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# Implementation: How Great Expectations In Washington Are Dashed In Oakland; Or, Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work At All, This Being A Saga ... Morals On A Foundation (Oakland Project)



## Synopsis

Three substantial new chapters and a new preface in this third edition explore and elaborate the relationship between the evaluation of programs and the study of their implementation. The authors suggest that tendencies to assimilate the two should be resisted. Evaluation should retain its enlightenment function while the study of implementation should strengthen its focus on learning.

## Book Information

Series: Oakland Project

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: University of California Press; 3 edition (June 5, 1984)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520053311

ISBN-13: 978-0520053311

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #58,163 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Public Affairs](#) #55 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Public Affairs & Administration](#) #107 in [Books > Business & Money > Economics > Economic Policy & Development](#)

## Customer Reviews

"The potential good that can come out of this study cannot be exaggerated."--"Virginia Quarterly Review

If only every policy maker and every voter would read this book! Pressman and Wildavsky dig in and show how the best of intentions, and even seemingly great plans, fall apart when it's time to implement them on the ground. They show the difficulties in coordinating the many stakeholders that governments have to bring together, in synchronizing steps carried out by an array of public and private organizations, and of keeping everybody on board over the course of time it takes to execute plans. They show that even if each step in the implementation of a policy seems like a no-brainer, a long series of steps almost certain to succeed can be almost certain to fail! The human mind sees a series of steps that have a 95% chance of success and thinks that the process is likely to work... we rarely appreciate that if there's a 95% chance of each of 15 things working, there's a

less than 50% chance that they all work. And when you need to coordinate them to all work on a tight timeline, forget about it! Pressman and Wildavsky's *Implementation* shows, in both human and theoretical terms, how these miscalculations caused government policy in Oakland to fall apart.

Good condition and great value

I bought this book for my daughter and she needed it for school and this purchase really saved us a lot of money!!

This is a classic work on program implementation--the process by which words on a piece of paper (such as a law) become translated into an actual program, delivering goods and services to people. There is a rich literature on this subject in political science, public administration, and policy studies. The specialty has come a long way since the first edition of this work appeared in 1973 (I was in graduate school then). This version was the third edition, appearing in 1984. The book addresses problems in implementation by route of a case study--the effort to address unemployment in Oakland, California by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). An odd aspect of this was that the program had originally been designed for more rural areas. But Oakland, technically, fit the criteria. The agency essentially offered financial support for organizations (whether public or private sector) that developed plans to employ the unemployed. So, organizations got money based on a promise (not on performance). EDA spent a fair amount of money in Oakland, with not-so-fantastic results. Pressman and Wildavsky discuss why this might have been the case. For one thing, there were so many steps from the time that EDA decided to go to Oakland with many actors having to agree at each stage of the process. Also, there was the authors' concern that money was provided based on plans rather than actual performance in terms of employment. The book examines successes and failures of a number of funded projects in Oakland--quite instructive! All in all, an important work. For one thing, this was considered one of the earliest works in implementation (at least according to lore--one could make the case that implementation had always been a focus in the discipline of public administration). For another, it began to identify challenges to successful implementation. Finally, the volume made suggestions about how to address these challenges. A satisfying work even decades after its initial appearance. . . .

This book was a college epiphany for me. "Geez, the answers to the world's policy issues may be a bit more complicated than I thought. I may have more to consider." I credit the authors, and a great

professor for helping me consider the two halves of the puzzle - strategy and execution. One without the other accomplishes nothing, and they both can affect the other in very dynamic ways. My thinking became less naive, and less ego-centric that semester. I wish all my college readings had such a long lasting impact.

Pressman and Wildavsky does an excellent job pointing out the many obstacles that can occur with policy implementation. Far too often, policy-makers create policy without giving much thought to the implementation. In reality, the way policy is implemented actually establishes the policy.

Perfect description.

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