

THE POLICY ANALYSIS PROJECT

Important Dates:

Policy Project Topic Due : **June 23**
Class Presentations : **July 28 and July 30**
Final Project Due : **July 31** :
(In the middle of the semester, we would also review the progress on the project)

Purpose of the Assignment:

- This assignment is designed to give you an apprenticeship experience of conducting a well-structured policy analysis. If you take up any internship or join as a staff in any government organization or non-profit, it is most likely that you will have to prepare a project of this kind. This is an opportunity for you to gain some experience in the basic craft of policy analysis in a setting that won't cost you your job (but may be your grade).
- In the next section, I have listed ten open-ended policy problems that require some investigation, and then the analysis has to be communicated to a client. Most of the topics listed below are focused on Atlanta and Georgia so that you do not encounter much problem in collecting and organizing information. Learning to gather information is one of the key steps in conducting policy analysis, so you will have to find a way of gathering information about the problem if it is not readily available.

What you will submit?

- A Policy Memorandum
 - 4-5 pages of single-spaced text (excluding tables and figures)
 - 12 pt. **Times New Roman** or Garamond Font
 - Page numbers at the bottom of the page
- Background Material
 - Policy Analysis Workbook
 - Slides of the class project presentation

Assignment:

You are the Senior Policy Analyst in the (hypothetical) Office of Planning and Policy Analysis of the State of Georgia. The Chief of the Office of Planning and Policy Analysis receives requests to conduct policy analysis from different clients on various issues. This month the Chief has assigned you problem number X and has asked you to submit a policy memorandum within 30 days and present the findings in front of the mentioned clients. Your policy memorandum should lay out the background of the problem, identify different elements of the problems, specify the goals, compare the alternatives and consider political and implementation feasibility.

- (1) Atlanta Bicycle Coalition is an advocacy group that promotes biking in the Atlanta Metropolitan Area and advocates for better cycling infrastructure. The members of this organization along with other sustainability groups recently met with the mayor of the city and discussed various issues related to the shortage of biking infrastructure in the city. The mayor has promised them that his office will examine the issue and meet with them next month. Several issues related to separate bike lanes, trails, beltline, bike-sharing, accidents etc. were discussed in the meeting. (Clients: Office of the Mayor, Dept. of Driver Services)
- (2) The perceived crime situation in downtown Atlanta is one of the major challenges that afflict the area. The high crime rate has a significant effect on the housing market and economic activity. The new Chief of Atlanta Police Department wants to make downtown Atlanta a safe place where businesses can thrive and residents feel secure. The Office of Planning and Policy Analysis has received a request to analyze the problem and suggest policy options. (Client: Chief, Atlanta Police Department)
- (3) Homelessness is a major problem in the city of Atlanta. The Mayor convened a meeting recently to review the situation of homelessness and discuss possible steps the city can take to address the problem. Several issues related to the housing market in Atlanta, experiences of other cities, etc. were discussed in the meeting. (Client: Office of the Mayor)
- (4) In a recent meeting with the Mayor, some residents have suggested that Atlanta is not pedestrian friendly. There are several areas of the city where the infrastructure is lacking, or there are other challenges that pedestrians have to face. The Mayor has agreed to examine this problem and plausible solutions. What are the steps that the city can take to make the city more pedestrian friendly? Some suggestions for infrastructure improvements, automatic signals, etc. have been discussed in the meeting.
(Clients: Office of the Mayor, Georgia Department of Transport Commissioner).
- (5) Georgia provides tax credits for the production of films. Such tax credits have been criticized by several experts, while others say they are an effective tool for promoting economic development and job creation. The Governor will be reviewing this program and will make a decision on whether to continue the tax credit or not. The Office of Planning and Policy Analysis has received a request to analyze the issue. (Client: Office of the Governor, Georgia Department of Economic Development).
- (6) Food Deserts are the areas that have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, especially in poorer neighborhoods. According to a report by a local newspaper, almost 2 million Georgians live in a food desert. The Georgia Department of Public Health is concerned about this development and has asked the Office of Planning and Policy Analysis to analyze the problem and suggest policy measures. (Client: Georgia Department of Public Health).

- (7) The access to public transportation remains a major problem in Atlanta. In addition to making MARTA more commuter friendly, the new chief of MARTA wants to increase the ridership of MARTA. Two key issues were discussed at a recent meeting, how to attract more commuters to MARTA and how to make MARTA system accessible to more commuters by route expansions and increase in frequency. Besides, the political challenges associated with the expansion of rail transit, the possibility of expanding bus transit, and feeder routes are some of the points that were mentioned in the meeting. (Client: CEO of MARTA)
- (8) In 2014, the city of Atlanta witnessed a few inches of snow that brought the city to a standstill. The Governor and Mayor of the city convened a meeting of different stakeholders to consider various options for inclement weather planning in the city. Considering, the general weather conditions in Atlanta, the meeting was inconclusive about the steps that the city should take to be better prepared in the future. Several issues like Cost of Equipment, Staff Requirements, etc. were discussed in the meeting. Office of Planning and Policy Analysis has been asked to submit their analysis (Client: Office of the Mayor, Office of the Governor).
- (9) Some recent media reports have highlighted the problem of school discipline in public schools and inequities in how discipline is doled out in Georgia's public school. Georgia Appleseed Centre for Law and Justice (<http://gaappleseed.org/publications>) analyzed the discipline reports and suggested that students of color and poor students were given out of school suspensions at a higher rate than other students. The Georgia Department of Education is concerned about this development and has asked the Office of Planning and Policy Analysis to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the problem and present the findings at the next monthly meeting. (Client: Georgia Department of Education)
- (10) Atlanta Streetcar was inaugurated for downtown Atlanta in 2014 after much excitement, but several news reports have highlighted problems in the functioning of the streetcar including the staff constraints and funding problems (including user fee). Considering that there have been proposals to expand the streetcar even further, addressing these issues is of even more concern. The Mayor has requested Office of Planning and Policy Analysis to examine the problems associated with functioning of the streetcar and suggest different policy options. (Client: Office of the Mayor)