

# Unit 2: Internal Background Research for Group Problem Setting (200 Points)

A backgrounder or white paper is an informative research report that provides background information related to a focused topic. While sometimes white papers have been reimagined as marketing tools, especially for high tech products, for our class use these documents as internal communication, designed to share information inside an organization in response to a specific issue.

Unlike an argumentative paper, the goal of a backgrounder is not to compel a specific action or present a conclusion; instead, it is meant to provide contextual information necessary for an unfamiliar audience to understand the topic or issue at hand so that they might later make informed contributions and decisions. Even though the purpose is to inform, a backgrounder is still highly rhetorical. Because the information presented has been chosen specifically for the intended audience it cannot be considered “neutral” even though it may not explicitly make an argument.

Typically, a backgrounder is immediately followed by a recommendation report or action plan, which assumes the reader is already familiar with the information in the backgrounder. The backgrounder establishes the groundwork and puts the audience in the right frame of mind to then be presented with a more argumentative report.

## Task:

As a group, choose areas of research related to the problem or issue identified in your group’s proposal memo. Each member of your group should have a specific area of research to consider. Research topics and write short background reports to share with your group. These reports should help you make decisions about further research needed and will help you compile an individual recommendation report as your final project.

## Deliverables:

- ❖ **A group proposal**, of no more than 2 pages, that situates your issue in context and explains your plans for individual research, including any concerns or questions about research and reports.
- ❖ Each member of your group will submit a **well-researched individual report of 4 to 5 pages**. Your audience for this report is internal, meaning you are writing a report designed to inform your group members and your manager (me) about a facet of the problem your group wants to address.
- ❖ **Each report should include a letter of transmittal** that summarizes research and explains and complications you encountered or further research your group should consider.
- ❖ A self-evaluation rubric and reflection.

## **Assessment of successful projects will include but is not limited to:**

- ❖ Professional ethos in tone and attitude for all elements of this assignment.
- ❖ Engagement with instructor and group about research and revision to proposal.
- ❖ Completion of all deliverables on time.
- ❖ Awareness to the rhetorical situation of a background document (audience, purpose, exigence, context)
- ❖ Thorough research, including well documented (APA or Chicago) source material (Including a bibliography of at least five sources.)
- ❖ Good use of document design principles including headings, bullet points, and visuals as needed to make reports scannable so that information is easy to find and absorb.

## **Tasks to consider:**

- ❖ How will your group manage communication and share documents? I have set up a Google Drive folder for each group. You will be required to submit some documents via Google Drive throughout the remainder of the semester.
- ❖ How will you schedule research within the time frame required?
- ❖ Will you use your group for peer review during the drafting process?
- ❖ Will you make group decisions about format or design in order to make your individual reports more cohesive? How will you communicate these decisions if so?

## **Recommendations**

- ❖ As we move into group work for the rest of the semester, I recommend you set up some kind of external communication, via whatever platform your group agrees on. Some past platforms groups have used include Slack, Discord, and GroupMe. You can choose to add me to these groups but it is not required. I will ask that you share your group proposals in your group's Google Drive. This allows for real time editing/collaborating and commenting.
- ❖ Google Docs are also incredibly useful for handling the problem of version control. If you use google docs for writing and editing you can see the changes group members are making in real time rather than working in separate documents that have to be reconciled or discarded later.
- ❖ There is a file sharing platform in Brightspace. It isn't ideal, but it is a resource available to you if Google Drive doesn't work.