

OL 201 Assignment One Homework Instructions

Online Learning. OL 201 Designing and Funding Non Profit Projects

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/ol-240-design-fund-manage-nonprofit-programs/>

This week's resources:

Class Home Page 201

OL 201 Assignment One Discussion

Download Class Documents 201: Summary of Ten Seed Technique Word Doc.

Download Class Documents 201: Ten Seed Technique Workshop Lesson Plan

Download Class Documents 201: Ten Seed Technique How-To Card

Magee Example Project 201 Assignment 1

Assignment 1. What's the real problem?

This first week's assignment will take longer than any of the assignments of the next 8 weeks. This is why you have three weeks for it. This gives you time to explore the online course structure and resources, to read the discussion—and to form a partnership if you would like to.

This assignment also has two components: a field component and a written component. I would suggest printing this assignment out by downloading it from Downloading Class Documents.

The three weeks also give you time to digest a lot of new concepts and to meet with a community in order to facilitate a needs assessment with them. Here are some of the things that you will need to digest:

Important Overview of problems, underlying causes and negative impacts.

In this course you are going to jump right into a series of brand-new concepts. This course is about developing sustainable, fundable, impact-oriented projects—and you start right away in Assignment One. Here are some background ideas.

When you meet with your community to do the Ten-Seed needs assessment, they will present you with a mixture of needs, problems, underlying causes, grievances and negative impacts. Your job as a facilitator is to encourage them to say everything that is on their mind. Their Ten-Seed vote will prioritize the two or three things that are the most important to them—so this will simplify your job.

Your job is to be an interpreter. Your job will be to sort their array of challenges into three things:

1. One or two (**two maximum**) important problems (that they prioritized)
2. The underlying causes of those problems
3. The long-term negative impacts that the problems cause

Problems for the purposes of this course are the visible and compelling elements of the needs assessment. These are the things that human beings can relate to. For example, sick little kids or malnourished little kids are visible, compelling problems. You can see these, you can feel the pain and suffering. You can relate to them. But if the community lists (for example) a shortage of food—realize that this is not a problem for this particular exercise—it is a cause of a problem. Look for the visible, compelling problem that a shortage of food causes.

Underlying causes in this course are the components that are the causes of the ultimate problems that your community identified. A shortage of food (in our example) and a lack of knowledge of family nutrition are good examples of the underlying causes that lead to malnourished little kids. A lack of knowledge that family gardens can increase family nutrition can also be an underlying cause to malnourished children. Underlying causes tend to be related to things (food) or knowledge (lack of knowledge of family nutrition).

Negative Impacts are the long-term negative outcomes of the problem. Malnourished kids don't function well in school, have trouble gaining an education, and may therefore be unable to lead the prosperous, meaningful, productive lives that they need as adults to leave the cycle of poverty. Negative impacts are long-term outcomes—5 to 15 years away. They are the ultimate reason why we are interested in working in the non profit world. It is terrible to see malnourished children—and you want to fix it right away—but the ultimate goal is to develop prosperous, well-educated community members that can work together in the prevention of malnourishment. So your project is going to address the immediate problem (malnourished children) with the long-term goal of (positive impact) healthy, productive, well-educated community members.

Therefore, your job in evaluating the Ten-Seed assessment has two main components:

1. Problem/cause/negative impact
 - a. Figure out what the visible, compelling problem is (if all that the community comes up with are causes, ask them about what the ultimate problem is or use your observational skills)
 - b. Figure out what the underlying cause is for that problem
 - c. Figure out what the long-term impacts are
 - d. Fit them into an outline exactly like the one in Magee Project Example Assignment 1.
2. Keep your problem/cause/impact outline short (one or two things maximum) and incredibly simple. The goal of the course is to learn how to develop projects—and you need start off with a simple project to learn the steps. If your community raises several challenges to be addressed—you can return and develop projects for those challenges also after you have learned how

to do it in this course. If you are going to benefit from this course, you need a very, very simple project. Complex, grand projects won't help you out in the course.

Getting started.

Part 1: The Needs Assessment

Download the Summary of the Ten Seed Technique, the Ten Seed Technique Lesson Plan, the How-to Card, and the Magee Project Example from the Download Course Documents. Read through the first three activities of the Ten Seed Lesson Plan (you are only going to do Lesson Plan Activities 1, 2 and 3). I would recommend role-playing the Lesson Plan with a colleague for practice. Make adaptations to the lesson plan that would be appropriate for your community situation.

Find a group of community members that either you or one of your colleagues already has a trusting relationship established with. Set up 3-4 hour meeting with eight or 10 community members. Please try and meet with community members that represent the ultimate beneficiaries (mothers, fathers, families—whoever describe the community you are working with); try to avoid basing your assessment on a meeting with people in higher positions: mayors or city council members for example.

Work through the lesson plan with the group and begin making simple illustrations or writing simple phrases that represent the challenges they describe on sheets of paper. Ideally you will draw a large rectangle with nine or 12 smaller squares inside of it with one illustration or phrase in each square. An example could be that if there is a housing shortage, draw a little house.

After the group has come up with a good set of needs/problems, have everyone leave the workshop area. Give each one of the participants 10 seeds, or beans, or coins. Only one person should go into the workshop area at a time to use their voting tokens to vote on the needs. They should select the needs which they feel as an individual are the most important. It is their decision if they want to put all 10 tokens in one square or if they want to distribute them around several different problems.

After each workshop participant has had a chance to cast their votes, you can count the total token in each square and write up a prioritized list ordered by the number of votes each problem received. This is a good time for the participants to have an open discussion about the results of the vote.

Important:

You should take a few minutes alone with the prioritized list and make a determination whether the items on their list are problems or underlying causes.

You should also make the determination if the prioritized list represents two or three unrelated projects such as some health needs and some vocational training needs. If that is the case, organize the list so that health needs are in one place and vocational training in another.

For the purposes of the course, I want you to develop a very simple, easily defined project. It would be a good idea to let the participants come to an agreement on which project should be attempted first. In our example above, you could ask them if they would prefer to work on the health component or the vocational training project first.

Part 2: The Capacity and Assets Assessment

Conduct an informal capacity and assets assessment in an open discussion. Ask participants if they had any skills, time, materials, tools—or other resources that they might be able to contribute to a new project that would help address the challenges that they had identified in the needs assessment. Take notes and write up a simple list for Assignment 1.

Part 3: The Simple Project Outline

After the assessment workshop, back in your office, take the project component that you agreed to work on with the community and write an outline (just exactly like on the Magee Project Example) of:

1. A problem or two (**maximum 2**)
2. An underlying cause or two
3. Some of the long-term negative impacts that will result from the problem.
4. A short paragraph (Problem Statement) that is nothing more than the copy/pasting of the three things in the simple outline above. The problem statement is not an introduction to a proposal, nor a paragraph of background information. It is simply the problem, the underlying causes and the negative impacts copied and pasted together in order.

Follow the Magee Project Example exactly—it is what we are looking for. Pull it up on your screen and type right over it.

The complete Assignment One homework to turn in will be:

1. The full list of needs/problems with the number of votes each received (Photos too please if possible! Attach a few separately or paste them onto page 2—don't mix them in the main homework)
2. Simple project outline of problems/causes/negative impacts of the chosen project idea.
3. A short paragraph (Problem Statement) that is nothing more than the combination (copy and paste) of the problems/causes/negative impacts in the simple outline above. Look at my example to see how simple it is—no embellishments.
4. A simple list of skills, time, materials, tools—or other resources that participants might be able to contribute to a new project.
5. One short line about your forum involvement.

Very, Very, Important:

We are going to be presenting to you new, cutting-edge ideas in community-centered, sustainable, impact-oriented project design. At the end of the 12 week (201 & 202), step-by-step process you will have a brand-new, global perspective on this process that you don't have today—in this first week. You will need to trust our guidance in the early stages.

You will struggle with two challenges in the first two assignments.

The first challenge is that some initial projects are too complex. In the real world, most funded projects address one concept. Projects that are too complex are difficult to get funded, difficult to manage successfully, and from the perspective of this course, their complexity will overshadow what we are trying to teach you.

The second challenge is project drift; you have a great idea for your project in the first assignment, which changes a little in the second assignment as you creatively think about solutions, and it changes a little bit in the third assignment – and so on – until pretty soon you have a project that is a different project from Assignment One.

In order to enhance the learning experience, we will insist that you lock in on the project developed in weeks one and two as the project that will be used for the entire 12 assignments. Each week, I need to go back and refer to your first and second week assignments (that I print out and save) throughout the rest of the 12 assignments. If you have changed the project, I lose the ability to keep track of the project's direction.

Therefore, this first assignment will set your project's direction for the rest of the two courses, OL 201 and 202: 12 assignments. I will invest a good amount of time in Assignment One and Assignment Two bringing them into alignment for you with the 12 steps of the course system. This is the same process that I use with clients as a paid consultant; I can't afford the time to provide my consulting services twice for you if your project drifts.

The advantage of staying with your original project is three-fold:

One, you will learn the system of refining one single project over 12 weekly steps.

Two, I will be able to refer back to Assignments One and Two at each step of the process in order to make sure that everything is being resolved and included as the process marches on.

Three, the assignments build on each other from one week to the next – so you will be able to refer back to your early assignments to make sure that everything is included in the process. For example, Assignment 6 is an expansion of Assignment 2. Assignment 7 is an expansion of Assignment 6. Assignments 11 and 12 are compilations of the previous 10 assignments.

In summary, trust our initial guidance: it will become evident why we make the suggestions we do. Focus on learning the system – you can always go back and modify your project quickly and easily at the end of the course when you understand all of the steps.

Go to Magee's Example Project Assignment 1 to see what this could look like.

See you next week.

Extra Information:**If you are pursuing:**

1. Your own project: Carry on.

2. A project done with a course partner (for instance one partner in an urban setting and one with access to rural community members). You will need to explore how the two of you can best support each other. The person in the field will need to do the needs assessment, but from there on, the project development can be done together. It is really helpful if the person in the field can take a few digital photos for their urban partner.

3. A Virtual project. You have the opportunity of inventing your own project idea.