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Australian College of Applied Psychology

Project Proposal

A project proposal is a document often used by community organisations to propose an intervention to a problem. Often for assignments, this will be a hypothetical or theoretical intervention related to your area of study. Project proposals summarise a problem or area of need, often based on a literature review, and then come up with interventions, programs or policy based on best practice from the literature. An important part of project proposals is showing what your aims are, how you plan to achieve them and then how you are going to evaluate the effectiveness of your project.

Structure

Like a report, project proposals use headings and subheadings which give structure to your writing by telling the reader what to expect. Always check your unit materials and marking criteria for required or suggested heading. Headings might include:

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction and overview (including the need/problem identified)
- Project Details
    - Aims/Goals
    - Outcomes (Measurable)
    - Timeline
    - Budget
    - Staffing and Personnel
- Stakeholders / Partners
- Evaluation
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendices

Content

The content of a project proposal builds a narrative to convince the reader there is a problem and that this project can help address it. Each section of the proposal has a specific function.

The introduction and overview explain the "why" of the project – why is this project necessary? This section may include background information, an explanation of the relevance or importance of the problem, and a discussion of previous related work by others (i.e. a literature review with credible sources).

The aims/goals section is the "what" of the project – what do you want to achieve? This section should state clear and specific objectives, the scope of the project, and the beneficiaries of the project.

The budget, timeline and staffing sections are the "how" of the project – how will this project be implemented? These sections should include a detailed timeline of activities/tasks, an estimate and breakdown of the funds/resources needed (stationary, catering, room hire, personnel (where relevant), and an overview of the project team and their roles.

The evaluation section should state the success criteria of the project and the methods and timing of monitoring and evaluation.

Style

Project proposals use headings and subheadings and may include graphs, charts, tables and appendices to make information more readable. Information may be presented in paragraphs, as well as in bullet points and numbered lists (although these should be used sparingly). Always check the instructions and marking criteria for your assignment as there may be specific requirements.

The language used in a project proposal follows the general rules of formal writing. It should be written in third person and should avoid language that overstates what the project can deliver.

Be mindful of verb tenses when writing each section. The introduction/overview section should be written in past and/or present tense: *The impacts of food insecurity on the local community include….. A recent study found that…..*

Other sections, such as the timeline, should be written in present/future tense: *Volunteers will be trained over two days in intensive workshops.*

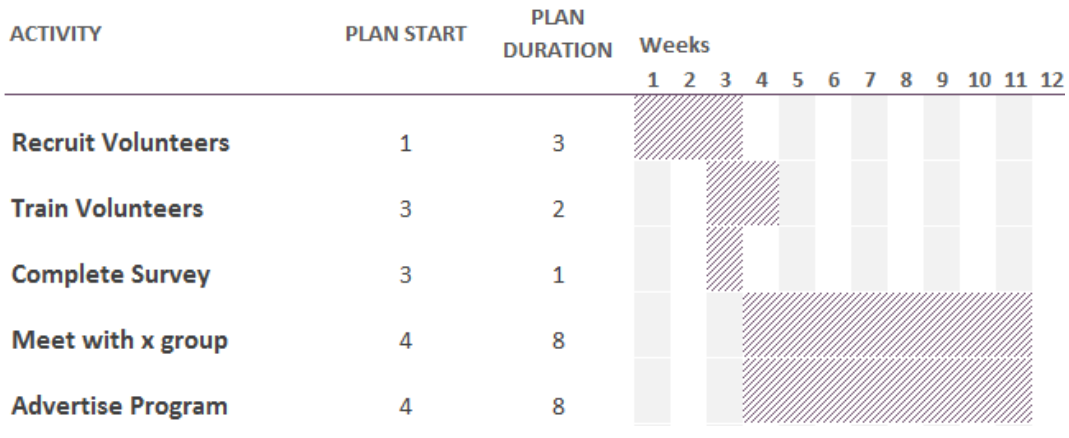
Tips

- Address feedback from any previous linked assignments
- Although your proposal may be hypothetical, make sure your hypothetical context is clear and realistic
- Be clear about what you will assess and how you will measure the success of your project

Checklist

- ☐ Includes details about the context of the organisation
- ☐ Summarises why the issues to be addressed are important
- ☐ Includes achievable aims/outcomes and how they will be measured
- ☐ Includes a realistic timeline and budget
- ☐ Uses clear headings and subheadings
- ☐ Interventions/content is based on evidence and literature
- ☐ Checked against the marking criteria to make sure all areas are covered
- ☐ Proofread and edited for clarity
- ☐ Formatted according to APA rules

Resources

- Using Tables and Figures in APA Style: https://sls.navitas-professional.edu.au/sites/default/files/resource/resource_version_pdf_1.pdf
- Levels of heading in an APA Style paper: http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2011/04/how-to-use-five-levels-of-heading-in-an-apa-style-paper.html
- Creating Gantt Charts: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_03.htm
- Coley, S. & Scheinberg, C. (2008). *Proposal writing: Effective grantsmanship* (3rd Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Always check your class space for resources and examples

Example Gantt chart