

## **Survey of Prague and Potential Project Opportunities**

An Interactive Qualifying Project Proposal  
submitted to the faculty of  
**WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE**  
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degree of Bachelor of Science

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*This report represents work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its web site without editorial or peer review. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see*

*<http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects>*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has an educational philosophy of project-based learning that the *WPI Plan* describes, which creates a learning environment focused on group projects. One of WPI's main goals with project-based learning is to prepare students "for the demands and rewards of fulfilling careers and lives" (Creating the *WPI Plan*, n.d.). Working in teams is commonplace in the business world, and WPI graduates are well-prepared for this through WPI's use of project-based learning. Another essential objective of the *WPI Plan* is to learn to solve problems effectively, meaning that following graduation, students have the qualifications to enter the workforce. The *WPI Plan* accomplishes this through a curriculum that enables students to apply their classroom learning to community-based projects which challenge them from a "proficiency, social, and global perspective" (The *WPI Plan*, n.d.). The elements of the *WPI Plan* come together in the Interactive Qualifying Project that all students must complete as a graduation requirement.

The Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) experience immerses students in projects "at the intersection of science and society" around the globe (Interactive Qualifying Project, n.d.). The IQP places students in interdisciplinary teams that address problems with real-world impact. Working in multifaceted groups, WPI students can tackle issues from many perspectives and learn to work with different personalities. While options exist for students to remain on campus for the IQP requirement, nested within the WPI's Global School, the Global Projects Program maintains over 40 project centers enabling students to complete projects around the globe. In addition, the Global School continually looks for opportunities to spread the IQP program and establish new project centers in various locations (Project Center Directory, n.d.).

Students at WPI project centers complete projects with sponsors with whom the center director has established a working relationship. A sponsor can be any company, organization, NGO, or government agency. When establishing a new project center, the Global School analyzes the location to assess the social issues and organizations willing to partner with WPI as an IQP sponsor. In 2020, WPI established the Prague Project Center. Because this site is still in its infancy, the Prague center site directors benefit from using the strategies of prior establishment IQP projects such as Reykjavik and Hangzhou to grow their project center. Our team will perform a similar role to these groups and strives to select project opportunities through a methodical and rigorous process.

Our project assists the site director, Professor Aaron Deskins, by assessing the topical areas of the Czech Republic which hold the greatest opportunities for projects and identifying potential sponsors for the Prague Project Center. While the project center is located in Prague, potential sponsors may exist throughout the country, not just in the city. Preliminary research done by our team identifies multiple societal categories, including a variety of social, economic, and cultural issues that exist in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, different organizations lie within each category, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for major social issues and museums for cultural awareness. Delving further into researching these organizations and reviewing the best practices that previous IQP establishment projects and center directors have utilized, we will identify high-quality sponsors and potential projects.

This project aims to identify potential sponsorship opportunities that will produce an abundance of projects assisting the Prague Project Center in expanding the number of high-quality projects available to students. To achieve this over-arching goal, we will focus on accomplishing these three objectives:

1. Determine a standard set of characteristics of suitable sponsors.
2. Identify and categorize areas of opportunity for student projects in Prague.
3. Identify potential sponsor organizations and reach out to contacts within them.

Successful completion of this project will aid WPI's Global Experience Office continue its mission of providing projects in international locations where students can have a positive real-world impact.

## 2.0 Background

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to WPI and the significance of the Interactive Qualifying Project as a graduation requirement before explaining the role of the project center and how to establish a new project center. Next, a history of Prague and the Czech Republic provides a background on areas of interest that our project will further analyze. Finally, this chapter provides information on similar projects WPI students completed in Hangzhou, Honolulu, and Reykjavik. This background knowledge clarifies the importance of an establishment IQP and its key role in locating potential sponsors for the Prague Project Center.

### 2.1 Interactive Qualifying Project

#### 2.1.1 History of WPI and the IQP

In 1865, the founders of Worcester Polytechnic Institute established the university on the principles of ‘Theory and Practice,’ meaning that not only is it important to learn concepts in the classroom, but students need to apply that knowledge to real-world problems. After much discussion and debate, WPI adopted a new educational model focused on “applying your classroom experiences in projects that challenge you from a proficiency, social, and global perspective” in the mid to late 1960s (The WPI Plan, n.d.). This educational model, titled the *WPI Plan*, has been in place for over 50 years. Through The *WPI Plan*, students get an opportunity to do three large-scale projects during their undergraduate career. One of these projects, the Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP), is an opportunity for students to experience the “intersection of science and society.” (Interactive Qualifying Project, n.d.). This project involves students doing the equivalent work of three academic courses focused on a real-world societal problem using scientific methodologies. Students begin the IQP experience by completing the ID2050 course the term before their IQP on social research methodologies and writing a project

proposal. While students can complete their IQP on WPI's campus, there are many off-campus project opportunities. Off-campus project centers exist in several US states and numerous countries around the world.

### ***2.1.2 The Role of the Project Center***

Today, WPI maintains over 40 project centers that allow students to participate in an IQP (Project Center Directory, n.d.). The project center acts as a connecting entity that coordinates students with project sponsors in the Czech Republic. The project center directors and the sponsors work together to identify a local and often human-centric problem for students to address. A typical project center has one to two advisors and anywhere from twelve to twenty-eight students. Students typically work in groups of four under the advisors to complete a project with a local sponsor.

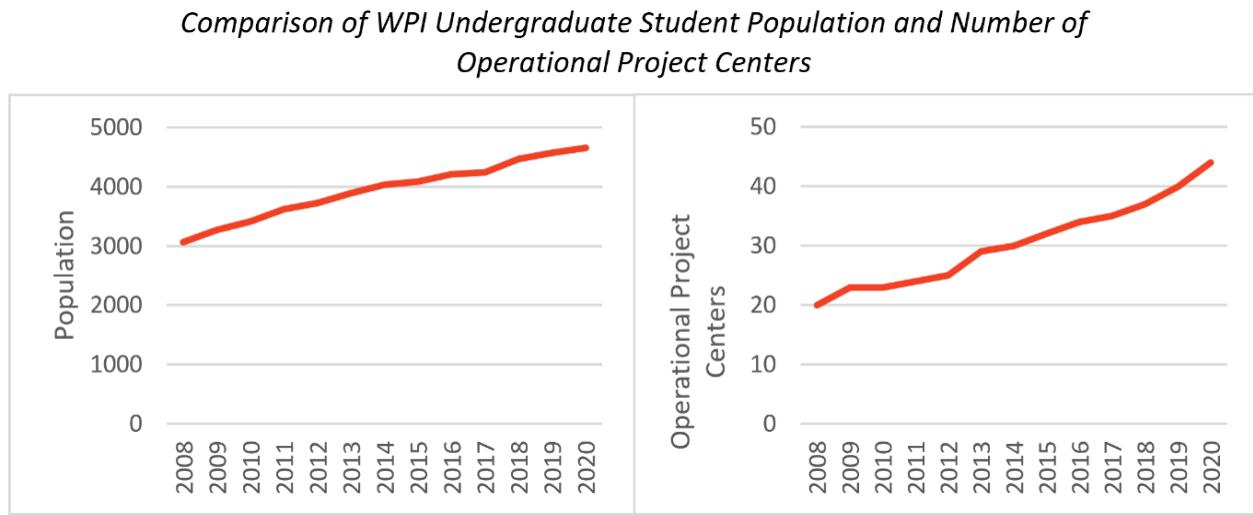
### ***2.1.3 Establishing a New Project Center***

As the student body grows and as interest in global travel increases, the Global Projects Program at WPI is creating new project centers around the world. The graphs in Figure 1<sup>1</sup> show this

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<sup>1</sup> The data of Operation Project Centers was collected by the authors' own work based on preliminary research of WPI's IQP database

correlation.



*Figure 1: Comparison of WPI Undergraduate Student Population and Number of Operational Project Centers Since 2008 (WPI Institutional Research, n.d.)*

The most recent project center is the Prague Project Center, within the Czech capital city of Prague. Students working on the first Prague projects worked remotely with the Prague Project Center in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which makes our group the first to physically travel to Prague to complete the IQP. With the successful completion of our project, the Prague Project Center will have the foundation from which to expand into a fully established project center. When establishing a new project center, it is integral to have a strong understanding of the history and contemporary issues within the project center location in order to produce projects that are relevant and meaningful.

## **2.2 History and Background of Prague and the Czech Republic**

### **2.2.1 Prague in WWII**

After successfully annexing Austria in 1938, Hitler turned his sights to the Sudetenland. This territory is a region of Czechoslovakia with a large population of people of German origin. The map on Figure 2 provides a visual of the Sudetenland. Following the annexation, Germans

in Czechoslovakia often behaved as political agitators, through demonstrations and protests, as an offensive tactic (Britanica, 2021).



*Figure 2: German Annexation of the Sudetenland during WWII (Britanica, 2020)*

Czechoslovakia, aligned with France and the Soviet Union, was mainly reliant on the military support of France. Although the Soviet Union was willing to work with Great Britain and France to defend Czechoslovakia, Great Britain was unwilling to “preserve Czech sovereignty over the Sudeten Germans without first clearly ascertaining the latter’s wishes” (Britanica, 2021). Running out of opportunities to avoid war, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain proposed a meeting without representatives from Czechoslovakia to settle the dispute over the Sudetenland. The meeting was a four-power conference consisting of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The meeting took place on September 29, 1938, and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini submitted a written plan that the four powers accepted as the

Munich Agreement. The Germans planned to occupy the Sudetenland by October 10th, meaning Czechoslovakia had to resist Germany without allies or surrender (Trevor-Roper, 1948).

The annexation of the Sudetenland left the remaining territories of Czechoslovakia weakened and under Axis control for much of WWII. Miraculously, Prague escaped the war with minor physical damage compared to other European cities. There were only two major incidents affecting the city in the last year of the war. The first of these bombings was due to a navigational error from a group of American B-17 bombers, killing 701 citizens and destroying 93 buildings (Falvey, 2011). The second major bombing was a targeted strike from British forces on the industry in the north-eastern region of Prague. The bombing took place on a Sunday when workers were not in the factories to minimize civilian casualties (Falvey, 2011). Prague faced a relatively low number of bombings, and because of this, many historical buildings from several centuries survived, unlike many other European cities which experienced complete devastation.

### **2.2.2 The Velvet Revolution**

The fall of communism began with the decline of the Soviet Union as a result of costs incurred by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; at the same time, independence movements were growing in the Soviet Socialist Republics (*The Fall of the Soviet Union / CES at UNC*, n.d.) The fall of communism in other parts of Eastern Europe, such as Poland and East Germany, precipitated the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia as a wave of anti-communism spread throughout Eastern Europe. On November 17, 1989, a group of Czech students held a peaceful demonstration in Prague, sanctioned by the communist government, to commemorate the death of a student 50 years prior at the hands of the Nazis. The students went to the grave of Karel Hynek Mácha, a Czech poet, before moving onto the center of Prague. When some of the demonstrators began chanting anti-communist slogans, police dispersed the protest (History

Matters, 2019). Reports of a student's death began to spread across Czechoslovakia (Merriman & Winter, 2006). Rumors emerged that the death was a result of the actions of the security forces that dispersed the protest.

The alleged viciousness of the police's actions outraged the public, and more civil disobedience occurred. The people in Prague would pretend to attend theater performances when in reality, the theaters became gathering locations to plan protests without being disrupted by the police. Theater workers throughout the country also began to express their support for a strike by being vocal during protests and supporting college students to join the cause (*How Theater Professionals Helped Stage The Velvet Revolution*, n.d.). In Prague on November 19, citizens, led by Václav Havel, gathered in the Magic Lantern Theater and formed the Civic Forum (Merriman & Winter, 2006). Meanwhile, the Public Against Violence movement, which shared similarities with the Civic Forum, formed in Bratislava. Bratislava at that time was the major city within the Slovak region of Czechoslovakia and is now the capital of Slovakia. By November 20, there were over two hundred thousand demonstrators in Prague. Pressure on the communist government was mounting.

On November 24, 1989, a meeting of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee dismissed several senior leaders. Another communist, Karel Urbánek, replaced the current Communist Party leader, Miloš Jakeš, after his resignation. Following the reconfiguration of the communist government, the public remained unsatisfied and continued protesting, as Jakeš' replacement was yet another communist (History Matters, 2019)<sup>2</sup>. Just a few days later, on November 29, the communist parliament accepted the formation of a new federal cabinet and constitutional revisions negotiated by the Civic Forum. By December 10, Communist president

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<sup>2</sup> History Matters is an educational YouTube channel aimed at providing short introductions to various historical topics.

Gustáv Husák announced a new coalition government before resigning. The communist parliament elected Havel as president to lead the compromise government. By June 1990, The Civic Forum and Public Against Violence dealt a final blow to communism in Czechoslovakia when Havel won the first post-communist, democratic elections. This series of events known today as the Velvet Revolution lasted several months; a timeline our team created, seen in Figure 3, summarizes key events.



*Figure 3: Velvet Revolution Timeline*

### **2.2.3 The Velvet Divorce**

Once the Velvet Revolution began, locals in Bohemia and Moravia expressed a more negative sentiment towards communism than did those living in Slovakia. The Velvet Divorce, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, began with the economic and developmental differences between the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia dating back to the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Kopeček et al., 2017). As described in Figure 4, the country now known as the Czech Republic was much more industrial than the

region that would become Slovakia. The map in Figure 4 illustrates the many regions that made up Czechoslovakia.



*Figure 4: Czechoslovakia before the events of the Velvet Divorce*

The residents in Slovakia were generally more resistant to the privatization of state property. A grammatical conflict, known as the Hyphen War, arose when the time came to rename the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. This was a precursor to the fundamentally different ideologies held by Czech and Slovak politicians due to disparities in income between the two regions. A formal agreement for the dissolution of Czechoslovakia came in 1992.

### 2.3 Prague in the Modern Era

#### 2.3.1 How Czech Values Changed with the Fall of Communism

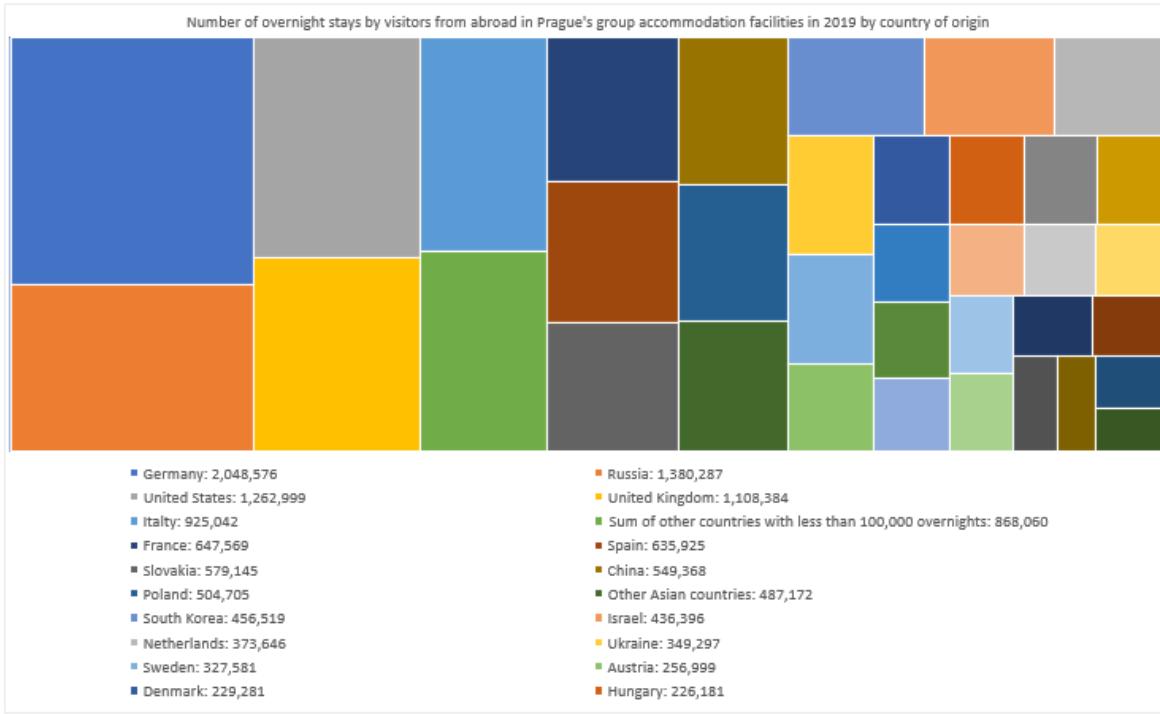
Since the democratization of the Czech Republic, beliefs about distributive justice began to shift from being dominantly egalitarian to meritocratic. This process has also continued through recent years. Distributive justice refers to how a community or society should distribute its scarce resources to individuals with competing needs (Roemer, 1998). A study by Smith &

Matějů examined these changing beliefs and characterized the transformation as the “crystallization of beliefs of distributive justice” (Smith & Matějů, 2012). Over time, norms of distributive justice have shifted from being predominantly egalitarian to predominantly meritocratic (Smith & Matějů, 2012). However, the study suggests that the egalitarian ideology is still more universal than expected this many years after the fall of communism. The study's findings indicate that the people of Prague may be less enthusiastic about meritocratic ideals influencing government policies many years after the fall of communism than those living in countries such as the United States. These views are also evident when considering the Czech Republic's high level of income equality. Understanding how Czech citizens think about distributive justice is crucial to understanding how Czech society views and interprets various social problems.

### **2.3.2 The Economy**

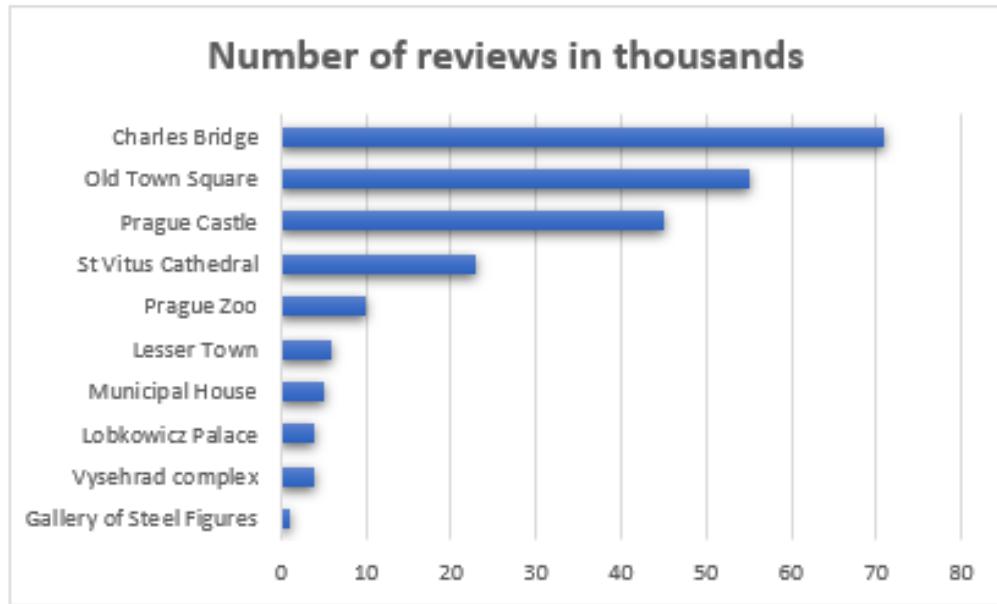
The Czech Republic has a strong economy, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita measure of 23 thousand USD, higher than neighboring Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia (*Timelines Explorer*, n.d.). This is partially due to the emergence of a large tourist industry in the country, with many international visitors. The cultural, economic, and political transformation that occurred as a result of democratization in Prague throughout the 1990s led to the modernization of the city and Prague becoming a major tourist destination (Carter et al., 2020). Additionally, the Czech Republic's joining of the European Union (EU) in 2004 eliminated border checks for tourists coming from other EU nations, further bolstering tourism in Prague. In 2019, over 8 million tourists visited Prague, and approximately 80% of those tourists were

international visitors (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2019). The majority of visitors to the historic city come from Germany and Russia, as shown in Figure 5.



*Figure 5: Overnight Visitors in Prague by Country, 2019 (Tourism - 2019, n.d.)*

The city's historic center, also known as The Royal Way, is one of the most popular destinations for tourists. Figure 6 highlights the ten most popular locations for visitors of The Royal Way.



*Figure 6: Most Popular Tourist Destinations in Prague (Tripadvisor, 2020)*

Although Prague is a popular tourist destination, the only revenue the city retains is real-estate taxes and local overnighting fees (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2019). The only taxes retained by municipalities within the Czech Republic is real estate taxes. While the tourism industry is beneficial to Prague's economy as a whole, it does not provide a significant amount of revenue to the city compared to its total expenditures. Popular businesses, restaurants, and shops receive the majority of benefits from tourism.

The Czech Republic exhibits one of the highest levels of income equality in the world, although certain regions, such as Ústecký, where a legacy of heavy industry and lack of investment has led to a stagnation in economic growth and are more likely to experience poverty (Hnízdilová & Adamec, 2020). The Czech News Agency reports that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the inequalities that already exist ("News," 2021). Additionally, the

pandemic has caused an increase in the incidence of domestic violence (“News,” 2021). A strong background in the economic, cultural, and societal aspects of Prague facilitates identifying promising categories to pursue project opportunities.

## **2.4 Identifying Areas to pursue project opportunities in Prague**

This section examines a variety of categories in which we may identify potential sponsor organizations. These categories include social issues as well as cultural elements, including local museums and artisans. Identification of these potential project sectors informs our search for sponsors. It is important to note that this is an early list based on preliminary research in which we reviewed news articles and scholarly journals.

### **2.4.1 Social Issues**

#### **2.4.1.1 Gender Inequality**

Gender inequality in the Czech Republic revolves primarily around economic and political disparities (Heintzelman, 2016). While more women graduate from college than men in the Czech Republic, areas of study are still disproportionately skewed towards one gender or another, such as more men going into technical fields requiring math and science knowledge. However, women in the workforce do experience discrimination in the Czech Republic, including occupational segregation as well as rank, or seniority, segregation. Women receive a salary around 25-30% less than what men would receive for the same job (Heintzelman, 2016). Failures of the government regarding maternity leave and childcare further hinder opportunities for women. Possible project opportunities exist in partnerships with sponsors who advocate for closing the gender gap.

#### **2.4.1.2 Homelessness**

Out of the 10,000 homeless people within the city of Prague, roughly 30% are between the ages of 19 and 29 (Jakub et al., 2011). When an adolescent turns 18, they reach the age of majority. Age of majority means that the law does not consider a person as a minor and assumes they have complete control of their legal responsibilities. In Czech law, a family must care for the well-being of a minor. However, once they reach the age of majority, they are no longer under this same level of care (Jakub et al., 2011). Unlike older homeless people, who have established a position or status within the homeless community, meaning that well-known homeless individuals feel more sense of community among the homeless population, the younger individuals have a more difficult time dealing with loss and are more likely to turn to risky behavior, which includes substance use and illegal activity (Jakub et al., 2011). Due to the unique issues impacting young homeless individuals in Prague, project opportunities focused on this subset of the homeless population could be significantly impactful. There are agencies and centers located in Prague that work to assist the homeless population, such as Pragulic, who seeks to challenge stereotypes about homelessness in Prague, or Naděje, a non-profit organization with facilities throughout the country. Our plan is to research further this category of potential sponsor organizations when the team is onsite in Prague (“About Us,” n.d.; Ústředí NADĚJE - Nadeje.Cz, n.d.).

#### **2.4.1.3 Other Societal Issues**

While our preliminary research identified homelessness and gender inequality, there are other notable social issues in the Czech Republic including: domestic violence, ethnic discrimination, housing debt, air pollution, climate change, and a high rate of incarceration (De

Pauw et al., 2021; “News,” 2021; Vusilović et al., 2021). Our research in Prague will determine which issues might benefit from IQP research collaborations.

#### ***2.4.2 Opportunities involving Czech Culture and Art***

Art has played an important role throughout Czech history. Puppetry saved the Czech language (M. Keller, personal communication, August 26, 2021). The theaters and their actors played a major role in the Velvet Revolution and Czechoslovakia’s nonviolent overthrow of the communist government. After the fall of communism, the new democratic government developed policies to restore public culture instead of the previous communist government-enforced culture. A major influence in these policies was President Havel, a playwright. There was a general sense of regaining control of art from the communist regime, but since then, art and culture have shifted away from anti-communism and towards a more politically neutral position (Vojtíšková & Lorencová, 2015).

In addition to art being an important part of Czech history, many past IQP projects based on art and culture have successfully been completed across many project centers. One such project occurred at the Tirana, Albania Project Center in 2018. Collaborating with students at the University of Arts in Tirana, the team investigated how they might use public art to increase public trust in the government (Fox et al., 2018). A lack of trust in the government is a result of Albania being a former communist country, similar to the Czech Republic. After developing a series of art pop-ups and workshops, the team found that the serious fun their exhibits generated helped to build trust (Fox et al., 2018). Another successful IQP from the past happened at the Venice, Italy Project Center in 2007. Sponsored by the non-profit organization PreserVenice, the team worked to document previously undocumented public art they found on Venetian lagoon islands, laying the foundation for the sponsor organization to restore and maintain these new

objects (Kent et al., 2007). These are only two examples of the copious number of IQP projects related to art or culture. To exemplify the scope of interest, a search of the Digital WPI repository with the keyword “art” yields results of 2,394 IQP reports.

### **2.4.3 Sponsor Opportunities**

The Czech Republic offers numerous opportunities for the Prague Project Center to flourish, but the number of sponsors and projects affects the growth and sustainability of a site. The two previous sections explored various areas of opportunity for projects in Prague. Since this was only preliminary research, it is important to conduct more research into these areas in order to consider as many options as possible. We will also research the entities that lie within these areas of opportunity because our goal is to identify not just project opportunities but potential sponsor organizations.

#### **2.4.3.1 Non-Government Organizations**

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are entities that are generally independent of a government, non-profit, and address major social issues in countries. The United Nations (UN) formulated this term to contrast “between international government organizations and private organizations” in 1945 (NGOs (Nongovernmental Organizations), 2020). The UN and other world organizations contribute to NGO funding, which relies heavily “on donations from governments, foundations, corporations, and individuals” (NGOs (Nongovernmental organizations), 2020). Historically, these organizations find it appealing to serve as WPI IQP sponsors since students provide research and execution of projects with a return on investment often exceeding initial costs (*Sponsor a Student Project*, n.d.). PresserVenice, a non-profit organization focused on preserving and restoring public art in Venice, sponsored *The PreserVENICE: Preserving Venetian Public Art* project (Kent et al., 2007; *PreserVenice*, n.d.).

Another example is Ashoka Romania, an international NGO, serving as the sponsor for *Assessing and Promoting Intersectional Approaches Among the Ashoka Fellows*, a project that a WPI IQP team completed at the Tirana Project Center (Allegrezza et al., 2021). The Ashoka organization supports “social entrepreneurs” who solve complex social problems with their innovations (*About Ashoka*, n.d.). NGOs “act as a mechanism for cooperation among private national groups” and tackle a variety of problems such as “economic, cultural, humanitarian, and technical” (Law, 2018). These objectives drive NGOs’ actions and can provide a consistent source of fulfilling projects for student IQPs (Mirońska & Zaborek, 2019). Having NGOs as project sponsors can enhance both the local community and the real-world experience of a student group.

Some NGOs use certain methodologies, such as inciting demonstrations and riots, to convey their agenda (*NGOs, Political Protest, and Civil Society*, 2017). These organizations do not fully reflect the mission of the IQP and are not suitable sponsors. Further, it is unlikely that any entity could solve a major problem like homelessness in under seven weeks with one project. Broader concerns take time to resolve. However, WPI experience shows that allowing teams to append previous projects year after year can yield significant change. This is evident in the La Makana y el Publico Museum in Cuenca, Ecuador, where groups from January 2021 and March 2021 assisted a small museum in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (Casserly et al., 2021; Mihaleva et al., 2021). NGO sponsors hold the potential to supply an IQP center with projects that will last for many school years and give students ample opportunities to satisfy the WPI learning philosophy.

#### **2.4.3.2 Museums**

Art is deeply related to the culture and nationalism of the Czech Republic. Museums house “distinctive artistic tradition” and keep a sense of “unity over time” (Carrier, 2012). Unlike in the United States and England, museums in the Czech Republic do not narrate their history but convey their complex national identity (Carrier, 2012). Artists and writers living in the Prague region over different time periods define this identity. These traditions “may be especially important for nations which” recently enjoy political independence as the public and private donate to museums (Carrier, 2012). IQP project opportunities do not have to address a major social issue but can strive to positively impact the surrounding community. Before looking into project opportunities revolving around communities, we must first ask if members of the community are welcome to IQP involvement.

Many museums within Prague provide a plethora of potential opportunities. Museums preserve history but struggle to stay relevant and sufficiently popular to survive, as the profits made through ticket sales do not cover operational costs. Although Prague experiences a large amount of tourism, not all visitors enter the culturally rich institutions located throughout the city. One potential project problem is “that there is no full-scale accessible guide to the museums” (Carrier, 2012). These issues are examples of project opportunities for students to confront through the IQP process. Similar to NGOs, museums receive funding from the government and donations, so project sponsorship is an enticing chance for low to no cost student research.

#### **2.5 Previous Establishment IQP Case Studies**

Previous WPI IQP teams documented their own search for sponsor opportunities to expand project centers around the world. By reviewing these three reports as case studies, one

can compare methodologies and summarize the positive outcomes for specific strategies. Commonalities between the cases include developing criteria of a suitable sponsor through center director interviews, developing informational material to define IQP logistics, and ranked suggestions for specific potential sponsor organizations. These commonalities provide a basis for our own research.

### ***2.5.1 Case Study 1: Expanding recruitment at the Hangzhou Project Center***

Within this project, a team of students at the Hangzhou Project Center (HZPC) in China identified entities as potential sponsors, developed criteria for the most suitable sponsors, and produced a list of recommended organizations using their criteria. The students used a weighting system to rank potential sponsors on suitability. The project team assessed sponsors within each category to produce a numerical value for their suitability as project sponsors. While defining “key criteria in a successful IQP sponsorship,” they found that the role of a sponsor was a common organization misconception (Miller et al., 2021). Outcomes from this HZPC IQP include marketing materials such as a tri-fold brochure, a website, and a PowerPoint presentation that covers general IQP logistics, sponsor expectations, previous projects, and contact information of the students and center directors. The HZPC team gathered the resources to create these materials through one-on-one interviews with WPI faculty involved in marketing and business. The IQP group utilized interviews with WPI project center directors to develop their criteria for suitable project sponsors and with Chinese organizations to deliver their sales pitches. We will use a similar interview methodology to establish our own criteria for suitable sponsors and conduct semi-structured interviews with organizations in Prague to present IQP logistics.

### ***2.5.2 Case Study 2: Identifying community development opportunities for the Hawai'i project center***

In 2021, the Hawai'i project center relocated from Hilo to Honolulu on the island of Oahu “due to its bustling, urban environment that offers great potential for student projects” (Bragaw et al., 2021). An IQP team of students strengthened the project center by identifying suitable sponsors and analyzing challenges Oahu’s communities were facing for project opportunities. Like the Hangzhou report, this team began developing criteria for potential sponsors through interviews with project center directors who coordinate IQPs at locations similar to Hawai'i. The team suggested that future IQP groups should conduct interviews with WPI center directors before going abroad since in-person interviews are a valuable methodology to gain information. By examining their interviews, this team developed a measurement for sponsor suitability based on the most common aspects of a sponsor that the center directors mentioned. As the IQP team began searching on the internet for organizations, project center directors stated that “phone call or face-to-face communication is more successful” than sales pitch emails since organizations may be too busy to distinguish the credibility of the students (Bragaw et al., 2021). This IQP group suggested that future teams should utilize criteria to filter the most suitable organizations for sponsorship and potentially establish connections with universities.

### ***2.5.3 Case Study 3: Investigating the feasibility of a project center in Reykjavík***

In 2018, a WPI student team investigated the “Feasibility of a WPI Project Center in Iceland” (Zellerbach et al., 2018). This was the first year that WPI based a project center in Reykjavík, Iceland. The group outlined necessary characteristics for a prosperous project center and approached “ten organizations interested in student projects” (Zellerbach et al., 2018). The

students analyzed past IQP reports and “highlighted the various techniques past student teams used to assess sponsor opportunities and student logistics” (Zellerbach et al., 2018). In addition, the team members conducted in-person interviews with successful, long-standing project center directors. Unlike the Hawai’i and Hangzhou projects, the Iceland team did not rank sponsors but produced a checklist of criteria for suitable sponsors. In their initial search for organizations, the group members found networking to be a vital method in approaching entities and gaining useful contact information. The Icelandic IQP team found the language barrier and culture were detrimental to the response rate from entities. Once the team met in person with organizations, they were quite successful in using a presentation to explain the logistics of the IQP process. After interviews, the team analyzed their results and produced a profile for each organization summarizing in-person and online interactions, potential project opportunities, and contact information. Based on their prior research, the group members deduced organizations with goals aligning to the educational mission of the IQP provided creative projects benefiting both the students and the local community.

#### ***2.5.4 Case Studies Summary***

These preliminary case studies serve to highlight various approaches and ideas from previous IQP project groups with similar goals and objectives. The insights from these reports guided the development of our methodology. Additionally, we will further analyze these reports to gain a deeper understanding of effective approaches for contacting potential project sponsors.

### 3.0 Methodology

This project aims to identify potential sponsorships that will produce an abundance of projects assisting the Prague Project Center in expanding the number of projects available to students. To achieve this over-arching goal, we will focus on accomplishing these three objectives:

1. Determine a standard set of characteristics of suitable sponsors.
2. Identify and categorize areas of opportunity for student projects in Prague.
3. Identify potential sponsor organizations and reach out to contacts within them.

Figure 7 provides a visual representation of our objectives and the roadmap we will use to accomplish our objectives through methods and analyses described in this chapter.

#### Prague Future IQP Sponsorships Project Overview

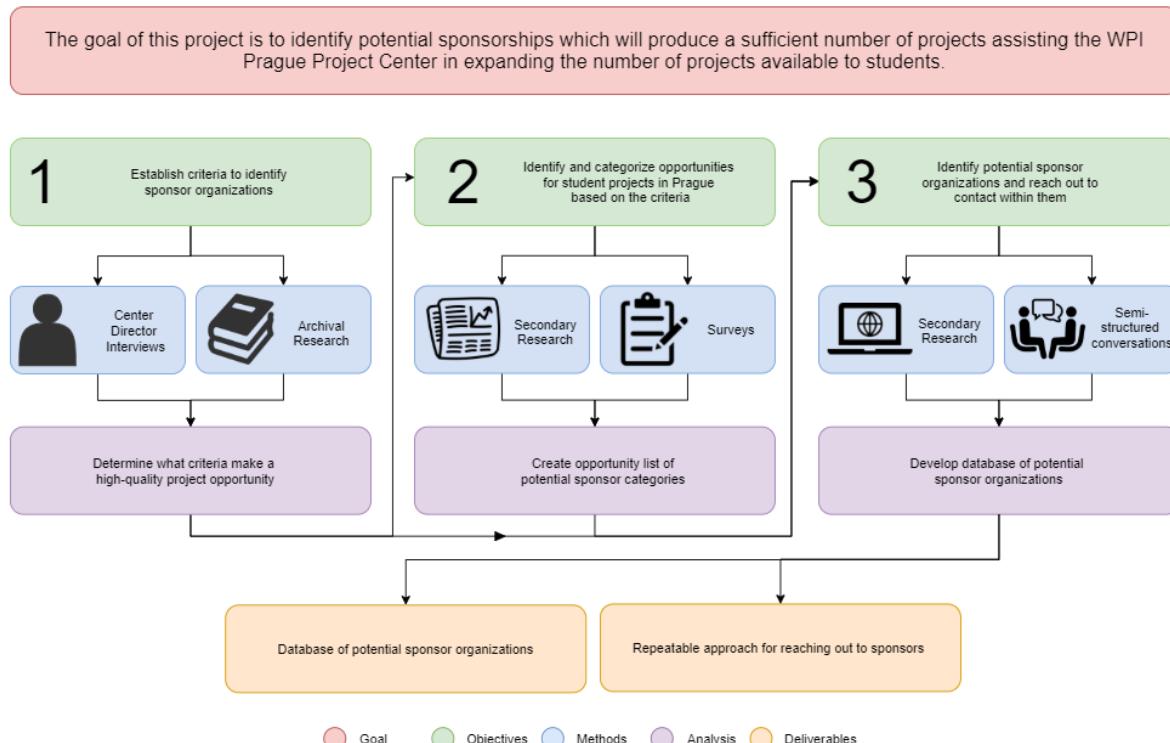


Figure 7: Prague Future IQP Sponsorships Project Overview

Successful completion of this project will aid WPI's Global Experience Office in continuing its mission of providing projects in domestic and international locations in which students work on projects that have a positive real-world impact.

### **3.1 Objective One: Determine a standard set of characteristics of suitable IQP sponsors.**

To identify high-quality opportunities, we will determine generic characteristics and criteria that constitute a suitable IQP project sponsor. We will review previous IQP reports focused on new center establishment to extract sponsor criteria and questions for project center director interviews.

After garnering consent to record and use the interviewee's name, we will conduct semi-structured interviews with at least three WPI project center directors to comprehend which characteristics are valuable in a project sponsor. These interviews will provide us with unique insights from project directors about developing a network of project sponsors and what constitutes a good project. High-quality projects and suitable sponsors build the foundation of a long-lasting project center. Appendix A contains a preliminary list of questions that we will ask each center director in the interviews. These questions are representative of the type of questions we will ask each center director, but we will finalize them in Prague. We placed questions into multiple connecting groups. Initial questions refer to the respondent's time at WPI and as a center director. The next set of questions attempt to ascertain what characteristics describe a suitable sponsor. Another set of questions define techniques to find potential sponsors. The final sections ask the center directors to reflect on any lessons they learned and final suggestions to our team for success. We will generate transcripts for each interview through consensual recordings and notes. If they do not grant us consent to record, we will designate one or two team members to take notes during the interview.

We will utilize open coding to generate key criteria for project sponsors according to the center directors (Saldaña, 2008). Open coding involves the induction of criteria based on the responses given in each interview. Inductive coding is preferable to deductive coding in this case, which requires the team to generate categories beforehand. Open coding, while more difficult to perform, ensures that we do not omit any important characteristics.

We will develop a frequency chart to determine important criteria within our generated categories. Our frequency analysis will utilize the criteria reported by our case studies and the transcripts from our interviews. If multiple interviews and reports mention a certain characteristic, it will receive a higher weighting than a characteristic only mentioned once. We will consider a more sophisticated weighting calculation that considers the experience level of the center directors interviewed. Characteristics from veteran center directors may experience a greater weight. Figure 8 shows an example of how we might weigh the characteristics using sample characteristics and frequency counts. A characteristics weight is equal to its frequency divided by the total frequency count for all characteristics. The frequency analysis of criteria will result in our goal for objective one, to develop a spreadsheet of weighted criteria. The benefit of this additional step of weighting the criteria is the ability to rank potential sponsors on suitability and deliver an ordered list of project sponsors, from most to least suitable, to our center director.

Characteristic	Frequency	Weight
Responsive to Emails	5	50%
Has space for students to work	2	20%
Connections to local university	2	20%
Strong English Skills	1	10%

*Figure 8: Frequency Chart Weighing Scale*

One limitation in achieving this objective is that every project center is unique and what is vital for one location may not be as crucial in another location. However, there are project center locations in places with a similar history to the Czech Republic, such as Albania. Therefore, we will interview site directors from project centers in locations similar to Prague in different aspects, including the economy, geography, and government. Yet, an interview with a center director from a location dissimilar to Prague will further strengthen our understanding of project sponsors overall because there are commonalities between suitable sponsors and high-quality projects regardless of the center's location. Our analysis will provide us with a list of important characteristics that will guide our assessment of the feasibility of potential sponsors.

### **3.2 Objective Two: Identify and categorize areas of opportunity for student projects in Prague**

The purpose of exploring social issues and cultural opportunities in the Czech Republic is to identify relevant organizations that would be a good fit for WPI as potential sponsors for future projects. Hence our plan is to explore current major societal, economic, and cultural issues in the Czech Republic during the IQP term and document the potential areas of project opportunities. Based on our preliminary research, these categories include gender inequality, homelessness, ethnic discrimination, domestic violence, and climate change, and others as they become known to us. Cultural opportunities may include puppetry, theater, museums, and other forms of artistic engagement. To satisfy this objective, we plan to conduct secondary research using peer-reviewed journals and surveys to identify pressing prevalent societal issues.

Societal problems within the Czech Republic are only one source of project opportunity. Entities representing cultural aspects, such as museums, are also potential project sponsors. WPI supplies us with content-rich databases that are a perfect tool to analyze peer-reviewed articles

about the Czech Republic. Journals and local newspapers may include social issues and economic topics, while residents of Prague may describe cultural aspects such as art in museums.

Additionally, we will conduct surveys with residents of Prague to determine relevant, pressing opportunities in the city and country. We will stop people of Prague in locations with high foot traffic and ask them for their consent to fill out a survey that will take less than five minutes. Locations may include in front of grocery stores, restaurants, or other places that are not overcrowded. Appendix C describes the preliminary set of survey questions. Limitations of our research methodology include a language barrier. However, we can use easily accessible translation tools such as Google Translate and DeepL to translate electronic documents, written text, and our survey. The aid of locals in live translation may be necessary to correct translation programs, which are not as accurate. Bias can affect the results of interviews, creating inconsistency in the results. Another limitation may include forms of bias for our survey, such as voluntary bias. Furthermore, our study only gains information depending on the people who volunteer. For example, a minority group who might be suffering from discrimination may not volunteer for the interview and state there is a problem.

For our survey, we intend to ask as many closed questions as possible for an easier analysis of coding. These questions may include specific options that a participant may choose but also allow the respondents to produce their own answers through an “other” option. We will review answers for open-ended questions, as the responses may be too unique to analyze through coding. After we determine what the relevant categories are for the Prague Center, we will create another dimension to our weighted criteria from objective one. We will weigh these categories on relevance according to our findings in objective two. The survey may uncover a pressing

issue that we did not expect to find based on our preliminary research. Using these categories, we will narrow our search to identify specific organizations in objective three.

### **3.3 Objective Three: Identify potential sponsor organizations**

This project aims to identify potential sponsorships that are suitable candidates to develop projects that have the characteristics of good projects to assist the Prague Center site directors in expanding the number of projects available to students. The previous analysis from section 3.2 will yield the established criteria of high-quality sponsors and opportunity categories. Pulling all this information together, our project team will be well-positioned to identify and contact potential sponsors.

Through secondary research, internet research, and semi-structured interviews, we will collect a significant list of potential sponsors. A characteristic of a quality sponsor that we anticipate from the results of objective one is the sponsor's proximity to the Prague center. Depending on the results from the center director interviews, we may or may not limit this list of potential sponsors within Prague. This includes identifying organizations from scholarly articles, current events in newspapers, references from individuals' responses to the questions in Appendix C familiar with the area, and our general walking observations of Prague. After this initial assessment, we will construct an ordered list of the organizations.

Our primary source of contact information will come from the organizations' websites. The first email to the potential sponsor organization is important and will be the most challenging part of early contact. The team's method to ensure a successful first impression will be to construct a strong, flexible, informative, and brief email. Appendix B contains the English template that will be sent to potential sponsor organizations. Once in Prague, we will translate it into Czech. An email to gauge interest in sponsoring a project at the Prague Project Center will

contain a summary of the purpose of the project and a short background of the team. Additionally, the email asks about their availability for an interview to offer them detailed information about the IQP concept and becoming a sponsor. After the initial contact email, in the case of no response, we will begin to recontact the organizations following a period of time determined by the number of responses we do receive. The initial contact information in Appendix B is preliminary, and we anticipate that it will change after the team has a better appreciation of the situation in Prague.

The team will meet with an organization representative, ideally in person, and present information about being an IQP sponsor. The team will reference the Prague Project Center website and examples of past projects similar in nature to the organization's mission to supplement our presentation. We will then conduct a semi-structured interview to assess the organization's suitability; at the same time, the organization will be determining if being an IQP sponsor is a good fit for them. Appendix D contains the preliminary questions we plan to ask in order to weigh the sponsor against the criteria created in objective one. The team will request consent to record audio of the meeting. In the case that the organization does not consent to being recorded, a member of the team will take notes. After our team returns from the interview, we will write a summary of the meeting. Then we will rank the organization based on all the criteria developed in objective one and organized by categories from objective two. We will then add the organization to the contact management database.

At the end of the project, we will pass on these documents to the site director for them to contact the potential sponsors that are likely the best fit for WPI based on the weighted metrics. A major limitation we may face will be the language barrier of Czech and English. We may need to send the introductory email, found in appendix B, in Czech for initial contact. If the language

barrier becomes an issue, a translator will become necessary to aid in communication with potential sponsor organizations. A translator may be available within the organization, as English is widely spoken in the Czech Republic, but if this is not an option, we will utilize online translation tools.

Objective three utilizes the foundational information within the first two objectives to create a deliverable, a database of potential sponsors, which we will present to our sponsor. This database will compose of profiles for each prospective sponsor. The profiles will contain the organizations: name, address, potential project, and the meeting summary. We will organize the profiles based on opportunity categories and sort them based on each entity's weighted score.

### **3.4 Methodology Summary**

By conducting individual interviews with WPI center directors, we will use coding to develop a frequency chart of characteristics for suitable project sponsors. Our team will weigh each characteristic based on the frequency from interview transcripts and previous establishment IQP reports. The weighting process may become more sophisticated, taking the level of experience of each center director into account. An outcome is a ranking system for characteristics of a suitable potential sponsor.

By performing secondary research, such as analyzing local newspapers, and surveys with residents of Prague, we will identify relevant potential project opportunities relating to societal, economic, or cultural categories. Examples include homelessness or climate change. We will weigh opportunities mentioned in the secondary research and surveys as another dimension to our criteria established in objective one to produce a decision matrix. An outcome is a list of weighted project opportunities that will narrow our search for potential sponsor organizations in objective three.

We will conduct secondary research to identify potential sponsor organizations relating to our list of opportunities. Our team will approach these entities via email in order to secure meetings with organization representatives. In meeting with the organizations, we will present and hand out information based on IQP and sponsor logistics. Through a semi-structured interview, we will answer questions from the representatives and ask questions relating to our established criteria in objective one. After each interview, we will summarize and rank each organization through our decision matrix and produce profiles for a database, which will be sent to our center directors. We will suggest the highest-ranked organizations to the center directors to approach. The center directors will choose which entities to continue the sponsorship process with.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Questions for Center Directors**

Hello <<INSERT NAME>>,

We are the Prague Future IQPs team consisting of Matthew Amodea, Emily Gorelik, Ben Sakac, and Andrew Sifferlen. We are identifying potential sponsors for the Prague Project Center as part of our Interactive Qualifying Project in B21. We hope an interview with you will help us gain a better understanding of how to make a project center stable and successful. We would like to inform you that this interview is voluntary, and you may withdrawal at any time. With your permission to record the audio of this interview, we will develop a transcript for our report. We will omit any personal information and you may remain anonymous unless otherwise stated. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with answering. Would you like to continue?

A.1 What academic department are you a part of at WPI?

A.2 How many years have you worked at WPI?

A.3 How many years have you been a site director?

A.4 Are you an original center director for this location?

A.5 How many site directors are there currently for your project center?

#### Sponsor Characteristics:

A.6 Approximately how many sponsors have you worked with during your time with this project center?

A.7 What are some common characteristics you have noticed among successful sponsors?

A.8 What are sponsors responsible to provide for students?

A.9 In your opinion, what are WPI's expectations for IQP sponsors?

A.10 If there were any, what were some hurdles or obstacles you have faced with working with sponsors?

Techniques for finding sponsors:

A.11 What is the process you have used to approach a potential sponsor?

A.12 What were some difficulties you faced while trying to acquire new project sponsors?

A.13 What information do you discuss in preliminary meetings with these organizations?

Lessons learned:

A.14 What are some of the outcomes of a poor sponsor?

A.15 What characteristics of a project make some more successful than others?

A.16 What type of projects often lead to obstacles or difficulties?

Suggestions for success:

A.17 Do you have any suggestions or hints for success in a project like ours? If so, please share.

A.18 Are there any other center directors that you believe would be beneficial for us to reach out to?

## Appendix B: Initial Organization Contact Email Template

Hello <<ORGANIZATION NAME>>,

We are a group of university students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), an engineering college in the Worcester, MA, with a focus on project-based learning. We are currently in Prague, for seven weeks, completing a project for our third-year university project under Robert Kinicki, our advisor.

Our university tasked us with identifying potential sponsor organizations, such as <<ORGANIZATION NAME>>, for future Interactive Qualifying Projects (IQP). Your work in <<AREAS OF INTEREST>> is very impressive and are hoping to learn more about your work with <<ISSUE THEY ADDRESS>>. We would also like to provide more details to you about the IQP and provide examples of past projects students have completed. If possible, we would like to meet with a representative of <<ORGANIZATION NAME>> to further discuss this opportunity and allow us to present details of the process.

Thank you,

Prague Future IQPs team

Matthew Amodea

Emily Gorelik

Benjamin Sakac

Andrew Sifferlen

Email: gr-futurepragueiqpsponsorship@wpi.edu

For more information about WPI, please visit:

<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/departments/interdisciplinary-global-studies>

For more information about the Interactive Qualifying Project, please visit:

<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/undergraduate/interactive-qualifying-project>

For more information about the Prague Project Center, please visit:

<https://pragueprojectcenter.org/>

## Appendix C: Questions for Individuals in Prague

We are a group of university students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), an engineering college in the Worcester, MA, with a focus on project-based learning. We are currently in Prague, for seven weeks, completing a project for our third-year university project under Robert Kinicki, our advisor.

We are looking for areas of opportunity in the Czech Republic that would benefit from student projects with local Czech organizations. Would you be willing to complete an anonymous survey will take less than five minutes and is completely voluntary? You can withdraw from the survey at any time.

C.1 What is your age?

Options: 18-25, 26-40, 41-64, 65+

C.2 What is your gender?

C.3 What is your nationality?

C.4 Yes or No, is your ethnicity listed under one of the recognized minorities of the Czech Republic? (ie. Moravians, Slovaks, Polish, Germans, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Russians, Roma, Silesians, Jews, Bulgarians, Croats, Ruthenians (Rusyns), Greeks and Serbs)

C.5 Are you a citizen of the Czech Republic?

C.5.A How many years have you lived in the Czech Republic?

Options: <1, 1-5, 5-10, 10<

C.6 What are the best ways to express Czech culture in Prague?

Options: Museums, historical landmarks, theater, puppetry, other: \_\_\_\_\_

C.7 Are going to museums a great way to learn Czech Culture? (Art etc.)

C.8 What are some societal issues that you've noticed effect Prague and the Czech Republic as a whole? (Some examples of a societal issue include homelessness, climate change, etc)

C.9 Are you aware of any local NGOs or organizations that combat the social issues you raised in the previous question?

## Appendix D: Questions for Potential Sponsors

Once we meet representatives of an organization, we will begin with a round of introductions. Following that, we will deliver a PowerPoint presentation. We will print copies of the PowerPoint and hand them out as a reference to the representatives as well. While we will give the presentation in English, our handouts will contain both English and Czech versions. The presentation will be interactive and encourage the organization's representatives to ask any questions that arise.

Following, we will transition to a set of questions through a semi-structured interview. We will construct these questions on site to determine if the potential sponsor will meet the criteria created by Center Directors. Some examples of possible questions are<sup>3</sup>:

D.1 Do we need to clarify any information from our presentation?

D.2 Were you familiar with WPI before our initial contact?

D.2.A If yes, were you an alum or know anyone who is an alum?

D.3 Would your company/org be willing to establish a dedicated liaison?

D.3.A How senior would that staff member be?

D.4 Are there any projects that come to mind that WPI students could help you accomplish?

D.5 Could you provide an estimated amount of time that your organization might give to working with students?

D.6 Do you feel that your company/org would want to learn more about the IQP and Prague Project Center?

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<sup>3</sup> The questions are representative of the questions we intend to ask organization representatives during our semi-structured meetings. We will construct additional questions depending on the criteria we establish through objective one of our methodologies.

Thank you for your time. It was a pleasure to meet you. If you are interested in moving forward with the process of becoming an IQP sponsor, please reach out to us or our center directors within the next <<TIME FRAME>>. You can reach us at gr- futurepragueiqpsponsorship@wpi.edu and our center directors at nadeskins@wpi.edu and mkeller@wpi.edu. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the IQP sponsorship process.