

**Summary:** This Project Based Learning (PBL) example was developed by Christian Garbis and Brent A. Anders, Ph.D., and is taken from a Professional Communication course within the English and Communications program at AUA. This is a useful example in that it can be easily modified and applied within virtually any department/course.

**Process:** The final assignment within the Professional Communication course requires students to work in groups of 3 to 4 and come up with a grant proposal to the “Make Armenia Great Foundation” (a fictitious organization used to make the entire process as real as possible). Below are the main parts of this PBL project example organized as per the recommended gold standard for PBL consisting of *seven key PBL project design elements*.

- 1) **A Challenging Problem or Question:** Student groups must come up with a specific issue - real-world problem that currently exists in Armenia and actions that could actually be taken to help resolve that problem.
- 2) **Sustained Inquiry:** Students are given some class time, but work is also done outside of class to properly investigate the issue as well as research and develop realistic actions in order to help solve the problem.
- 3) **Authenticity:** The project assignment specifically requires students to identify a current, real-world, pressing issues/problem that is affecting Armenia. Then, in accordance with a provided rubric, must come up with a detailed quality solution that is presented through a formal written grant proposal as well as a professional presentation to a mock grant approving judge(s).
- 4) **Student Voice & Choice:** Students are given a lot of leeway in identifying the issue/problem that they find most compelling and are also given autonomy in deciding what would be the best way to specifically address/solve the issue. The way that their group gives the final presentation is also open to creative modification.
- 5) **Reflection:** Students are asked to keep individual journals about their process. Each group must also provide weekly email updates to document their general progress. Additionally, the instructor meets with each group weekly to discuss their progress and give them a chance to reflect on their actions towards project completion.
- 6) **Critique & Revision:** An initial short grant proposal document is required from each group at the beginning of the project to help each group better organize their thoughts and steer the direction in which they will do additional research. The initial document is

then reviewed by the instructor to ensure it is on the right path and appropriate to meet all the rubric requirements. Groups are also given opportunities to present to their peers for pre-final peer feedback. During the final presentation, feedback is given by both the instructor (judge(s)) and peers.

*To help ensure effective group work dynamics, each member of a group additionally completed a final assessment on how well each group member did in participating within the group and fairly doing their part of the work required for success. This assessment was used to address any problem group members. Students were periodically reminded of this to help motivate their dedication to their group success.*

- 7) **Public Product:** Student groups are required to not only create a final grant document but must also give their presentations to the class, additional guests (the public) are also invited to come and guest judges can also be utilized. Final documents and videos of the students' presentations can also be placed online for all to see and learn from.

\*Students expressed that this PBL activity was the most challenging yet also the most rewarding part of the class. Most feedback from students revealed that it took a lot of work and effort but was a great experience because they had more freedom and got to really use their skills in critical thinking, research/investigating, analysis, creation, and presentation/communication.

**Scaffolding Utilized:** To help ensure student success, various types of scaffolding (learning assistance) were utilized. Prior to the assignment, classes were given on the importance of being able to work effectively in a team, conflict management, and how to create a business report (used as a foundation for the grant document). Additional readings on these topics were made available as well. Students were also given access to example grant documents so they could see what a quality finished product would need to look like.

*Below are documents utilized within this example Project Based Learning activity to include the initial document given to students and the rubric used for the final assessments.*

## Initial Guiding Document Given to Students:



# **MAKE ARMENIA GREAT FOUNDATION**

## **-CALL FOR PROPOSALS-**

The Government of the Republic of Armenia (along with private funding) has established the **MAKE ARMENIA GREAT FOUNDATION**, which is seeking proposals that focus on community outreach for the greater Armenian community. These proposals should focus on how your initiative will meet the expectations and desires of making Armenia a better place for all Armenian citizens and, ultimately, the global community. The **MAKE ARMENIA GREAT FOUNDATION** is looking for creativity, feasibility, and wide expected impact in the proposed projects. There are no placed limitations in scope, implementation, and desired impact. Proposals will be evaluated and voted upon by a special judge(s).

The **MAKE ARMENIA GREAT FOUNDATION** will determine whether the winning bid will be supported by a grant as well as professional advisement. The winning team may also be showcased with other socially progressive initiatives on a worldwide scale with partner foundations from around the world. We will support this initiative for two years from the date of implementation.

The **MAKE ARMENIA GREAT FOUNDATION**'s mission is to empower university-level students to embrace volunteerism and create positive change in their communities.

**Requirements:** Submit an initial proposal (500-1000 words in **Microsoft Word format**) addressing three sections: Problem, Proposed Solution, and Goals

**Deadline:** Written Initial Proposals due by DAY MONTH YEAR  
Proposal Presentation will start the week of DAY MONTH YEAR  
Final Written Proposals due DAY MONTH YEAR

*Announcement of winning bid: Week of DAY MONTH YEAR*



Liam Andersyan,  
Chairman  
**MAKE ARMENIA GREAT FOUNDATION**

## Rubric Proposal Written (Grant) - Professional Communications - Professor Anders

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT (90 - 100%)	ABOVE AVERAGE (80-89%)	AVERAGE (70 - 79%)	BELOW AVERAGE (60-69%)	UNACCEPTABLE (68% & below)
<b>Sections</b>	All sections (executive summary, the problem, the proposed solution, how it will work, goals, what is needed to get started, financial analysis, summary) are present within the document.	One section (executive summary, history/background, organizational structure, products/services, conclusion, and references) was missing within the document.	Two sections (executive summary, history/background, organizational structure, products/services, conclusion, and references) were missing within the document.	Three sections (executive summary, history/background, organizational structure, products/services, conclusion, and references) are missing within the document.	Four or more sections ( <i>as previously expressed</i> ) were missing within the document.
<b>Content</b>	Provided excellent, accurate, detailed information. Properly cited any figures/images or direct quotes. Visuals used when appropriate for clarity/impact.	Provided generally good, accurate, detailed information derived from 2 official and 1 additional source. Properly cited most figures/images or direct quotes.	Provided generally good, accurate information derived from 1 official and 1 other source. Most figures/images or direct quotes not properly cited.	Provided general information derived from 1 official or 1 other source. Did not cite figures/images or direct quotes.	Provided poor information. Did not provide any sources and did not attempt to cite any figures, images, or direct quotes.
<b>Effectiveness (word choice- language use)</b>	Used vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words seemed accurate, natural, and not forced. Document was persuasive and engaging to read.	Used vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words were accurate most of the times. Document was mostly persuasive and mostly easy to read.	Used clear words and phrases. The choice and placement of words were accurate most of the times. Document was sometimes persuasive and easy to read.	Used a limited vocabulary. Jargon or clichés may be present and detracted from the meaning. Document was not persuasive or pleasant to read.	Poor word choice and language used throughout the document.
<b>Grammar &amp; mechanics</b>	All sentences were well constructed and had varied structure and length. Proper titles and "white space" utilized. No errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling noted. In Microsoft Word format.	Most sentences were well constructed and had varied structure and length. Only 2 or 3 errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling noted, but they do not interfere with understanding. Not in Microsoft Word format.	Most sentences were well constructed, but they had a similar structure and/or length. The author made several (4 or 5) errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfered with understanding.	Sentences sounded awkward, were distractingly repetitive, or are difficult to understand. The author made numerous errors (6 or 7) in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfered with understanding.	The author made numerous errors (8 or more) in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfered with understanding.

## Rubric: Proposal Presentation - Professional Communications - Professor Anders

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>EXCELLENT (90 - 100%)</b>	<b>ABOVE AVERAGE (80-89%)</b>	<b>AVERAGE (70 - 79%)</b>	<b>BELOW AVERAGE (60-69%)</b>	<b>UNACCEPTABLE (68% &amp; below)</b>
<b>Appearance</b>	Presenters and their environments presented an exceptionally professional appearance. No environmental distractions. Serves as an example to others.	Presenters and environment presented a good professional appearance. Little to no environmental distractions.	Presenters and environment presented an average appearance that was not fully professional. Some environmental distractions.	Presenter and environment presented a negative non-professional appearance. Some to a lot of environmental distractions.	Presenter and environment presented a negative non-professional appearance. A lot of environmental distractions.
<b>Content</b>	Provided excellent, accurate, detailed information in a friendly and professional manner. Information presented was concise and addressed all sections (the problem, the proposed solution, how it will work, goals, what is needed to get started, financial analysis, summary).	Provided good, accurate, detailed information in a mostly friendly and professional manner. Information presented was mostly concise and only missed one main section.	Provided acceptable, mostly accurate, information in a generally friendly and professional manner. Information presented was generally concise and only missed two sections.	Provided very marginal, information in plain manner. Information presented was not concise and only somewhat relative. Missed three needed sections.	Provided bad information in negative manner. Information presented was not concise or relative missed four or more sections. Unprofessional.
<b>Effectiveness (word choice- language use)</b>	Used expressive words and phrases with excellent-appropriate emotion. Language used was effective, confident, natural, and not forced (spoke at appropriate speed). Persuasive with great visuals.	Used clear words and phrases with good and mostly appropriate emotion. Language used was effective, mainly confident, natural, and not forced (mostly spoke at appropriate speed). Mostly persuasive with some good visuals.	Used mostly clear words and phrases with mostly good-appropriate emotions. Language used was effective, somewhat confident, natural, and mostly not forced. Persuasive at times, one or two good visuals.	Poor use of words and emotion. Language used was somewhat effective, not confident or natural, and somewhat forced. Not persuasive, poor visuals used.	Language used was ineffective, not confident or natural, and felt very forced without any emotion. Used slang, unprofessional language. Not persuasive at all and/or no visuals used.
<b>Technical Aspects</b>	Audio quality, lighting, and framing (if done by video) were perfectly implemented. An example to others. Completed within allotted time.	Audio quality, lighting, and framing were well implemented. Less than one minute off of allotted time.	Audio quality, lighting, and framing were acceptably implemented. Off of allotted time by one minute or more.	Audio quality, lighting, and framing were poorly implemented.	No effort made in audio quality, lighting, or framing implementation.