

Summer 2022

Workshop in Sustainable Development Practice

The Workshop in Sustainable Development Practice at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) – a course for second-year graduate students – enables SIPA to partner with a diverse range of organizations on innovative development projects and approaches. Through the workshop, student teams add value to their clients' current and future programs through focused desk reviews, field research and analysis, and practical recommendations. Workshop clients – including national and local governments, NGOs, development agencies, corporations, consulting firms, social enterprises, research institutes and others – have found the workshop extremely valuable, and several have partnered with SIPA over a number of years.

Past workshop projects have included needs assessments, program evaluations, strategies for expanding existing projects, development of tools or guides, case studies, mapping exercises, facilitation of workshops and conferences, and other activities. Reports from several recent workshop projects, and other information on the workshop, are available at <https://sipa.columbia.edu/academics/capstone-workshops/workshop-development-practice-epd-workshop/information-epd-workshop-0>

The workshop encourages multidisciplinary approaches to development challenges. Organized by SIPA's Economic and Political Development (EPD) concentration, the workshop collaborates with other SIPA concentrations and specializations including Gender and Public Policy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy, International Conflict Resolution, International Finance and Economic Policy, International Organizations and UN Studies, Technology, Media and Communications, and Urban and Social Policy, and with other parts of the university including its regional institutes and the Earth Institute. The workshop also seeks opportunities to collaborate with universities and research institutes in the country where the client is located.

The workshop process begins over the summer (June–August), when possible project ideas are discussed with clients. By September, preliminary terms of reference are developed. In October, teams of students are matched with projects based on their language proficiency, skill sets and interests. Supported by a faculty advisor, each student team starts work by early November on a draft work plan. Depending on the needs of the project and available budget, students can travel to carry out field work over Columbia's winter and spring holidays (in early January and in mid-March). Based on their desk and field research, each team prepares a report and recommendations for review by the client in April. The student teams present their final reports during a two-day workshop at SIPA in late April. For clients who cannot attend the workshop, other arrangements can be made to present the students' findings and recommendations to the client and other stakeholders.

The only costs associated with the workshop are the costs of the students' field travel. SIPA provides a limited budget to cover some of these expenses, and clients are asked to share a portion of the costs.

For more information on the workshop, please contact:

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