ready, set, app!
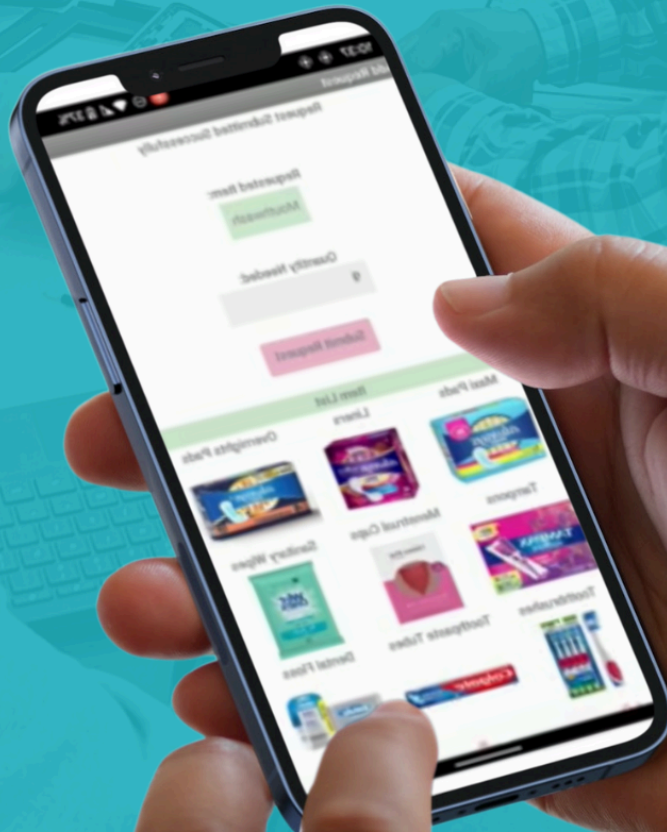
an NCBCE initiative sponsored by Lenovo

Overview

General details about the Ready, Set, App! Competition

Sponsored by Lenovo

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Ready, Set, App!

The North Carolina Business Committee for Education's Ready, Set, App! (RSA) challenge is a mobile app development competition for high school students sponsored by Lenovo™. Student groups are asked to develop a mobile app using a mobile app development platform (e.g., MIT App Inventor) to solve a problem in their school or community. Ready, Set, App! focuses on three primary pillars:

1. Mobile App Development
2. Professional and Personal Development
3. Interpersonal and Soft Skills Development

Basic Requirements

1. Student teams must be enrolled as 9-12 grade students in any NC high school, not limited to public schools, to be eligible for RSA.
    a. Students across the state of North Carolina can participate in teams no smaller than 3 and no larger than 5.
    b. A student can only compete as part of one team.
    c. The development of the student groups should seek to demonstrate and utilize diversity and inclusivity (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, neurodiversity, age, culture, language, subject area of expertise).

2. Teams must have an advisor for the app development process.
    a. Advisors may be a teacher, coach, or any other community leader

Competition Timeline

❖ **Competition registration opens: November 6, 2023 Link to registration**
   Students will be notified of their application approval on a rolling basis.
❖ **Competition registration closes: January 28, 2024 at 11:59 pm**
❖ Will receive confirmation of registration and intern assignment by: January 30, 2024
❖ App development: January 29, 2024 - March 16, 2024
❖ **Competition materials due: March 17, 2024 at 11:59 pm Link to upload materials**
❖ Finalists notified: March 29, 2024
❖ Final Pitch Competition: In-person, April 26, 2024.

Prizes

❖ The top three teams at the final competition will receive branded prizes from Lenovo.

Phases Overview

Phase 1 (Registration)

The Competition registration closes on January 21, 2024 at 11:59 pm! While registering, teams should provide the following:

- ❖ Contact information for the advisor (does not have to be a STEM or computer science teacher) who will advise the team in the app development process. The advisor can be a teacher, school staff member, or any adult community leader (Girl Scout/Cub Scout leader, Boys and Girls Club leader, Sports Coach, etc.).The advisor is required to serve as the primary contact for the student team.
- ❖ For each team member: name, school, grade, and email.
- ❖ Photo/Video Release Statement
- ❖ Optional: App Idea Statement. This is not required, but it can be helpful to your intern to have an idea of what you'd like to create before meeting with you. If you don't have an idea yet, don't worry! Your intern can help you with brainstorming in your first meeting.

After registration, teams should be able to complete the following:

1. Indicate the roles each member will have for the duration of the development process. Useful platforms for generating and assigning roles are Google Sheets and Trello:
   a. Google Sheets: If you choose this option, we have a [project management plan template](#) and a [team planning template](#) readily available for you to use. To make a copy, click the following: File > Make a Copy
   b. Trello: This site will allow you to create a Trello Board and organize your tasks in a to-do list. You are able to move said tasks into "In-Progress" and "Complete" sections.

   However, there are plenty of other organizational platforms you can utilize. Smaller teams will require students to take on multiple roles and responsibilities. Teams do not need to have roles set in stone, however, it is helpful to have a designated person responsible for completing each task even if said tasks are collaborative.

2. As part of registration, teams can choose to address the following reflection questions. These questions are optional on the registration form but teams should be able to answer each question before starting the app creation journey.
   a. What is the app name and which app development platform will be used?
   b. What is the problem the app will address?
   c. How will the app address the issue?
   d. Why is this problem significant to your team?
   e. How will your team demonstrate and utilize diversity and inclusivity (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, neurodiversity, age, culture, language, subject area of expertise) to develop your app?

Registration is quick and simple. After completing the form, teams will be notified of their completion of Phase 1 and be connected with their assigned intern via an email to the advisor.

Your assigned intern will then follow up with the next steps which include getting you set up on the messaging platform, Slack, scheduling your first meeting, and sharing with you the project workbook. This workbook includes activities for you to complete in the brainstorming and ideation portion of developing your app, including resources detailing different app development platforms you could potentially use. The activities in this workbook will need to be completed and submitted in order to receive the next workbook for Phase 2.

Phase 2 (App Development, Pitch Video, and Group Reflection)

Once you finish Phase 1, it's time to start Phase 2! Phase 2 involves developing your app, then creating a video that includes an app pitch, demo, and group reflection. The video **should be no longer than 5 minutes.** We suggest teams allow at least two weeks to complete their video before the deadline. The predetermined group reflection questions will be found in the Phase 2 workbook. Additional resources such as tips for app design, video editing tools, guides for script writing for pitches, and more will also be included in the Phase 2 workbook. Along with the workbook, students will also have the chance to meet regularly with their assigned intern for help with all their app-building and pitch-creating needs.

Phase 3 (Final Competition)

After the Phase 2 submission deadline, judges will select a total of eight finalists. Finalists will be notified by March 29, 2024, and will be invited to present at the Final Pitch Competition. The finalists will be required to present their mobile app in front of an audience and a group of judges who will select the top 3 winners at an event on April 26, 2024..

If a finalist team has more than one member unable to attend the Pitch Competition, the opportunity will be given to the next runner-up team, and the original team will be ineligible to be selected as an overall winner.

Workbooks entailing more detailed information about Phase 1 will be shared following registration.

Resources (Throughout the Competition)

Teams will have the RSA Interns and Phase Workbooks as readily available resources throughout the competition. These resources will provide guidance throughout every phase – allowing for RSA to be as beginner friendly as possible.

Why Compete?

The primary goal of NCBCE is to connect employers to students and job seekers through work-based learning opportunities. RSA is a high-quality example of a career competition. The work-based learning continuum depicted in figure 1 illustrates that career competitions provide students with the opportunity to learn through work. Learning through hands-on experiences gives students the ability to make connections and develop new skills that can be used in school and job preparation. This guide will serve as employability support for your student group's app development process. ***During the app development process, student groups will receive personal and professional development opportunities from IT industry professionals across the state of North Carolina.***
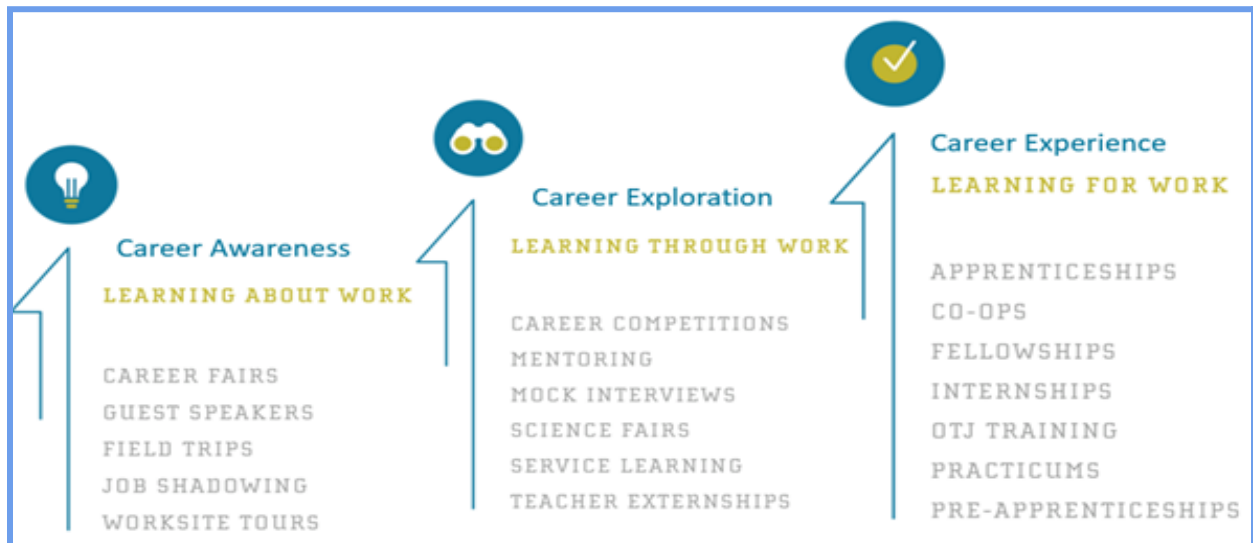

Figure 1- NCBCE Work-Based Learning Continuum

The Ready, Set, App! Competition promotes…

Employability Skills

Students who develop and utilize employability skills (i.e., soft skills) regularly are preparing themselves to be successful and stand out in the job market. Employers are always looking for candidates that work well in teams, can communicate effectively, and can think outside the box to solve large-scale problems. RSA will require student groups to utilize each of the skills to be successful.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is communication that is clearly and successfully delivered, received, and understood. Students who participate in RSA must communicate effectively to work with their team, meet deadlines, and produce a final product that is high quality.

Effective communicators can do the following:

- Articulate clear messages
- Be a good listener
- Manage stress and emotions

Problem Solvers

Problem-solving is the process or act of finding a solution to a problem. One of the primary goals of RSA is for students to develop a mobile app that will address an issue in their schools or communities. Student groups will have to research to find a problem that aligns with each of their interests. The ability to problem solve is an essential skill employers seek in potential candidates. Employers want to know candidates can research, think outside the box, and design a solution that is effective and sustainable.

Problem Solvers can do the following:

- Teamwork
- Generate and evaluate varying solutions
- Maintain consistent communication with individuals involved in the process
- Research the problem using credible sources

Time Management

Time management is the analysis of how working hours are spent and the prioritization of tasks to maximize personal efficiency in the workplace. Student groups who do not practice time management will not be successful in RSA. RSA outlines important deadlines (e.g., registration, final material submissions, check-ins with the appointed intern) that will hinder the group's success and ability to complete the competition if they do not adhere. We encourage teams to utilize their project workbook and utilize organizational tools such as a project management spreadsheet to generate roles, determine project milestones, and provide a general sense of the timeframe to complete the project.

Time management requires the following additional skills:

- Goal setting
- Scheduling and prioritization
- Self- Motivation and self-awareness
- Team motivation
- Accountability
- Decision making

Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability to react effectively when business and environmental factors unexpectedly change. As the competition progresses, to meet deadlines, teams may have to revise their project management plan depending on circumstances that may be unprecedented. For example, student groups may have a solution in mind at the beginning of the project that they are no longer able to execute.

Consequently, the students will have to be adaptable and revise their strategies to find a better solution. Employers seek candidates who are adaptable because the workplace is continuously evolving. Candidates who can manage several different tasks at once and are comfortable working in environments where ambiguity is often present are typically ideal for hire.

Adaptability requires the following qualities:
- Willingness to accept new roles and acquire new skills
- Maintaining positive relationships while experiencing adversity or change
- Decision-making skills

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are not ideal, but they are sometimes inevitable. Conflict resolution is the process of settling a dispute or disagreement between individuals. Depending on the team dynamic, conflicts can hinder the execution of the final product. Addressing conflict among groups is an invaluable skill in the workplace.

Conflict resolution requires the following qualities:
- Active listening
- The ability to learn from unique perspectives
- Willingness to compromise

Collaboration

Collaboration is a process in which two or more individuals come together to generate innovative solutions to solve problems. To be successful in RSA, teams have to collaborate and utilize the diversity of the group to brainstorm and develop ideas that meet the needs of the indicated community or school. Employers view collaboration as an essential skill in the workplace. Individuals who can work in a team are prepared to face some of the biggest challenges in their fields.

Collaboration requires the following attributes:
- Respect
- Effective Communication
- Effective Listening
- Relationship Building

Creativity

Creativity is an essential skill in the workplace. Creativity is important because it allows for the development of new and innovative ideas. These ideas can be used to solve problems, improve processes, and drive business growth. In app development specifically, creativity is important because it allows developers to come up with unique and engaging app concepts that can differentiate their product from others in the market. It also allows developers to find creative solutions to technical challenges that may arise during the development process.

Creativity requires the following qualities:
- Imagination
- Curiosity
- Flexibility
- Originality

Leadership Traits

Leadership is the act of guiding a group of people. This can be a small team or an entire organization. Leadership will be prevalent in three instances throughout RSA: one person from each student group will serve as the primary contact and will submit all materials, all students within RSA teams can take on a leadership role (design lead, coding lead, organizational lead, etc.), and the willingness for the students to engage with RSA in addition to their other responsibilities shows leadership. RSA competitors are unique because they have the motivation and determination to solve big problems in our world today. The leadership skills they gain through this competition will be invaluable in making them change agents in the future and will make them prime candidates for jobs in many industries.

Leadership requires the following qualities:
- Generating and executing a vision
- Motivating a team
- Being a good listener
- Ability to network
- Innovation and creativity

Questions?

If you have any questions about any phase in the process, please reach out to ciera.tucker@nc.gov.

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