

COLLECTION OF INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR A PROJECT

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One of the most important aspects of a project is the collection of data. It is no secret that the success of a project depends on the authenticity and accuracy of the information, data etc. collected for the project. Therefore it is extremely important to carry out the collection of information required for a project, in an organized manner.

Identification of information required for a project

The information required varies from project to project. Therefore when a topic is selected, the information available with regard to the project should be gathered. This means the reading of any books, publications reports etc., written in relation to the topic and gaining a basic understanding of the topic. Where such literature is not available, it is important to identify why information is required, in view of the objectives and the process of the project.

For example, if the project is on a topic related to study investigation, a preliminary knowledge could be acquired by examining a parallel investigation or literature on similar topics. Where an invention is selected as a project, information on similar or parallel inventions would provide an understanding of the subject. However it might be difficult to obtain such information with regard to all topics. In such instances it would be important to obtain the

advice of a resource person in the relevant field. The process of the project should be prepared step by step in the form of a flow chart. From the inception of the project the information and data that can be gathered should be noted down. Accordingly, the additional data required to reach the intended goal could be identified.

A description of such data should first be prepared. Also the time periods during which the data will be required according to the time schedule of the project should also be noted down. The sources and methods, institutions and resource persons from whom data can be gathered should then be listed out. It is necessary to be very attentive in selecting institutions persons, organizations for the collection of information. It is important to find out whether the expected information could be obtained from the institutions identified. It is often easier to obtain information from state sector institutions than from those in the public sector. Therefore it is preferable to make contacts with public sector as far as possible for the collection of information. It should be stressed that this does not mean that it is difficult to obtain information from the private sector, as there are many instances where the private sector has provided such information. It is necessary to have a specific form to obtain information and to record the information when it is collected.

Some projects require information based on results of experiments/investigations carried out by the project. To collect such data too, the relevant tables should be prepared systematically. Further, it is necessary to develop a method of checking the accuracy of the information collected. Information collected from the results of experiments could be verified by comparing with the results obtained by repeating the experiments. Where information is gathered from the environment too, it is preferable to take two readings.

Directories of sources, such as places, organizations etc. from where information on different areas could be obtained have also been published. Such directories or manuals of instruction are often found in libraries. For instance, a directory containing complete details about institutions related to environmental protection programmes has been prepared by the NIE and sent to school libraries. This index becomes useful for projects related environmental programmes. The telephone directory too could be used to find out details about places from where certain information could be obtained.

Steps required to collect information

There is a process to be followed in order to obtain information, after having identified the necessary information as indicated in the above section.

Where information is to be obtained from an external institution

A brief introduction to the project and a clear and brief description of what is to be done under the project should be submitted to the Head of the institution concerned.

In the next paragraph, a clear description of the information to be obtained from that institution

should be submitted. A table or a format prepared for the provision of information to suit your purposes would make the work easier for the institution. Further, it is essential to mention that the information thus obtained would be used only for this purpose. A letter complete in all the above aspects should be submitted with the signature of the Principle of the school to the Head of the Organizations, placing a copy in the project file.

For some projects where it is not possible to obtain information through a letter, it might be necessary to go to the institution concerned. Often the practice is to visit institutions and obtain the information required. In such instances, it should be indicated in the letter, that you will be coming to the institution to obtain such information, give a description of the information required and request that a suitable date and time be granted.

There are instances where some institutions do not give certain information. For instance certain financial institutions, and commercial establishments retain certain information as confidential. Where there are difficulties in obtaining such information, amendments in the projects have to be made in consultation with the project Consultation Committee. In instances where satisfactory responses to letters are not forthcoming it might be possible to arrange to obtain such information on the telephone.

When information has to be obtained from an individual / individuals

Initially a letter that indicates clearly the nature of the project, the information required and the reason for selecting the individual/individuals concerned should be sent. These letters too should be sent through the Principal of the

school. It is also important to ask in this letter, how this information could be obtained. Inquiries such as whether the relevant information could be obtained through letters or through an interview could also be made in the first letter itself. It is essential to design a form, which is suitable for the extraction of the required data. The design of the form should also facilitate the analysis of the data obtained.

Sometimes it might be necessary to obtain information on several occasions. On each of these occasions, your requirements should be indicated and forwarded by letters. Similarly on every occasion that information is obtained in this manner, the correct practice is to send a letter thanking the individual/individuals concerned through the Principal of the school. Copies of all this correspondence should be placed in the file.

When information is to be retrieved from literature

Information obtained from newspapers books and journals also could be very important. Further it is important to pay great attention to how the information obtained in this way, is used for the project and how it is entered in the project report. If a section is extracted from a book and included in the project report in the same form, it should be found out whether it is necessary to obtain the author's permission to do so. This will be indicated in the front pages of the book. Such extractions could be done from some book. In the case of some books, the author's permission is required to do so. On such occasion it is appropriate to obtain the advice of the Advisory Board. Further when the relevant information is being included in the report, the institutions, newspapers, journals etc. from which the information was obtained should be mentioned.



Figure 1: A group of students who are involved in a bio-gas project obtaining some information from a teacher