

# Prospectus Guidelines

[Political Science 5397](#)

[Political Science 5335](#)

Applied Research Project  
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The research prospectus (or proposal) is a document that discusses the nature of your future project. The prospectus has four parts:

1. Statement of research question or purpose
2. Conceptual framework
3. Methodology
4. [Human Subjects Protection](#)

Note: Please use this link to review examples of prospectus [Prospectus Examples](#) All prospectuses **MUST** include page numbers, internal referencing and a bibliography

## I. Statement of the Research Purpose

The research purpose statement should be prefaced with introductory material that explains why and how the research purpose has merit or is compelling. Directly or indirectly there should be a connection to public administration.

The research purpose statement should correspond to one of the research purposes developed in the “Missing Link” article by Shields & Tajalli (2006) <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/polsfacp/39/> . The purpose should be preceded with a subheading and should be clearly identifiable as

- Exploratory
- Descriptive
- Gauging (or assessing a process)
- Decision Making
- Explanatory/Predictive (impact evaluation)

If possible terms like “explore,” “describe,” “assess,” “explain,” “explanatory,” “influences the likelihood,” “evaluate factors influencing,” and “evaluate the impact” should be used in the purpose statement. This will focus the attention on the type of research purpose and set the stage for a coherent ARP – one with research purpose, conceptual framework, operationalization and results all coherently lined up.

**EXAMPLE: Exploratory Research Purpose**

1. Aida Berduo Douglas <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/107/>

**Title:** “Exploring the Barriers to Community Involvement in Public Transportation: The Case of Capital Metro”

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this research study is to explore the perceived barriers to community involvement in public transportation from the perspective of the minority community in Austin, Texas which is served by the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

2. Melissa Meyer <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/12/>

**Title:** “Exploring Texas Policy Toward Narcotics”

**Purpose Statement:** The general purpose of this research project is to explore state narcotics policy, with more in-depth research into the political and bureaucratic factors that influence Texas narcotic policies.

3. Kim Gunn <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/18/>

**Title:** Exploring Environmental Policy in Austin, Texas

**Purpose Statement:** First, this study explores the various factors influencing the implementation of local environmental policies, including local pressures, the level of resources, political demands, and administrative capacity. The second purpose is to explore the various strategies used in local environmental policies, including market-based, information-based, and public cost strategies.

4. **Other ARPs that use the Exploratory Purpose**

Heather Gatlin <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/125/> (award winner)

Demetria Howard Watkins <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/115/>

Ronald Ellis <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/110/>

Stephen Este <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/250/>

Shivaun Perez <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/76/> (national award)

## EXAMPLE: Descriptive Research Purpose

1. Josh Shepherd <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/261/>

**Title:** Attitudes and Opinions of Agricultural Growers in Texas Regarding Guest Worker Policy

**Purpose Statement:** This purpose of this research is to describe the attitudes and opinions of agricultural growers in Texas regarding guest worker policy.

2. Tyler Revel <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/202/>

**Title:** “Perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff’s Office Pertaining to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education’s Stress Management Curriculum”

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this research is to describe the perceptions and attitudes of the Hays County Sheriff’s Office employees who have taken the (TCLEOSE) Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education’s stress management training.

3. Rebecca Anderson <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/43/> (over 800 downloads 2/25/08)

**Title:** “A Description of Domestic Partner Benefit Policies of State, County, and City Governments

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this research is to describe domestic partner benefits in state, county, and city government

4. **Other ARPs that use the Descriptive Purpose**

Brad Sinclair <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/32/>

Rebecca Britain <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/258/>

Elena Esparza <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/35/>

Saidat Ilo <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/11/>

Karak Fields <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/111/>

Jessica Dovalina <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/107/>

Bryce Kessler (over 900 downloads 2/25/08)

<http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/5/>

## **EXAMPLE: Gauging Research Purpose**

**Note:** Because the gauging research purpose is so often used in process evaluation there are usually three purposes. The first purpose develops a model that will be used to assess a particular management or policy process. The second purpose deals with the assessment. The assessment will reveal which aspects of the process do and do not meet the practical ideal model. Using these findings, the third purpose, recommendations to improve the policy or management process follow.

1. **Jason Vaden** <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/207/>

**Title:** A Model Assessment Tool for Classroom Technology Infrastructure in Higher Education

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this research is threefold. The first purpose is to establish a practical ideal model to assess current classroom technology infrastructure in higher education. Second, is to assess current classroom technology infrastructure at Texas State University. The final purpose is to provide recommendations for improving classroom technology infrastructure at Texas State University.

2. **Melissa Whitmore** <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/185/>

**Title:** Success Through Succession: Implementing Succession Planning at the Texas Department of Insurance

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of this research is threefold. First, based on the Applied Research Project of Sharon Ley (2002), as well as relevant literature the critical components of an ideal succession plan are developed. Second, utilizing the practical ideal type characteristics, succession planning at the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) is assessed. Finally, based on the assessment, recommendations to improve succession planning at TDI are presented.

3. **Michael Roberts** <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/209/>

**Title:** Applying the Andragogical Model of Adult Learning: A Case Study of the Texas Comptroller's Fiscal Management Division

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this research is three-fold. First, the components of an andragogical class are developed and explained. Second, regularly scheduled Fiscal Management training classes are assessed using the components. Third, recommendations on ways to improve the training classes are offered.

4. **Other ARPs that use the gauging purpose**

Chance Sparks <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/251/>

John Marcus West <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/257/>

Katherine Petersen <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/118/>

Candace Moreno Ferguson <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/10/> (over 600 downloads 2/25/08)

Victoriano Casas III <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/109/> (over 700 downloads 2/25/08).

Rebecca Ann Blecke <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/82/>

**EXAMPLE: Decision Making Research Purpose**

1. **James Paul Quintero** <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/259/>

**Title:** Regional Economic Development: An Economic Base Study and Shift-Share Analysis of Hays County, Texas

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, this paper analyzes the economy of Hays County, Texas using the economic base study to determine the structure and composition of the local market. Second, this study analyzes the Hays County's economy using shift-share analysis to compare regional growth against national development.

2. **Elizabeth Ascott** <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/104/>

**Title:** A Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Wonder World Drive Overpass in San Marcos, Texas

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to two fold. First is to hold a detailed discussion about benefit-cost analysis and how it is used. The second is to apply the theory of benefit-cost analysis to a real project: the Wonder World Drive overpass in San Marcos, Texas.

## **EXAMPLE: Explanatory/Predictive Research Purpose**

**Note:** There are generally two kinds of explanatory research. One focuses on the impact of a program or policy on an outcome. Below, Michael Good's, John Bolton's and David McCauley have an impact evaluation purpose. Other explanatory research seek to find the determinants of a phenomena (reaching goals, bond election passage). The focus is to explain the phenomena more generally and not whether a particular program is effective. The Doehrman and Mendoza papers are examples of research that emphasize finding determinants. In some sense the first focuses on the independent variable (the program). The second focuses on the dependent variable (explaining the phenomena).

1. Tessa Sue Doehrman <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/249/>

**Title:** Factors Influencing States' Success in Reaching Healthy People 2000.

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate factors influencing states' success in reaching the goals of Healthy People 2000, National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives.

2. Michael Good <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/203/>

**Title:** An Evaluation of the Impact of Hopwood on Minority Enrollment at the University of Texas at Austin

**Research Purpose:** This explanatory research project evaluates the impact of Hopwood v. the State of Texas on minority enrollment at the University of Texas at Austin.

3. Richard Mendoza <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/256/>

**Title:** Explaining the Affects of Public Participation and the State of the Local Economy on Municipal Bond Elections.

**Research Purpose:** This explanatory study evaluates the impact of public participation programs and the health of the local economy on municipal bond election outcome.

4. John Bolton <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/126/>

**Title:** An Evaluation of Fingerprinting on Registered Nurse Licensure Rates in the State of Texas

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to determine whether fingerprinting for the purpose of obtaining criminal history record information has an impact on registered nurse (RN) licensure rates in the State of Texas.

5. David McCauley <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/206/>

**Title:** The Impact of Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Programs on College Graduation

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to test whether Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment courses for high school students influence the likelihood of enrolled students graduating from a four-year college or university within six years.

6. Other ARPs that use the explanatory/predictive research purpose  
Michael Estrada <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/208/>  
Jessica Sievert <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/262/>  
James Good <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/112/>  
Charles Kelm <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/30/> (award winner)  
Brion Oaks <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/29/>

## II. Conceptual Framework (1 to 3 pages) (excluding the table)

The conceptual framework section links the research question to the larger literature and provides the theoretical structure for the entire paper.

Please re-read "Pragmatism as Philosophy of Science: A Tool for Public Administration" (Shields 1998) <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/polsfacp/33/> and Intermediate Theory: The Missing Linke in Successful Student Scholarship (Shields & Tajalli, 2006) <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/polsfacp/39/> before developing this section. These articles should help refresh your memory about conceptual frameworks. They should also help you justify your choice of framework(s).

The choice of frameworks include:

- Working Hypotheses
- Pillar Questions
- Descriptive Categories
- Models of Operations Research
- Formal Hypotheses

In this section you **MUST** include a table that summarizes the conceptual framework and links it to the literature (or another relevant framework in PA).

*A short narrative that explains and justifies the components in the framework must accompany the table. This narrative should begin by connecting the research question/purpose to the framework and the literature.*

If the conceptual framework consists of descriptive categories or a practical ideal type subheadings should be used for each category. There should be at least one paragraph that justifies each category. The section should explain why the category was included in the framework and discuss the elements within the category. This section should be carefully referenced. There should be correspondence between the literature referenced in the narrative and the table. If the framework is a hypothesis, remember that the hypothesis is a statement of expectations. Please provide reasoning and references that justify the expectation.

**FAILURE TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION IS THE MOST COMMON REASON PROSPECTUS ARE RETURNED FOR REVISION.**

### **III. Methodology (1 to 5 pages)**

- A. Discuss the technique/method you intend to use to address the research question or test the above hypotheses. **Explain why** it is the most appropriate method to address the research question. Demonstrate that the data collection instrument connects to the research purpose and conceptual framework. Provide an operationalization table that links the mode(s) of observation and expected evidence to the conceptual framework. Explain the table in brief narrative.

Common techniques or methods:

1. Survey Research
2. Content Analysis
3. Structured Interviews
4. Focus Groups
5. Analysis of aggregated data or existing statistics (e.g., aggregated crime statistics, tax revenue by county)

6. Document Analysis (e.g., review of agency minutes, plans, newsletters etc.)
7. Archival Record Analysis (e.g., agency file data)
8. Experimental or quasi-experimental design
9. Case study research (usually multi-method e.g., interviews, document analysis, direct observation)

**B. Provide an analytical discussion of the strengths and the weaknesses of the method you have selected based on your review of research methodology literature. Apply the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses to your research question.**

**C. Discuss specific methodological issues.**

1. **Sampling:** When relevant, discuss the population, sampling frame, sampling method (random, systematic, stratified) and the expected size of the sample. Almost all methodologies involve some form of sampling. If multiple methodologies are used, nest the sampling discussion within the larger discussion of the specific methodology. For example if both survey research and interviews are conducted, a discussion of the sampling processes/decisions should be discussed for both techniques.
2. **Statistics:** When relevant, discuss the statistics (statistical tests) that will be used to address the research question. Explain and justify your choice.

**D. Some issues are unique to a particular method:**

**For survey research,** include a preliminary **copy of the instrument** and a discussion of how you plan to pretest the instrument.

**For content Analysis,** include a copy of the coding scheme and discussion of the unit of analysis. What is the nature of the document or social artifact that you will be studying. Remember that this is the type of research that needs a full discussion of the sample.

For **experimental/quasi-experimental** design, include a discussion of the control group/comparison group and a description of the design e.g., Pre-test, posttest comparison group. Discuss variable measurement. Identify independent and dependent variables and show how you will measure them. This will be found in the table.

For **Case Study** discuss the organization(s) you will be studying. Justify why this is an appropriate organization(s) to analyze. Include a copy of the interview questionnaire (probably open ended) that you intend to use. Discuss whom you intend to interview and the method you used to choose them. This discussion can be approximate, for example what types of people do you intend to interview. See document analysis below for discussion of how to discuss document analysis.

For **Focus Groups**, include a copy of the questions or issues that will be the topic of the group discussion. Describe the number of groups, their approximate size and the type of people that will make up the group. Describe how you will collect the data (transcript or tape etc.).

For **Document Analysis**, list the documents that that will be used. Document analysis is usually a supplemental method used in conjunction with field research/case study. Note that content analysis and document analysis are very different.

For **Analysis to Existing statistics or aggregate data analysis**, discuss the data source you will use to address the research question. Be as specific as possible. Discuss how variables will be measured and if appropriate the independent and dependent variables.

#### **IV. Human Subjects Protection (1 to 10 paragraphs) (Applies only to research that involves human subjects).**

The prospectus should also include a statement of :

- A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject.
- A description of any benefits to the subjects or to others that might reasonably be expected.
- A disclosure of alternative procedures or courses of treatment (optional for most) expected.
- A statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.
- Identification of whom to contact for further information about the research and about subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury (optional for most ARPs).
- A statement that participation is voluntary, that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time.

#### **Suggested outline for the Prospectus**

##### **I. Introduction**

Include the section that introduces the research purpose. If the study focuses on a specific governmental unit (city, state, state agency etc), include a paragraph that connects the governmental unit to the purpose.

##### **II. Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework narrative – explain and justify the framework. Connect to the research purpose.

Conceptual framework table (this is meant to summarize the narrative above).

### III. Methodology

Discussion that connects the methodology to the research purpose.  
Why this methodology for this purpose?

#### Operationalization Table

Narrative that explains the operationalization table and connects to the framework using examples.

Identify specific techniques (survey, focus group, etc.) and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each. Show how you address or overcome the common weaknesses. Discuss the sampling methodology. If there are multiple methods, nest the sampling discussion within the discussion of the technique.

#### Statistics used

### IV. Human subjects discussion

#### Checklist for written prospectus

- 1. Page numbers
- 2. Internal references
- 3. Bibliography
- 4. Statement of research question/purpose
- 5. Section that introduces the research question/purpose
- 6. Conceptual framework narrative
- 7. Conceptual framework table
- 8. Discussion connecting data collection instrument to research purpose
- 9. Operationalization table
- 10. Operationalization table narrative
- 11. Discussion of technique or method
- 12. Discussion of sample (if relevant)
- 13. Discussion of statistics (if relevant)
- 14. Questionnaire (if relevant)

\* Note - Conceptual Framework table and operationalization table should be in the body of the prospectus. DO NOT INCLUDE AS AN APPENDIX.

\*\* #4 & 5 belong in the statement of Research Question or purpose.  
#6 & 7 belong in the conceptual framework section.  
#8 - 14 belong in the Methodology section.

