OL 101 Assignment One Homework
Online Learning: OL 101 Sustainable Development.
Center for Sustainable Development
https://csd-i.org/

This week's resources:
Class Home Page 101
OL 101 Assignment One Discussion
Download Class Documents 101: Summary of Ten Seed Technique Word Doc.
Download Class Documents 101: Ten Seed Technique Workshop Lesson Plan
Download Class Documents 101: Ten Seed Technique How-To Card
Magee Example Project 101 Assignment 1

Assignment 1. What's the real problem?
This first week's assignment will take longer that any of the assignments of the next 8 weeks. This is why you have three weeks for it. This gives you time to explore the online course structure and resources, to read the two discussions -- and to form a partnership if you would like to.

This assignment also has two components: a field component and a written component. I would suggest printing this assignment out by downloading it from Downloading Class Documents.

The three weeks also gives you time digest a lot of new concepts and to meet with a community in order to facilitate a needs assessment with them. Here are some of the things that you will need to digest:

Important Overview of problems, underlying causes and negative impacts.
In this course you are going to jump right into a series of brand-new concepts. This course is about developing sustainable, fundable, impact-oriented projects – and you start right away in Assignment One. Here are some background ideas.

When you meet with your community to do the Ten-Seed needs assessment, they will present you with a mixture of needs, problems, underlying causes, grievances and negative impacts. Your job as a facilitator is to encourage them to say everything that is on their mind. Their Ten-Seed vote will prioritize the two or three things that are the most important to them – so this will simplify your job.

Your job is to be an interpreter. You job will be to sort their array of challenges into three things:
1. One or two (**two maximum**) important problems (that they prioritized)
2. The underlying causes of those problems
3. The long-term negative impacts that the problems cause

Problems for the purposes of this course are the visible and compelling elements of the needs assessment. These are the things that human beings can relate to. For example, sick little kids or malnourished little kids are visible, compelling problems. You can see these, you can feel the pain and suffering. You can relate to them. But if the community lists (for example) contaminated water – realize that this is not a problem – it is a cause of a problem. Look for the visible, compelling problem that contaminated water causes.

Underlying causes in this course are the components that are the causes of the ultimate problems that your community identified. Contaminated water (in our example) and a lack of knowledge of health and hygiene (safe water storage, hand washing, kitchen hygiene) are good examples of the underlying causes that lead to sick little kids. A lack of knowledge that family gardens can increase family nutrition is an underlying cause to malnourished children. Underlying causes tend to be related to things (contaminated water) or knowledge (lack of knowledge of health and hygiene).

Negative Impacts are the long-term negative outcomes of the problem. Sick kids don't function well in school, have trouble gaining an education, and may therefore be unable to lead the prosperous, meaningful, productive lives that they need as adults to leave the cycle of poverty. Negative impacts are long-term outcomes – 5 to 15 years away. They are the ultimate reason why we are interested in working in development. It is terrible to see sick children – and you want to fix it right away – but the ultimate goal is to develop prosperous, well-educated community members that can work together in the prevention of illness. So your project is going to address the immediate problem (sick children) with the long-term goal of (positive impact) healthy, productive, well-educated community members.

Therefore, your job in evaluating the Ten-Seed assessment has two main components:
    1. Problem/cause/negative impact
        a. Figure out what the visible, compelling problem is (if all that the community comes up with are causes, ask them about what the ultimate problem is or use your observational skills)
        b. Figure out what the underlying cause is for that problem
        c. Figure out what the long-term impacts are
        d. Fit them into an outline exactly like the one in Magee Project Example Assignment 1.

2. Keep your problem/cause/impact outline short (one or two things maximum) and incredibly simple. The goal of the course is to learn how to develop projects – and you need start off with a simple project to learn the steps. If your community raises several challenges to be addressed – you can return and develop projects for those challenges also after you have learned how to do it in this course. If you are going to benefit from this course, you need a very, very simple project. Complex, grand projects won't help you out in the course.

Getting started.

Part 1: the Needs Assessment

Download the Summary of the Ten Seed Technique, the Ten Seed Technique Lesson Plan, the How-to Card, and the Magee Project Example from the Download Course Documents. Read though the first three activities of the Lesson Plan (you are only going to do Lesson Plan Activities 1, 2 and 3). I would recommend role-playing the Lesson Plan with a colleague for practice. Make adaptations to the lesson plan that would be appropriate for your community situation.

Find a group of community members that either you or one of your colleagues already has a trusting relationship established with. Set up 3-4 hour meeting with eight or 10 community members. Please try and meet with community members that represent the ultimate beneficiaries (mothers, fathers, families, farmers, weavers – whoever describe the community you are working with); try to avoid basing you assessment on a meeting with people in higher positions: mayors or city council members for example.

Work through the lesson plan with the group and begin making simple illustrations that represent the challenges they describe on sheets of paper. Ideally you will draw a large rectangle with nine or 12 smaller squares inside of it with one illustration in each square. An example could be that if there is a housing shortage, draw a little house.

After the group has come up with a good set of needs/problems, have everyone leave the workshop area. Give each one of the participants 10 seeds, or beans, or small stones. Only one person should go into the workshop area at a time to use their seeds to vote on the needs. They should select the needs which they feel as an individual are the most important. It is their decision if they want to put all 10 seeds in one square or if they want to distribute them around several different problems.

After each workshop participant has had a chance to cast their votes, you can count the total seeds in each square and write up a prioritized list ordered by the number of votes each problem received. This is a good time for the participants to have an open discussion about the results of the vote.

> **Important:**
> You should take a few minutes alone with the prioritized list and make a determination whether the items on their list are problems or underlying causes.
>
> You should also make the determination if the prioritized list represents two or three unrelated projects such as some health needs and some micro-enterprise needs. If that is the case, organize the list so that health needs are in one place and microenterprise in another.
>
> For the purposes of the course, I want you to develop a very simple, easily defined project. It would be a good idea to let the participants come to an agreement on which project should be attempted first. In our example above, you could ask them if they would prefer to work on the health component or the micro-enterprise project first.

Part 2: The Simple Project Outline

Take the project component that you agreed to work on with the community and write an outline (just exactly like on the Magee Project Example) of:

1. A problem or two (**maximum 2**)
2. An underlying cause or two
3. Some of the long-term negative impacts that will result from the problem.
4. A short paragraph (Problem Statement) that is nothing more than the combination of the three things in the simple outline above. The problem statement is not an introduction to a proposal, nor a paragraph of background information. It is simply the problem, the underlying causes and the negative impacts copied and pasted together in order.

Follow the Magee Project Example exactly – it is what we are looking for. Pull it up on your screen and type right over it.

The complete Assignment One homework to turn in will be:

1. The full list of needs/problems with the number of votes each received (Photos too please if possible! Attach a few separately or paste them onto page 2 – don't mix them in the main homework)
2. Simple project outline of problems/causes/negative impacts of the chosen project idea.

3. A short paragraph (Problem Statement) that is nothing more than the combination (copy and paste) of the problems/causes/negative impacts in the simple outline above. Look at my example to see how simple it is – no embellishments.

Very, Very, Important:
We are going to be presenting to you new, cutting-edge ideas in community-centered, sustainable, impact-oriented project design. At the end of the 12-week, step-by-step process you will have a brand-new, global perspective on this process that you don't have today, in this first week. You will need to trust our guidance in the early stages.

You will struggle with two challenges in the first two assignments.

The first challenge is that some initial projects are too complex. In the real world, most funded projects address one concept. Projects that are too complex are difficult to get funded, difficult to manage successfully, and from the perspective of this course, will overshadow what we are trying to teach you.

The second challenge is project drift; you have a great idea for your project in the first week, which changes a little in the second week as you creatively think about solutions, and it changes a little bit in the third week – and so on – until pretty soon you have a project that is a different project from Assignment One.

We will insist that you lock in on the project developed in weeks one and two as the project that will be used for the entire 12 weeks. Each week, I need to go back and refer to your first and second week assignments (that I printed out) throughout the rest of the 12 weeks. If you have changed the project, I lose the ability to track of the project's direction.

Therefore, this first assignment will set your project's direction for the rest of the two courses, OL 101 and 102: 12 weeks. I will invest a good amount of time in Assignment One and Assignment Two bringing them into alignment for you with the 12 steps of the course system. This is the same process that I use with clients as a paid consultant; I can't afford the time to do it twice for you if your project drifts.

Again, we will ask you to trust our guidance in the suggestions that we make at this early stage: it will become clear as to why over the 12 weeks. Our suggestions to these two assignments will need to be adopted as the final version of your project.

The advantage of staying with your original project is three-fold:
One, you will learn the system of refining one single project over 12 weekly steps.

Two, I will be able to refer back to Assignments One and Two at each step of the process in order to make sure that everything is being resolved and included as the process marches on.

Three, the assignments build on each other from one week to the next – so you will be able to refer back to your early assignments to make sure that everything is included in the process. For example, Assignment 6 is an expansion of Assignment 2. Assignment 7 is an expansion of Assignment 6. Assignments 11 and 12 are compilations of the previous 10 assignments.

In summary, trust our initial guidance: it will become evident why we make the suggestions we do. Focus on learning the system – you can always go back and modify your project quickly and easily at the end of the course when you understand all of the steps.

Go to Magee's Example Project Assignment **1** to see what this could look like.

See you next week.

Extra Information:
If you are pursuing:

    1. Your own project: Carry on.

    2. A project done with a course partner (for instance one partner in an urban setting and one with access to rural community members). You will need to explore how the two of you can best support each other. The person in the field will need to do the needs assessment, but from there on, the project development can be done together. It is really helpful if the person in the field can take a few digital photos for their urban partner.

    3. An Urban Project. As we discussed in the opening class page, there is no reason why you can't quickly develop an urban project. Go here for ideas.

    4. A Virtual project. You have the opportunity of inventing your own project idea.