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**Peer Review: Testing for Document Usability**

**Problem Definition**

**Begin by familiarizing yourself with the key components of a Problem Definition as outlined on my slides, then read the posted Problem Definition (on your monitor only) once all through**

**On a second reading, answer the following questions but do not make any changes or corrections on the proposal itself. Answer Y (YES) or N (NO) or question mark (?) if you’re unsure**

**Check with me if you’ve got any questions**

**PROBLEM DEFINITION:**

* Section starts off with a **Problem Definition heading**, properly **numbered**, using **non-serif** font
* A brief **signaling sentence** follows, identifying what this section will present (thus avoiding “stacked headings”)
* The sub-heading **Need statement** appears next, applying doc design principles for font style and size, properly numbered
* The Need Statement describes the troubling or unsatisfactory nature of the current situation, focusing on a particular technology—a something—that’s **absent, lacking,** or **missing**. The consequences of this lack is appropriately detailed, showing why and for whom it’s a problem
* A **“Goal” heading**, appropriately sized and numbered, appears next, with a one-sentence **Goa**l statement identifying what’s required to meet the Need, i.e. a specific *something* that will “fill in” or otherwise remedy the lack.
* The Need and Goal statement can be seen as –ve / +ve versions of each other
* A more detailed **Objectives** statement follows (under its appropriate **heading)**, identifying key “performance characteristics” of an effective design solution
* If presented as a list (complete with an introductory lead-in), the list is **grammatically parallel**
* **Constraints** (with appropriate **heading**) are identified, listing criteria that limit the scope of the design in some way (costs; timeline; materials, etc.)
* The problem definition ends by briefly noting the **benefits** or advantages of **investigating** the problem and proposed solution (i.e. it makes clear how and why the client would benefit from implementing the study)

**STYLE:**

* The Problem Definition is written in a way that aligns with Plain Language and Standard English principles:
  1. Short, fluent sentences
  2. Clear grammatical subjects at the beginning of the sentence
  3. Dynamic action verbs (rather than weak *is/are/have/ got* verbs)
  4. Simple words where simple words will do the job
  5. Formal but not stilted expression
  6. Absence of false subjects, *There is/ there are/ it is*
  7. Pronouns are clearly anchored to noun antecedents, meaning every *it, this, he, she* refers directly back to a specific referent in the preceding phrase or sentence
  8. Commas, colons, and semi-colons all appear to be used correctly
  9. Institutions, organizations, companies, and countries (e.g. UVic, the UN, Canada) are all collective nouns, taking singular pronouns: *it* (not *they)*
  10. Typos have been caught and corrected