

# Economic Policy Proposal Overview

**Goal:** For students to apply strategic thinking toward improving the local community

**Objectives:** Students will...

- Articulate policy goals and a compelling rationale for the project
- Conduct a rigorous analysis of a policy problem
- Research and compare the implementation of policies addressing their issue
- Use a cost-benefit analysis to justify their policy recommendation
- Craft an implementation strategy for their solution

**What:** The economic policy proposal is a simplified version of a policy brief that think tanks or research organizations submit to stimulate public debate and advance a particular solution. The audience for these papers is typically those with power to implement, or at least influence and lobby for, the policy. Your proposal can argue for a policy at the local, state, or national level as long as the policy directly supports a strong and resilient local economy. The policy recommendation can be for specific public institutions (e.g. Fort Lewis or the public library) or departments within a particular level of government (USDA or planning department). Your goal is to convince others not only that your proposal has potential but that it has **more** potential than the other proposals during our exhibition. Note that quality work could result in the advancing of your idea by local government.

The proposal must have the following:

**1. Executive Summary** - The summary should briefly discuss the situation you are concerned about, why it is important and urgent, and the various policy options under discussion. You should state your preferred solution and an abbreviated summary of your rationale and path to implementation. Your summary should state clearly how your policy contributes to a strong, resilient economy in La Plata County (5 points).

## **2. Overview**

A.) Background - A policy proposal begins with the relevant background on the situation you are trying to address. The situation doesn't have to be a problem. It could be that things are going well, and this proves the community is ready to implement a more ambitious policy. The overview answers the basic questions: what is the situation, who is involved, where it is taking place, and for how long has the situation been going on. It should include a short history of how we arrived at the current situation. (10 points)

B.) Current Situation - The background section gives an overview of the policy currently governing the situation (if there is one). It explains who decided upon and implemented this policy, how it is supposed to work, and the perceptions of the policy among stakeholders. (10 points)

C) Rationale - The overview must also explain why a change is needed now. The need for the change could stem from a change in current conditions within city, state, nation, or world. (5 points)

### **3. Discussion of Alternatives**

A) You must give at least two policy options to address the current situation. For each option you must include a thorough description of the option being used within another setting. You have to give the results, and the reasons for those results, for each option. The options don't have to be the same as your recommended solution. Your own solution could be an innovative combination of the different options you present. (10 points)

B) You must provide the strengths and shortcomings of each option, what their impact would be and unanticipated side effects, if any. You should contrast the options with one another and the current policy. (10 points)

### **4. Recommendation**

You must clearly articulate and explain your proposed policy solution--how it works (inducements, rules, facts, etc.), who will be in charge of implementing it, who it will impact, and over what period of time. You must present a convincing rationale for your choice supported by a cost-benefit analysis of your recommendation. This can be either quantitative or qualitative but should consider both short-term and long-term impacts and a description of the fiscal impact on city and county budgets. (20 points)

### **5. Implementation**

You will then plot a path for the approval and implementation of your policy. This includes identifying obstacles that the policy will encounter, including opposition from specific groups, and a strategy to secure passage. Implementation should address the necessary roles of different groups in gaining approval. It should also include plans for evaluation of the policy over time. (10 points)

**Length:** 6 to 10 pages (single spaced)

**Exhibition** (20 points) - You must have the following:

- a concise explanation and justification of your economic policy proposal
- your proposal in a three-hole folder or binder for attendees to look through
- a visual aid to support your proposal. Visual aids can include posters, videos, slide shows, brochures, model, or demonstration of the situation your policy is meant to address.

**How:** After February 17th, you will have approximately three weeks of project work time to finish your research and write the proposal. During this time, I will gather everyone writing a policy proposal together to answer questions and offer coaching. I will also be teaching additional classes on related topics, such as the local political process and local

issues, that you can participate in. You will need to do outside research to complete the proposal. You can do much of this online, but you can also do interviews in the community of organizations and agencies both in Durango and elsewhere that have experience with the issues you are trying to address.

**When:** Final proposals are due by the end of class on March 6th; exhibition date TBD.

Evaluation

Each of the sections listed above will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Accuracy - Are the facts and numbers you are providing correct? Do you provide citations?
- Level of detail - Do you provide enough detail to overcome skepticism?
- Language - Is the proposal convincing, compelling, and easy to understand? Is it free of spelling and grammatical errors?
- Creativity - Is your policy innovative? Have you overcome obstacles and problems in creative ways?
- Logical - Do the different parts of proposal hold together? Are the assumptions valid? Do you acknowledge uncertainty? Will your proposal contribute to long-term health and resilience of La Plata County's economy?

Section/Component	Pay particular attention to:	Possible	Score
Executive Summary	Accuracy, language, and logic	5	
Overview	Accuracy, detail, and logic	25	
Description of Alternatives	Accuracy, detail, and logic	20	
Recommendation	Detail, creativity, and logic	20	
Implementation	Detail, creativity, and logic	10	
Exhibition	Accuracy, language, creativity, and logic	20	
Total		100	