

OL 201 Assignment Three Homework Instructions

Online Learning: OL 201 Designing and Funding Non Profit Programs

Center for Sustainable Development

<http://www.csd-i.org/>

This week's resources:

Assignment Three Discussion

Magee Example Project Assignment Three

Assignment Three. Will your theory of a solution work?

Investigating if there is a scientific basis that our proposed theory and activities have worked on other projects.

In this assignment, you will be researching three interventions/activities. Pick activities you plan to use in your project that are simple ones and can be easily described.

Look for potential information in these places:

Google

Google Scholar

In Google you can ask questions just as if you are asking them of another person.

For example, in my project, I am looking for information on improving a food bank's ability to increase the amount of food it provides. So in Google, I can type in "How effective are community gardens at providing nutrition?" Or, "Are urban vegetable gardens a source of food for food banks?"

Google also has Google Scholar which focuses strictly on scientific documents.

<http://scholar.google.com/schhp?hl=en&tab=ws>

With this approach I can get excellent results. If you happen to hit a gold mine of results, save those key words. They may come in handy in the future, and the way you phrased the question may be a template for future searches on different subjects.

I find using keywords like 'food banks' and 'nutrition', gets me out of mainstream news and into real non profit information. You can also type in things like 'abstracts' and 'executive summaries' to point you towards scientific documents. Play around.

We are looking for peer-reviewed, scientific documents. If you find one with the magic symbol PDF next to it, this means that there is a document to download.

We are not looking for informational documents found on websites that have not gone through evaluation by a team of scientists. These are called 'Grey Literature' and are not acceptable for gathering evidence.

This is what a peer-reviewed scientific document looks like online; note the list of authors' names, the abstract and the reference to a university:

http://www.niams.nih.gov/about_us/Mission_and_Purpose/Community_Outreach/Multicultural_Outreach/AIAN_WG/Bartgis_UrbanIndianVoicesCBPR.pdf

I have also posted a scientific document as an example on the Download Course Documents page: "[Food Insecurity and Participation in Community Food Programs among Low-income Toronto Families.](#)" Sharon I. Kirkpatrick, Valerie Tarasuk.

Sometimes you'll go to a link which is simply an abstract (a paragraph describing a document). Frequently these abstracts are at publishing houses, and they will want to charge you to download the full document. However, make a note of the exact name of the study and the authors, and do a Google search on those, and sometimes you can find the original document online as a PDF.

If not, frequently the abstracts by themselves will be all you need.

If you work at a university and have access to peer-reviewed search engines, your life will be much simpler. They are geared to finding the kinds of scientific documents are looking for.

When you find a document, hopefully it will be a "synthetic study", or a "literature review", which has analyzed a large number of primary research documents. These will give you the most useful results for your project. In the executive summary and in the conclusion they will tell you if the activity has worked to solve the challenge that you've identified, and under what circumstances.

Once you've found one or several of these documents I want you to act like a scientist and without putting your own desires and feelings into the interpretation of the document, write a short, one paragraph summary that will indicate whether or not the activity that you have selected for your project appears to work, or not.

Do this for three of your project activities; one short, summary paragraph for each.

If a document indicates that the activity you chose to solve your project challenge does not work-- that's good news too; because it means that you won't waste a lot of time and money on an activity which is not going to perform.

If one of the documents indicates the activity doesn't work, just write your paragraph on that one: the fact that it doesn't work is good information for all of us.

If during your searches you see any practical information on one of your activities like a field guide or manual, bookmark it for a future assignment on preparing for a workshop.

	Forum Discussion. Have you been able to find scientific papers or examples of projects similar to your proposal? How do your project needs differ from those in the examples? Can you suggest any good websites or information sources that may be helpful to other students in their research?
	FaceBook Posting. If your login name begins with the following initials, you do not need to post to the forum this week: Instead post to Facebook instead. Each individual course participant needs to post: this is not a joint-partnership posting. S-Z first letter of your login name: 'Like' CSDi's Facebook page first (https://www.facebook.com/CSDi.org). Then, after you have 'Liked' the page, post a brief description to the wall about your project and ask a question of the group asking for their opinion, a request for an informational resource, or for their expertise in you project concept. Go to the FaceBook page to see an example.).

The homework to turn in will be:

1. A list of links to one or two scientific papers about three of your proposed project activities.
2. A short paragraph summarizing the findings of one scientific paper for each of your three activities.
3. One short line about your forum discussion or Facebook posting.

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

See you next week.