

Policy Analysis Overview - Writing an Effective Policy Memo using the Bardach Eightfold Path

January 25, 2024

Writing an Effective Policy Memo

- Before you begin...

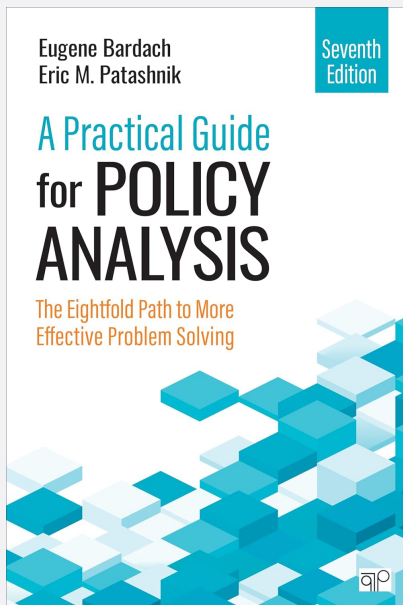
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 - Inform
 - Persuade

Bardach Technique for Policy Analysis



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- Step 1: Define the Problem
- Step 2: Assemble Some Evidence
- Step 3: Construct the Alternatives
- Step 4: Select the Criteria
- Step 5: Project the Outcomes
- Step 6: Confront the Trade-Offs
- Step 7: Decide
- Step 8: Tell Your Story

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 - ▶ Short statement (1-3 sentences) summarizing the issue to be considered.
- What do we want to accomplish with the problem statement?
 - ▶ Grab attention and spark interest
 - ▶ Convey the importance of the problem

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 - ▶ “The quality of care in the U.S. is spotty, despite costs vastly greater than those of any other nation. And almost 50 million Americans are uninsured.”

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 - ▶ “The quality of care in the U.S. is spotty, despite costs vastly greater than those of any other nation. And almost 50 million Americans are uninsured.”
 - ▶ “The 1993 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides up to twelve weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons. However, nearly 40% of workers are not covered by FMLA, or do not use it because of the financial implications of unpaid leave.

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 - ▶ “The 1993 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides up to twelve weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons. However, nearly 40% of workers are not covered by FMLA, or do not use it because of the financial implications of unpaid leave.
 - ▶ “Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. According to the CDC, every day, six teens ages 16-19 die from motor vehicle injuries.”

This Issue

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Editorial

April 23/30, 2019

Lowering Cost and Increasing Access to Drugs Without Jeopardizing Innovation

Robert M. Califf, MD^{1,2}; Andrew Slavitt, MBA³

[» Author Affiliations](#) | [Article Information](#)

JAMA. 2019;321(16):1571-1573. doi:10.1001/jama.2019.3846



US drug costs have reached unacceptable and unsustainable levels. Evidence shows that “financial toxicity” arising from drug costs and other medical expenses is reducing financial security for many families¹ and prompting difficult choices, as patients defer or forgo therapies they cannot afford.² In stark contrast, comparable countries negotiate drug prices and use drugs more effectively. Recent data suggest that other high-income countries have an average life expectancy approximately 3 to 5 years longer than that of the United States, which ranks last among high-income countries and is losing ground compared with peer nations.³ Although drug prices account for only part of these trends, they nevertheless add to disparities that dominate the trajectories of US health outcomes.

Bardach Step 1 - Define the Problem



You

I'm writing a policy memo on Medicaid coverage loss during unwinding. Could you give me 5 options for a problem statement?



ChatGPT

Certainly! Here are five options for a problem statement regarding Medicaid coverage loss during unwinding:

1. "The unwinding of Medicaid coverage poses a critical challenge as individuals face the risk of losing essential healthcare services, leading to potential negative impacts on their health outcomes and well-being."
2. "The unraveling of Medicaid coverage raises concerns about the accessibility and affordability of healthcare for vulnerable populations, potentially exacerbating health disparities and compromising the overall effectiveness of the healthcare system."
3. "As the process of unwinding unfolds, a pressing issue emerges with the potential disruption of Medicaid coverage, jeopardizing the healthcare security of millions and requiring urgent attention to mitigate the adverse consequences on public health."
4. "The potential erosion of Medicaid coverage during unwinding represents a significant policy dilemma, necessitating a comprehensive examination of the factors contributing to coverage loss and the development of strategic interventions to safeguard the health of affected individuals."
5. "The challenge of Medicaid coverage loss amid unwinding demands a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between policy changes, healthcare access, and socio-economic factors, prompting the need for targeted solutions to prevent adverse outcomes for vulnerable populations."

Bardach Step 1 - Define the Problem

You

Ok, but I'm trying to use the Bardach method to craft the problem statement. Bardach says that I should think in terms of deficit and excess and quantify when possible. Can you modify these statements so that they follow Bardach's suggestions?

ChatGPT

Certainly, let's modify the problem statements using the Bardach method by incorporating deficits, excesses, and quantifiable elements:

1. "The persistent deficit in Medicaid coverage during policy unwinding reveals a significant gap in healthcare accessibility, with a quantifiable increase in the number of individuals lacking essential health insurance, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted interventions."
2. "Policy unwinding has resulted in an excess of Medicaid coverage loss, creating a substantial deficit in healthcare access for low-income individuals. A quantitative analysis is essential to understand the magnitude of this deficit and develop evidence-based strategies to address the growing issue."
3. "The consistent rise in Medicaid coverage gaps during policy unwinding represents an excess that quantifiably hinders healthcare access for vulnerable populations. Identifying the systemic deficits leading to these gaps is crucial for implementing effective interventions and minimizing the impact on individuals dependent on this critical healthcare program."
4. "The systemic deficit of Medicaid coverage loss during policy unwinding disproportionately affects the most vulnerable segments of society. A quantitative assessment is imperative to measure the extent of this excess and inform evidence-based solutions aimed at preserving healthcare access for those in need."
5. "The escalating problem of Medicaid coverage erosion during policy unwinding presents an excess that demands a quantitative investigation into the root causes and systemic failures. Understanding the quantifiable aspects of this deficit is critical for designing and implementing policy interventions to safeguard the health coverage of at-risk populations."

Bardach Step 2 - Assemble Some Evidence

- **Step 2: Assemble Some Evidence.**
- More to come in weeks 8 through 10

Bardach Step 3 - Construct the Alternatives

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- Start comprehensive, end up focused.
 - ▶ “How would you solve a problem if cost were no object?”

Bardach Step 4 - Select the Criteria

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- Some examples:
 - ▶ Equity
 - ▶ Efficiency
 - ▶ Cost
 - ▶ Political feasibility

Bardach Step 4 - Select the Criteria

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An effective policy solution to this problem must satisfy the core requirements of reducing drug costs and increasing access to beneficial drugs, while continuing to incentivize development of new therapies. The path forward requires a sustainable, fair payment system in which drug prices reflect the value provided and reward innovations that improve outcomes. Four Viewpoints in this issue of *JAMA*⁴⁻⁷ recommend different but overlapping approaches for achieving these goals.

Bardach Step 7 - Decide

- Recommend the policy proposal (or proposals) that would solve or mitigate the problem.

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The most effective ways to address pricing involve 4 categories: importation from other countries; reduction of bloated administrative and marketing activities; direct negotiations between federal payers and industry; and creation of a value-based system.

Bardach Step 8 - Tell Your Story

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- Gauge your audience

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- Apply the grandparent test
- Gauge your audience
- Consider your medium
 - ▶ Policy memo
 - ▶ Infographic
 - ▶ Leave-behind document
 - ▶ Give your story a logical narrative flow