COURSE SYLLABUS

Decision Support Analytics Course

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

Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email onsite@graduateschool.edu or visit: https://sdfm.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.