

PROJECT PROPOSALS

You may be asked to write a project proposal to explain your plans for a large or long-term assignment: what you intend to do, how you'll go about doing it, and why the project is important. Like any proposal, a project proposal makes an argument, demonstrating that the project is worth doing and feasible given the time and resources you have available. Unless the assignment names other requirements, your proposal should cover the following ground:

An Indication of Your Topic and Focus

Explain what your topic is and give any necessary background information. In some cases, you might be required to do some background research and to include a **LITERATURE REVIEW** summarizing what you find, including any issues or controversies you want to investigate. Say what your research focus will be, with the **RESEARCH QUESTION** you plan to pursue and a tentative **THESIS**. Finally, say why the topic matters—so what, and who cares?

An Explanation of Why You're Interested in the Topic

Briefly explain what you already know about your topic and why you've chosen to pursue this line of inquiry. You might describe any coursework, reading, or experience that contributes to your knowledge and interest. Also note what you don't yet know but intend to find out by doing this project.

A Plan

Explain how you will investigate your research question. What types of sources will you need and what will your **RESEARCH METHODS** be? If you plan to do **FIELD RESEARCH**, how will you conduct your study? And what **GENRE** and **MEDIUM** will you use to present your findings? What steps will be required to bring it all together into the final document?

A Schedule

Break your project into tasks and make a schedule, taking into account all the research, reading, and writing you'll need to do. Include any specific tasks your instructor requires, such as handing in a draft or an **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**. Be sure also to leave yourself time to get feedback and revise.

DAVID PASINI, an engineering major at The Ohio State University, wrote this project proposal for a first-year writing course on the theme of sports in contemporary American society.

The Economic Impact of Investing Public Funds in Sports Franchises

DAVID PASINI



SINCE THE 1960s, local governments have provided increased funding and subsidies for professional sports franchises. Taxpayer money has gone toward facilities like stadiums and arenas, and many cities have offered tax exemptions and other financial incentives to keep a team in town that has threatened to relocate. Proponents of public funding for privately owned sports franchises argue that cities gain more from the arrangement—namely jobs, status, and tourist dollars—than they lose. Opponents argue that using public funds for these purposes results in long-term financial drains on local governments and point out that many communities have been abandoned by teams even after providing substantial benefits, leaving the city or state holding the proverbial debt-heavy bag.

Writing in the *New York Times*, Ken Belson gives an example of one such government-funded project: "The old Giants Stadium, demolished to make way for New Meadowlands Stadium, still carries about \$110 million in debt, or nearly \$13 for every New Jersey resident, even though it is now a parking lot" (Belson). The image

The introduction announces the topic and summarizes a controversy the project will focus on.

city, but not the

in the city



Figure 1. Left to right: the governor of New Jersey, William T. Cahill; the owner of the Giants, Wellington Mara; and chairman of the New Jersey sports authority, Sonny Werblin, admire a drawing of Giants Stadium. Photo by Neal Boenzi. (Belson A)

included here shows the governor of New Jersey looking over a drawing of the Giants Stadium, which was completed in 1976 and destroyed in 2010 (fig. 1).

Given the high stakes involved—and particularly the use of taxpayer dollars—it seems important, then, to ask what these sports franchises contribute (or do not contribute) to their cities and wider metropolitan areas. Do these teams “generate positive net economic benefits for their cities,” or do they “absorb scarce government funds” that would be better spent on programs that have “higher social or economic payoff” (Noll and Zimbalist 55)? My research project will investigate these questions.

The question of public funding for sports is important to any resident of a community that has a professional sports franchise or is trying to lure one, as well as to any citizen, sports fan or not, who is interested in the economic and political issues surrounding this topic. I am in the latter group, a nonfan who is simply interested in how public monies are being used to support sports, and whose knowledge about the issues is primarily in the economic domain. At this point in the research process, I am neither a pro-

ponent nor an opponent of investing in sports, but I think that it's important to consider just how—and how much—professional sports contribute to the economic well-being of the government that funds them. How much of the money that teams generate supports local businesses, school districts, or other important entities that benefit all citizens? How much of it stays in the owners' pockets? Do the franchises “give back” to their communities in any other tangible or intangible ways? The franchises themselves should consider these questions, since the communities that helped to provide them with the amenities they require to be successful sports teams have a right to expect something in return.

To learn more about investment in sports teams and the teams' economic impact, I will consult business and sports management journals and appropriate news sources, both print and digital. I will also interview stakeholders on both sides of the debate as well as experts on this topic. In my research, I will consider the many factors that must be taken into account, such as the benefits of tourism and the costs of “creating extra demand on local services” (Crompton 33). As a result of my research, I hope to offer insight on whether public funds are in fact put to good use when they are invested in major sports franchises.

Proposed Schedule

Do library and internet research	April 6–20
Submit annotated bibliography	April 20
Schedule and conduct interviews	April 21–25
Turn in first draft	May 10
Turn in second draft	May 18
Turn in final draft	May 25

Preliminary Works Consulted

Belson, Ken. “As Stadiums Vanish, Their Debt Lives On.” *The New York Times*, 8 Sept. 2010, p. A1.

Crompton, John L. “Economic Impact Analysis of Sports Facilities and Events: Eleven Sources of Misapplication.” *Journal of Sport Management*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1995, pp. 14–35.

More focused research questions, leading to a tentative thesis statement.

tentative thesis

A research plan, including kinds of sources he'll consult and field research he plans to conduct.

The conclusion restates why this research matters.

A schedule that allows time for research, writing, and revising—and lists assignment deadlines.

Pasini uses MLA style for a preliminary list of works consulted.

Noll, Roger G., and Andrew Zimbalist, editors. *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums*. Brookings Institution, 1997.

Robertson, Robby. "The Economic Impact of Sports Facilities." *The Sport Digest*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2008. www.thesportdigest.com/archive/article/economic-impact-sports-facilities. Accessed 1 Apr. 2011.

 **REFLECT.** *If you're reading about project proposals, you've likely been assigned to write one. Analyze what your assignment is asking for, comparing it with the features described on p. 343. What does this exercise help you appreciate about how such a proposal works? What you can learn from doing one?*

WRITING A PROPOSAL / A Roadmap

Think of a problem you can help solve

If you get to select the topic, begin by identifying an issue you know something about. You'll probably find it easiest—and most rewarding—to tackle an issue on which you can have some real impact. Try choosing a topic you have some knowledge and authority to speak on, and one that is narrowly focused or local enough so that your suggestions may be heard. You can't expect to solve all the problems of America's food system, but you may well be able to propose a more healthy and sustainable dining option on campus.

If you've been assigned a topic, consider ways that you can make it interesting to you and to your readers. This may mean finding an interesting angle on the topic you've been assigned, or, if the assignment is framed in general terms, finding a specific aspect that you can address with a specific solution.

Consider your rhetorical situation

Once you have a topic, thinking about your rhetorical situation will help you focus on how to proceed.

Think about your AUDIENCE. Who do you want your proposal to reach, and why? If you're proposing changes to a campus policy, you would do so differently if you're writing to school administrators in charge of that policy than if you're writing a piece for the student newspaper. Here are some things to consider:

- What do you know about your audience? In what ways are they like or unlike you—and one another?
- What will they likely know about your topic? What background information will you have to provide?
- What interest or stake are they likely to have in the situation you're addressing? Will you need to convince them that the problem matters—and if you do, how can you do so?
- What sorts of evidence will they find most convincing?
- How likely are they to agree with what you propose?