NFTE Virtual Volunteering Guide

This guide provides essential information that will help you prepare for and perform your virtual volunteer assignment at the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). As a virtual volunteer, you will be able to participate in opportunities such as guest speaking, coaching, judging, and hosting.

At NFTE, virtual volunteering means volunteer tasks completed, in whole, via the Internet from a home or work computer. Virtual volunteering allows our organization to expand the benefits of our traditional volunteer program, by allowing for more volunteers to participate, and by utilizing volunteers in new areas.

We recognize that many people actively search for volunteer opportunities they can complete via home or work computers, because of time constraints, personal preference, a disability or a home-based obligation that prevents them from volunteering on-site. Virtual volunteering enables our volunteers to contribute time and expertise to our students from his or her home or office.

Good luck and have fun!

NFTE Program Model

Our model is classroom-based with entrepreneurship curricula that teach math and literacy skills in the context of building a business plan. The curricula meet the social studies and mathematics national standards, and the language arts, mathematics, science, technology, and social studies standards in several states. Programs are rigorous, experiential, and vital to students’ futures, and volunteers from local businesses share their expertise in our classrooms.

We support teachers by giving them the tools they need to inspire students to learn entrepreneurship. We work districtwide with school administrations to help them achieve their educational objectives.

We motivate our students to work hard in the classroom. As an incentive, we give students the chance to win seed capital for their business ideas by competing in NFTE’s classroom, citywide, regional, and national business plan competitions. NFTE’s national business plan competitions have a grand prize of $10,000 and bring together our top students from around the country each fall in New York City. These top students compete in front of a panel of volunteer judges who are distinguished business leaders and entrepreneurs.

NFTE’s advanced business programs support students through volunteer-alumni mentorship, pro
bono consulting, and other services to make students’ businesses operational.

**Student Participants**

Our students come from low-income communities in major cities across the country, which are often plagued by crime, violence, substance abuse, and hopelessness. These challenges affect the quality of students’ lives and fuel school-dropout rates.

Conversely, NFTE instills hope and improves students’ lives through entrepreneurship education. We teach skills relevant to the real world, and motivate students to stay in school and learn. When they do, their vision of the world changes. They discover innovative, relevant programs that inspire them to graduate, go to college, and embark on successful careers. They learn to recognize opportunities for success all around them.

**Benefits for Students**

There are clear benefits for students who participate in NFTE programs. They graduate with the necessary presentation, leadership, and problem-solving skills for continuing their education and contributing to the economy by either running their own businesses or joining the workforce. The strong financial literacy skills that students learn help them to make and manage money.

**Virtual Engagement Preparation**

**Volunteer skills and Equipment Needed**

- A computer and regular access to the internet
- Access to
  - Yammer or Edmodo
  - Skype, Google Hangouts, and/or WebEx
- Attention to detail, thoughtful and careful reading, commitment to deadlines

**Your Responsibility**

The most important component of the program is you, your real-life experience, personally and professionally. Virtual volunteering has less to do with technology and everything to do with the individuals engaged in the interactions. As a virtual volunteer, regardless of position, you give students a greater understanding of how a business operates by sharing your insights and experiences. The following will provide specific information that will prepare you for your virtual experience:

- Virtual Guest Speaking

As a virtual guest speaker, you give students a greater understanding of how a business operates by sharing your insights and experiences. By using Skype or Google Hangouts You may speak about your education or academic background, successes and failures, jobs held or business
Volunteer

endeavors, hobbies, and civic or volunteer service, in relation to the planned lesson or topic.

The time you spend with students should be interactive. Engage them by linking your real-world experiences to the particular curriculum, and you will successfully capture their interest. Keep discussions lively.

- Virtual Business Plan Coach

As a virtual business plan coach, you give students a greater understanding of how a business operates by sharing your insights and knowledge. Offer advice that not only aligns with the business plan model, but also nurtures the students’ entrepreneurial spirit.

The coaching should be interactive. Use approved platforms such as Yammer or Edmodo to engage students by linking your business experiences to the particular curriculum, and you will successfully capture their interest. Through asynchronous and synchronous interactions, students will post portions of their business plan along with questions for coaches to respond.

- Virtual Field Trip Hosting

As a virtual field trip host, you give students a greater understanding of how a business operates by acquainting them with the mission, structure, and operations of your company or business.

Through Skype or Google Hangouts, include colleagues or employees from different departments (e.g., finance, marketing, human resources, and sales) in the virtual experience. By inviting speakers from other departments, you offer students diverse perspectives about job functions and business.

- Virtual Business Plan Competition Judging

Your role as a virtual business plan competition judge is to evaluate the presentations of our student entrepreneurs as though you were a venture capitalist considering an actual investment.

Although some students might already be operating the business on which they based their business plans, you must judge all presentations equally. Therefore, avoid giving more weight or higher scores to a business plan simply because it is operational.

Our Responsibility

NFTE staff will work with you beforehand to coordinate your virtual experience. Orientation and additional training will be provided to support you in your role. Details to work out include the date and time, number of students, length of the engagement, business concepts that the students have learned, and ideas on how to make the engagement valuable.

Evaluation

At the end of your assignment, NFTE staff will email you the link to an evaluation about your volunteer experience. Please complete it promptly, and thank you!