GROUP WRITING

STEP 2: Plan your approach to the project

A. **Review the assignment requirements.**
   Discuss your understanding of the topic and the purpose.

   Discuss the rhetorical elements of content, purpose, audience, organization, and document design:
   - What is the purpose of this assignment?
   - What is the target audience? How familiar is the audience with the topic?
   - Is the document a report, an essay, a research proposal? What conventions for this document style should be included (for example, headings are a feature of report styles)? What resources are available for understanding the form the document should take (course guidelines, instructor resources such as examples posted on BLS, style manuals)?
   - Has the instructor provided guidelines on font, line spacing, title pages, etc.? If not, what standards will your group incorporate?
   - What style (MLA, APA, Chicago style, etc.) does the field for which you are writing use?

B. **Brainstorm possible approaches to the subject.**
   At this stage, it is important to record all ideas. The best way to record the ideas is on a flipchart or white board so that all ideas can be seen by all group members and ideas can build on each other. Or, you might each conduct a brainstorming session individually, compile your ideas, and conduct a further brainstorming activity as a group.

C. **From this brainstorm, categorize the ideas.**
   What elements fit together? What is the relationship among ideas? How do groups of ideas relate to each other? For example, if we were brainstorming features of two cities, Halifax and Toronto, we might note the characteristics of each city. As we explore the relationship among the pieces of information, we might note that Halifax is a city of 350,000 while Toronto is a city of 2.5 million. If we were to categorize the information, we might use the heading “population.” Then, we need to establish some overall picture of how groups of information work together. For example, population is just one kind of
comparison between the two cities. Other comparisons might be the availability of public transport, economic development, or education.

D. Create a thesis.
A thesis is a statement of purpose. It is a single sentence that takes the categories determined in the previous step and states what these categories reveal about the topic. The working thesis statement should be written collaboratively. This collaborative element is essential because as group members proceed individually with research and writing they will be guided by the thesis and are, therefore, less likely to contribute pieces that are irrelevant or tangential. The thesis offers a unifying element as group members proceed. In each group meeting, the thesis should be reviewed and changed, if necessary, to suit the evolving project. For example, you may discover that there is little information pertinent to one of your categories while another category yields a vast amount. You may need to change the thesis and the working categories to reflect this discovery. Record the working thesis on the agendas and meeting minutes for every meeting to ensure that all members are aware of the overarching theme.