



Workplace Challenge Fact Sheet

Workplace Challenge

A Workplace Challenge is a Career Preparation activity where small groups of students/learners (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.

Students/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 students/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 students/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 students/learners make the connection between school and the workplace.
- Inform career planning.

Workplace Challenges are structured to:

- Offer students/learners the opportunity to explore and practice in a field of interest.
- Give students/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 student/learner's next steps.



Go Deeper

- Have several teams of students/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 students/learners so the experiences build on one another.
- Model aspects of the challenge after reality TV shows such as “Shark Tank” (with the students/learners pitching their solutions to a group of employers).
- Have the challenge flow into an internship for successful students/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, students/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 students/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
- Student/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 Student/Learner Reflection

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 Student/Learner Growth
- ✓ Ensure Activities are Safe and Legal
- ✓ Provide Ongoing Support
- ✓ Provide for Reflection, Presentation and Feedback
- ✓ Connect to the Student/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.