

Public Policy Decision Model Application Guide

Introduction

This decision model is intended for use in the process of developing and disseminating public policy statements on behalf of the American Academy of Actuaries. Some of its criteria are mandatory and some are discretionary but, in all cases, the model should be applied with common sense.

The model is in the form of a series of questions. Each question and the subject it represents should be considered in the development of public statements. The model will be useful throughout the development of statements and should be specifically applied by the individuals responsible for final approvals of statements. It is meant to complement but not replace the “Guidelines for Making Public Statements” (page 97) of the Academy. It should help assure the intents of the guidelines are fulfilled but does not address the processes delineated in the guidelines.

Structure and Application

The model consists of five levels (categories) of questions. The five levels are named qualifiers, clarifiers, justifiers, implementers and screeners. In each level there is an overarching question intended only to help describe the context of the level. None of the lists is necessarily exhaustive, so for a given application, other appropriate questions may surface. If so, they should be document-

ed. Each level and its application are explained below.

LEVEL ONE—Qualifiers

Qualifiers identify threshold conditions that must be met in order to start development and must be met throughout development. Each question must have “yes” as an answer. If, at any point in the development, conditions change so that any one of these questions has an unsatisfactory answer, the project should stop.

LEVEL TWO—Clarifiers

Clarifiers are focusing questions that address conditions that must be met at the time of release of a public statement but which do not need to be fulfilled at the outset. They are objectives to work toward during development. Work should not even start without belief that the objectives implied by the clarifiers can be met. In that sense, the level also serves as a qualifier.

LEVEL THREE—Justifiers

A “yes” answer to any one of the justifiers is adequate to start a project and keep it going. The justifiers serve to help determine and define a focused purpose for a statement. When a project has more than one positive response (normally a good thing), care should be taken to avoid trying to do too many things or satisfy too many audiences in a single statement. The category itself is both a qualifier and a clarifier.

LEVEL FOUR—Implementers

This category is one of tactics and logistics. The questions will help set priorities, timelines, and resources. They can be particularly helpful in implementation planning.

LEVEL FIVE—Screeners

The screeners help identify the risk/reward exposures of a proposed statement as well as both intended and unintended consequences. They are, more than anything else, due diligence questions. None are conditions that must be met in order to release but their use may identify conditions that must be prepared for or dealt with at release. By discussing the proposed statement in the context of these questions, the group working on it can take a necessary and valuable “step-back” look at their work.

The Criteria

Level One—Qualifiers

Threshold conditions that must be met to begin and at all points throughout development

Level Two—Clarifiers

Target conditions that must be met at the time of release

Level Three—Justifiers

Determining and defining a focused purpose (both L1& L2)

Level Four—Implementers

Defining and focusing tactics and logistics

Level Five—Screeners

Risk, reward, and consequences—non-conditional due diligence

LEVEL ONE—QUALIFIERS

Is the issue significant enough for the use of Academy resources?

- ▶ Is it consistent with the Academy vision and mission?
- ▶ Is it “actuarial?”
 - Broad definition of actuarial
 - In concept and/or content
- ▶ Does it relate to a need of an identifiable public?
- ▶ Will it have an impact?

LEVEL TWO—CLARIFIERS

What quality content can we deliver?

- ▶ What can we contribute?
 - Facts? Knowledge? Tools? Analysis?
- ▶ Can we be objective?
- ▶ Can we be clear and concise?
- ▶ Will we be credible?

LEVEL THREE—JUSTIFIERS

Why bother?

- ▶ Will it educate or inform the public?
- ▶ Can it help improve policy?
- ▶ Does it advocate for the profession?
 - Promote? Defend? Market? Protect?
- ▶ Do our members expect us to make a statement?
- ▶ Did someone ask for it?

LEVEL FOUR—IMPLEMENTERS

How do we make the statement?

- ▶ Is it a current or future issue?
- ▶ Are we being proactive, reactive, or responding?
- ▶ What method of communication should we use?
- ▶ What resources do we need?
 - Staff? Volunteer? Knowledge? Data? Money?
- ▶ Do we have enough time to do quality work?

LEVEL FIVE—SCREENERS (A)

What is the risk?

- ▶ Could there be political fallout?
 - How much? How probable? Good or bad?
- ▶ How will our members react?
 - Consensus? If not, can we get it? If not, then what?
- ▶ Are there potential unintended consequences?
- ▶ Are there potential collateral consequences?
 - Good? Bad? Benign?
- ▶ Can it be misused or used against us?

LEVEL FIVE—SCREENERS (B)

What is the reward?

- ▶ Who benefits and how?
 - The Academy? The profession? An identifiable public? An identifiable group?
 - Are the benefits direct or indirect?
 - Are the benefits current or deferred?