

Project-Based Learning Sponsor Planning Worksheet

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Inviting “project sponsors” from outside the classroom to challenge students with a real, interesting, non-trivial problem to address can often enhance the learning experience for students and provide value to sponsors. This worksheet poses questions for program developers to consider when thinking about if and how to work with project sponsors, whether that be the campus facilities department, a local government agency, a small non-profit organization, an international company, etc. The worksheet is designed to be used flexibly and adapted to fit the particular needs of any given program.

Planning Prompts	Notes
<p>1. Articulating Educational & External Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the educational goals for your project program?• What are the program’s “external” goals, if any (e.g., support for local organizations or communities, advancing a socially relevant research agenda, etc.)?• What are the likely logistical/curricular parameters for the program (e.g., credit and time parameters).	
<p>2. Identifying Potential Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kinds of sponsors and sponsor relationships will help you achieve educational and external goals?• Do sponsors have adequate resources---staffing, time, networks---to make a sustained commitment to a project team and help them explore the complexities embedded in the project?• How important is physical proximity to working with your sponsors? If important, what logistical needs of the students (e.g., office space, Internet access) would you want the sponsor to address? If not important, how would students interact with the sponsor?• Who is supporting the project and to what extent is the proposed project seen favorably across the organization rather than being a hobbyhorse of one person?• How does a potential sponsor see his or her role to the team?	

<p>3. Scoping Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the sponsor’s project goals? Is the project conceived in narrow instrumental terms for the organization---data gathering, mapping, surveying? • Does the sponsor see the importance of other outcomes for students -- increased cross-cultural competence, understanding the ethical dimension of the project, developing effective working relationships? 	
<p>4. Building Relationships with Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you looking to build long or short term relationships with your sponsors? If long term, how much time and energy do you have to build long-term relationships with them? • What do you have to offer sponsors that will serve their goals? • How will you define the project with your sponsor? How detailed will the project description need to be? • If there are different interpretations of the project once it has started, what role will you play in trying to resolve differences? 	
<p>5. Liaising Between Sponsors and Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might the perspectives of students and sponsors differ about a project’s focus, scope, methods used, and deliverables and what can you do to broker these differences and move the project forward? • What can you do to help the sponsor understand your students’ capacities and limitations in order to recalibrate the project when necessary? • How often should you meet with sponsors, in what context, with students or without, formally or informally? • How can you help students understand the institutional context in which the sponsors operate? • How can you enlist sponsors to help underperforming student teams? 	

<p>6. Promoting Diversity and “Cross-Cultural” Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you and sponsor think about encouraging openness to others? • What diversity opportunities/challenges may the project present? • Can sponsor suggest readings, lead discussions, or otherwise facilitate student learning about diversity? 	
<p>7. Resolving Problems Between You and Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you do with sponsors who change the project or on whom the project has changed? • How might you handle a sponsor who disappears or engages unproductively or inappropriately with students? • How can you avoid disagreements about intellectual property? • How might the project give rise to legal considerations and how might you, the students, and your university be liable. • In projects with multiple sponsors, how can you anticipate turf issues, small “p” politics, and encourage transparency and cooperation. 	
<p>8. Assessing Your Partnership with Sponsors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For your programmatic goals, what criteria are useful to assess the role played by the sponsor? • What value ex-post does the sponsor give to the project and how does that correspond to your assessment? • How can you best elicit feedback from the students about their experience with the sponsor and the project more broadly? 	
<p>9. Strategizing About Long and Short-term Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you motivate good sponsors to continue working on PBL? • What makes a multi-year projects viable---external funding, formal agreements, trust, etc.? • How can you maintain momentum between student site visits? • How do you weigh trade-offs between short and long-term relationships? 	