

# WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

## Morgan Center

### Overview

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are groups of WPI community members from multiple disciplines engaging in collegial inquiry, action, and collective learning around a central theme *in pedagogical development or educational development and innovation*. Each participant in a PLC plans, implements, and assesses their own project, with regular peer review, feedback, and support from the group. PLCs may also work together to develop and test teaching and learning resources for the campus community.

This grant mechanism is designed to support projects that advance teaching and learning in distinctive and innovative ways. **It is *not* intended to fund routine updating or renewal of courses, curricula, or teaching methods.**

PLCs create space for faculty and staff to collaborate across disciplines, deepen expertise, and advance WPI's commitment to educational innovation. Participants receive stipends and resources as outlined in the funding guidelines (below), and the experience is designed to foster both individual and collective impact on teaching and learning.

The proposal deadline is **February 9, 2026**.

### A. Eligibility

Because faculty deliver our academic programs, there must be at least one faculty member in a PLC, and some PLCs may consist only of faculty. All WPI faculty members are eligible and welcome to apply, including dual-mission and teaching-mission tenure-track and tenured faculty, teaching- and research-track (TRT) faculty, and adjunct faculty. Faculty who will be in residence at an off-campus project center during the PLC period will be expected to participate remotely. Potential applicants in this situation should consider whether the time zone difference and advising duties will enable them to engage fully in the PLC during that term.

Staff members with educational roles are also eligible and welcome to apply.

The group may decide to include a student(s) as co-designers or co-researchers in the PLC. The name(s) of specific students need *not* be identified in the proposal.

Current members of the Educational Development Council are not eligible for these grants.

## PLC Grant Summary

### Purpose:

To support innovative and collaborative projects that enhance teaching and learning across WPI.

### Eligibility:

Any WPI faculty member (tenure-track, teaching-track, research-track, adjunct). Staff in educational roles may also apply.

### Typical Funding Range:

\$1,000–\$3,000 per participant; PLCs typically funded at \$15K–\$20K total.

### Deadlines:

- Theme announcement:  
**December 10, 2025**
- Proposal submission:  
**February 9, 2025**
- Department Head Acknowledgement:  
**February 9, 2025**

For questions or proposal feedback, contact: [morgan-center@wpi.edu](mailto:morgan-center@wpi.edu)

[Application Link](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

## **B. Commitment, Expectations, and Funding of PLC Members**

PLCs require a 9-month or a 12-month commitment during the range of May 15, 2026, to May 15, 2027, depending on whether summer planning for projects is needed. Each PLC member will be expected to:

- Prepare for, attend, and actively participate in monthly meetings over the PLC period.
- Conduct a project that is aligned with the PLC theme and assess the outcomes.
- Submit a summary of the outcomes of their PLC project by June 1, 2027, or contribute to a group report of outcomes.
- Present their work by providing resource materials on the topic of the PLC to the teaching community, by publishing the findings of their work, or through some other means.

*Staff Information.* Per HR/labor guidelines, exempt professional staff with 12-month appointments may not receive additional compensation. Staff who wish to be part of PLC should discuss with their supervisor how the project aligns with their work responsibilities or unit goals and the extent to which other work activities would need to be adjusted during the grant period. In other words, participation in the PLC should not be an unpaid overload. *The budget may include funds for staff members to utilize toward specific professional development such as a conference, workshop, publications, or other resources or activity that will enable or enrich their project.*

## **C. Commitment, Expectations, and Funding of PLC Facilitators**

PLCs are facilitated by a faculty or staff member with experience or interest in the PLC theme. The group may identify their own facilitator, or the Morgan Center can help identify a facilitator. In either case, a Morgan Center team member will serve as either a co-facilitator or supporter for the group, depending on the group's preference.

The facilitator's general responsibility is to foster a collegial environment among the PLC participants while supporting them with a structure that helps them achieve both individual and collective goals. Faculty who will be in residence at off-campus project centers should not be the group facilitator. Specific responsibilities include:

- Scheduling monthly meetings
- Setting the agenda for each meeting with input from the group
- Arranging meeting space and catering with the assistance of staff in the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center (if desired)
- Selecting some common reading for the group at the start of the PLC (encouraged)
- Facilitating discussion and dialogue helps each person refine their ideas using constructive feedback during the planning and implementation stages. Submitting an informal mid-year update to the facilitator is recommended— including refined project objectives and deliverables and how their project fits into the community.
- Conducting some informal formative evaluation throughout the year about how the PLC is going and adjusting accordingly
- Arranging for resource sharing through SharePoint, a Canvas site, or another mechanism
- Budget oversight, with assistance from the Morgan Center as necessary
- Encouraging internal and external dissemination of the group's work

Facilitators will receive a stipend of \$1,000 for their role. If the facilitator also conducts their own project within the group, they will receive \$1,000 on top of the stipend budgeted for PLC members.

#### **D. Supervisor Acknowledgement:**

A supervisor is the individual responsible for overseeing a staff member's daily work and completing their annual performance review. Faculty members always have at least one supervisor, and in some cases, they may have more than one. These supervisors can include Department Heads, Program Directors, or both. Faculty members who serve as Department Heads have a Dean as their supervisor. If a faculty member has more than one supervisor, they can choose which supervisor is the most appropriate one to include in this process.

Before submitting your PLC application, please talk with your supervisor. This conversation helps ensure they understand your goals for teaching innovation, your interests, and the time the project will require. Use this time to think together about how the project fits into your current workload and whether adjustments might be needed—for example, shifting other responsibilities. These conversations become even more important if you're applying for multiple grants in a single year because the review committee wants to be confident that you'll have the time and space to do the work well.

After you've had that conversation, please share this link with your supervisor: [Supervisor Acknowledgement Form for PLCs](#). Your supervisor needs to submit the form **by February 9, 2026**. The form simply confirms that they know about your application and the time commitment it may involve. It is *not* a support or approval form.

#### **E. Proposal Review Criteria**

The review committee will use the following criteria when evaluating PLC proposals: 1) effective group composition (range of departments and faculty experience levels, thematic coherence among members, and commitment to collaboration); 2) potential scope and sustainability of impact; 3) presence of strategic, innovative or distinctive elements; and 4) cost effectiveness.

Applicants will receive notification in D-Term about whether their proposal has been accepted.

#### **F. Reporting Requirements and Grant Conditions**

- Grantees are responsible for consulting with WPI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine if the project involves human subjects and constitutes exempt or non-exempt activity.
- The facilitator is responsible for budget oversight and must approve any disbursement of funds. All funds unexpended by the end of the PLC period will be returned to the EDC or IT Division for redistribution the following year. Extensions should be requested in writing.
- Each PLC member is expected to submit a summary of the outcomes of their PLC project by June 1, 2026, or contribute to a group report of outcomes. *Failure to do this will lessen the likelihood of future funding from the EDC.*

#### **G. Contacts**

Prospective applicants for Professional Learning Community grants are invited to contact any faculty member of the EDC Jessi Hill (MTLC), Mike Buckholt (BBT), Geoff Pfeifer (DiGS), Stacy Shaw

(SS&PS), Brooke Adams (Student, PH '26), David Kohorn (Student, CS, '27), Kate Beverage (ATC-TTL), and Caitlin Neer (ATC), and Mary Courtemanche (MTLC) with questions prior to submission, related to the theme and scope of PLCs or budget questions.

With sufficient advance notice, Jessi Hill ([Booking App](#)) and Kate Beverage ([kwrigley@wpi.edu](mailto:kwrigley@wpi.edu)) may be able to provide feedback on proposal drafts. To inquire about the availability of our in-house evaluator or to discuss objectives and assessment methods, please contact the Morgan Center's Senior Research and Evaluation Associate, Kimberly LeChasseur, by completing [this form](#).