Policy Analysis: An Introduction
Outline

- Introduction
- Why do policy analysis?
- Types of policy analysis
- What kind of analysis is needed?
- Steps in the policy analysis process
Why Do Policy Analysis?

- Need for thoughtful, impartial assessment
- Avoid “shooting from the hip”
- Think seriously about problems and solutions
Steps in Policy Analysis

- Define and analyze the problem
  - questions may include: Who is affected and how seriously?
  - may include looking for causes

- Construct policy alternatives
  - might be the most important step
  - want to encourage creativity
Steps in Policy Analysis (cont’d)

- Develop evaluative criteria
  - effectiveness, efficiency, equity, political feasibility
  - assess potential of different criteria
  - will vary depending on the problem

- Assess policy alternatives
  - ask which is likely to produce desired outcomes

- Draw conclusions
  - some may advocate a single policy action, but others may not
  - be sure of the information gathered
Think Tanks and Analysis

- Many policy studies conducted
- Large number of think tanks
- Think tanks represent a broad range of ideologies and ideals
- Think tanks help policymakers and citizens
  - understand complex problems
  - show a rationality in addressing problems
  - appreciate value of their independent research
Types of Analysis

- Scientific
  - search for truth and build theory about policy actions and effects
  - may be too theoretical for most decision makers
  - examples: academic social scientists, National Academy of Sciences
Types of Analysis (cont’d)

- Professional
  - analyze alternatives to solve problems
  - goal is for practical value
  - research can be too narrow due to time or resource constraints
  - examples: Brookings Institution, American Enterprise Institute, General Accountability Office
Types of Analysis (cont’d)

- Political
  - advocate and support preferred policies
  - often ideological or partisan; may lack analytical depth
  - examples: Sierra Club, AFL-CIO, Heritage Foundation
What Analysis Is Needed?

- **Root causes vs. pragmatic adjustments**
  - should focus be on the underlying issues or on addressing the issue at hand

- **Comprehensive vs. rigor/relevance**
  - comprehensive is more thorough; better methodologically, but also takes more time
  - less rigor may be more timely to address problems but may have quality concerns
What Analysis Is Needed? (cont’d)

- Consensual vs. contentious

- Rational analysis vs. democratic politics
  - rational analysis tends to focus efficiency
  - should citizen involvement also be considered when making decisions

- Ethical issues
  - how studies are conducted
  - bias or funding source of the analyst