Fall 2021 World Series of Innovation
Community Partner Toolkit

Welcome! Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is pleased to present a whole new set of World Series of Innovation (WSI) challenges for the 2021-22 school year and we're excited you want to help young people participate.

This toolkit provides information about the challenges and advice for groups who may want to hold WSI "Innovation Day" events to provide volunteer coaching for their young innovators.

WSI competitors tackle some of the biggest global issues of our time, from climate change to hunger, poverty, inequality, and injustice. They envision solutions to seemingly intractable problems, coming up with innovative ideas to help protect the planet and improve the lives of people around the world.

In the process, participants learn about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are introduced to basic concepts of entrepreneurship and design thinking. Working on a challenge allows young people to develop their entrepreneurial mindset and even win cash prizes for their ideas.

Are you ready to help? WSI Innovation Days offer a unique way for volunteer coaches to engage with students and guide them. Tackling a big problem together is fun and being a sounding board for a young innovator developing an idea is a great way to lay a foundation for future mentorship.

FAQs

What is NFTE?
Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship – or NFTE, as we're often referred to – is a global nonprofit that brings high-quality entrepreneurship education to middle and high school students as well as college students and young adults. Most of our work is focused on under-resourced communities. We reach students in 25 states across the U.S. and 20 countries around the world. Since our founding, we've educated over a million young entrepreneurs through in-school, out-of-school, college, camp, and community programs. Learn more at www.nfte.com.

What is the NFTE World Series of Innovation?
WSI is an annual online competition that invites young people to help solve some of the most critical issues humanity faces today. Every fall, NFTE launches a new set of WSI innovation challenges aligned with the UN SDGs. Young innovators can enter one or more challenges and win cash prizes for innovative ideas to advance the SDGs.

Why organize innovation challenges around the SDGs?
The UN SDGs represent some of the most serious challenges humanity faces today. Things like hunger, poverty, justice, equity, jobs, environmental sustainability, and climate change. NFTE believes the creativity and ingenuity of young innovators and entrepreneurs is vital to solving these big challenges.

Who can compete?

WSI is open to all young people ages 13–24 and it's completely free to participate. There are no entry fees and no requirements other than meeting the age criteria: competitors must be at least 13 years old but not more than 24 years old as of the date when the submission period for this set of challenges closes: December 15, 2021. Participants do not need to be U.S. citizens and don't need to have taken a NFTE class. **They can compete individually or team up to compete in small groups. WSI teams can have one, two, three, or four members.**

How does WSI work?

The challenges are completely online. All you need is basic internet access and big ideas. Participants should first explore the challenges on the WSI website then sign up to compete by clicking the Get Started button that appears in the top right corner of all pages on the website or by clicking the Accept Challenge buttons that appear within the challenge descriptions.

1. **Sign Up to Compete ▶** *TIP: Students can click here to sign up right now*
   Competitors need to provide their name and email address, choose a password, and a provide a tentative team name (don't worry, it's easy to change later). When a competitor signs up they'll receive a confirmation email and must click on the link in that email to validate. Then they can log in to their own WSI Dashboard page on our competition platform. That's where they can select the challenge they want to enter, invite friends to join their team, and start building their entry.

2. **Start Brainstorming**
   Competitors should explore the challenge resources provided on the WSI website then do some rapid ideation (aka brainstorming) and pick their best ideas to develop.

3. **Complete the Online Entry Form**
   The online entry form walks competitors through the process of identifying their ideal customer, defining the problem they intend to solve for that customer, and thinking through how their idea might be implemented – in just 9 questions. We don't ask for full-blown businesses plans. We just ask for innovative ideas that could be feasible. The entry form does not need to be completed all at once, either. There is a Save/Preview feature for those who want to keep making refinements before clicking Submit.

First round judging determines the Top Ten entries in each challenge category. The teams selected to advance to the final round are then asked just one more question: can you persuade the judges your idea is the best entry in its category?

Finalists are given a chance to submit a 1-minute video pitch in support of their entries then final round judging determines the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizewinners in each challenge category.

When are entries due?

All entries must be submitted by 11pm (US Eastern Time) on December 15, 2021.

What are the prizes?

There are three cash prizes in each challenge category. **The 1st place prize is $1,500 USD. The 2nd place prize is $600 USD. The 3rd place prize is $300 USD.** Teams are expected to divide prize money equally among members. There is no limit on the number of prize awards you can win, either. Some competitors enter more than one challenge and win multiple prizes.

Who judges entries?

The organizations that sponsor challenges select experts to serve on both first round and final round judging panels. NFTE may also source additional volunteer judges, drawing from our own community of entrepreneurs, business leaders, educators, and subject matter experts.

How are entries scored?

Each entry is evaluated by multiple judges who've been trained on the scoring rubric. The judges' scores are averaged to determine the ranked order of finish in each challenge category. At the end of first round judging the top ten entries in each category are determined. The teams that submitted the top entries are named as finalists and those teams advance to the final round of competition. Finalists are asked to record a 1-minute video "commercial" or "elevator pitch" in support of their entries, and a whole new set of judges then evaluates both the videos and the original entries of the finalists. Again, the judges' scores are averaged to determine the ranked order of finish. The top-scoring entry in a category is the 1st place winner. The next highest-scoring entry is the 2nd place winner and the next-highest is the 3rd place winner.

Can students enter more than one challenge or be on more than one team?

Yes. Just remember it's one entry/one challenge per team. Students who want to work on more than one challenge can accept invites to join other teams or lead additional teams themselves. They're not limited in any way. But they will need to sign up again, using a different email address for each team they want to join or lead because the signup email address is linked to the challenge entry and must be unique to that entry. Bottom line: students will need to use multiple email addresses if they want to be associated with multiple teams/entries.

Are there resources available to help students compete?

Yes! Have students download the WSI Competitor's Toolkit, which provides helpful information, links to curriculum resources and other useful tools as well as tips on building a winning entry, including a step-by-step guide to filling out the online entry form – with notes on how scoring works and what the judges will be looking for.

Young people may also enjoy learning more about the entrepreneurial mindset domains using some of NFTE's digital learning tools.

Are there resources available to help volunteer coaches?

Yes! At the end of this document you'll find advice for volunteers planning and facilitating WSI Innovation Day brainstorming sessions.

You can also download two very useful resources from our friends at Intuit that were designed specifically to help you explore the design thinking approach:

- **Intuit Design4Delight Toolkit**
- **Intuit Design4Delight Method Cards**

Design4Delight (D4D) is Intuit's own method for using deep customer empathy in product design. You'll find some fun warm-ups to jumpstart brainstorming plus skill-building exercises to help students develop deeper customer empathy.

You may find it helpful to look at the WSI Educator's Toolkit if you'd like more background on entrepreneurship essentials.

What are this season's challenges?

There are seven innovation challenges being offered in the Fall 2021 challenge cycle:

Bank of the West Move on Climate Challenge, SDG 13

Design a solution to help entrepreneurs and small businesses move the needle on climate while supporting economic growth and promoting a green economy.

Citi Foundation Inclusive Growth Challenge, SDG 8

Design a solution to build a more just society by closing the racial wealth gap and promoting equity through inclusive economic opportunity.

EY Collaborate for Impact Challenge, SDG 17

Design a solution to help secure a livable future by promoting collaborative action on sustainability by business, government and civil society.

Mary Kay Gender Equality Challenge, SDG 5

**Design a solution to promote workplace equality and equal access to economic opportunity for women and girls.**

Maxar Community Resilience from Space Challenge, SDG 11

Design a solution using satellite imagery and other geospatial data to help communities become more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

PIMCO Food Equity Challenge, SDG 2

Design a solution to address disparities in access (racial or other), to help ensure that all people have enough nutritious food and other resources to live healthy, active lives.
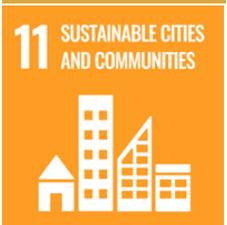
Saint-Gobain Sustainable Cities Challenge, SDG 11

Design a solution to promote use of sustainable building materials or create a circular economy in building construction.

A Guide to Holding Your Own WSI Innovation Day

Helping young innovators prepare for a WSI challenge is easy and it can be a very rewarding experience for both students and volunteer coaches to dive into brainstorming together. Anyone can hold an Innovation Day. It's a great way to get community volunteers to engage with young people while exploring issues that matter to everyone – hunger, poverty, equity and inclusion, justice, climate change, and environmental sustainability.

The Innovation Day Experience

While WSI Innovation Days were first developed as in-person, half-day coaching events, we've found that they can be successful in many different formats. Innovation Days can be structured as in-person gatherings or as totally virtual sessions. They can be engaging 2-3 hour events if you want to feature a few interesting speakers then break for lunch or a snack before the coaching and brainstorming – and they can also work well as 60- or 90-minute Zoom sessions if your community is facing COVID restrictions or if you simply want to make coaching super easy for your volunteers. We offer some advice on organizing both types of Innovation Days below.

A Planning Timeline

Competitors can sign up to compete and submit their entries any time between September 15 and December 15, so the best months to hold Innovation Days tend to be October and November. Here's a rough timeline for planning purposes:

September

- Start planning! Whether you intend to hold a 60-minute Zoom or a 3-hour brainstorming lunch, know the gameplan before you start recruiting coaches or competitors. Also, decide up front whether you want all competitors to focus on one challenge or to select whatever challenge interests them most (this may impact how you organize small breakout groups since it's best if everyone in a group is doing the same challenge).
- Choose a date in October or November for your Innovation Day.
- Start recruiting volunteers who want to coach as well as volunteers to help with setup.
- Start recruiting young people who want to compete.
    - Encourage them to explore the challenges at innovation.nfte.com ahead of time
    - Have students sign up to compete ahead of time if possible; that way they can begin filling out the online entry form during the Innovation Day session
- Encourage both coaches and competitors to explore the learn more resources provided for each challenge, to download the WSI Competitor's Toolkit.

October/November

- Hold a brief orientation/training meeting for your volunteers.
- Hold your Innovation Day!
    - Have someone welcome coaches and competitors, get them excited about the agenda, and introduce the challenge(s) you want students to work on.
    - Use the Design4Delight warm-up exercises and brainstorming prompts.

December

- If your young innovators did not submit their entries during your Innovation Day event, remind them to go online to complete and submit their entries before December 15.

Key To-Dos

☐ **Confirm you can achieve critical mass, both in terms of students and volunteers.** You'll want to have at least a 1:4 ratio of coaches to competitors. 1:2 or 1:3 will work nicely but consider 1:4 your limit; it's difficult for coaches to lead groups of more than four competitors.

☐ **If you're going for an in-person gathering, get a handle on the logistics.** Decide on the location, confirm whether WiFi is available (it's not essential but it is very helpful), find out whether you can serve refreshments, look into the student dropoff and volunteer parking scenarios, figure out how you'll be handling coach and competitor signup, and line up some non-coaching volunteers to help set up tables/chairs, cover check-in, etc.

☐ **If you're opting for a virtual event, get a handle on the technology available to you.** Confirm how many participants can be active on your web meeting platform (Zoom, WebEx, etc.) and look into your options for having breakout "rooms" during the web meeting so your coaches can work with small groups of students. Designate some volunteers to serve as your "web producers" and make sure they know how to assign students and coaches to breakout rooms.

☐ **Confirm you have budget for any costs associated with your Innovation Day.** If you're doing a virtual event they may not be significant but if you're doing an in-person event, there may be costs associated with printing materials and arranging for snacks.

☐ **Build your agenda.** Plan the "run of show" for the event itself and also for any pre-event volunteer orientation/training you plan to provide

☐ **Promote your event with students and potential volunteers**

☐ **Sign up coaches and competitors**

☐ **Visit innovation.nfte.com to read up on the challenges and download resources**

☐ **Have fun and don't forget to take photos of the event for your social feeds**

A Sample Agenda for a 90-Minute Zoom

1. Welcome (5 min)
This is a good time for your master of ceremonies to mention your organization's own mission and how it connects to youth entrepreneurship and/or sustainable development.

2. Challenge Overview and Goals for Today's Session (10 min)
Explore the challenge statement together and set out the goal for this session. For example: by the end of the hour competitors will have developed their customer profile and refined their problem statement. Note: You may be tempted to be more ambitious and aim for students having a rough draft of their entry by the end of the hour, however that may not be feasible unless you're able to have the students do a lot of pre-work before your Innovation Day.

3. Coach-Competitor Meet & Greet (10 min)
Break into small groups, have coaches and competitors introduce themselves to each other, and do a small group icebreaker activity, such as sharing favorite hobbies, favorite foods, or dream jobs.

4. Breakout Groups – Warm-Up (10 min)
In small groups, start with the 10-minute D4D Gift Giving Game as a warm-up.

The Gift Giving Game is described on page 1 of the <u>Intuit Design4Delight Toolkit</u>.

5. Breakout Groups – Brainstorm (15 min)
In small groups, do the 10-minute Brainstorming Exercise described in the WSI Competitor's Toolkit. Take a few minutes afterwards to let students go through their brainstorming lists and pick their best idea to work on.

The Brainstorming Exercise is explained on page 7 of the <u>WSI Competitor's Toolkit</u>. It will be helpful if students have paper and a pen handy for the Brainstorming Exercise.

6. Breakout Groups – Customer Profile and Problem Statement (30 min)
Have each student discuss who their ideal customer would be. Then have students do the D4D Problem Statement Activity. Make sure you leave enough time for each student in the group to read their problem statement out loud before everyone leaves the breakout groups.

The Ideal Customer concept is explained on page 8 of the <u>WSI Competitor's Toolkit</u>. It will be helpful for students to have discussed or at least thought about their customer profile before attempting the Problem Statement Exercise.

The Problem Statement Exercise is described on page 8 of the <u>Intuit Design4Delight Method Cards</u>. It will be helpful for students have printed out the blank template for the Problem Statement beforehand so they can use it during the breakout session.

7. Reflection and Closing Remarks (10 min)
Reconvene and do a group reflection exercise. Take a group photo and be sure to thank all the competitors, coaches, and other volunteers.

A Sample Agenda for a 3-Hour, In-Person Event

1. Opening Remarks (5 minutes)
Have a representative of your organization deliver brief welcome remarks.!

2. Ice Breakers & Warm-Ups (10 minutes)
Break into small groups, matching a small group of one to four competitors with each volunteer coach. Do a round of introductions then have the group try one of the D4D Deep Customer Empathy Exercises.

The Customer Empathy Exercises are described on pages 15-17 of the <u>Intuit Design4Delight Toolkit</u>.

3. Learning to Recognize Opportunity (30 minutes)
Help students understand the Sources of Innovation so they'll be prepared to recognize opportunities. Designate one volunteer to present to the whole room or let each volunteer lead their group through the material.

The Sources of Opportunity are described on page 6 of the <u>WSI Competitor's Toolkit</u>.

4. Exploring the Challenges (20 minutes)
Have volunteers lead their small groups in a discussion of the challenges and pick one WSI challenge to work on. If you have internet access, you can use the related content links on the WSI website to dig deeper, or you can prepare printouts of some related content ahead of time.

Break for Lunch/Snack (30 minutes)

5. Brainstorm (15 minutes)
Have volunteers facilitate time-limited, rapid ideation. Give students 15 minutes to write down as many ideas for solving a challenge as they can.

The Brainstorming exercise is described on page 19 of the Intuit Design4Delight Toolkit.

6. Evaluate (15 minutes)
Discuss the ideas that emerging during brainstorming as a group. Kick the tires together and assess which ideas are the most promising. Then let students decide how they want to proceed. They can build out their ideas individually as solo competitors, or they can work collaboratively in small teams of two, three, or four.

The Narrowing exercises are described on pages 20-21 of the Intuit Design4Delight Toolkit.

7. Start Building Out the Best Ideas (45 minutes)
Have individuals/teams start to fill out the WSI Entry Form Worksheet or, if there's internet access, have them register and start filling out the online entry form. Coaches can jump in to help if students have trouble understanding the submission form. Note that most competitors will not finish fleshing out their idea in 45 minutes, though some may. All should have made a good start by the end of the session and they'll be able to complete and submit their entry online later.

There are two printable versions of the WSI Entry Form Worksheet: DOC and PDF

8. Closing Remarks (5 minutes)
Have a volunteer or a representative of your organization deliver brief closing remarks.