Applying Behavioral Insights to the Design of Public Policy

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HARVARD Kennedy School
Executive Education
YOU'RE HERE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
Across the globe, policymakers are rethinking their approach to the design and implementation of public policies.

Historically, many policies have been rooted in the expectation of rational behavior. But, all too often, people make decisions that systematically depart from common notions of what is rational. Policies based on assumptions about how people should behave rather than how they actually do behave are less effective than they could be and can potentially backfire.

The most successful government policies are created from a deep understanding of human behavior. By using behavioral insights gleaned from economics, psychology, and other social sciences, policymakers can craft smarter policies with more impactful outcomes.

Applying Behavioral Insights to the Design of Public Policy is a dynamic Harvard Kennedy School executive program led by a renowned group of scholars and practitioners working in this rapidly expanding field. Here, you will discover how behavioral science insights can be used to construct innovative solutions to public policy problems. You will also examine cutting-edge research that will help you understand the factors that drive individual behavior in different contexts. Nontraditional policy tools informed by behavioral insights such as defaults, active choice, social norms, framing, and choice architecture will also be introduced.

You will be challenged to think critically about how to tackle problems large and small—from changing smoking and eating habits to modifying how taxes are...
levied and revenue is collected—as well as identify areas where behavioral science insights can have the biggest impact on your own policy and programs. You will explore a range of relevant national and international policy domains—including savings, consumer credit, education, labor markets, energy use, healthcare, revenue collection and tax compliance, social welfare programs, and the political process.

Applying Behavioral Insights to the Design of Public Policy will use a unique combination of lectures, case studies, small group workshops, experiential learning, and robust class discussions to deliver a powerful, stimulating experience. Led by some of the world’s preeminent behavioral science scholars, this program will enable you to:

» Apply insights from psychology, economics, and other social science disciplines to create behaviorally-informed policies for the public, nonprofit, and corporate sectors
» Analyze behaviorally-informed policy tools, including defaults, active choice, framing, reducing complexity, and providing peer information
» Examine how behavioral insights can improve the effectiveness of traditional policy tools like financial incentives (taxes/fines/subsidies), disclosures, and regulations
» Learn how behavioral insights have been successfully applied to domestic and international policy domains including savings, consumer credit, education, labor markets, energy use, healthcare, revenue collection and tax compliance, social welfare programs, and the political process
» Think critically about the policy tools that will be most effective and appropriate for your specific policy problems
» Test the effectiveness of behaviorally-informed policy interventions

“NUDGING” EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

» In the UK, a reform that required employers to automatically enroll employees in a pension plan increased participation by 20%

» In 2008, a change to a local get-out-the-vote script about how individuals will get to their polling stations increased voter turnout in the U.S. Democratic primary by 4.1%

» Adding a unique serial number to sales receipts in Brazil that consumers could use to enter a state lottery increased VAT revenue by 22%

» Informing U.S. households how their energy consumption compared with their neighbors’ reduced energy consumption 1.9% - 3%
WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This program is designed for leaders with a range of backgrounds and responsibilities who are in a position to influence and/or implement public policy, including:

» Officials in national, state/provincial, and municipal governments in developed or emerging countries who are involved with creating or amending public policies and who wish to apply behavioral insights to their work

» Leadership/senior staff in nonprofit organizations or other NGOs who work on public policy issues and wish to increase the effectiveness and/or cost-effectiveness of the projects they undertake, fund, or evaluate

» Philanthropies, education, military, etc.

A background in economics, statistics, psychology, or any other specific discipline is not required. Consideration will be given to ensure those selected are geographically diverse, face a range of current policy challenges, and have backgrounds and experience relevant to the program’s various group discussions. You will also be invited to share specific policy challenges you are personally interested in resolving.

TO APPLY OR LEARN ABOUT PROGRAM DATES, CURRICULUM, TUITION, AND MORE, PLEASE VISIT

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Admission is competitive and based on professional achievement and organizational responsibility. There are no formal educational requirements; however, fluency in written and spoken English is a necessity for participation.

This program qualifies for both the Public Leadership Executive Certificate and the Public Policy Executive Certificate. Visit www.hks.harvard.edu/ee/certificate to learn more.
Todd Rogers is a behavioral scientist, a Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Director of the Student Social Support R&D Lab. His research generates and harnesses insights about human behavior to address critical issues of public policy. It is part of the emerging field of behavioral policy, tightly linking the design of policy with insights and methods of behavioral science. As an overarching goal, Rogers is committed to ensuring that behavioral policy research is implemented widely and with fidelity. This has led to him co-founding two social enterprises: the Analyst Institute (focused on citizen engagement) and InClass Today (focused on student engagement).

In addition, Rogers is a senior researcher for Ideas 42, a nonprofit think tank using behavioral science to help solve complex social problems. He is also a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Behavioural Insights Team, which generates and applies behavioral insights to inform policy, improve public services, and deliver results for citizens and society. Rogers received a Ph.D. jointly from Harvard’s department of Psychology and Harvard Business School, and received a B.A. from Williams College, majoring in Religion and Psychology.

ADDITIONAL FACULTY AND SPEAKERS

» Cass R. Sunstein, Robert Walmsley University Professor at Harvard University; founder and Director of the Program on Behavioral Economics and Public Policy at Harvard Law School; former Administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs; and co-author of *Nudge* (with Richard H. Thaler, 2008)

» Iris Bohnet, Academic Dean of Harvard Kennedy School; Professor of Public Policy; Co-Director of the Women and Public Policy Program; Associate Director of the Harvard Decision Science Laboratory; and Faculty Co-Director of the Behavioral Insights Group (BIG) at Harvard Kennedy School

» David Laibson, Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics at Harvard University; Chairman of the Harvard Department of Economics; and head of the Harvard University Foundations of Human Behavior Initiative
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