

CHALLENGE HOST TIP SHEET

Workplace Challenge: Success Factors

A tip sheet for participating Workplace Challenge hosts

WHAT IS A WORKPLACE CHALLENGE?

A Workplace Challenge is a Career Preparation activity where small groups of youth and young adults (four to six per team) are engaged in solving a problem or a challenge issued by an employer or organization partner in consultation with the Intern & Earn Program representative.

HOW IS IT STRUCTURED?

As a Workplace Challenge host, the employer or organization partner presents an authentic problem or issue faced by the host company/organization or industry. Response to the challenge is based upon effective project-based learning approaches, enhanced by a focus on the targeted Career Pathway and the real-world problem presented. Youth and young adults are engaged in career-focused, project-based learning and work as a team over time to identify possible solutions. They then create and deliver a presentation on their solution to the employer or organization.

WHAT'S MY COMMITMENT?

As a Workplace Challenge host, you (and any team members working on the challenge with you) will be asked to:

- Identify a few issues or problems your company/organization or industry is facing that might be a good focus for a team of youth and young adults to work on together. Keep in mind that authentic issues work much better than hypotheticals.
- Work with program staff who will help you select and develop a challenge that is a good fit with the current focus in the classroom or in workshop activities, youth and young adult interests and available resources.
- Present the challenge to the participating youth and young adults. Workplace Challenges work best when the challenge is issued at the workplace, where youth and young adults can actually “see” the problem.
- Touch base with program staff during the challenge period of six to eight weeks to answer any questions or clarify anything. You may also want to set up a time to visit the program and observe and engage with the youth and young adults during the process.
- Arrange for you and others at your company/organization to view the solution presentation provided by the youth and young adults and provide feedback. Again, this works best if conducted at the workplace.
- Participate in an evaluation and assessment of the youth and young adults’ performance and the Workplace Challenge itself.

HOW CAN I MAKE IT A GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR THE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS?

- Make sure you are asking the youth and young adults to address a real issue or problem.
- Consider providing a Workplace Tour prior to the challenge to acquaint youth and young adults and program staff with your company or organization. (Your program representative can help set this up.)
- Make the presentation of the challenge engaging. Use multiple forms of media. Use props. Engage the youth and young adults in a dialogue to discover the issue and its impacts. Let them know why developing a viable solution is important to you, your company or organization and your industry.
- Check in with your youth program contact regularly to respond to requests for information or to clarify something. Consider scheduling a time to visit the program during the challenge.
- Make the presentation of the solution a formal event. Whether structured as a pitch in the boardroom or a visit to the “Shark Tank,” it’s important that you and others you have gathered to hear the solution take the presentation seriously.
- Provide honest and productive feedback on the solution to the youth and young adults.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS?

- Research shows effective project-based learning activities like those conducted in a Workplace Challenge help youth and young adults learn new concepts more easily and engage more deeply.
- A Workplace Challenge offers the opportunity to develop, practice and demonstrate many of the academic, technical and professional skills needed for success in the workplace.
- It allows youth and young adults to experience what it might be like to work and practice in a field of interest.
- It enhances the relevance of classroom or workshop instruction through the application of applied knowledge to a real-world problem or issue.

WHAT WILL I GET OUT OF IT?

- Your company or organization may offer incentives for volunteering to be a Workplace Challenge host.
- You will learn how to interact with the next generation—some of whom you may be working with and/or supervising soon.
- You and your team members at work will gain a fresh perspective on an issue or problem.
- You may even uncover a viable solution.

WHAT IF I HAVE A QUESTION, A CONCERN, OR NEED SOME HELP?

Your program representative is there to help you with any question or concern, no matter how great or small.

GO DEEPER

- Actually put the solution, or elements of the solution, into practice.
- Have one or more of the youth and young adults shadow you at work for a day.
- Arrange an Internship at your company or organization for one of the youth and young adults on the solution team. Check in regularly around their progress.