

A DECISION TREE TEMPLATE AND MENU

Once a deliberation group has been formed, goals have been set, rules of procedure and civility put in place, and a reasonable working foundation has been established, here is a general roadmap for working through challenging issues. The roadmap is adaptive and fungible and needs to be adjusted to circumstances.¹

1. What specific decisions do we need to make?
 - a. *What is the problem we are trying to solve?*
 - b. *How are different groups framing it?*
 - c. *What facts, evidence, or underlying information bears on the problem?*
 - d. *How supported or contested is the information?*

2. What is success?
 - a. *What is our vision of the problem "solved"? What would we actually and specifically see going on?*
 - b. *What are the components of the "problem solved"?*
 - c. *Working backwards, what future actions are implied?*

3. What is the timeframe we envision to achieve success? How long do we think it will take?

4. What criteria can we apply to evaluate good, better, worse, or simply acceptable solutions? Is there an early assumption that the solution may involve a mix of regulation, economic incentive, public education, information dissemination?

5. What specific important objectives do we need to put into the plan?
 - a. *Which objectives matter and why?*
 - b. *What are the key results we are seeking from each objective?*
 - c. *Which objectives are contradictory and how exactly do they work at cross-purposes?*
 - d. *Which ones are potentially complementary?*
 - e. *What measures (numbers, indicators, or metrics) can we use to track the key results we are seeking from each objective?*
 - f. *What is the hierarchy of objectives? Which ones take priority?*
 - g. *How will others be balanced?*

¹ (a) Treat all steps as interim and contingent until final decisions have been made; (b) it is easy to drown in complexity. Keep total number of decisions needed to reasonable. Each decision will require additional sub-decisions; (c) Same with criteria, objectives, and alternatives. Short lists ("the critical few") are better. If lists get long, keep prioritizing; (d) for complex policy challenges with multiple causes and multiple effects, the decision-seeking process isn't usually linear. More often it requires looping back to previous steps; (e) Wherever possible, bring numbers to bear on the tasks.

6. What specific alternatives (or actions) do we propose to help achieve measurable key results for each objective? What level of detail are we striving for?
7. What are the comparable consequences and trade offs for implementing each alternative?
8. Which alternatives (actions) do we recommend and over what time frames?
9. How much will the alternatives cost and who pays?
10. Who will be responsible for implementing the selected alternatives?
11. What will be monitored and who will do the monitoring?
12. Who will receive the reports and do course corrections?

NOTES

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- It is easy to drown in complexity. Keep total number of decisions needed to reasonable. Each decision will require additional sub-decisions. Same with criteria, objectives, and alternatives. Short lists (“the critical few”) are better. If lists get long, keep prioritizing.
- For complex processes with multiple causes and multiple effects, process isn’t usually linear. Often requires looping back to previous steps.
- Wherever possible, bring numbers to bear on the ask.