



# Innovator Toolkit

## Educator Guide

# Educator's Toolkit

World Series of Innovation competitors tackle some of the biggest global issues of our time, from climate change to hunger, poverty, inequality, and injustice. **We want participants to think BIG and come up with an innovative idea to help protect the planet and improve the lives of people around the world.**



**This toolkit provides information about the WSI challenges and links to a variety of resources that may be helpful for educators using the challenges in the classroom. In the process, participants learn about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are introduced to basic concepts of entrepreneurship and design thinking.**

**Are your students ready to  
change the world with their  
innovative ideas?**

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# 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](http://www.nfte.com).

## ➤ What is the 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 challenges aligned with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Young innovators can enter one or more challenges and win cash prizes for ideas that 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. We encourage you to think BIG because our future depends on you.

## ➤ Who can compete?

WSI is open to all young people ages 13–24 and it's completely free. There are no entry fees and no requirements other than meeting the age criteria. You do not need to be a U.S. citizen and you don't need to have taken a NFTE class.

## ➤ Can I register and see what my students will see?

Please don't sign up as a fake student! We are happy to update you on the progress of your students' submissions. If you use the student sign up form and start a test entry, you'll get a whole lot of email reminders you don't want, plus we'll be worried about the "student" who registered a team then dropped out.

## ➤ How does WSI work?

The challenges are online. All you need is basic internet access and some big ideas. Explore the challenges on the [WSI website](#) then sign up to compete by clicking on the Get Started button that appears in the top right corner (or click the Accept Challenge buttons that appear above and below the challenge descriptions). You'll receive a confirmation email when you sign up. Click on the link in that email to validate. Then you can log in to your WSI Dashboard on our competition platform. That's where you can start your entry, manage your team, etc.

**IMPORTANT:** When you sign up, you'll receive a confirmation email. You must click on the link in that message to validate. If you don't see it in your Inbox, check your Spam or Junk folders. Add [wsf@nfte.com](mailto:wsf@nfte.com) to your Address Book as a trusted sender right now to help ensure delivery.

➤ **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?**

Absolutely! We encourage students to submit your ideas in more than one challenge, as long as their ideas are different. If they want to work on more than one challenge, they can accept invites to join other teams or lead additional teams themselves. They're not limited in any way.

➤ **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](#).

# How to Sign Up

1. **Sign Up to Compete** ► *TIP: [You can click here to sign up right now](#)*

Provide your name and email address, choose a password and a tentative team name (don't worry, it's easy to change later if you get a better idea). As soon as you sign up, you'll get access to your online Dashboard where you can select the challenge you want to enter, invite friends to join your team, and start your entry.

2. **Pick a Challenge & Start Brainstorming**

Explore the challenges on the WSI website. Select one to focus on, do some rapid ideation (aka brainstorming), assess your rough ideas, and pick the best one to develop.

3. **Build Your Entry**

The online entry form will walk you through the process of identifying a "customer" and defining the problem you want to solve, then help you think through how your idea might be implemented – in just 9 questions. You don't need to write a full-blown business plan. We just ask you to describe an innovative idea that could be feasible. You don't even need to fill out the whole entry form at once, either. You can [Save/Preview](#) your work and come back later to keep working on it. Whenever you're ready, click [Submit](#).

That's all you need to do. First round judging determines the top ten entries in each challenge category. If you're selected to advance to the final round, you'll be asked just one more question: can you persuade the judges your idea is the best entry in its category? Finalists are given an opportunity to submit a 1-minute video pitch in support of their entries and final round judging determines the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizewinners in each challenge category.

# Helpful Resources

## Design Thinking

We urge you to 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 and more.

## Entrepreneurial Mindset

One of the best ways to introduce students to the concept of the entrepreneurial mindset is to point them towards [this interactive tool NFTE built to help young people explore six key mindset domains](#). The lessons are quick and fun, offering students a chance to explore the domains then test their knowledge with short quizzes. There are modules covering: Initiative and Self-Reliance, Future Orientation, Creativity and Innovation, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, Communication and Collaboration, Comfort with Risk, Flexibility and Adaptability, and Opportunity Recognition.

If you'd like more in-depth material, we suggest starting with these three topics:

DNA of an Entrepreneur  
[Overview Slide Deck](#)

Design Thinking  
[Overview Slide Deck](#)  
[Lesson Plans](#)  
[Student Handouts: Custom Backpack Design Challenge](#)

Ideation and Sources of Opportunity  
[Overview Slide Deck](#)  
[Lesson Plan](#)  
[Student Handout: Opportunity Recognition Circles Challenge](#)

# Guide to Building a Winning Entry

## Start With the Customer

We ask you to start building your entry by identifying the target market for your idea, creating a profile of the kind of customer your solution is intended to serve, and describing the specific need or want your solution would meet for that ideal customer. Even the most innovative ideas may lose points if the judges aren't persuaded your solution meets a customer need or want.

## Make Sure Your Entry is Complete!

All questions are required and must be answered. Judges will be awarding points for each question, so your answers matter as much as your big picture idea. Your entry name and the image you provide to represent your entry will be visible to judges, but all your other team information, including “Your Team” information, is hidden so judging is blind.

List all active team members and answer all questions for each active team member. Note that if your team is selected to advance to the final round of competition, you'll be asked to do one more thing: record a one-minute pitch video in support of your entry. Only the teams that are selected as finalists (the top ten entries in each challenge category) will need to submit a video, but you might want to start thinking about it just so you're ready!

## Step-by-Step Guide to Filling Out the WSI Entry Form

Follow the steps below to open the Entry Form then see the tips for answering each question, including what judges look for and how much each question counts toward your overall score.

1. If you haven't already done so, click the link in the confirmation email we sent when you signed up to compete. This will validate your registration.
2. Access your WSI Dashboard using the email address you used to sign up and the password you created when you signed up.
3. Select “Start Entry” at the bottom of the page to begin an entry. NOTE: You must select a challenge to open the WSI Entry Form!
4. Answer all required questions. Click submit when you are done. You can always save your submission, edit, and submit at a later time.



# Entry Form Worksheet

Draft your idea here, then register at [innovation.nfte.com](http://innovation.nfte.com) and complete your submission online.

Answer one preliminary question: What interests you most about this challenge?

*Note that this question does not count towards your total score however it will be read by the judges!*

## WSI ENTRY FORM PART 1: Your Customer

### First, identify your customer

Consider the issues addressed by this challenge and the group or groups that are most impacted. Is there a particular problem you want to solve or an unmet need or want you see a way to fulfill? Think about who is best positioned to help and try to put yourself in their shoes, too. Your solution might be for those who are directly impacted by the problem – or it might be for those who can be activated to help. Build a profile of your target customer using geographic (where your customer lives), demographic (social and economic data such as age, occupation, income, etc.), or psychographic (attitudes, beliefs, or interests) attributes.

1. Who are you designing a solution for? Use geographic, demographic, or psychographic characteristics to describe your target customer\*

*Your score on this question will account for 10% of your total score. TIP: be specific.*

### Next, define the problem you want to solve

This challenge is broad. It may help if you can zero in on a specific problem you want to solve for your target customer. What does your target customer need or want the most relevant to this challenge?

2. What customer need or want are you trying to meet? What's the market opportunity? \*

*TIP: use empathy to choose a meaningful and actionable need or want. It should be realistic for your target customer.*

### Now, brainstorm! Then pick your best idea and describe it here

Try the rapid ideation exercise. Set a timer and write down as many ideas as you can to meet that customer need or want. Even crazy ideas. Don't limit yourself. When the time is up, go through your list and pick your best idea. Which grabs you most? Think through how you might make that idea work.

## WSI ENTRY FORM PART 2: Your Idea

**3. What is your innovative idea? \***

*Your score on this question will account for 15% of your total score. TIP: be clear and concise.*

**4. How would your idea work? Provide enough detail for us to understand your thinking. \***

*Your score on this question will account for 15% of your total score. TIP: be clear and concise but try to connect the dots for the judges so they can really understand your thinking. This is an ideation competition, so you don't need to be able to perfect all the moving parts yourself right now. The judges will be considering whether your idea could actually work the way you describe it and achieve what you intend, assuming any underlying innovation (technology, material science, manufacturing process, logistics, etc.) could be perfected.*

**5. How does your idea meet the challenge? \***

*Your score on this question will account for 10% of your total score. TIP: read the challenge again! Make sure that what your idea could accomplish aligns with the goal of the challenge.*

## **WSI ENTRY FORM PART 3: Business Model**

**6. How does your idea meet the customer need/want? \***

*Your score on this question will account for 10% of your total score. TIP: be realistic. Judges will consider whether your idea truly fills the need/want that you described in Question 2.*

**7. What makes your idea different or better than existing solutions? Explain your competitive advantage. \***

*Your score on this question will account for 10% of your total score. TIP: highlight what makes your idea unique or explain what would distinguish it from similar solutions/competitors.*

**8. What type of business could implement your idea? \***

*Select your answer from the dropdown list. This question will account for 10% of your total score. TIP: think about how you'd organize the effort to implement your idea and, more specifically, where the money would come from. Judges will consider your idea and gauge how effective the type of business/organization you select would be for implementing your idea.*

**9. Your Logo. Use this box to sketch a possible logo for your innovation.**

*TIP: Your logo should be appealing to look at and relate to the innovation in some way. The best logos are often suitable to work in a variety of formats.*

Look over your answers to the questions above once more just in case you see anything you want to correct, then click submit.

**NOTE:** If you have any trouble accessing/using your competition dashboard or using the entry form, email [wsj@nfte.com](mailto:wsj@nfte.com) for support. We're happy to help.