

## From Dr. Greg Streib's Public Budgeting Class at Georgia State University:

**Assignment 1** *Budget Action Memo:* Effective arguments can often make a difference in budget debates. This assignment will help you to hone your skills. You must develop a memo that will spur action on a budget related issue. The goal of your memo can be to get your issue on a public agenda or to aid a policy choice (by presenting a single solution or a range of possible solutions). *The completed memos will be posted on a special class bulletin board as Word attachments.*

You should avoid ideological arguments. Your memo should make a case for action that can be understood by a broad audience. Readers of your memo should be able to fully understand that a solvable problem exists and recognize the need for action. As a general rule, people are good at spotting problems, but presenting the problem in a way that commands action takes a bit more thought. Solvable problems are more likely to attract funding.

Students must cite all sources appropriately and have a minimum of three sources. The memos are also expected to have a meaningful title (meaningful for the audience--that is, the citizen or the contributor) and a conclusion that also provides a summary of key issues and/or arguments.

The memos should be one to three pages in length in a single spaced format. References can include newspapers, periodicals, Web sites, or even interviews. The style of the citations can vary, but it must be easy to access any information that has been cited. Any citations in the text should include a date and the author(s). Please use hyperlinks or footnotes for links to Web sites. There should not be any Web addresses mixed in with your text.

Apart from the specific instructions given here, the memos will be graded on whether they frame a problem in a way that could possibly be addressed by a government or nonprofit organization and how well they conform to the class rubrics. Some handouts

will be provided to help you with this task

All assignments submitted in this class receive instructor comments. The comments will be sent via Vista Email or posted on the Vista assignment page, depending on how the assignment was submitted.

## Assignment 2

*Trend Analysis Report:* It is often necessary to assess the financial condition of an organization, both at the present time and for the foreseeable future. For this assignment, you must choose a government, single agency or nonprofit organization and conduct an in-depth analysis of revenues and expenditures for the past six years. You are responsible for doing whatever research is needed to completely address all the required components of your report. It is likely that you can get the appropriate legislation, fiscal data, and budget documents off the Web, but personal interviews might also be useful. The approach you use is up to you.

Consider this to be a consulting report for a firm that has been asked to develop this analysis for a potential investor (as in the case of an economic development project) or a contributor. If you are looking at a single agency, you may want to think of this project as a component of a financial audit being conducted by GAO or a similar oversight agency. Focus your work on providing the information that your client needs to make appropriate management decisions.

Your final product should be at least 10 typed pages, double-spaced, not including title page, tables, footnotes, references, etc. Please use standard margins and a standard font size. *You may complete this project with a partner*, but this is something that you will need to arrange. More information about this assignment will be provided on the class home page at an appropriate time.

Each trend analysis should contain the following components:

1. Identify organization mission, goals, and

- objectives;
2. Describe tax and non-tax revenue sources;
  3. Describe expenditure categories and trends (using appropriate tables and graphics);
  4. Assess the budgetary process--political, incremental, crisis oriented, results oriented, or a hybrid;
  5. Identify future challenges--regarding revenues, expenditures, budget process, or other aspects;
  6. Reach a conclusion about the fiscal capacity and stability of the organization you studied.

Apart from the specific instructions given here, the reports will be graded on how well they conform to the class rubrics. It will also be possible for drafts to be submitted for review, but they must be posted to a special bulletin board that the entire class can view. These postings are encouraged, as they should help to increase the quality of the projects.

A 5 minute oral presentation is also required. Each presentation should summarize the highlights of a trend analysis, and this will account for 50% of the presentation grade. An additional 25% will be based on how well the presentation conforms to the 5 minute time limit. The final 25% will be based on the utility of your analysis for decision makers. You need to focus on the most important information to get a top grade.

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