

BUSI-2500W SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP · MARCH 17, 2026

## The Artful Edit

# Writing That Persuades, From Sentence to Portfolio

Tonight we work across three levels of editing (macro, meso, and micro) to transform your portfolio drafts into compelling, persuasive arguments.

WHY IT MATTERS

# Editing Matters More Than Writing

'Writing is rewriting.' First drafts capture your thinking. Editing turns thinking into persuasion.

In social entrepreneurship, your writing does **real work**. The stakes are high:

## Theory of Change

Convinces funders your logic is sound and your approach is credible.

## Executive Summary

Gets 30 seconds of a board member's attention — every word counts.

## Portfolio

Tells a coherent story about a venture's viability from problem to impact.

📌 If the writing is unclear, the idea dies — no matter how good it is.

# Three Levels of Editing

Think of editing as zooming in and out on your work. Each level serves a different purpose.



## Macro

### Portfolio Level

Does the whole document tell one coherent story? Is there a clear arc from problem → solution → impact?



## Meso

### Paragraph Level

Does each paragraph have one clear job? Are transitions logical? Is evidence placed where it supports your argument?



## Micro

### Sentence Level


Is every word earning its place? Are you precise or vague? Can you cut 20% without losing meaning?

Tonight we work all three levels — but we'll spend the most time at the **micro level**, where most student writing loses its reader.

# Kill Your Darlings

These five patterns silently undermine SE writing. Learn to spot and cut them:

Problem	Before	After
Fluff	"It is important to note that..."	Just say the thing.
Hedging	"This could potentially help to possibly reduce..."	Commit to your claim or hedge <b>once</b> .
Passive Voice	"Impact was created by the program."	"The program created impact."
Nominalizations	"The implementation of the strategy..."	"Implementing the strategy..." — verbs over nouns.
Redundancy	"In order to" / "Due to the fact that"	"To" / "Since"

 **The test:** Read each sentence aloud. If you lose your breath or lose the thread, the sentence is too long or too tangled.

# One Paragraph, One Job

## The Paragraph Formula

- 1 Topic Sentence: Make ONE clear claim.**
- 2 Middle: Support with evidence or reasoning.**
- 3 Transition: Connect to what comes next.**

## Common Pitfall: The "Everything Paragraph"

Many students dump all their ideas into one block because they're unsure where things belong.

**The fix:** Outline *after* you draft. List what each paragraph actually says. If you can't summarize it in one phrase, it needs surgery.

- Two jobs in one paragraph? **Split it.**
- Zero clear jobs? **Cut it.**

# The Portfolio Arc

Your final portfolio must tell **one story** across 6–7 pages. Each section is a building block and editing means making them *fit together*, not just stapling them in order.

## Problem Framing

Here's a real, documented problem worth solving.

## Theory of Change

Here's what we think will work + and the logic behind it.

## Honest Assessment

Here are the strengths, risks, and gaps integrated throughout.

## Stakeholder Analysis

Here's who cares (me?) and why it matters to me/them.

## Critical Analysis

Here's what an existing SE doing similar work taught us.

# Editing Your Theory of Change

A Theory of Change is an argument. You're saying:

*"If we do X, then Y will happen — and here's why that chain of logic holds."*



## Missing Links

"We run workshops → community is empowered." How?  
Spell out every step between action and outcome.



## Assumed Outcomes

"Participants will change behaviour." Why? What evidence or mechanism supports this claim?



## Scope Creep

If you're a local program, don't claim to "transform the food system." Match your ToC to your actual scale.



## Wrong Lens

Pick the right level: micro (individual), meso (organizational), or macro (systemic) — match it to your actual activities (per last class)

The best Theories of Change are honest about what they **don't know** and where the logic might break down.

THE 20% RULE

# Cut 20% — Lose Nothing

## The Challenge

Take any piece of your writing and cut 20% of the words without losing any meaning.

You will **almost always** be able to do this.

## Where the waste hides

- **Throat-clearing openings:** "In today's society..."
- **Redundant transitions:** "Additionally, it is also worth noting..."
- **Filler qualifiers:** "very," "really," "quite," "somewhat"
- **Unnecessary definitions** of terms the reader already knows

Cutting 20% makes every remaining word work harder. Your reader's attention is finite.

# Your Editing Checklist

Before submitting your portfolio, run through every item below. These are the questions a careful reader will ask.

**1****Flow Check**

Read it aloud. Do you stumble? Does it flow naturally from section to section?

**2****Paragraph Clarity**

Can you summarize each paragraph in one phrase? If not, it needs surgery.

**3****Logic Chain**

Is your Theory of Change a chain of logic or list of hopes?

**4****Word Economy**

Have you cut at least 20% of unnecessary words and removed all filler phrases?

**5****Critical Lens**

Does your critical analysis actually *critique*, or does it just describe?

**6****Reader Test**

Would a smart reader who knows nothing about your SE understand your full argument?

UP NEXT

# Let's edit line by line.

I'll show a fictional Theory of Change with real problems embedded in it. We'll work through it together as a class.

**Fluff**

**Missing Logic**

**Passive Voice**

**Scope Creep**

**Vague Claims**