

## SIXTEEN


## “Here’s What I Recommend” Making a Proposal



**WILL YOU MARRY ME?** There is no clearer proposal than the one represented by this question. It proposes something that at least one person thinks ought to be done. Proposals are just that: recommendations that something be done, often to bring about some kind of change or to solve a problem. You’ll likely have occasion to write proposals for various purposes; and if you’re reading this chapter now, you’ve probably been assigned to write one for a composition class.

You might propose better financial aid options, a new way of disposing of cafeteria food, a possible solution to the childhood obesity crisis. Like a marriage proposal, each suggests change of some kind; unlike a marriage proposal, however, each of these cases addresses some kind of problem and calls for careful analysis of several possible courses of action. While it may be obvious to your beloved that you are the one, it’s less obvious how a more flexible borrowing plan can ease the burden of student debt, how composting can create a more sustainable food system, or how school lunch programs can help end childhood obesity. Proposals of this kind argue for clear solutions to specific problems, and as with any argument, they build a convincing case that what they recommend should be considered—and perhaps acted on.

This chapter provides guidelines for writing proposals that others will take seriously, ones that essentially say, “Here’s what I recommend—and why you should take my advice.”

 **REFLECT.** Proposals are part of daily life, but some are more compelling than others. Find a proposal that interests you, perhaps an op-ed on a social issue such as homelessness or inequality or a GoFundMe campaign to fund a cause. How does the proposal convince you (or fail to convince you) that it’s about something that matters and that the solution it recommends is worth your support?

### Across Academic Disciplines

If you’ve been assigned to write a research paper, chances are that your instructor has asked you to present a proposal before you begin researching and drafting the paper. Such proposals ensure that your topic and your plan of action are appropriate for the assignment. You’ll likely have occasion to write these and other kinds of proposals in many courses. For a *biology* course, you may be asked to propose an experiment you want to carry out, explaining why it’s important and hypothesizing what you expect to find. And in a *public policy* course, you might work with a group to analyze a particular policy—perhaps your city’s policy of providing incentives to encourage the use of solar power—and to propose changes in that policy. In each case, you’ll need to think about what’s expected, given the topic and the discipline.

### Across Media

Authors of proposals often use multiple media to present their recommendations. Crowdfunding sites like *Kickstarter* may use *video* to show their projects in action or to bring audiences face-to-face with their cause. Op-ed columnists writing for *print* newspapers rely on carefully crafted words to make their points, but online versions of the papers may include links to supporting materials. If you’re presenting a proposal in an *oral presentation*, slides can help illustrate what you’re recommending—and you may be asked to provide a print document to elaborate on what you propose.

### Across Cultures and Communities

Proposals of various sorts are common in the United States. At your school, for example, students might band together to propose more effective cam-

THINK  
BEYOND  
WORDS

**CROWDFUNDING SITES** are filled with proposals. Take a look at the proposal that three college students posted on Kickstarter seeking funding for Roominate, a build-it-yourself dollhouse that could be wired for electricity, which they hoped would get young girls interested in science and technology. Their proposal stated a problem (not enough women studying in STEM fields) and proposed a solution (the Roominate dollhouse kit). Go to [everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com](http://everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com) to see their proposal. As you'll see, it includes written words, video, and audio. Imagine these students were presenting this proposal in a meeting with potential investors; what information would they give in speech, on slides, in a video, in a handout?

pus policies to prevent sexual assault. In business, many companies encourage employees at all levels to share ideas for improving the company's products or services. And in many states voters can propose a ballot initiative to change existing laws.

Proposals are common in cultures and industries that thrive on open discussion and innovation, but not every community is receptive to input from just anyone. Many governments, organizations, and households around the world value the judgment of authorities and community leaders, and proposals from others may be seen as disrespectful. So be aware of the

situation you're writing in and the audience you are speaking to, not just to avoid offending someone but to determine how best to present your ideas.

## Across Genres

Proposals occur in many kinds of writing. **REVIEWS** sometimes end with proposals for how something could be improved, and many **REPORTS**, especially those on pressing social issues, conclude by proposing a course of action that will address the issue.

A fully developed proposal is based on an **ANALYSIS** of a problem or situation in great detail. It requires **REPORTING** trustworthy information, and often involves **NARRATING** one or more past events as part of that reporting.

**REFLECT.** Find two proposals that address the same issue, perhaps one students are currently debating on your campus. How does each proposal define the issue, what solutions does each of them offer, and what evidence does each provide to show that its solutions will work? Which of the two proposals do you find more persuasive, and why?

## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Although there will be variation depending on the topic, you'll find that nearly all proposals share the following characteristics:

- A precise description of the problem
- A clear and compelling solution to the problem
- Evidence that your solution will address the problem
- Acknowledgment of other possible solutions
- A statement of what your proposal will accomplish

## A Precise Description of the Problem

The goal of all proposals is to offer a solution for some kind of problem, so most of them begin by explicitly stating the problem and establishing that it is serious enough that it needs a solution. Some problems are obvious—that

John Maeda weaves elements of several genres into his proposal for improving STEM education on p. 987.

there's a water shortage in California, for instance, or few women majoring in engineering—and you won't have to say much to convince your audience that they matter. In other cases, though, you'll need to describe the problem in detail and provide data, examples, and other evidence to convince readers that it's serious enough to require a solution.

The title of a controversial article by journalist David Freedman identifies a problem and proposes a possible solution: "How Junk Food Can End Obesity." But in the following passage from that article, Freedman describes a specific problem in the wide debate about obesity that his proposal then responds to.

If the most-influential voices in our food culture today get their way, we will achieve a genuine food revolution. Too bad it would be one tailored to the dubious health fantasies of a small, elite minority. And too bad it would largely exclude the obese masses, who would continue to sicken and die early. Despite the best efforts of a small army of wholesome-food heroes, there is no reasonable scenario under which these foods could become cheap and plentiful enough to serve as the core diet for most of the obese population—even in the unlikely case that your typical junk-food eater would be willing and able to break lifelong habits to embrace kale and yellow beets. And many of the dishes glorified by the wholesome-food movement are, in any case, as caloric . . . as anything served in a Burger King.

Through its growing sway over health-conscious consumers and policy makers, the wholesome-food movement is impeding the progress of the one segment of the food world that is actually positioned to take effective, near-term steps to reverse the obesity trend: the processed-food industry. —DAVID FREEDMAN, "How Junk Food Can End Obesity"

Not only does Freedman say that the views of many well-known food writers are wrong (that there wouldn't be so much obesity if only we all ate more "wholesome food"); he argues that their "growing sway" over consumers and policy makers is actually "impeding the progress" of one group that might be able to do something to "reverse the obesity trend." In other words, he identifies them as part of the problem.

The authors of the *Kickstarter* proposal illustrated on page 342 to fund a toy meant to interest young girls in scientific and technical fields state the

problem directly, noting that they "noticed a BIG problem" in their engineering classes: "Where are all the girls?" They then elaborate on this problem in their proposal:

We know that girls are great at solving, deducing, and experimenting.

Yet . . .

- Only 15% of female first-year college students intend to major in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields
- Less than 11% of engineers are women

And . . .

- Toys for young girls are predominantly dolls and princesses

We think there is a connection.

We believe that early exposure to STEM through toys will inspire change.

—"Roominate: Make It Yours!"

The numbers demonstrate that a problem exists (only 15 percent of first-year women students intend to major in a STEM field, less than 11 percent of all engineers are women), and the fact that the toys young girls play with are mostly dolls and princesses shows one possible cause. Together these facts establish the problem that the proposal will then address.

In any proposal, it's important to identify the problem clearly and in a way that sets up the solution you'll be recommending. Defining the problem precisely can also help make your solution realistic: increasing the number of women engineers is a tall order, while creating a toy that might encourage young girls to become interested in engineering seems doable.

### A Clear and Compelling Solution to the Problem

Successful proposals offer a compelling solution to the problem at hand. That is, it isn't sufficient merely to have a good idea; in a proposal, you'll have to convince readers that your idea squarely addresses the problem as you've defined it.

You'll want to explain the solution succinctly but in enough detail to make a clear and confident case for it. See how Ras Baraka, the mayor of Newark, New Jersey, and a former teacher in that city's famously struggling

school system, calls in a publicly published proposal for the state to return control of the schools to local officials.

In 1995, the New Jersey State Department of Education took control of Newark's schools, disbanding the local board and appointing its own superintendent. I had just then become a teacher in Newark.

The express intent of the takeover was to intervene temporarily to improve the quality of our schools, increase the achievement of students and better manage the system's finances. . . .

Nearly 20 years later, it is clear that the state has failed on all counts. Local control must be returned to Newark's public schools immediately.

—RAS BARAKA, "A New Start for Newark Schools"

Faced with the problem of the state having "failed on all counts" to improve Newark's schools, Baraka raises a clear solution: to return those schools to local control. And in mentioning the state's long history of failure over the past twenty years, he makes a strong case that change is needed "immediately."

Now consider a proposal for a policy that would provide more affordable housing in Portland, Oregon, from an article by a member of that city's city council written for *Street Roots*, a weekly newspaper often sold by people who've been homeless:

We can't require developers to build affordable housing; state law prevents it. But we can encourage those who want to build here to be part of the solution. . . . The city currently provides "density bonuses" to developers for including certain public benefits in their projects—meaning they can build taller buildings or get more floor space than would normally be allowed in exchange for including features like eco-roofs or bicycle parking.

Now is the time to restructure our density bonus regulations to prioritize affordable housing development. . . .

Under a proposal that will go before the council on July 9, developers seeking a density bonus must either provide affordable housing within their development or pay a fee into a fund for the creation and preservation of affordable housing. This proposal . . . would require them to contribute to the creation of affordable housing in order to receive the maximum density that our zoning currently allows.

—DAN SALTZMAN, "Incentive for Developers  
Would Spur Affordable Housing"

The proposal Saltzman describes offers a solution that addresses the problem clearly: to build the largest permissible buildings (and hence make more money), developers will have to include affordable units in the development itself or contribute to a fund for creating affordable housing. Thus, in return for something a developer would want, the city gets something it wants: more affordable housing.

### Evidence That Your Solution Will Address the Problem

A proposal is convincing when the evidence it provides shows that the solution being proposed will, in fact, address the problem. The kind of evidence that will be convincing will vary depending on what it is you're proposing, and to whom. If you're pitching a new business venture to potential investors, your evidence would include numbers showing the projected returns on their investment. If you're proposing a new honor code at your school, your evidence would likely include testimonies and examples of how it would improve the learning environment. In his article on the Portland affordable housing proposal, Dan Saltzman provides data projecting what the proposal could accomplish:

This "affordable housing incentive zoning proposal" could result in as many as 60 additional units of affordable housing a year on top of those already being developed by the city, or it could mean an additional \$120 million to \$200 million in funds for affordable housing over the next 20 years.

This proposal alone will not solve our affordable-housing crisis but is a critical step to ensuring more affordable housing in our city.

By acknowledging that this proposal will not totally solve the problem of affordable housing but demonstrating its potential benefits—more affordable housing or funds to create such housing—Saltzman limits his solution to one that Portland will be able to address at the time, thus making a persuasive case that what he is suggesting is in fact feasible.

Another example comes from Appleton, Wisconsin, a city facing the challenge of redesigning its streets and transit systems to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. In an eighty-page proposal laying out a twenty-year plan to improve such access, the city's designers offer plenty of evidence to support their ideas: diagrams showing how specific roads will be reconfig-

ured to include bike lanes, charts of costs and funding sources, and a timetable for completing the project over the twenty-year construction period. Some of this evidence illustrates that the proposed changes will achieve the city's goals; others show that they will do so in a feasible manner.

### Acknowledgment of Other Possible Solutions

Part of crafting a persuasive proposal is making it clear that your solution is the best course of action—and hence better than other options. To do so, you need to account for other possible solutions and demonstrate the comparative advantages of the solution you're suggesting.

In his article proposing that junk food has the best potential to end obesity, David Freedman describes in great detail what those in the "wholesome food" camp suggest—and then points out why what they advocate is not so good after all. Here he visits his local Whole Foods, where he finds many "wholesome" items:

One that catches my eye . . . is Vegan Cheesy Salad Booster . . . whose package emphasizes the fact that it is enhanced with spirulina, chlorella, and sea vegetables. The label also proudly lets me know that the contents are raw—no processing!—and that they don't contain any genetically modified ingredients. What it does contain, though, is more than three times the fat content per ounce as the beef patty in a Big Mac . . . and four times the sodium.

—DAVID FREEDMAN, "How Junk Food Can End Obesity"

Later in his article, he does acknowledge that some of the arguments on behalf of "wholesome food" are accurate:

For the purpose of this article, let's simply stipulate that wholesome foods are environmentally superior. But let's also agree that when it comes to prioritizing among food-related public-policy goals, we are likely to save and improve many more lives by focusing on cutting obesity—through any available means—than by trying to convert all of industrialized agriculture into . . . small organic farms.

Notice that in each case Freedman first describes something others have proposed (or might propose)—and then proceeds to point out their shortcomings.

Other situations call for proposals that consider several possible solutions at the same time, as in the case of the one for creating bicycle and pedestrian access in Appleton, Wisconsin. Because there's no one-size-fits-all solution that will work for every street in the city, the authors of this proposal must suggest several possible configurations, including those shown on the following page in Figures 16.a and 16.b.

Bike lanes, which are meant only for cyclists, and shared lanes, which are shared by bicycles and cars, are two of the possible road configurations the authors of this proposal explore. They provide detailed information about each option, describing its purpose, listing its advantages and disadvantages, and providing a diagram. By presenting multiple design options, the authors address the full range of situations that exist. In situations that call for multiple solutions, considering all possibilities shows that you have fully considered the complexity of the problem.

### A Statement of What Your Proposal Will Accomplish

So what if readers decide to follow your proposal? What can they expect it to accomplish? The strongest proposals answer that question explicitly. Given that your goal is to persuade readers to agree with what you suggest and perhaps to take some kind of action, you need to help them understand the likely outcomes. Many proposals end by making clear what's to be gained, what outcomes large and small they might bring about.

Megan Hopkins, a former teacher with Teach For America (TFA), concludes her proposal calling for changes in that program by making clear how her suggestions—a longer commitment period, a full year of training, more incentives to continue teaching—will help TFA realize its mission.

While these proposals would require substantial redesign of the TFA model, the results are likely to be worth the investment. Teach For America has the potential to effect large-scale change in the field of education. It recruits highly qualified, motivated corps members who appreciate the importance of equal education opportunities, and many go on to devote their lives to this mission. However, these bright individuals are not as effective in the classroom as they could be, and their students do not perform as well as students in classrooms where teachers have more formal training. Corps members who are given a full year to learn effective instructional practices and to fully prepare to work within the

Fig. 16.a BIKE LANE

**Description/Purpose:** Marked space along length of roadway for exclusive use of cyclists. Bike lanes create separation between cyclists and automobiles.

**Advantages**

- Provides bicycle access on major through streets
- Clarifies lane use for motorists and cyclists
- Increases cyclists' comfort through visual separation

**Disadvantages**

- Space requirements may preclude other possible uses like parking or excess travel lane width

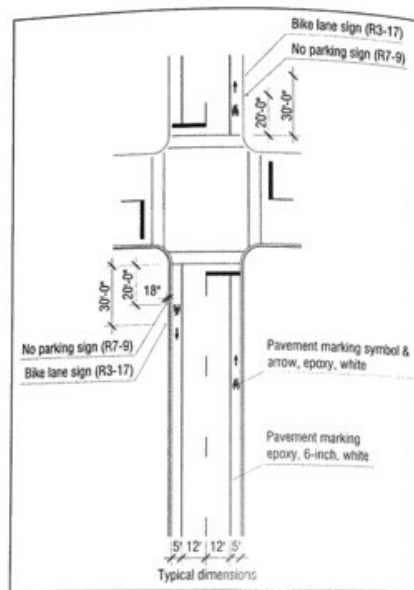


Fig. 16.b SHARED LANE

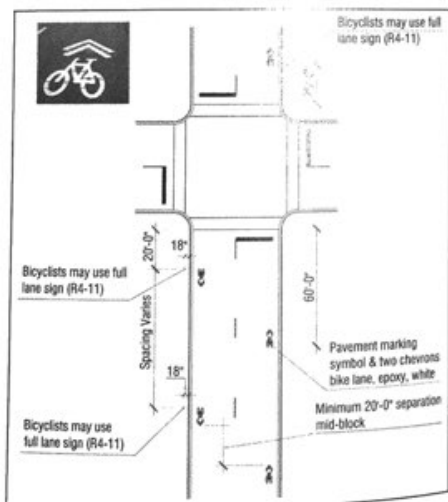
**Description/Purpose:** Shared roadway pavement markings, or "sharrows," are markings used to indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles. Sharrows identify to all road users where bicycles should operate on a street where a separated facility is not feasible.

**Advantages**

- Helps cyclists position themselves in lanes too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to travel side by side
- Provides pavement markings where bike lanes are not possible

**Disadvantages**

- Maintenance requirements
- Not as effective as a separated bicycle facility



—Wisconsin Department of Transportation, City of Appleton On-Street Bike Plan

context of their placement sites will be better prepared to enter their classrooms as skilled teachers. If TFA can prepare its recruits to be more successful in their classrooms from the beginning of their service, it may be able to achieve its vision more effectively, so that, as the TFA mission states, "One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education."

—MEGAN HOPKINS, "Training the Next Teachers for America"

Hopkins states one immediate result of the reforms she's suggesting, namely that corps members will be "better prepared to enter their classrooms." However, to highlight the true impact that her proposal would have, she starts and ends her summary of results by explaining how these adjustments would help TFA realize its "potential to effect large-scale change in the field of education" and thereby "achieve its vision" of providing every child in America with a good education—an inspiring outcome most audiences would happily stand behind, and one that shows persuasively why this proposal matters.

While many proposals are quite concrete, some deal with more abstract topics. Neil deGrasse Tyson's proposal on p. 1069 is as big as the universe itself.

## WRITING A PROPOSAL / An Annotated Example

RAS BARAKA is mayor of Newark, New Jersey, and a former teacher and administrator in the Newark school system. In this proposal, published in the *New York Times* in 2014, Baraka offers a first-step measure for solving the struggles of that city's schools. He introduces the problem by laying out the failures of state control—once thought to be a solution itself—before making a strong argument for an alternative.

### A New Start for Newark Schools

RAS BARAKA



**I**n 1995, the New Jersey State Department of Education took control of Newark's schools, disbanding the local board and appointing its own superintendent. I had just then become a teacher in Newark.

The express intent of the takeover was to intervene temporarily to improve the quality of our schools, increase the achievement of students and better manage the system's finances. Since the state was on the receiving end of a 1994 State Supreme Court ruling that the underfunding of public schools in urban districts was unconstitutional, the timing seemed suspicious, to say the least. It felt as if we were being annexed.

Nearly 20 years later, it is clear that the state has failed on all counts. Local control must be returned to Newark's public schools immediately.

Over the years, the court-ordered remedies for Newark's schools were eroded or ignored. A \$6 billion school construc-

→ A clear description of the problem.

→ An explicit statement of Baraka's proposed solution.

tion program never materialized. Instead, thanks to state control, Newark has become a laboratory for experiments in top-down reforms.

Successive state-mandated initiatives came and went. Occasionally, there were useful ideas that yielded results—for example, in lower grades when resources were focused on early childhood learning. But when there was no dramatic breakthrough, programs were withdrawn, and some new plan hatched. Over time, the cycle hurt teachers' morale and bred cynicism among parents.

During state control of Newark's schools, a lack of consultation and consent has been a persistent problem. Reports show at least one neighborhood school was shut down and the real estate sold off; others were changed to charter schools\* without a vote—a clear violation of state charter laws.

You might think that Mark Zuckerberg's \$100 million donation in 2010 to kick-start a foundation for Newark schools would have been a game changer. But little funding went directly to Newark's schools. Instead, the first \$1.3 million was wasted on a poorly conducted community outreach campaign. Then another \$100 million, including funds from Zuckerberg, went to a program for teacher merit pay.

Principals were given the power to re-interview teachers for their jobs and in some cases hire new teachers. But the rejected teachers joined a pool of floating staff members in the "rubber room"\*\*\* downtown, until reassigned to other schools or bought out. So even as Newark teachers worked without a contract, the state went on a hiring and cash-incentive spree.

There was not enough accountability or transparency about the spending. We only know this much thanks to demands filed by community groups under New Jersey's Open Public Records Act.

The state's maladministration of Newark's public schools con-

\* *charter schools*: privately run, tuition-free schools that are subject to fewer regulations than public schools but that receive less government funding. Supporters argue that they encourage innovation and competition while detractors say they undermine the mission of public education.

\*\* *rubber room*: a reassignment center where public school teachers accused of misconduct or incompetence are sent, with pay, until their cases are settled, often for a period of years.

← Evidence that state control—once thought to be a solution—has not succeeded in addressing the issues.

← Consideration of an alternative solution (more funding) and evidence that it has not been effective.



tinues to this day. When Superintendent Cami Anderson's "Renew Schools" reform plan ran into difficulties because of its lack of public consultation, foundation dollars went to a community-engagement program. Yet the latest iteration, the "One Newark" plan, has only plunged the system into more chaos.

Examples provide evidence of the problem.

Consider the reports I've received of Barringer High School (formerly Newark High School). Three weeks into the school year, students still did not have schedules. Students who had just arrived in this country and did not speak English sat for days in the school library without placement or instruction. Seniors were placed in classes they had already taken, missing the requirements they'd need to graduate. Even the school lunch system broke down, with students served bread and cheese in lieu of hot meals.

Things are no better for parents. Under One Newark's universal enrollment scheme, a secret algorithm determined what school was the "best fit" for each child. Often, this ended up placing each child in a family in a different school, none of which was the neighborhood school the parents chose. The superintendent even had to devise a new busing program service for the unpopular One Newark plan.

Links to sources providing evidence of the state's mismanagement.

→ To cap it all, last year the school system operated with a deficit of \$57 million.

Baraka declares state control to be the problem that needs a solution.

→ Gov. Chris Christie likes to say that he is "the decider" of what happens in Newark's public schools. What that means is that he and his appointees now own the failure of the state's policies. Advocates of both traditional and charter schools, parent groups, ministers, student organizations and local elected officials have called on New Jersey to relinquish its hold over our schools.

A discussion of the outcomes readers can expect if control is returned to local officials.

→ The real issues that reform should address are ensuring that every 3- or 4-year-old child is enrolled in a structured learning environment, and that all our teachers get staff development and training. We must be more effective at sharing best practices and keeping our class sizes manageable. If necessary, we should put more than one teacher in the classroom, especially for students from kindergarten to third grade.

We also need to fix additional problems like a historically segregated curriculum, which offers stimulating choices in wealthy suburbs but only the most basic courses to our inner-city chil-


dren. And we must break the cycle of low expectations that some educators have of the children they teach, merely prescribing repeat classes if students don't pass.

The first step in a transition to local control of Newark's schools is a short-term transfer of authority to the mayor. I would quickly appoint a new superintendent. Once basic functions were restored to the district, we would move as soon as possible to return control to an elected school board with full powers.

A statement of what he will do if his proposal is enacted.

It is clear that we cannot rely on the good faith of the state to respond expeditiously. Federal intervention appears our only recourse. I have written to the Justice Department's Office of Civil Rights in support of the lawsuits that parents, students, advocates and educators in our city have brought, requesting that the federal government intercede. The right of Newark's citizens to equitable, high-quality public education demands the return of local, democratic control.

A restatement of why the change he proposes matters to his audience of "Newark's citizens."

 REFLECT. Find a proposal in a campus publication or local newspaper. Read it first to see if you find it persuasive. If not, why not? Then annotate it as we've done with Baraka's proposal to see if it includes all the features listed on p. 343. If not, would it be improved by adding any of the features it's lacking, or by elaborating on any it doesn't demonstrate well?

## PROJECT PROPOSALS

You may be asked to write a project proposal to explain your plans for a large or long-term assignment: what you intend to do, how you'll go about doing it, and why the project is important. Like any proposal, a project proposal makes an argument, demonstrating that the project is worth doing and feasible given the time and resources you have available. Unless the assignment names other requirements, your proposal should cover the following ground:

## An Indication of Your Topic and Focus

Explain what your topic is and give any necessary background information. In some cases, you might be required to do some background research and to include a **LITERATURE REVIEW** summarizing what you find, including any issues or controversies you want to investigate. Say what your research focus will be, with the **RESEARCH QUESTION** you plan to pursue and a tentative **THESIS**. Finally, say why the topic matters—so what, and who cares?

## An Explanation of Why You're Interested in the Topic

Briefly explain what you already know about your topic and why you've chosen to pursue this line of inquiry. You might describe any coursework, reading, or experience that contributes to your knowledge and interest. Also note what you don't yet know but intend to find out by doing this project.

## A Plan

Explain how you will investigate your research question. What types of sources will you need and what will your **RESEARCH METHODS** be? If you plan to do **FIELD RESEARCH**, how will you conduct your study? And what **GENRE** and **MEDIUM** will you use to present your findings? What steps will be required to bring it all together into the final document?

## A Schedule

Break your project into tasks and make a schedule, taking into account all the research, reading, and writing you'll need to do. Include any specific tasks your instructor requires, such as handing in a draft or an **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**. Be sure also to leave yourself time to get feedback and revise.

## PROJECT PROPOSAL / An Annotated Example

DAVID PASINI, an engineering major at The Ohio State University, wrote this project proposal for a first-year writing course on the theme of sports in contemporary American society.

## The Economic Impact of Investing Public Funds in Sports Franchises

DAVID PASINI



SINCE THE 1980s, local governments have provided increased funding and subsidies for professional sports franchises. Taxpayer money has gone toward facilities like stadiums and arenas, and many cities have offered tax exemptions and other financial incentives to keep a team in town that has threatened to relocate. Proponents of public funding for privately owned sports franchises argue that cities gain more from the arrangement—namely jobs, status, and tourist dollars—than they lose. Opponents argue that using public funds for these purposes results in long-term financial drains on local governments and point out that many communities have been abandoned by teams even after providing substantial benefits, leaving the city or state holding the proverbial debt-heavy bag.

Writing in the *New York Times*, Ken Belson gives an example of one such government-funded project: "The old Giants Stadium, demolished to make way for New Meadowlands Stadium, still carries about \$110 million in debt, or nearly \$13 for every New Jersey resident, even though it is now a parking lot" (Belson). The image

The introduction announces the topic and summarizes a controversy the project will focus on.



Figure 1. Left to right: the governor of New Jersey, William T. Cahill; the owner of the Giants, Wellington Mara; and chairman of the New Jersey sports authority, Sonny Werblin, admire a drawing of Giants Stadium. Photo by Neal Boenzi. (Belson A1)

included here shows the governor of New Jersey looking over a drawing of the Giants Stadium, which was completed in 1976 and destroyed in 2010 (fig. 1).

Given the high stakes involved—and particularly the use of taxpayer dollars—it seems important, then, to ask what these sports franchises contribute (or do not contribute) to their cities and wider metropolitan areas. Do these teams “generate positive net economic benefits for their cities,” or do they “absorb scarce government funds” that would be better spent on programs that have “higher social or economic payoff” (Noll and Zimbalist 55)? My research project will investigate these questions.

The question of public funding for sports is important to any resident of a community that has a professional sports franchise or is trying to lure one, as well as to any citizen, sports fan or not, who is interested in the economic and political issues surrounding this topic. I am in the latter group, a nonfan who is simply interested in how public monies are being used to support sports, and whose knowledge about the issues is primarily in the economic domain. At this point in the research process, I am neither a pro-

An explicit statement of his research questions.

A statement of why this topic matters, and to whom.

Pasini explains his interest in the topic and his current knowledge of it.

ponent nor an opponent of investing in sports, but I think that it's important to consider just how—and how much—professional sports contribute to the economic well-being of the government that funds them. How much of the money that teams generate supports local businesses, school districts, or other important entities that benefit all citizens? How much of it stays in the owners' pockets? Do the franchises “give back” to their communities in any other tangible or intangible ways? The franchises themselves should consider these questions, since the communities that helped to provide them with the amenities they require to be successful sports teams have a right to expect something in return.

To learn more about investment in sports teams and the teams' economic impact, I will consult business and sports management journals and appropriate news sources, both print and digital. I will also interview stakeholders on both sides of the debate as well as experts on this topic. In my research, I will consider the many factors that must be taken into account, such as the benefits of tourism and the costs of “creating extra demand on local services” (Crompton 23). As a result of my research, I hope to offer insight on whether public funds are in fact put to good use when they are invested in major sports franchises.

#### Proposed Schedule

Do library and internet research	April 6–20
Submit annotated bibliography	April 20
Schedule and conduct interviews	April 21–25
Turn in first draft	May 10
Turn in second draft	May 18
Turn in final draft	May 25

#### Preliminary Works Consulted

- Belson, Ken. “As Stadiums Vanish, Their Debt Lives On.” *The New York Times*, 8 Sept. 2010, p. A1.
- Crompton, John L. “Economic Impact Analysis of Sports Facilities and Events: Eleven Sources of Misapplication.” *Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1995, pp. 14–35.

More focused research questions, leading to a tentative thesis statement.


A research plan, including kinds of sources he'll consult and field research he plans to conduct.

The conclusion restates why this research matters.

A schedule that allows time for research, writing, and revising—and lists assignment deadlines.

Pasini uses MLA style for a preliminary list of works consulted.

- Noll, Roger G., and Andrew Zimbalist, editors. *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums*. Brookings Institution, 1997.
- Robertson, Robby. "The Economic Impact of Sports Facilities." *The Sport Digest*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2008, www.thesportdigest.com/archive/article/economic-impact-sports-facilities. Accessed 1 Apr. 2011.

 **REFLECT.** *If you're reading about project proposals, you've likely been assigned to write one. Analyze what your assignment is asking for, comparing it with the features described on p. 343. What does this exercise help you appreciate about how such a proposal works? What you can learn from doing one?*

## WRITING A PROPOSAL / A Roadmap

Think of a problem you can help solve

If you get to select the topic, begin by identifying an issue you know something about. You'll probably find it easiest—and most rewarding—to tackle an issue on which you can have some real impact. Try choosing a topic you have some knowledge and authority to speak on, and one that is narrowly focused or local enough so that your suggestions may be heard. You can't expect to solve all the problems of America's food system, but you may well be able to propose a more healthy and sustainable dining option on campus.

If you've been assigned a topic, consider ways that you can make it interesting to you and to your readers. This may mean finding an interesting angle on the topic you've been assigned, or, if the assignment is framed in general terms, finding a specific aspect that you can address with a specific solution.

### Consider your rhetorical situation

Once you have a topic, thinking about your rhetorical situation will help you focus on how to proceed.

Think about **YOUR AUDIENCE**. Who do you want your proposal to reach, and why? If you're proposing changes to a campus policy, you would do so differently if you're writing to school administrators in charge of that policy than if you're writing a piece for the student newspaper. Here are some things to consider:

- What do you know about your audience? In what ways are they like or unlike you—and one another?
- What will they likely know about your topic? What background information will you have to provide?
- What interest or stake are they likely to have in the situation you're addressing? Will you need to convince them that the problem matters—and if you do, how can you do so?
- What sorts of evidence will they find most convincing?
- How likely are they to agree with what you propose?

Be clear about your **PURPOSE**. Odds are that you'll have multiple purposes—everything from getting a good grade to demonstrating your understanding of a situation to making your community a better place for everyone. The more you understand your own motivations, the clearer you can be with your audience about what is at stake.

Be aware of your **STANCE**. What is your attitude about your topic, and how do you want to come across to your audience? How can your choice of words help convey that stance? When David Freedman refers to those he disagrees with as the "let-them-eat-kale" crowd, his dismissive language tells us as much about him as it does about those he is criticizing.

Examine the larger **CONTEXT**. What do you know about the problem you're tackling? What might you need to learn? How have others addressed the problem? What solutions have they proposed and how well have those solutions worked?

Think about **MEDIA**. If the choice is yours, what medium will best reach your audience and suit your purpose? If you're assigned to use a particular medium, how can you use it best? If, for example, you're giving an oral presentation, *PowerPoint* slides can help your audience follow the main points of your proposal, especially if you're presenting quantitative data.

Think about **DESIGN**. If you have the option of designing your proposal, think about what it needs. If it's lengthy or complex, should you use headings? Is there anything in your proposal that would be hard to follow in a paragraph—and easier to read in a chart or a graph?

### Study the situation

Whatever the problem, you have to understand it in all its complexity and think about the many ways different parties will likely understand it.

Begin by thinking about what you know about the situation. What interests you about the issue, and why do you care? What more do you want or need to find out about it? To answer these questions, try **BRAINSTORMING** or other activities for **GENERATING IDEAS**.

Be sure you understand the problem. To do so, you'll surely need to do some **RESEARCH**. What **CAUSED** this problem, and what are its **EFFECTS**?

How serious is it? Who cares about it? What's been said about it? What efforts have already been made to address the problem, and how have they succeeded? How have similar problems been handled, and what insights can you gain from studying them?

Consider how you can best present the problem for your **AUDIENCE**. If they're aware of the problem, how likely are they to care about it? Does it affect them? If they're not aware of it, how can you make them aware? What kind of evidence can you provide to show them it exists and make them recognize the potential consequences? Why do you think the issue matters, and how can you persuade others to take it seriously?

For example, if you were writing about the need for a program to raise awareness of the effects of hate speech on campus and needed to persuade readers who have no reason themselves to worry about that, you might open with an anecdote about hateful things that have been said about others to make them aware of the issue. And you could then appeal to their goodwill and concern for fellow students to understand why it's a problem that needs to be solved.

### Determine a course of action

Once you've got a thorough understanding of the problem and what others likely think about it, you can start thinking about possible solutions.

Come up with some possible solutions. Start by making a list of options. Which ones seem most feasible and most likely to solve the problem? Is there one that seems like the best approach? Why? Will it solve the problem entirely, or just part of it?

If, for example, you're proposing a program to raise awareness of the effects of hate speech on campus, what are the options? You could suggest an open forum, or a teach-in. Maybe you could get a prominent activist to come speak, or someone from the ACLU.

Decide on the best solution. Determine which of the options would be feasible and which one would work the best. Then think about how far it would go toward actually solving the problem. Hate speech is not a problem easily solved, so this might well be a case when you can realistically only raise awareness of the problem with the ultimate goal of solving it.

These are some of the questions you'll need to ask and answer as you determine the best solution to propose.

### Organize and start writing

Once you've clearly defined the problem, figured out a viable solution, and identified evidence to support your proposal, it's time to organize your materials and start drafting.

Come up with a tentative **THESIS** that identifies the problem and proposes a solution. Use this statement to guide you as you write.

Provide **EVIDENCE** showing that the problem does in fact exist and is serious enough to demand a solution—and that your proposed solution is feasible and the best among various options.

Acknowledge other possible solutions. Decide how and at what point in your proposal you will address other options. You might start with them and explain their shortcomings one by one, as David Freedman does in "How Junk Food Can End Obesity." Or you could raise them after presenting your own solution, comparing your solution with the others as a way of showing that yours is the most feasible or the most likely to solve the problem.

Draft an **OPENING**. Identify and describe the problem, making clear why the issue matters—and why the problem needs a solution.

Draft a **CONCLUSION**. Reiterate the nature of the problem and the solution you're proposing. Summarize the benefits your proposal offers. Most of all: remind readers of why the issue matters, why they should care—and why they should take your proposal seriously (and perhaps take action).


### Look critically at your draft, get response—and revise

Once you have a complete draft, read it over carefully, focusing on how you define the problem and support the solution you propose—and the way you appeal to your audience. If possible, ask others—a writing center tutor or classmate—to read it over as well. Here are some questions that can help you or others read over the draft with a critical eye:

- **How does the proposal OPEN?** Will it capture readers' interest? Does it make clear what problem will be addressed and give some sense of why it matters? How else might it begin? Does the title tell readers what the proposal is about, and will it make them want to know more?

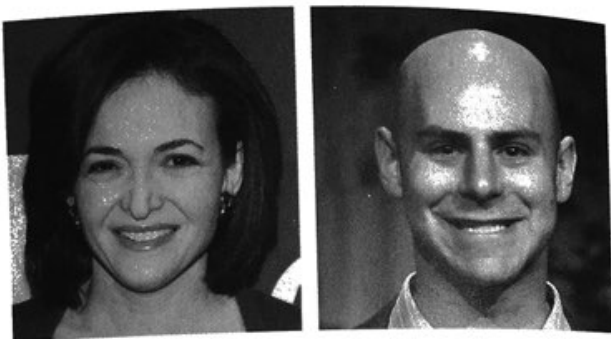
- **Is the problem DESCRIBED in enough detail?** Will any readers need more information to understand that it's a problem that matters? Have you said anything about its **CAUSES** and consequences—and if not, do you need to?
- **Is the proposed solution explicit and compelling?** Have you provided enough **EVIDENCE** to show that it's feasible and will address the problem—and that it's better than other possible solutions? Is there an explicit statement of what it will accomplish?
- **Have other possible solutions been acknowledged fairly**—and how well have you responded to them? Are there any other solutions that need to be considered?
- **Is the proposal easy to follow?** If not, try adding **TRANSITIONS** or headings.
- **How have you established your AUTHORITY to write on this topic?** Does the information seem trustworthy? How do you come across as an author—passionate? serious? sarcastic?—and how does this tone affect the way the proposal comes across to readers?
- **How would you characterize the STYLE?** Is it appropriate for your intended audience? Consider the choice of words, the level of formality, and so on.
- **How about DESIGN?** Are there any illustrations—and if so, what do they contribute to the proposal? If not, is there any information that would be easier to show with a photo or in a chart? What about the font: is it appropriate for a proposal of this kind? Is the design appropriate for the **MEDIUM**?
- **How does the proposal CONCLUDE?** Will it inspire the change or action you're calling for? How else might it conclude?

Revise your draft in response to any feedback you receive and your own analysis.

 **REFLECT.** Once you've completed your proposal, let it settle for a while and take time to reflect. How well did you define the problem, and how thoroughly did you support your proposed solution? How fairly did you acknowledge and respond to other possible solutions? How persuasively have you demonstrated the feasibility of your solution? Research shows that such reflections help "lock in" what you learn for future use.

Speaking While Female

SHERYL SANDBERG AND ADAM GRANT



**Y**EARS AGO, while producing the hit TV series *The Shield*, Glen Mazzara noticed that two young female writers were quiet during story meetings. He pulled them aside and encouraged them to speak up more.

Watch what happens when we do, they replied.

Almost every time they started to speak, they were interrupted or shot down before finishing their pitch. When one had a good idea, a male writer would jump in and run with it before she could complete her thought.

Sadly, their experience is not unusual.

We've both seen it happen again and again. When a woman speaks in a professional setting, she walks a tightrope. Either she's barely heard or she's judged as too aggressive. When a man says virtually the same thing, heads nod in appreciation for his fine idea. As a result, women often decide that saying less is more.

Some new studies support our observations. A study by a Yale psycholo-

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SHERYL SANDBERG serves as the Chief Operating Officer of *Facebook*; she is also founder of *LeanIn.org*, inspired by her bestselling book of the same name. ADAM GRANT teaches at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania; he is the author of *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success* (2013). This essay was the second in a series of four on women in the workplace that Sandberg and Grant wrote for the *New York Times* in 2015. Go to everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com to access the links (underscored here) as you read.

gist, Victoria L. Brescoll, found that male senators with more power (as measured by tenure, leadership positions and track record of legislation passed) spoke more on the Senate floor than their junior colleagues. But for female senators, power was not linked to significantly more speaking time.

Suspecting that powerful women stayed quiet because they feared a backlash, Professor Brescoll looked deeper. She asked professional men and women to evaluate the competence of chief executives who voiced their opinions more or less frequently. Male executives who spoke more often than their peers were rewarded with 10 percent higher ratings of competence. When female executives spoke more than their peers, both men and women punished them with 14 percent lower ratings. As this and other research shows, women who worry that talking "too much" will cause them to be disliked are not paranoid; they are often right.

One of us, Adam, was dismayed to find similar patterns when studying a health care company and advising an international bank. When male employees contributed ideas that brought in new revenue, they got significantly higher performance evaluations. But female employees who spoke up with equally valuable ideas did not improve their managers' perception of their performance. Also, the more his men spoke up, the more helpful their managers believed them to be. But when women spoke up more, there was no increase in their perceived helpfulness.

This speaking-up double bind harms organizations by depriving them of valuable ideas. A University of Texas researcher, Ethan Burriss, conducted an experiment in which he asked teams to make strategic decisions for a bookstore. He randomly informed one member that the bookstore's inventory system was flawed and gave that person data about a better approach. In subsequent analyses, he found that when women challenged the old system and suggested a new one, team leaders viewed them as less loyal and were less likely to act on their suggestions. Even when all team members were informed that one member possessed unique information that would benefit the group, suggestions from women with inside knowledge were discounted.

Obviously, businesses need to find ways to interrupt this gender bias. Just as orchestras that use blind auditions increase the number of women who are selected, organizations can increase women's contributions by adopting practices that focus less on the speaker and more on the idea. For example, in innovation tournaments, employees submit suggestions and solutions to problems anonymously. Experts evaluate the proposals, give feedback to all participants and then implement the best plans.



Since most work cannot be done anonymously, leaders must also take steps to encourage women to speak and be heard. At *The Shield*, Mr. Mazara, the show runner, found a clever way to change the dynamics that were holding those two female employees back. He announced to the writers that he was instituting a no-interruption rule while anyone—male or female—was pitching. It worked, and he later observed that it made the entire team more effective.

The long-term solution to the double bind of speaking while female is to increase the number of women in leadership roles. (As we noted in our previous article, research shows that when it comes to leadership skills, although men are more confident, women are more competent.) As more women enter the upper echelons of organizations, people become more accustomed to women's contributing and leading. Professor Burriss and his colleagues studied a credit union where women made up 74 percent of supervisors and 84 percent of front-line employees. Sure enough, when women spoke up there, they were more likely to be heard than men. When President Obama held his last news conference of 2014, he called on eight reporters—all women. It made headlines worldwide. Had a politician given only men a chance to ask questions, it would not have been news; it would have been a regular day.

As 2015 starts, we wonder what would happen if we all held Obama-style meetings, offering women the floor whenever possible. Doing this for even a day or two might be a powerful bias interrupter, demonstrating to our teams and colleagues that speaking while female is still quite difficult. We're going to try it to see what we learn. We hope you will, too—and then share your experiences with us all on Facebook or in the comments section.

## Thinking about the Text

1. What specific problem do Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant seek to solve in this essay? What sorts of **EVIDENCE** do they offer to show that the problem exists?
2. What specific solutions do they suggest? Consider both the short- and long-term solutions that they raise. How practical or compelling do you find these solutions?
3. The problem Sandberg and Grant describe extends beyond women's frustrations in their workplaces. What is the ultimate significance of the problem, and how do these authors make it clear? In other words, what meaningful outcomes do they argue their proposal can ultimately bring about?
4. How did the **AUDIENCE** for this piece, the readers of a major U.S. newspaper, likely affect this essay? How might it have been different had it been written for an audience of male executives? of female employees?
5. Sandberg and Grant tackle a persistent problem of some magnitude, one that is clearly important to them. Choose a problem that matters to you and offer a **PROPOSAL** that addresses some aspect of that problem. You might start by observing issues you see around you, but you'll likely find that you need to do some research to precisely define the problem and propose a solution. Use the genre features on p. 343 as a guide as you construct your proposal.