For more than 15 years, students at UCLA’s Department of Public Policy have helped organizations answer these questions through Applied Policy Projects (APPs).

APPS are year-long research projects that serve as master’s theses. In the APP, a team of three to four Public Policy students works closely with a client to identify a policy problem and then informs a strategic decision or prescribes a course of action based on rigorous analysis. The team collects and evaluates key information, considers alternative solutions, and provides a detailed recommendation that fits the client’s mission and capabilities.

APPS help a wide range of clients whose work promotes the public interest. These include local, state and federal government agencies; domestic and international non-profits; universities; and for-profit enterprises. Clients gain professional-level policy analysis while students gain valuable experience putting their analytic skills into action.

Past projects include:
- Fixing the Appeals Process at the Department of Veterans Affairs
  - Client: Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
- Chumash Educational Initiatives
  - Client: Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
- Clean Technology in Los Angeles
  - Client: Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles
- Eyes in the Sky: Implementing Unmanned Aircraft
  - Client: Los Angeles Police Department
What is a “policy problem?”

APPs help clients facing uncertainty better understand their constraints and opportunities, their range of options and the best course of action to take. Policy problems in the past have tackled questions like: How can we best serve our client base? Are our programs effective? What is the best allocation of resources to meet our goals? What regulations would best support efficiency?

Who is on the team?

UCLA’s Public Policy graduate students are a diverse group of individuals with a wide range of academic interests and professional aspirations. With advanced training in policy and institutional analysis, they are inquisitive, creative thinkers who are practiced in attacking a problem from multiple angles to uncover new knowledge and new ideas. Working in teams of three to four under the guidance of a member of UCLA Luskin’s nationally recognized faculty in the Department of Public Policy, they bring a fresh approach to challenging topics.

What is the process?

Over the course of an academic year, Public Policy students work with clients to refine the policy problem at stake, they gather quantitative and qualitative data to illuminate the problem, and then they conduct an integrative analysis that leads to a recommended course of action. Results are delivered in the form of a written report and an oral presentation.

How can I get involved?

Managers that are interested in working with UCLA Public Policy students should write a brief letter describing their organization, the policy problem they want to address and a project lead. Letters should be directed to Annie L. Kim (annie@luskin.ucla.edu), and sent before October to allow the Department and students time to contact clients.

Learn more at luskin.ucla.edu/PP