Future Finder Challenge

Virtual Information Session Transcript

Eden Baker (00:01):

All right. Welcome everybody. Thank you so much for attending today's information session for the Future Finder Challenge, which is a $1 million challenge to reimagine career navigation for adult learners. Note we are recording today's session. You should have received a little notification when you joined the webinar, and we'll be sharing a copy of this via the challenge website in the coming weeks. We will get started shortly. We'll give people a few minutes to get settled, and in the meantime, you should see a little poll on your screen. We're curious to learn a little bit more about who is in the room. So while we're waiting for everyone to settle in, take a few moments just to respond to the two questions up there and we'll get started in just a moment.

Eden Baker (00:54):

I can see a few more folks joining, so if you have just joined, welcome. I will give everyone another minute or two before we get started. And in the meantime, you should see a little poll on your Zoom screen that just has two questions so we can learn a little bit more about who is in the room with us today.

Eden Baker (01:25):

Great. So in the interest of time, I think we will jump in. I'm going to end the poll and share the results so that people can take a look as well. So you should see that up on your screen now, it looks like we actually have a real mix of organization types, which is exciting for us to see quite a few adult ed providers and then also edtech companies, and then a few people that look like they're from design and web development agencies, and then also a few folks from policy and research and then workforce development.

Eden Baker (01:55):

So great to have you all here today and really great to see such a mix of attendees. And then looking down at the second question there, so we had a question here about what best describes you. It looks like the majority are planning on entering, which is super exciting. I'm hopeful that today's session is informative and give you some good information as you prepare your submissions. We also have a few folks here that are interested in joining intern team and we can share a little bit more about how you can do that in today's session as well. And then also a few folks just curious to learn more. So hopefully this is relevant to all of you as well.

Eden Baker (02:31):

So again, welcome. My name is Eden Baker and I'm an engagement manager at Luminary Labs. We are a strategy and innovation consultancy based in New York, we've been engaged by the US Department of Education to run the Future Finder Challenge so we are so thrilled to have such a great turnout here today. Some of my Luminary Labs colleagues are also here in the back end, so they're here behind the scenes to help respond to your questions and they'll also be sharing some information and links via the chat as well.

Eden Baker (03:00):

So the purpose of today's session is to provide an overview of the Future Finder Challenge and then also answer your questions. Start from Department of Education, we'll start by providing some background on the challenge and then I'll walk through the challenge structure including the selection criteria, the submission process, and prizes. We'll then have about 20 minutes at the end for questions. We will be using the Q&A function in Zoom, so feel free to submit questions during the presentation and we'll come

back to these at the end. I'll also spend some time answering the questions that we receive via Eventbrite before today's session as well.

Eden Baker (03:35):

And then just a reminder, in case you miss this at the beginning, we are recording today's session and we'll be sharing our recording as well as the FAQs by the challenge website in the coming weeks.

Eden Baker (03:49):

So today, we are so pleased to be joined by several representatives from the Department of Education, Assistant Secretary Dr. Amy Loyd, Grace Solares, Travis Combs, and Carolyn Lampila. Assistant Secretary Dr. Amy Loyd, I'll pass it over to you to introduce yourself.

Dr. Amy Loyd (04:06):

Hi everyone. It's an honor to be with you today and I'm so excited that you're interested in this challenge because we are very excited about it. So I am the Assistant Secretary for OCTAE, the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. And I'm thrilled to be able to provide this incredible opportunity to our adult education community. I'll hand it over to my colleague, Grace.

Grace Solares (04:28):

Hi, good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for joining us. I share Amy's enthusiasm and excitement to see the level of interest in today's session. My name is Grace Solares and I am the Acting Director of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy in the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. And I'll pass the baton to my colleague, Travis Combs.

Travis Combs (04:50):

Thanks, Grace. Thanks, Amy. I also share and echo their enthusiasm and excitement for you joining us today. I'm Travis Combs, I'm the Branch Chief of Innovation and Improvement within the Division of Adult Education and Literacy at OCTAE. And I'll pass to my colleague, Carolyn.

Carolyn Lampila (05:07):

Hi, good afternoon. I'm Carolyn Lampila. I am an Education Program Specialist and Contractors Officer Representative in the Division of Adult Education and Literacy. And I'm also going to thank you all for joining us today and also then pleased about your interest in the challenge.

Eden Baker (05:29):

Great. Thank you, Carolyn. So as you can tell, we all very thrilled about this project and also really excited to see such a great turnout today. I'm going to pass it over to Assistant Secretary Dr. Amy Loyd to share some more background on the challenge.

Dr. Amy Loyd (05:44):

Thank you. So as I think most of you, if not everyone on this webinar knows, our office, the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education or OCTAE, administers and coordinates programs that are related to adult education and literacy, career and technical education and community colleges, also correctional education. Within our department, the Division of Adult Education and Literacy is responsible for helping adults acquire the academic and technical skills that prepare them for high skill, high wage, high demand occupations in our 21st-century global economy. And our Division of Academic and Technical Education is responsible for helping all students require acquire these skills necessary to thrive in our 21st-century workforce through career and technical education. And OCTAE also provides national leadership to strengthen the role of community colleges and expanding access to post-secondary education for youth and adults' advancing workforce development. So this is kind of the broad scope of our work and the context in which this challenge is taking place.

Dr. Amy Loyd (06:45):

Next slide. So the U.S. Department of Education has run many open innovation challenges to spur the development of services, products and programs to better support learners of all ages. These challenges have had a wide range, they've focused on increasing access to and expanding the capacity of career and technical and adult education to prepare learners for the workforce. Our most recent challenge was the Rethink Adult Ed Challenge, which may be familiar to many of you. That challenge invited adult education providers to design pre-apprenticeship programs to better prepare learners for apprenticeships and beyond. And we were so impressed with the diversity and the quality of the submissions that we received in OCTAE. Over 200 organizations submitted to Stage 1 and 95 organizations participated in the Stage 2 virtual accelerator for that challenge.

Dr. Amy Loyd (07:36):

And then we announced five prize winners in September last year. And I was recently fortunate enough to visit the Rethink Adult Ed grand prize winner Northampton Community College just last month and was thrilled to see their innovative impactful work firsthand. We know that these challenges are not only spurring the field, but making a difference in the lives of the people and the communities that we serve. Other relevant challenges include the EdSim Challenge, which invited app developers, data experts and educators to create next generation educational simulations that strengthen academic technical and employability skills. And then the Reach Higher Challenge, which invited app developers, data experts and educators to create mobile solutions that help students navigate education and career paths. So you can read more about these challenges online and the Luminary Labs team will include links in the chat for those.

Dr. Amy Loyd (08:26):

This brings me to our newest open innovation challenge, the Future Finder Challenge. This is a $1 million challenge to reimagine career navigation for our adult learners. The Department is inviting innovators including strategists, tech developers, user-centered designers and educators to submit prototypes for digital tools that will improve the career navigation experience for adult learners.

Dr. Amy Loyd (08:50):

The Future Finder Challenge supports the Department's Strategic Plan from 2022 to 2026 and OCTAE's priorities, like particularly our efforts and our focus on increasing access to upward mobility and building a more equitable and inclusive economy. More specifically, we're running this challenge in order to respond to a changing economy in which skills and credentials are no longer enough and to expand equitable access to the resources and tools that will help all adult learners enter and succeed in high quality, high growth industries and to support a thriving and diverse workforce to enhance our global competitiveness. So we're really excited about this and I'm going to pass it over to my colleague, Grace now to share more about career navigation specifically in the specific challenge goals and why we want you to participate in this. Over to you, Grace.

Grace Solares (09:39):

Amy, thank you so much for that framing. And now that everyone has heard about the strategic imperative for the challenge, I want to talk a little bit about the design principles and some of the definitions that undergird the challenge itself. So first, what do we mean by career navigation? Career navigation is the process of understanding, choosing and preparing for career opportunities. And this process can have several components or parts. First, there's the assessment of skills and interests. Here you can think about online or in-person career inventories that individuals might take to gain insight into their own preferences, their strengths and their areas for development. There's also the part of the process that involves learning about career opportunities, for example, through searching local job boards or investigating salary ranges. And finally, there's the process of understanding the necessary skills and credentials needed to pursue opportunities in those career areas. Some of the things that support understanding might be talking to a mentor or conducting an informational interview to better understand what's required to break into a career field. Next slide, please.

Grace Solares (11:04):

So with that definition in mind, it's also important for us to be clear on what defines effective career navigation services. In our review of the literature and engagement with subject matter experts in adult education providers, there seems to be a center of a gravity around a few main components. First, effective career navigation services provide personalized support that are tailored to each learner's needs and circumstances. They also offer up-to-date relevant information based on current labor market trends and opportunities. They're accessible and user-friendly and in practical terms, this might mean that they're free, they're offered in the user's preferred language or they're appropriate for their literacy level. And finally, effective career navigation services track and share data to measure learner outcomes and to identify areas for improvement. Next slide, please.

Grace Solares (12:04):

We know that it's difficult to scale high quality personalized career navigation services and that's where technology comes in. It has the potential to rapidly expand access, but we also know that the digital career navigation tools that are on the market today largely are geared towards college and university students or professionals. Very few are designed to meet with the unique needs of adult learners in mind, which brings me to the three goals for this challenge. First, we want to spur the creation or improvement of technology tools that help adult learners identify and access learning and career opportunities. Second, we want to generate greater awareness of the importance of career navigation services for adult learners. And finally, we want to unite stakeholders from across the adult ed ecosystem in adjacent fields to encourage collaboration and information sharing.

Grace Solares (13:02):

We know that innovation in the adult education space can be difficult because of lack of data sharing, complex provider networks and limited resources, but we're hopeful that through this challenge we'll remove some of those barriers and encourage people to innovate and collaborate. So with that, I'm going to pass the baton back over to my colleague, Eden Baker who's going to talk more about the structure of the challenge. Thank you so much.

Eden Baker (13:34):

Great. Thank you so much, Grace. So as Grace mentioned, I'm now going to walk through the specific details of the challenge. I remember there will be a chance to ask questions at the end. I can see a few questions already coming through, so encourage you to keep sharing as we're talking. I also encourage you to take a close look at the website for additional information and my colleagues will be posting links in the chat as we go.

Eden Baker (13:59):

So before we get into specifics, I really wanted to highlight the benefits of participating in this challenge. So the first big benefit is really impact. This is an incredible opportunity to make an impact on adult learners and the broader workforce. There are over 43 million adults across America who could benefit from adult education. So as you can imagine, supporting even a small fraction of this group would generate a huge impact.

Eden Baker (14:26):

The challenge also provides a really unique opportunity to be at the forefront of an emerging ecosystem. And if you're selected as a finalist, you'll have access to resources and mentorship through app Stage 2, and this will include specific guidance around working with adult learners and the adult ed ecosystem. And then finally, the prize pool. So this is a chance to receive a share of $1 million in non-dilutive funding. One really important thing to note if you are new to challenges is that prize money is no strings attached, so it is not subject to the same reporting requirements as grants or some other typical funding mechanisms that you maybe familiar with. I'll be sharing more details about of these including the breakdown of the prizes a little later in today's session.

Eden Baker (15:11):

So looking at the structure of the challenge, it will be conducted in two stages. In Stage 1, which is where we're in now, open submissions. Innovators are invited to submit prototypes for digital tools that will improve the career navigation experience for adult learners. Submissions are open now and they close at 6:00 ET, Thursday, December 15 at the end of this year. Up to five finalists will then be selected to receive at least $50,000 each and progress to Stage 2.

Eden Baker (15:39):

In Stage 2, which is called the accelerator. Our finalists will have access to virtual resources and support from experts to help them build and test their tools. At the end of Stage 2, finalists will submit their market-ready tools and accompanying proposals for review and also participate in a live demo day. One grand-prize winner will receive $500,000 and up to two runners-up will receive a share of least $250,000. At the end of Stage 2, the Future Finder team will support winners as they deploy their solutions across the adult ed ecosystem. This will include providing guidance around marketing strategies as well as customizable templates for communications materials.

Eden Baker (16:20):

Then looking at eligibility, I know we've had a few questions around this already. So to be eligible to participate in the challenge, entrants must be individuals who are at least 18 years of age and a citizen or permanent resident of the United States, teams of individuals that are at least 18 years of age and include at least one citizen or permanent resident of the United States, or an entity that is registered or incorporated in accordance with applicable state and local laws and maintains a primary place of business in the United States. The entity may include foreign citizens participating as an employee of the entity. I really encourage you to take a close look at the rules, terms and conditions to read through this eligibility criteria as well as the submission requirements. And I believe my colleague has just posted a link in the chat for you all to take a look at that.

Eden Baker (17:10):

Another really important thing that we wanted to share with everyone is target users. So it's really important that tools are designed to serve adult learners. They may also serve additional users, so for example, adult ed providers or other intermediaries, but their primary user needs to be adult learners. And for this challenge, we're defining adult learners based on the definition of eligible individual in WIOA. This definition includes learners who are basic skills deficient such as individuals who have English, reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the eighth grade level or who are unable to compute or solve problems or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function in their jobs, families or society, do not have a secondary school diploma or it's recognized equivalent and have not achieved an equivalent level of education or an English language learners. So we are using a very specific definition here and again this is included in the rules, terms and conditions on the challenge website.

Eden Baker (18:11):

Taking a look at the submission fidelity. So in Stage 1 the challenge is seeking prototypes for digital tools. These prototypes don't need to be high fidelity at this stage, but keep in mind that we are looking for tools that be ready to be deployed at the end of Stage 2, so late 2023 onwards. Tools may focus on any part of the career navigation process. So this could include things like self-assessment and mentorship or job matching. It's really up to entrants to articulate the focus of the tool and demonstrate how it could improve the career navigation experience for adult learners.

Eden Baker (18:46):

So looking specifically at Stage 1 for this submission, you will need to include a description of the tool's key functionality, the evidence base to inform your tool design and desired outcomes, a demonstrated understanding of adult learners, other target users, and then the broader adult ed ecosystem. And then also really importantly a plan for building and testing your tool if you are selected to progress to Stage 2. Then by the end of Stage 2, finalists will need to demonstrate that they have a user tested functioning tool

that is ready for deployment, a plan for deployment to adult learners and any other target users, ability to collect and share data. So this could include things like usage data, data around the user experience and/or outcomes. And then a plan for scaling and sustaining the tool beyond the challenge.

Eden Baker (19:40):

So using the Stage 1 selection criteria, a review panel and judging panels select up to five finalists to enter Stage 2. When reviewing submissions, panelists will assign one to five points in each of these categories: analytics and insights, impact, integration, learner centricity, scalability, and market readiness. In the interest of time, I'm not going to read through all of these, but these criteria are on the challenge website. So I encourage you to review these closely.

Eden Baker (20:13):

And then taking a look at the Stage 2 selection criteria. So using this criteria, the judging panel will select one grand prize winner and up to two runners-up. When reviewing submissions in Stage 2, judges will assign one to five points in each of these categories: analytics and insights, impact, integration, learner centricity, scalability, and sustainability. So you can see there's a lot of overlap in terms of the criteria here, but if you take a look at the description, you'll see there's a different level of expectation once we get to Stage 2. Again, I won't read through all of these, but you can also take a look at these on the challenge website.

Eden Baker (20:54):

So in Stage 2, as I mentioned, all finalists will participate in an accelerator and this will run from early 2023 through to fall 2023. The accelerator will kick off with a boot camp. We are anticipating that this will be hosted in-person, our conditions permitting. Finalists will then have ongoing access to virtual mentorship from experts and curated digital resources to support them as they build and test their tools. And specific elements of the accelerator will be developed depending on specific finalist needs. Finalists will then submit their market-ready tools and accompanying proposals in fall 2023, and then present to judges at a live demo day. And again, we anticipate this will be conducted in-person if possible.

Eden Baker (21:42):

So taking a look at prizes, as we mentioned earlier, the total prize pass for this challenge is $1 million. In Stage 1, up to five finalists will receive at least $50,000 each. And then in Stage 2, a grand prize winner will receive $500,000 and up to two runners-up will receive a share of at least $250,000. And as I mentioned earlier, prize money awarded through this challenge is not subject to the same reporting requirements as grants and other funding mechanisms that you may be familiar with.

Eden Baker (22:12):

So how can you get started? So there are a few key resources here that all finalists will have access to as they prepare their submissions. The first is a challenge community and this is really an opportunity to connect with potential team members or offer your expertise. So I really encourage you to sign up if you haven't already. And this is on the challenge website as well. There's also a general resources page that contains a curated list of resources about adult learners, the adult ecosystem, and then career navigation more broadly. So again, really encourage you to take a look at those resources as well.

Eden Baker (22:49):

And then finally, how to enter? So to enter the challenge, you'll need to do a few key things before the deadline at 6:00 ET on December 15th. So the first is to create a Luminary Lightbox account and you can do this via the submission form, which is also available on the challenge website. Then also review the Stage 1 selection criteria as I mentioned earlier, and then complete and submit the Stage 1 submission form. We really encourage you to try and complete all of these steps well ahead of the deadline just to make sure that there's plenty of time to resolve any potential technical issues or answer any last minute questions.

Eden Baker (23:28):

So with all of that in mind, we want to open it up for questions. I can see we already have had a few coming through and I know we also received quite a few via Eventbrite before today's session as well. So we'll start with some of the ones that we received today and then we'll move into some of the questions that we received via Eventbrite, and then we'll move onto some of the questions that we've received today. Apologies in advance if we don't get to all of your questions, we'll answer as many as we can live. We'll also be posting FAQs on the challenge website. And then you should see on the screen there to an email address. So if you do have additional questions that we don't get to today, you're also welcome to reach out to the Challenge inbox, so that's hello@FutureFinderChallenge.com.

Eden Baker (24:19):

Okay. So as I said, we're going to start with the questions that we received via Eventbrite before today's session. And while we're doing these I encourage you to keep the other questions coming. So the first question that we've received, and I believe we've received some similar questions today is, what fidelity are you expecting for the Stage 1 prototype? So I mentioned a little bit about this before, but just to provide some more information, entrants are required to submit a PDF presentation that demonstrates the functionality of their tool. It's not expected that this is high fidelity necessarily, it could include things like wireframes, screen mockups and other imagery. It's just really important that it demonstrates how the tool would work. As part of their submission, entrants are also required to submit information regarding their target users and overview of how their tool will integrate with existing systems and then also a plan for how they will build and test the tool to ensure it is market-ready at the end of Stage 2.

Eden Baker (25:19):

So I think as you're, I'm thinking about fidelity for Stage 1, you should also think about the fact that the expectation for Stage 2 is that you will deploy the tool at the end of the challenge. So we're really looking for things that could be market-ready by the end of Stage 2. And I would really encourage you, as you're thinking about this, to take a look at the Stage 1 submission form and then the Stage 1 selection criteria for more information about the expectations for Stage 1.

Eden Baker (25:47):

We also have received quite a few questions around the type of organizations that can enter. So, any type of organization can enter provided they make the eligibility requirements. So just as a reminder for an entity to be eligible, they must be registered or incorporated in accordance with applicable state and local laws and maintain a primary place of business in the United States. Individuals and teams of individuals are also welcome to apply provided they make the relevant eligibility criteria as well.

Eden Baker (26:23):

We've also received a few questions and I think this relates a little bit to the question around fidelity which is, is the challenge seeking new or existing tools? So for this one, entrants with new or existing tools are welcome to apply, I think keeping in mind what we just shared around fidelity. The challenge is really seeking entrants that are looking to adapt, improve and/or scale their tools. So this could include things like adding functionality, improving the user experience with design or tailoring content to better suit the specific needs of adult learners.

Eden Baker (26:58):

Again, just as a reminder for Stage 1, the challenge is seeking prototypes. And then for Stage 2, entrants are expected to have market-ready tools and all submissions will be assessed again with the same selection criteria. So regardless of whether they're new or existing tool.

Eden Baker (27:18):

And then another question that we received a few versions through the Eventbrite was around whether the challenges focused on any specific areas of career navigation. So I believe Grace touched on this a

little bit earlier, but the challenge is not focused on any particular stage or component of the career navigation process. So entrants will really just be expected to demonstrate how their tool could improve the career navigation experience for adult learners, and this could include anything from increased self-awareness and career knowledge or confidence through to better job attainment and high growth, high wage industries. So it's really up to the entrant to demonstrate the potential for their tool to improve the career navigation experience and to also articulate why they've decided to focus on a particular stage or component of this process. And again, we have got a definition of career navigation in the rules, terms and conditions, but encourage you again to take a look at that too.

Eden Baker (28:17):

And then another question which I think is for the Department is, how this challenge aligns to other Department initiatives? So for that one, Travis, I will hand it over to you.

Travis Combs (28:30):

Thanks, Eden. So the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education carries out a program of national leadership activities focused on enhancing quality and outcomes of adult education and literacy, activities and programs nationwide. This challenge specifically aligns closely with the Department's FY '22-'26 Strategic Plan, and even more specifically the strategic goal one, which is around promoting equity and student access to educational resources, opportunities and inclusive environments such as helping them engage in learning, finding transitions to post-secondary ed, increasing their employability and high demand, high wage occupations, and then focusing on equity conscious strategies to address access and high quality institutions, affordability, completion, post-enrollment successes and supportive inclusive institutions. This challenge is authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and Section 2-42, the national leadership activities allow the secretary to establish and carry out this program of national leadership activities. So we see that it closely aligns with the Strategic Plan and we're really excited about the opportunity. I'll pass it back to you, Eden.

Eden Baker (29:52):

Great. Thank you, Travis. So I'm just taking a look at some of the questions that we are getting live as well. So there's one here about whether the tool needs to be designed for all adult learners. So for that one, entrants may design their tool for any group of adult learners as defining the rules, terms and conditions. And I shared that definition earlier from WIOA. This could include all adult learners or it could include a specific subset of adult learners. So for example, you might decide to focus your tool on English learners, veterans or another specific group within that sort of broader umbrella.

Eden Baker (30:27):

If that is the case for your tool, you're just expected to demonstrate how it's designed to meet their specific needs. So, that will be part of your Stage 1 submission. Again, I suggest you take a look at the selection criteria to read a little bit more about that, but the short answer is you're welcome to design a tool for a specific subset as long as you demonstrate how your tool is being designed to meet their needs. I would also suggest you take a look, there is a criterion around scalability, so we take a look at that to make sure you're factoring that into your tool design as well.

Eden Baker (31:05):

We also have a question here about creating a Luminary Lightbox account. So in creating a Luminary Lightbox account, is there a way to align yourself to a submitting agency or project? If I'm understanding that correctly, and I hope I am, when you create an account, you are welcome to add team members to that account. So, what you would do is one person would make the account in Luminary Lightbox, then they can add team members. So that could include team members who are from different organizations or entities and then you'll all be listed on that one submission. So I'm hoping I'm answering that correctly. If I didn't interpret it right, feel free to ask a follow-up question and I'll try and address it.

Eden Baker (31:54):

Then we have a question here which is, can existing technology or systems be leveraged, for example using Salesforce database and related applications and technology? I think the short answer to this is we would not stipulate any requirements about the specific technology or systems that can be leveraged. You are more than welcome to use existing technology and services and tools. I think one thing to consider here is that there is an expectation around integration with existing workforce systems and tools. So this is one of the criterion in Stage 1. So that might just be something to factor and if you are planning on using existing technology but there's no specific reason or rule that you would not be able to do that.

Eden Baker (32:40):

We have another question here about digital tools and specifically what types of digital tools the challenge is seeking. So again, we do have a definition in the rules, terms and conditions of what digital is, but in this case, we have essentially defined it as any program, service and/or resource that is delivered through a computer, tablet, smartphone or other electronic device. So we have that definition deliberately broad to encourage and enable a really diverse range of approaches and tools.

Eden Baker (33:34):

We have a question here. Do you have any guidance for what aspects the a business plan you want to see for scalability and sustainability? I think that the short answer for that one is that I would really just encourage you to take a look at the selection criteria. So Stage 1, there's a specific criterion around scalability and this is the extent to which the tool has the potential to be scaled to impact a meaningful number of adult learners beyond the challenge.

Eden Baker (34:02):

And then in Stage 2, I think scalability and sustainability become more crucial. So for Stage 2, scalability is the extent to which the entrant articulate to plan to deploy and scale the tool to impact a meaningful number of adult learners following the challenge. So this is really looking beyond Stage 2. And then the same goes for sustainability. So for Stage 2 for that one, it's the extent to which the entrant demonstrates the skills, resources, and commitment to maintain, update and grow their tool beyond the challenge. So I think to answer that question I would encourage you to take a look specifically at the selection criteria and then also the submission form for Stage 1 to get a better sense of the expectations for that.

Eden Baker (34:44):

We have another question here. So if we applied as a technical product team and a marketing team, which team do you think would be more involved in Stage 2? I think that one is a little bit tricky to answer as I imagine it will be somewhat dependent on the particular product and team and the fidelity of where your tool is at. I would encourage you to take a look at the timeline, which is on the challenge website. Stage 2 will be really focused on building the tool and preparing it for market and then following the end of Stage 2, so towards the end of 2023 and 2024 is when we'll really be expecting the team to deploy that tool and get it into the hands of users. So, I think it'll be really up to the team to consider what is most appropriate and what makes most sense depending on where their tool is at and what they might need to build out in Stage 2.

Eden Baker (35:41):

We have another question here. So, can you elaborate on community collaboration? How would we demonstrate that in our proposals? That's a really good question. So there are a few ways that I think that this might come in. In Stage 1, there is a couple of criteria that I think would be quite relevant. One is around integration, so this is really about the extent to which you plan to integrate with existing systems and tools and this could include partnerships with adult education providers and/or industry. So I think that's one criterion that I would encourage you to take a look at as you think about collaboration.

Eden Baker (36:30):

There are also a few others I think could be relevant to this. So one is around learner centricity. So this is really getting at the extent to which you understand your target adult learners. So this might involve some consultation in Stage 1 so that you can demonstrate you have a good understanding of their specific needs. And then I think market readiness criteria is also a little relevant here. So this is really about thinking about your team, so your entrant team and whether or not you have the necessary mix of skills and expertise in order to build and test your tool in Stage 2. So the judging panel will also be looking at the skills and experience of your team as part of the Stage 1 review.

Eden Baker (37:12):

I will take this opportunity as well to plug the challenge community. So I mentioned this earlier, but it is a really great resource which is on the challenge website. So it's basically an opportunity if you are looking for partners or if you're looking to offer expertise that you can do that. So essentially, you input your information and you can share a little bit more about your skills and experience and then also the types of skills and experience you might be looking for from partners. And then you'll be able to see everyone else who has entered the challenge community. So I think this is a really great way if you are looking for additional team members or if you are looking to collaborate with a few different organizations, this is a really great resource to help you do that.

Eden Baker (38:03):

It looks like we have a few more questions here that relate to what we've been talking about a little bit with fidelity. So the question here is, what level of detail are you looking for in Stage 1 in terms of the description and documentation of the technology stack that will be used in the tool development? So again, I think this is something that I would encourage you to take a look at the submission form and the criteria. We really are looking for you to be able to demonstrate how the tool would work. So I think the extent to which you need to provide detail to demonstrate that. One thing I will note is a submission form does have a word limit. So there are specific questions and each of those do have a word limit there so you are somewhat limited as to the detail you can provide. So I would encourage you to take a look at the form too and of keep those limits in mind too.

Eden Baker (38:51):

With the PDF upload, that is also a limit of five pages, so that's another thing to factor in when you're considering what detail is appropriate.

Eden Baker (39:18):

And sorry, just taking a look at a few more questions as they come in.

Eden Baker (39:26):

So building on that one, there's a question here. Will it be possible to include a video of a functional prototype in the application or only a PDF? That's a really good question. You'll only be able to upload a PDF, and reviewers and judges will only review what is included in your submission form and the PDF upload. So there won't be an opportunity to include a video or functional prototype.

Eden Baker (40:02):

And then another question here, is it okay if we have completed a pilot after the prototype for submission to Stage 1? If I'm understanding this question correctly, I think this should not be a problem. I'm assuming that it means like you would submit your tool and then pilot it potentially during the review process. I don't think this would be a problem. I think if there was any information that you had from previous pilots, we would encourage you to include that as part of your Stage 1 submission, but I don't think there's an issue with you running a concurrent pilot after you've submitted to Stage 1.

Eden Baker (40:40):

And then we have a follow-up question here around scalability. So, can you say a little bit more about the expectations and guidelines for assessing scalability? This is a really great question. I think the reason that we have this in here as a criteria is that we really want to ensure that tools have the potential to support a wide range of adult learners. So while we appreciate, you might design for a specific subset and that's absolutely appropriate. We also want to make sure that tools that are progressing through the challenge and are deployed beyond the challenge have applicability to support a broad range of adult learners. So, that's the reason that we have scalability in here. And in terms of sharing more, I think I would just, as I said, encourage you to take a look at the criteria. You'll see that for Stage 1, we've really just said the potential to be scaled to an impact and meaningful number of adult learners.

Eden Baker (41:45):

I think we've deliberately kept that somewhat general and it's really up to entrants to be able to demonstrate the potential for scalability depending on the specific design of their tool and then the specific learners that they are focusing on.

Eden Baker (42:19):

Okay. Then a question here around, are we supposed to also include a market analysis to show market viability when complete? If I'm understanding this correctly, I think the answer is this is ultimately up to you. We have not stipulated that this is a particular requirement, but if you think that that would be relevant to support your submission and would help address the selection criteria, then you're more than welcome to include that. I think particularly as it might pertain to the existing ecosystem and information around of how you're thinking about sustainability and scalability. But the short answer is this is not a specific requirement, but if you feel that it would support your submission, then you are absolutely welcome to include it. Again, the thing I would just keep in mind here is that each question does have a word limit. So you are somewhat limited in terms of how much information you can include in that Stage 1 submission.

Eden Baker (43:33):

Then we have another question here. So, is learning a specific skill part of career navigation in your view? I think that's a really good question. I mentioned this a little earlier that we've deliberately kept the definition quite general because we want to encourage a really broad range of tools and also enable people to come up with innovative ways of thinking about career navigation. So we have not specified whether or not, so skill building might be part of that. I think it would be really up to you to be able to demonstrate how you felt building that particular skill could support career navigation and improving the career navigation experience for adult learners.

Eden Baker (44:15):

So in the Stage 1 criteria for impact, we have specified a couple of outcomes that we think are relevant. So that includes increased self-awareness, career knowledge, confidence and/or job attainment. They are really just meant to be illustrative examples. I think it's up to entrants to be able to demonstrate how their particular tool and the focus of their tool relates to career navigation. And so, I think to the extent that building a particular school skill does that, that would be fine.

Eden Baker (44:54):

There's another really good question around technology access and I believe Grace alluded to this earlier which is, is it safe to assume that target adult learners will have continuous access to the internet in order to use the digital tool? I think this is a really good consideration. Again, I think this depends on your specific target users and I would encourage you to think about their access to technology, including their access to the internet and their bandwidth and things like that, and make sure that you are demonstrating how your tool is designed to accommodate and reflect things like their access to technology and their access to the internet. And I would say that type of consideration would relate to the learner centricity criterion. So that specifically calls out tech proficiency and access to technology.

Eden Baker (45:56):

Then there's another question here which builds on some of the discussion we've been having around prototype fidelity as well. So, if we have an MVP, can we submit to Stage 1? I think the short answer here is yes, as we've been saying we've kept the level of fidelity somewhat general just so that we can accommodate folks who are adapting a tool or scaling a tool or looking to improve a tool. So again, there's no specific fidelity requirements there. I think an MVP would be appropriate. The main thing to think about is whether or not your tool has the possibility and your team has the competency and skills to build that out in Stage 2 so that it's ready for market at the end of Stage 2. So I think that's the timeline and fidelity consideration there.

Eden Baker (46:42):

We have another question here which is a great question which is, are there any specific considerations for someone who wants to be part of the review or judging process? How would someone go about expressing their interest? Firstly, thank you, that's so exciting that people are interested in getting involved. I think the first step would be to get in touch with the Challenge team, so that's hello@FutureFinderChallenge.com. We are actively looking for folks who might want to be involved in scoring, as well as people with relevant expertise who might want to be involved in the Stage 2 accelerator. So if you think that could be you, feel free to get in touch and we will get back to you. But appreciate your early interest.

Eden Baker (47:49):

And then we have a couple of questions around prizes. These often come up when we talk about challenges. So just to recap a few things. So in terms of how the prize purse will be allocated, so the total prize purse is a $1 million and it will be allocated across Stages 1 and 2. So in Stage 1, up to five finalists will receive at least $50,000 each. And then in Stage 2, a grand prize winner will receive $500,000 and up to two runners-up will receive a share of at least $250,000.

Eden Baker (48:21):

And then just to recap, so prize competitions and challenges by design do not place any restriction on how funds are used. So recipients are responsible for any applicable federal state and/or local taxes and reporting requirements, but they are not required as part of the challenge to report in the same way that they might be for say a grant or something similar. One thing to flag here is that finalists will be expected to cover the cost of their participation in Stage 2. So this would include any necessary travel to things like the boot camp and the live demo day.

Eden Baker (49:13):

And we have another question here around judging. So, can you guide us on how long the readout of the PDF presentation or submission will be? How long will judges spend on it? So really good question. For Stage 1, there's no actual kind of readout. So the time commitment for judges will vary, I think, depending on the length of submission and things like that. However, for Stage 2, that's when we will have a live demo day and that's where finalists will present their tools and accompanying proposals to judges. We have not got into the specific details of how exactly that demo day will be structured, but we'll share more information around that with finalists once we get into Stage 2. So just to reiterate, there's no formal presentation component of the Stage 1 submission. The presentation component just comes in with the live demo day in Stage 2.

Eden Baker (50:07):

And then another really good question. So, for folks who do not win in Stage 1, is there any support, so things like connection on mentoring to keep working on the project? This is such a good question, and I think it's something that we really want to encourage where we can. We know that a lot of effort goes into preparing these submissions and we want to encourage people to continue working on them. I think that there will likely be opportunities for continued collaboration through the challenge community. We also typically continue a newsletter where we might share information on the challenge and relevant resources

and things like that. So there's definitely ways for folks to stay up-to-date. And then I think given your question, we can definitely also do some thinking about how we might be able to continue to facilitate greater connection and support other entrants to Stage 1. This is something that we did in the Rethink Adult Ed Challenge that Amy and team mentioned earlier. So I think it's definitely something that we can think more about as we move into specifics of what Stage 2 might look like.

Eden Baker (51:29):

And then we have another question here, building on what we were talking about with the selection criteria. So are there any resources about your evaluation rubric you can share? Great question. So typically, we just share the selection criteria, which is already on the challenge website. We do develop some additional internal resources for reviewers and judges, but in terms of what we make public, it's just the selection criteria and we deliberately share both Stage 1 and Stage 2 at the beginning so that people can get a really good sense of what the expectations are across the two stages and how they shift and increase as the challenge progresses. So we just encourage you to take a look at the criteria on the website, that's all we share with entrants.

Eden Baker (52:20):

Another really good question here. So is there a minimum number of adult learners that we should interview to demonstrate learner centricity? I think there's a great question. I would say there is not a specific number. I think this really, again, depends on who you are targeting, where your tool might be at and the other consultation that you have done. So I think this varies a lot from team to team. I would encourage you as you're thinking about interviews and who you might speak to, to make sure that you've got a good representative group of adult learners. So thinking about the diversity of that group to make sure you're factoring in different perspectives there. I also would encourage you to talk to educators and other people involved in the adult ed ecosystem to get a well-rounded insight there as well. So I think to answer your question, no specific number. I think it's more about the holistic consultation and information gathering that you've done to inform your tools design.

Eden Baker (53:27):

I'm mindful of time so we'll try and get to maybe one or two more. And apologies if we haven't gotten to your question. As I said earlier, we will be posting FAQs to all of these questions on the challenge website and we will also be sharing a recording of the session, too.

Eden Baker (53:45):

So looking at just a final few more. So another great question here, are there any specific cybersecurity function requirements to be included in the tool? That's a really good consideration. There is not a specific requirement, it is not explicitly built into the selection criteria. In saying that, we would really encourage you to think about what would make a tool market ready. So I think to the extent to which cybersecurity considerations and no issues around user data and things like that would impact market readiness, I would consider it there. But we do not have a specific criterion around cyber security.

Eden Baker (54:32):

Okay. I'm looking at the time, I think as I said, we might have to wrap and then if we didn't get to your question, we will make sure to include it in FAQs on the challenge website or if we don't have a chance to answer it there, please reach out to the challenge team. You should see the email address on the screen there. So that's hello@FutureFinderchallenge.com.

Eden Baker (54:58):

Really appreciate all of the excellent questions that we got today. I think it's really heartening to see you all thinking so much about what your submission might look like. So really appreciate all of the great questions and encourage you to keep them coming. You should see some next steps up on your screen here. So as I said, feel free to reach out to the challenge team if you have additional questions.

Eden Baker (55:19):

I also really recommend you add hello@FutureFinderChallenge.com to your address book just to make sure that any important messages are not marked as spam. We want to make sure you're not missing out on notifications. And then just a final plug for the challenge website, obviously there are a lot of resources on that that I have mentioned today. So encourage you to visit the website. This is where you can sign up for the newsletter and I believe my colleague, Harrison has just popped a link for the newsletter sign up in the chat as well. And then this is also where you can join the challenge community. So as I said, really encourage folks to do that as I think it's a good opportunity to form potential partnerships and connect with other people who are interested in helping solve this really important problem.

Eden Baker (56:01):

So, again, on behalf of the Department of Education and Luminary Labs, really, really appreciate you all attending today. Really hope it was helpful. We are planning on hosting some additional sessions over the course of open submissions, so please sign up for the newsletter to be updated on additional opportunities to hear from the challenge team. Otherwise, have a lovely afternoon everyone, and take care.