

Before using a case:

When ISS works with students, we distinguish “development challenges” from “delivery challenges.” A development challenge is the over-arching challenge, such as reducing land conflicts or increasing the speed of service delivery. The delivery challenges are the likely obstacles to implementation. They stem mainly from context—for example, inequality, financial austerity, rapid rotation of officials in office, diversity, polarization, etc. (Note that they could also stem from management style/leadership attributes.)

What are the core concepts you want to leverage when you use the case? Can we attach names to some of those core problems and link people to tool kits for addressing those problems? Is this case about streamlining a process, delegating effectively, coordinating across agencies, building a coalition, communicating effectively with the public, etc.? Often there are multiple problems and concepts in a single real-world case.

There isn't generally a single right answer in a case, but there are some approaches or solutions that are more viable than others. On which points do you want to land the discussion (in addition to building familiarity with core concepts and how scope conditions shape the feasible set of solutions)?

A general outline:

You say: Let's go to ____ place/time. The country is struggling with _____. (“development challenge”)

Put yourself in the shoes of _____ (the case protagonist). You want to _____ (solve “development challenge” in the case). Do you have the legal and political power to act? Where does that authorization come from? What are its limits? What else might shape your authority? If you don't have authorization, is there any way for you to make a difference?

What are the roots of the development challenge you want to solve? What has given rise to this issue, in your view?

Can we give a general name to this issue or problem? (Good point for you to add content. “ah, so you can't get your frontline employees to do what you want them to do. That sounds like a delegation problem. Let me just add a note on the structure of this kind of problem...)

What approach do you propose to adopt and why do you think this approach will work? What approaches have been tried in the past (or in your country...)?

You have a vision—a sense of what system or policy will make a difference. But now you have to implement this solution and make your vision a reality. Having a vision of effective policy is one thing, but getting the job done is another. What are the likely delivery challenges you will face? Are there some not mentioned in the case that you think are likely to arise? (Can you give general names to some of these?)

What implementation strategy does our protagonist propose to try to ensure that s/he can actually implement the vision? Does that feel right to you?

Let's talk about some of the specific delivery steps taken. What are the pros and cons associated with each? (Another chance for you to add content as the discussion moves forward. Are there general terms and toolkits for addressing some of these delivery challenges?)

How do you know you have made a difference? What metrics should ____ (our protagonist) use? (Some types of cases provide a lot of fuel for discussion of metrics, while others don't. It is helpful to draw distinctions between differences in broad outcomes, such as improved health or less carbon in the atmosphere (all of which may be affected by many other things as well as your intervention) and outputs or success in implementation (faster delivery, reduced error, more equal access, etc.) How does one assess whether coordination improved? Whether employees worked more efficiently or effectively? What data collection systems could you have put in place to help with this task?

Some of the reflections case protagonists in the case offered suggest some modifications that would improve effectiveness. Do you think these are useful and implementable in the setting described or in other settings? Why or why not?

What are the scope conditions that influence the effectiveness of the approach adopted? If you step out of the case, are there other challenges you think are likely to arise? Let's think about you would you do differently in these settings or identify ways to mitigate the downsides of the approach taken and boost the positives.