Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

3. Apply different decision-making techniques of effective human resource management to case scenarios.
   3.1 Express your thoughts on decision-making techniques that you have found to be valuable through your own experiences.

5. Analyze the use of power and politics in public organizations by managers and leaders.
   5.1 Describe tactics that are the most valuable for properly managing power within public sector organizations.
   5.2 Differentiate between the major sources of power.

6. Compare ways to improve human communication to build effective teams and groups.
   6.1 Determine when different decision-making tactics are best and most appropriately applied in public sector organizations.

Course/Unit Learning Outcomes	Learning Activity
3.1	Unit Lesson Unit IV Case Study
5.1	Unit Lesson Chapter 5, pp. 136-144 Chapter 8, pp. 235-252 Video: *Developing Alternatives and Considering Their Consequences* Video: *Moving the Group from Conflict to Consensus* Video: *Summing Up the Decision Making Process* Unit IV Case Study
5.2	Unit Lesson Chapter 5, pp. 136-144 Chapter 8, pp. 235-252 Unit IV Case Study
6.1	Chapter 5, pp. 136-144 Chapter 8, pp. 235-252 Video: *Developing Alternatives and Considering Their Consequences* Video: *Moving the Group from Conflict to Consensus* Video: *Summing Up the Decision Making Process* Unit IV Case Study

Required Unit Resources

Chapter 5: Decision-Making, pp. 136-144 (stop at Who Should Be Involved?)

Chapter 8: Power and Organizational Politics, pp. 235-252 (stop at Is Power a Positive Force or a Destructive Force?)

In order to access the following resources, click the links below.

Watch the following segments from the full video referenced below:

- *Developing alternatives and considering their consequences* (Segment 5 of 8) [Video],
- *Moving the group from conflict to consensus* (Segment 6 of 8) [Video], and
- *Summing up the decision making process* (Segment 7 of 8) [Video].

The Hathaway Group (Producer). (2014). *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A case study in decision making and its consequences* [Video]. Films on Demand. https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=273866&xtid=53321

Unit Lesson

By virtue of the missions of numerous public sector organizations and the sector in general, decision-making is an important aspect to many public sector employees. Additionally, these decisions often affect a large number of people from the general public and can have widespread ramifications. In many instances, decisions need to be made in a short period of time and with limited information, which complicates the processes. As such, effective decision-making can be helpful to public administrators, and because these workers operate within the scope of their respective organizations, organizational decision-making processes—where an authority figure recognizes a problem and works to solve it while keeping in mind possible outcomes and ramifications—are important (Denhardt et al., 2016). According to Saaty (2008), decision-making requires a knowledge of the problem being addressed, the purpose of the intended decision, decision-making criteria, who the stakeholders are, and any other alternative possibilities.

Decisions exist in varying degrees and classifications. Whether they are *programmable* based off of routine circumstances or whether they are not, they involve a degree of risk. If decisions are at the *level of introduction,* which is where strategic decisions are at the highest levels and lower-level decisions can have less of an impact or more potential for delegation, the relationship between the decision-making process and the problem to be solved must be established. If this relationship is not established early, it can lead to unnecessary superfluous decisions being made when fewer would have sufficed (Denhardt et al., 2016). It is also important to consider the transparency that public sector decision-making processes inherently have. This transparency puts more pressure on administrators to not only make the best decisions but also to do so in an appropriate, ethical, and accountable manner. This transparency does have its limitations, which is shown through the U.S. political system's design of protecting political and administrative processes from overly active citizenry or outside stakeholders (King et al., 1998).

Blenko et al. (2010) attest that, in the end, it comes down to the organization's value being the sum of decisions that it makes and fulfills. Furthermore, it is recommended that organizations engage in a six-step process, which is described below.

1. Be clear about which decisions are most important.
2. Figure out where in the organization those decisions must be made.
3. Organize structures around sources of values.
4. Figure out the level of authority decision makers need, and give it to them.
5. Adjust the organizational system to support decision-making and execution.
6. Equip managers to make decisions quickly and well.

Somewhat related to the previous points made about accountability is the necessity of involving citizens and other stakeholders in certain public decision-making processes. Proper choices need to be made in regard to which specific people should be included in the processes and how input will be utilized in the intermediate and final decision-making. Additionally, public administrators would be wise to engage in sensemaking at some point, preferably before formal decision-making processes, as this activity involves extracting environmental cues in order to make sense of what is happening around them, prompting the decision-making process on how to best proceed (Brown et al., 2015).

Effective decision-making begins with two major steps:

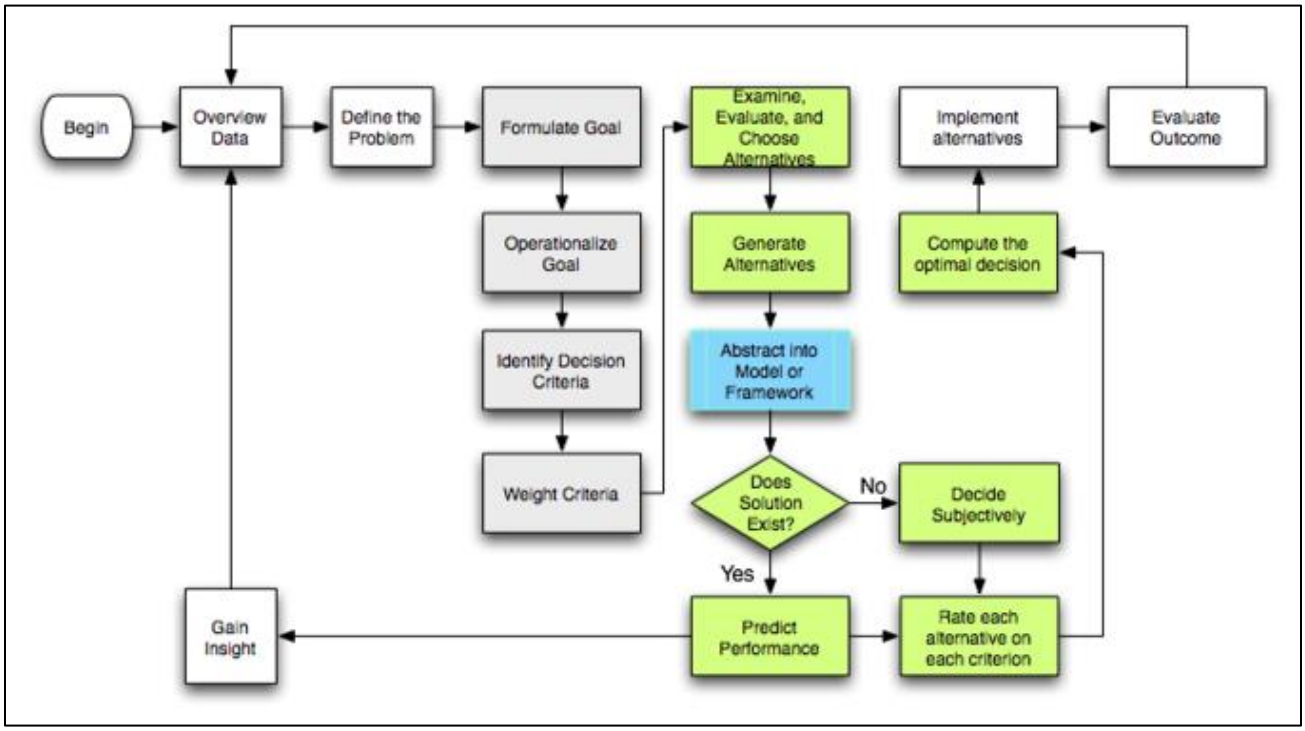
1. Identify the problem and its elements. Is the problem easy to deal with? Can it resolve on its own?
2. Properly manage the involvement of others in the decision-making processes. This includes balancing efficiency, such as making quick decisions with less involvement, and effectiveness that may require longer decisions, more involvement, and more defined involvement.

Like many of the topics that we have discussed so far in this course, there are models associated with particular approaches to decision-making, and Allison (1971) suggests three major approaches for public and third-sector workers. A discussion of each follows.

The Rational Model

Phases of the decision-making process are deliberate and conscious and rely on the extent to which the decision makers' thoughts are rationally crafted. It assumes rational thinking by both individuals and groups. Next, it assumes that decisions are orderly, intentional, purposeful, deliberate, consistent, responsible, accountable, explainable, and rational. Also, one must note that all included or related values and considerations are prioritized, all possible outcomes are rated, all possible alternatives are outlined, and the choice that maximizes value is chosen. It is questionable whether the model is effective when attempting to explain reasons for specific, non-routine organization decisions (Nutt, 2005). The rational model is often criticized for the disproportionately high impact that goals and feelings have on decision-making as well as for its less than proportionate appreciation for effects of culture on decision-making.

One example we will focus on in this lesson will be a decision-making process faced by a border patrol agency. Ranking border patrol personnel requires ranking which areas would need to be addressed in chronological order with possible outcomes being rated and addressed and requires inputs as well as possible alternatives to be listed. A desire to limit illegal border crossings within a particular region could be the primary goal with subsidiary goals being to hire additional personnel and to beef up existing physical barriers. Additional personnel are determined to provide the most benefit for the least cost with the alternative option of transferring existing personnel or focusing solely on border fortifications also being discussed. The decisions ultimately being made are to hire 20 new border patrol agents with a second phase involving the strengthening of fortifications, and that phase is slated to commence 9 months later.



The rational decision-making model
(Boundless, n.d.)

The Organizational Process Model

This model views government as being composed of a number of loosely aligned organizations, each with their own distinctive leaders (Denhardt et al., 2016). The behavior of a number of individuals must be coordinated in order to complete complex tasks. Organization activities are heavily comprised of patterns that lead to standard ways of responding to select situations. Organizational culture shapes the behavior of individuals and creates capabilities for tasks that would normally be impossible. Decisions are dependent on *incrementalism*, which represents small, incremental changes or choices. Critics claim that the model provides decision makers with a narrow-minded way of forecasting by only relying on predetermined visions and that organizations end up creating rationality specific to themselves.

Going back to the border patrol example, the organization's mission fits into the larger aligned goal of limiting illegal immigration into the United States. The ranking of border patrol personnel work with other government organizations to coordinate higher-level standards with individual organization standards, such as patrolling patterns, was created to address organization-specific considerations.

The Governmental Politics Model

This model acknowledges that government decisions are based on collaborative processes as opposed to a single executive decision (Denhardt et al., 2016). It focuses on multiple decisions makers, multiple strategic issues, and the effects of decisions on all stakeholders. The timing of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities are all included in the decision-making process, and all are viewed as independent from each other. Managers may make decisions in small increments in order to make themselves look good (Starbuck, 1983). Judgement is relied upon most heavily while analysis is relied upon the least.

With the border patrol's personnel situation, regional commanders are involved with the decision to increase personnel and make requests that shape how the personnel are allocated, which ultimately affect their individual jurisdictions and associated populations and environments. Personnel will actually be granted by higher-level organization officials at strategic intervals in order to appease both lower-level commanders as well as local government officials.

Decision-Making Process

A major portion of the decision-making process is dedicated to deciding who to involve in the process. Three basic methods are *authoritarian*, where a single individual makes decisions on behalf of the group; *consultative*, when a single individual makes decisions with the input of others; and *group decisions,* where multiple members come together to develop a decision. While group decisions can be more valuable due to multiple points of view and insight, they can also suffer from *groupthink* where the thoughts of individuals are discounted by the group's consensus (Denhardt et al., 2016). Promoting diversity within groups can add even more perspectives into the decision-making process and can ensure that more priorities are being acknowledged. Actively promoting diverse decision-making processes helps to ensure that a thorough understanding exists in regard to how diversity affects the behavior of those within the organization (Jackson et al., 1995).

A number of techniques exist to assist with decision-making, and each can be valuable in certain situations. These include the approaches explained below.

The decision-making primer: This tool assigns clear roles and responsibilities through a process of making recommendations, coming to an agreement, performing the activity, involving necessary inputs, and making an ultimate decision.

In continuing with our border patrol example, border patrol captains could discuss personnel allocation with lower-level officials and make allocation decisions based on multiple perspectives that are all focused on achieving organizational goals such as limiting illegal border crossings.

An active and engaged focus group. (Fizkes, n.d.)

Focus groups: These consist of 10–12 people who discuss a topic under the direction of a trained facilitator. Data are used to make a decision. The process of developing and garnering insight from focus groups involves properly planning, recruiting participants, moderating, and analyzing the findings.

An example here would be trained border patrol associates meeting with agents of various ranks and jurisdictions. Data derived are used to justify personnel decisions.

Brainstorming: This is the process of generating a number of ideas in a short period of time. It works best when the problem being addressed is clearly and neutrally stated and when certain ground rules are applied to the process. In group situations, it is best under the direction of a facilitator.

Similarly to our example above, the same focus group facilitator might ask participants to share opinions on personnel increases versus fortification reinforcement, allowing for all participants to speak and withholding all judgements about ideas or opinions posed.

Cost-benefit analysis: This is used to identify negative and positive impacts of a proposed project. It ultimately determines what the best solution is (Sylvia et al., 1997). Costs and benefits are normally converted to monetary terms.

Here, in our example, the border patrol budget and policy analysts find that personnel benefits would equate to $5,000,000 with costs at $3,000,000. On the other hand, fortification benefits may be $3,750,000 and costs may be $3,300,000, making both options beneficial in relation to costs, but the personnel additions would provide a better ratio.

Cost-effectiveness analysis: This is used to compare program output to costs incurred (Denhardt et al., 2016).

Let's look at it this way. The border patrol budget and policy analysts find that personnel outputs would be strongly beneficial to accomplishing mission standards at marginal cost while fortifications would be moderately beneficial for accomplishing mission standards at marginal cost, making both options cost-effective, but personnel additions would provide a better ratio.

Nominal group technique: This ensures that each group member has equal input with discussion and, ultimately, that decision-making only occurs once all participant inputs have been acknowledged.

Continuing with our example, border patrol regional commanders might all discuss and give equal input on how new personnel will be allocated.

Logic models: This is a picture of how a program is anticipated to work from the initial stages to the final outcome. The model displays inputs, intermediate activities, and end outcomes.

Performance management includes processes that attempt to link performance pay, budgeting, and contracts with associated outcomes (Denhardt et al., 2016). The theory behind this approach is that it facilitates an

investment in learning what is happening within a particular community, using information to steer policy decisions, and maintaining communication and accountability measures. Evidence-based management is a tactic closely related to performance management where organizational decisions are based off of organizational research and practice.

A final topic to discuss in regard to decision-making best practices is discretion, which involves ensuring that factors related to proper representation, economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, fairness, and transparency are accounted for throughout the process. It is also important to consider that discretion often results in lower-level officials and managers making decisions without the direct guidance of higher-ranking officials (Denhardt et al., 2016). In many cases, these decisions must be made quickly due to emergency situations.

The concepts of power and politics are closely related entities. Power has the potential to influence others, and the extent to which the power is exercised or used can be seen in politics (Denhardt et al., 2016). In order to understand how these concepts apply in a modern setting, it is important to study how power and politics have historically been written about. Machiavelli (1947) asserted that a leader's power is the extent to which he or she is able to dominate others and is able to act independently of others. He also contended that the state is paramount, and a leader should be ruthless if needed in order to maintain the order of the state while also concluding that power is a desirable and necessary end and that politics is a natural human enterprise. Max Weber (1947) pondered the concept of power at a deeper level, ultimately concluding that there are main types of power, including charismatic power, power derived from personal magnetism, traditional power, power granted through lineage, and legal-rational power, a situation where law creates power. In Weber's opinion, legal-rational power is the most significant type of power.

By the 1950s, power was being explored in the context of sociology to a much greater extent. Bierstedt (1950) contended that power is the potential to influence, can be exercised via use of force, and can be formalized by granting someone the authority to exercise it. Shortly thereafter, in the 1960s and the 1970s, traditional models of hierarchy began to be more closely questioned and scrutinized, and questioning authority became much more commonplace (Denhardt et al., 2016). Haire (1989) contended that much of the impetus for this questioning was the shift in employee attitudes during the time period of accepting labels of *lazy* and *uninterested in work* to wanting management to approach them in a much more positive manner. In addition to taking this more egalitarian view of people within organizations, more of an increased push to view organizations as political entities became popular, even while contending that organizations free of political influences are inherently happier places.

Power can be addicting, and those with power often become psychologically compelled to pursue more power (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). This power is believed to derive from five categories of sources, which are listed below.

1. Legitimate power: This power type idea is derived from the belief of an individual that someone else has the right to power over them. The source of this can be in relation to an established organizational structure as is the case with the military or popular elections.
2. Reward power: This is similar to providing positive reinforcement. Also, this can be represented by leaders promoting subordinates based on merit or on some other metric.
3. Coercive power: This is the opposite of reward power; it is the ability to sanction if certain behaviors are not followed.
4. Referent power: This is the ability to influence others based on any combination of characteristics that cause them to cede power and authority to an individual or group.
5. Expert power: This is credibility earned by displaying some type of special knowledge or expertise, which leads to others' defaulting to a particular individual or group's perceived authority (French & Raven, 1989).

Additionally, common qualities of powerful individuals are ambition, focus, energy, self-knowledge, confidence, and empathy, among others (Pfeffer 1981). Even with these cues in mind, power can still be difficult to recognize. While it may be more overt, such as in cases of legitimate or explicitly utilized coercive power, other faces of power may be more subtle, combining discussed elements or being exerted differently in different circumstances. More subtle exercises of power are generally met with less open resistance; however, due to the non-transparent nature of such power, it can be easier to conceal potentially destructive aspects that can result (Denhardt et al., 2016). As important as discovering and acknowledging sources of power can be, it is also important to consider methods related to balancing power. By decreasing

dependency on a particular power source, one can decrease the general degree of power that a figure or authority group possesses.

Assessing power structures is vital to understanding a number of aspects of organizational life (Denhardt et al., 2016). These structures, in recent years, have become more focused on the general representativeness of the workplace as new groups begin to enter in significant capacities. In many cases, newer groups may feel a degree of powerlessness, which can result in less productive outcomes and behaviors. This also leads to different behaviors between groups within organizations. To properly address these considerations, Kanter (1977) suggests that organizations must seek to expand opportunity and mobility in order to empower workers in all groups within the organization.

Ultimately, power has been argued to be both a positive and a negative force. As a positive force, it is believed that power is necessary for positive organizational functioning while also helping organizations to grow and adapt to ever-changing environments (Salancik & Pfeffer 1989). Additionally, Wilson (1995) attests that when leaders use power effectively and positively, organizational commitment is enhanced. Additionally, the presence of organizational power and politics are pivotal components to organizational learning and include the general process of institutionalization, which provides a venue for individuals to be comfortable with the organization to share their ideas with the organization (Denhardt et al., 2016). In contrast, Vrendenburgh and Maurer (1984) contend that organizational political structures can essentially cover up the individual goals that those in power positions may possess, which, in some cases, are not beneficial to general organizational goals. Power can also be used to denigrate lower-level employees. Additionally, those who perceive, whether rightly or not, that they possess little power within an organization often are less involved with their work, less committed to work, and possess more job-related stress (Ferris et al., 1996; Kacmar et al., 1999; Miller et al., 2008; Vigoda, 2002).

While both positive and negative aspects of power and politics should be kept in mind when contemplating best organizational practices, actively working to improve practices at the individual level is something that everyone can engage in (Denhardt et al., 2016). Developing political skills and networking skills can greatly enhance professional success. Levine (2005) credits simply being liked as an important component of political skill development, although this trait involves being able to adjust to situations in an appropriate manner and to act in a trustworthy manner. These skills can also positively contribute to overall job performance, leadership effectiveness, and career reputation (Denhardt et al., 2016). On a related note, the concept of *empowerment* is a method of channeling power to others within an organization and to help people to realize the fulfillment associated with empowering themselves. Encouraging employees to participate in the decision-making process is generally perceived as an empowering activity and properly addressing, and consoling those who make mistakes or fail in other regards in a manner that is supportive and attempts to make improvements for future initiatives can also be viewed in an empowering manner (Denhardt et al., 2016). Ultimately, though, Block (1987) contends that empowering activities can come from managers and others in authority positions but will generally reside within an individual empowering himself or herself. This extends to citizens; empowering citizens to participate in public affairs can lead to higher levels of general community and commitment to developing positive solutions to public problems (Feldman & Khademian, 2003).

Referring back to the border patrol example, it is of utmost importance for this organization to develop positive relationships with the public due to the fact that local populations are often directly affected by illegal border crossings and also have a unique perspective and knowledge that can be beneficial to the organization. By empowering citizens with encouragement to participate in organizational proceedings—whether in the form of simply contacting the organization with information, encouraging attendance at a local government city council or similar body meetings, and letting citizens know how they can protect themselves and their communities—the public will feel better about the organization and the organization’s mission while also being more inclined to assist with organization’s endeavors when needed and where possible.

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Suggested Unit Resources

Continue reading the following sections in your textbook for more in-depth discussion of these units' concepts.

Chapters 5: Decision-Making, pp. 126-136, 144-159

Chapter 8: Power and Organizational Politics, pp. 252-266