

## Assignment Two Discussion

### 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:

Homework Assignment Two

Magee Example Project Assignment Two

#### Assignment Two. What's your theory of a solution?

**Developing a theory of how we plan to address the problem statement and project outline developed during Assignment One.** You concluded Assignment One with a set of community identified problems organized into a unique project outline. You also wrote a short and concise description of the overall problem. Now is your opportunity to develop a theory of how to solve this problem, and to begin exploring specific activities that will fulfill your theory through discussions with colleagues, through your own experience, and through Internet searches.

#### Theory of Change

A theory is just that. In the non-profit world it's called a theory of change; it's your theory of what changes in behavior, or changes in services and infrastructure will need to be realized to solve the problem (and its underlying causes). Your theory of change will include the interventions/activities that you are proposing will address the causes of the problem. This week we will also draft a goal statement that reflects our theory of change.

#### First, identify potential solution oriented activities.

We wrote out a list of the needs and challenges from last week's assessment with space in between each one. Then we researched solution-oriented activities to each of the underlying causes. Our search uncovered scientific papers, articles, handbooks and manuals. You can search for information by:

1. using keywords to search the Internet
2. brainstorming with colleagues and experts in their field
3. using your own experienced based successes

#### Next, look for families of activities for developing programs.

Some of the documents you found will have numbered, sequential lists of activities: 8 Steps to More Food in your Food Bank. Select one list most appropriate for your non-profit and modify it to best fit your project's context.

Then, think up a name for a solution-oriented program which will seek to solve one of your underlying causes. Then paste in the activity list below. The food bank is trying to increase food donations and food diversity too. Here is what one of their new programs looks like this:

#### **Restaurant and Grocery Store Donation Program [Solution to underlying cause: No program in place for collecting surplus food from restaurants and grocery stores]:**

1. Form a Restaurant and Grocery Store Donation team to assess feasibility and develop a plan
2. Research different restaurant and grocery store donation programs and visit local food pantries, restaurants and grocery stores participating in programs
3. Research product availability, transportation, pickup and delivery, and volunteer time requirements
4. Survey community members to better understand products that they would enjoy from a program such as this
5. Work with a nutritionist to better understand healthy products identified by restaurants and grocery stores
6. Use this information to determine feasibility and develop a detailed working plan, budget and schedule
7. Assess funding possibilities
8. Launch a pilot program

Do this with the rest of the underlying causes in your project.

#### Use your Problem Statement to develop a compelling Goal Statement

If your problem statement is clear, concise, and simple, you will have a much easier time developing your goal. Your project's goal statement will be phrased to be a positive reflection of your problem statement (somewhat like mirror images of each other) and at the same time offer a general strategy for a solution.

To create your compelling Goal Statement simply copy and paste your problem statement below your project outline—and without changing it structurally—make the negative words positive. This isn't the introduction to a proposal, so it needs to be left clean and simple and an exact, parallel reflection of the problem statement.

You can download the instructions for designing your project and a finished example of the completed food bank project design in Download Class Documents.

## **Practicalities**

Over the next 10 weeks we will be using techniques to expand upon the theory that you come up with this week, and we will be revisiting your problem statement, goal statement and activities. For consistency's sake, we will lock in on this week's Project Outline as the final version to be used over the next 10 weeks.

The ultimate goal over the next 10 weeks is to design a project that has long-term, sustainable impact—not a project that address short-term, near-sighted outputs.

But here are some clues to get you off to a good start

1. The simpler your problem statement is the easier it will be to develop a theory of change.
2. The more information that you can find about project interventions that have shown evidence of having worked to solve your problem (on other completed projects), the greater the likelihood that:
  - your theory of change will be a good one
  - your project will have long-term impact

Be careful, because your explorations for solution oriented activities might lead you to activities which a colleague is enthusiastic about, but may not be an activity that offers long-term, sustainable impact. So use your experience, your common sense, and your good judgment to select three programs/activities this week that you believe will be a positive benefit in fulfilling your theory of change.