field

- Framework

Apply knowledge

Get to know one another

Explore new literature and resources

Practice voicing your opinion & expertise

- For your patients, yourself, colleagues & institution

# What Is Policy Analysis?

The systematic examination of a policy **problem** from the perspective of a particular **stakeholder** with the purpose of helping an individual/organization/group make a **choice** that is reflective of the **values** of the stakeholder and the **practical** and **political** realities.

# A Tale of Two Models

Political

Subjective

Rational

Objective

## Study Finds Expressing Anger In Unhealthy Ways Actually Incredibly Satisfying



# Why Health Policy Analysis?

*Should* action be taken to address a given problem?

If so, what type of action?

# Core Elements of a Policy Analysis

## Problem statement/Issue statement

Background

Landscape

Options

Recommendation

# Problem Statement

Provided for you!

## Broad or narrow?

The mortality rates for infants of non-Hispanic black mothers was 11 per 1,000 live births in 2013, compared with 5 per 1,000 for non-Hispanic white mothers. The governor has asked you, the California Public Health Department, to present a plan to decrease racial disparities in neonatal mortality rates in California. Present your strategic plan, considering limited resources.

# Core Elements of a Policy Analysis

Problem statement/Issue statement

## **Background**

Landscape

Options

Recommendation

# Background

Detailed description of the problem

Provides fact base

Summarize evidence

Determine magnitude of the problem

Why is this important?

# Background

Is the problem changing?

Historical trends?

Future projections?

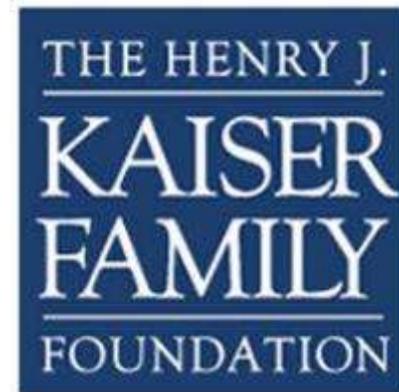
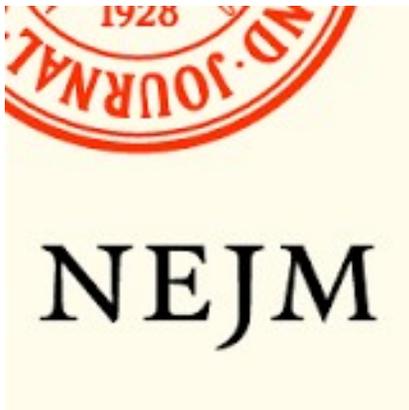
Who is affected?

Populations

Geography (national, state, city)

Affected equally?

# Resources



**The Incidental Economist**  
The health services research blog

# Core Elements of a Policy Analysis

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# Landscape

“Tries to diagnose the problem”

Identify stakeholders

Who's affected and how? e.g. groups, organizations, individuals

Clarify the political landscape

Politically charged? Divisive?

Provide economic context

Economic causes? Cost of a solution? Cost of inaction?

# Landscape

Describe social context

- Equity
- Ethical/moral concerns

Legal context/considerations

Administrative feasibility

## BOX 13-1 Possible Factors to Include in a Landscape Section

### Political Factors

What is the political salience of the issue?

Is this a front-burner issue?

Is this a controversial issue?

Do key constituents, opponents, interest groups, etc. have an opinion about the issue? Who is likely to support or oppose change?

Is there bipartisan support for the issue?

Is there a reason to act now?

Is there a reason to delay action?

### Social Factors

Who is affected by this problem?

According to the client who assigned the analysis, are influential or valued people or groups affected by this problem?

Is there a fairness concern relating to this issue?

### Economic Factors

What is the economic impact of addressing and of not addressing this problem?

Are various people or groups impacted differently?

Are there competing demands for resources that relate to this issue?

What is the economic situation of the state or nation? How does this affect the politics relating to this issue?

### Practical Factors

Is it realistic to try to solve this problem?

Would it be more practical to solve this problem later?

Are other people in a better position to solve this problem?

What do we know about solutions that do or do not work?

If this problem cannot be solved, is it still necessary (politically, socially) to act in some way to address the problem?

### Legal Factors

Are there legal restrictions affecting this problem?

Are there legal requirements that impact the analysis?

Is new legislative authority necessary to solve the problem?

Is there legal uncertainty relating to this problem?

Is future litigation a concern if action is taken?

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**Options**

Recommendation

# Options

Identify evaluation criteria

Identify options (potential solutions)

Evaluate

Justify your final recommendation

# Options

Potential evaluation criteria

- Net benefit
- Cost and financing
- Equity
- Administrative ease
- Legality
- Political feasibility
- Social acceptability

How do you measure these?

You may not be able to..high/medium/low, \$-\$\$\$

# Options

In identifying options

- Be creative
- Do some research
- We want you to think!
- Some typical options: education, mandates, taxation, subsidies..

In evaluating options, consider building a chart/grid for side-by-side comparisons

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**Recommendation**

# Recommendation

Choose a single option

May be a combination of options, but needs to have been presented & evaluated as a combination

Why is this the best course of action?

- “Analysis not advocacy”

# Questions?