



PART

I

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The analytic work in problem solving generally proceeds in a certain direction, from defining the problem at the beginning all the way to making a decision and explaining it at the end. But remember, this is a process much given to reconsidering, reviewing, changing your mind—in other words, retracing your steps on the path before starting out once more. Also, in some cases, the client or, perhaps, the political situation has already narrowed and focused the analytic task to such a degree that you need not even bother thinking through some of the steps. The exposition that follows lays out a generic process that must be adapted to particular contexts.

STEP ONE: DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Your first problem definition is a crucial step: it gives you both a reason for doing all the work necessary to complete the project and a sense of direction for your evidence-gathering activity. And in the last phases of the policy analysis, your final problem definition will probably help you structure how you *tell your story*.

Think of Deficit and Excess

Semantic Tip It often—but not always—helps to think in terms of deficit and excess. For instance:

- “There are too many homeless people in the United States.”
- “The demand for agricultural water is growing faster than our ability to supply it at an acceptable financial and environmental cost.”