COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITY EXPLORATION

WORKPLACE PROJECT I

Introduction
The Masters of Business in Complex Project Leadership (MBCPL) Workplace Project 1, is designed to integrate the theories and concepts learned in the early courses of the Executive Masters program and apply them to an identified opportunity in a real-world work context. This is a project-based learning experience in which the MBCPL Candidate is able to contribute what they have learned in the program to the benefit of a sponsoring organization and in particular, the Opportunity Owner. The development of the required analysis, a written report and an oral presentation of the findings based on the theme of ‘People and Communication in Projects’ is the major focus of the Workplace Project. The Candidates will be provided support from Telfer through the MBCPL Program Director, an Academic Advisor and a support team of other project managers attending the course.

In this learning environment, following the advice of the Opportunity Owner, Program Director and Academic Advisor, the Candidate will first prepare a two page project proposal to clearly define the project scope and proposed approach. The proposal is to be submitted to the Opportunity Owner, Program Director and Academic Advisor for approval. The Candidate will determine relevant tools, techniques and methodologies from their Year 1 courses listed in Table 1 that will contribute to understanding the situation. The Candidate will then develop and write a report outlining a range of solution options for their Opportunity Owner. The MBCPL Candidate will discuss the potential solution options with the Opportunity Owner and assist in forming a course of action. Implementation of the course of action is beyond the scope of this course and left to the Opportunity Owner to appropriately resource and action.

Key Roles include:

1. The Candidate is the MBCPL student.
2. The Opportunity Owner is the person in the work environment who has identified an opportunity or issue to be investigated.
3. The Academic Advisor is a TELFER instructor.
4. The Program Director is the liaison between TELFER and the Opportunity Owners

**Objectives**

The aim of is to provide Candidates with the opportunity to integrate and apply the principles learned in the Year 1 courses of the MBCPL program (Table 1).

At the completion of this course, Candidates will be able to:

1. Apply skills and knowledge from the classroom to a practical work environment.
2. Interact and negotiate with the Opportunity Owner to identify and scope an opportunity or issue around the theme of People and Communication in Projects. Achieve agreement and common understanding on the opportunity.
3. Organize and write a professionally structured and persuasive proposal that outlines the opportunity or issue and the approach to be followed.
4. Evaluate, analyse and use critical research to support persuasive intentions.
5. Synthesize information from a number of different disciplines in the MBCPL course.
6. Prepare and deliver a briefing report with recommendations as part of a strategic conversation with the Opportunity Owner.
7. Organize, structure, and strategically deliver a professional persuasive discussion with the Opportunity Owner.
8. Deliver a presentation that analyses the learnings from the project to the MBCPL cohort and Academic Advisors.

**Table 1: Executive Masters in Complex Project Leadership Nominated Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2016 (Term 1) Courses</th>
<th>Winter 2017 (Term 2) Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPL 5101 Systems Thinking</td>
<td>CPL 5104 Organizational Behaviour of Project Teams and their Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPL 5102 Self Realization and Personal Development</td>
<td>CPL 5105 Planning and Communicating Change Effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPL 5103 Strategic Management of Complex Projects and Programs</td>
<td>CPL 5106 Acquisition Strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Based Learning Overview**

Project-based learning is defined as a form of problem-based learning which presents the learner with an opportunity to apply theory to practice through evaluating a ‘real-world’ practical situation or a problem in the work environment. This activity serves to situate, motivate and solidify learning. With a project to work on, the learner actively engages in framing the problem, identifying and gathering resources and working with others to explore the opportunity in potentially new, innovative or unconventional ways.
In traditional content based learning, the content is the major focus of the learning (See figure 1.1). In contrast, with problem-based learning, content is gathered by the learner in the process of addressing the problem and experience is gained in the application of new theories, tools and techniques to present potential viable solutions or improvements. Armed with new learning from the MBCPL courses, Candidates take the role of an “internal consultant” to help the Opportunity Owner gain a new perspective on the opportunity or issue.

**Opportunity Characteristics**

To allow Candidates to exercise the skills that they learned in the MBCPL program, the opportunity must have a People and Communication in Projects focus and the task must be situated in an area with some complexity. Suitable project opportunities will deal with topics covered in the first courses of the program, such as Systems Thinking, Strategic Management of Complex Projects and Programs, Organizational Behaviour of Teams and Their Systems, Acquisition Strategies, and Planning and Communicating Change Effectively.

Opportunities might include:

- The challenges of planning new projects,
- Defining and communicating a project strategy and/or vision,
- Project communications planning,
- Building people-focused project organizations,
- Sharing information in project teams and
- Improving project team dynamics.
For example, if a project is progressing through the project lifecycle and its task needs are changing, the project opportunity could be the development of a strategy for the building of a new culture to support the new phase, or a closure strategy. Alternatively, the opportunity could be to investigate ways to encourage adaptive or enabling leadership communication skills within a project team.

**Scope**

The project opportunity must be large enough to challenge and small enough to be completed within the Workplace Project course. The final presentations will be delivered on 7-9 Aug 2017. Candidates will have the opportunity to gather initial information, reflect on the issues and scope the project with the Opportunity Owner and Academic Advisor by 30 May 2017. The central focus of the project will not be a purely technical problem, but will be focused on a communication and people issue at the structural, project or organisational level. Similarly, the opportunity cannot be a staff or personnel problem. Opportunities would preferably not have security clearance requirements or excessive confidentiality issues. If necessary, confidentiality agreements can be entered into with the Candidate and the Academic Advisor.

**Timing**

The Program Director will solicit proposals from potential Opportunity Owners by 1 Mar 2017. The MBCPL Candidate will meet with the Opportunity Owners to discuss the opportunity. Following that meeting, the Candidate will gain an initial understanding of the project and begin preparation of the project proposal. The project topic proposal must be approved by the Opportunity Owner, the Program Director and Academic Advisor by 30 May 2017.

**MBCPL Candidate’s Responsibility**

The MBCPL Candidate will be responsible for gaining agreement on the proposal by all parties concerned, gathering data, developing, with any nominated project leader and/or team, an implementation strategy, and communicating the potential solutions to the Opportunity Owner. Candidates will not be responsible for implementing potential solutions.

**Opportunity Owner’s Responsibilities**

The Opportunity Owner will identify potential opportunities by 1 Mar 2107. Meet with the MBCPL Candidate by early May to explore the opportunity further such that the candidate can scope the work. The Opportunity Owner will have the authority to approve the Candidate’s proposal, attend a discussion of recommendations and receive the Candidate’s briefing and report. The Opportunity Owner may also need to provide information or direct the Candidate to appropriate information sources. Participation will require approximately 10-15 hours of the Opportunity Owner’s time.
The Opportunity Owner is also required to submit an assessment of the Candidate’s contribution on completion of the workplace project. This is a short document taking approximately 15 minutes to complete.

**Academic Advisor’s Responsibilities**

The Academic Advisor is available to guide the candidates on their approach using the theories and methodologies that they have been exposed to. Information regarding the applicability for the specific situation and guidance for alternative sources and references may also be provided. The Academic Advisor is responsible to ensure that academic rigor is maintained as the workplace project is a course that forms part of the individual study component at the Masters level and the MBCPL candidates are evaluated with formal grades allocated through the university. The Academic Advisor will grade the final presentation and report.

**Program Director’s Responsibilities**

The Program Director is the main point of contact to various opportunity owners and is responsible to solicit the various opportunities for MBCPL candidates to work on. The Program Director matches MBCPL candidates to the potential opportunities and is available to assist the candidates in scoping the opportunity as part of the overall MBCPL workload. Guidance and/or suggestions of the proposed approach may also be provided based on his/her experience.

**Submitting an opportunity/problem statement**

Potential Opportunity owners are requested to submit a short (1-3 paragraph) description of the situation to be investigated and how it relates to the theme of People and Communications in Projects to the MBCPL Program Director by 1 Mar 2017.

The Program Director will match Candidates to Opportunity Owners and encourage initial communications. The Candidate will develop a 2-page proposal for approval by the Opportunity Owner, Program Director and Academic Advisors. The Proposal will contain the following elements:

**Title**

Project Opportunity name, Opportunity Owner, Candidate, Academic Advisor

**The Opportunity**

Briefly explains the Opportunity or issue.

**Background**

Provides contextual information necessary to understand the opportunity or issue. Major constraints might be mentioned.
**Project Objective**

A statement of the objective, for example: “The objective of this study is to explore ways to improve communications between the Detachment in Victoria and Project Management Office in Ottawa.”

**Scope**

Description of the scope of the study. This can take the form of a broad statement about what will be studied, clarified by several short statements about what will NOT be studied or done. Broadly speaking, the Scope of this study is to make recommendations but does not include implementation of those recommendations.

**Methodology**

Description of the steps that will be used to collect information. Identifying the type of information required and the information-gathering strategies envisioned.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion describes the potential benefits of the project.

The Proposal should be short and to the point. It is designed to allow the Candidate and the Opportunity Owner to negotiate a suitable project and define the scope of the project. This document will assist the Candidate to clarify their tasks and feel confident that it meets the requirements of the course. It also allows the Opportunity Owner to be clear about what it is reasonable to expect. The Opportunity Owner, the Program Director, the Academic Advisor and the Candidate will sign off on this document.

**The Process and Timelines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Solicitation of Project Proposals from Opportunity Owners begins</td>
<td>20 Jan 2017</td>
<td>MBCPL Program Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Receive Opportunity/Problem Statements from Opportunity Owners</td>
<td>1 Mar 2017</td>
<td>Sponsoring Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Assignment of Projects to MBCPL Candidates</td>
<td>3 Apr 2017</td>
<td>MBCPL Program Director, Academic Advisor and Candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Official Launch of – Workplace Projects Course</td>
<td>1 May 2017</td>
<td>MBCPL Program Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Develop two page <strong>Project Proposal</strong> for the identified opportunity including methodology</td>
<td>30 May 2017</td>
<td>Candidate to Opportunity Owner &amp; Academic Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Develop consultation process, analysis and report.</td>
<td>30 May – 1 Aug 2017</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Milestone</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Present findings and <strong>Written Report</strong> to the Opportunity Owner and possibly others on the team</td>
<td>Week of 1 Aug 2017</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Deliver a <strong>Reflective Presentation</strong> to the cohort</td>
<td>7-9 Aug 2017</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Deliver <strong>Academic Report</strong> to Academic Advisor</td>
<td>15 Aug 2017</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Opportunity Owner to submit assessment of Student contribution to the project</td>
<td>15 Aug 2017</td>
<td>Opportunity Owner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For further information please contact the MBCPL Program Director at 613-562-5800, extension 7489.