

Project 4 – Proposal Essay/Professional Proposal (2,000-3,000 words for 40 Points)

Purpose: Build on the research you conducted for Project 3 to compose a proposal essay or professional proposal.

Audience: Your instructor, your peers, the decision makers, stakeholders, and shadow readers involved with and/or affected by your proposal.

Background

When you write for other classes in college—and when you write in the workplace—you will use elements of rhetoric to persuade readers that you have conducted credible research, that you are a reliable source of information, and that your conclusions can be trusted. Regardless of your job, you will have to go about your work and then report your findings to others to help them solve problems. Communicating effectively will influence your success on these projects.

Many times, your audience will not be familiar with your research, so you will have to educate your readers. In addition, members of your audience may need to retrieve information in your essay/report quickly, so you will have to create accessible documents that are readable at many different levels. This capstone project, the proposal essay or professional proposal, prepares you for the writing you will do in higher-level courses and the writing you will probably do in the workplace.

The Assignment

Use the research you conducted for Project 3 to write a persuasive proposal essay or professional proposal. The proposal should:

- Explain the purpose, goals/objectives of your project
- Provide background and stakeholder information, as well as causes of the problem
- Provide a description of your research methods you performed this semester
- Present one or two viable solutions with a detailed explanation of how the solution will work
- Outline the schedule of tasks (along with their dates) decision makers must accomplish to bring about the solutions
- Discuss your credentials (in professional proposal)
- Overview the budget of your solutions (if necessary); your tentative budget is \$5,000
- Suggest any more research that could help solve the problem.

You will produce the following for this project:

1. A proposal essay **or** professional proposal
2. A writing log recording the tasks you complete and the time it takes to complete them
3. An MLA, APA, or CMS appropriate references page with foot or endnotes.

Assignment Goals

The goals for this assignment are as follows:

1. Use the in-depth research from Project 3 to help you compose a solid proposal and convince your audience that you understand the issue thoroughly
2. Convince your decision makers that a problem exists
3. Research your proposed solutions to convince decision makers your ideas will work
4. Write an accurate writing log and references page using MLA, APA, or CMS.

The Format

For this assignment, you may choose to follow an academic or professional model for your proposal. If you choose the academic model, you may follow the examples in *Writing Today* or on the course website. If you choose the professional model, you may follow the examples in *Writing Today* and the sample student work on the “Writing for Change” page on the course website.

Proposal Essay Outline

You may follow the examples in *Writing Today* or on the course website.

Professional Proposal Outline

For the professional proposal, you may follow the examples in *Writing Today* or on the course website. Overall, you will have at least eight or nine sections:

1. Cover
2. Title page
3. Abstract or executive summary (abstracts are used in academic contexts; executive summaries are used in professional settings)
4. Table of contents
5. List of appendices
6. List of illustrations
7. Body of report including
 - a. Introduction (context, purpose, goals, scope, intended audience, recommendations with overview of cost and timeline)
 - b. Background (problem, issue, history, etc.)
 - c. Research methods (exploratory and then empirical research methods)
 - d. Findings (information your research produced, one or two solutions overviewed)
 - e. Recommendations (details of solution(s) you suggest)
 - f. Budget (and practicality of solutions, where the money will come from, etc.)
 - g. Timeline (how solution will run after you submit your report)
 - h. Staffing (*your* qualifications and experience)
 - i. Conclusion (restate main ideas, problem, solution, provide closing, contact info.)
8. Works Cited/References (depending on which method of citation you use)
9. Appendices (dual entry observation logs, interviews, surveys)/Glossary of terms (if necessary)

You should divide the body into headings or chapters with appropriate subheadings. Also, remember to use transitions between sections. This detailed outline should help with content:

Introduction. Your introduction should be short. Introductions outline, briefly, what is to come. The introduction should contain the purpose, scope, goals, and audience of the report as well as an overview of your recommendations with their cost and timeline. Focus on reader benefits, explain reasons for the report, touch on possible results, and describe the problem and your solution. You may also need to define technical or contentious terms you will use in your report. The important questions your readers will ask: What is this? Why am I getting it? What do you want me to do?

Background, Problem. Here is your chance to detail the background of the situation and discuss the problem you want to solve. Use this section to convince the reader that a problem exists. Your job is to show them that you understand the situation completely so you can offer realistic solutions. You may split up this section based on the needs of your project.

Research Methods. In this section, explain how you collected the data for your project. You need to answer three questions: 1) What types of research methods did you use? 2) Why did you choose those methods? 3) How did you carry out those methods? Then discuss your exploratory work and the sources you found. You can use information from your annotated bibliography to help you in this section. Next, explain the empirical research you completed. Discuss your methods and research participants. Talk about how your methods helped you build supporting information for your report.

Findings. Here, you will discuss your findings based on the research you conducted this semester. Don't confuse findings and conclusions with recommendations. In the findings and conclusions section, you present the data you developed from your research.

Recommendations. In this section, detail your suggestions/solutions to help address the problem. Successful recommendations sections provide a lot of detail explaining, specifically, how the solutions address the problem and how decision makers will carry out your recommendations. Explain products (brochures, procedures, web pages, new equipment, etc.) and explain process: what the decision makers will have to do to carry out your solution.

Budget. In competitive proposals, this section is critical. You must be accurate and honest. You would provide a line-by-line breakdown. However, in this case, you are outlining a problem and then offering a solution. So, complete a brief cost analysis (if necessary) that provides a general idea of what your solution might cost. Your tentative budget is \$5,000.

Timeline. In this section, you will further explain the process of carrying out your solution by discussing the schedule decision makers will follow. Your timeline should begin with the submission of your report and follow through a tentative process until your solution is incorporated/launched/accepted, etc. Gantt charts provide an effective visual illustration of the tasks and times people must follow to realize your solutions.

Staffing. In this section, you will outline the skills and experience you bring to the project to help convince the decision makers you are offering good data along with a good, workable solution. Keep in mind that regardless of your background or major, you possess skills that will help you succeed. For example, even if you choose to help solve the problem of rising tuition, you do not necessarily need to be an economics major to offer solid suggestions. Your background in education, English, or computers can help you research and present a convincing and workable problem-solution report.

Conclusion. Restate the problem and your solution, summarize your key points, and the total time/cost involved with your solutions. Wrap up your proposal using a friendly but professional tone and provide contact information. Tell the readers how to get assistance or more information and what they need to do next.

Works Cited/References (depending on which method of citation you use). You may use the method of citation your field of study/discipline uses, MLA, APA, or CMS.

Appendices (dual entry observation logs, interview notes, surveys, etc.). This section should contain additional information you used to build your case in the body of your report. Graphs, charts, tables, etc., that show data taken from surveys should reference the survey itself contained in the appendix. You don't need to include all of the surveys you handed out, just include the original.

(Some of this material is adapted from Dr. Jim Dubinsky's Professional Writing Program at Virginia Tech Website.)