

Evaluation of Public Policies and Social Programs

Session 4: Project Introduction — Fundación Astoreca Guest Session

Andrés Barrios Fernández

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

MA in Economics, Universidad de los Andes, Chile — Second Semester 2026

Today

1. Project expectations & report structure (0–25 min)
2. Guest presentation: Fundación Astoreca (25–60 min)
3. Q&A (60–78 min)
4. Debrief (78–90 min)

No paper presentation today. No new academic reading — the case packet and today's syllabus sections *are* the reading.

Learning Objectives

By the end of today's session, you will be able to:

- State precisely what the project requires at each of the four milestones, and what the final report must contain
- Use the report structure to generate a concrete list of questions before hearing from Fundación Astoreca
- Understand the real-world context and challenge Fundación Astoreca is asking us to help evaluate
- Leave with enough information to form a project team and sketch a preliminary research question

Project Expectations & Report Structure

Why we do this before the guest speaker, not after

If you don't know what you're building toward, you don't know what to ask.

Every professional evaluation — a World Bank project appraisal, an OMB Circular A-4 regulatory review, a philanthropic due-diligence memo — starts from a known report structure. We are going to work backward from ours *before* today's guest presentation, so that the next 90 minutes generate exactly the information you'll need.

You've now had three sessions of toolkit (private appraisal, real resource costs, shadow pricing, consumer surplus) — bring that lens to today's questions too.

The decision

Fundación Astoreca, a Chilean NGO with an established track record running schools for low-income students, is proposing to open a new school.

A government agency and/or a philanthropic donor is deciding whether to fund it.

Your team's job: is this school worth the resources it will consume,
and for whom does it create value?

A private question is a legitimate starting point

- Would Fundación Astoreca's own budget balance?
- Would a donor's narrow cost-per-beneficiary metric look good?

But the deliverable is a social evaluation

One that prices what a private accounting would omit.

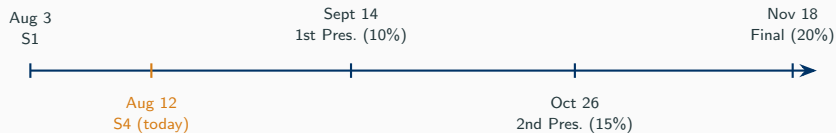
What your evaluation needs to address

- **Benefits:** achievement and long-run earnings gains; externalities on siblings, peers, the community; effects on parental labor supply; effects on the counterfactual schools students would otherwise attend
- **Costs:** capital, teachers, operations; opportunity cost of the site and of funds; real resource costs vs. transfers
- **Scope:** does the school displace enrollment elsewhere, or expand access? Whose perspective — commune, region, country?
- **Distribution:** who benefits, and should a poor family's dollar count more?
- **Discount rate:** what rate for benefits arriving decades from now, and how does it compare to a private funder's rate?
- **Uncertainty:** which two or three parameters is your recommendation most sensitive to?

The four milestones

Milestone	Wt.	What it must contain
First Presentation (Sept 14)	10%	Research question; framework(s) chosen and why; preliminary benefit/cost taxonomy; data sources
Second Presentation (Oct 26)	15%	One credible benefit <i>and</i> one credible cost estimate; proposed discount rate, justified; key open uncertainty
Final Presentation (Nov 18)	20%	Full private-vs-social comparison; headline metric(s); distributional table; sensitivity analysis; recommendation
Final Report	25%	All of the above, integrated into a single decision memo

The semester at a glance



Plus the Final Report (25%) shortly after, and two individually-graded paper presentations (10% each) along the way — each done in a pair.

Suggested final report structure (1 of 2)

A strong default, not a straitjacket — deviate if your evaluation calls for it, but be able to justify the deviation.

1. Executive Summary (1 page) — the recommendation, up front
2. The Policy Question and Decision Context
3. Private Evaluation Baseline
4. Causal Identification Strategy
5. Benefits
6. Costs

Suggested final report structure (2 of 2)

7. Discount Rate — choice and justification
8. Distributional Analysis
9. Scope and General Equilibrium Considerations
10. Sensitivity and Uncertainty Analysis
11. Recommendation
12. Appendices

The exercise: work backward from the report

For each section of the report, ask: what would I need from today's guest to write this?

- Section 4 (Causal Identification) → how does admission work? Is there a waitlist, a lottery, a capacity cutoff?
- Section 5 (Benefits) → what outcomes does Astoreca already track?
- Section 6 (Costs) → what is the capital vs. operating cost breakdown?
- Section 9 (Scope) → where would students otherwise go?

Five question categories for today's Q&A

- Benefits
- Costs
- Causal identification /
counterfactual
- Scope (who else is affected)
- Uncertainty

Every student asks or helps formulate at least one question. Try to spread questions across all five categories.

Guest Presentation

Fundación Astoreca

Q&A

Structuring our questions (60–78 min)

Back to the five categories: benefits, costs, causal identification, scope, uncertainty.

The instructor will moderate to make sure we hear from all five before time runs out.

Debrief

What did you hear today that a private evaluation would capture —
and what would it miss?

Going section by section through the report structure:
which sections do we already have a handle on — and which are
still wide open?

What We Learned Today

- The project has four graded milestones and one final report; each has a specific, known content requirement
- A report structure, worked out in advance, tells you exactly what data and arguments you still need to gather
- Today's guest session was not a passive presentation — it was targeted data collection for a specific document you are already committed to writing
- The open questions we identified in the second debrief are your team's starting research agenda

Before Session 5

- Project team assignments (4 students per team, assigned by the instructor) will be announced by Session 5
- Begin drafting a one-paragraph research question for informal instructor feedback
- Revisit today's list of open questions — your team will need to start closing them