

Connector Workplace Challenge Checklist

Quick tips for Work-Based Learning Connectors³ to ensure a successful workplace challenge.

Before the Workplace Challenge

- Identify all interested teachers, help them plan their challenges. Share the Teacher/Faculty Tip Sheet.
- Work with the teacher/faculty to recruit and team learners⁴, create learning objectives and work with learners to prepare for the challenge.
- Design the challenge with the employer and teacher, making sure that it's one the learners can potentially address, and that teachers/faculty can support. Typically, the employer presents a number of possible problems or issues that might constitute the challenge and you can help select and develop one that's a good fit with the current focus in the classroom. Selection should also reflect the interests of participating learners and the availability of resources to support addressing the challenge.
- Encourage the employer to identify a real-world problem or issue—one that the industry is facing today. Make it real.
- Develop a timeline for the challenge. Include when and where it will be issued, the time set aside in the regular schedule for learners to address the challenge, scheduled "touch" points with the challenge host, and when and where the solution presentation will take place.
- Distribute and collect appropriate forms.
- Address any additional logistical issues such as transportation, safety gear or access to equipment and tools.
- Determine the employer's preferred form and frequency of contact and define an ongoing communication strategy and feedback protocols for the challenge.

During the Workplace Challenge

- Observe and meet with learners as they address the challenge. Make sure they're engaged in the challenge and interacting with the employer as appropriate.
- Share the Work-Readiness Competencies with the workplace challenge hosts.
- Support the challenge host in preparing to receive the presentation on the solution(s) to the challenge.

After the Workplace Challenge

- Document the workplace challenge. Review feedback from employers, teachers/faculty and learners and summarize results. Make recommendations for improvements.
- Help learners update their career development plan and think about any next steps they would like to take to further their career goals.

Sample Workplace Challenge Timeline

Beginning of the school year: Identify interested teachers/faculty and brainstorm business partners who could participate.

One month in advance: Invite business partners to participate. Design the challenge with employer and teacher.

One week in advance: Send employers logistics and address any questions.

During challenge: Observe the presentation and the challenge process in the classroom. Help teachers/faculty and employers support the activity.

At end of challenge: Observe the solution presentation (ideally at worksite), engage in dialogue and receive feedback on the approach.

Note: While it's desirable to bookend the challenge with visits to the company, take care to minimize the impact on small- to medium-sized organizations.

³ This includes Earn & Learn work-based learning connectors and others who facilitate, arrange and support work-based learning activities for learners.

⁴ 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.

- Work with teachers/faculty to coordinate “go deeper” activities to connect the workplace challenge to the classroom.
- Send thank-you notes to employers and identify possible next steps with the employer.
- Take pictures from the workplace challenge and provide them to the companies for their websites or newsletters. Ensure you have signed releases for all photos.
- Publicize the workplace challenge and the businesses that participated by placing a story in the local newspaper or posting on the school or agency webpage.
- Consider other potential public relations benefits and opportunities.