Researched Feasibility Report Assignment

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# Scenario

Adapted from Paul V. Anderson's *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach, 7th ed.*

For this project, you’ll write a feasibility report designed to help an organization (real or imaginary) solve a problem or achieve a goal. You’ll write the report as a response to a request (again, real or imaginary) from the organization you’re addressing.

A real situation is one that you have actually encountered. It might involve your employer, your major department, or a service group to which you belong, to name just a few of the possibilities. For example, a student might study the feasibility of using a computer database to catalog the art department's slide library at the request of the chair of the Art Department.

An imaginary situation is one that you create to simulate a type of situation that you may encounter as you begin your career. You pretend that you have begun working for an employer who has asked you to use your specialized training to solve a problem or answer a question that faces the organization. You may imagine that you are a regular employee or that you are a special consultant. For example, a student might write about the feasibility of upgrading the monitoring and communication system in a Psychology Clinic.

# Reading

* + - * All textbook chapters assigned to-date, especially Ch.17, Formal Reports
      * Supplementary Reading--Writing Reader-Centered Feasibility Reports

NOTE: Our textbook discusses feasibility reports as informal reports. This assignment, however, is a formal, researched report, so reading this file is essential to doing well on this assignment.

* + - * *Course Handbook:*
      * Achieving a Technical Writing Style
      * Using Your Field’s Citation Style
      * Style and Mechanics Reviews

# Three ways to organize a feasibility report

The standard sections of the body of a feasibility report are described in detail under Organization A, but apply to the other organizations as well.

Organization A—One section for each of the seven feasibility-report elements

Refer to the outline in the Supplementary Reading file, p. 615.

Introduction: Address the question, "Why is it important to consider these alternatives?" Identify the problem that your feasibility report will help your reader solve, or the goal that it will help your reader achieve. The introduction should also preview the main conclusions.

Overview of alternatives: List and briefly describe three to five alternatives. *Offering only one or two alternatives is not enough.* In order to understand your detailed evaluation of the alternatives, your reader must first understand what the alternatives are. Include a brief description of each alternative.

Evaluative criteria: Evaluative criteria are the standards that you apply in a feasibility study to evaluate the alternative courses of action you’re considering. Four evaluative criteria are typically used in a feasibility study:

* Does this course of action do what is needed or wanted? How?
* Is this course of action implementable? How?
* Is this course of action affordable? Why?
* Is this course of action desirable? Why?

Research method: Explain how you obtained your facts. This section helps your reader understand the reliability of your facts.

Evaluation: Address the question, "How well do the alternatives meet the evaluative criteria?" Organize the evaluation section around the criteria, and put the most important points first.

Conclusions: Address the question, "What overall conclusions can be drawn about the alternatives?" This section is an overall assessment of the feasibility of the alternative courses of action you have studied and are documenting in your report.

Recommendations: Address the question, "What should we (if an internal report) or you (if the report is written for a client) do?" Not all feasibility reports provide conclusive information, however. If a study produces limited information, than the recommendation should include the following:

* Point out the limitations.
* Let the reader know what else needs to be learned before making a decision and proceeding.

Organization B—Alternatives discussed with respect to each of the reader’s decision points

Refer to the outline in the Supplementary Reading file, p. 617.

When your topic and reader will benefit from a discussion of the alternatives with respect to each of the reader’s decision points, use this organization.

The sample outline on p. 617 shows the major decision points how to organize a new infrastructure, followed by how to install a system, followed by how to train employees, followed by how to manage the overall change.

Organization C—Research method and evaluation discussed with respect to each evaluative criterion

Refer to the outline in the Supplementary Reading file, p. 618.

When one or two of your evaluative criteria are of utmost importance to the decision to be made, use this organization.

The sample outline on p. 618 addresses the research method and evaluation of the first criterion, followed by the research method and evaluation of the second criterion, and so on.

# Instructions

The flowchart below shows the major stages of this assignment:

Choosing the problem or goal

1. Read the information listed in the “Required Reading” section above.

You are responsible for selecting a problem or goal that can be addressed in the structure laid out in the Supplementary Reading file, and meets the project requirements documented in this file. If, for example, you get to the “Cost” section and discover you can’t come up with information, you’ll have to start over again with a new problem or goal.

1. Select a likely workplace scenario.

Remember that you’re preparing to write at work. Don’t write about how a single person can reach an individual goal, but instead, how an organization can reach a larger, related goal.

Don’t select an issue that requires legislative or profession-wide agreement. Changing a governmental or professional policy—such as tightening state drunk-driving laws or allowing psychologists to prescribe medication—is completely outside the focus of this assignment. A feasibility report is usually read by a single decision-maker who has the ability to act on the information in the report.

Filling out the Communication Objectives Worksheet

The Communication Objectives Worksheet ([Appendix](#_Appendix_A:_Writing)) prompts you to analyze your feasibility report’s audience in great detail, to understand your report’s purpose, and to create a document structure suitable for a feasibility report.

Complete the worksheet and turn it in by the due date on the Semester Schedule.

Writing the feasibility report

1. Research the problem or goal, and the courses of action.

Search online and in books and journals for information that supports your ideas in this report. Paraphrase and/or quote the information, working the information smoothly into the relevant areas of your report.

You’ll use a minimum of four authoritative sources for this project. In addition to books and professional association journal articles, authoritative sources include .gov and .edu websites.

You have experience writing research papers in high school as well as a previous college courses (note that a first-year college writing course is a prerequisite for this class). Our textbook’s Appendix A on documentation should act more as a review than as new information.

1. Select the body organization for your problem or goal.

Read through the three body organizations described in the [Three Ways to Organize a Feasibility Report](#_Three_ways_to) section above, referring to outlines in the textbook as noted. Then, select the body organization best suited to your topic and your reader’s decision or task.

1. Use the citation style for your field.

See *Course Handbook* > Using Your Field’s Citation Style for links to MLA, APA, and IEEE style guides.

1. Include graphics and captions.

Readership studies show that readers glance quickly at a graphic, read the caption for context, look at the graphic more closely, and then return their attention to the surrounding text. Be sure that your figure captions introduce your reader to what is being shown in the graphic. For examples of effective captions, review the figure captions throughout our textbook.

• Number figures consecutively, starting with “1.”

• Refer to the figure in the body of your report before the reader encounters it. Refer by figure number and a brief description of the information shown in the figure. You can refer to a figure in different ways:

* In parentheses: “Teen pregnancy rates in Nigeria far exceed the international norm (Table 3).”
* In a complete sentence: “Figure 5 compares performance and highlights the best option.”

• Your reader should find the graphic immediately after the paragraph in which the first reference to it occurs. Our textbook supports this guideline faithfully.

• Figure captions and table titles should be in a consistent format throughout a document.

1. Add the following front matter (Ch. 17):

Letter or memo of transmittal: A letter is used when a report originates outside of the organization that receives it (external communication); a memo, when the report originates from within an organization (internal communication). A letter of transmittal is described and shown in Ch. 17. A sample memo of transmittal is shown on p. 192.

Cover page: [Don’t include for this assignment.]

Title page: See sample in Ch. 17.

Executive summary: See sample that starts on p. 287 (the executive summary for this assignment would be about one-third as long).

Table of contents: See sample on p. 328. Add “dot leaders” so that the reader’s eye can travel more easily across the page:

[Heading] ##

[Subheading] ##

For a tutorial in creating dot leaders in Microsoft Word, visit

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/add-dot-leaders-to-a-table-of-contents-HA102322464.aspx>

TIP: You can also copy the two table of contents lines above and adjust the indentions on the left to reflect the various levels of headings in your report.

1. Add the following back matter (Ch. 17):

Appendix (if needed; see p. 324 and this file’s appendices): Appendices enable you to present additional information without interrupting the flow of your document. Give an appendix an informative title that indicates clearly what it contains. Then, refer to the appendix, by title, in the body of your report at the point at which your reader would want to read the extra information.

Begin an appendix at the top of a new page. If your report has more than one appendix, present them in the order in which they are mentioned in the body of the report (e.g., Appendix A: [Title], Appendix B: [Title]).

See, for example, our textbook’s Appendix A: Documenting Sources, and Appendix B: A Brief Handbook.

References or Works Cited page: This section is placed after the body of your report or after the appendix. Use the format described in your citation style.

# Appendix: Communication Objectives Worksheet *(copy into separate Word file before submitting)*

Name:

Overall Purpose

*Please keep the questions in this worksheet and add your answers below the questions.*

1. What are you writing?

2. In this scenario, what prompts you to write?

3. What outcome do you desire from your feasibility report?

4. What outcome does your reader desire from your feasibility report?

Reader Profile

1. Who is your primary reader? Include job title and professional responsibilities.

2. What is your reader’s relationship to you?

3. Who might be secondary readers?

4. How familiar is your primary reader with your subject?

Usability Objectives

1. What are the key questions your reader will ask while reading your feasibility report? (List at least 5.)

2. How will your reader search for the answers? By reading sequentially, by jumping from section to section, by scanning graphics, etc?

3. How will your reader use the information in your report?

Persuasive Objectives

1. What will your reader’s initial attitude be toward your report? Why?

2. What do you want your reader’s attitude to be?

Stakeholders

1. Who, besides your readers, are stakeholders in your communication?

2. How will they be affected by it?

Purpose Statement

Write a working purpose statement for your report. (See *Course Handbook* > Achieving a Technical Writing Style > Content Development.) Your purpose statement might change slightly by the time you turn in your assignment.

Outline

Create a working formal outline below to show the structure you anticipate your feasibility report will have. To review formal outlining, see *Course Handbook* > Formal Outlining.

As with your purpose statement, your report’s final structure might be different than you show in your outline.

* Don’t retain the numbering from your outline in your final document’s headings. See *Course Handbook* > Formatting assignments > Text and headings.

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