

 Community Engaged Learning, Curricular Programs
Western University

2026-2027

CEL Community Partner

Orientation Manual



A Step-by-Step Guide to Support Community
Partners Navigate CEL at Western University



How to Use this Manual



The CEL Community Partner Orientation Manual is a step-by-step guide to support prospective, new, and returning CEL community partners in navigating the timelines and responsibilities associated with Community Engaged Learning (CEL) partnerships at Western University.

It is recommended that all community partners review this manual prior to beginning their CEL project(s) or placement(s), as it includes helpful information, resources, and reminders intended to support you in attaining meaningful partnership outcomes.

Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns about CEL at Western University, you may connect with the CEL team through the contact information at the end of this manual.

*Please note: this manual refers to general guidelines, best practices, and timelines in CEL, though variations may occur from course to course.

CEL Timeline



1 Review resources

2 Define project / placement & draft project proposal(s)

3 Submit project proposal(s)

4 Project proposals are reviewed & tentatively matched with CEL courses

5 Notification of match / non-match & next steps

6 Classes begin & students are matched with partners

7 Connect with students & define deliverables

8 Ongoing communication, mentorship & supervision

9 Reading week & mid-point check-in with CEL coordinator

10 Wrap up deliverables & next steps

11 Evaluate student work

12 Opportunity to provide feedback to CEL coordinator



Review Resources

BEFORE & THROUGHOUT
PARTNERSHIP

Before getting started with CEL at Western, it is important to understand what CEL is, how the process works, and whether it is a good fit for your organization. Please review the information in the [Community Partner Guide to CEL](#) on our [website](#) prior to submitting your project proposal(s).

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Define Project / Placement & Draft Proposal(s)

PRIOR TO LATE-AUGUST (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR LATE-DECEMBER (WINTER COURSES) SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The [CEL Course Guide](#) is a key document to review prior to submitting your project proposal(s). It includes [important details for all CEL courses offered in the upcoming academic year and examples of past projects](#) that have been completed by students in previous years. You may wish to review this document and note which courses you are interested in matching with to then [write your project proposal\(s\) in line with the course objectives and expectations](#). If you are open to matching with students from any course or multiple courses, you can indicate that in the proposal as well.

If you would like more [inspiration on the kinds of deliverables that CEL students could produce](#), please see [Project Deliverables for CEL](#) document.

It may be helpful to note that it is possible to submit project proposals that extend beyond the length of a single term or full-year course timeframe. If you have a long-term project that you would like to collaborate with students on, or a project that could benefit from collaborating with students from different disciplines at different academic levels, you can outline these plans in one proposal. A CEL coordinator will then connect with you to discuss how to divide the project between courses based on scope and final deliverable requirements.

3

Submit Project Proposal(s)

.....● **JUNE-AUGUST (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR NOVEMBER-DECEMBER (WINTER COURSES)**

You should receive an outreach email from a CEL coordinator inviting CEL project proposal submissions between June and August for Fall and Full-Year courses and November and December for Winter courses. If you are not on our mailing list, you may email us at cel@uwo.ca to receive the most recent project proposal link.

Once your proposal has been reviewed, you will receive a follow-up email notifying you of a potential course match, or whether further discussion is needed to define and scope your project. You may also be invited to discuss your project further with a CEL course instructor.

Project proposals are reviewed by a CEL coordinator on a regular basis until September (Fall and Full-Year courses) and December (Winter courses). We recommend submitting your proposal(s) as soon as you have it ready, as we typically receive a surplus of applications for participation in the CEL program.

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Project Proposals Reviewed & Tentatively Matched with CEL Courses

.....● **AUGUST** (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR **DECEMBER** (WINTER COURSES)

A CEL coordinator will do a final review of all CEL Project proposal submissions throughout August and September (Fall and Full-Year courses) and December (Winter courses). They will then send instructors their tentatively matched proposals for approval to ensure they are appropriate partnerships for their course.

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Notification of Match / Non-Match & Next Steps

**AUGUST-SEPTEMBER (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR
DECEMBER-JANUARY (WINTER COURSES)**

Once a CEL coordinator receives approval from course instructors, they will email community partners to notify them of which course(s) they have been matched with, and important dates and details about the course(s). It may be beneficial to read through the course details in the CEL Course Guide at this time to refamiliarize yourself with course expectations, learning objectives, and timelines.

If your project is not matched with a CEL course, a coordinator will connect with you at this time to discuss next steps. Often, it is possible to match your project with a course in another term, or to match you with a placement student or co-curricular CEL (volunteer) opportunity instead.



Classes Begin & Students are Matched with Partners

.....● **MID-SEPTEMBER** (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR **MID-JANUARY** (WINTER COURSES)

Fall and Full-Year courses begin in the first week of September, and Winter courses begin in the second week of January. For exact dates, please visit the [Sessional Dates Calendar](#).

Most [students will review the CEL project proposals early- to mid-September and early- to mid-January](#). They are expected to understand the tasks and goals of the projects, and to familiarize themselves with the partnering organizations. They then [select their top 3 project/placement preferences](#) to a CEL coordinator or course instructor, who will then review and match students accordingly.

[Some course instructors invite community partners into class virtually or in-person to introduce their organization and project](#) before students are matched with partners. In these cases, a coordinator or instructor will email community partners to share important information: class date, times, and location or link. Information about each course's timeline can be found in the [CEL Course Guide](#).

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Connect with Students & Define Deliverables

.....● **MID-SEPTEMBER (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR MID-JANUARY (WINTER COURSES)**

Once students have been matched with their projects/placements, community partners will receive an email from a CEL coordinator, course instructor, or student leader introducing them to their assigned student group. Students will be instructed to follow-up with their community partner to schedule a mutually convenient date and time for all participants to meet virtually or on-site.

In this initial meeting, students will bring the Student and Community Partner Expectations Agreement. It is important for community partners and students to complete this document together during this meeting. This allows participants to collaboratively refine the project deliverables (or define them, if they have not been), determine methods and frequency of communications and meetings, define tasks and roles, and schedule deadlines throughout the project's progression. This document should be completed in detail to ensure all participants have agreed upon the expectations for the project, including the collaborative and independent responsibilities required to complete the project within the given timeline. The agreement serves as an outline that may be referred to if students or partners are unsure of the next steps or if the project changes. Once it is completed, students submit the document to a CEL coordinator and/or course instructor.

*Please note: While projects may evolve over the course, project objectives should be defined first to ensure institutional policies and procedures are followed. Students should inform their course instructor if projects evolve or change, particularly regarding research involving human participants and/or their information.



Ongoing Communication, Mentorship & Supervision

.....● **THROUGHOUT PARTNERSHIP**

As student groups work through completing the project/placement deliverables, regular and consistent communication between students and partners is expected. This may include routine meetings, emails, updates, and/or opportunities for questions and feedback. Community partners serve as supervisors of the projects and mentors for the students. This is an opportunity to provide knowledge, insights, and resources to students, and to help guide them throughout the project, as needed. Coordinators and instructors may also provide support throughout projects and are available for students and partners to connect with at any time.

Your expectations for methods and timelines for communication should be clearly indicated in the [Student and Community Partner Expectations Agreement](#), and as agreed upon by students. For example, if you wish to receive weekly check-in emails, or any other frequencies or methods that are suitable to your organization and the project/placement, please indicate that in the agreement.

As you engage with your student group, you may find the [Tips for Engaging Students Remotely](#) document helpful. If you encounter any challenges with your students or project/placement progress, you can contact a CEL coordinator at anytime.



Reading Week & Mid-Point Check-In with CEL coordinator

.....● **MID-OCTOBER** (FALL & FULL-YEAR COURSES) OR **MID-FEBRUARY** (WINTER COURSES)

It is important to note that [students have Reading Week in October and February](#) (see [Sessional Dates Calendar](#) for exact dates). During these weeks, classes are paused, and students typically use this time to study for exams. They may or may not be working on their CEL projects, but students are often unavailable for check-in meetings.

[CEL coordinators use Reading Week as a time to connect with community partners to offer support and check in about how project\(s\)/placement\(s\) are progressing.](#) They are also available to contact at any time throughout the duration of your partnership via email or phone. During these weeks, you can expect a check-in email that provides partners an opportunity to share how the project(s) are progressing and any relevant feedback.



Wrap Up Deliverables & Next Steps

.....● **EARLY-DECEMBER** (FALL COURSES) OR **EARLY-APRIL** (WINTER & FULL-YEAR COURSES)

While the official last day of classes is in early-December (Fall courses) and early-April (Winter or Full-Year courses), the CEL project may be scheduled to wrap-up earlier or later than this. You can find specific dates in the [CEL Course Guide](#). You should discuss these dates and deadlines with students during your initial meeting to include them in the Student and Community Partner Expectations Agreement.

Around this time, you will receive an email from a CEL coordinator with options for providing feedback about your experience working with CEL students. You will have the opportunity to schedule a 1-on-1 meeting with a coordinator, or respond to a feedback survey to share about your experience.

If your student group was unable to complete all of the deliverables initially outlined, you can connect with a CEL coordinator to discuss options for the project to potentially continue in another upcoming CEL course.



Evaluate Student Work

.....● **EARLY-DECEMBER** (FALL COURSES) OR **EARLY-APRIL** (WINTER & FULL-YEAR COURSES)

Depending on the course, community partners may be required to submit a [Student Evaluation](#) to the course instructor and/or CEL coordinator. It includes a rubric to help guide your assessment. [The evaluation helps instructors understand and assess the groups' and individual students' contributions to your organization.](#) The evaluation often counts for a small percentage of students' overall final grade in the course. If the course you are partnered with requires partners to submit an evaluation, it will be indicated in the [CEL Course Guide](#), and a coordinator will send email reminders and deadlines for evaluations to be completed and received.

It may be helpful to [review the rubric before beginning the project/placement](#) to familiarize yourself with the areas of assessment, and to keep each one in mind throughout the term or year.

You may wish to [schedule a debrief meeting with your student group](#) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership, provide and receive feedback regarding the project, and discuss strategies for improvement with regards to future partnerships. To guide this meeting, you can refer to the [Community Engaged Learning Final Debrief](#) document, which lists ideas for discussion questions.



Opportunity to Provide Feedback to CEL Coordinator

.....● **EARLY-DECEMBER (FALL COURSES) OR EARLY-APRIL (WINTER & FULL-YEAR COURSES)**

The CEL coordinators would like to better understand the impact that CEL has on our community partners. Feedback about your experience partnering with Western students is welcome on an ongoing basis, though at the end of the term, you will have the opportunity to fill out an online survey designed to help improve CEL programming.

The survey will be circulated by the CEL coordinator via email at the end of the term. Please note that the survey is optional, it takes 10-15 minutes to complete, and it helps the coordinator ensure that your needs are met at all stages of the partnership. You may share successes and challenges, and anything else you deem important for improving our partnership with you.

The goal of CEL is to create mutually beneficial outcomes for partners and students, and by sharing your experience, the coordinators can help ensure this is achieved. CEL at Western is grateful for your feedback!

 Community Engaged Learning, Curricular Programs
Western University

Contact Our Team



cel@uwo.ca



cel.uwo.ca



University Community Centre (UCC),
Room 210

Links & Resources



[Community Engaged Learning at Western University](#)

[Community Engaged Learning Final Debrief](#)

[Community Partner Guide to CEL](#)

[CEL Course Guide](#)

[Project Deliverables for CEL](#)

[Sessional Dates Calendar](#)

[Student and Community Partner Expectations Agreement](#)

[Student Evaluation](#)

[Tips for Engaging Students Remotely](#)