



What is Applied Research?

Applied research is the powerful mechanism through which ideas are transformed into real-world impacts. Distinct from basic research, which delves into concepts and theoretical development, applied research is driven by practical questions and the urgent needs of the world. It effectively bridges the gap between theory and practice. Applied research closely examines everyday challenges in areas such as education, industry, technology, lifestyle and community development, asking, "How can research help us solve this problem?"

Bridging the Gap

Applied research focuses on practical questions and seeks solutions to real-world issues and challenges, rather than just exploring abstract concepts. It aims to improve teaching methods, design better community programs, and test new technologies by taking knowledge from labs or classrooms and applying it in everyday life. The goal is to create an impact—helping education, organizations, and communities become stronger through evidence-based solutions.

One of the strengths of applied research is its emphasis on action. For instance, in the field of education, it might involve studying how different teaching methods affect student engagement and then using those insights to design programs that genuinely enhance learning outcomes. In community settings, applied research can look at how access to resources like libraries, digital tools, and after-school programs affects participation.

By linking research directly to practice, applied research ensures that knowledge does not remain confined to academic journals or classrooms. Instead, it becomes a tool for building better systems, informing policy, and strengthening communities. It is research with a purpose—research that not only studies the world but also actively works to improve it.

IGS team x

In this newsletter you can expect:

Applied Research

Bridging the Gap

Project Initiated-
Design User-
friendly Tax
Organizer

Invitation for new
project ideas

Staff Spotlight-
Dr.Darshi Mody

Staff Spotlight-
Luke Swinson

Project Initiated-To design User-friendly Tax Organizer for a small accounting firm

Introduction

As tax season approaches, individuals and families often struggle to organize their financial information for filing, which can lead to stress and confusion. To assist with this, our nonprofit organization has launched a project designed to create a user-friendly tax organizer. This tool aims to help both taxpayers and tax preparers in streamlining the filing process.

Delving into the Approches and Strategies of Tax Preparers

To start, we consulted with several tax preparers about their methods for gathering information from taxpayers, including those filing personal or business tax returns. Most tax preparers used tax organizers that were printed directly from tax software, while a few did not share the tax organizer with previous clients and mentioned that they typically retrieved most information from previously filed returns. However, the firm that approached us expressed a desire to automate the tax organizer process but did not want to use the pre-generated forms from the tax software.

Urgency for a better document gathering system

The printed tax organizer document appears outdated because it requires mailing to clients for completion and return. In some instances, documents were lost, or they needed to be scanned immediately to ensure that the preparer had the updated information when preparing the return. This situation created chaos during tax season, highlighting the need for a better system to maintain organization and consistency.



Food for thought: What makes a Tax Organizer User-Friendly?

A good tax organizer should simplify your life, not complicate it. If you've ever felt overwhelmed by lengthy forms and confusing questions, you're not alone. A user-friendly organizer is designed to guide you step by step, using clear language and only asking for the essential information.

Look for these features in a helpful organizer:

- **Simple wording** instead of tax jargon
- **Logical flow** that follows how you think about income and expenses
- **Relevant questions** no clutter, just what's needed
- **Helpful examples** or checklists to avoid guesswork

The right organizer not only gathers information but also helps you feel confident and in control during tax season.



Invitation to Share Project Ideas on Applied Research and Idealized Design

I hope this message finds you in great spirits. As we endeavor to explore innovative approaches, I would like to extend a warm invitation for you to share insights about a recent applied research project that you would have come across.

Your contributions could greatly enrich our collective understanding and inspire new ideas.

Here are a few guiding questions to consider as you formulate your ideas:

- What specific challenges do you see in our current practices that could benefit from applied research?
- Are there any particular areas you feel passionate about that could be explored further through a collaborative effort?

Staff Spotlight

Dr. Darshi Mody brings a wealth of experience in applied research methodology and has effectively led idealized design sessions. Throughout her doctoral studies, she took an active role in co-hosting applied research conferences, showcasing her commitment to advancing the field.

With over a decade of contributions to higher education, she leverages her design expertise and her ability to infuse empathy into her work, enhancing the overall process and fostering meaningful engagement.



Staff Spotlight

Luke Swinson is a dedicated volunteer who analyzes data and assists us in preparing analysis reports for end-users. He has tutored thousands of students across a wide range of academic disciplines, including many with special needs and numerous non-native English speakers. He excels at reviewing drafts both mechanically and in terms of content, and he helps graduate and doctoral students refine their research, develop their arguments, find and access sources, and organize their thoughts.

In addition to his teaching, tutoring, and advising, Luke works as a freelance editor. He has edited and consulted on more than three dozen dissertations, as well as numerous published articles, chapter drafts, and book manuscripts. Luke resides in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, with his wife and their beloved pack of rescued cats and dogs.

Thank you for reading!