

Planning Your Project

Some Helpful Tips

- Be sure to look over the “Assignment Overview” handout distributed at the beginning of the term (also available in the Materials section of the website). The last section has a good listing of books about potential projects.
- Make sure you pick a topic for which a lot of information is available. Are there a lot of online references? Have you found a whole book/thesis (preferably more!) dedicated to your specific topic? You will be working with this topic for the whole semester and should ideally have financial, social, environmental, and political details from a variety of sources.
- In general, you may be able to get more information (particularly financial information) on projects completed by the public sector (bond statements, environmental reports, public meetings, etc are all supposed to be in the public record and are not too hard to obtain). However, this is not always the case and there are definitely a large number of high-profile private projects for which sufficient information exists. You just have to find these through trial-and-error (so leave yourself plenty of time!)
- Everyone should have at least one meeting with one of us to discuss projects.

Time Period: Current/Future, Recently Completed, or Historic?

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with all three:

Current Project: If a project is either currently under construction or is under consideration for construction, you can still select it for your project. This can be very enjoyable if it is a project that is controversial and has a great deal of current press coverage. However, it is important to remember that project info is obviously incomplete. With this type of project, you will have to estimate remaining construction costs and potential operating costs/revenues. Sometimes projection estimates for this already exist, but you have to take all of them with a grain of salt. If you can't find estimates, then you will be expected to estimate, generally using data from similar projects.

Recently Completed Project: If a project has been completed in recent years, it is still relatively easy to obtain interesting press coverage (although maybe not quite as easy as with a current project) and you also have the advantage of more complete financial information (although you will still have to make judgments about future cash flows). In most cases, however, not enough time has passed for books to exist on the topic (although you may find some theses/academic papers).

Historic Projects: If a project was completed many years ago, you are more likely to have a greater selection of books, papers, etc. to use as resources (often from a variety of different perspectives). In some cases, there will be much more information about construction costs, operating costs/revenues, and perhaps even renovation/demolition costs. However, in other cases, the specific details may have become blurred and/or less accessible over the years (reports may be too old to be found on internet, exact costs may not have been properly recorded, non-financial issues may have not been considered as extensively, etc).