

### **Project #3: Problem-Solving Report (200 points)**

*ENGL 7 Workshop #3: June 5–9*

*Assignment Due: Tuesday, June 13, 11:59 PM Pacific Time*

In this project, you will identify a specific **operational problem** at your current or former company (student organizations or other non-profits are fine too), research relevant business tools and/or policies that could address the problem, and write a persuasive report (**1750-2500 words, single-spaced, in full-block memo format**) to describe the problem, present your research findings, give your recommendations to solve the problem, and deal with potential obstacles to implementing your recommendations. Your report must integrate and cite at least **three relevant secondary sources**, including at least one academic article or book. **If you don't have any professional experience to draw on, premade scenarios are available on Canvas.**

Before your memo header, you will establish the scenario in a context description (100-150 words). **Your audience for the context description is your TA, while the rest of the report will be addressed to a leader in your organization.** The context description should indicate your role in the situation, the reader(s) for the document, the issue/information to be covered, and the purpose or goal of the document. What is your professional role for the purposes of this report? Who will be reading the report and why? What is the report designed to accomplish? How will it be used? Include any other relevant details that will help to clarify the nature and function of your report.

Once you finish your context description, the rest of your document will be an informal report (in memo format) addressed to a specific decision-maker in your organization. Follow this structure to organize your report.

#### Report Structure

1. Memo Header & Report Introduction (10% of total length): establishes the report's addressee(s), introduces the setting, then gets your readers' attention by clarifying the report's purpose, goals, and benefits.
2. Problem Description (10% of total length): briefly explains the specific problem you wish to solve, who is affected by it, and why your organization should address it.
3. Problem Analysis (30% of total length): analyzes the problem in detail, including the likely first-order and second-order effects. Use your secondary research here to back up your claims about why this problem needs attention and how it could affect important business and ethical outcomes.
4. Recommendations (40% of total length): proposes a targeted solution to the problem, based on the problem analysis. Include specific actions the organization needs to take, the approximate cost, a timeline (if applicable), and specific benefits of adopting your solution.
5. Counterargument (10% of total length): acknowledges and deals with **one** potential counterargument to implementing your recommendations, such as cost, time, expertise, and inconvenience.

### Choosing a Problem

Operational problems negatively affect day-to-day professional tasks or projects, especially in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. For example, let's say a **grocery store wants every customer to have easy access to a sanitized shopping cart** upon entering the store. The store would have to ensure that there are enough carts to go around, that employees can regularly retrieve carts from the parking lot and sanitize them for the next customer, that damaged carts are quickly identified and repaired/replaced, and that customers don't steal carts from the parking lot. Operational problems could arise with the **initial supply of carts**, with the **availability of employees**, with the **efficiency of the retrieval and sanitizing process**, and with the **security of the parking lot**. Your report could focus on the efficiency problem, proposing (for instance) a better schedule to retrieve carts and/or a better process for sanitizing them.

As you can see from the sample context descriptions, the size of the problem you address is not as important as its significance for your audience and organization. In other words, think about **which community** the problem currently affects (e.g., employees, customers, members, or vendors), what the problem's **potential consequences** are, and why those consequences are **important to the organization**. Keep this information in a chart or spreadsheet and use it to organize your notes, guide your research, and plan your report.

### Focusing on Experience

Remember that even if a problem only affects a relatively small community, those individuals' **experiences** could lead to bigger problems or higher costs for the organization. For instance, let's say you work at a restaurant that does not have wheelchair-accessible bathrooms. Not only would this inconvenience customers or employees who use wheelchairs, prompting them to write **negative reviews**, but it could lead to **heavy fines or even a lawsuit** if local/state laws require wheelchair-accessible bathrooms.

A good way to identify potential problems is to walk through common tasks or processes in your organization. What elements might annoy or inconvenience someone in your target community? Why might that cause a problem or a negative experience? How would that experience affect the organization's business outcomes, such as sales, morale, or reputation? Beyond business outcomes, what moral or ethical issues may be in play? **You don't necessarily need a solution at this point, but you should understand the problem and its potential consequences in detail.**

### Researching the Problem

Your report must draw on and cite at least three secondary sources, including one scholarly article or book. **Please use [APA style](#) for your citations. You will need in-text citations after every quote, paraphrase, or summary, as well as a reference list at the end of the document.** All your sources should be relevant to your topic and reflect current business conditions, so use material published in the past 5-10 years if possible. **However, make sure that you use the most up-to-date legal and public health standards!** On Canvas, see Resources →

Research Tools and Tips for some useful links and reference material. To find relevant sources, think about both the details of your problem and its potential consequences, as well as the potential benefits for solving it. These elements should help inform your solution, but that doesn't mean your sources have to solve the problem for you.

For example, let's say your problem is that employees don't have a good place to store meals or cold drinks while they are at work. Your solution might consider options like adding a refrigerator to the break room, allowing employees to keep mini-fridges in their workspaces, or offering a meal delivery service. But your research is more likely to cover **variables like employee morale, nutrition, and health**. Use those variables in your Google/database searches, then use the results to make a more persuasive argument. Remember, well-researched sources [like this one](#) will point you toward other potentially useful material.

### Analyzing the Problem and Recommending a Solution

As you learn more about the problem, its context, and its potential significance for your organization, you will be able to develop a more detailed **problem analysis**. This section should demonstrate not only that you've done your research, but also that you fully understand why this problem is significant, how it affects your target community's experience with your organization, what consequences could emerge (or already have emerged), why the organization should care about those consequences, and how the problem affects key business outcomes.

Based on your problem analysis, your final task is to **recommend a specific, detailed, and targeted solution to the problem**. It must clarify specific actions the organization needs to take, provide an approximate budget, give a timeline (if applicable), and identify specific benefits of adopting your solution. Your solution should be practical for the context in which you observed the problem, so think about things like physical space, personnel, procedures, and even potential penalties. Keep the focus on how this solution would make life better for the target community, but also consider budgetary and policy limitations. By at least acknowledging **potential problems with implementation**, you will make a more realistic and persuasive case.

Going back to the sample problem of workplace food storage, let's say you recommend purchasing a refrigerator for the break room. In addition to determining a budget for the purchase and making sure there's enough floor space with access to a grounded outlet, you would want to think about how the fridge would be used. How many employees would need to access it per day? Will there be enough room for everyone's lunch boxes/bags? What about long-term storage, like storing a case of water bottles or soda cans all week? Who will be responsible for cleaning the fridge, and when? You do not necessarily need answers for every single question, but bringing them up (perhaps to be addressed in future memos) is a good way to **enrich your analysis and demonstrate that you've thought carefully about the issues**.

### Grading Rubric

<b>Category</b>	<b>A (90-100%)</b>	<b>B (80-89%)</b>	<b>C (70-79%)</b>	<b>D/F (40-69%)</b>
Context Description (25 points)	Placed before header. Includes these rhetorical elements: author's role, audience, report content, and report goal/purpose.	Placed before or after header; missing info on 0-1 rhetorical elements.	Placed before or after header; missing info on 2-3 rhetorical elements.	Absent from document.
Memo Header (25 points)	Includes all these format elements: company logo, to, from, subject, and date fields. Subject line clearly establishes topic and approach.	Missing 0-1 format elements. Subject line generally relates to report content.	Missing 2-3 format elements. Subject line is "Project 2" or otherwise unrelated to report content.	Missing 4-5 format elements.
Document Structure (25 points)	1750-2500 total words. Section headings indicate content and add rhetorical value. Paragraphs are consistently 100-150 words long.	1500-1749 total words. Section headings mainly indicate content. Most paragraphs are 100-150 words long.	1000-1499 total words. Section headings copy assignment section names. Some paragraphs are 100-150 words long.	0-999 total words. Section headings are absent. Few paragraphs are 100-150 words long.
Research & Documentation (25 points)	3+ relevant sources, including 1 academic source. All quotes, paraphrases, and summaries are cited correctly.	3+ relevant sources, but missing academic source. Most quotes, paraphrases, and summaries are cited correctly.	1-2 relevant sources. Some quotes, paraphrases, and summaries are cited correctly.	No relevant sources mentioned or cited.

<p>Problem Analysis (50 points)</p>	<p>Detailed &amp; compelling analysis of the problem, clearly supported by research. Excellent understanding of the community, effects, and potential outcomes.</p>	<p>Solid and clear analysis of the problem, adequately supported by research. Good understanding of the community, effects, and potential outcomes.</p>	<p>Inconsistent or confusing analysis of the problem, poorly supported by research. Basic understanding of the community, effects, and potential outcomes.</p>	<p>Very little analysis of the problem, unsupported by research. Poor or inaccurate understanding of the community, effects, and potential outcomes.</p>
<p>Recommendations &amp; Counterargument (50 points)</p>	<p>Solution is clear, detailed, and targeted to the organization and setting. Includes these rhetorical elements: specific actions, a working budget, a timeline, and a list of specific benefits. Acknowledges and responds to one potential counterargument to the recommendations.</p>	<p>Solution is clear and detailed. Missing 0-1 rhetorical elements. Acknowledges a potential counterargument to the recommendations, but does not respond to it.</p>	<p>Solution has some vague or confusing parts. Missing 2 rhetorical elements. Does not acknowledge any potential counterarguments.</p>	<p>Solution is simplistic or only addresses part of the problem. Missing 3+ rhetorical elements. Does not acknowledge any potential counterarguments.</p>