Enabling Informed Decision Making

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School

Maxwell AFB, Alabama

An Opening Thought

"Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think."

~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

(1929 – 1968)

A Call for Effective Decision Making and Decision Support

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"The Professional Ethos of the financial management community is demonstrated when we deliver unbiased financial information to the decision maker, even when the information is uncomfortable or undesirable . . . Processes need to be transparent and visible . . . Trust is key!"

Honorable Dr. Jamie M. Morin
Former Director, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation
From 28 May 2015 Luncheon Presentation to PDI

Effective Decision Making is Critical to our Nation's Future

Why Do We Make Bad Decisions?

Why do we make bad decisions?

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- Past experience
- Self interest / egocentric
- Prejudgments
- Attachments
- Sunk cost bias
- Confirmation evidence
- Overconfidence
- Status Quo effect
- Availability / recency effect
- Conformity
- Illusion of control
- Attribution errors (personality-based)
- Poor time management

-**WSJ, Erin White, 13 Feb 09**

Traps and Pitfalls

Anchoring

Status Quo

Sunk-Cost

Confirming Evidence

Anchoring Trap

- What …
  - Disproportionate weight to first information received
  - Initial data, estimates, or impressions prejudice our subsequent thoughts

- Examples…
  - Using historical data as a basis for future events
  - MSRP label on windshield of new car

- How to Recognize and Avoid the Trap …
  - Seek input from a variety of sources
  - Think through information before engaging others

Status Quo Trap

- What …
  - Predisposition to perpetuate the current situation
  - More alternatives to consider requires more effort

- Examples …
  - Cups – (Kahneman, Knesch, Thaler)
  - Organ donation
  - Using same supplier or vendor without getting quotes from other sources

- How to Recognize and Avoid the Trap …
  - Remember your objectives; does the status quo best achieve those objectives?
  - Identify & explore alternatives to the status quo

Sunk-Costs Trap

- What …
  - Continuing a project based on a past decision
  - Not able to admit a mistake

- Example …
  - DIMHRS
  - Staying to watch the end of a movie that you are not enjoying

- How to Recognize and Avoid the Trap…
  - Involve new team members
  - Put self-esteem aside

Confirming Evidence Trap

- What …
  - Subconsciously making a decision and seeking out support
- Example …
  - Gun control data
  - Climate change data
- How to Recognize and Avoid the Trap …
  - Beware of leading questions
  - Get someone to play "devil's advocate"
  - Seek to understand alternative points of view

Decision Support Defined

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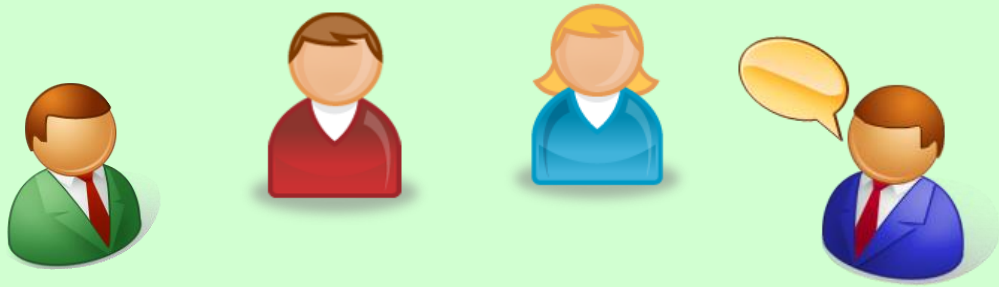
Enabling decision makers to make informed decisions that better use resources and improve mission effectiveness.



Scorekeeper vs. Advisors

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- Building/Strengthening Networks/Relationships
- Influencing Outcomes, Driving Decisions
- Analyzing Options/Developing Alternatives
- Looking Forward…Future Perspective
- Effectively Communicating
- Engaging Proactively

- **<u>Adding Value</u> to the Decision Making Process**

Decision Making Process

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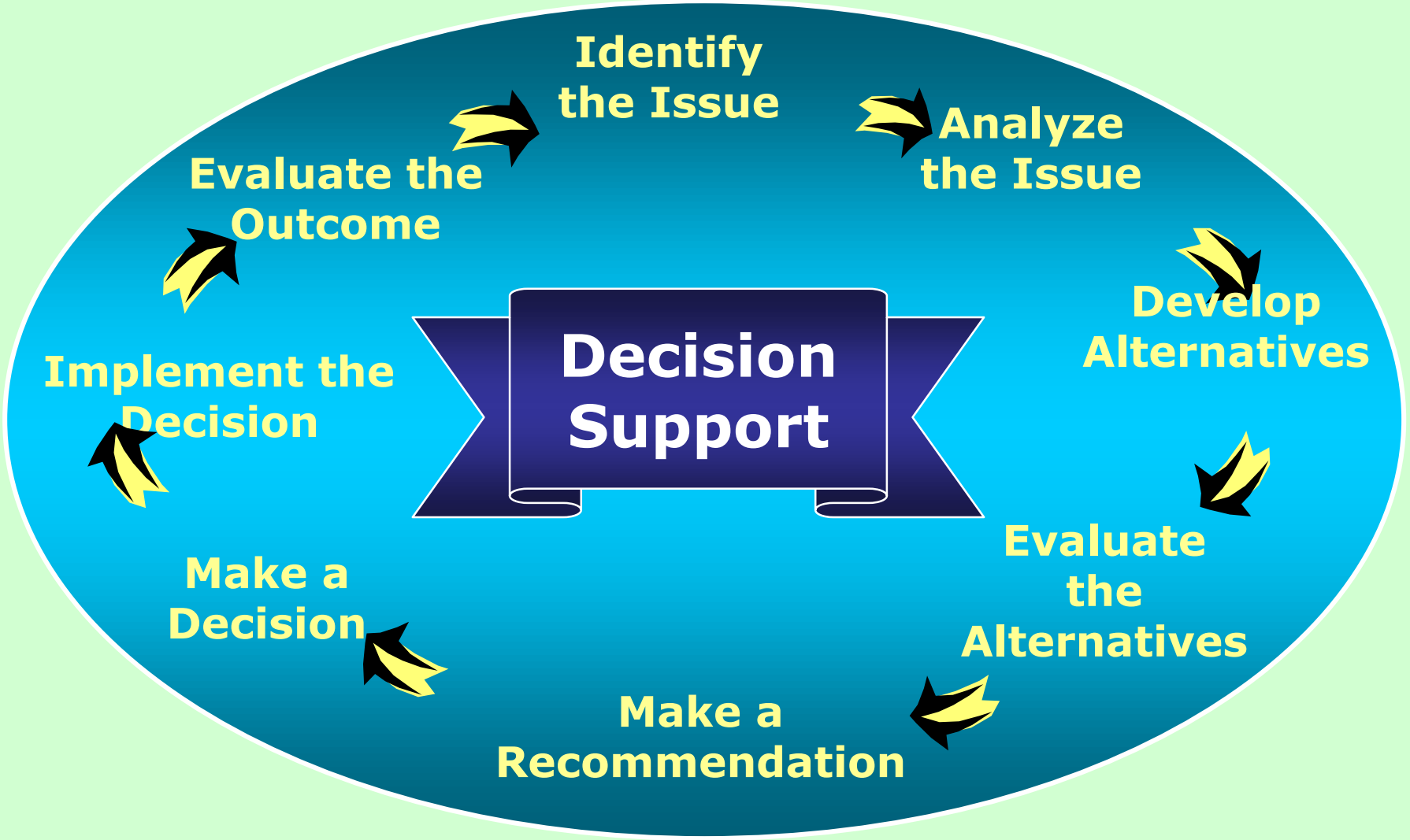

Decision Making Process

- What's going on?
  - Identify issue and decision maker's intent
  - Analyze the issue and environment
- What needs to be done?
  - Develop/evaluate potential solutions
    - Estimate costs, benefits, risks, and flexibility
      - Determine impacts (financial and non-financial)
      - Consider a range of alternatives
  - Propose a recommendation

Pre Decision

- Doing something
  - Determine how to lead/manage the solution to ensure a result (implement)
  - Continuously evaluate the implementation

Post Decision

Decision Support Model

5 Steps / 14 Words

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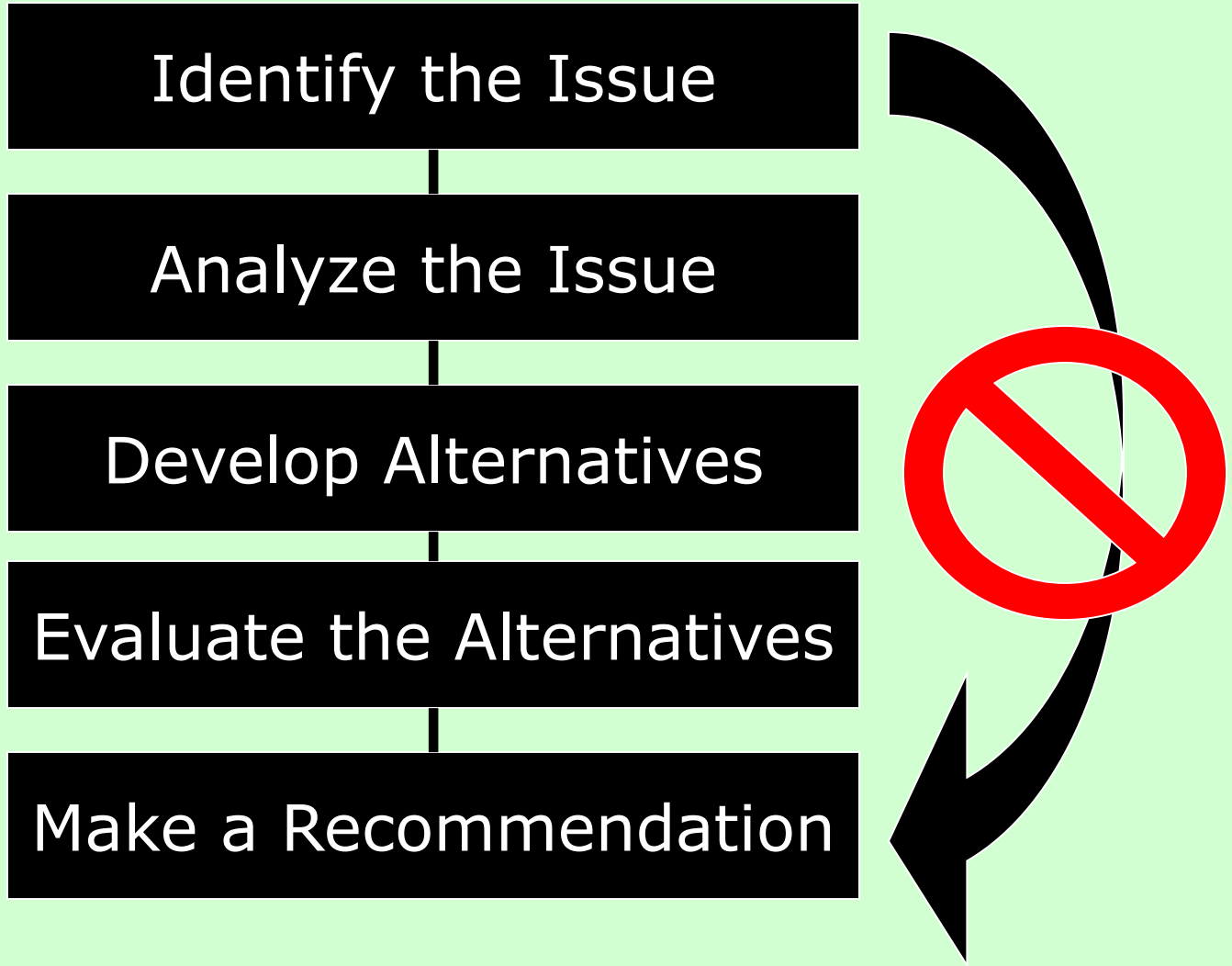
To positively affect decision making… you must do your part before decisions are made



Keys to Successful Decision Support

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- Critical Thinking
- Broad Perspective
- Creativity
- Analysis
  - Qualitative
  - Quantitative
- Communication Skills

Observations Regarding Decision Support

- Applying an effective Decision Support process is hard work -- learning curve
- Using decision support requires commitment to making a difference
- Timing is everything -- the decision maker may not ask for decision support
- A timely "good" recommendation is better than a "perfect" recommendation too late

Identify the Issue

Dealing with Complex Issues

- Holistic System Perspective is Necessary
  - Structural Complexity
  - Interactive Complexity
- Consider Personal Biases
- Framing the Problem is Essential First Step

Resist Temptation to Leap to a Conclusion

What's the big deal?

- Issue may not be what it appears
- Need to understand the decision maker's intent
- If you get it wrong, you develop wrong alternatives
- Identifying the issue requires critical thinking skills

Identify the Issue

- Most Important Step of Decision Support
- Provides Structure to the Problem
  - Indicates What is to be Accomplished
  - **"How do we best…?"**
- Ensures Decision Maker and Decision Support Team are Working Toward the Same Objective
- Sets the Stage for Success (or Failure)

Deliverable – Step 1

Issue Statement

or

Issue Question

Transition – Elevator Complaints

Occupants have begun to complain about poor elevator service in their NYC high-rise office building. Waiting times for elevators during peak times, they say, are excessively long. Several tenants have threatened to break their leases and move out of the building because of this.

What should management do?

Analyze the Issue

Analysis

"The most erroneous stories are those we think we know best - and therefore never scrutinize or question."

~ Stephen Jay Gould

What Does "Analyze" Mean?

Analyze:

- To study or determine the nature and relationships of the parts by analysis (a separation of a whole into its component parts)
- To dissect
- To break down

Purpose of Analysis

- Simplify complex issues
- Understand the environment
  - Consider key factors relevant to the issue
  - Identify and account for relationships between variables
  - Part science – objective analysis
  - Part art – subjective analysis
- Logically gain insight about the issue

How do you begin?

- Start by asking questions:
  - What do you know?
  - What do you need to know?
  - What info can you get (in time)?
  - What do you do when you can't get the info?
- End with:
  - Are we still on the same issue or did new info change our perspective?

Defining the Issue Environment

Gathering Data & Developing Information

- Facts – verifiable pieces of information
- Assumptions – information accepted as true in the absence of facts
- Limitations – "Must have"; "Cannot exceed"; etc.
- *Relevant Facts* , *Necessary Assumptions* *and* *Valid Limitations* are paramount to defining the environment
- Continually seek to confirm assumptions and verify limitations
- The environment determines the solution set

Why Do We Analyze the Issue?

To Understand Where We Are (Issue Environment) and Where We Want To Be (Desired Endstate)

&

To Enable the Development of Evaluation Criteria and Alternatives

Evaluation Criteria – Why Now?

- Transparency and Accountability
  - Reveals and documents preferences
  - Mitigates biases

- Benefits
  - Process is visible
  - Easy to explain
  - Easy to determine points of disagreement
  - Provides direction for developing alternatives

Evaluation Criteria – Defining "Good"

- What do we have to work with?
  - Context
  - Priorities
  - Intent

- Stakeholder Analysis
  - Who does this decision affect?
  - What is important to them/the organization/the mission?
  - What would be the ideal endstate?

Developing Evaluation Criteria…

- Evaluation criteria – Areas of consideration
  - What is important in a solution and how important is it? (what does good look like?)
  - Sufficient number (to differentiate alternatives)
  - Distinctive (not double counting)
  - Definable and Measurable (on a relative scale)

- Consider these dimensions as a starting point:
  - Resources (both financial and non-financial)
  - Benefits
  - Time
  - Intangibles
  - Risk/Flexibility

Types of Criteria

Screening Criteria

- Eliminating undesirable outcomes
- Building the sides of the BOX
- Binary (Yes or No)
- Eliminating Badness

Evaluation Criteria

- Defining what Good looks like
- Determining what is in the BOX
- Relative (Degrees of Goodness)
- Adding Goodness

Providing Direction

- Solution Set Parameters
  - Defining requirements (must have)
  - Specifying exclusions (cannot exceed)
  - Short vs Longer Term

- Define and Weight Evaluation Criteria
  - Will use to influence alternative development
  - Will use to evaluate alternatives

How Important is It? - Weighting Criteria

Determine how important each criterion is to identifying the "best" solution

- Score the importance of each criterion on a scale of 1-10
- Sum the individual rankings of all criteria
- Divide the score of each criterion by the total to determine its % contribution

Weighting Criteria

	MPG	Cost	Reliability	Utility	Safety	Style
Scoring (1-10)	9	10	9	6	6	4

Sum of Scores: 9 + 10 + 9 + 6 + 6 + 4 = 44

MPG:	9/44 =	20.5%
Cost:	10/44 =	22.7%
Reliability:	9/44 =	20.5%
Utility:	6/44 =	13.6%
Safety:	6/44 =	13.6%
Style:	4/44 =	9.1%

Deliverables – Step 2

- Relevant Facts
- Necessary Assumptions
- Valid Limitations
- Defined and Weighted Evaluation Criteria

Develop Alternatives

Characteristics

Sources

Alternatives – What are they?

- Alternatives are objects or actions where the choice of one excludes the selection of another

- Status quo – may be an option…but not always
  - Examples?

- Consider hybrid alternatives
  - Combines best features (e.g. – SUVs)

In the absence of alternatives,
there is no real decision to be made!

Characteristics of Alternatives

GOOD alternatives are:

- ***Distinguishable*** – Not minor variations of a single alternative
- ***Feasible*** – Realistic, given available resources
- ***Acceptable*** – Benefits should outweigh costs
- ***Suitable*** – Accomplish the mission and comply with guidance

How many should you develop?

- Develop ***enough*** viable alternatives
- Provide a ***reasonable*** number of alternatives to decision maker to offer a real choice

Developing Alternatives

Understand what you are trying to accomplish

- Remember your issue statement!

What does good look like?

- Ensure the alternatives meet the evaluation criteria

Review the alternatives for possible duplications

Sources of Alternatives

Brainstorming

Benchmarking

Brainstorming

- Powerful tool to generate possible alternatives
- Encourage open dialog and creativity
- Nonjudgmental idea generation…actively listen
- One idea/comment can lead to others
  - Help break through blocks or stagnation
  - "Light bulbs" or foundations to build upon

Brainstorming Methods

- Spontaneous
  - free flowing, no rules…easy!
  - can easily be dominated discussion
- Round Robin
  - ensures everyone has input
  - more time, order may matter (rank/grade/position)
- Written
  - anonymous – all equally weighted
  - takes longest, ideas need to be compiled

Benchmarking

What is benchmarking?

- Identification and application of "best practices" based on demonstrated performance
- Objective is to find examples of superior performance and to understand the processes and practices driving that performance
- Improve performance by tailoring and incorporating

Benchmarking

Why use benchmarking?

- Improves performance
- Identifies opportunities for improvement
- Reduces risk
- Potentially saves resources

Deliverable – Step 3

A Reasonable Number of Good (DFAS) Alternatives

Evaluate the Alternatives

Types of Data

Evaluation Techniques

You can't evaluate what you don't have…

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Evaluation Criteria
(Quick Review)

- Use the set of weighted criteria to evaluate the alternatives based on the desired end state
- Evaluation criteria should represent the decision maker's priorities
- What does "good" look like?
- Decision maker's intent is key!

Types of Data / Levels of Measurement

Qualitative

Nominal

Ordinal

Quantitative

Interval

Ratio

Qualitative Data

Two Types:

1) Nominal (name):
- No particular order – vacation spots
- Mutually exclusive: cannot happen at same time

2) Ordinal (order):
- Rankings (a "greater than" relationship)
- Ordered vacation spots / priorities
- Order matters but not the difference between values

Quantitative Data

Two Types:

1) Interval
- Difference between numbers is meaningful
- Zero value is arbitrary, no meaningful definition

2) Ratio
- All the same properties of interval data except that…
- When the variable equals zero, there is none of the variable

Evaluation Techniques

Pros and Cons

Tradeoff Table

Prioritization Matrix

Pros & Cons

- Identifies the advantages and/or disadvantages of making a specific decision
- Best used in binary (yes/no) decisions
- Advantage:
  - Relatively quick and easy
- Disadvantages:
  - Often subjective
  - May not lead to the "Best" alternative

Pros & Cons
Purchase a New Car

Pros	Cons
• Fuel Economy • Reliability • Safety • Utility • Style	• Cost • Stress • Theft

Pros & Cons
Purchase a New Car

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Pros		Cons	
• Fuel Economy	7	• Cost	10
• Reliability	5	• Stress	2
• Safety	4	• Theft	1
• Utility	3		
• Style	2		
Total Pro	21	Total Con	13

Trade-off Table

- Identifies the important attributes of each alternative to compare them with one another

- Advantages:
  - Helps you identify the degree of variation between alternatives

- Disadvantages:
  - Does not directly show the relative importance of the attributes
  - Can get confusing with multiple alternatives

Trade-off Table
Car –vs– Truck

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	MPG / HWY	Cost	Reliability*	Utility	Safety**	Style
Honda Civic	36	$ 15,955	5 - Better than most	Seats 5	5 - Driver 4 - Passenger	Practical
Ford F-150	19	$ 23,670	5 - Better than most	Seats 3 / Can haul stuff	4 - Driver 3 - Passenger	Studly

*J.D. Power and Associates Rating
**National Institute of Highway Safety

Trade-off Table
Compare SUVs

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	MPG HWY	Cost	Reliability*	Utility	Safety**	Style
Lexus RX	24	$ 39,075	5	2	5	5
Lincoln MKT	23	$ 45,230	4	3	5	5
Toyota Highlander	22	$ 30,695	3	4	5	4
Volvo XC60	23	$ 31,300	4	3	5	3

*J.D. Power and Associates Rating
**National Institute of Highway Safety

Prioritization Matrix

- Identifies how well each alternative meets your priorities (evaluation criteria)

- Advantages:
  - Provides fidelity when using multiple criteria
  - Scores alternatives to help rank order them

- Disadvantages:
  - Aggregate "scores" may not meaningfully represent the degree of separation between alternatives

Prioritization Matrix - Ordinal

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	MPG Hwy (18-27)	Rank	Cost ($30-40K)	Rank	Reliability (3 to 5-star)*	Rank	Utility	Rank	Safety (3 to 5-star)**	Rank	Style	Rank	Sum of Ranks
Lexus RX	24	1	$ 39,075	3	5	1	2	4	5	1	5	1	11
~~**Lincoln MKT**~~	~~23~~	~~2~~	~~$ 45,230~~	~~4~~	~~4~~	~~2~~	~~3~~	~~2~~	~~5~~	~~1~~	~~5~~	~~1~~	~~12~~
Toyota Highlander	22	4	$ 30,695	1	3	4	4	1	5	1	4	3	14
Volvo XC60	23	2	$ 31,300	2	4	2	3	2	5	1	3	4	13

*J.D. Power and Associates Rating
**National Institute of Highway Safety

1=Best
4=Worst

Ordinal ranking can cause a loss of evaluative information.

Prioritization Matrix - Interval

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	MPG Hwy (18-27)	Score	Cost ($30-40K)	Score	Reliability (3 to 5-star)*	Score	Utility	Score	Safety (3 to 5-star)**	Score	Style	Score	Sum of Scores
Lexus RX	24	7	$ 39,075	1	5	10	2	4	5	10	5	10	42
Toyota Highlander	22	4	$ 30,695	9	3	1	4	8	5	10	4	8	40
Volvo XC60	23	6	$ 31,300	8	4	5	3	6	5	10	3	6	41

10=Best
1=Worst

*J.D. Power and Associates Rating
**National Institute of Highway Safety

Prioritization Matrix Interval with Weights

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	MPG (18-27)	Wt 20.5%	Cost ($30-$40k)	Wt 22.7%	Reliability* (3-5 Stars)	Wt 20.5 %	Utility	Wt 13.6%	Safety** (3-5 Stars)	Wt 13.6%	Style	Wt 9 %	Sum of Weighted Scores
Lexus RX	7	1.44	1	0.23	10	2.05	4	0.54	10	1.36	10	0.90	6.52
Toyota Highlander	4	0.82	9	2.04	1	0.21	8	1.09	10	1.36	8	0.72	6.24
Volvo XC60	6	1.23	8	1.82	5	1.03	6	0.82	10	1.36	6	0.54	6.79

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10=Best
1=Worst

Since "Safety" ranks the same for all alternatives, its inclusion does not add value for this decision

Prioritization Matrix
Interval with Weights

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	Cost	Wt 26.3 %	MPG	Wt 23.7 %	Reliability*	Wt 23.7 %	Utility	Wt 15.8 %	Style	Wt 10.5 %	Sum of Weighted Scores
Volvo XC60	8	2.10	6	1.42	5	1.19	6	0.95	6	0.63	6.29
Lexus RX	2	0.53	7	1.66	10	2.37	4	0.63	10	1.05	6.24
Toyota Highlander	9	2.37	4	0.95	1	0.24	8	1.26	8	0.84	5.66

10=Best
1=Worst

*J.D. Power and Associates Rating

- **Removed "Safety"; redistributed weight; adjusted legend**
- **Re-ordered the Evaluation Criteria with most important on the left**
- **Re-ordered the Alternatives putting best choice on the top**

- **Result: Easier to read and explain**

Deliverable – Step 4

Rank-ordered Alternatives with Justification

Make a Recommendation

Decision Brief

Data Presentation

Charts & Tables

Decision Briefing

Outline

- Focus presentation with issue statement / purpose
- Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF): Present recommendation as soon as feasible after issue
- Describe the issue environment; relevant facts, necessary assumptions, valid limitations
- Define the evaluation criteria used and weighting

Outline

- Clearly define the alternatives
- If appropriate, explain why some were infeasible, unethical or illegal
- Present the rank-ordered set of feasible alternatives
- Make recommendation and provide rationale
- Ask for a decision

Preparation

- ABCs: Accurate, Brief, Clear
- Know your purpose
- Understand the context
- Identify key participants / stakeholders
- Be prepared!
  - Play Devil's Advocate
  - Look for holes in data / presentation
  - Try to identify uncertainties

Content Review - Proofreading

- Grammar and mechanics
  - Proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling
  - Consistent capitalization
- Headings
  - Be consistent
  - Only use sub-headings if you have more than one
- Proofreading
  - Don’t rely on spell cheek
  - Check acronym consistency

Abbreviated Decision Briefing

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If decision maker knows issue well, you may be able to limit briefing:

- Issue Statement
- Essential background
- Recommended solution

Handling Early Decisions

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Before you finish, the decision maker may announce a decision

- Note the decision
- End the briefing
- Start follow-up process

DON'T TALK

PAST THE DECISION!

Follow-Up

- Follow-up immediately or decision may quickly lose traction
- Notify affected parties as soon as possible
  - Not complete until the paperwork is done
  - Do not allow others to lose sight of the decision
- Until decision is implemented, it simply remains a good intention

Executive Summary

- Summarizes situation and process
- Focuses on key information
- Names the stakeholders
- Highlights key aspects of analysis
- Describes justification for recommendation

Data Presentation

Preparation

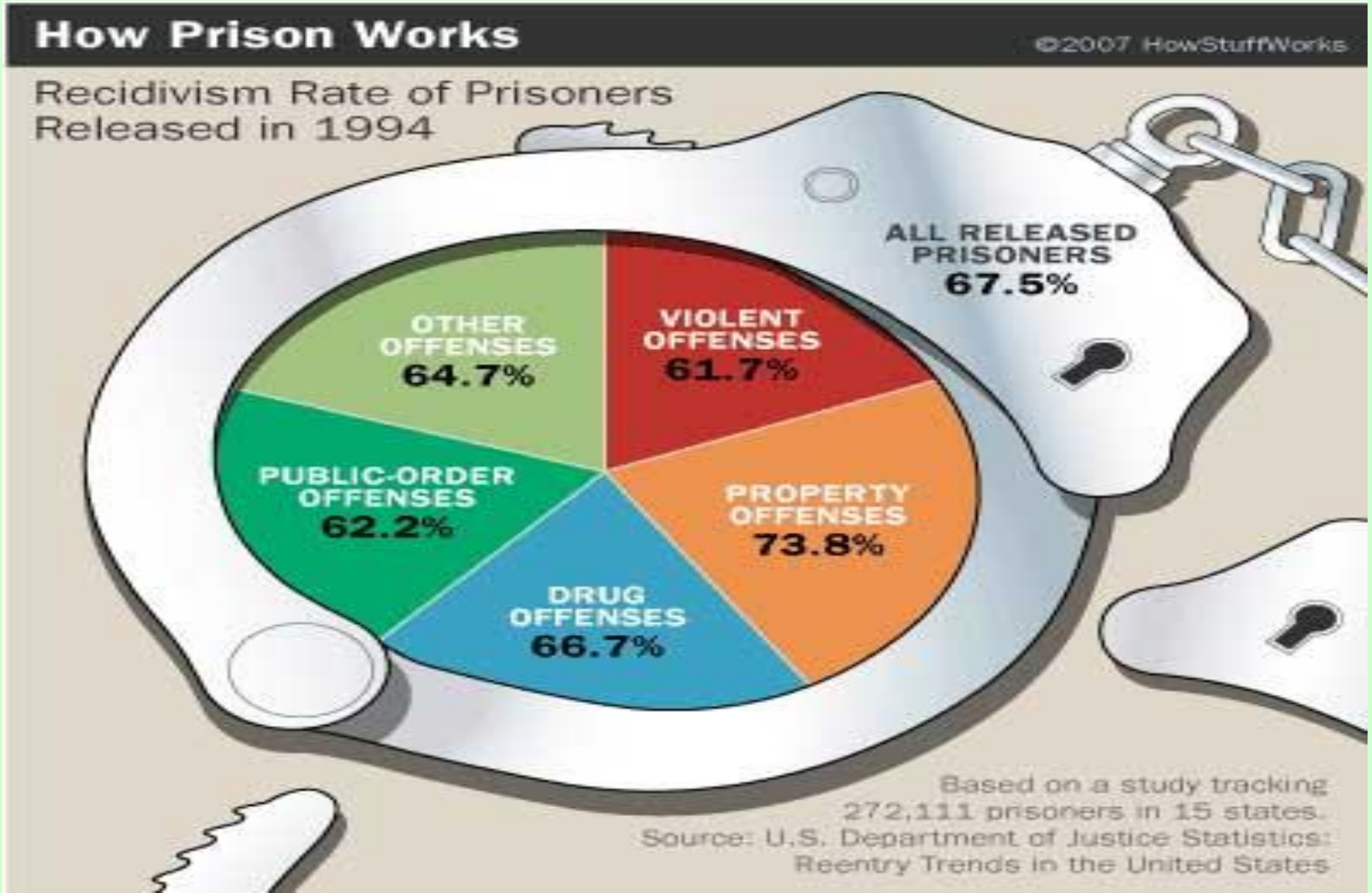
- Know your audience
  - What is the intended use of the data?
  - What question are you trying to answer?
- Tailor and highlight
  - Trends
  - Drivers
  - High priority areas
- Do the data add value to the process?

General Guidelines

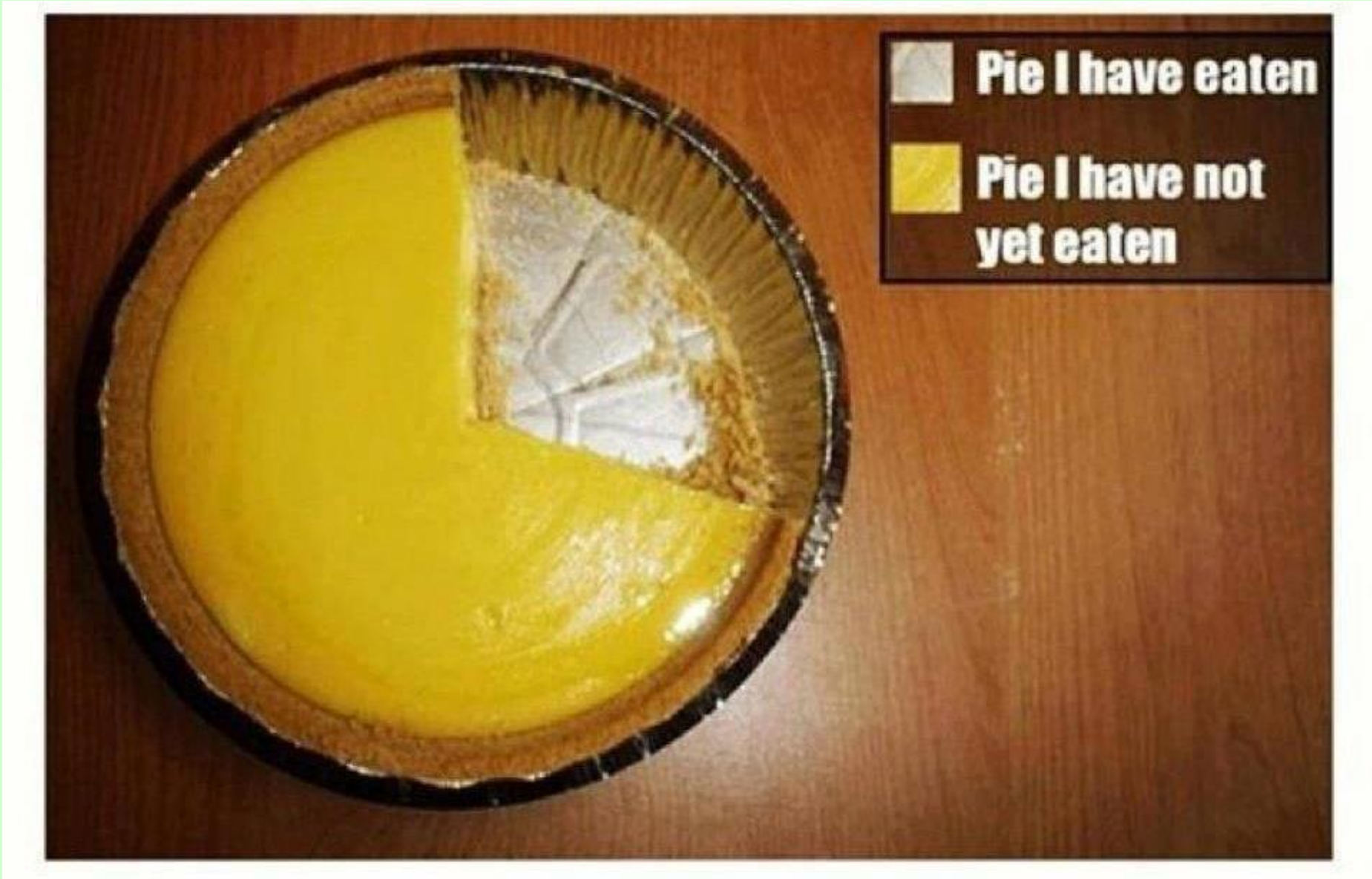
- Clearly title to identify purpose
- Indicate what data is being measured
- Label units and legends
- Identify source of data
- Use at least 24-point font for main points
- Practice, on location, whenever possible

Charts & Tables

Worst "Pie" Chart Ever



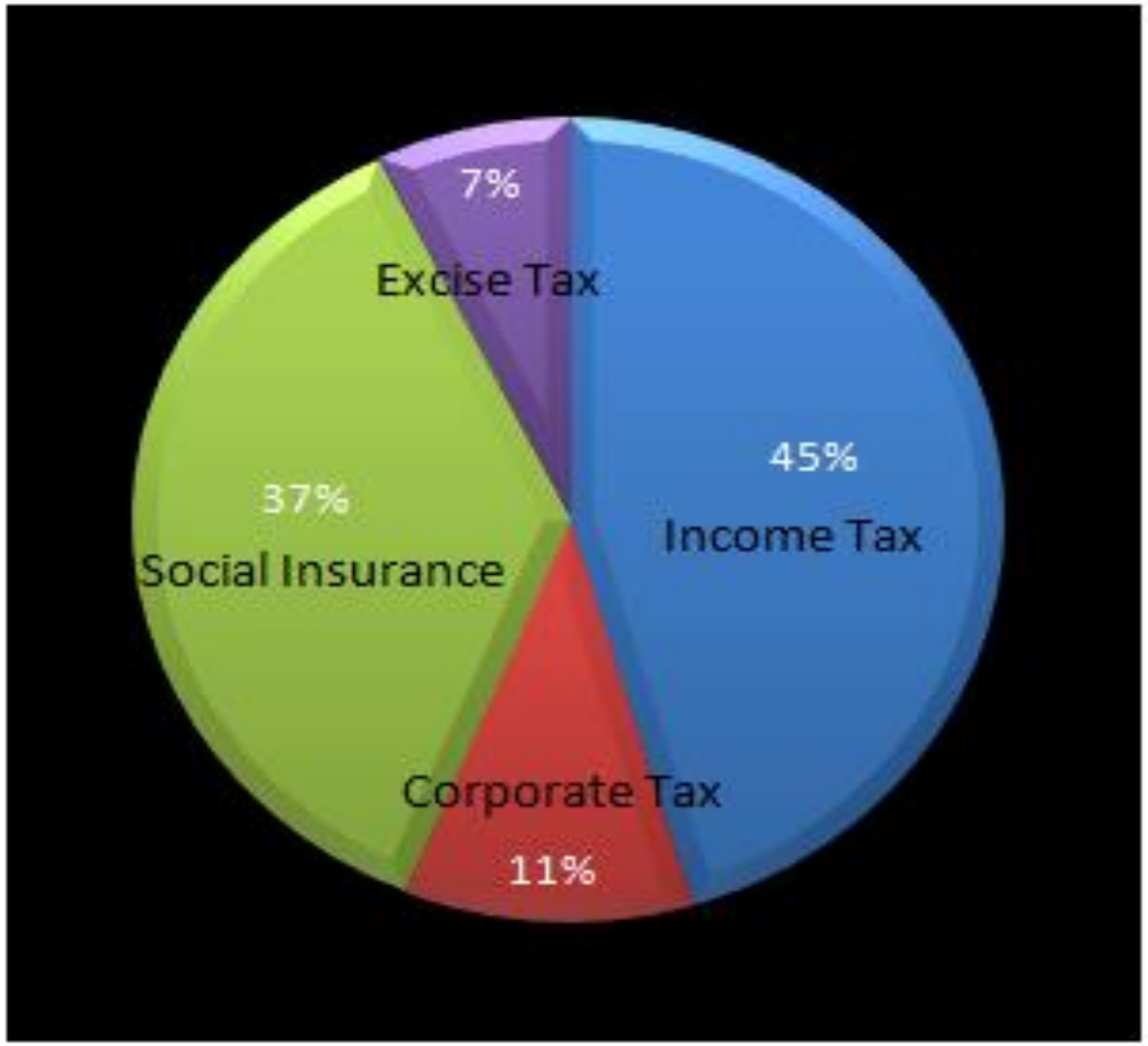
A ***MEANINGFUL*** Pie Chart



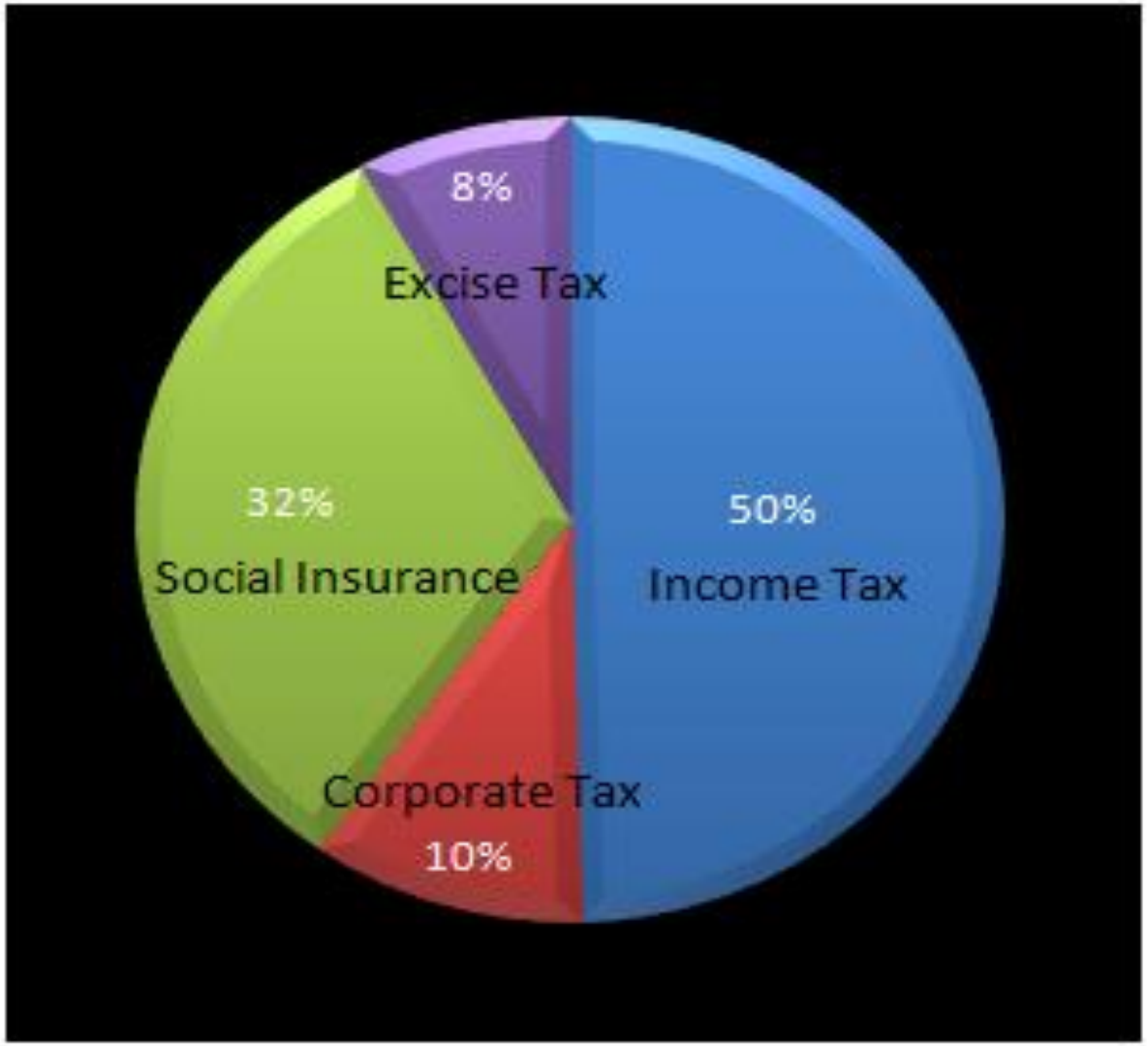
Rules for Pie Charts

- Pie charts must add up to some meaningful total (100%)
- Only use when the comparison of a part to the whole is useful to your decision
- Typically used for higher level, more general discussions of issues
- Trying to include details or differentiate between minor differences on a pie chart could prove confusing

Federal Government Receipts by Source



FY 2007



FY 2000

Federal Government Receipts by Source

	2000		2007	
Source	$B	%	$B	%
Individual Income Taxes	$1,004	50%	$1,096	45%
Social Insurance Payments	$653	32%	$884	37%
Corporate Income Taxes	$207	10%	$261	11%
ExciseTaxes/Other	$161	8%	$175	7%
Total Receipts	$2,025		$2,416	

C-130J Simulator Lifecycle Costs (25 Years)

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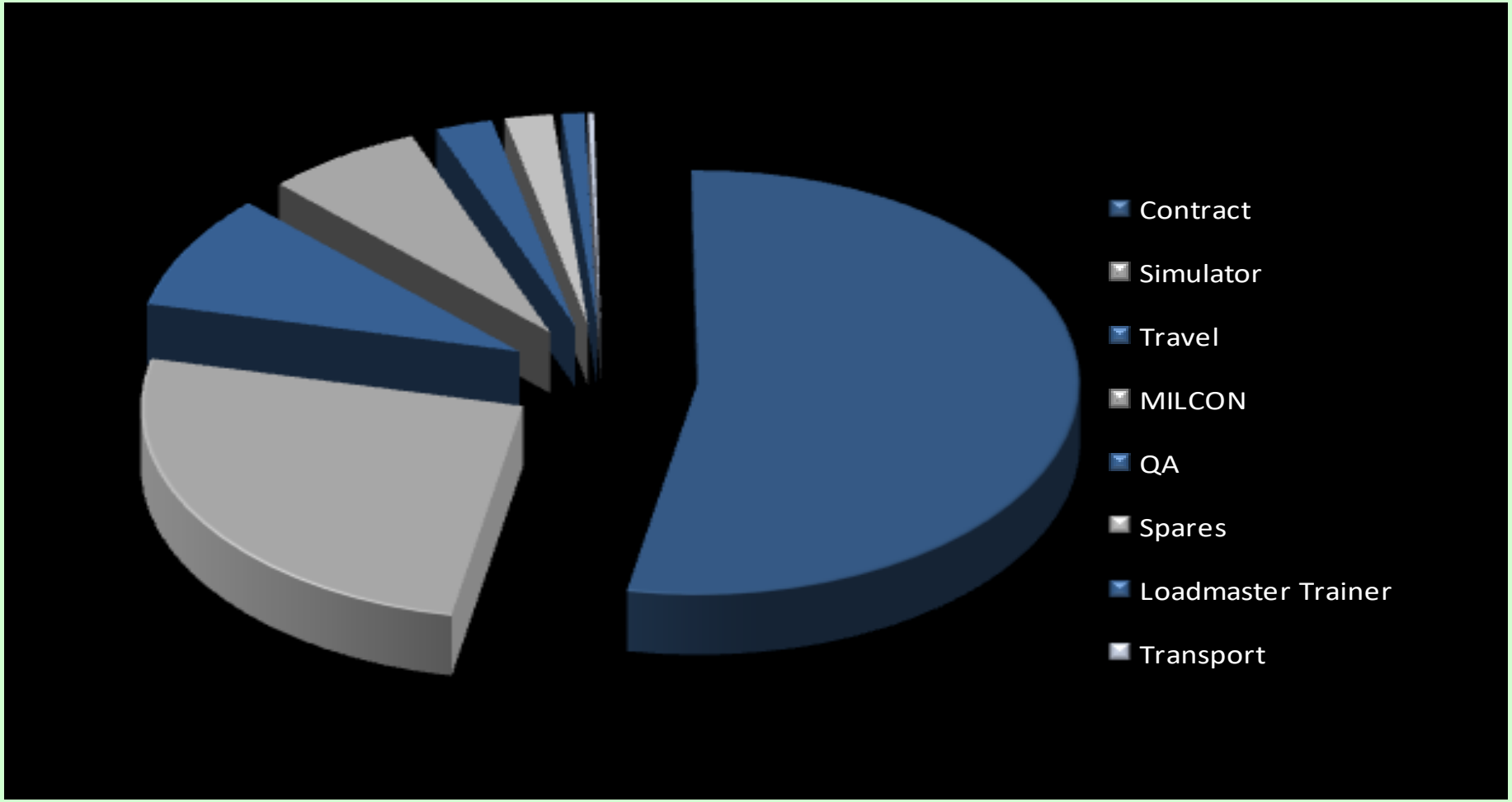

C-130J Simulator Lifecycle Costs (25 Years)

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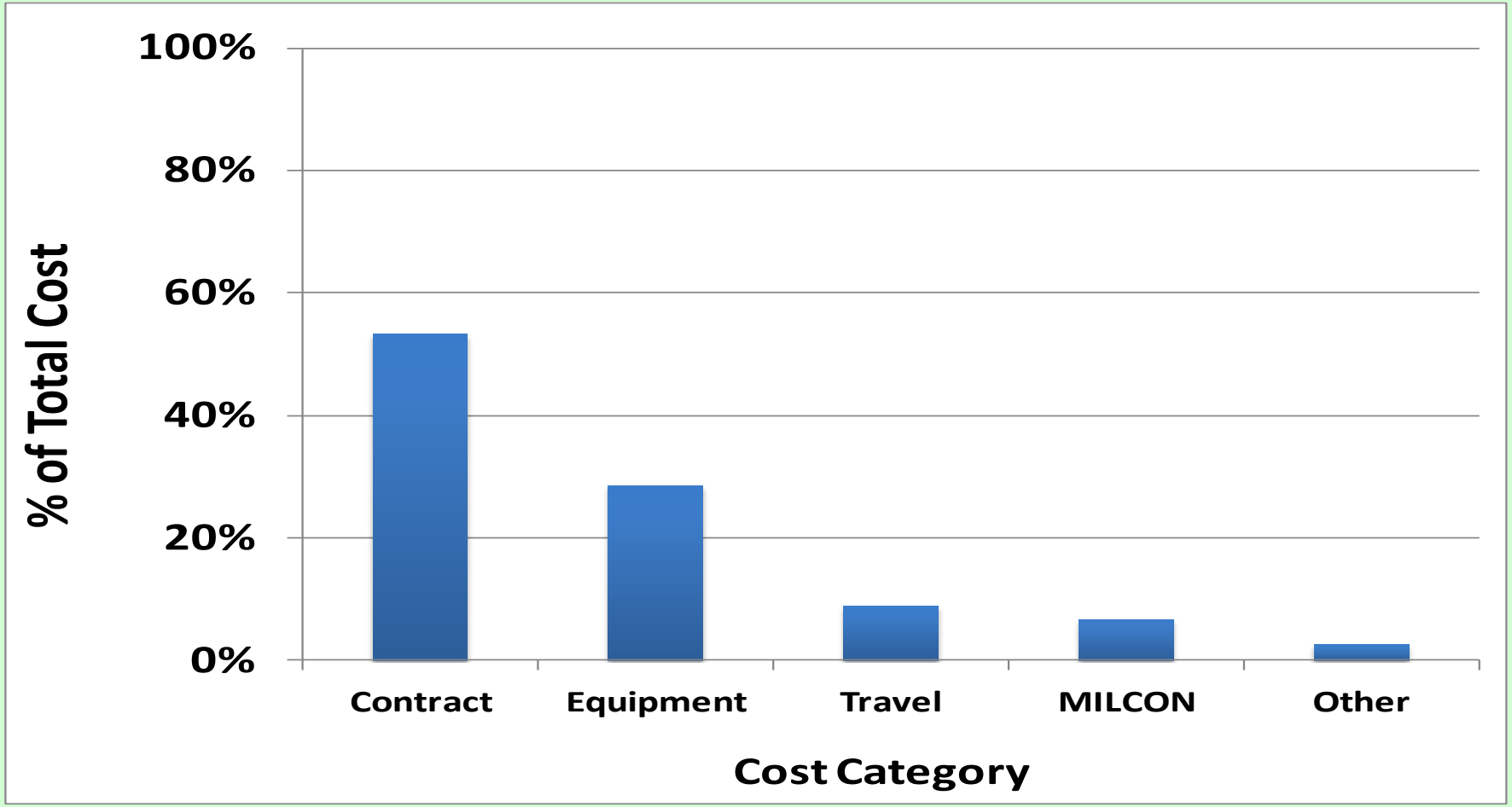
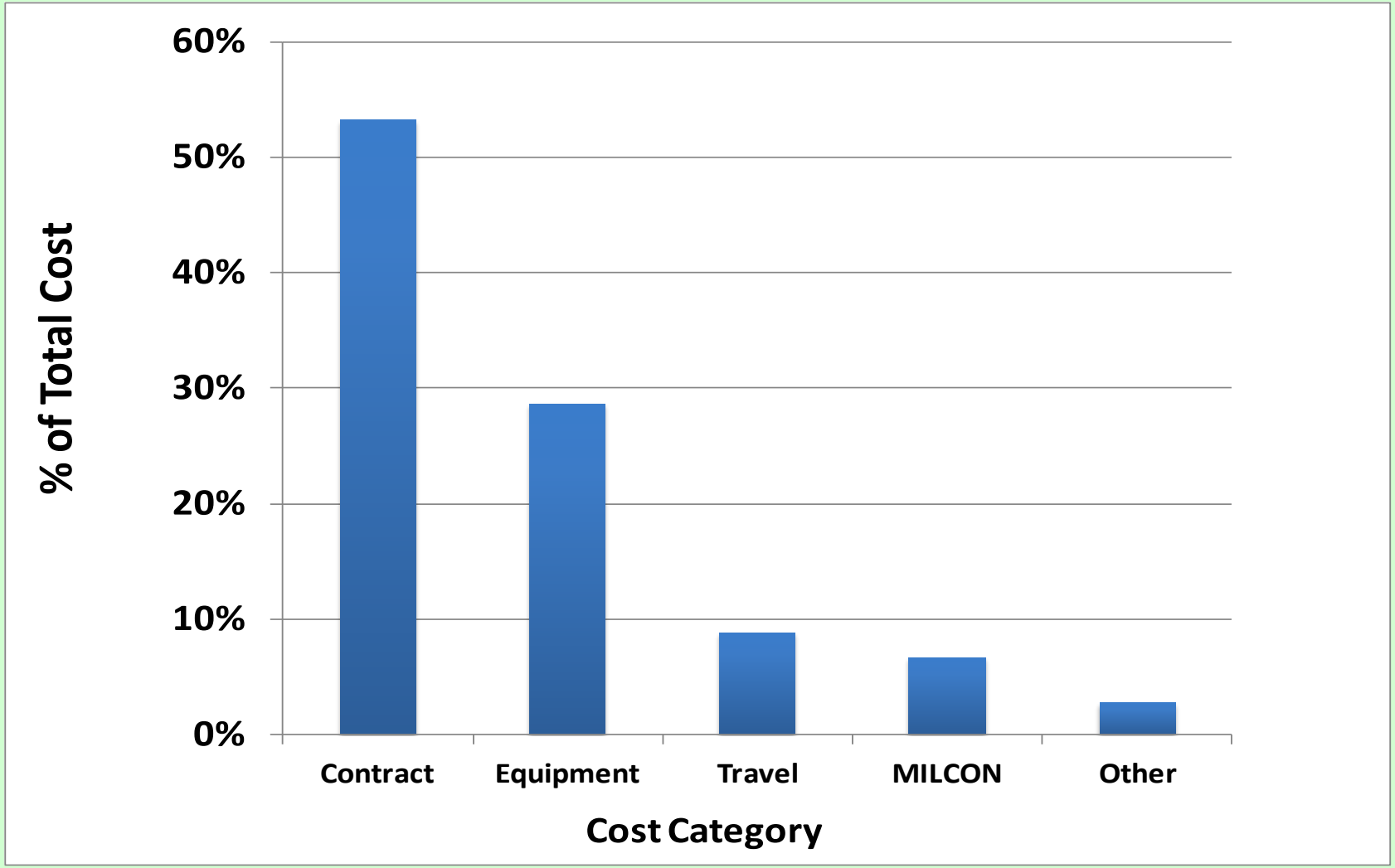


C-130J Simulator Lifecycle Costs (25 Years)



Guidelines for Tables

- Should stand alone and be unambiguous
- Specify units
- Column and row headers
- Minimal decimal places & consistent rounding
- Columns for comparison
- Group chronologically or by classification

LRS Execution Plan

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Cost Center/Flight	EEIC	Total Req	MAJCOM Bogey	Funding Delta
Air Freight Terminal Ops	61900	5,677	0	(5,677)
Air Freight Terminal Ops	59200	7,122	0	(7,122)
Air Freight Terminal Ops	40915	18,784	0	(18,784)
Air Passenger Terminal	40915	3,922	0	(3,922)
Air Passenger Terminal	61900	5,677	0	(5,677)
POL Services	44300	0	15,300	15,300
POL Services	46200	2,972	0	(2,972)
POL Services	60900	7,225	0	(7,225)
POL Services	40900	20,642	0	(20,642)
POL Services	61900	132,316	0	(132,316)
Supply Support	44000	0	4,300	4,300
Supply Support	44300	0	1,000	1,000
Supply Support	55300	0	16,800	16,800
Supply Support	44000	2,064	0	(2,064)
Supply Support	44200	2,064	1,100	(964)
Supply Support	53400	5,253	0	(5,253)
Supply Support	60900	8,257	0	(8,257)
Supply Support	40900	36,124	0	(36,124)
Supply Support	61900	197,649	25,000	(172,649)
Supply Support	63700	237,624	30,000	(207,624)
Supply Support	59200	554,963	0	(554,963)
Traffic Management	44200	1,239	0	(1,239)
Traffic Management	61900	218,806	0	(218,806)
Traffic Management	46200	576,327	46,363	(529,964)
Vehicle Lease	43300	61,926	65,000	3,074
Vehicle Maintenance	44300	0	5,500	5,500
Vehicle Maintenance	47308	0	2,300	2,300
Vehicle Maintenance	50200	0	800	800
Vehicle Maintenance	61911	0	909,000	909,000
Vehicle Maintenance	64500	1,239	0	(1,239)
Vehicle Maintenance	43300	7,225	6,167	(1,058)
Vehicle Operations	64100	76,998	117,789	40,791
Vehicle Operations	59200	258,026	0	(258,026)

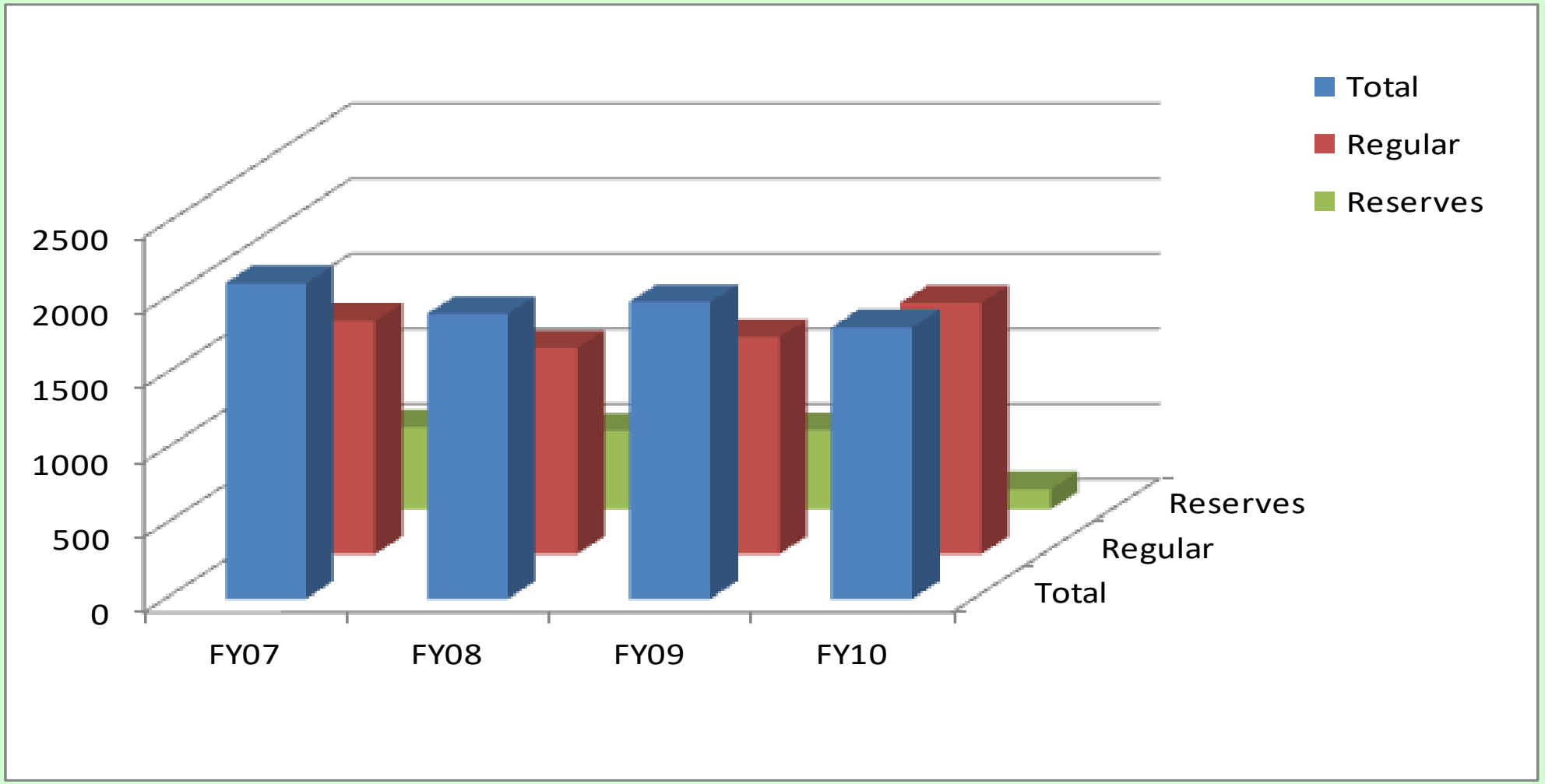
LRS Execution Plan

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School

Cost Center/Flight	Total Req ($)	MAJCOM Bogey ($)	Funding Delta ($)
Supply Support	$1,043,998	$78,200	($965,798)
Traffic Management	$796,372	$46,363	($750,009)
Vehicle Operations	$335,024	$117,789	($217,235)
POL Services	$163,155	$15,300	($147,855)
Air Freight Terminal Ops	$31,583	$0	($31,583)
Air Passenger Terminal Ops	$9,599	$0	($9,599)
Vehicle Lease	$61,926	$65,000	$3,074
Vehicle Maintenance	$8,464	$923,767	$915,303
Total	**$2,450,121**	**$1,246,419**	**($1,203,702)**

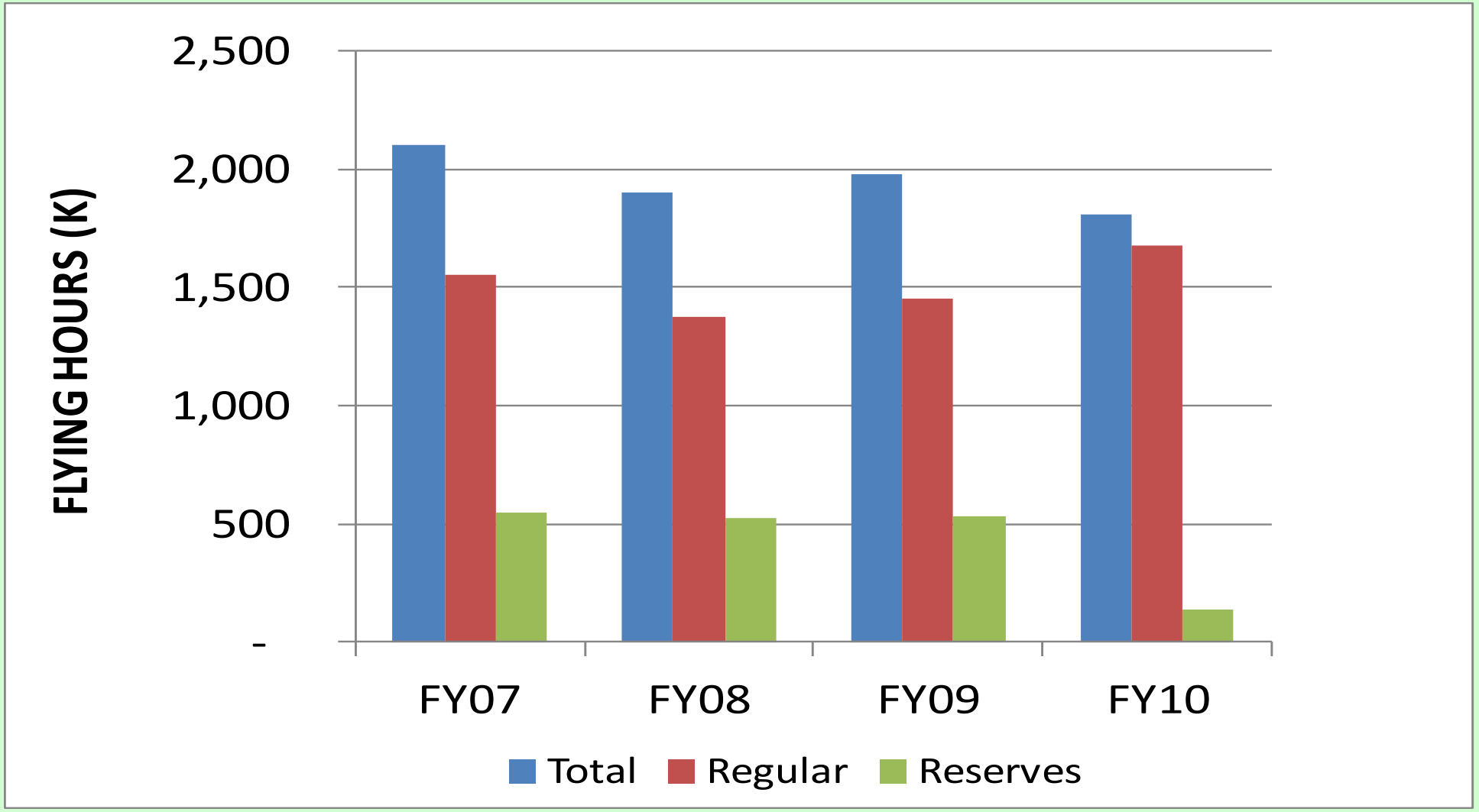
AF Flying Hours by Component

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School



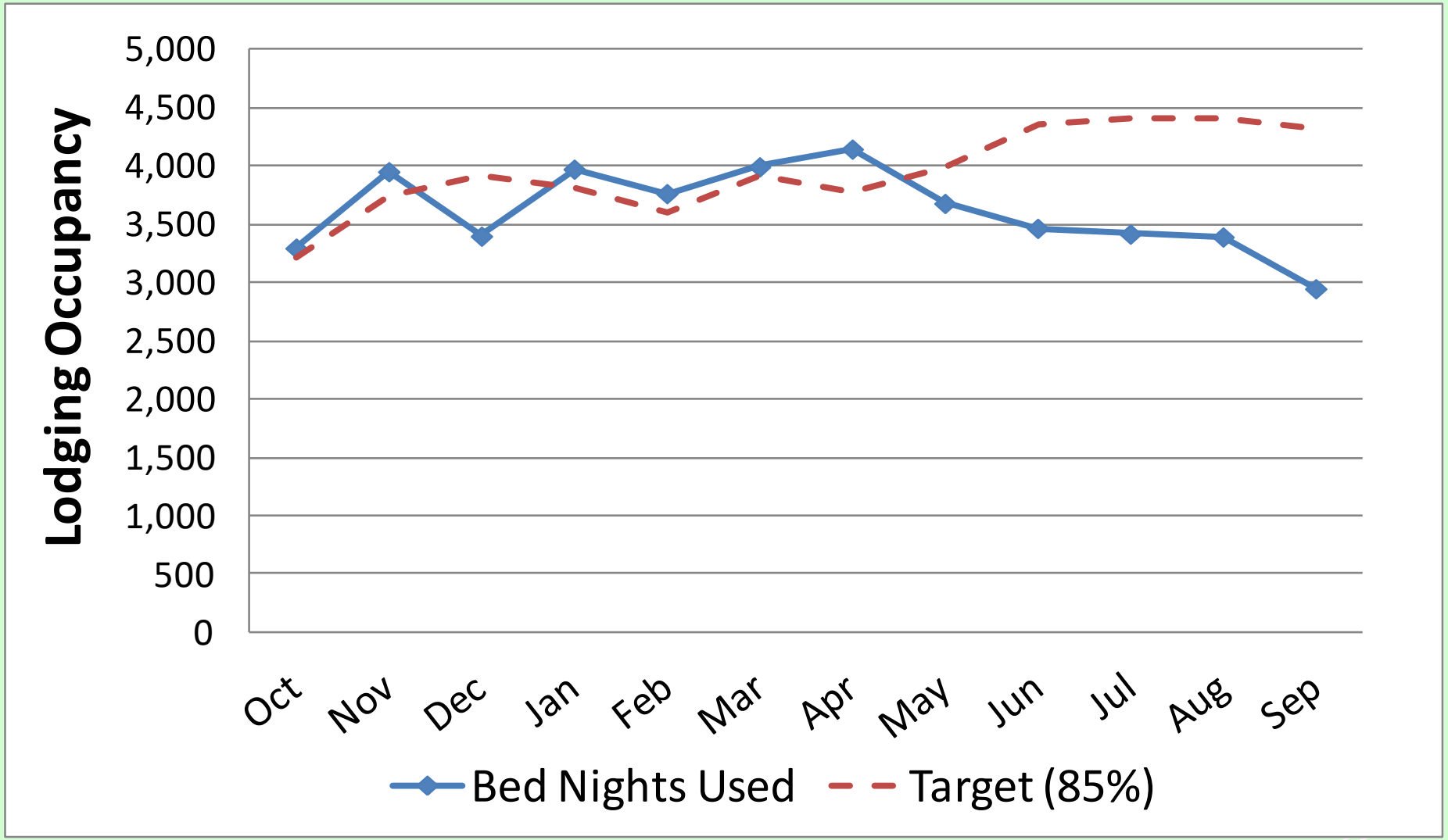
AF Flying Hours by Component

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School



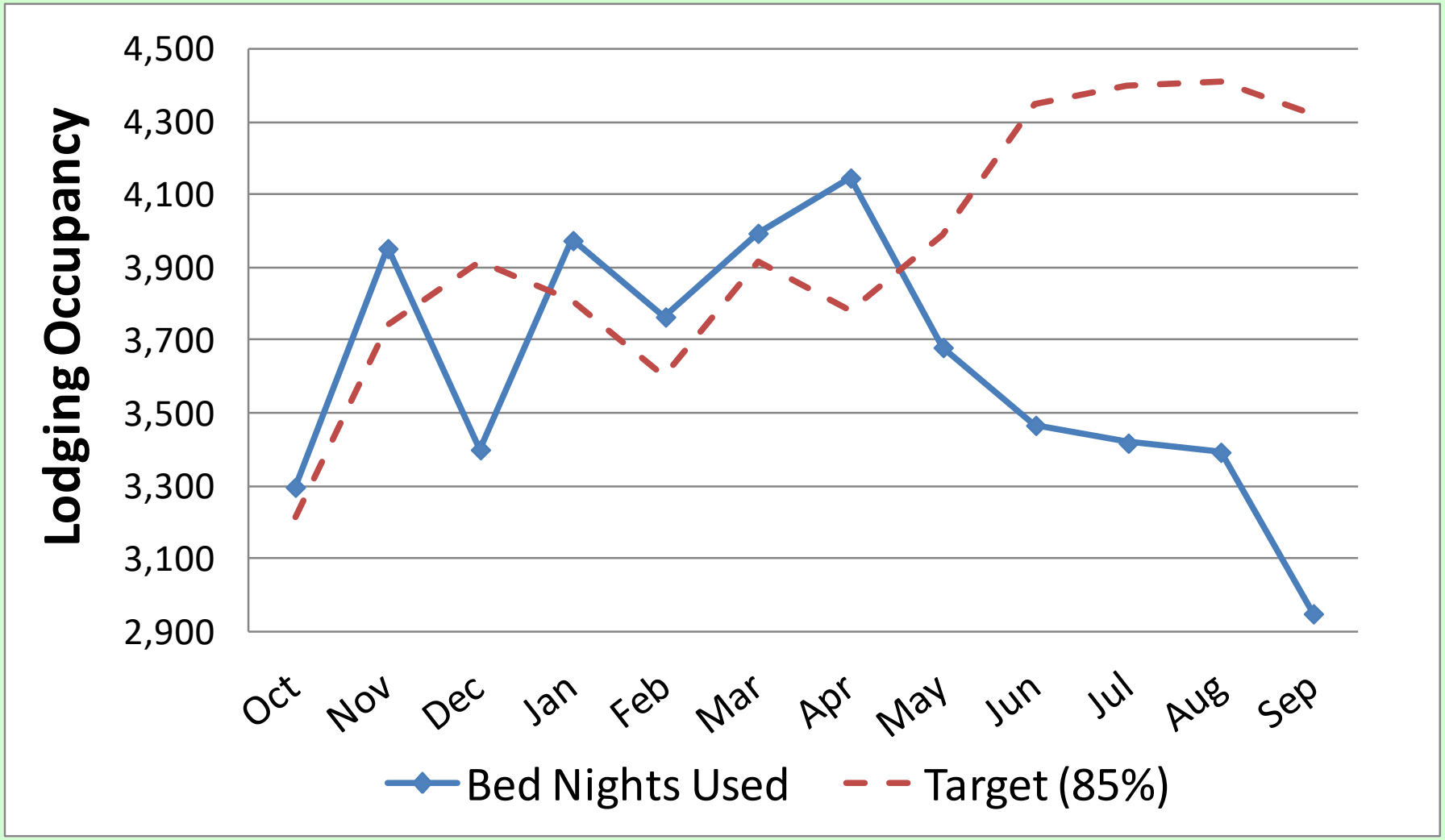
Lodging Occupancy Rates

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School



Lodging Occupancy Rates

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School



A Few More Tips…

- Less is usually more
- Group bars to show relationships
- Use grids and patterns in moderation
- Choose colors carefully; don’t depend on them
- Use appropriate background

Deliverable – Step 5

Communication of the Recommendation with Justification, as Required

Knowledge Check
Steps and Deliverables for Each Step

Defense Financial Management & Comptroller School

- **Identify the Issue**
  - Issue Statement or Issue Question
- **Analyze the Issue**
  - Relevant Facts
  - Necessary Assumptions
  - Valid Limitations
  - Defined and Weighted Evaluation Criteria
- **Develop Alternatives**
  - Reasonable Number of GOOD Alternatives
- **Evaluate the Alternatives**
  - Rank-ordered Set of Alternatives with Justification
- **Make a Recommendation**
  - Communication of the Recommendation with Justification

Parting Shots

"Not adding value is the same as taking it away."

~ Seth Godin

"Leadership is not about executive position or title. It is about connection and influence. At its highest, leadership is all about adding value to the world and blessing lives through the work you do."

~ Robin Sharma