

PADP 6950: Foundations of Policy Analysis

Assignment notes for Policy Tool Memo (to complement in-class policy tool presentations)

Due November 29th by start of class

For this assignment, you will work with your policy tool presentation partner to write a one-page memo that accompanies your policy tool presentation.

The memo will (briefly) propose to use the tool that you present on to address a public policy problem of your choosing. The memo should state the specific problem, provide relevant background information, describe the rationale for why the tool will help to solve the problem, and discuss important uncertainties or remaining concerns. Formatting and structure can be somewhat flexible, but here is what I recommend:

- Write your memo from a perspective where a public official (e.g., state agency director, city manager, congressman, or whoever) has heard--but knows nothing--about a given policy tool, and has asked you to assess whether said tool (in this case, the one that your team has chosen) could be useful for solving a particular problem (you get to identify this problem, but I am happy to help come up with a relevant topic if need be).

Then, follow this basic structure:

- **State the central issue/problem as clearly as possible:** Try to state the issue or problem as a one-sentence statement. This can be followed by a brief explanation or clarification. Many times significant issues will be implicit rather than explicit and are linked to larger policy and management issues. Part of your task is to point out the significance of the larger issues.
- **Identify relevant course of action (using your policy tool):** Describe your tool and explain how it would work to address the problem.
- **Evaluate the alternative:** Critique the relative strengths and weaknesses of this option make a balanced presentation even if you disagree with one side of the "argument".
- **Recommend a specific course of action:** Be sure to clearly state the recommended course of action and the consequences you expect to flow from the selected course of action (note: your recommendation could be no action, or at least no action using the policy tool that you are discussing).