Overview

Your group represents an organization seeking funding from the fictional Abecedarian Group. Choose a problem connected to your majors or prospective professions. You'll propose a project in a letter of inquiry, gather evidence and discuss it in a group conference, write a formal report, and make your case in an oral presentation.

1 Write a letter of inquiry

As a group, write a letter of inquiry addressed to the Abecedarian Group's funding committee. Use the grant priorities and letter-of-inquiry instructions in Sections 3 and 4 of the request for proposals (RFP). In your letter, introduce your organization, identify the problem and who it affects, and explain how your proposed project fits those priorities.

Frame a research question your group can answer within the project timeline. Identify what you need to find out about the problem, the people affected, and the feasibility of your initial idea.

2 Gather evidence and meet as a group

Compile a body of evidence that addresses your research question. Use at least two primary research methods and three secondary sources, or at least six primary sources. Choose evidence that fits your question. Here are three ways to gather it.

- **Interviews.** Use a common set of open-ended questions with people affected by the problem or experts who work on it. Ask follow-up questions and compare recurring themes and disagreements across interviews.
- **Surveys.** Use closed-ended questions to compare responses and open-ended questions to learn why respondents answered as they did. Explain who responded and whose perspectives the survey might miss.
- **Structured observation.** Observe a site, process, or activity using the same criteria each time. Record what you see separately from what you infer.

For example, a group studying rural electric vehicle charging could map gaps in station coverage and interview drivers or site operators about barriers the map cannot show.

Bring the evidence your group has gathered to a conference with me. We'll discuss what your research shows, identify gaps you still need to fill, and plan how to use your evidence in the formal report.

3 Write the formal report

Write a group report of approximately 2,000 words using formal business report conventions and APA style. This report serves as your full proposal. Follow the content requirements in RFP Section 5, including its one-page project budget. Give the funder enough evidence to judge the need for your project and decide whether the proposed response is feasible.

- **Table of contents.** List the report headings and their page numbers.
- **Executive summary or abstract.** Give a reader who has limited time an overview of the problem, key findings, and recommendation.
- **Introduction.** Explain the background, problem or purpose, significance, scope, and organization of the report.
- **Findings and analysis.** Briefly explain how you gathered and analyzed your evidence. Use descriptive headings to organize findings, and show what the evidence supports and where it has limits.
- **Conclusions and recommendations.** Tie your recommendation to your findings. Include the RFP's required implementation plan, budget, and sustainability discussion. Identify estimates and explain the assumptions behind them.
- **References and appendices.** List secondary sources in APA style. Include survey questions, interview protocols, or other supporting research materials in appendices as needed.

Edit and proofread the report as a group. Check that the executive summary and recommendation reflect the evidence in the body and that a reader can find the information needed to make a decision.

4 Present your recommendation to the board

For this class simulation, every group gives an in-class presentation of about 10 minutes, with visual support. Your classmates and I will act as the Abecedarian Group's board and decide whether to fund your project. Explain what you found and how it led to your recommendation. Use a map, chart, or other visual if it helps the audience interpret the evidence. Be prepared to answer questions about your methods, who stands to benefit, and whether the project is feasible.