**LEE Policy Design and Analysis Framework**

*The Policy Design and Analysis Framework outlines the basic considerations of constructing or assessing a policy proposal. Items 1-3 deal with the technical design of the policy (what is the reason for the policy and how does it work?), items 4 and 5 address the context around the policy (what is the environment surrounding this policy and who cares about it?), and items 6 and 7 deal with the marketability of the policy (what are the competing ideas and how popular will it be?). As you read through these items, consider how the policy you are developing or assessing fits the given criteria.*

**1. STATUS QUO– What is the current situation around the issue the policy is trying to affect?**

Key questions:

1. What is the current situation of the issue the policy is focused on? What are the 2-3 key metrics that highlight this as a vital issue?
2. What are the detailed absolute metrics of this issue? What are the appropriate relative metrics (e.g., compared to another similar region, 10 years ago, between different socio-economic groups)?
3. What are the sources for all your data? Is it from a reputable source (scholarly journal, government study)? When was it published? Has it been refuted by other theories or evidence since it’s been published?
4. What are the root causes of this situation? It is important to understand this, as it will drive your solutions (e.g., unemployment may be caused by many factors – skills of local workers being mismatched with types of jobs in local growing industries is very different than no jobs available as all companies contracting)
5. What are the indirect impacts of this situation? (e.g., how does smoking affect healthcare costs?)
6. As far as you can tell, what have other regions/states/school boards done about similar issues?
7. What are the financial implications of this situation? What is currently being done to affect this situation and how much does that cost (and how effective is it)?

**2. CAUSAL THEORY –- What is the logic behind this policy?**

The basis for any policy is (1) some type of input (your decision), (2) a desired outcome, and (3) a logical explanation connecting the two. The input is the program, mandate, incentive, regulation, or change to an existing policy that you are proposing. The outcome is the change in behavior in a specific target group that the policy is attempting to create. The logical explanation should explain the causal relationship between the input and the desired outcome, which is often a multi-step process. It is helpful to think of a causal theory like this:

Input 🡪 Output (immediate effect) 🡪 Outcome (eventual result) 🡪 *Long-term impact*

Key questions:

1. What is the input? Or, how does the policy or program intervene with the status quo?
2. What is the intended outcome?
3. Who is the target group? (Whose behavior are you trying to change?)
4. How does the input lead to the intended outcome?
5. What evidence is there to support this theory? Is it from a reputable source (scholarly journal, reputable database)? When was it published? Has it been refuted by new theories or evidence?

**3. POLICY INSTRUMENT – How the policy intervene with the problem?**

Once you’ve determined the logic behind the policy, it’s worth taking a step back to re-examine the input (or, the policy instrument), especially in light of the root causes you’ve identified in Step 1. Remember to consider the political implications of using a certain instrument over another (increasing taxes to fund a program, for example), as well as the cost and feasibility of your current method.

Key Questions:

1. What are the political implications of this instrument?
2. What are alternatives to this instrument (other programs, mandates, incentives, regulations)?
3. How does the input reach your desired outcome more effectively than an alternative? Why?

**4. FUNDING – How will this policy be funded?**

Where will the money come from to fund this policy? More importantly, what will money *be taken* from? Unless you’ve secured private funding for this policy or your policy is a tax decrease, money will most likely have to be redistributed towards this policy in some way, whether it is from another program’s budget or from increased taxes. Remember that even regulatory policies, which are not necessarily funded programs, still need funds to pay for implementation, administration, oversight, and evaluation.

Key Questions:

1. Where exactly is the funding for this program coming from?
2. Where will money be redistributed from? Can you justify this? How?
3. Once funded, how exactly will you use money to support your program? What resources will you need to successfully implement it?

**5. STAKEHOLDERS – Who will your policy affect and what are the implications of that?**

It’s likely that this policy or program will affect several groups of people outside of the intended target group. Whether the proposal is successful will very likely depend on how it affects groups that are interested in your issue and how much influence they have to support or oppose it.

Key Questions:

1. Who are the people/organizations/communities affected by your policy? (target group, other constituents, interest groups, legislators, industry leaders, etc.)
2. For each of these entities:
   1. What is their basic involvement in the issue? How impacted are they by your policy? (Does it benefit them, harm them, or have no effect on them?)
   2. How interested are they in the issue?
   3. How supportive or opposed (or neutral) are they to your policy?
   4. How much power/influence do they have? Are they willing to use it for or against you?

**6. CONTEXT – What else might affect the implementation of this policy?**

Policy proposals don’t exist in a vacuum! You should consider the political, economic, and social environment that might affect the implementation of this proposal. If the political or economic climate isn’t favorable, even a well constructed proposal won’t go very far. You should also be aware if this policy has been tried before in other regions or contexts.

Key Questions:

1. What is the political climate in your district (Very partisan? How is the district drawn? Who has recently been elected at the local or state level in your district and what have their stances on your issue been?)
2. What about the economic/financial climate?
3. What are the major issues affecting your constituents right now? What do they care about most? Does your policy interfere with or support that?
4. Has this policy been tried before (even if in different forms)? What worked or didn’t work? How is your policy different (or the same)?

**7. COMPETING THEORIES – What are the arguments against your policy?**

To successfully argue for your policy, you should be aware of arguments against your idea. Knowing where you stand among competing theories will not only give you a better understanding of the nuances of the issues you’re dealing with, but help you defend your policy in public more convincingly.

Key Questions:

1. What are arguments against your policy? These competing arguments may fall under the following categories:
   1. Different causal theory
      1. A different set of evidence that supports another causal theory
      2. The values supporting their causal theory are just different (ie. What is “fair” or “just”)
   2. Different way of reaching the same outcome (different instrument)
   3. Different funding strategy (i.e. don’t want to pull from the same program you’re pulling from, don’t agree with raising taxes)
   4. Different understanding of the political/social context
2. What makes your policy the better method? Is it more financially feasible than the others? Is it more in line with the political/social context?

**8. MARKETABILITY – Will this policy be popular with the people who matter most?**

Finally, you should be able to convincingly sell your policy to constituents and influential stakeholders. Do you have a personal story or compelling reason why people should care about this issue at this moment? Can you convince people that this is something they should care about as much as you do? How well can you articulate this? (\*\*note that this will be more relevant for advocacy, implementation, and elected leadership positions)

1. Can you sell the policy to constituents and influential stakeholders?
2. Do you have a personal story or compelling reason why people should care about this issue at this moment?
3. Can you convince people that this is something they should care about as much as you do? How well can you articulate this?