



Program Planning and Implementation: Using Evidence to Guide Decisions

Preliminary syllabus

Spring 2024

(In-person: March 18–22; online: March 29 and April 5)

Instructors

Douglas J. Besharov
Douglas M. Call

Guest Instructors

Neil Gilbert
Martin Nekola
Martin Potůček
Arnošt Veselý

Governments, multinational organizations, NGOs, and funders need to make informed decisions about whether to establish, modify, or expand particular programs—and how to do so. This is often a complex process involving many interacting factors that are difficult to assess. And this, in turn, creates a demand for staff able to apply the tools of evaluation-based program planning and implementation.

The course seeks to advance the knowledge and careers of participants by helping them understand and apply those tools in real-world settings. Students will learn how to:

Formally assess the need to establish, modify, or expand a program (whether public or private);

Prepare a detailed program design using a logic model (informed by theory, research, and evaluation);

Estimate a program's likely effectiveness, costs, and benefits;

Consider various modes of financing and delivery, including public/private partnerships and Social Impact Bonds;

Develop plans to assess the fidelity of implementation to the program's original design, with the ability to make operational modifications, if needed, based on lessons learned after the program is initiated.

In addition to course instruction, the class will also visit relevant service programs and visit with senior officials of relevant Czech government offices, international organizations, and NGOs in Prague.

Classroom procedures

All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and digested the readings. (Supplemental readings are optional.) If some unavoidable circumstance prevents you from being prepared, please inform the instructors. If you have not done so before class begins, we will assume that you are affirming that you are fully prepared to participate in that day's class discussion.

Assignments

For their final papers, students will prepare an analysis of program, using one of the methodologies discussed in class. All other assignments in the course are for the purpose of assisting students in the process of completing their analyses.

Initial topic and type of analysis. Students will select topics and briefly describe the type of analysis they intend to conduct. The methodologies include a formal needs assessment; a detailed program design using a logic model; an estimate of a program's likely effectiveness, costs, and benefits of a program; a practical proposal for financing and delivery; a plan to assess the fidelity of implementation to the original design, with the provision for needed modifications; or another topic approved by the instructors. This assignment will be due to the instructors on ***Friday, March 29 by 5:00 p.m.***

Final paper. As the final product for the course, students will prepare analyses using the type of analysis selected in the initial assignment. The final papers should be a minimum of twenty pages of text (double spaced), not counting appendixes and should also include executive summaries.

Draft papers will be due on ***Friday, May 3.***

Final papers will be submitted via email to the instructors by ***Friday, May 31.***

Grading

Initial project description 10%

Class participation	25%
Draft paper	20%
Final paper	45%

All late assignments will received a deduction of *one-third* a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late, unless permission granted by the instructor.

Assigned readings

Potůček, M. et al. *Public Policy. A Comprehensive Introduction*. Prague: Karolinum Press 2017.

Veselý, A., M. Nekola, E.M. Hejzlarová. *Policy Analysis in the Czech Republic*. Bristol, Chicago: Policy Press 2016.

All other assigned readings are available on Canvas (elms.umd.edu).

CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS

Note: The course will meet daily (tentatively 9:00-13:00) when in Prague from March 18–March 22. In addition, class will be held online on Fridays for two weeks after the in-person classes

Prague

Monday, March 18. Introduction to the course; Logic models; Problem definition; Policy formulation; Structure of decision-making, and Strategies

Instructors: Douglas Besharov, Douglas Call, Martin Potůček, and Arnošt Veselý[[

Readings

Douglas J. Besharov, *Logic Models* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2023).

“Chapter 7: A Comprehensive Introduction” and “Chapter 10: How to Understand Public Policy,” *Public Policy: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 119-132, 161–173.]]

Tuesday, March 19. Policy design

Instructor: Douglas Besharov, Douglas Call, and Arnošt Veselý[[

Martin: This would be a good day for a site visit.

Readings

Howlett, M. “From the 'old' to the 'new' policy design: design thinking beyond markets and collaborative governance,” *Policy Sci* 47, 187-207 (2014).]]

Wednesday, March 20. Program design (including how to design a program for evaluation)

Instructor: Martin Nekola and Arnošt Veselý[[

Readings

T. R. Dye, “Chapter 4: Policy Evaluation” in *Understanding Public Policy*, 15th ed.

Karol Olejniczak, Pawel Sliwowski, Frans Leeuw, “Comparing Behavioral Assumptions of Policy Tools: Framework for Policy Designers,” *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 22:6, 498-520.]]

Thursday, March 21. Program financing and delivery; public-private partnerships

Instructors: Douglas Besharov; Neil Gilbert, professor, University of California, Berkeley.]]

Martin: This would be a good day for a site visit.

Readings

Doug B: Neil’s readings]]

Friday, March 22. Needs assessments and process evaluations.

Instructor: Douglas Besharov and Douglas Call[[

Martin: This would be a good day for a site visit.

Readings

James A. Altschuld and David D. Kumar, “Needs Assessment” in *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

Douglas J. Besharov and Douglas M. Call, “Using Logic Models to Strengthen Performance Measurement” in *Improving Public Services: Modern Performance Measurement Around the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Arnold Love, “Chapter 3: Implementation Evaluation,” in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2nd ed., eds. Joseph S. Wholey, Harry P. Hatry, and Kathryn E. Newcomer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004): 63–67, 80–88.]]

Online

Friday, March 29. Evaluability assessments.

Instructor: Douglas Besharov and Douglas Call[[

Readings

US Agency for International Development, *Conducting an Evaluability Assessment for USAID Evaluations* (Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, June 2017).]]

Friday, April 5. Cost, cost minimization, cost feasibility, and cost effectiveness studies

Instructors: Douglas Besharov and Douglas Call[[

Readings

Stephanie R. Cellini and James E. Kee, “Cost-effectiveness and Cost-benefit Analysis,” in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2016): 636–669.

David Greenberg, Victoria Dietch, and Gayle Hamilton, *Welfare-to-Work Program Benefits and Costs: A Synthesis of Research* (New York: MDRC, February 2009): 5–15, <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/511/full.pdf> (accessed March 25, 2011).]