Data and Policy Analysis: General Framework

Policy Analysis vs. Political Analysis

- Aggregate efficiency
- Transparency
- Credentials of analyst (peer review, expertise)
- Properly compiled and analyzed data tell a story

- Distribution of costs and benefits
- Information is power
- Every analysis has a political “angle”
- Choice of “data” to tell a predetermined story
Data and the Law

• Legal context matters
  – Does the law state that data must be compiled and provided as part of law making process
  – In Michigan Yes
    • Every piece of legislation must have a “fiscal note” attached
    • Revenue forecast is a binding “budget constraint” on legislature

Michigan Government

• Executive branch
  – Governor
  – Bureaucracy
• Legislative Branch
  – Senate
  – House of Representatives
• Judicial Branch
  – Supreme Court & Lower courts
Policy/Data Analysts

• Legislative branch of government
  – Partisan or Political Staff
    • Analyze policy and help make policy (very concerned about political feasibility)
  – Nonpartisan Staff
    • Analyze policy and project revenues (barred from politics or political feasibility)
    • House Fiscal Agency and Senate Fiscal Agency

House/Senate Fiscal Agency

• Nonpartisan agency serving both democratic and republican parties

• Does not engage in policy setting only policy analysis

• Mission
  – Serve as committee to address
    • Expenditures
    • Revenues
Policy/Data Analysts

• Executive Branch staff
  – Work on behalf of Governor
    • Managerial Staff---can be fired for political reasons
    • Civil service —cannot be fired for political reasons

• Exist in various areas
  – Treasury (Office of Revenue & Tax Analysis)
  – Office of the State Budget
  – Dept. of Labor & Economic Growth
  – Dept of Community Health

Other Policy/Data Actors

• Outside Michigan government
  – Nonprofit agencies (may analyze policies or recommend policies)
  – Academia (may analyze policies, fine line over whether or not to recommend policies)
Other Policy Actors

• Lobbyists
  – Paid to represent groups such as business, education, environmental protection, cities, etc..
  – Play an important “advocacy” role in policy setting and policy analysis
  – Use information strategically to establish positions

Data, Where does it come from?

• Government accounting and tax systems
• US Government
  – Census Bureau
  – Bureau of Labor Statistics
  – Bureau of Economic Analysis
  – Office of Management and Budget/Congressional Budget Office
Data locations

• Private sector firms
  – Sometimes are willing to share with us
  – Ford, GM especially auto industry
• Newspaper, Internet, Blogs

Examples

• Pure Michigan (tourism project)
• Michigan Film Production (tax credits)