

TABLE 6-1

Selected Criteria for Evaluating Public Policy Proposals

Criterion	Definition	Limits to Use	Where Most Likely Used
Effectiveness	Likelihood of achieving policy goals and objectives or demonstrated achievement of them.	Estimates involve uncertain projection of future events.	Virtually all policy proposals where concern exists over how well government programs work.
Efficiency	The achievement of program goals or benefits in relationship to the costs. Least cost for a given benefit or the largest benefit for a given cost.	Measuring all costs and benefits is not always possible. Policy decision making reflects political choices as much as efficiency.	Regulatory policies, such as workplace safety and environmental protection; consideration of market-based approaches.
Equity	Fairness or justice in the distribution of the policy's costs, benefits, and risks across population subgroups.	Difficulty in finding techniques to measure equity; disagreement over whether equity means a fair process or equal outcomes.	Civil rights, disability rights, tax equity, access to health services and higher education.
Liberty/Freedom	Extent to which public policy extends or restricts privacy and individual rights and choices.	Assessment of impacts on freedom are often clouded by ideological beliefs about the role of government.	Proposed national identification cards, restrictions on Internet use, property rights, abortion rights, regulatory actions that constrain choices of corporations and individuals.
Political feasibility	The extent to which elected officials accept and support a policy proposal.	Difficult to determine. Depends on perceptions of the issues and changing economic and political conditions.	Any controversial policy, such as gun control or changes in environmental regulations.
Social acceptability	The extent to which the public will accept and support a policy proposal.	Difficult to determine even when public support can be measured. Depends on saliency of the issues and level of public awareness.	Any controversial policy, such as crime control or abortion rights.
Administrative feasibility	The likelihood that a department or agency can implement the policy well.	Involves projection of available resources and agency behavior that can be difficult to estimate.	Expansion of agency duties, use of new policy approaches or new technologies, policies with complicated institutional structures.
Technical feasibility	The availability and reliability of technology needed for policy implementation.	Often difficult to anticipate technological change that would alter feasibility.	Science and technology policy, environmental and energy policies, telecommunications, defense policies.

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