

# Building the Prague Project Center



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# **Building the Prague Project Center**

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## **Abstract**

To help Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) achieve its project-based learning goals, the Prague Project Center (PPC) needs to expand their network of partner organizations to accommodate the number of students attending the study abroad in Prague. Our project aimed to strengthen and grow the network of the PPC by establishing connections with local organizations for future collaborations. To do so, the team interviewed project center directors (PCDs) at WPI to identify ideal organizations for partnerships. Throughout our time in Prague, the team interviewed current PPC sponsors to understand why they chose to partner and continue to partner with WPI. Using this information from PCDs and sponsors, the team identified 34 potential partner organizations in Prague and developed outreach materials highlighting the benefits of sponsoring a project. With the use of a curated initial outreach email, a follow-up email, an elevator pitch, an informational brochure, and a detailed presentation, the team was able to generate interest among 11 potential sponsors in Prague, dramatically improving the PPC's partnership network and creating outreach materials other project centers can use in the future.

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) takes pride in providing intercultural educational experiences and incorporating project-based learning into their curriculum. The heart of this curriculum is the Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP), a graduation requirement completed in junior year. The IQP gives students the opportunity to travel and work with local organizations to create positive changes within their respective communities. WPI’s Global Projects Program (GPP) was first implemented in 1975 and, as of 2023, 17,468 students have completed their IQP in an off-campus location. Currently, the GPP offers students over 50 project centers to choose from (Figure E.1).



Figure E.1: Map of WPI Project Centers

WPI’s Prague Project Center (PPC) was established in 2020 and is a relatively new location. Since the continuation of project centers depends on local partnerships, the project center directors (PCDs) of the PPC need assistance building relationships with organizations in Prague.

## Maintaining a Project Center

The IQP is an immersive learning experience that combines project-based learning and intercultural learning. To gain a deeper understanding of the IQP, our team interviewed five global PCDs at WPI to learn how they manage their project centers. The key takeaways from these interviews include characteristics to look for in a sponsor (Figure E.2), strategies for finding sponsors, and aspects of a “good” project. Traits to look for in a sponsor include having time to collaborate with students, supplying a workspace for teams, and providing projects that get students out into the local community. Recommended strategies for finding sponsors include cold-calling and referrals.

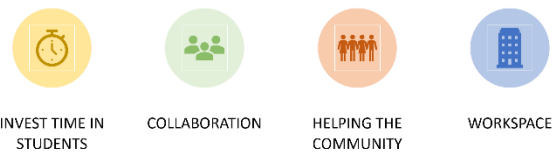


Figure E.2: Characteristics for Identifying Sponsors

Then, our team researched the current social issues in Prague to identify where an IQP partnership would be most beneficial to the community and WPI students alike. The social issues that our team focused on when identifying potential sponsors include accessibility, discrimination of Roma population and LGBT+ community, environmental concerns, a large homeless population, and over-tourism.

## Methodology

The goal of this project is to assist the co-directors of the PPC as they build connections with potential sponsors and establish an avenue for future partnerships. Our team achieved this goal by fulfilling the following objectives:

1. We used interviews with current and past sponsors to **understand the sponsor experience at the PPC**.
2. We used internet searches, the past IQP team, and referrals to **identify organizations in Prague that could be potential sponsors**.
3. We developed outreach materials to help **explain WPI and the IQP to potential sponsors**, ensuring they can be understood by non-native English speakers.
4. We initiated conversations with potential sponsors to **acquire their interest and brainstorm future project ideas**.

## Results and Analysis

First, current and past sponsors generally had a good experience partnering with WPI. The sponsors enjoy the weekly one-hour meeting when students are onsite. Sponsors were also impressed with the technical skills of WPI students and their ability to work independently. Additionally, sponsors like the prep period because it allowed the team to get right to work when they arrived onsite. However, there are some obstacles that come with sponsoring an IQP. First, the language barrier between the student team and sponsor can make it difficult to communicate back and forth. Additionally,

students being onsite from mid-October to mid-December isn't ideal for certain organizations (Table E.1).

Pros	Cons
Flexible time commitment	Language barrier
WPI students' skills	Time period when students are onsite
Structure of the program	

Table E.1: Sponsor Experiences

Next, our team identified 34 organizations in Prague that have potential to be a future sponsor. Then, our team developed four outreach materials to use when contacting potential sponsors (Figure E.3).

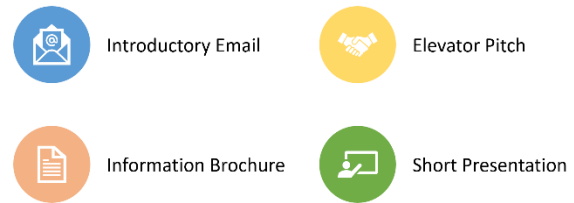


Figure E.3: Outreach Materials

The introductory email was used to generate interest among organizations in Prague. To build trust with organizations, our team attached an information brochure that included examples of projects and quotes from sponsors. Finally, the short presentation was used in the meetings our team held with potential sponsors. This presentation focused on the global scope of the program, the role and responsibilities of the team, and the benefits to partner organizations. Figure E.4 follows the process our team used when contacting potential sponsors. Once we identified an organization, an introductory email was sent. If they did not respond within a week, a follow up email was sent with the information brochure attached. Then, if the

organization was interested, a meeting was scheduled. The outcome of the meeting resulted in either an invitation to the final presentation or a closing email thanking them for their time.

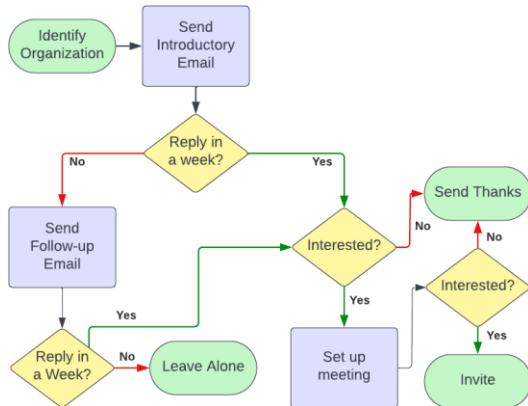


Figure E.4: Flowchart of Communication Process

Overall, the team received responses from 17 of the 34 organizations we reached out to, giving the outreach emails a 50% response rate. Of those 17 respondents, eleven were interested and agreed to a 30-minute meeting with us.

### Recommendations

The team has many recommendations for future IQP teams and WPI project center directors working to expand their center’s network.

1. Interview current and past sponsors.
2. Introduce the team to the current sponsor in ID2050.
3. Systematize process for sponsor outreach and communication (See Figure E.4)
4. Follow our tips for communication and information transfer between

WPI and potential sponsors (Figure E.5).

5. Invite potential sponsors to final presentations.

Contact organizations on Monday mornings

Don't overload information. Focus on the brochure OR the presentation.

When possible, email real people instead of "info@organization.org" emails

Figure E.5: Tips for Reaching Out to Organizations

### Conclusion

Our project worked to expand the Prague Project Center’s network of contacts. The team accomplished this goal by creating relationships with ten organizations in Prague. Furthermore, the team developed three deliverables for the co-directors of the PPC.

1. Dashboard of interest levels and network status of the 34 organizations we contacted.
2. Summary of the meetings our team held with ten organizations.
3. Collection of outreach materials that future IQP teams and PCDs can use as a resource.

From our work in Prague, WPI’s Global School can increase the number of students traveling to Prague in 2024. We are excited to see the projects that will spawn from our work here, hoping that it will result in meaningful assistance for the people of Prague and an unforgettable experience for future cohorts.

## 1.0 Introduction

Study abroad programs offer students an amazing experience of immersing themselves in new cultures, while providing rich educational experiences that go beyond the scope of a classroom. Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) prides itself on providing intercultural educational experiences and incorporating project-based learning into their curriculum. WPI's Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) is a junior-year graduation requirement that gives students the opportunity to travel abroad and work on a semester-long project. The Global School at WPI involves over fifty different project center locations that create opportunities for students to do meaningful work and gain valuable learning experiences. This model of connecting students with their place of travel is what makes WPI's global opportunity for the IQP so attractive to students (G. Burrier, personal communication, September 29, 2023).

WPI faculty established the Prague Project Center (PPC) in 2020 to nurture a relationship between WPI students and Czech organizations by partnering on mutually beneficial projects. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 cohort of 11 students worked remotely from Worcester, Massachusetts. In 2021, 12 students were able to work onsite, but COVID restrictions continued to affect the scope of their projects. Therefore, only one cohort of students (2022) has been able to travel to Prague and complete their IQPs without experiencing sizeable COVID-related challenges thus far.

While the consequences of the pandemic have improved, there are other challenges the PPC faces pertaining to its connections in Prague. Interviews with project center directors (PCDs) from Prague and other IQP destinations gave our team insight into the challenges that they face pertaining to securing sponsorship. The three main challenges include effectively communicating

the scope of the entire IQP to potential sponsors, finding sponsors that can effectively accommodate working with the 7-week timeline of the project, and building trust with sponsors.

First, explaining the student-sponsor relationship to organizations can be a difficult task, especially if they have never sponsored a project before. Sponsors typically gain a better understanding of this relationship once they have partnered on a project or two (L. Elgert, personal communication, October 24, 2023). Therefore, it can be complicated for center directors to explain this dynamic to potential sponsors that are unaware of WPI or the IQP, adding uncertainty to the responses of organizations when reaching out about a partnership with a group of unknown students (A. Deskins, personal communication, September 27, 2023).

The next challenge is finding sponsors who can accommodate the timeline of an IQP. The PPC runs once a year, which means students are only onsite for seven weeks. Due to this short time frame, WPI students are unable to partake in projects that go beyond seven weeks, unless the project were to be broken up over two years. Therefore, it can be challenging for PCDs and sponsors to create projects that are doable in the allotted time while simultaneously benefiting both parties. Nevertheless, the research students complete prior to traveling allows for students to begin implementing ideas right away once they arrive onsite. This decreases the risk of the seven-week timeline for sponsors and project center directors as they only need to worry about the implementation of the project taking seven weeks.

Finally, building trust with organizations abroad is key. The main challenge when reaching out to potential sponsors is navigating cultural differences pertaining to communication and trust (A. Deskins, Personal Communication, September 27, 2023). The language barrier and cultural differences between WPI teams and organizations in Prague may make it difficult to communicate with one another. Furthermore, organizations may be wary of a group of American

university students approaching them and their place of work; they may get overwhelmed by the concept of the IQP program or think we are proposing something that is only of benefit to us. Therefore, our team needed to be conscious of these potential challenges before working on our project onsite.

The co-directors of the PPC have expressed their interest in working with organizations that need help and are benefiting the Prague community. While government businesses and for-profit organizations are viable partners, PCDs advised seeking out non-profit and non-government organizations. Acquiring these partnerships requires a high level of understanding of the Czech communities. Therefore, it is our job to find a space for WPI to engage in meaningful issues in areas that are important to the different communities in Prague. Through remote and onsite research, our team will identify these important areas and complementary organizations in Prague.

Our goal is to identify and forge meaningful connections with potential sponsors, laying the foundation for future collaboration. The team's objectives to achieve this goal are as follows:

- Understand the experience of current and past sponsors of the PPC.
- Identify organizations in Prague that could be potential sponsors.
- Develop promotional materials to help explain WPI and the IQP to potential sponsors, ensuring they can be understood by non-native English speakers.
- Collaborate with potential sponsors in-person to acquire their interest and brainstorm ideas on how students can work with their organization.

By learning how PCDs have established and nurtured relationships in the past, we hope to learn from how they connect with a community and create a similar procedure tailored to Prague. By



focusing on the social issues prevalent in Prague, we can identify areas where WPI students can make a tangible difference, ensuring that their time in Prague is both educational and impactful.

## 2.0 Background

Worcester Polytechnic Institute's (WPI) Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) is a graduation requirement that undergraduates typically complete in their junior year. This requirement gives students the opportunity to work with peers from different majors on a project “that lies at the intersection of science and society.” (WPI, 2023b). Students can choose to complete their IQP on-campus, in local communities across the U.S., or around the globe.

Wherever students end up, they work on a project in collaboration with an organization from their designated location. These locations are called project centers, and each center has a director(s) who works with local organizations to develop projects for students. Therefore, interviewing project center directors (PCDs) at WPI helped our team understand the challenges that come with creating and maintaining a project center.

Along with the insights from PCDs, it is essential to understand the current social location of the center where our team will be working. Therefore, researching the social issues of Prague helped our team identify areas where potential IQPs could be useful.

The interviews and research our team conducted created a foundation for building relationships with organizations in Prague. Since the Prague Project Center (PPC) is still in its nascent stage, building these relationships is imperative to help the PCDs expand the center's network.

## 2.1 Innovative Learning Approaches for WPI and the IQP

“Lehr und Kunst” is the motto that embodies WPI and its core educational goal (WPI Students Alumni Society & WPI Alumni Association, 2010). Translating to “Theory and Practice,” WPI combines both bases into the studies and research students complete. In the 1960s, WPI created what is known as The WPI Plan, giving students the opportunity to work on meaningful and impactful projects as part of a team. This plan, aimed at combining the ‘Practice and Theory,’ as well as project-based learning and intercultural learning, gives students the opportunity to work on projects that lie at the intersection of technology and society.

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, project-based learning (PBL) and its innovative approach to education had successful outcomes in the medical field. As it became more popular among institutions, students and faculty began to see benefits in the new approach (Doles, 2012). Project-based learning, the process in which students develop and construct solutions for real-world problems, is a teaching technique that gives students the skills to critically analyze issues and implement solutions. One study finds a correlation between PBL in secondary education and post-secondary practices (Capraro et al., 2013). By promoting active participation, skills such as teamwork and communication, rated the first and third most important skills employers look for in a candidate, are commonly observed from PBL (Krosel et al., 2023). A separate study found evidence that “it [PBL] has a medium to large positive effect on students’ academic achievement compared to traditional education” (Maros et al., 2023). These results display the value of PBL compared to traditional learning methods and explain its appearance and use in education today. Ultimately, PBL is an effective teaching tool that helps students achieve critical skills both academically and professionally.

While PBL develops critical problem-solving and teamwork skills, another innovation in education known as Intercultural Learning (ICL) provides additional global perspective skills. Also known as global and intercultural competency, students can experience ICL through travel abroad programs, experiencing new cultures, and gaining fresh insights while achieving an academic goal. This cultural exposure helps students understand their own cultural biases, values, and beliefs, thus making them more culturally aware. One study showed that 60% of students on study abroad programs felt that cultural awareness was the most prominent global skill they learned (Stout, 2020). These experiences positively affect students' ability to collaborate with different people. The National Center for Cultural Competence states, "cultural awareness is the first step in becoming proficient in working well with people from a variety of cultures." (NCCC, 2023). In addition to this, ICL introduces the skill of global competency. An increasing number of engineering educators are recognizing how "social, political, economic, and environmental contexts" have a bidirectional influence on engineering projects. This influence, combined with "language ability" and "international experience," is fundamental in developing global competency (Elgert, 2019). The combination of these skills makes ICL an effective tool that not only provides students with exposure to international experiences and cultures, but offers a global perspective, helping students grow personally as well as developing the skills to work with others.

As PBL and ICL become more prevalent in education, by combining both, WPI stands by its motto "Lehr und Kunst" in providing theory and practice to all its students (WPI Students Alumni Society & WPI Alumni Association, 2010). The WPI plan incorporates each technique to develop each student's respective skills. A part of this plan, the GPP is the epitome of combining project-based learning and global intercultural competency, because it gives students the chance

to travel abroad and work with local organizations on various issues. While completing their IQP, students get to experience new cultures, while working in teams alongside local organizations aimed at helping solve issues regarding community and local culture through interdisciplinary projects.

## 2.2 Creating a Project Center

To develop productive and rewarding relationships between students and local organizations, it is imperative to provide meaningful projects. As of 2023, WPI partners with sponsors at 50+ project centers on six continents (Figure 2.1). This amount has doubled from 2009, when there were only 26 project centers (WPI, 2023a). This rapid growth has meant the onboarding of new project center directors in unprecedented numbers. Each project center has at least one project center director (PCD) whose role is to facilitate and organize projects for their specific IQP location. This is achieved by building relationships with sponsors and developing projects that would benefit both parties.



Figure 2.1: Map of WPI Project Centers (WPI, 2023a)

Identifying organizations and creating impactful projects is a challenging task for project center directors, especially when they need to do so every year. Since our job is to assist the Prague co-directors, we interviewed five project center directors to gain insight into managing a project center (Table 2.1).

Project Center Director	Global Project Center Location
Grant Burrier	Panama City, Panama
Dominic Golding	London, England
Lorraine Higgins	Melbourne, Australia
Courtney Kurlanska	Cuenca, Ecuador
Stephen McCauley	Melbourne, Australia

*Table 2.1: Interviewed Project Center Directors*

The key takeaways from the interviews include characteristics to look for in a sponsor, strategies for finding sponsors, and aspects of a “good” project (Appendix A).

## **2.2.1 Characteristics for Identifying Potential Sponsors**

Through interviews, our team identified the key characteristics of a “good” sponsor. These traits include understanding the educational aspect of the project, having time to collaborate with students, supplying a workspace for teams, and providing projects that allow students to work with the local community. Furthermore, “good” sponsors are typically non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or non-profit organizations (NPOs), but other types of organizations are still practical partners.

First, it is important that we help sponsors understand the educational component of an IQP. Students are more than capable of creating a successful project, but there may be learning curves during the process. Therefore, it is important to highlight the WPI faculty that the sponsor can rely on to help them work through these challenges. Furthermore, Professor Golding,

director of the London Project Center, stated that the “best sponsors will bend and go in a different direction if it will meet the educational needs of the students.”

Additionally, it is essential that a sponsor has the time to work with students. A sponsor that cannot consistently meet with their team leads to a less meaningful project for the students and a less impactful deliverable for the sponsor.

Next, it is preferred that sponsors provide some sort of workspace for students. This is not a necessity but can be beneficial since students are expected to work a 40-hour week onsite. Therefore, a workspace allows students to get out into the community and gain experience working in a professional environment (D. Golding, personal communication, September 25, 2023).

Furthermore, it is beneficial if a sponsor can offer a project that connects students with the local community. As described in section 2.1, one purpose of an IQP is to give students experience with project-based and intercultural learning. Therefore, students are more likely to gain the benefits of intercultural learning when they can engage with locals and immerse themselves in their destination’s culture. So, while it’s inevitable for students to sit behind a screen for their projects at times, it’s important the students get real-world experience “rubbing elbows” with others (D. Golding, personal communication, September 25, 2023).

Finally, PCDs advised collaborating with NGOs and NPOs because these organizations frequently fit the desired characteristics mentioned in the first paragraph. These organizations typically benefit from collaboration with volunteer students because they don’t always have sufficient funding or manpower. Nevertheless, for-profit companies and government businesses are still viable partners and can provide successful projects for students.



## 2.2.2 Practices for Finding Sponsors

Making connections abroad can be difficult because most organizations haven't heard of WPI and might not have ideas for an IQP project. To overcome this obstacle, cold-calling and references are two methods used to introduce WPI and the IQP to organizations abroad. 'Cold calling' is often referred to as calling a person to try and sell goods or services (Hayes, 2023). A cold call could be sending an email to an organization or knocking on their door and asking to speak with them. An email can serve as an introduction to WPI and provide the organization with promotional materials and contact information. This is a beneficial tactic because the contact person may not have decision-making authority but can send the information to someone who does. However, Professor Aaron Deskins advised, "In some situations, email might not get you anywhere." This advice is important because some organizations may not read or respond to an email from someone that they do not know.

In-person contact, while relatively old-fashioned, with some luck, can be an effective tool. Professor Stephen McCauley, co-director of the Melbourne Project Center, recalls being 'interested' in an organization 'without prior research.' He then explained his experience utilizing the in-person cold call method, "[I] went in and just said, 'Hey, do you at all do any volunteer programs or any work with students?'" (S. McCauley, personal communications, September 2023). From this interaction, McCauley built a long-term relationship with the organization and has collaborated with them on multiple projects.

However, four out of five interviewees concluded that referrals were the best method for finding new sponsors (D, Golding, L Higgins, C, Kurlanska, S, McCauley, personal communication, September 2023). This technique involves asking current and past sponsors if they can recommend any organizations that would be a good fit for the IQP program. This

strategy is important because the sponsor may have contacts elsewhere who might be interested in a potential project. Reaching out with a referral at hand also builds trust, as it can legitimize the person reaching out. If the person being reached out to trusts the person mentioned in the referral, then they are more likely to trust the person reaching out to them. This process is beneficial due to its efficiency compared to the cold call method as you skip the intermediary steps of legitimizing the IQP through initial contact, establishing a better relationship between WPI and the referred.

### **2.2.3 Valuable Student Projects**

Once the initial connection with sponsors is made, the next step is to develop project ideas. When done properly, projects can have a meaningful impact on both the students and the communities they serve. It is easy to view these projects simply as academic requirements, but IQPs can generate real and practical outcomes, prompt students to drive for change, foster relationships, and provide valuable insights (WPI, 2023c).

The main aspect of an IQP is to conduct research. Students engage in research remotely, primarily through textual and web-based analysis. Then once onsite students can conduct interviews and complete hands-on work. Both methods are invaluable to developing their projects. These projects can produce a range of outcomes and valuable deliverables for their sponsors, ranging from websites, to recommendations, to tangible products. A good example of this is from a 2023 project at the Melbourne Project Center. In this project, WPI students collaborated with the Red Cross and similar organizations in Australia to develop a synergistic approach to communication between them (L. Higgins, personal communication, September 25, 2023). Through this enhanced communication, these disaster relief organizations are better able to manage issues like the Australian brush fires, COVID-19, and migrant support (Krause et al.,

2023). Through research and engagement with the local community, students were able to make a significant impact. These traits are hallmarks of a “good” project, according to the project center directors we interviewed.

Another example of a “good” project comes from the C-Term 2023 Ecuador Project Center and was focused on the environmental sustainability of a soup kitchen (C. Kurlanska, personal communication, September 28, 2023). Despite its broad objective, the team was able to identify clear areas for improvement and implemented a genuine solution to a problem. Specifically, the students identified that the soup kitchen went through a significant amount of disposable plastic bags. To reduce this waste, the students used readily available materials to design a reusable alternative that is now in use (Braun et al., 2022). Not only did this project reduce waste, but it also cut down on costs, something that can have a true impact on a non-profit soup kitchen that often operates on a shoestring budget. Looking at both projects, we see not only the impacts they can have, but also the range of deliverables. Some deliverables can be theoretical, such as an outline or plan of action, while others may be tangible or fully realized; both present the opportunity for substantial change.

Through all of this, the value that student-led projects can bring is clear. The work done on these projects goes beyond just an assignment and becomes an impactful experience for both students and the communities served, thus underscoring the potential for change we can have as students and the tangible effects we can have in Prague. As this center continues to grow, so will the impact students can have on Prague and the problems faced there.

## 2.3 Social Issues in Prague

To create meaningful projects for students, it is necessary to understand the issues and needs of those who live in the Czech Republic. Some of the most pressing issues in Prague include a large homeless population, prejudice against the LGBT+ community, the exclusion of people with disabilities and the Roma Population, environmental concerns, and over-tourism. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development shows the level of current well-being in the Czech Republic as follows (OECD, 2017).

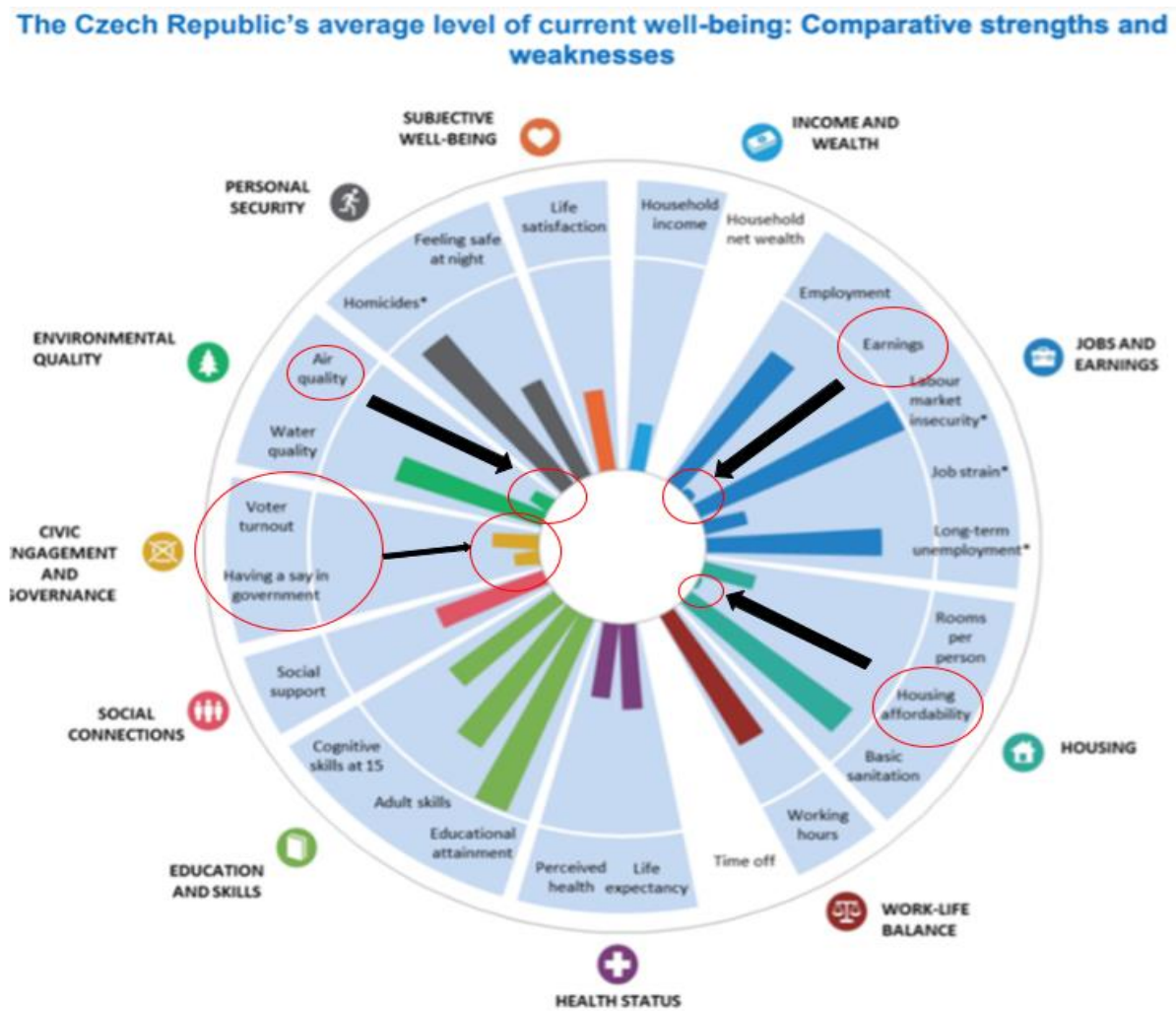


Figure 2.2: Wellness Chart (OECD, 2017) Note: The larger lines mean a higher level of satisfaction.

While looking at the level of current well-being in Figure 2.2, areas such as earnings, housing affordability, civic engagement, and air quality are causing citizens of the Czech Republic to feel unsatisfied with their country. From there, it became clear that homelessness, discrimination against certain social groups, and environmental concerns are three prominent social issues that exist within the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the European Union; 0.65% of the population experience homelessness and, as of 2018, 12.6% are under the age of 18 (Homeless World Cup, 2022; SDG Watch Europe, 2019; Thomas Smith, 2022). Factors contributing to high rates of homelessness include little access to affordable housing, alcoholism, debt, and unemployment (Thelwell, 2021). A lack of housing affordability has become a main contributor to homelessness; since 2010, the cost of flats has increased by 64%, 10.7% alone between 2019 and 2020. The 2019 census concluded that there are 119,000 people at risk of becoming homeless due to the rising cost of living and housing insecurity (OECD, 2020). Working on a project pertaining to the homeless population would be valuable for WPI students because they would interact with locals and help improve the lives of those with fewer resources.

Another pressing issue that exists not only in Prague but throughout the Czech Republic is prejudice and discrimination toward the LGBTQ+ community (known as the LGBT+ community in the Czech Republic). In 2019, Ombudsman (Public Defender of Rights) conducted a large survey (2,249 respondents) of the LGBT+ community and found that LGBT+ still face prejudice, discrimination, and bullying in schools and their place of work (Ombudsman, 2019). More than half of the respondents expressed incidents of harassment within the past five years. Yet, percentages may be even higher given that victims of discrimination and harassment tend not to come forward, as they do not feel it will evoke any change. There are many NPOs in

Prague working toward bettering the social constructs around the LGBT+ community; Prague Pride (Table 2.2) is only one of them.

Individuals with disabilities also face challenges throughout their everyday lives. While legislation has been making strides toward a more inclusive society, disabled people in Prague continue to face discriminatory issues, such as employers giving disabled people inferior work or making disabled people the first to be fired. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities in the Czech Republic is currently around 50% (Torokul Doorov, 2009). “Disability” is a broad term, so there are many different NPOs working toward improving accessibility for targeted disabilities. For instance, in Table 2.2, one organization is inspiring accessibility for Prague’s deaf community, while the other is improving tourist experiences for visitors with physical disabilities. Both organizations have the potential to become an IQP sponsor because they are working on significant projects that pertain to a profound social issue.

A larger minority in Prague that also experiences exclusion and discrimination is the Roma population. Roma people make up almost 2% of the Czech population and face exclusion pertaining to education, housing, employment, and interactions with authorities (Council of Europe, 2023). The Council of Europe explains, “There are many good ideas and intentions that could really help Czech Society become more inclusive, but these need proper implementation and enforcement. Unfortunately, an important gap still exists here.” (Council of Europe, 2023). Since this minority is so large, there are a plethora of organizations working toward improving the lives of the Roma population. However, the government is heavily involved in this issue, and interviews with project center directors showed that it can be difficult but not impossible to find sponsorships within government agencies (G. Burrier, personal communications, September 29, 2023).

There are also many environmental concerns in the Czech Republic due to a lack of renewable energy sources being implemented. Coal is a key energy resource in the Czech Republic as it is the country's only domestic fossil fuel. In 2019, coal accounted for a third of the total energy supply, 46% of the energy used for electricity, and over 25% of the energy used for heating (IEA, 2021). In the same year, only 14% of electricity and 22% of heating and cooling energy were generated by renewable energy sources (IEA, 2021). Although the amount of coal being used as an energy resource has been decreasing, coal still produced half of the total domestic energy production in the Czech Republic as of 2019 (IEA, 2021). The Czech government is working toward bettering their energy policy to build a path to a cleaner, more sustainable society. The current recommendation is to phase out coal by 2038 at the latest, which would have an immensely positive effect on the environment. The main obstacle pertaining to phasing out coal is that using coal as an energy resource is good for the economy and creates jobs (IEA, 2021). As for student project potential, it can be difficult to find an NPO or NGO working toward bettering the environment because environmental acts and efforts are usually directed by the government. Yet, as seen in the Melbourne Project Center, students from WPI tend to do excellent work when assigned environmental-related projects (L. Higgins, Personal Communication, September 25, 2023).

Another aspect that is causing environmental concerns is over-tourism. Over-tourism in Prague has affected the environment by creating soil erosion in touristy areas, challenges in waste management, and has also caused wear and tear on historical monuments (Kacprzak, 2021). Not only has over-tourism affected the environment, but it also has social and economic repercussions. Socially, over-tourism has caused the disintegration of authentic culture, leading to a shift in the local culture and a strain on infrastructure in Prague. Economically, over-tourism

negatively affects inflation and has created a dependence on seasonal tourist revenue for the Czech government (OECD, 2020). Within the 2023 Prague cohort, there is already a project working toward improving over-tourism in Prague. Therefore, it could be beneficial to research sponsorships where students could build off this project or find other ways for WPI students to improve over-tourism in Prague.

Overall, Prague has a plethora of meaningful areas where WPI students have the potential to make a difference during their time abroad. Table 2.2 shows non-profit and non-government organizations that are actively working toward repairing the social issues presented above, as well as the mission of each organization. Each of the organizations listed represents an area of expressed need for change in Prague and a corresponding organization that could one day become a key contact for the PPC. These organizations were identified through research strictly using the internet and social media.

Social Issue	Organization	Mission
The Exclusion of People with Disabilities	Accessible Prague	Removing barriers for people with disabilities, especially those traveling to Prague
Large Homeless Population	Archdiocesan Carita Prague	Helping those in need (homeless people or people going through difficult life situations)
Environmental Concerns	Arnika	Protecting nature and sustaining a healthy environment
Large Homeless Population	FriendShip Prague	Restoring a sense of dignity and humanity within homeless people through mutual and genuine friendships.
Over-tourism	Juzit	Helping young travelers avoid tourist crowds, while also allowing them to perceive the life of the locals



The Exclusion of Roma People	META	Promoting equal access to work and education in Prague.
The Exclusion of Roma People	Prague Multicultural Center	Working toward a society that is based on respect for human rights, political equality, and intercultural competence and understanding.
Prejudice Against the LGBT+ Community	Prague Pride	Creating “a respectful and safe environment where LGBT+ can be themselves.”
Over-tourism	Putting Prague First	Improving quality of life in Prague by taking care of Prague citizens, public spaces, and the destination.
The Exclusion of People with Disabilities	Tichy Svet	Creating equal opportunities for the hearing impaired.

*Table 2.2: Social Issues and Addressing Organizations*

The research completed prior to going onsite aided the team in securing sponsorship for the 2024 Prague Project Center cohort. The interviews with project center directors helped our team understand the qualities to look for while we search for sponsors abroad. Additionally, the interviews provide our team with techniques for reaching out to sponsors. The research done on PBL, ICL, WPI, and the IQP program provided a basis for the promotional materials we presented to organizations. The research done on previous student projects (in Prague, and all around the world) can provide organizations with examples and can help spark ideas about the projects that a potential sponsor can implement within their organization. With a better understanding of the social issues in Prague, the team identified more organizations onsite that are working toward creating a positive impact.

### 3.0 Methodology

Our goal is to identify and forge meaningful connections with potential sponsors, laying the foundation for future collaboration. The team's objectives to achieve this goal are as follows:

1. Understand the experience of current and past sponsors of the PPC by communicating with CIEE, the National Technical Museum, Něžně k ženě, and Zoo Praha.
2. Identify organizations in Prague that could be potential sponsors by doing online research, referencing the 2021 IQP findings, and referrals from current sponsors.
3. Develop outreach materials to help explain WPI and the IQP to potential sponsor, ensuring they can be understood by non-native English speakers.
4. Collaborate with potential sponsors in person to acquire their interest and brainstorm ideas on how students can work with their organization.

We worked on this project onsite in Prague from October 24, 2023, to December 14, 2023. First, our team set up interviews with past and present sponsors of the PPC. This gave us insight into the reasons why sponsors continue to work on projects with WPI students. Next, our team developed outreach materials to legitimize our cause when reaching out to potential sponsors. Finally, our team prepared for meetings and discussed with potential sponsors to establish meaningful connections for the PPC.

## **4.0 Results and Analysis**

This chapter reviews the results from our team's work onsite, organized by objective. The first section is an analysis of the feedback our team received from interviews with Prague sponsors. The next section is a list of the organizations our team reached out to and the methods we used to identify them. The third section is a description of the process we used to contact sponsors and an analysis of the methods we used in doing so. The final section summarizes each meeting we held with interested organizations.

## 4.1 Objective #1: Understanding the Experience of Sponsors

Our first objective is to determine the reasons why sponsors decide to work with students. To achieve this goal, our team interviewed current and past sponsors of the PPC (Appendix B). These sponsors included CIEE, National Technical Museum, Něžně k ženě, and Zoo Praha. Our team plans to use our findings from these conversations to showcase to future sponsors the positive impact IQPs have had on other organizations in Prague.

### 4.1.1 Sponsoring an IQP

Through these interviews, our team discovered the pros and cons of participating in the IQP program (Table 4.1).

Pros	Cons
Flexible time commitment	Language barrier
WPI students' skills	Time period when students are onsite
Structure of the program	

*Table 4.1: Current Sponsors Experience with IQP*

First, sponsors enjoy the flexible time commitment of the program. The one-hour weekly meeting between the student team, advisors, and sponsor seems to fit well into their schedule. Depending on the team dynamic and their personal schedule, some sponsors chose to put in more than one hour a week. Additionally, sponsors appreciated the flexibility of meeting times and using Zoom when necessary.

Next, sponsors were impressed with WPI students' technical skills and ability to work independently. Most sponsors don't have a profession with a technical focus, so the new perspective WPI students provided was incredibly refreshing. Furthermore, sponsors truly do a service when they take time out of their day to work with students, and they were delighted by

the independence of student teams. For instance, sponsors enjoyed that students meet their needs and provided quality work without needing to “hold their hand” for every step of the process.

Furthermore, four out of five sponsors are satisfied with the timeline of the IQP. Although they might not know all the details, sponsors like that students go through a prep period before arriving onsite. This made it easier for sponsors and students to get right to work when students arrive onsite. Furthermore, sponsors feel confident that students can produce meaningful deliverables in the two months they are onsite.

Additionally, our team was able to identify the main challenge of being a sponsor: the language barrier. This barrier can make it difficult for sponsors to explain their needs to students and for students to present their ideas to sponsors. Overall, this challenge can make it difficult for students and sponsors to achieve a common understanding of the goals and direction of the project. However, a returning sponsor noted that this communication got easier as they partnered on more projects.

Finally, for certain organizations, students coming onsite from mid-October to mid-December isn't ideal. Some organizations are busiest during the summer and the winter can affect hours of operation, number of visitors, etc. This could make it difficult for student teams to survey visitors or perform observations, for example. However, this may give sponsors more time to sit down and work with students.

## 4.2 Objective #2: Identifying Organizations

The team was able to identify 34 organizations in Prague fit for the IQP Program through internet research (See Table 2.2), a past IQP done in Prague, and referrals.

### 4.2.1 Identified Organizations via Research and Past IQP Group

During our first week onsite, our team contacted the Prague Projects team from the 2021 cohort and asked them if we could use the contacts they found during their time in Prague. This reference combined with our previous internet research gave our team 19 organizations to reach out to in our first round of cold call emails (Table 4.2).

Organization	Connection
Accessible Prague	Internet Research
Archdiocesan Carita Prague	Internet Research
Arnika	Internet Research
Association for Private Farming in the Czech Republic	Past IQP
Integration Centre Prague	Past IQP
Czech Red Cross Prague 1	Past IQP
FriendShip Prague	Internet Research
InBaze	Past IQP
Juzit	Past IQP
La Strada	Past IQP
Leonardo da Vinci Academy	Observation
Library of Vaclav Havel	Past IQP
Nova Skola	Past IQP
People in Need Foundation	Past IQP
PostBellum	Past IQP
Prague Multicultural Center	Internet Research
Prague Pride	Internet Research
Slovo 21	Past IQP
Tichy Svet	Internet Research

*Table 4.2: Cold-Called Organizations*

## 4.2.2 Identified Organizations via Snowball Sampling

In addition to internet research, our team heavily utilized “snowball sampling.” This technique is implemented by starting out with a small number of connections, asking current connections if they know anyone else interested, and then reaching out to the people that the previous connection referred. If this process is repeated continuously, then the networker can end up with a much larger network than they had before.

Our team first used this technique during our interviews with current sponsors. Fortunately, many sponsors recommended organizations we should contact. Additionally, respondents from Table 4.2 who declined a partnership provided referrals to other organizations that might be better suited for sponsoring a project. These connections helped our team identify an additional 15 organizations to contact (Table 4.3).

Organization	Connection
Abaceda	Sponsor
Botanicus	Project Center Director
Expat Centre Prague	Sponsor
Forum 2000	Sponsor
Fulbright Commission	Sponsor
Loono	Sponsor
National Library of The Czech Republic	Library of Vaclav Havel
National Museum	Sponsor
National Museum of Agriculture	Sponsor
National Technical Library	Library of Vaclav Havel
Organization for Aid to Refugees	Sponsor
Political Prisoners	Sponsor
Prague Shakespeare Company	Sponsor
Prague Wheelchair Association	Accessible Prague
Prague Youth Theater	Sponsor

*Table 4.3: Organization Referrals*

### **4.3 Objective #3: Developing and Deploying Outreach Materials**

Once potential sponsors had been identified, our team made contact and began building relationships. Our team accomplished this in four phases:

1. Sending introductory and follow-up emails to organizations that provide enough information without being overwhelming.
2. Giving an in-person elevator pitch at each potential sponsor meeting to serve as an introduction.
3. Creating an informational brochure to reference during meetings and provide additional context in follow-up emails.
4. Guiding potential sponsor meetings with a short presentation that included examples of IQPs relevant to the specific organization.

Our team spent the first three weeks onsite developing the above promotional materials. Then, at the beginning of the fourth week, our team followed the process described in Figure 4.1.

The first step for contacting potential sponsors was to identify organizations of interest (as described in section 4.2). Then, an introductory email was sent. If an organization was not interested, we replied expressing our gratitude for their response. If an organization was interested, we set up a meeting. If an organization was still interested after the meeting, we invited them to final presentations and introduced them to our PCDs as their new person of contact. If an organization was uninterested after the meeting, we thanked them for their time and left them alone.

Furthermore, if an organization never replied to the introductory email, we sent them a follow-up email with the information brochure attached. If an organization still did not respond,



we left them alone. However, if they did respond, we would follow the same process as if they responded to the introductory email.

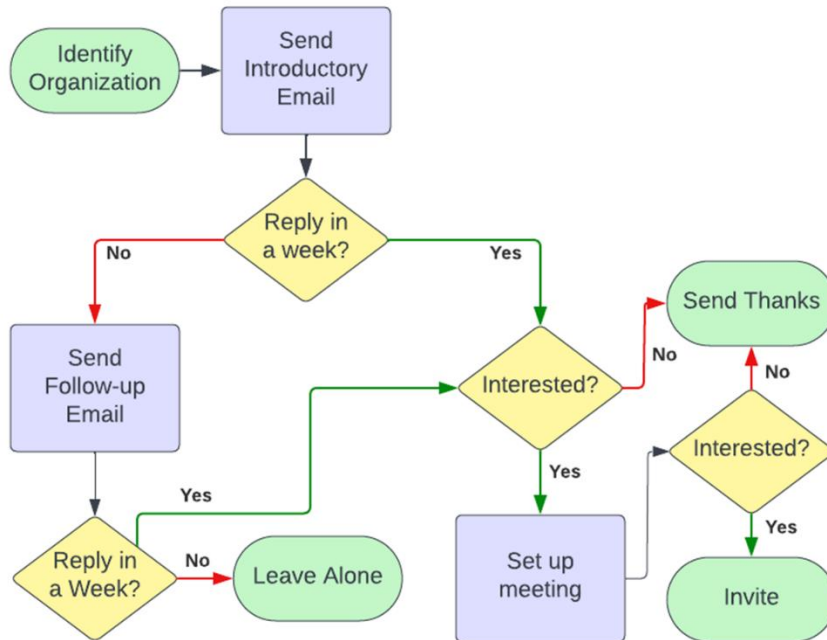


Figure 4.1: Potential Sponsor Contact Flowchart

### 4.3.1 Description of Outreach Materials

The first outreach material our team used to contact organizations was a “cold call” (See Appendix C) email that we sent to the organizations listed in Table 4.2. If an organization was referred to us, we would mention the referral in the subject line. If we didn’t have a referral, we included the organization's name in the subject line. Our team included the referral name or organization name to ensure the email did not come off as a scam. Then, there were three main goals our team took into consideration when writing the body of the email:

1. Understandable to non-native English speakers.
2. Sufficient information, but not an overwhelming amount.

3. Past project examples relevant to the specific organization.

Additionally, the follow-up email was sent as a reply to the introductory email, and the information brochure was also attached. This gave the organization more information about the IQP program, which helped legitimize our outreach efforts.

The elevator pitch briefly explained the value of the IQP program, so our team started the potential sponsor's meetings with it. From there, we would engage in small talk and then transition to the short presentation. Overall, the elevator pitch served as a good transition without being awkward or intimidating to the potential sponsor.

The information brochure was created so we could leave it with potential sponsors after our meetings. Then, the representative would have a physical reference of our meeting and could share it with their colleagues. Additionally, we included the web version of the brochure in our follow-up emails. The brochure contains key information for organizations to learn about partnerships with WPI. The first two pages focus on WPI and the IQP program (See Figure 4.2). To further promote the program, our team included past project examples from the PPC. Highlighting past projects displays the variety and technicality of WPI student work. Additionally, our team included a benefits section that described the positive feedback from sponsors (see Section 4.1) and a testimonial section (See Figure 4.2). These sections made the partnership opportunity more credible and enticing. Overall, the brochure's main purpose was to establish a sense of legitimacy for the organization, and to show that partnering with WPI is a possibility that should not be overlooked.



Figure 4.2: Prague Project Center Brochure (Larger Version can be Found in Appendix E)

The final outreach material our team created was a PowerPoint presentation to use during our meetings with organizations. The purpose of the presentation was to explain the IQP program and, hopefully, spark project ideas. Throughout these meetings, our team noticed that six slides from the presentation stood out to potential sponsors.

First, the most helpful slides were the ones that answered logistical questions (See Figure 4.3). The slide on the left explained the roles of an IQP team, including center directors, faculty advisors, sponsors, and students. This was meant to show organizations that they had resources of people to work with and weren't just being left with a group of students for two months. The slide on the right helped clarify the timeline and scope of the IQP program.

Next, our team included descriptive slides (See Figure 4.4). These slides helped the team introduce the IQP to potential sponsors and helped ignite the brainstorming process. To further this brainstorming process, our team illustrated past projects that were relevant to the organization (See Figure 4.5). For instance, if an organization focused on the integration of refugees, our team would search for past IQPs that did something similar or worked with a

similar organization. Overall, these slides promoted the most brainstorming and showcased the global impact of participating in the IQP program.

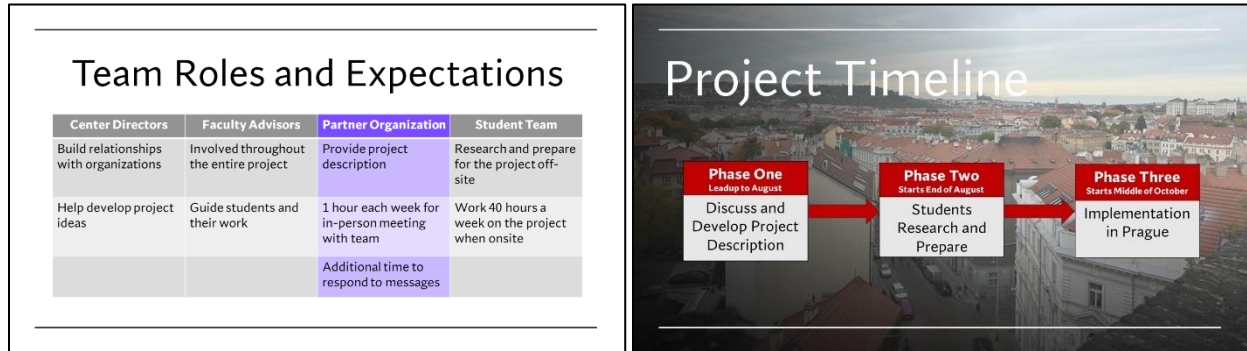


Figure 4.3: Logistical Slides



Figure 4.4: Descriptive Slides

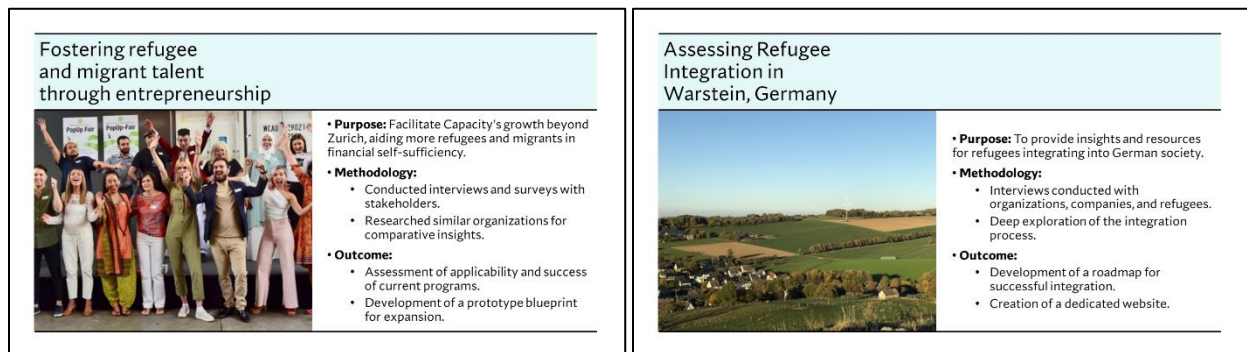


Figure 4.5: Past Project Example Slides

### 4.3.2 Responses of Interest

After our team identified the organizations from section 4.2, the next step was to contact these organizations using a “cold call” email (Appendix C). Despite its theoretical ineffectiveness, cold calling allowed us to cast a wide net that did, in fact, result in a few responses (Table 4.4). The purpose of this initial contact was to provide the organization with basic information about the IQP and, hopefully, grab their attention. To gain the interest of organizations, our team kept the introductory email short and provided examples of past projects that are related to the organization.

Contact Source	Contacts Provided	Organizations That Responded	Response Rate	Interested Organizations	Interested Rate	Meetings Held
Current/Past Sponsors	11	3	27%	3	100%	2
Internet Research	9	2	29%	1	50%	1
Organization	3	0	0%	0	0%	0
Past IQP	10	4	36%	2	50%	2
PCD	1	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	34	9	26%	6	67%	5

*Table 4.4: Introductory Email Response Rates*

To connect with the organizations that did not respond, our team replied with a follow-up email (Appendix D) one week after the initial email was sent. In this email, our team attached the information brochure (Appendix E) to help legitimize our cause and gain the trust of these organizations. Fortunately, the follow-up email was a great success, and our team received more responses (Table 4.5).

Contact Source	Contacts Provided	Organizations Which Responded	Response Rate	Interested Organizations	Interested Rate	Meetings Held
Current/Past Sponsors	2	1	50%	0	0%	0
Internet Research	7	5	71%	2	40%	2
Organization	3	1	33%	1	100%	1
Past IQP	6	2	33%	2	100%	1
PCD	1	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	19	9	47%	5	56%	4

*Table 4.5: Follow-up Email Response Rates*

Once we had organizations who were interested, we were able to proceed with the initial meetings with organizations. The meetings our team held with organizations were approximately 30 minutes in length. We began each meeting with the PowerPoint presentation our team developed (Appendix F). This provided in-depth information about WPI and IQP and the context around being a “sponsor.” After the presentation, our team answered any questions the representative had and, in some cases, started brainstorming ideas for potential projects to promote their interests.

Our team concluded each meeting assuring the representative that we would follow up with an email that has the presentation attached. Additionally, we left organizations a physical copy of the information brochure in case they want to show it to others in their organization.

## 4.4 Objective #4: Initiate Conversations with Potential Sponsors

Table 4.6 displays the level of interest and network status of the 34 organizations we contacted. Table 4.7 describes color coding in the interest-level column of Table 4.6.

Organization	Interest Level	Email?	Follow-Up?	Meeting?
Abaceda		✓		✓
Arnika		✓	✓	✓
Integration Centre Prague		✓		✓
Post Bellum		✓		✓
Association for Private Farming on the Czech Republic		✓	✓	
Fulbright Commission		✓		✓
Leonardo da Vinci Academy		✓	✓	✓
Prague Pride		✓		✓
Prague Wheelchair Association		✓	✓	✓
Prague Youth Theatre		✓		
Slovo21		✓		✓
Expat Centre Prague		✓		
Forum 2000		✓		
Loono		✓		
Organization for Aid to Refugees		✓		
Political Prisoners		✓		
Prague Shakespeare Company		✓		
Archdiocesan Carita Prague		✓	✓	
Botanicus		✓	✓	
Czech Red Cross Prague 1		✓	✓	
La Strada		✓	✓	
National Library of the Czech Republic		✓	✓	
National Museum of Agriculture		✓	✓	
National Technical Library		✓	✓	
Nova Skola		✓	✓	
People in Need Foundation		✓	✓	
Prague Multicultural Center		✓	✓	
Accessible Prague		✓		
Friendship Prague		✓	✓	
InBaze		✓		
Juzit		✓	✓	

Library of Vaclac Havel		✓		
National Museum		✓	✓	
Tichy Svet		✓	✓	

Table 4.6: Interest and Stage of All Organizations

Color	Meaning
Green	Very interested. Good candidate for future sponsorship
Yellow	Interested, but still cautious. Will benefit from further discussions.
Blue	Only received the introductory email. Follow-up is recommended.
Orange	No response. Follow-up may be beneficial.
Red	Not currently interested.

Table 4.7: Interest Level Key

In short, our team received responses from 17 organizations. Of those responses, eleven organizations agreed to meet with our team to learn more. The team took detailed notes during each meeting to pass along to the co-directors of the PPC.

**4.4.1 Summary of Potential Sponsor Meetings**

In conclusion, our meetings with various organizations in the Czech Republic have highlighted a diverse range of potential collaboration opportunities. Each organization presents unique challenges and areas for project development, reflecting their specific missions and needs. Key concerns of the organizations we met with included budget constraints, space requirements, and language barriers. These factors are crucial in shaping the scope and feasibility of potential projects. Through our meetings, we were able to address these issues and brainstorm potential ideas for collaboration. Overall, these meetings represented a variety of avenues for meaningful partnerships and emphasized the need for us to tailor approaches with organizations and thoughtfully curate project examples to entice new organizations. Ultimately, these meetings



proved to be quite successful as evident from the data in Table 4.6. We are excited about what these connections could mean for the future of the PPC.

## **5.0 Recommendations for PCDs Looking to Expand Their Network**

This section focuses on recommendations for future IQP teams and WPI project center directors working to expand their center's network. The recommendations include techniques that worked well for the team and steps we would do differently.

### **5.0.1 Interview Current and Past Sponsors**

The team highly recommends interviewing current and past sponsors of project centers. These interviews helped the team understand the IQP from the perspective of a sponsor. Gaining an understanding of the logistics, challenges, and rewards of being a sponsor was useful information to present to potential sponsors. These interviews, paired with the information from project center directors, created a stronger case when trying to convince potential sponsors to work with WPI. Additionally, interviewing former sponsors helped our team understand how to improve the IQP experience and retain sponsorship.

### **5.0.2 ID2050 “Introduction to Team” Assignment**

The interviews with current sponsors resulted in beneficial feedback, specifically about the prep term (ID2050). One sponsor noted that they would have liked to get to know their students prior to their arrival onsite. Therefore, the team recommends an assignment for the first week of ID2050 where students should create a short PowerPoint presentation that introduces each team member that can be sent to their sponsor. It can include things like majors, interests, where they're from, etc. Not only would this assignment be useful for the team to get to know each other, but it can open the door for correspondence between students and their sponsor during the prep period, which some sponsors may enjoy.

### **5.0.3 Potential Sponsor Contact Flowchart**

The team highly recommends that future networkers for the PPC follow the flow chart (Figure 4.1) for contacting potential sponsors. The process was incredibly successful for our team, particularly the follow-up email. Without the follow-up email, our team would have only received responses from eight organizations. However, responding to our introductory email with the information brochure attached helped establish the team's credibility and resulted in nine additional responses.

### **5.0.4 Outreach Tips**

The team recommends contacting potential sponsors in the mornings on Monday. The team used this approach for the introductory and follow-up emails and received many responses that way. Additionally, the potential sponsors who received the information brochure in the follow-up email were not as engaged with the presentation. This shows that the information brochure was successful in explaining the IQP in enough detail, and therefore, the team recommends meetings with potential sponsors that have already received the brochure should be conversation based instead of focusing on the presentation. Furthermore, reaching out to emails attached to a person in the organization, and not the "info@organization.org" emails, is incredibly beneficial.

### **5.0.5 Logistics and Final Presentations**

The team recommends that project center directors provide teams with a list of general logistics. In many meetings with potential sponsors, the representative wanted to review these points, but it was not our team's place to speak for project center directors. Additionally, the team highly recommends inviting potential sponsors to the IQP presentations at the end of the term.

The event is a great opportunity for interested organizations to learn more about the IQP program and what WPI students can offer.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Throughout the course of our time in Prague, the team was able to successfully create new connections for the Prague Project Center. Interviews with both Project Center Directors and current Prague Sponsors gave us the information we needed to understand the value of student projects, not only for the students, but also for the partner organization.

Through our interviews with Project Center Directors, we learned that the best projects have aspects of students interacting with the local community around the project center. It was also commonly noted that non-profit and non-government organizations usually result in the best sponsorships. In addition, Project Center Directors explained to us that sponsors who have time to work with students and can provide a workspace are best. We were then able to use this information to find organizations in Prague that had the potential to provide this type of experience for students.

Interviews with current sponsors provided us with the information that sponsors enjoy working with WPI students because they are independent workers with advanced technical skills, providing a fresh perspective for the organization. Using this information, we were able to mold our promotional materials from explaining what we *thought* sponsors enjoyed to explaining what sponsors from Prague *actually* enjoyed.

Each of our promotional materials played a pivotal role in making connections for the Prague Project Center. The initial email did its job of creating an initial point of contact and providing information while not overwhelming the person on the other end of it. The follow-up email had great success in getting us more responses; only eight people responded to our initial email, whereas our follow-up email that was sent to fewer people had nine responses. The

brochure contributed to the higher response rate to the follow-up email; attaching it gave the organizations more information and legitimized our efforts. The slideshow provided potential sponsors with all the information about the IQP Program in great detail, clearing up any possible confusion. From there, most potential sponsors could decide if they were ready to move forward and speak to Project Center Directors. In addition, our invitation to student presentations at the end of the term gave potential sponsors who are interested an opportunity to see student projects that occurred this year, giving our efforts more credibility.

The final step for the team is to hand over our list of contacts to our Project Center Directors. This includes a list of organizations that are interested in working with WPI students, a list that are not interested, and a list of organizations that are on the fence. In addition, our team produced a list of contacts that seemed good, but we were unable to meet due to a time constraint, allowing them to reach out in the future if the Prague Project Center requires more sponsorship. All in all, our team finding four very interested organizations, and seven adequately interested organizations in Prague shows how successful our methods have proven to be while securing sponsorship for a WPI project center.

From our work done in Prague, WPI's Global School can increase the number of students travelling to Prague for IQP from 20 to 24, as there are now six organizations that are expected to work with students next year. As a group, we are excited to see the projects that will spawn from our work here, hoping that it will result in meaningful assistance for the people of Prague and an unforgettable experience for future WPI cohorts.

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## **Appendix A: Project Center Director Interview Schedule**

- In your opinion, what defines a "good" project or project center?
  - What are the characteristics of a multi-term project center?
- Can you share a favorite project(s) you've worked on and highlight the key characteristics that made it stand out?
- Are there any projects, project characteristics, or sponsors you try to avoid?
- Do you believe it is common or important for a project center to have a theme for its projects (i.e., environmentalism, community development, cultural heritage)?
- How was your project center affected during the pandemic?

## **Appendix B: Past and Present Sponsor Interview Schedule**

1. What was the process of developing a project idea like?
2. How did you integrate working with students into your schedule?
  - a. What was your time commitment?
    - i. Too much? Too little?
3. What did you enjoy most about working with students?
4. Have you experienced any challenges working with WPI students?
5. What did you think about the outcome of the project?
6. *For returning sponsors*
  - a. Why did you decide to return and sponsor another project?
7. *For past sponsors*
  - a. Do you plan to sponsor more projects in the future? Why or why not?
8. How do you think the IQP process / overall experience could be improved?
9. Do these materials reflect your experience as a sponsor? (show brochure)
  - a. Would you be willing to provide a quote for this page about your experience?
10. Do you know any other organizations that may benefit from working with WPI students?

## Appendix C: Potential Sponsor Introductory Email Template

Subject Line: University Students Looking to Partner with [organization name]

Dear [contact name],

I hope you are doing well. {[Referral name] suggested that I reach out to you about [organization name]}. I am an American university student, and I am looking to connect college students and faculty with your organization.

My name is [student sending email] and I am currently in Prague with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). WPI has a program that connects a team of students to organizations like yours from around the world to work on projects that support the organization's cause.

These students, along with faculty advisors, would spend two months in Prague working closely with your organization on a project you define. I believe WPI students can make a positive impact on your organization because they are technically skilled and independent workers.

Here are some examples of projects from past partnerships:

[Previous Project Example 1]

[Previous Project Example 2]

Would you be interested in setting up a time to meet and learn more about this opportunity? I only ask for 30 minutes of your time.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have or to send more information about the program.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest Regards,

[student sending email]

[email address of student]

<https://pragueprojectcenter.org>

<https://www.wpi.edu/project-based-learning/project-based-education/interactive-qualifying-project>

## Appendix D: Potential Sponsor Follow-Up Email Template

Hi [contact name],

I am just following up on the previous email I sent you one week ago. I have attached an information slide about the program if you would like to learn more.

Would you be willing to set up a time to meet [preferred day]? I only ask for 30 minutes of your time.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Kindest Regards,

[student sending email]

[email address of student]

<https://pragueprojectcenter.org>

<https://www.wpi.edu/project-based-learning/project-based-education/interactive-qualifying-project>

# Appendix E: Informational Brochure for Potential Sponsors



## WPI



### PROJECT PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

### WHAT IS WPI

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (WPI) IS A TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES.

.....

WPI IS KNOWN FOR ITS "LEARNING THROUGH PROJECTS" APPROACH, WHERE STUDENTS WORK WITH ORGANIZATIONS ON REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS.

.....

THE GLOBAL PROJECTS PROGRAM SPANS THE GLOBE WITH 50+ PROJECT CENTERS, IN 31 COUNTRIES, ACROSS SIX CONTINENTS.

### Interactive Qualifying Project...

Is a key part of WPI's project-based curriculum, where students collaborate in teams to address real-world problems, combining science, technology, and society.



Students work in teams with faculty advisors over seven weeks, addressing societal issues, with a focus on topics like education, cultural preservation, health, and environment.



### Past Prague Projects

#### National Technical Museum

In 2022, a team of students from WPI worked on a project at the National Technical Museum, identifying the museum's strong points and weak points for language accessibility.



### Benefits of Partnering with WPI

#### Solution-Oriented Projects

WPI students bring creative solutions, tackling issues like tourism and web development, aiding partners and community relations.



### From our partners

"It's really great to work with students side by side and see them getting not just new knowledge but also many experiences with our animals."

Oliver Le Que, Zoo Praha

"I am very grateful for the experience to work with them [WPI students] as well as for working with WPI and I hope that NTM will participate in another project soon."

Jan Duda, Národní Technické Muzeum

### Zoo Praha

In 2022 a group of WPI students worked on a project at Zoo Praha, with the goal of improving the functionality and accessibility of the zoo's website. The team recommended changes to improve the online experience for international visitors.



### Fresh Perspectives and Technical Expertise

WPI students bring new ideas and technical skills to sponsors, improving project success and supporting Evidence-based decisions.



### Contact us

gr-PraguePartnerships@wpi.edu  
<https://pragueprojectcenter.org>  
 Štúlcova 89/1, 128 00 Praha 2-Vyšehrad  
 Prague, Czechia


# Appendix F: PowerPoint Presentation for Potential Sponsors

## The WPI Prague Project Center



Kaylee Carr  
Maxwell Friedman  
Colleen Mullane  
Aleksandr Samarin

## Our Team



Kaylee Carr  
Civil Engineering  
New York

Maxwell Friedman  
Robotics Engineering  
New Jersey

Colleen Mullane  
Robotics Engineering  
Connecticut

Aleksandr Samarin  
Computer Science  
Massachusetts

## Directors and Advisors



Aaron Deskins  
Co-director


Marie Keller  
Co-director

Lauren Elgert  
Advisor

Philip Hultquist  
Advisor

## Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)

- American technological university
- Founded in 1865
- Located in Worcester, Massachusetts
- 5,246 undergraduate students
- Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP)



Albion, L. (2016). WPI/Quincy on Morgan Hill [Image].

## Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP)

A group of college students, alongside faculty advisors, partner with organizations from **around the world** to work on projects that support the organization's mission.

- **Mutually beneficial** for the students and the organization.
- Students gain valuable experience working in a **team**.
- Organizations benefit from a group of independent workers that will provide a **fresh perspective**.



## Project Center Locations





## Prague Project Center Information

  
**Established in 2020.**  
 First students came in  
 October of 2021.

  
**Operates in Prague every  
 year from mid October to  
 mid December.**

  
**Students have worked on  
 projects with organizations  
 like:**  
 Zoo Praha  
 National Technical Museum

## Team Roles and Expectations

Center Directors	Faculty Advisors	Partner Organization	Student Team
Build relationships with organizations	Involved throughout the entire project	Provide project description	Research and prepare for the project off-site
Help develop project ideas	Guide students and their work	1 hour each week for in-person meeting with team	Work 40 hours a week on the project when onsite
		Additional time to respond to messages	

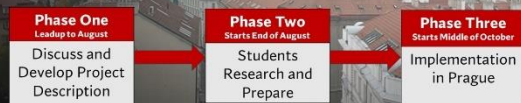
## Good Projects Include

- Open-ended solutions
- Collaboration between students and organization
- Interactions with local community
- Interesting and helpful to partner organization

## Project Examples

To be swapped with two slides of examples  
 (can be found below the "Contacts" slide)  
 based on relevance to the organization

## Project Timeline



## Benefits to Partners



FRESH  
 PERSPECTIVE  
 FROM YOUNG  
 STUDENTS



WPI STUDENTS HAVE  
 TECHNOLOGICAL  
 SKILLS AND ARE  
 INDEPENDENT  
 WORKERS.



WPI FACULTY  
 ENSURE  
 QUALITY  
 WORK.

## Contacts

Email us: [gr-PraguePartnerships@wpi.edu](mailto:gr-PraguePartnerships@wpi.edu)

Project Center Directors (Slide 3):  
 - Aaron Deskins: [nadeskins@wpi.edu](mailto:nadeskins@wpi.edu)  
 - Marie Keller: [mkeller@wpi.edu](mailto:mkeller@wpi.edu)

Check out our website: [pragueprojectcenter.org](http://pragueprojectcenter.org)



### “Assessing Refugee Integration” (Warstein, Germany)



- **Purpose:** To provide insights and resources for refugees integrating into German society.
- **Methodology:**
  - Surveyed and conducted interviews with organizations, volunteers and refugees.
  - In-depth exploration of the integration process.
- **Outcome:**
  - Developed a guide for successful integration.
  - Created a website mock-up that volunteers could use to improve communication.

### Assessing Refugee Integration in Warstein, Germany



- **Purpose:** To provide insights and resources for refugees integrating into German society.
- **Methodology:**
  - Interviews conducted with organizations, companies, and refugees.
  - Deep exploration of the integration process.
- **Outcome:**
  - Development of a roadmap for successful integration.
  - Creation of a dedicated website.

### Fostering refugee and migrant talent through entrepreneurship



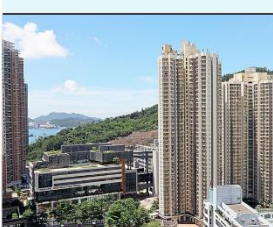
- **Purpose:** Facilitate Capacity's growth beyond Zurich, aiding more refugees and migrants in financial self-sufficiency.
- **Methodology:**
  - Conducted interviews and surveys with stakeholders.
  - Researched similar organizations for comparative insights.
- **Outcome:**
  - Assessment of applicability and success of current programs.
  - Development of a prototype blueprint for expansion.

### “Sala Siete: A Space for the Artist in Everyone” (San Juan, Puerto Rico)



- **Purpose:** To design a rooftop café where artists are free to connect, create and perform.
- **Methodology:**
  - Analyzed the current conditions of the rooftop.
  - Conducted interviews and workshops to understand what artists are looking for in a space like this.
- **Outcome:**
  - Created a completed 3D model of the café.
  - Developed two resources and multiple recommendations the theater can use to further enhance the space.

### “The Use of Technology to Enhance English Language (ESL) Teaching” (Hong Kong, China)



- **Purpose:** To recommend changes in Caritas Institute of Higher Education's English program to improve students' English performance
- **Methodology:**
  - Identify the underlying causes of current student performance
  - Conducted through classroom observation
  - Interviews with focus groups, instructors, and students
  - Determine the impact that technology could have on English language programs
  - Examine current technology and its usage
  - Examine possible technologies to be used
- **Outcome:** From observations and interviews it was recommended for classrooms to use modern polling/form sites. They also recommended language learning software for outside-of-classroom use.

### “English Language Education and Cultural Exchange Program for Rural Schools in Thailand” (Bangkok, Thailand)



- **Purpose:** To develop, test, evaluate, and recommend new and sustainable teaching techniques to improve the educational impact of the existing English Foreign Language programs in rural elementary schools.
- **Methodology:**
  - Worked with teachers to develop criteria for programs
  - In-classroom lessons
  - Cultural Exchange Fair
  - Teacher training program
  - Selected, implemented, evaluated, revised each of the activities proposed
  - Interviewed and researched ways to implement these activities
- **Outcome:** After completing research, feedback was conducted in three Thai schools where the methods were used with students. These included a variety of English language-based games and songs as well as other pronunciation activities. All activities were worked and were recommended to implement in other rural schools in Thailand.

### Increasing Street-Level Accessibility in Cuenca, Ecuador



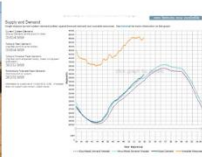
- **Purpose:** Addressing street-level accessibility by implementing the application Project Sidewalk
- **Methodology:**
  - Conducting a modified pilot test of Project Sidewalk
  - Calculating the frequency of positive and negative labels on streets
  - Conducting interviews with experts
- **Outcome:**
  - Formulating recommendations for their partner organization, EMOV, to better improve street-level accessibility
  - Recommendations included improving surface problems, missing sidewalks, unpassable curb ramps, and promoting Project Sidewalk

### Evaluating the State of Accessibility in Iceland



- **Purpose:** Forming a data-driven conclusion on the best way to support students with mobility concerns in Iceland
- **Methodology:**
  - Interviews with experts and students
  - Survey asking questions regarding accessibility
- **Outcome:**
  - In-depth analysis on the current state of accessibility in Iceland
  - Recommendations for how WPI can improve accessibility for students traveling to Iceland

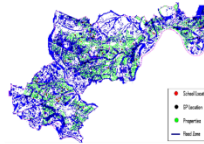
## Energy Sustainability in Morocco



- **Purpose:** Suggesting possible improvements to Morocco's energy policy by identifying gaps and evaluating social, political, economic, and technical factors
- **Methodology:**
  - Interviews with scientists, engineers, non-governmental and governmental groups to see what they believed were major challenges and opportunities for Morocco's sustainability goals
  - Analysis of both large-scale and small-scale projects carried out in Morocco
- **Outcome:** The students identified key areas where Moroccan energy conservation organizations could improve and made suggestions
  - Increasing awareness about energy conservation and efficiency
  - Supporting local energy projects
  - Enhancing Morocco's growing reputation in the renewable energy space
  - Consider new long-term renewable energy projects

## "Modeling Flooding in the Borough of Hounslow" (London, England)

Figure 10: Simulation - Surface Water in 2031 Year



**Purpose:** To develop a program to model the damages of urban flooding to the Borough of Hounslow. This would be used to estimate flood costs to aid in emergency planning.

### Methodology:

- Develop an understanding of the variables included in an urban flooding model
  - Including relevant and discounted variables as well as utilities and property damages
  - Schools, temporary accommodation, health and people were also analyzed when developing the program
- Projected different flooding scenarios based on a variety of initial conditions
  - They chose a variety of flooding scenarios. Each one modelling a different type of flood.
  - Identify the impact areas
  - Takes into account flood projections for the year 2031.

**Outcome:** After running six different flooding scenarios in and around Hounslow, the team found that the program would be a good tool to record and store statistics of past floods as well as predict damages for potential floods. The team made their program easily replicable for other boroughs in England to be used in emergency situations.

## Kyoto Organic Farming Initiative



- **Purpose:** Promoting a sustainable food lifestyle to Kyoto residents through organic farming
- **Methodology:**
  - Understanding of the farming and food landscapes in Kyoto through observation and interviews
  - Building a classroom where people can learn about and practice organic farming
- **Outcome:**
  - Strong analysis of farms and markets for the teams' partner, Chuck Kayser.
  - Building a classroom that abided to Japanese building codes

## Assessing the Farming Methods of Local Communities in Nan Province



- **Purpose:** To evaluate farming methods in Nan Province and support the transition to sustainable practices.
- **Methodology:**
  - Comparison of crop rotation and integrated terrace farming.
  - Analysis of barriers faced by farmers, including lack of knowledge and financial constraints.
- **Outcome:**
  - Strategies for farmers to adopt sustainable terrace farming.
  - Support for sustainable farming initiatives.

## "Making History Interactive at the Hong Kong Museum of History" (Hong Kong, China)



- **Purpose:** To preserve culture and educate the younger generations on cultural history and traditions.
- **Methodology:**
  - Developed and implemented interactive computer and hands-on games.
  - Performed observational studies and created written surveys to evaluate games.
- **Outcome:**
  - Confirmed that interactive games promote cultural learning among museum visitors.
  - Recommendations to improve room layout and each game.

## "The Untold Stories of Museums and Cultural Spaces" (Cuenca, Ecuador)



- **Purpose:** To highlight the cultural preservation efforts of museums and cultural spaces unknown to the public.
- **Methodology:**
  - Observe museums and spaces from a visitor's perspective.
  - Interview staff to uncover stories.
- **Outcome:**
  - Developed a guidebook with unique profiles for each site.
  - Provided recommendations to improve the sites.

### Recommended Features for ORAM's Web Application

- 1 **Languages**  
Continuous addition of languages starting with popular refugee languages
- 2 **Email**  
Refugees can reach out to ORAM's email and refugees can submit their email
- 3 **Resources**  
Constant addition of resources including getting in contact with other organizations
- 4 **Number of Refugees**  
Allowing a single refugee to submit a request for help for more than one refugee
- 5 **Country Seeking Refuge in**  
Section where refugees can identify which country they are seeking refuge in

## "Safeguarding the Online Presence of LGBTQ Refugees" (Berlin, Germany)

- **Purpose:** To develop a secure web presence to limit the potential danger posed to users.
- **Methodology:**
  - Developed a survey for refugees to determine their thoughts on the website.
  - Conducted interviews with professionals who have experience with cybersecurity.
- **Outcome:**
  - Created training materials for LGBTQ refugees to learn how to keep their personal data safe.
  - Provided recommendations to help improve the website.

## "Seeing is Believing; Creating a Database and Strategic Media Plan for Femmes et Diversité" (Lyon, France)



- **Purpose:** To analyze and improve the association of Femmes et Diversité.
- **Methodology:**
  - Analysis of the association's current media and communication strategies.
- **Outcome:**
  - Developed a database for the association to build relationships with clients.
  - Created a mockup website and implemented changes to social media platforms.
  - Provided a six-month plan to implement the team's recommendations.

## Appendix G: Transitional Email for End of Term

Subject Line: Transition of WPI Project Communication

Dear [Organization/Sponsor Name],

I hope you are doing well. I am writing to share some important updates from our team here in Prague.

As you know WPI students come to Prague from mid-October to mid-December every year. Though we are sad to see this time come, our team is scheduled to leave Prague on December 15th, and we wanted to ensure a seamless communication flow even in our absence.

So, we are transferring all project-related communications to our project center directors, Aaron Deskins and Marie Keller. They will be your primary points of contact going forward. Aaron and Marie are CC'd on this email and are well-equipped to provide you with any assistance or information you may need.

Their contact information is below:

Aaron Deskins: [nadeskins@wpi.edu](mailto:nadeskins@wpi.edu)

Marie Keller: [mkeller@wpi.edu](mailto:mkeller@wpi.edu)

Aaron and Marie are committed to upholding the standards we've set and are fully committed to working with your organization to help you make an informed decision about partnering with us.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and cooperation throughout our time in Prague. We deeply value the possibility of working together and look forward to building a mutually beneficial relationship in the coming year.

If you have any questions about this, please feel free to ask me. Alternatively, you can now reach out to Aaron and Marie should you have any questions or need further information in the future.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Email Address]