

Public Policy Formulation Procedure

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to recommend a procedure/model for County use in formulating public policy on any major subject. This is not a new procedure; it has been studied and used at many levels and within many organizations for several years. When a perceived problem surfaces, the tendency is to jump into writing new policy, procedures, rules, and/or regulations without first doing proper research and analysis into the matter. By following this easy to use model, a much better result can be obtained for the County. This procedure may initially sound complicated, but it is not because it follows a rational and common sense approach to decision making.

2. **Steps:** The steps listed below are sequential and interrelate with one another.

1. Define the problem: This is the first and most important step in the process for the manner in which the problem is defined will shape the solution. Time and thought must go into properly defining the problem. If the problem is improperly defined, the solution will likely be wrong.

2. Assumptions: State any relevant assumptions that if changed, would have a major effect on any potential solution to the problem. For example, if demographics were involved in a problem, an assumption about the County demographics in the future would be important and would shape any solution. Another example is water—is water assumed to exist in a given situation?

3. List viable courses of action (COA): COAs are potential ways to solve the problem. Each COA must be individually analyzed regarding its pros and cons based on common decision criteria that must be applied to each COA. This is where the research and analysis is done. For example, “cost” in its broadest sense is almost always a decision criteria applied to all COAs. In Custer Co, water impact is a common decision criteria.

a. Kinds of COAs: Using existing policies, rules, and regulations is always the first COA that should be considered to solve the problem for the solution can often be found in what already exists through a waiver, variances, etc. Status quo (make no changes) is also an acceptable COA after it is properly researched and analyzed. Conversely, listing new feasible COAs to solve the problem is always possible such as writing a new regulation or new words in an existing regulation.

b. The key to success lies in unbiased, complete research and analysis into the pros and cons for each COA as they are compared to each other using the same decision criteria. This is normally done on a matrix where decision criteria can be weighted if desired based on their perceived value and importance.

4. Pick the best COA: If a matrix is used a numerical score will identify the best COA and it then becomes the best solution to the stated problem based on the decision criteria used.

5. Implement the COA: This would address whatever follow up is required to make the COA happen.