
Overview: Your work for the Needs Assessment Report is the first step in a series of three interrelated projects. For this, the first project in the series, you will:

1. Identify a “client” (a group, organization, or workplace) with document needs.
2. Research the client’s document needs.
3. Write an informal report that presents your assessment of the client’s document needs.

After you finish this needs assessment, you will use your report as the basis to write and present a proposal. For the final project in this series, you will collaborate with classmates to implement your team’s document plan.

Goals: The main goals for this project are for you to learn more about how to (1) conduct research, (2) analyze the needs and expectations of audiences, and (3) write an informal report.

Audience and Purpose: Your immediate audience is me--your project supervisor and evaluator. The purpose of your report is to share two important findings: why the client needs this document, and how the document would be suitable for a large-scale collaborative project for this class. Later, in the event that you work with classmates to develop the needed documents for the client, you are likely to share information from this report with the client in order to ensure that you have an accurate and insightful understanding of the client’s needs. A version of your report may also be posted to your Web portfolio for this course.

Procedures and Requirements:

1. **Identify a client with document needs.** Think in terms of the organizations with which you are involved: your workplace, campus clubs, your church, community organizations, or opportunities through your roommates or friends. It may be especially helpful for you to find a client who could benefit from your disciplinary expertise. The client must have needs for new or substantially revised documents that involve instructions or description; furthermore, the desired documents should be long enough and complex enough to merit the attention of a writing team. The need may be articulated (e.g., "We really need a manual for ____") or relatively unarticulated (e.g., the client is not aware of the specific need, but your knowledge of the situation suggests that documentation would be highly beneficial).

2. **Research the client's document needs.** To understand the client's needs, you must investigate them. Don't take the client's assessment at face value, even if the client is very specific (e.g., "We really need a manual for ____").
   - Interview the client(s).
   - Examine any existing documents related to the client’s needs.
   - Examine any public information on the client, including websites, Facebook, brochures, etc.
   - Using these data sources, identify possible users at the client site and research their needs in relation to the documents.

3. **Write an informal report that presents your assessment.**
   - Present an overview of the documentation problem. Briefly, what situation or problem makes it clear to you and the client that there is a need for new or revised documentation?
   - Explain, concisely, your research methods—what you did to ascertain the client’s document needs.
   - Present details about your specific findings about the particulars of your client’s document needs, based on the data you gathered. (This section is the heart of your informal report.) What problems would this new/revised documentation solve, and how? What is the client’s level of interest in having you and your team write this documentation? Who would be responsible to approve the documentation?
   - Make recommendations about the suitability of this project for collaborative work in ENG 305.

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1 These project instructions adapt and extend from similar assignments given by Dr. Kathryn Northcut (University of Missouri-Rolla) and Dr. Clay Spinuzzi (University of Texas at Austin).
Rhetorical notes: Your report should be detailed enough that it makes sense to write in prose paragraphs rather than relying simply on bulleted or numbered lists. (For this project, the typical report length is 1.5 single-spaced pages.) Apply principles for content organization and page design, and use visuals to the extent that they enhance your writing. Document your sources in accordance with the style guide (e.g., APA, CMS, CSE, or MLA) that is prevalent in your client's field. The due date for the final draft is Tuesday, February 28.

About workshop drafts: Meeting the due dates for the smaller assignments and the workshop drafts is important for you and for your classmates who learn with you. Each time that you miss one of these deadlines or come unprepared for a workshop will result in a full-grade reduction from the score for the final draft of your project.

Grading: This report is worth 12% of your final grade. I will grade your project holistically, meaning I will take all of the components into account. A quality project will:

- □ Report with thoroughness, accuracy, and insight about the assessed document needs of a client.
- □ Show that you have conducted careful research into the needs and expectations of the client and the intended users of the new or revised documents.
- □ Make broad recommendations for meeting the client’s need for new or revised documents.
- □ Demonstrate that you have taken care to study the rhetorical audience, purpose, situation, and assignment instructions; to understand your role in relationship to the client; and to research the written genre conventions that are expected for your documents. These will be shown through effective, appropriate:
  - o ideas, arguments, and evidence;
  - o rhetorical appeals;
  - o structure, arrangement, and organization;
  - o style;
  - o design and format;
  - o grammar, usage, and mechanics; and
  - o documentation for any sources whose ideas, words, visuals you use in your report.
- □ Demonstrate an ethical approach to the report writing process and product.
- □ Exhibit a developed and accurate understanding of the principles addressed in class, in the assigned readings and activities, and in my responses to your work.