Decision Support Analytics Course

Strengthen your decision-making by applying structured analytics to financial and performance data in government contexts.

Group classes in Live Online and onsite training is available for this course. For more information, email onsite@graduateschool.edu or visit: https://www.graduateschool.edu/courses/decision-support-analytics

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Course Outline

Module 1: Management Reform Drivers

- Explore the legislative and executive changes that drive the need for stronger analytics in federal decision-making.
- Understand the evolution of federal performance expectations and accountability standards.
- Examine the roles of CFOs and analysts in navigating performance management and resource allocation.
- Identify major management laws and executive initiatives impacting federal agencies.

Module 2: Structured Approach for Conducting Analysis

- Learn a five-step, structured framework for analysis in a federal environment.
- Connect analytical methods to management questions in budgeting, performance, and finance.
- Compare structured agency analysis to performance audit methodology.
- Use a design matrix to document, plan, and track analytical activities.

Module 3: Step 1 – Defining the Questions That Drive Analysis

- Develop descriptive, normative, and impact-driven analytical questions.
- Apply critical thinking and stakeholder alignment in formulating questions.
- Differentiate between overarching and subordinate questions.
- Organize questions into eight categories, including program impact and policy design.

Module 4: Step 2 – Identifying the Data

- Assess data quality based on reliability, verifiability, relevance, and consistency.
- Evaluate accessibility vs. availability to set realistic project timelines.
- Compare data from people vs. records and understand the pros/cons of each.
- Ensure identified data effectively supports analytical questions.

Module 5: Step 3 – Collecting the Data

- Understand methods for gathering data from systems, reports, people, and surveys.
- Use agency performance and accountability reports and financial statements as data sources.
- Consider sampling methods and limitations of data used in analysis.

- Recognize internal and external data constraints in planning and reporting.

Module 6: Step 4 – Analyzing the Data

- Apply analytical methods to descriptive, normative, and impact-based questions.
- Use content, trend, statistical, and benchmarking analyses appropriately.
- Understand how to use logic models and causal relationships in data interpretation.
- Select suitable analytical techniques based on the scope and purpose of analysis.

Module 7: Step 5 – Presenting the Results

- Communicate findings through written reports and oral briefings.
- Structure reports to clearly answer questions, show methods, and support recommendations.
- Incorporate visual aids and summary sections to clarify results for decision-makers.
- Demonstrate sufficiency, relevance, and appropriateness of evidence in communication.

Module 8: Case Study

- Apply the full five-step analysis model to a realistic agency scenario.
- Assess internal controls within a Department of Public Health and Safety case study.
- Practice defining questions, identifying and collecting data, and reporting recommendations.
- Produce an executive summary including condition, criteria, cause, and effect findings.