

Public Policy Evaluation

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Road Map

- Defining our terms
- Program evaluation
- Stages of public policy analysis
- Evaluation in all stages
- Preformative evaluation
- Current work
- Traits of Public Policy Evaluation

Defining Our Terms

- Public Policy
 - “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye, 1984)
- Public Policy Analysis
 - “an applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and arguments to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems” (Dunn, 1981)
- Prospective Policy Evaluation
 - “how policy makers assess the effect of a proposed policy or program before it is put into place” (Mossberger & Wolman, 2003)
- Evaluation
 - “the systematic process of determining the merit, value and worth of someone or something”

Isn't This Just Program Evaluation?

- Program evaluations “assess ongoing activities that provide services”
- Public policies don't always lead to programs (regulations, taxes, etc.)
- Public policy evaluation also assesses programs, actions, policies *before* they are enacted

Four Stages of Policy Analysis

- Assess – Identify – Agenda Setting
- Formulate – Prepare – Set Priorities – Develop – Plan – Choose – Estimate
- Implement – Action – Apply
- Evaluate

Evaluation in All Stages

- Explicitly recognizing the evaluative aspects of:
 - Problem identification
 - Setting priorities
 - Defining options
 - Developing strategies

Preformative Evaluation

- “Evaluation of the proposal or concept underlying the proposal” (Scriven, 1991)
- Relies on studying policy transfer
- Formal techniques:
 - Microsimulation, formal modeling
- Informal techniques:
 - Expert advice, anecdote, analogy

Current Work

- GAO's Prospective Evaluation Synthesis
- "Systematic method for meeting Congressional requests for analyzing proposed legislation"
 - Textual analysis of proposal
 - Implied goals and assumed results
 - Review and synthesis of prior evaluations
 - Similar programs and contexts
 - Summary of judgments
 - Likelihood of success given future contexts

Traits of Public Policy Evaluation

- Decision-driven
- Usually a short time-line
- Less evidence for decisions
- Greater relevance of public as a stakeholder
- Overtly Political component

Questions?

- Is there enough information?
- Really just evaluating other programs and applying to a new context?
- Do time constraints undermine validity of conclusions?
- Public Policy Evaluation
 - “the systematic process of determining the merit, value and worth of . . . whatever governments choose to do or not to do”