



Workplace Challenge Fact Sheet

Workplace Challenge

A Workplace Challenge is a Career Preparation activity where small groups of learners ²(four to six per team) are engaged in solving a real-world problem or a challenge issued by an employer. The challenge is identified by the employer in consultation with the work-based learning connector and a classroom teacher or faculty member. The structure of the challenge is based upon effective project-based learning approaches, enhanced by a focus on the targeted career pathway and an authentic problem or issue faced by an employer partner.

Learners work as a team to identify possible solutions. They then create and deliver a presentation on their solutions to the employer. Designed to meet specific learning objectives, workplace challenges are educationally rich, are tied to the curriculum, and help learners connect what they're learning in school with the workplace.

Workplace challenges are one activity in the continuum of authentic work-based experiences provided to all learners engaged in career-related programs or course of study in the Earn & Learn community.

Workplace Challenges are designed to:

- Provide exposure to potential careers in an industry of interest.
- Develop problem solving and research skills.
- Develop teamwork and presentation skills.
- Help learners make the connection between school and the workplace.
- Inform career planning.

Workplace Challenges are structured to:

- Offer learners the opportunity to explore and practice in a field of interest.
- Give learners the opportunity to enhance the relevance of academic concepts through the application of applied knowledge.
- Build knowledge about the education and training needed for a particular career path and entry into the industry.
- Allow for Teacher/Employer interaction to support the challenge.

Workplace Challenges are supported by:

- Classroom preparation, including research on the industry and participating businesses.
- Employer orientation and support.
- Opportunities to reflect upon the experience verbally and in writing.

Workplace Challenges are connected to:

- Individual career development/training plans.
- Future work-based learning activities.
- Identifiable academic curricular goals.
- The learner's next steps.

² Learners include K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

Go Deeper

- Have several teams of learners address the same challenge and reward the most innovative solutions through a competition—with the employer or a team of employers serving as the judge(s).
- After the presentation of the solution and critique by the employer partner, have the team(s) revisit their approach, define a new solution and present it to the employer partner(s).
- Sequence a series of challenges for the same team of learners so the experiences build on one another.
- Model aspects of the challenge after reality TV shows such as “Shark Tank” (with the learners pitching their solutions to a group of employers).
- Have the challenge flow into an internship for successful learners.

Workplace Challenge Lite

If the time and intensity of the workplace challenge described here is difficult to apply in your program model, consider a “workplace challenge lite.” Maintain key components of the challenge (employer issues a real-world challenge, learners work together to define a solution and present to the employer) but identify a simpler problem with the employer that a small group of learners might define over a single two- or three-hour session.

Workplace Challenge Support Materials

Checklists, Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets:

- WBL Connector Workplace Challenge Checklist
- Learner Workplace Challenge Checklist
- Teacher/Faculty Workplace Challenge Tip Sheet
- Employer Workplace Challenge Tip Sheet
- Employer Workplace Challenge Fact Sheet

Implementation Tools:

- Workplace Challenge Research Activity
- Workplace Challenge Learner Reflection

Remote Workplace Challenge

- Please see “Provider Guide: The Workplace Challenge” in the Remote and Virtual Section of this toolkit.

Tips for Success
Work-Based Learning Essential Elements

Effective Workplace Challenges include structured activity before, during and after the experience. Pay attention to these tips to ensure meaningful experiences that result in enriched learning.

- ✓ Conduct Effective Planning
- ✓ Prepare for Success
- ✓ Identify Learning Objectives.
- ✓ Create Authentic and Engaging Experiences
- ✓ Connect to Careers
- ✓ Support Learner Growth
- ✓ Ensure Activities are Safe and Legal
- ✓ Provide Ongoing Support
- ✓ Provide for Reflection, Presentation and Feedback
- ✓ Connect to the Learner Next Step
- ✓ Assess and Document the Experience

Sustaining and growing Workplace Challenges and all other work-based learning activities depend on maintaining positive relationships with the participating employers. These employers should be treated as valued customers and partners with frequent check-ins to address their needs and support their participation.