



Impact League

Competitor Guide



2025 WSI

Competition Timeline

Entries

September – December

A new set of innovation challenges launches in September. Click [here](#) to register and start an entry. Entries are due in December.

Office Hours

September – December

Office hours are available to anyone participating in or supporting students in the 2025 World Series of Innovation.

Full Schedule Below:

Tuesdays 12:00 – 2:00 PM EST

Wednesdays 6:00 – 9:00 AM EST

Fridays 3:00 – 6:00 PM EST

Join anytime during the times above using this [Zoom meeting link](#).
Password: WSI2025

Judging

January 2026

First round judges start scoring entries. The Top 10 teams in each challenge category advance to the final round of competition in February.

Top 10

February 20th, 2026

The Top 10 finalists in each challenge category move on to the final round. Finalists create a 1-minute video pitch to wow the judges.

Finals

March 8th, 2026

Finalists pitch videos due by 11:59 PM EST on Sunday, March 8th. Final round judges evaluate pitch videos submitted by finalists to determine 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each challenge category.

Winners

April 21st, 2026

Winners are announced live during the UN's World Creativity and Innovation Week on April 21st!

Welcome to the *World Series of Innovation!*

Do you have big ideas?

Are you between the ages of 13-24?

This guide was made for you.

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is pleased to present a whole new set of World Series of Innovation (WSI) challenges for 2025 Impact League Season, and we're excited you're participating! This toolkit provides information about the challenges – plus tips for building a winning entry.

The NFTE World Series of Innovation is a global competition that invites young people to **innovate new solutions** to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



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

Are you up for the challenge? See if you can **think like an entrepreneur!**



FAQs

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?

The [WSI Impact League](#) 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. Know someone 12 and under who wants to participate? Direct them to the [WSI Imagination League challenges](#).

Am I eligible?

You need to be at least 13 years of age and no older than 24 years of age as of December 12, 2025 (the date when the submission period for this season's challenges closes) to enter.

Team up or ride solo?

That's up to you. Teams of 1, 2, 3, or 4 members are allowed. So, you can go it alone, as a mighty team of one, or invite a few friends to join your team and compete together. You don't even have to decide up front. Just sign up to compete then figure out later whether you want to invite anyone to join your team or not.

Can I enter more than one challenge? Can I be on more than one team?

Super ambitious, eh? That's cool. Just remember it's one entry/one challenge per team. If you want to work on more than one challenge, you can accept invites to join other teams or lead additional teams yourself. You're not limited in any way. But you will need to sign up again, using a different email address for each team you want to join or lead because your email address is linked to your entry and must be unique to that entry. Bottom line: you'll need multiple email addresses if you want to be associated with multiple teams/entries.



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 on the official [WSI Submission Platform](#). 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.

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. 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**.

All entries must be submitted by 11:59pm (US Eastern Time) on December 12, 2025. You're welcome to submit your entry early if you're ready but you don't have to.

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.

There are three cash prizes in each Impact League 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.

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 wsin@nft.com to your Address Book as a trusted sender right now to help ensure delivery.

2025 Challenges

There are six Impact League challenges being offered in the Fall 2025 season:

13 CLIMATE ACTION



CBT Tech Climate Solutions Challenge, SDG 13

Design a solution that helps communities prepare for and respond to climate-related challenges—such as flooding, heatwaves, or power outages.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Comerica Skills for Success Challenge, SDG 4

Design a solution to develop platforms or initiatives that teach essential industry skills, enabling youth to participate fully in the economy.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



EverBank Financial Success Challenge, SDG 4

Design a product, service, or initiative that empowers youth in underserved communities with engaging financial literacy tools, helping them build a more inclusive and resilient future.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



EY Responsible AI Challenge, SDG 16

Design a solution to utilize artificial intelligence (AI) and entrepreneurship to create sustainable, inclusive, and peaceful communities.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



MetLife Good Health & Well-Being Challenge, SDG 3

Design a solution to promote high quality access to physical and/or mental well-being in your community.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



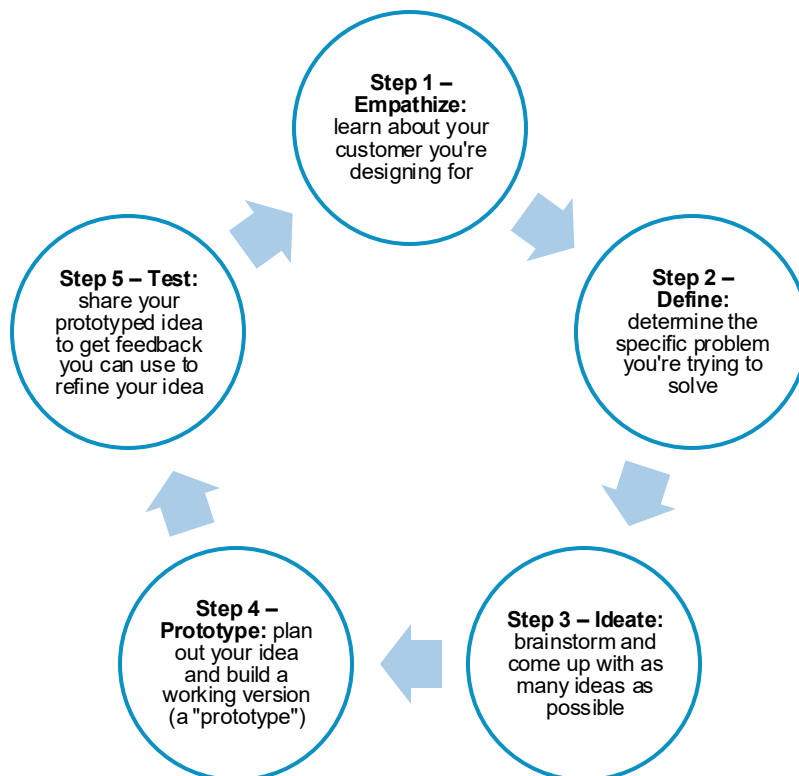
PayPal Opportunity for All Challenge, SDG 8

Create a solution that helps a small business grow, promotes inclusion, and opens up new opportunities for others.

Introduction to *Design Thinking*

Design thinking is an approach to problem-solving that can be particularly helpful when the objective is innovative sustainable development solutions. The method, which is celebrated for being human-centered and driven by customer empathy, emphasizes understanding your customers (sometimes called end-users) and encourages two very important behaviors: challenging assumptions and reframing problems. The design thinking approach is perfect for tackling complex problems and can also speed time-to-market through rapid iteration.

There are five steps in the standard design-thinking process:



The World Series of Innovation is primarily an ideation competition, so we're not expecting you to develop a working prototype – however, we would like you to think carefully about how your idea might be implemented, including what your competitive advantage might be and how your solution could be financed and marketed.

Tips on *Finding Opportunity*

Opportunity recognition is an important aspect of entrepreneurial thinking. Understanding the sources of opportunity can not only jumpstart your brainstorming, but also help you evaluate the ideas you come up with and figure out when you've come up with an innovative solution.

As you look for the opportunities in this challenge, you might want to consider some of the classic sources of opportunity:

- **Problems!** What problems exist in your personal life, in your community or in the world at large? What product, service or initiative would improve your life or the lives of others? Thinking about what will solve a problem or fill a need has launched a lot of innovative ideas.
- **Questioning the Status Quo.** Sometimes the very best innovations come from improving on something that already exists or figuring out a new use for something that already exists. Can you improve an existing product or service to provide better function or better quality? Or can you adapt an existing product or service for a new purpose? Both are ways to innovate.
- **Changes.** Social norms, laws and regulations, local and national trends, the weather. There are so many things in the world that are continuously changing. But change often results in new needs or wants that are not yet being met. That's a tremendous source of opportunity.
- **New Discoveries.** While totally new discoveries and inventions may not be encountered as frequently as changes or problems, they often result in totally new products and services being created. Thus, discoveries are another big source of opportunity.
- **Your Own Lived Experience.** Sometimes innovative ideas can arise from things you do in your daily life, your own personal hobbies, interests, talents, or skills. Could a hobby be turned into a product or service others might value? That's a source of opportunity.
- **Your Own Unique Knowledge.** Is there anything you know really well that could be turned into a product or service others would benefit from? That's another source of opportunity.

Stuck? Try This Brainstorming Exercise!

There's no right way to brainstorm, but here's one method we like:

1. **Prep your materials:** Grab paper, index cards, or Post-its. If using paper, fold and tear into smaller pieces so each idea has its own sheet.
2. **Rapid ideation:** Set a timer for 15 minutes and write as many ideas as possible to address your target customer's need. Ask "What if?" and don't censor yourself, every idea counts.
3. **Share & build (team only):** Spend 10 minutes exchanging ideas. Use "yes, and..." to riff on others' ideas and explore unexpected connections.
4. **Evaluate your ideas:** Sort each idea into Yes, Maybe, and No columns. Discuss with your team or reflect solo on which ideas are strongest.
5. **Pick & refine:** Choose the idea you want to develop further. Use the WSI Entry Form to guide your next steps.

Tips on *Identifying Your Customer*

Are you having difficulty identifying your customer or understanding what your customer needs? It's a cinch to come up with ideas for ourselves since we know our own wants and needs. It's a little harder to imagine what other people may want or need. **The design thinking method starts with customer empathy.** This is because the solutions you come up with will be better if you take time to understand your customer's goals, motivation, behaviors, needs, and concerns.

Here are some tips for building a customer profile:

- Dig into the resource links provided for the challenge you've selected. Explore the issues and identify the actors. Who is most directly impacted by the challenge? Are there other groups of people who may have a stake in finding a solution?
- Use the information you get from research but also use your own imagination. Paint a picture of your ideal customer in your mind. How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do for work? What do they spend their money on? What are their basic needs? What are their dreams and aspirations? Are there a few key geographic, demographic, psychographic, or behavioral characteristics that distinguish this customer?
- Your customer profile should be detailed enough to help you with the next step: zeroing in on a specific problem, concern, need, or want relevant to this challenge.

One of the pitfalls to avoid is viewing everyone in the world as a potential customer. After all, if you have a really good idea, why wouldn't everyone want in? You could be right, but chances are, you're not. The more specific you can be when you visualize your ideal customer, the more likely you are to come up with a successful solution – i.e., something they really need or want.

If you've studied business and entrepreneurship, you'll know that it can take a lot more research to define a target market, understand who the influencers are, build buyer personas for key market segments, and develop targeted marketing messages. But for the purposes of ideation, you simply need to use empathy and imagination to identify your ideal customer.

A Note on the SDGs and Social Entrepreneurship:

Impact entrepreneurs aim to create social good or advance the SDGs. They focus on solving local or global community needs—sometimes through nonprofits, other times using for-profit strategies. Many seek to “do well by doing good,” generating both social and private value.

How you implement your idea is up to you—there are many for-profit and nonprofit models. Your target market might not be the group directly affected by the issue; it could be another group that can help those in need.

When your market isn't the direct beneficiary, empathy is key. Understanding what motivates or inspires them can help drive action that benefits others.

How to

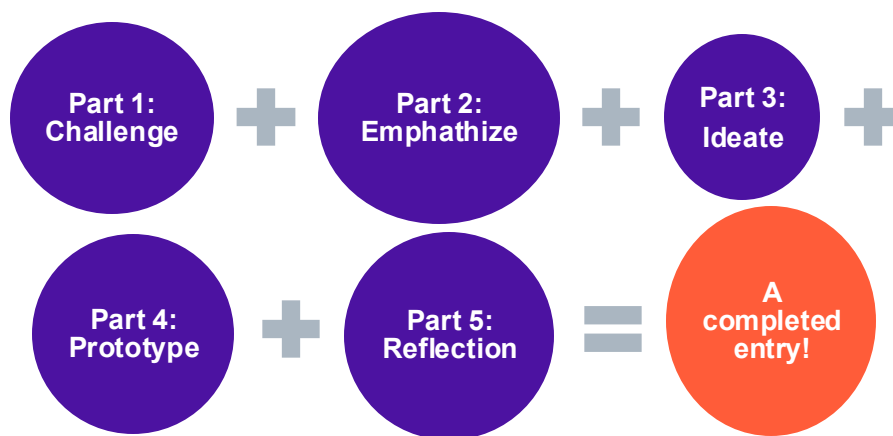
Build a Winning Entry

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!

There are five parts to the entry form you see during the first round of competition. You can access an offline version to brainstorm before submitting online, those resources are available in [WSI Resource Library](#).



All questions in Part 1-5 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 team's name and the image you provide to represent your entry will be visible to judges, but all your other team information is hidden so judging is blind.

Information for at least Team Member 1 / Team Leader is required to submit your entry.

All questions in "My Team" addressed to Team Member 2, Team Member 3, and Team Member 4 are optional only because team sizes vary. If you don't have a Team Member 2, 3, or 4 it's okay to skip those questions – **but if you do have a Team Member 2, Team Member 3, or Team Member 4 then all questions must be answered**

Additional

Impact League Resources

Quick Tips – all included in this document

- Intro to Design Thinking
- Brainstorming Exercise
- Tips on Finding Opportunity
- Tips on Identifying Your Customer
- How to Build a Winning Entry

Longer Reads

- *NFTE Entrepreneurship Essentials: [The DNA of an Entrepreneur](#)*

Short Videos

- **[Solve a Problem with Entrepreneurial Thinking](#)**: a light-hearted take on problem-solving with entrepreneurial thinking. You'll see why it's a skill worth developing. (50 sec)
- **[Introduction to Design Thinking](#)**: a brief overview of the [Intuit Design4Delight](#) method of design thinking. (1 min, 44 sec)

Just for Finalists!

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!

- **[Make the Best One-Minute Video Pitch of All Time](#)** (great advice from MassChallenge)
- Watch **[all the one-minute videos submitted by WSI winners and finalists last season](#)**

Here are two very useful design thinking resources from our friends at [Intuit](#), including fun warm-ups to jumpstart your brainstorming sessions and skill-building exercises to help you develop deeper customer empathy.

- **[Intuit Education: Design4Delight Toolkit](#)**
- **[Intuit Education: Design4Delight Method Cards](#)**

Want to learn more about design thinking for the SDGs? Here a few links to explore:

- **[The Design Thinking Process](#)**
- **[Applying Design Thinking to the UN SDGs](#)**
- **[UN Learning Brief: Design Thinking and the SDGs](#)**
- **[The Power of Innovation and Design Thinking for Sustainable Development](#)**



Still have questions?

Reach out to us at wsf@nfte.com