



CAPSTONE PROJECT GUIDELINES

TENNESSEE CERTIFIED ECONOMIC DEVELOPER

Congratulations on advancing to the final stages of the Tennessee Certified Economic Developer Program! Through the Capstone Project, you can express the knowledge gained through the courses to address an economic development opportunity or challenge in your community or within your organization.

Eligibility – You may begin the process after successful completion of TBEDC and four (4) of the six (6) TCED core courses. The final two core courses may be taken during the Capstone process. Capstone Projects are typically completed within two to six months.

(As of February 2017, the TCED Advisory Board voted to enforce a two-year maximum for TCED candidates to apply and submit their final Capstone Projects after completing all the required course work.)

Your capstone project will consist of two major components:

- **Report (10- 15 pages) - typed, double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1” margins on all four sides**
- **Presentation (5 minutes) – 7 slide maximum if using a PowerPoint (not required)**

Process Overview for Capstone Project Approval and Completion:

1. Candidate Submits Capstone Project Application to the Capstone Coordinator to obtain initial approval of project concept.
2. TCED Program Staff review application, notify candidate of eligibility. TCED Staff provides feedback on topic and provides candidate with list of potential mentors based on topic.
3. Capstone Coordinator will contact the selected Mentor to ensure availability to serve.
4. Mentor and Capstone Advisor will be introduced to the candidate via email and will be available to assist the candidate throughout the process.
5. Candidate develops an outline working with Mentor for guidance. Submit outline to TCED Capstone Advisor and copy TCED Mentor and Capstone Coordinator for review and feedback.
6. Candidate undertakes project and prepares report (according to capstone guidelines that follow). Mentors and TCED Capstone Advisor are available to assist candidate during the process.
7. Candidate submits report to Capstone Advisor, copies Mentor and Capstone Coordinator for review and feedback.
8. Once Capstone Advisor gives final approval, candidate is added to the graduation list.
9. Candidate delivers 5-minute presentation to small group of classmates, Mentors and TCED Advisory Board members and TCED staff during a graduation event.
10. Graduate is awarded the TCED certificate earning the TCEd designation!

Capstone Project Report Guidelines

STEP 1. CHOOSE YOUR CAPSTONE TOPIC

Your Capstone Project should address a substantial **challenge** or **opportunity** related to economic and community development impacting your community, region or organization. Participant may select a new project, or a project conducted within the final year of TCED course work. The topic you select should be a project you are passionate about implementing in your organization or community.

The goal of this Capstone Project report is to draw on the knowledge imparted from the course material and instructors to offer potential solutions for an opportunity or a challenge at hand. Completed TCED Capstone Projects provide economic developers and community leaders with a wealth of ideas, solutions and best practices to draw from that may have similar challenges and opportunities.

TCED Alumni Capstone Projects can be viewed at on the [TCED Capstone page](#) of the CIS website. If you are uncertain as to what is expected of you in completing project, seek guidance from the Capstone Coordinator.

STEP 2. GATHER INFORMATION

Begin by reviewing your TCED course information and note what courses and information pertain to your project topic. Talk to your mentor and other experienced peers. Research other communities/organizations for other relevant information.

Ask yourself the following questions: How can the information imparted in the courses address the opportunity or improve the situation? How can this project help my community or organization move forward? Has this challenge or opportunity arisen in other communities or organizations? What did they do to address the challenge or seize the opportunity? Is this a potential solution to the challenge/opportunity cited in your project? Why or why not? What are lessons learned? What's next?

STEP 3. FORMULATE YOUR GOAL STATEMENT

Do some critical thinking and write a statement down defining your topic in one sentence. The goal statement should state exactly what the project is to accomplish. It should be phrased using action words (such as "design," "build," "implement," etc.). It should be limited to those essential elements of the project that communicate the purpose of the project and the outcome expected.

STEP 4. MAKE AN OUTLINE

The purpose of an outline is to help you think through your topic carefully and organize it logically before you start writing. A good outline is the most important step in writing a good paper.

Check your outline to make sure that the points covered flow logically from one to the other. Include in your outline an **INTRODUCTION**, a **BODY**, and a **CONCLUSION**.

INTRODUCTION - State your topic (what question are you trying to answer, or what problem are you trying to solve) and the purpose of your case study paper clearly. State also how you plan to approach your topic. Is this a descriptive report, a review of techniques or programs, a comparison with what other organizations are doing, or an analysis of a problem? Briefly explain the major points you plan to cover in your report and **why readers should be interested in your topic**.

BODY - This is where you present your information to support your goal statement. Your project outline should include the following information:

1. **Background**

- a. Information on community and organization
- b. Description of the opportunity or need that the project addresses
- c. Applicable TCED coursework
- d. State or national standards or trends identified in research

2. **Project Description:**

- a. Project Name
- b. Who is Involved
- c. Goals and Objectives
- d. Timeframe
- e. Results
- f. Etc.

3. **Results and Lessons Learned**

CONCLUSION - Restate or reword your goal statement. Summarize your high-level outcomes or expected outcomes.

Submit outline to Capstone Advisor and copy your Mentor and Capstone Coordinator for review and feedback.

Examples of exemplary outlines can be found on the [TCED Capstone page](#) of the CIS website.

STEP 5. RESOURCE PAGE

As you organize your notes, jot down resource information for each reference used (class materials, magazine/periodical articles, and websites, etc.) and have it ready to transfer to your Resource Page. This should include title, author, date published or accessed, publication and/or web address. Your Resource Page should be the final page of your document and will **not** count towards your overall page total.

Do not include any information that is not relevant to your topic. Unless using a direct quote, which should be clearly marked, make sure the information that you have noted is carefully recorded and in your own words. Of course, plagiarism is out of the question.

STEP 6. WRITE AND REVISE YOUR FIRST DRAFT

Use your approved outline and feedback received from Capstone Mentor and Capstone Advisor to write a first draft. Your outline should guide the flow of your report and ensure all topics of importance are addressed.

- The final Capstone Project report should be **10-15 pages, typed, double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1" margins on all four sides.**
- Prepare a title page that contains the title of the Project, your name, the date, and to whom the report is being submitted.
- Resource Page should be the final page of the document and does not count towards your overall page total.

Read your report for any content errors. Double check the facts and figures. Arrange and rearrange ideas to follow your outline. Always keep the purpose of your report and your readers in mind.

CHECKLIST:

1. Is my topic statement concise and clear?
2. Did I follow my outline? Did I miss anything?
3. Is my information presented in a logical sequence?
4. Are all resources properly noted to ensure that I am not plagiarizing?
5. Use third person & avoid using "I" and "we" and phrases such as "I think", "I guess", "I suppose"
6. Have I made my intentions and points clear in the paper?
7. Did I begin each paragraph with a proper topic sentence?
8. Any run-on or unfinished sentences?
9. Any unnecessary or repetitious words?
10. Does one paragraph or idea flow smoothly into the next?
11. Any spelling or grammatical errors?
12. Quotes accurate in source, spelling, and punctuation?
13. Are my resources accurate and listed on resource page?
14. Did I avoid using contractions? Use "cannot" instead of "can't", "do not" instead of "don't"?

STEP 7. SUBMIT FIRST DRAFT FOR FEEDBACK

Work with your Capstone Mentor and make any needed revisions to your first draft. When both of you are satisfied, submit it to the Capstone Advisor (copying the Capstone Coordinator and Mentor) for feedback.

After receiving and considering the feedback, make necessary revisions and/or additions to your first draft. Your Capstone Mentor can provide guidance based on feedback until you meet the TCED Capstone Criteria, and you are satisfied with your report.

STEP 8. FINAL CAPSTONE PROJECT REPORT!

Congratulations! You are almost finished. After your draft is approved by your Capstone Mentor and the Capstone Advisor, you will be asked to submit your final Capstone Project report. This should be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Please delete any in-text feedback or comments from the document.

Once the Capstone Advisor has given final approval, and Capstone Coordinator confirms the report meets the Capstone report criteria, the candidate may prepare the Capstone Project presentation.

STEP 9. CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTATION

You will present your Capstone Project with a small group of fellow graduates, TCED Advisory Board Members, Mentors, and TCED Staff during a graduation event. Be prepared to share the highlights of your work in a **5-minute presentation** followed by a short Q & A. If you choose to use a PowerPoint presentation, the **maximum number of slides is seven (7)**. Your presentation should focus on the highlights of your project and could include your results, lessons learned, why your project is important, and your next steps.

STEP 10. CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT!

Unless you object, a press release will be submitted to your local community newspaper highlighting your achievement. Once you receive your Tennessee Certified Economic Developer designation, you may use the TCED credentials by your name. Your final Capstone Project report will be posted on the TCED Capstone section of the UT CIS website.

More tips for writing an effective paper can be found in "A Research Guide for Students"
<http://www.aresearchguide.com/1steps.html>.