

Experience-Driven Learning Venture Funding

Funding Categories and RFP Guidance

Two-Pool Structure

The EDL Venture funding model will support two complementary priorities: recognizing and making visible the Experience-Driven Learning already occurring across WMU, while continuing to support faculty innovation in teaching and learning. Together, the two funding categories will allow the University to better understand its existing EDL strengths while also encouraging faculty to develop and implement innovative approaches that deepen students' learning through experience.

Funding Categories

Funding Pool	Primary Purpose	Faculty Activity
EDL in Practice	Identify, recognize, and document EDL already occurring across WMU and begin building an institutional inventory of current EDL practices.	Faculty describe EDL occurring in an existing course, use the EDL rubric to reflect on and assess the course's current level of EDL, and provide representative examples or evidence of the practice. Faculty receive a modest honorarium in recognition of their time and contribution.
EDL Innovation Grants	Support innovative faculty-led projects that create, expand, or enhance Experience-Driven Learning opportunities for students.	Faculty propose and implement innovative projects that strengthen authentic, applied, experiential, or other forms of Experience-Driven Learning within their teaching and students' educational experiences.

How the Two Categories Work Together

The two categories address different but complementary questions:

EDL in Practice: What are we already doing?

This category is designed to surface and recognize the significant EDL that faculty are already providing across the University. The information collected will help WMU develop a clearer picture of where and how EDL is occurring, understand the range of approaches being used across disciplines, identify existing strengths and promising practices, and begin building an institutional inventory of EDL.

EDL Innovation: What new ideas should we support?

This category continues the traditional Venture Grant emphasis on faculty innovation. It provides resources for faculty to develop, test, expand, or enhance innovative approaches to Experience-Driven Learning that create meaningful opportunities for students to connect learning with authentic application and experience.

Together, these funding pools allow WMU to recognize and learn from what is already happening while continuing to invest in faculty creativity and innovation.

A more comprehensive emphasis on program- and curriculum-level redesign and intentional integration of EDL across students' academic pathways is anticipated as a future phase of the Venture Grant initiative.

EDL in Practice Honorarium

Honorarium

\$500 per accepted course submission

Initial-round parameters:

- Maximum of two honoraria per faculty member to encourage breadth across departments and colleges.
- Honoraria awarded for complete, relevant submissions rather than only for courses reaching a high rubric level.

EDL in Practice Honoraria

Purpose

Western Michigan University invites faculty to participate in an institution-wide effort to identify, document, and better understand Experience-Driven Learning already occurring across academic programs. The purpose is not to ask faculty to create something new. Instead, the honorarium recognizes faculty for taking the time to describe existing EDL in a course and use the EDL rubric to reflect on its current level of integration.

The information collected should help WMU:

- identify the breadth and diversity of EDL already occurring across the University;
- develop an initial inventory and map of EDL across programs and colleges;
- understand where EDL occurs within students' academic pathways;
- identify strong and innovative practices that may be shared across the institution;
- identify opportunities for faculty development, curricular innovation, partnerships, and other support;
- test and refine the EDL rubric using actual WMU courses; and
- inform future EDL planning and the continuing redesign of Academic Program Review.

Key message for faculty: This is a discovery and learning process, not an evaluation of individual faculty or courses.

Eligibility and Participation

Board-appointed faculty teaching undergraduate courses in any discipline and at any level should be encouraged to participate. Courses do not need to represent an exemplary or fully developed model of EDL. The initiative is designed to capture courses at different levels of development and different points in students' academic pathways.

EDL may include, but is not limited to:

- undergraduate research or inquiry; clinical or professional practice; field experiences; studio-based learning;
- laboratory investigation; client- or partner-based projects; community-engaged learning; project- or problem-based learning;
- simulations; creative production or performance; design challenges; case-based learning;
- entrepreneurship and innovation; interdisciplinary projects; applied classroom projects; internships, practica, and capstones.

WMU is not seeking to standardize EDL across disciplines. The goal is to understand the many ways faculty create authentic and meaningful learning experiences appropriate to their fields.

What Faculty Will Submit Via Qualtrics

1. Basic Course Information

Course prefix, number and title; department/program; college; faculty member; typical enrollment; course level; required/elective status; syllabus; and approximate annual student reach.

2. Description of EDL

A concise explanation of what students do and how it reflects the WMU definition of EDL. That is, how it:

- ***Enhances Learning*** through authentic application, inquiry, reflection, and integration.
- ***Shapes Professional Purpose*** through mentoring, exploration, and meaningful professional experiences.
- ***Empowers Students*** with the confidence, agency, adaptability, leadership, and lifelong learning skills needed to thrive.

3. Location and Intensity Within the Course

Indicate whether EDL occurs throughout the course, as a major project or assignment, during a particular portion of the semester, or as the central organizing pedagogy.

4. Intended Student Learning and Development

Describe what students are expected to gain, for example, applying disciplinary knowledge, integrating theory and practice, solving complex problems, communicating with authentic audiences, collaborating, exercising professional judgment, developing confidence and independence, exploring professional pathways, or reflecting on growth.

5. EDL Rubric Self-Assessment

Applicants will review each relevant rubric dimension, identify the level that best represents the course as it currently exists, provide a brief rationale or example, and identify possible areas for future development.

6. Representative Evidence

Applicants will provide one or more focused examples such as an assignment/project description, project prompt, reflection activity, rubric, authentic case/problem, partnership description, presentation requirement, portfolio requirement, simulation, research assignment, or other representative material. Faculty are not be required to upload an entire course.

7. Brief Faculty Reflection

Applicants will answer the following: (a) What is particularly effective about the EDL currently occurring in this course? and (b) If resources, support, partnerships, or time were available, what might you do to strengthen or expand the EDL?

How the Rubric Should Be Used

The rubric is framed as a reflective and discovery tool rather than as a performance evaluation. Faculty should assess the course as it currently exists, not describe an aspirational version. Importantly, no minimum rubric level is required for the honorarium.

Capturing courses at different levels is essential if WMU wants an actual inventory rather than a showcase. Over time, this can reveal patterns such as strong EDL late in a program but fewer intentional experiences early in the curriculum, or differences in the types and intensity of EDL available across programs.

Review and Selection

This category is noncompetitive. Review focuses primarily on completeness, relevance, and the usefulness of the information for the institutional inventory, not on rewarding the highest rubric ratings.

Awards will be made based on the following:

- The submission describes an identifiable undergraduate course.
- The faculty member clearly describes the EDL occurring in the course.
- The EDL rubric is completed thoughtfully.
- Sufficient representative evidence is provided to understand the experience.
- The brief faculty reflection is complete.
- The submission contributes useful information to the institutional EDL inventory.

How the Information Will Be Used

- Map EDL by college, program, course level, and point in the curriculum.
- Analyze the type and intensity of EDL and the number of students reached.
- Identify institutional strengths, patterns, and gaps.
- Identify practices and faculty expertise that could inform professional development or peer learning.
- Guide future EDL Venture Grant investments and partnership development.
- Refine the EDL rubric based on actual application across disciplines.
- Provide an evidence base for the continuing redesign of Academic Program Review.
- Eventually strengthen institutional communication about the distinctive learning experiences available to WMU students.

EDL in Practice Timeline

Proposal submission deadline: November 15, 2026

Award notification: Spring 2027

EDL in Practice honoraria will be awarded in spring 2027. Faculty receiving an honorarium will document EDL occurring in an existing course, complete the EDL rubric as a reflective self-assessment, and provide representative evidence as requested. The resulting information will contribute to the initial institutional inventory of EDL already occurring across WMU.

EDL Innovation Grants

Purpose

Western Michigan University invites faculty to propose innovative projects that create, expand, or enhance Experience-Driven Learning (EDL) opportunities for undergraduate students. Consistent with the traditional Venture Grant model, EDL Innovation Grants are intended to provide faculty with resources to explore promising ideas, pilot new approaches, strengthen existing practices, and test innovations that may improve student learning and engagement.

Projects should provide meaningful opportunities for students to connect academic learning with experience and application. Innovation may occur within an individual course, across a sequence of related learning experiences, or through a faculty-led initiative that directly enhances students' educational experiences. Proposals do not need to use a single pedagogical model; EDL should take forms appropriate to the discipline, course, students, and intended learning outcomes.

The Innovation Grants are intended to:

- support faculty creativity and experimentation in Experience-Driven Learning;
- create new EDL opportunities or meaningfully enhance promising practices already underway;
- increase opportunities for students to apply, integrate, and extend disciplinary learning in authentic contexts;
- strengthen connections among academic learning, professional purpose, and student agency;
- generate examples and evidence that can inform the broader development of EDL at WMU; and
- identify promising practices that may be sustained, adapted, or expanded following the grant period.

What Counts as an EDL Innovation?

Innovation should be interpreted broadly. A project does not need to be entirely new to WMU or unprecedented within higher education. An innovation may involve introducing an approach that is new to a course or context, substantially enhancing an existing experience, testing a promising strategy, building a new partnership, or extending an effective practice to reach additional students.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- new or enhanced project-, problem-, case-, studio-, laboratory-, simulation-, or inquiry-based learning experiences;
- authentic projects involving external clients, community partners, employers, alumni, professionals, or other stakeholders;
- undergraduate research, creative scholarship, design, performance, or entrepreneurial experiences;
- new field, clinical, community-engaged, global, or other applied learning opportunities;
- innovative approaches that help students connect disciplinary learning with career exploration, professional identity, or purpose;
- new mechanisms for mentoring, professional feedback, critique, or engagement with practitioners;
- strategies that increase student choice, leadership, agency, ownership, or responsibility within authentic learning experiences;
- intentional reflection activities that help students integrate experience with academic learning and future goals;

- technology-enabled experiences that meaningfully expand authentic application, interaction, simulation, creation, or access to EDL; and
- pilots that adapt an effective EDL practice to a new population, course, discipline, modality, or context.

Projects should go beyond simply purchasing materials, equipment, software, travel, or services. Requested resources should enable or strengthen a clearly articulated educational innovation and should be directly connected to the proposed student experience.

Alignment with the WMU EDL Definition

Applicants should explain how the proposed innovation reflects WMU's developing conception of Experience-Driven Learning. Projects may emphasize different dimensions depending on the discipline and nature of the experience; they are not expected to maximize every dimension.

Enhances Learning: Students deepen disciplinary learning through authentic application, inquiry, integration, reflection, and opportunities to use knowledge in meaningful contexts.

Shapes Professional Purpose: Students make connections among their learning, professional or community contexts, future pathways, mentoring, and an evolving sense of professional identity or purpose.

Empowers Students: Students develop agency, confidence, adaptability, leadership, independence, and the capacity to make meaningful decisions about their learning and future.

Use of the EDL Rubric

The EDL rubric will be used as a planning and reflection tool for Innovation Grant proposals. Applicants should identify the rubric domains most relevant to the proposed project and explain how the innovation is expected to strengthen those dimensions of the student experience.

Applicants will be asked to:

- identify the EDL rubric domains most directly addressed by the proposed innovation;
- briefly describe the current state or starting point, when the project builds on an existing course or experience;
- describe the intended change or improvement resulting from the innovation; and
- identify evidence that will be used to determine whether the innovation had the intended effect.

Strong proposals will demonstrate intentional alignment between the innovation, the relevant EDL dimensions, and the intended student outcomes.

Priority Areas for Innovation Grants

EDL Innovation Grants are intended to support a broad range of innovative approaches appropriate to different disciplines and learning contexts. While proposals are not required to use a particular model of Experience-Driven Learning, preference will be given to strong proposals that incorporate one or more of the following high-impact approaches:

- Client-based projects - experiences in which students address authentic questions, needs, or problems for an external or campus-based client, organization, or stakeholder.
- Undergraduate research integration - opportunities for students to participate meaningfully in research, inquiry, discovery, or creative scholarship as part of their academic experience.

- Community-engaged learning - experiences developed with community partners that connect academic learning with authentic community priorities, needs, or opportunities.
- Sustainability-focused learning– experiences that engage students in applying disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge to environmental, social, or economic sustainability challenges.
- Global learning - experiences that intentionally engage students with global issues, perspectives, contexts, communities, or cross-cultural learning and application.

Eligibility and Participation

The opportunity is open to faculty proposing undergraduate EDL innovations in any discipline. Individual faculty, faculty teams, and appropriate interdisciplinary collaborations may apply. It is highly encouraged that faculty engage with staff, community partners, employers, alumni, or collaborators from other disciplines who will strengthen the educational experience, with the eligible faculty member serving as project lead.

Priority will be given to projects with a clear connection to undergraduate student learning and a realistic plan for implementation during the grant period.

What Faculty Will Submit Via Qualtrics

1. Project Information

Project title; faculty lead and collaborators; department/program and college; course(s) or student population affected; anticipated number of students reached; and proposed implementation period.

2. Need or Opportunity

Briefly describe the educational need, opportunity, or challenge the project addresses. Explain what currently occurs and why an innovation would strengthen the student experience.

3. Proposed Innovation

Describe what will be created, tested, expanded, or enhanced; what students will do; how the proposed experience differs from or improves upon current practice; and why the approach is appropriate for the discipline and students involved.

4. Alignment with Experience-Driven Learning

Explain how the project enhances learning, shapes professional purpose, and/or empowers students. Identify the EDL rubric domains most relevant to the project and describe the intended movement or improvement.

5. Student Learning and Impact

Identify the intended student outcomes and the anticipated scope of student impact. Describe how the innovation will deepen learning, authentic application, reflection, professional connection, collaboration, student agency, or other relevant dimensions of EDL. Indicate the anticipated number of students who will participate directly during the grant period and, where relevant, the number of students who could benefit annually if the innovation is sustained or expanded.

6. Implementation Plan and Timeline

Provide a concise plan describing major activities, responsibilities, partners or collaborators, and key milestones for implementation.

7. Assessment and Evidence

Describe how the project team will know whether the innovation was effective. Identify the evidence that will

be collected, such as student work, reflections, feedback, performance data, partner input, participation data, rubric results, or other appropriate measures.

8. Sustainability and Potential for Continued Use

Explain what aspects of the innovation could continue after Venture funding ends. Identify ongoing resources, partnerships, or supports that may be needed. Where appropriate, describe whether the approach could be adapted or shared beyond the initial course or context.

9. Budget and Budget Rationale

Provide an itemized budget and concise justification showing how requested funds directly support the proposed innovation and student experience. Funding limits and allowable expense categories should follow the established Venture Grant parameters for the funding cycle.

10. Dissemination and Sharing

Briefly describe how lessons learned, materials, results, or promising practices could be shared with colleagues or the broader WMU community.

Review Criteria

Unlike EDL in Practice, which is noncompetitive and focused on documenting existing activity, EDL Innovation Grants remain competitive. Review will focus on the quality of the proposed innovation, its alignment with EDL, its potential benefit to students, and the feasibility and sustainability of the project.

Criterion	Suggested Weight	Review Focus
Alignment with EDL	20%	Clear and intentional connection to relevant EDL dimensions and rubric domains.
Potential Impact on Student Learning	20%	Likelihood that the innovation will deepen, extend, or improve the quality of student learning through experience.
Scope of Student Impact	10%	Anticipated number and proportion of students who will benefit during the grant period and, where applicable, the potential for continued or recurring student reach. Consider reach in the context of the discipline, course, and intensity of the experience rather than favoring enrollment size alone.
Professional Purpose	10%	Potential to strengthen connections to professional, career, community, or future pathways, when relevant to the project.
Student Empowerment	10%	Potential to increase student agency, ownership, confidence, adaptability, leadership, or meaningful decision-making.
Assessment Plan	10%	Clear, appropriate evidence for determining whether the

		innovation achieves intended outcomes.
Sustainability	10%	Potential for the innovation or its key elements to continue beyond the grant period.
Scalability / Transferability	5%	Potential for lessons, materials, or practices to be adapted, shared, or extended where appropriate.
Feasibility	5%	Realistic scope, timeline, partnerships, resources, and implementation plan.

Priority consideration will be given to well-designed projects that incorporate one or more of the identified Innovation Grant priority areas: client-based projects, undergraduate research integration, community-engaged learning, sustainability-focused learning, and global learning.

Funding and Allowable Uses

In general, the RFP requires that expenditures be directly tied to implementation of the proposed innovation and directly benefit students. Eligible costs include:

- materials, supplies, or specialized resources needed for the student experience;
- appropriate technology, software, or tools that enable the innovation;
- costs associated with external partners, experts, speakers, mentors, or other collaborators when permitted;
- student participation or project expenses when permitted under University policy;
- travel or field-based expenses when essential to the proposed EDL experience and permitted by the Venture Grant guidelines; and
- other implementation costs specifically justified by the project.

Expectations for Funded Projects

- Implement the proposed EDL innovation within the approved project period.
- Use the EDL rubric and other appropriate evidence to reflect on the implemented experience.
- Provide a concise final report describing implementation, student impact, evidence collected, lessons learned, and recommended next steps.
- Share project outcomes, materials, or lessons learned with the WMU community through an appropriate forum or repository.
- Identify whether and how the innovation will be sustained, adapted, expanded, or inform future EDL work.

Proposal Development Workshops and Support

Faculty interested in applying for an EDL Innovation Grant will have opportunities to participate in proposal-development workshops and consultations designed to help them develop strong, feasible EDL projects. Applicants are encouraged to take advantage of the support most relevant to their proposed project, particularly when developing a new pedagogical approach, integrating undergraduate research or inquiry, or creating community-engaged, client-based, or other externally partnered experiences. Participation in workshops or consultations is encouraged but is not required and will not, by itself, affect proposal evaluation.

Center for Teaching, Learning, and Development. Workshops and consultations will provide guidance on designing and strengthening Experience-Driven Learning; aligning proposed projects with the EDL framework and rubric; identifying appropriate student learning outcomes; and developing approaches for assessing student learning, engagement, and impact.

Government Relations and External Partnerships. Workshops and consultations will support faculty interested in community-engaged, client-based, or other externally partnered projects. Guidance may include identifying and engaging appropriate partners, developing mutually beneficial projects, defining roles and expectations, establishing realistic project scopes and deliverables, and considering how partnerships can be sustained beyond the grant period.

Office of Research and Innovation. Workshops and consultations will support faculty whose proposed projects incorporate undergraduate research, inquiry, creative scholarship, or other research-informed approaches to Experience-Driven Learning. Guidance will include developing meaningful roles for undergraduate students in research and creative activity; integrating research or inquiry into courses and curricula; identifying appropriate project scope and methods; and considering opportunities to sustain or expand undergraduate research experiences beyond the grant period.

Faculty may participate in any or all opportunities depending on the nature and developmental stage of their proposed project.

Innovation Grant Timeline

Proposal submission deadline: November 15, 2026

Award notification: By December 22, 2026

Project preparation period: Spring 2027

Project implementation: 2027-28 academic year

The spring 2027 semester will serve as a preparation and development period for funded projects. Awardees may use this time to refine project design, develop or strengthen external and community partnerships, prepare instructional materials and resources, establish assessment strategies, address logistical or implementation needs, and participate in available faculty-development support. Funded EDL Innovation projects will be implemented during the 2027-28 academic year.

Positioning of the Two Opportunities

The two categories are complementary but have clearly different purposes. EDL in Practice recognizes and documents what faculty are already doing; EDL Innovation Grants provide resources to create, test, expand, or enhance promising approaches. The two EDL Venture funding categories will operate on complementary timelines. EDL in Practice will focus on identifying and documenting existing EDL, with faculty honoraria awarded in spring 2027. EDL Innovation Grants will support the development of new or enhanced EDL experiences. Innovation proposals will be due November 15, 2026, with awardees notified by December 22, 2026. Spring 2027 will serve as a preparation period for funded Innovation projects, with implementation occurring during the 2027-28 academic year. Together, the two funding categories will allow WMU to learn from EDL already occurring across the University while simultaneously investing in the next generation of innovative student learning experiences.

EDL in Practice: What are we already doing, and what can we learn from it?

EDL Innovation: What new or enhanced ideas should we invest in and learn from?

Together, the categories allow WMU to build an evidence base about current EDL while continuing the Venture Grant tradition of supporting faculty creativity and experimentation. The knowledge generated through both pools can then inform a more comprehensive focus on program- and curriculum-level EDL redesign in a future funding cycle.

Discover and elevate what we already do well while investing in what we want to become.