Stage 1: Finding a client

Do:

1. Listen to your client to learn of the problem he or she would like you to address, the history of the problem, and what those in the organization hope to learn and do with the results of your paper.

2. Find a faculty member who has expertise in the content area or methodology of your project. Ask this person to be your second reader. Meet with her or him shortly after your prospectus (or before) and get recommendations for some references and/or suggestions for conducting the project.

3. Be able to state the purpose of the project in both a statement and question form. For example: “The purpose of this project is to…” and “This project will answer the question, “…..?””

Don’t:

1. Impose your ideas for a project on the client. A good consultant listens well to learn the problems the client has. Once you have learned more about the organization, reviewed the scholarly literature on the topic, and collected information on the problem, you will offer advice and recommendations, but your role is not to select the problem to be studied.

2. Fall into the role of an advocate (for a particular group or policy). You are a consultant and, as such, attempt to be neutral. Your role is to help the client, and the organization, improve their work or achieve their goals.

Stage 2: Writing your literature review and introduction

Do:

1. Use the Auraria Library databases to find scholarly articles on the subject of your study. These data bases can connect you directly to scholarly journal articles online.

2. Spend many hours looking for articles to inform your study. If you’re having difficulty finding them, or knowing what to search for, ask your instructor or your second reader for advice. The Auraria reference librarians can also be very helpful. There are articles on everything, so there will be scholarly writing on something related to your topic. Someone with expertise has written something relevant to a subject you are struggling with as a manager or policy maker, and that information will be useful to you.
You should know how to find this literature and how to read and understand what is relevant to your project.

3. Synthesize what you have learned from the literature. Step back and think about what you’ve learned from all the articles, identify what is relevant to your project about content and methodology, develop an outline that organizes this information by topic and write a review of the literature.

4. Provide the appropriate level of detail in discussing a reference. In other words, just because you cite a reference doesn’t mean you have to tell everything about that reference. For some references, you may only be citing them to indicate that other places have this problem or to briefly describe the problem or relevant theory. For other references, particularly those that collect data – qualitative or quantitative – and are quite relevant to your project, you may need to present quite a bit of detail. For example, you might mention where they collected the data, the type of people they collected it from, and important, specific findings, rather than just a general statement on their conclusions.

5. Also, obtain documents from your organization that may provide useful background on the organization, its history, its policies, and how it handles problems. These can include strategic plans, mission statements, proposals, annual reports, etc. Of course, you can also cite these in your paper.

6. If you know you struggle with writing, see an expert at the Auraria Writing Lab.

7. Review the generic outline and sample papers under “Writing the Paper” to think about how to organize your introduction, description of the problem, review of literature, and statement of purpose.

8. Make sure your purpose, the questions you want to answer for the client, are clear and match the client’s needs as well as the requirements of the advanced seminar. In some cases, the client’s needs are too narrow to demonstrate what you have learned in the program and simply meeting the client’s needs will not make a good advanced seminar paper. Talk with your instructor to make sure your scope is appropriate and sufficient for SPA purposes.

Don’t:

1. Organize your review of literature as a sequential, summary of each article or book.

2. Just summarize articles. Instead, tell what is relevant about this article to your study. Feel free to comment on the article and how it is like or different from the problem or setting you are addressing.

3. Use too many quotations. Quotations should only be used if the exact wording is very important or very eloquent.

4. Plagarize!
Stage 3: Collecting and analyzing information.

Do:

1. Consider *what* you need to collect to inform your questions and *how* you will collect it. And how will you process it once you get it?
2. *Who* knows it, and *how* do you collect it from them? If it’s many people, a survey will probably be most appropriate. If it’s a few, interviews may be most appropriate.
3. Look for data that already exist, either in the agency or in other agencies, to supplement and/or support your findings.
4. Be able to defend why you select the methods you do. Consider how the articles that are similar to your purpose collected data and whether you should use their strategies.
5. Show draft surveys or interview guides to your instructor to get his/her feedback.
6. Decide how you will seek participation from those you interview or survey. How can you best obtain their participation? (A letter from your client, an e-mail from you?)
7. Decide whether responses are anonymous or confidential or if you will use names. Then, decide how you will inform those you interview or survey about this.
8. Have all final surveys or interview guides approved by the instructor.
9. Share surveys or interview guides with your client and seek his or her input.
10. Consider how to analyze the information you obtain. Talk with your instructor and second faculty reader for their suggestions. Consider how information is summarized in the articles you read. For qualitative data, consider how you can use “qualitative” tables to summarize trends. Also, identify quotes you will use to bring findings to life. For quantitative data, will you use SPSS? What programs will you use? How will you use tables to summarize your results? (See sample tables and papers.)

Stage 4: Writing the Final Paper

Do:

1. Make sure your conclusions are supported by the data or information you have collected. Maintain objectivity. You are not an advocate in this paper, but a consultant.
2. Use tables to summarize results, but comment and expand on the information in the tables in the narrative of the table.
3. Make a distinction between the “Results” section and the “Discussion” or “Conclusion” section. You may “take off” with broader interpretations or your own ideas
or link the findings with the views of others in the discussion or conclusions sections. But, you should not do that in the results section. In the results section, your focus is on presenting your findings on the questions you hoped to answer, i.e., your purposes.

4. Make recommendations at the end. Make sure they are linked to the information you collected.

5. Seek input from your client before you begin writing the final paper. Talk with him or her about what you have found and get his or her interpretation or reaction.

6. Carefully edit and proof-read your paper.

7. Check your headings and reference list and any tables carefully to make sure you follow APA style rules.

8. After the entire project is completed, write an Executive Summary that synthesizes the problem, results, and conclusions or recommendations. This should be interesting. The purpose is to entice the “executive” to read the rest of the paper or, if she doesn’t have time, to know the key findings from reading this.

9. Number your pages starting with the first page of the narrative after the Executive Summary.

Don’t:

1. Go over 25 pages in the length of the narrative and reference list. (Appendices, cover page, and executive summary pages do not count on this limit.)

2. Make grammatical or punctuation errors.

3. Plagiarize!

**Stage 5: Preparing and Making the Oral Presentation**

**Do:**

1. See Guidelines for Oral Presentations.

2. Identify the important information you want to convey in 10 to 15 minutes and develop simple, clear (perhaps artful!) power point slides to highlight your outline or main points or to present detailed tables.

3. Practice your presentation to make sure it is not over 15 minutes.

4. Make eye contact with your audience.

**Don’t:**

1. Make too many slides or slides that are too detailed. (a good guide is one slide per minute)

2. Look at your PowerPoint slides or note cards constantly. (Referring to them, pointing to a detail in a slide, etc. is fine and appropriate.)