

DEVELOPING A CASE STUDY PAPER FOR THE CERTIFIED LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPER CERTIFICATION

Requirements

The final requirement for certification as a Certified Louisiana Economic Developer (CLED) will be a paper of ten to fifteen pages that demonstrates how the student used knowledge gained from the course work to solve an economic development problem in their community or within their organization.

1. The paper shall describe in detail how the student solved the specific problem in their community or their work, and the next step(s) taken to apply the lessons learned. The topic shall be approved in advance by the Dean of the CLED program based on an outline of the content submitted to LIDEA for the Dean's review and approval.
2. Papers shall be typed, double-spaced, in 12 pt Times New Roman font, 1" margins on all four sides. The text should be triple-spaced between paragraphs. All pages should be sequentially numbered.
3. Prepare a title page that contains the title of the research paper, your name, the date, and to whom the paper is being submitted. This title page will not count towards the number of pages in the paper.
4. Completed papers shall be submitted to the Dean of the CLED program, who will review and evaluate them for conformity to the standards established by the Curriculum Committee.
5. Feedback will be provided to the participant and the paper will be revised until it meets the specified criteria.
6. Papers meeting the criteria will be approved by the Dean of the CLED program and forwarded to the Curriculum Committee with a recommendation for approval of the applicant as a CLED.

Guidelines for Case Study Paper Content

The paper shall be the result of a process of data collection (internet, news, interviews, etc.), source evaluation, analysis, organization, and composition. The paper should not simply be an attempt by the writer to capture his or her thoughts about past experiences or to tell "war stories." Nor is it a mere summary of what the writer has read from various sources nor a mere overview of a particular topic. The goal of this case study paper is not to inform the reader what others have to say about a topic, but to draw on the course material to offer potential solutions to the issue at hand.

The case study should consist of a challenge or problem the candidate faces in their effort as a member of the ED community. For candidates that work for a specific community or region, the problem would likely be a community issue. For candidates that are less directly connected

to communities, this problem would be a challenge they face in their organization, part of the larger Economic Development community. The paper should answer the following questions:

- Has this issue or challenge arisen in other communities, or with other individuals? What did they do to address the problem? Why? Did they solve the problem, or make improvements? Is this a potential solution for this case study? Why or why not?
- What information, ideas, sources, or contacts from the CLED courses is/are relevant to the problem or challenge?
- How can the information imparted in the courses address the issue or make the situation better? (A complete, clean solution may not be possible in real-world situations.)
- What's next?

Guidelines for Organizing the Case Study Paper

The following suggestions for writing an effective paper are taken and modified from "A Research Guide for Students" that is found at: <http://www.aresearchguide.com/1steps.html>.

STEP 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Choose an aspect of your community or your work which interests and challenges you. Your attitude towards the topic may well determine the amount of effort and enthusiasm you put into your research.

Focus on a limited aspect, e.g. narrow it down from "Economic Development" to "Business Attraction" to "Identifying target industries". Obtain the Dean's approval for your topic before embarking on a full-scale research. If you are uncertain as to what is expected of you in completing the assignment or project, re-read your assignment sheet carefully or talk with the Dean of the program.

STEP 2. FIND INFORMATION

Begin your case study paper process by reviewing the material on your topic that you received as handouts during your training session(s).

Do a search on the Internet (websites and news) to find some additional relevant information on your topic.

Read and evaluate. Bookmark your favorite Internet sites. Printout and take notes of relevant information.

STEP 3. STATE YOUR PROBLEM STATEMENT

Do some critical thinking and write a statement down defining your topic in one sentence. This statement is like a declaration of your belief. The main portion of your case study paper will consist of arguments to support and defend this belief.

STEP 4. MAKE A TENTATIVE OUTLINE

How do I create an outline?

- **Brainstorm:** List all the ideas that you want to include in your paper.
- **Organize:** Group related ideas together.
- **Order:** Arrange material in subsections from general to specific or from abstract to concrete.
- **Label:** Create main and sub headings.

The purpose of an outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically before you start writing. A good outline is the most important step in writing a good paper. Check your outline to make sure that the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include in your outline an INTRODUCTION, a BODY, and a CONCLUSION. Make the first outline tentative.

INTRODUCTION - State your topic (what question are you trying to answer, or what problem are you trying solve) and the purpose of your case study paper clearly. What do you hope to learn by writing the paper? State also how you plan to approach your topic. Is this a descriptive report, a review of techniques or programs, a comparison with what other organizations are doing, or an analysis of a problem? Explain briefly the major points you plan to cover in your paper and why readers should be interested in your topic.

BODY - This is where you present your arguments to support your topic statement.

CONCLUSION - Restate or reword your topic statement. Summarize your arguments. Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion. This part is the most important part for the reader. This is meant to show how the research findings have helped achieve the objective of the research. It should include a generalized conclusion derived from the research, so it is practical and easy to understand for the reader.

Remember: creating an outline before writing your paper will make organizing your thoughts a lot easier. Whether you follow the suggested guidelines is up to you, but making any kind of outline (even just some jotting down some main ideas) will be beneficial to your writing process.

STEP 5. ORGANIZE YOUR NOTES

Organize all the information you have gathered according to your outline. Critically analyze your information. Using the best available sources, check for accuracy and verify that the information is factual, up-to-date, and correct. Opposing views should also be noted if they help to support your topic statement. This is the most important stage in writing a case study paper. Here you will analyze, synthesize, sort, and digest the information you have gathered and hopefully learn something about your topic which is the real purpose of doing a case study paper in the first place. You must also be able to effectively communicate your thoughts, ideas, insights, and research findings to others through these written words.

Do not include any information that is not relevant to your topic, and do not include information that you do not understand. Make sure the information that you have noted is carefully recorded and in your own words, if possible. Plagiarism is definitely out of the question. Document all ideas borrowed or

quotes used very accurately. As you organize your notes, jot down detailed bibliographical information for each cited paragraph and have it ready to transfer to your Works Cited page.

Devise your own method to organize your notes. One method may be to mark with a different color ink or use a hi-liter to identify sections in your outline.

Group your notes following the outline codes you have assigned to your notes, e.g., I, II, III, etc. This method will enable you to quickly put all your resources in the right place as you organize your notes according to your outline.

STEP 6. WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT

Start with the first topic in your outline. Read all the relevant notes you have gathered that have been marked, e.g. with the capital Roman numeral I.

Summarize, paraphrase or quote directly for each idea you plan to use in your paper. Use a technique that suits you, e.g. write summaries, paraphrases, or quotations on note cards, or separate sheets of lined paper. Mark each card or sheet of paper clearly with your outline code or reference, e.g., IB2a or IIC, etc.

Put all your note cards or paper in the order of your outline, e.g. IA, IB, IC. Before you know it, you have a well organized paper completed exactly as outlined.

STEP 7. REVISE YOUR OUTLINE AND DRAFT

Read your paper for any content errors. Double check the facts and figures. Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline. Reorganize your outline if necessary, but always keep the purpose of your paper and your readers in mind.

CHECKLIST ONE:

1. Is my topic statement concise and clear?
2. Did I follow my outline? Did I miss anything?
3. Are my arguments presented in a logical sequence?
4. Are all sources properly cited to ensure that I am not plagiarizing?
5. Have I demonstrated the validity of my conclusions with strong supporting arguments?
6. Have I made my intentions and points clear in the paper?

Re-read your paper for grammatical errors. Use a dictionary or a thesaurus as needed. Do a spellcheck. Correct all errors that you can spot and improve the overall quality of the paper to the best of your ability. Get someone else to read it over. Sometimes a second pair of eyes can see mistakes that you missed.

CHECKLIST TWO:

1. Did I begin each paragraph with a proper topic sentence?
2. Have I supported my arguments with documented proof or examples?
3. Any run-on or unfinished sentences?
4. Any unnecessary or repetitious words?
5. Varying lengths of sentences?
6. Does one paragraph or idea flow smoothly into the next?
7. Any spelling or grammatical errors?
8. Quotes accurate in source, spelling, and punctuation?
9. Are all my citations accurate and in correct format?
10. Did I avoid using contractions? Use "cannot" instead of "can't", "do not" instead of "don't"?
11. Did I use third person as much as possible? Avoid using phrases such as "I think", "I guess", "I suppose"
12. Have I made my points clear and interesting but remained objective?
13. Did the readers of my paper feel a sense of completion when they reached the end of the paper?

STEP 8. TYPE FINAL PAPER

All formal reports or essays should be typewritten and printed, preferably on a good quality printer.

Read the assignment sheet again to be sure that you understand fully what is expected of you, and that your case study paper meets the requirements as specified. Know how your paper will be evaluated.

Proofread the final paper carefully for spelling, punctuation, missing or duplicated words. Make the effort to ensure that your final paper is clean, tidy, neat, and attractive.

Aim to have your final paper ready a day or two before the deadline. This gives you peace of mind and a chance to triple check. Before handing in your assignment, ask yourself: "Is this the VERY BEST that I can do?"