DEVELOPING A RESEARCH STRATEGY

This exercise will help you develop a thoughtful research strategy related to your World Affairs Challenge problem/issue. Answer the following questions to help you better understand and refine your thinking about your problem and solution.

A What problem have you chosen to focus on?

Choose a community issue related to this year's WAC theme. Haven't chosen a problem yet? Browse the 2025 Research Guide for inspiration or try a resource like TED Talks.

B How did you become interested in this problem?

Why did you choose this problem? In 2 or 3 sentences, explain why you are interested in this issue (Examples: This directly impacts me or someone I know by…, or Hearing about this topic stimulated me to learn more because…)

C Think about the following elements of your problem:

WHO	WHAT	WHERE	HOW
Who is involved? Who does it affect? Is there a specific population you want to focus on? Identify the stakeholders and their opinions.	*What is the issue or problem? Consider the "so what" of your problem. Why should it matter to others?*	*Where did it begin? What is the specific geographic location you want to focus on?*	*How does one aspect of your problem affect another? How serious is the issue/problem?*

D Do background reading:

Search Google, Wikipedia, and online resources to find background information about your topic and answer the questions below.

Define the basic terms used in this issue

Consider the varying ways that stakeholders define key terms. Do different people define or "see" things differently? Example: X defines "racial profiling" as _____, but Y explains it as _____, which includes implicit (or unconscious) bias.

Could you identify any scholars or experts who do research on your topic?

They may be identified or listed as Further Resources. List the experts/scholars here:

Did you find any additional keywords to use when you search?

Keywords change based on who is speaking; for example, a scholar might say "preadolescent," whereas a journalist might say "tween." List new keywords here:

Did the articles cite any useful sources that would be useful for your research?

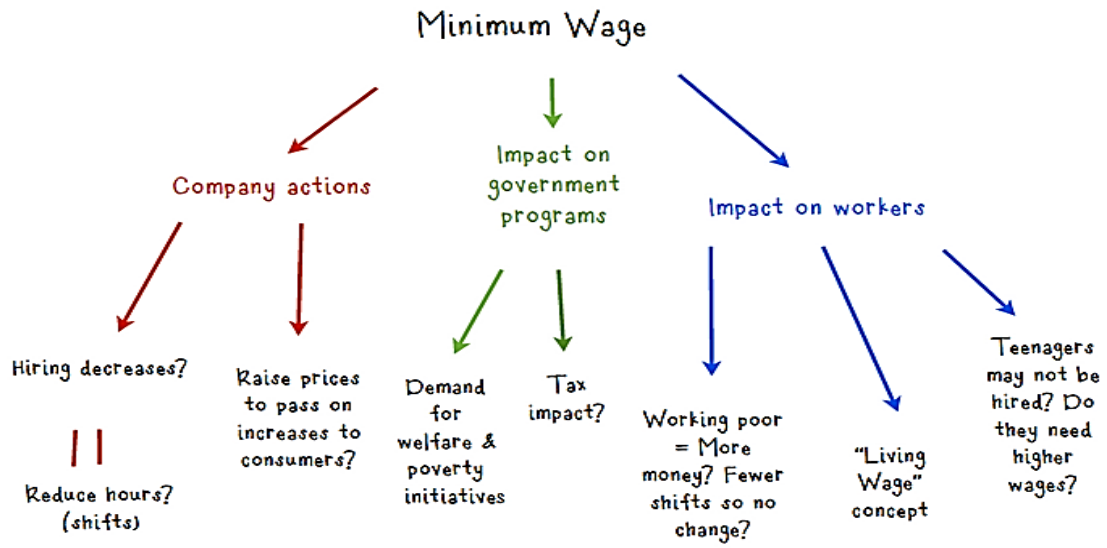
List additional sources here:

What innovations already exist? Who is already working on the problem in your community and around the world? What can you build on that already exists?

List additional innovations, solutions, and ideas here:

E Create a concept map or informational outline for your topic:

EXAMPLE CONCEPT MAP



YOUR CONCEPT MAP

EXAMPLE OUTLINE

TOPIC: MINIMUM WAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

1. WORKERS
    1. LIVING WAGES
    2. DECREASE IN ENTRY LEVEL JOBS / FEWER SHIFTS
    3. WORKING POOR / RELIANCE ON SUPPLEMENTAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE
2. CORPORATIONS
    1. PRICE HIKES
        1. PASSED ON TO CONSUMERS?
        2. DECREASED PROFITS?
    2. FEWER JOBS / SLOW JOB GROWTH
    3. OUTSOURCES JOBS OVERSEAS
3. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS
    1. IMPACT ON WELFARE GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
    2. TAX IMPACT
    3. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

YOUR OUTLINE

F Incorporating diverse points of view:

The following are essential questions to ask as part of the Human Centered Design process. Consider this an optional discussion or expansion of the project if your team has the time and capacity.

How do I feel about this problem? How do my life experience and cultural, gender, race, ethnicity, and social class backgrounds influence my view of the problem? What assumptions do I hold about the issue/problem? How might someone from a different background view the problem?

What are my feelings about the information I am finding? Am I developing an open mind when encountering varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives? How does this new information compare to my existing knowledge about the topic? Am I surprised? Confused? Inspired? Are any of the sources challenging or uncomfortable?

How am I addressing other points of view? How does my approach integrate different perspectives? List various stakeholders and their points of view. What voices are missing?

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