

**Service Learning Proposal Assignment**  
**Living Lab**  
**05.03.2013**

**Designed by Robert Leston, Department of English**

**Introduction**

What follows is the modification to the Proposal Assignment that I do in my Advanced Career Writing course. This assignment asks students to identify a real world problem, to explore solutions to that problem, and to write a proposal that tries to convince an actual organization or entity to implement their proposal. For instance, a student may know that listening to music through ear buds is dangerous. And so they write a proposal to the MTA to begin a public service ad campaign that asks music listeners to turn the music down in their ears.

**Summary of Original Assignment**

The problem must be solvable. That is, it needs to be a real problem that can be solved and that students can propose a solution to in approximately 10-12 pages. Thus, the scope must be appropriate. Students will not be able to solve the problem of illegal immigration in 11 pages because students will not even be able to identify the complexity of the problem in that number of pages.

In the past students have been required to identify a real person who has a real job at a real place that has the power to read their proposal and if she or he is persuaded, to take the necessary steps towards solving the problem. Thus, they must find an audience who would be open to receiving an 11-page report. If their problem is that dog walkers in NYC don't curb their dogs enough (that's a fine problem), they must think creatively and practically who their audience will be. A person walking her dog is typically not interested in an 11-page proposal. They need, rather, to identify an audience who has the power of implementing some kind of solution (perhaps a proposal for a public service advertisement directed to the appropriate city agency?)

**Service Learning Modification**

For this service learning component, students will take this project a step further by establishing contacts with NYC nonprofit agencies and tailoring their proposal to the needs of the agency. By taking into consideration the particular needs of the agency, they adjust their proposal so the agency will be able to implement their solutions to the problem they and their agency contacts have identified.

What follows are the steps to the assignment, SLOs, Assessment, and HIPs.

## **Beginning the Process**

### **Steps to the process:**

1. Establish Support Groups (SG's) of four. Support groups will meet in a Google hangout or face to face weekly (share your meeting times/places with the instructor and class). You are required to attend each SG meeting. Failure to do so will count as an absence. Each item below should be shared with the SG in weekly meetings.
2. Read and understand the entirety of the project.
3. Conduct preliminary research and make sure you have a workable project.
4. Find your audiences (a minimum of 3 is required) and make phone calls. You will need to set up meetings with three lead people at your organizations. Email your contacts the Needs Assessment Handout and ask them to prepare it for your meeting. You will have to submit this later, so make sure they fill it out. You may also share the NA with other org members. Feel free to share the entire project outline with them, my name, and my contact info. Make sure they understand that the work from them will be minimal and they will receive, in turn, your devotion and dedication.
5. Meet with all 3 of your audiences. (You can skip meeting with all three if, by this time, you can document that you have established one committed contact that you will be working with.)
  - Schedule meetings and show up.
  - Discuss your WorkPlan with each
  - Discuss your contact's Needs Assessment.
  - Write a reflection where you discuss each step of the process and you reflect on how to integrate the needs assessment gaps into your proposal. Share this with your support group and then with the class via the Open Lab.
  - Narrow down your choices to one after meeting with the various Orgs. Write thank you letters to the other Orgs. You MUST write and send thank you letters. Share with SG.
6. Revise your Workplan to specifically adjust and address the Needs Assessment from your contact.
7. Write the proposal, following the various stages. You will have three weeks to write this, but a segment will be due each week (continue to meet weekly to reflect and discuss your research and writing processes). Be sure to specify in the Executive Summary how your project meets the Needs Assessment. (There are a whole series of handouts and readings associated with writing the proposal.)
8. Share your proposal with your support group, conduct peer reviews (2 each), and revise your proposal.
9. Send an email to your Org contact and tell them you are finishing up the proposal and that you will be calling them in a week or so.
10. Write a reflection on the writing process and submit the proposal to instructor.

### **Proposal Follow Up**

1. Call your Org contact and tell them your proposal is finished. Set up a time to meet, giving them enough time to read your proposal (1 week).

- Email your proposal to your Org contact along with the Proposal Response Form.
  - Make sure that in your Cover Letter you specifically address their Needs Assessment as it showed up in the proposal.
2. Meet with SG to discuss prepping for the meeting. Make a list of items that you want to discuss in order to implement your proposal.
  3. Meet with your Org contact.
    - Come to the meeting with your agenda items and be prepared to discuss your project.
    - Your contact should assess your proposal by filling out the Proposal Response Form. Send it to me. (They can send it directly.)
    - Discuss the possibilities of implementing your proposal. Ask: what needs to be done in order for your Org to put this plan into effect?
  4. Discuss with SG and write a reflection on the process.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Engage in an in-depth, focused, and sustained program of study (Gen-ed Knowledge)
- Pursue disciplined, inquiry-based learning (Gen-ed Knowledge)
- Acquire tools for lifelong learning (Gen-ed Knowledge)
- Communicate in diverse settings and groups, using written (both reading and writing), oral (both speaking and listening), and visual means, and potentially in more than one language. (Gen-ed Communication)
- Derive meaning from experience, as well as gather information from observation.
- Understand and employ both quantitative and qualitative analysis to describe and solve problems, both independently and cooperatively. (Gen-ed Inquiry/Analysis)
- Employ scientific reasoning and logical thinking.
- Gather, Interpret, evaluate, and apply information discerningly from a variety of sources. (Gen-ed information literacy)
- Use creativity to solve problems. (Gen-ed Inquiry/Analysis)
- Resolve difficult issues creatively by employing multiple systems and tools. (Gen-ed Integrate Learning)
- Make meaningful and multiple connections among the liberal arts and between the liberal arts and the areas of study leading to a major or profession. (Gen-ed Integrate Learning)
- Demonstrate intellectual agility and the ability to manage change. (Gen-ed Professional/Personal Development)
- Work with teams, including those of diverse composition. Build consensus. Respect and use creativity. (Gen-ed Professional/Personal Development)
- Assume responsibility for social justice.(Gen-ed Ethics/Values)
- Apply knowledge and analyze social, political, economic, and historical issues.(Gen-ed Community/Civic engagement)

- Show ability to contribute actively by applying knowledge to the identification and analysis of societal and professional problems to enact solutions. (Gen-ed Community/Civic engagement)
- Discern multiple perspectives (Gen-ed Global/ Multicultural Orientation)
- Demonstrate proficiencies and capacities in dealing with a diverse society. (Gen-ed Global/ Multicultural Orientation)

### **High Impact Practices**

- Learning Communities—through weekly support groups.
- Writing Intensive
- Collaborative Assignments—Students participate in weekly support and collaborate with nonprofit agency
- Undergraduate Research—the proposal project is a research project.
- Diversity/Global Learning--Community Based project

### **Portfolio Documents for Submission**

1. Reflective letter on the entire experience.
2. Original Work plan (pre first meeting)
3. Org Needs Assessment
4. Revised Work plan according to Needs Assessment
5. Reflective Letter on the first meeting
6. Reflective letter on the writing of the proposal.
7. The Proposal and components
8. Completed Proposal Response Form
9. Reflective Letter on the second meeting with the Nonprofit.
10. Minutes from each Support Group Meeting.

**Methods of Assessment:** The proposal and Service associated service learning documents will be evaluated as a portfolio. Evaluation criteria will include completeness of understanding, sophistication of expression, and nuance to complexity. Students will also be evaluated (pass/fail) according to their participation in weekly support groups (as evidenced by meeting minutes) and according to feedback from the nonprofit agency (as evidenced by the Proposal Response Form).