CASE STUDY INITIATIVE AT THE LINCOLN INSTITUTE OF LAND POLICY

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy seeks to improve quality of life through the effective use, taxation, and stewardship of land. To advance the Institute’s mission, we offer professional learning programs that put current research and effective practices in land policy into the hands of public officials, business leaders, educators, students, and citizens who will use them to solve social, economic, and environmental challenges facing their communities.

Our teaching and learning strategies include the creation of a case study library that is guided by learning design principles and leverages technology innovations. Our case studies are teaching materials, not research publications or vignettes. They are written for educational purposes and designed to make learning engaging and instructive. Educators and practitioners across the world will use the Institute cases in classrooms, workshops, and online courses. The cases are also exemplars for authors who want to contribute to the library.

What Is a Case Study?
A case study is a story about a real situation. The story includes people, groups, issues, events, and background information essential for re-creating the situation. The purpose of the story is to help students achieve learning goals – a specific body of knowledge or set of skills.

There are many types of cases and different ways to organize them. We focus on two types of case studies: descriptive and inquiry. A descriptive case study lays out a real world situation, the chosen solution, and its implementation, followed by expert commentary. The author may also discuss implications of the case for other localities in the same country or other parts of the world. In an inquiry case the writer provides sufficient information for readers to understand the situation, do their own analyses, draw their own conclusions, and consider actions consistent with their conclusions. An inquiry case does not disclose the real world solution, specify theory or frameworks that apply to the situation, or give expert commentary. In other words, the burden is on readers to understand the situation in the case and provide answers responsive to it.

Educational Purpose

Learning goals determine the type of case and what it requires of students and instructors:

- The educational purpose of a descriptive case is to acquaint readers with real world problems involving significant land policy issues; theories, concepts, policies, and tools that can help students understand the problems; and expert analysis based on both theory and practice. A descriptive case also portrays the real world factors that influence how case characters or groups perceive the problem and act to solve it, with varying results.
• The educational purpose of an inquiry case is to develop students’ critical thinking about situations involving land policy, including choosing relevant concepts and frameworks for analysis, drawing conclusions, and advocating for action. Inquiry cases do not preempt student thinking by telling them the "right" answer. They challenge students to develop their own responses to the cases.

**Educational Use**

The two types of cases offer different approaches to learning:

• A descriptive case study gives students a real world example of land policy, shows how theory and policy decisions can lead to a deeper understanding of the example, and models thinking by demonstrating how an expert analyzes them. Descriptive cases give instructors concrete, contemporary examples of land policy and allow them to question students about their understanding of the facts, the expert analysis, and connections to course concepts and themes.

• On the other hand, an inquiry case study provides a basis for open-ended discussions in which participants must diagnose a problem and advocate for a solution or analyze a decision and argue which decision option should be adopted. Inquiry cases give students an opportunity to practice the thinking they will have to do in the real world. Inquiry cases give instructors an opportunity to guide students through a real world application of course concepts and tools.

**Case Study Templates**

The Institute’s templates for descriptive and inquiry cases have two advantages: flexibility and consistency.

The templates can accommodate a wide range of land policy situations. In the Institute's current collection, cases address a variety of land policy in action, including New York City, Taiwan, South Africa, Kenya, the Philippines, South Korea, Brazil, the state of New Mexico, and the city of Cleveland, Ohio.

The consistency of the case organization means that authors, students, and instructors can rely on a specific order of information in descriptive cases. Authors know what they need to write and instructors easily understand how the content is organized, what information is included, and how they can use the content in workshops, courses, and other education settings. Students will be helped by a logical presentation of information in a descriptive case and the same format if they are asked to read more than one. In inquiry cases, the templates guide authors to develop a consistent application of critical thinking that students will become familiar with, especially if they read more than one case.