World Series of Innovation

Community Implementation Guide

To educators & parents supporting young people dream big,

This guide is for you.

What happens when educators, mentors, and community leaders unite to support bold youth ideas?

When you bring these voices together, you create space for collaboration, mentorship, and bold problem-solving.

And the World Series of Innovation (WSI) is where that happens. WSI, powered by NFTE, is a global competition platform where young people become changemakers by designing solutions aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **We, at NFTE, want participants to think BIG and explore innovative ideas to protect the plant and improve the lives of people in their community and around the world.**

This toolkit will help you bring WSI to life in your local programs by providing planning guidance, resources, and inspiration. Whether you are running a one-day event or embedding WSI into your curriculum, we've got you covered.

Contents

Getting Started

What is the World Series of Innovation?

WSI is an annual innovation challenge inviting youth ages 5–24 to design creative, feasible ideas aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
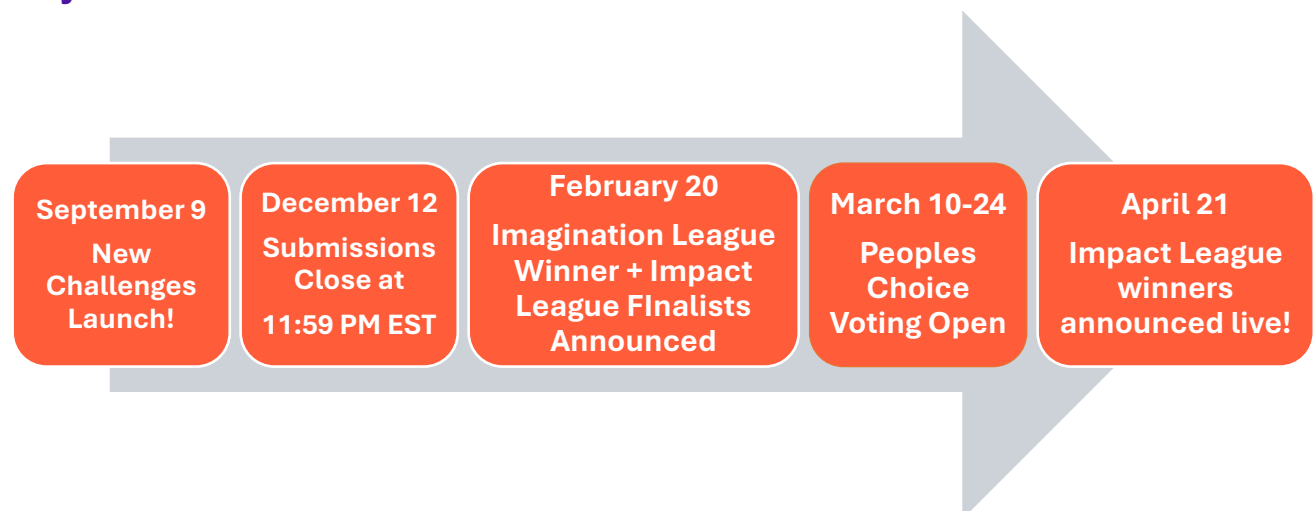
The program is structured into two tracks: the **Imagination League**, designed for students ages 5–12 and focused on age-appropriate prompts that build early creative thinking; and the **Impact League**, for students ages 13–24, encouraging bold, scalable solutions to global challenges.

Benefits of Participation:

- Prizes valued up to $1,500 (Impact League).
- Introduction to real-world global issues.
- Strengthening critical thinking and teamwork.
- Development of entrepreneurial mindset and self-efficacy.
- A chance to be recognized on an international stage, and much more!

Along the way, **students build essential 21st-century skills, develop portfolio-ready projects, and engage more deeply in their learning through real-world applications.** This guide will help groups host Innovation Days that offer youth a chance to brainstorm and receive mentorship while working on their WSI entries.

Key Dates for the 2025-26 Season

| September 9 New Challenges Launch! | December 12 Submissions Close at 11:59 PM EST | February 20 Imagination League Winner + Impact League FInalists Announced | March 10-24 Peoples Choice Voting Open | April 21 Impact League winners announced live! |

Step-by-Step Setup

1. Decide who you're supporting (ages 5–12 or 13–24).
2. Explore the open challenges on innovation.nfte.com.
3. Pick your implementation model (see below).
4. Download facilitator tools and worksheets.
5. Schedule your own WSI launch or integrate into existing programming.
6. Share student entries by the December 12 deadline.

Support by League

Many partners choose to run WSI programming that includes both the Imagination and Impact Leagues, especially during Innovation Days or Fall programming. While the leagues are designed with distinct age groups in mind, the program structure allows for shared learning, peer mentoring, and celebrating all student ideas together.

Imagination League (Ages 5–12)

Entry Format: A simplified form guiding students to share who they want to help, the problem, and their creative solutions. Students may write, type, or draw responses (guided by adults if needed).

Entries are submitted to World Series of Innovation submission portal.

Who has a problem?	What's the problem?

What is the solution to the problem?	How will the solution work?

Judging Criteria:
- Creativity and originality
- Clear identification of a problem and solution
- Relevance to the challenge

Key Resources:
- Guided entry form
- NFTE Nova's Submission Video
- Challenge content found on their respective pages

Impact League (Ages 13–24)

Entry Format: A 10-question online form where students describe their ideas, explain their solutions, and reflect on their innovation process from concept to completion. Optional visual support can include a sketch, image, or complementary logo; **no video explanations should be included in the first round.**

Entries are submitted to World Series of Innovation submission portal.

Round One: Open to all participants and judged based on the written submission.

Round Two (Finalists Only): Top submissions from each challenge category are invited to submit a 1-minute video pitch to further explain and promote their idea.

Judging Criteria:

- Innovation and originality
- Feasibility and impact
- Clarity of ideas and alignment with SDG
- Overall quality of submission (including pitch for finalists)

Key Resources:

- Guided entry form
- Competitors' guide
- Design thinking activities
- Challenge content found on their respective pages

Conceptualizing and Localizing Content

While the core WSI challenge prompts must remain unchanged, you can tailor how students engage with those prompts to better fit your local context. Customizing exercises, examples, and learning materials can help make the experience more relevant and age- or region-appropriate. **WSI competitor materials are currently available in English, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Arabic, and Hindi, and entries are accepted in all five of these languages.**

What Can Be Customized:

You have flexibility in how the experience is delivered.

✅ **What You CAN Adapt:**	🚫 **What Should Stay Consistent:**
• Workshop activities and pacing • Relevant case studies and examples • Language or cultural framing • Adding guest speakers or mentors	• Official WSI challenge wording • Entry form questions • Judging criteria

Need help? We're here to support you. Reach out to us at WSI@nfte.com

Implementation Models

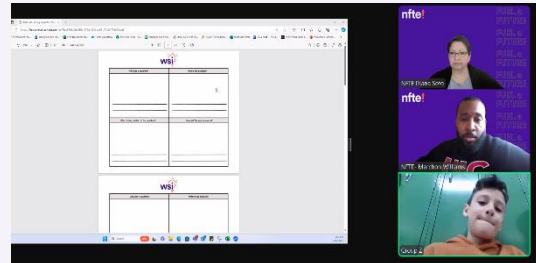WSI is flexible! Here's how global partners are integrating it:

💼 Classroom Integration

- As a semester project
- Embedded in entrepreneurship, global studies, or STEM courses
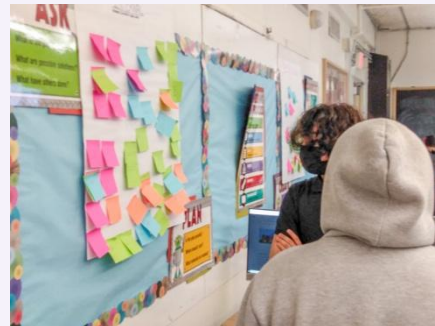- Small group or individual work

🖥️ Virtual or Hybrid Programs

- Asynchronous challenge exploration
- Small group Zoom brainstorms
- Weekly project check-ins via messaging or platform

👳 Youth Clubs & Afterschool Programs

- Weekly meetups leading to submissions
- Focused on creativity, SDGs, and entrepreneurship

🏕️ Camps or Innovation Days

- One-day or multi-day design sprint
- High-energy team competition
- Great for break weeks

FAQs

What is NFTE?

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global nonprofit that offers high-quality entrepreneurship education to middle and high school students, as well as college students and young adults, primarily in under-resourced communities. NFTE reaches students in 25 U.S. states and 30 countries worldwide and have educated over one million young entrepreneurs through in-school, out-of-school, college, camp, and community programs. Learn more at www.nfte.com.

Why organize innovation challenges around the SDGs?

The UN SDGs address some of humanity's most pressing challenges, including hunger, poverty, justice, equity, environmental sustainability, and climate change. NFTE believes that young innovators are key to solving these challenges, and we encourage them to think big because our future depends on their creativity.

Who can compete?

WSI is open to all young people aged 5–24, and participation is completely free. There are no entry fees or prerequisites other than meeting the age requirement. Competitors don't need to be a U.S. citizen or have taken a NFTE class to participate.

Can I register and see what my students see?

Please don't sign up as a fake student. We're happy to update you on your students' progress but signing up as a test student will lead to unnecessary reminders and confusion.

Do students in the Imagination League need an adult to submit for them?

Yes. For any team with participants 12 and under, an adult must create and submit the entry on their behalf. This can be a teacher, parent, or other adult supporter. The adults will register using their own email and serve as the primary point of contact for the team.

How does WSI work?

The challenges are online, requiring only basic internet access and big ideas. Sign up to compete by clicking on the "Get Started" button on the WSI website. You'll receive a confirmation email, make sure to click the link in that email to validate your registration. You can then log in to your WSI Dashboard to manage your team and start your entry.

What are the prizes?

For the **Imagination League** (ages 5–12):

1st place: Prizes valued up to $600 USD

Runner-up teams (2nd and 3rd place): Each will receive a plaque of achievement and a sponsored celebration of innovation with their class or program.

For the **Impact League** (ages 13–24):

1st place: $1,500 USD
2nd place: $600 USD
3rd place: $300 USD

Teams are expected to divide prize money equally among members.

Who judges entries?
Judges are selected by the organizations sponsoring the challenges and may include experts from the NFTE community, including entrepreneurs, business leaders, educators, and subject matter experts.

How are entries scored?
Entries in both leagues are evaluated by multiple judges using a standardized scoring rubric. For the **Imagination League** (ages 5–12), entries are judged based on creativity, feasibility, and how well they align with the SDGs. The top entries are selected, and winners are determined in the first round.

For the **Impact League** (ages 13–24), entries go through **two rounds** of judging. In the first round, the top ten entries are selected based on the rubric. Finalists then submit a 1-minute pitch video, which is evaluated in the second round by a new set of judges, along with the original entry. The highest-scoring entry in each league wins first place, with second and third place determined based on the scores.

Can students enter more than one challenge or be on more than one team?
Yes! Students are encouraged to enter multiple challenges, as long as their ideas are different. They can also join other teams or lead additional teams without any limitations.

Are there resources available to help volunteer coaches?
Yes! At the end of this document, you'll find advice for volunteers planning and facilitating an Innovation Day.

You can also 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 engaging warm-ups to jumpstart brainstorming plus skill-building exercises to help students develop deeper customer empathy.

Appendices & Resources

This section includes all tools, templates, and resources to support the implementation of the World Series of Innovation. Everything listed here is downloadable and editable for your local context. These resources are great for planning workshops, coaching students, or celebrating success.

The *Innovation Resource Hub* is organized by available WSI languages: Arabic, English, Hindi, Simplified Chinese, and Spanish.

Imagination League Competitor Resources (Ages 5-12)

- Guided Entry Worksheet E
- Entry Form Template to Upload
- Nova's Submission Walkthrough Video
- Educator Facilitation Script
- Judging Rubric (Imagination League)

Impact League Competitor Resources (Ages 13–24)

- Submission Guide (10-question form walkthrough)
- Pitch Video Planning Guide
- Sample Entry Forms with Annotations
- Visual Storytelling & Logo Tips
- Peer Feedback Template
- Judging Rubrics (Written & Video)

Innovation Day Resources

- Sample Agendas + Agenda Builders
- Event Planning Checklist
- Facilitation Deck Templates
- Volunteer + Student Orientation Templates

General WSI Resources

- Customizable Flyer Templates (Canva & PPT)

- Editable Certificates of Participation
- Community Support Guide
- Language & Translation Tip Sheet