REFERENCE SHEET: BARDACH'S EIGHTFOLD PATH FOR POLICY ANALYSIS Source: A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis (Eugene Bardach) STEP 1: DEFINE THE PROBLEM - Core Concept: "Deficits and Excesses." State the problem as "Too much of X" or "Too little of Y." - The "Solutionism" Trap: Never define a problem as the lack of a solution (e.g., "The problem is we lack a tax"). That is a solution in disguise. - "Private Troubles vs. Public Problems": Ensure the issue is a market failure or government failure, not just a personal grievance. - Quantify: "How big is the problem?" (Magnitude). STEP 2: ASSEMBLE SOME EVIDENCE - "Hustle": Evidence gathering must be aggressive but time-efficient. - "Guesstimation": It is better to have a rough estimate with a confidence interval than no number at all. - Precedents: Look for "Smart Practices" (what have other jurisdictions done?). STEP 3: CONSTRUCT THE ALTERNATIVES - "Start Comprehensive, End Focused": Brainstorm many, but analyze only 3-5 deeply. - The "Do Nothing" Option: Always include the status quo as a baseline alternative. - Variants: "Tax it," "Regulate it," "Subsidize it," "Educate regarding it," "Direct Government Supply." STEP 4: SELECT THE CRITERIA - Evaluative Criteria: The mental standards used to judge the alternatives. - Efficiency: Maximizing aggregate welfare (Cost-Benefit Analysis). - Equity: Fairness of distribution (who wins, who loses). - Political Feasibility: Will elected officials vote for it? - Administrative Robustness: Can the bureaucracy actually implement it? (The "weak link" test). STEP 5: PROJECT THE OUTCOMES - The "Implementation Game": Assume things will go wrong. - Magnitude of Impacts: Don't just predict direction (+/-), try to predict size. - Unintended Consequences: Look for negative externalities. STEP 6: CONFRONT THE TRADE-OFFS - Dominance: If Option A is better than Option B on all criteria, discard Option B. - The "CAM" (Criteria-Alternatives Matrix): A table with Alternatives as rows and Criteria as columns. - Commensurability: Try to put trade-offs in the same units (usually money) if possible, but acknowledge qualitative trade-offs. STEP 7: DECIDE! - The "Twenty-Dollar Bill Test": If your alternative is so great, why hasn't it been done yet? Is there a hidden barrier? - Conviction: Don't just summarize; choose the best option based on the analysis. STEP 8: TELL YOUR STORY - The "Grandma Bessie Test": Can you explain the logic to a layperson in 1 minute? - Structure: Start with the recommendation, then backfill the reasoning.