

Welcome!

While we wait to get started, Please enter *Your Name* and *Organization* into the Meeting Chat. We will begin shortly!

- **Presenter**
 - **Mayada Christiansen**
- **Slides / Chat Monitor**
 - **Eric Brinn**



Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge

Info Session #3

Innovation

October 5, 2026



Our Time Today

1. **Welcome and Intro to Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge**
2. **Innovation in the Context of the Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge**
3. **Innovation Practice/ Resources**
4. **Is this an Innovation Self-Reflection**
5. **Close and Questions**

Write questions in the chat as they come to
you



After today, applicants will be able to...



Clarify

Define innovation in the context of this project



Consider

Consider strategies for inspiring innovative solutions that advance career connected learning within emerging industries and occupations



Design

Consider system partners that may be helpful to support your innovative solutions



Test

Use five questions to test your innovation alignment



What is Catalyze?

Catalyze exists to jumpstart innovations nationally in the field of career-connected learning (CCL), working to ensure learners ages 11 - 22 have access to transformative career-connected learning that integrates education and career, allowing them to discover their aptitudes and purpose and leading them to rewarding careers.

Catalyze drives innovations in career-connected learning through:



Agile Grantmaking



Next Generation Learning



**Transformative
Storytelling**



What is Catalyze Pittsburgh?

Catalyze Pittsburgh is a funding and learning initiative intended to strengthen the connection between emerging industries and career-connected learning (CCL) for youth ages 11-18 in the six-county region (Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Washington, Westmoreland).

Local Collaborating Organizations:

Richard King Mellon Foundation
Partner4Work



**Emerging
Industries or
Occupations**



**Innovative and
Creative Approaches**



Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge Phases



What is career-connected learning?

Learning that connects young people's interests to real careers through experiences, skill-building, relationships, and reflection.

It is:

Experiential

**Set in a Workplace
Context**

Relevant



Career connected learning is the long term access ramp to our regional job market for under-resourced youth

The Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge prioritizes youth ages 11–18 from low-income families in six counties.

Bring opportunities closer

Reduce the barriers to entry by making learning relevant to local careers, use accessible sites, or virtual access where useful.

Build social capital

Connect youth with practitioners and trusted adults they might not otherwise meet.

Make informed career decisions

Help youth test interests and compare pathways before a high-stakes decision.



Today's young people are the talent pipeline for emerging industries and occupations

Emerging industry

A new or rapidly growing sector driven by technological innovation.

Examples: biotechnology, robotics, AI, aerospace

Emerging occupation

A new role, or an existing role changing substantially as tools, tasks, and required skills evolve.

Ask: What has changed in the work?

Note for Applicants: Justify whether the industry or occupation you plan to focus on is emerging using employer feedback, market research or labor market data



Innovation



Innovations should focus on early-stage solutions that may be:

A novel approach developed within the Pittsburgh region

A new application of an existing approach

A new business or delivery model with the potential to achieve better outcomes than the solutions available to date



Innovations should focus on early-stage solutions that may be:

A novel approach developed within the Pittsburgh region

- This solution **does not** currently exist in the region
- It **is not** an expansion or reapplication of an existing program
- It **is a new approach**- that may or may not be a new program

Tools for Inspiration:

Brainstorm methods: [Brainstorming Techniques: 29 Ways to Generate Ideas \[2026\] • Asana](#)
(#11 can help you reimagine a current program if you're stuck)

Creative matrix: [Creative Matrix | LUMA Institute](#)



A creative matrix offers a tool to brainstorm connections between people and solution enablers

Problem Statement:

Groups of people or stakeholder groups

How might we increase
access to CCL in EIO?

**Leverageable
Enablers**
(examples
listed)

	People Group 1	People Group 2	People Group 3	People Group 4
Technology or Software				
Policy				
Media				
Published Documents				
Political Will				



Innovations should focus on early-stage solutions that may be:

A new application of an existing approach

- This solution is derived from successes from **outside this region**

Links for Inspiration:

Catalyze: [Case Studies — Catalyze | Advancing Career-Connected Learning](#)

National Center for Education and the Economy: [Thinking Differently About Career-Connected Learning • NCEE](#)

New Skills Ready Network: [Emerging Sectors, Responsive Career Pathways: Bridging Education and Industry](#)

Education Strategy Group: [The New Skills Ready Network - Education Strategy Group | Education Strategy Group](#)



Innovations should focus on early-stage solutions that may be:

A new business or delivery model with the potential to achieve better outcomes than the solutions available to date

- This solution may be structural or system focused vs. direct service
- Provides an opportunity for deeper engagement with system partners

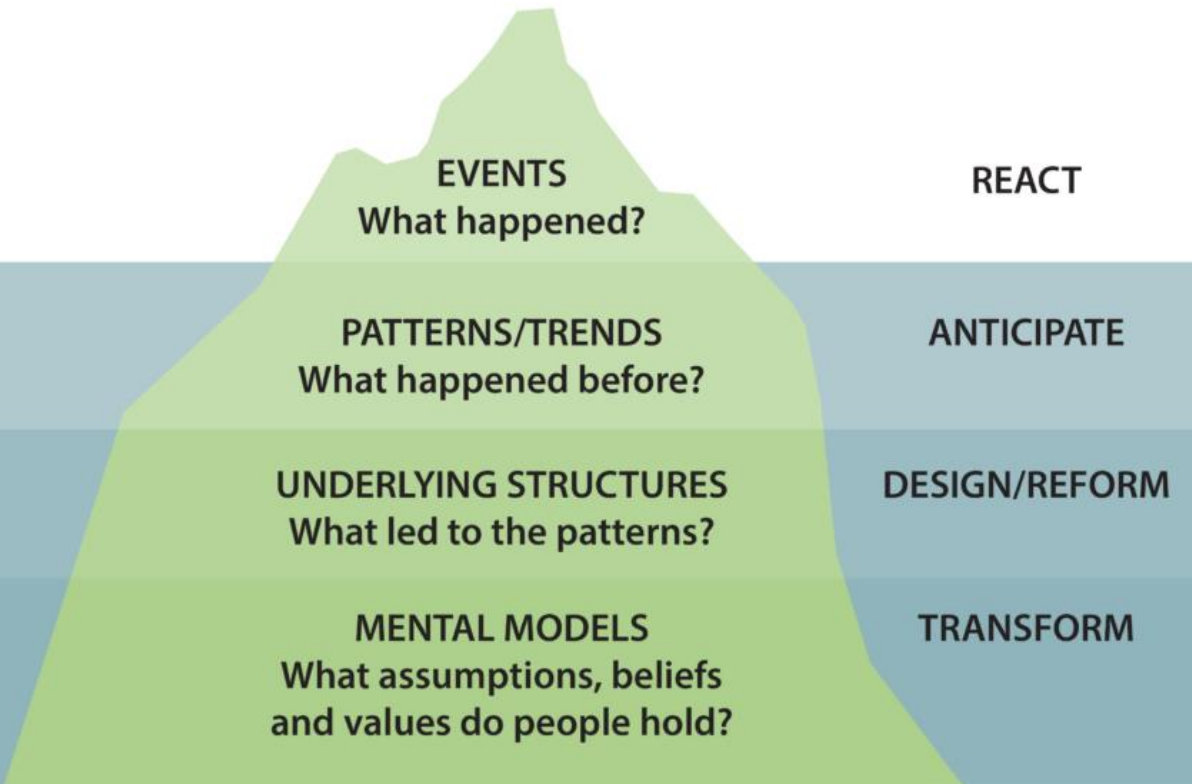
Tool for Inspiration:

Iceberg Model for Systems Thinking: [The Iceberg Model: Uncovering Root Causes for Sustainable Problem-Solving | Creately](#)



Iceberg Model for Systems Thinking

From "Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook.." By Peter Senge



System Design Questions:

What do we want to see happen?

Where is this already happening? What patterns or habits would be required?

What structures need to exist? What structures are currently prohibitive?

Who would be the actors? What do they need to see or hear?



Five questions to test your innovation alignment

- 01 Does your innovation fit the young people and communities in SW PA?
- 02 Do you have a strong argument for how your innovation meets at least one of the 3 definitions of innovation specific to this challenge?
- 03 Can you logically connect your innovation to increasing access or participation in career connected learning in an emerging industry or occupation in our region?
- 04 Do the partners that you may need exist in this region?
- 05 Does your innovation offer a creative or courageous solution?



Next steps for applicants



Review the Application Guide and related materials

Review full eligibility, application questions, and the FAQ before submitting.



View past informational session recordings

Learn more by viewing session 1 about the challenge application and session 2 about emerging industries and occupations.



Be a courageous catalyst

Use the Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge to challenge yourself and partners to think differently

Applications due October 30, 2026



"I have an idea or resource, how can I find others to partner with?"

In the chat, put your name, email and an explanation of what you could contribute or are looking for.

We will update the **FAQ** with all of your responses to help others find you.



Application Links

- Application Guide, FAQ, and Application Materials Available on:
 - Catalyze Challenge: www.catalyzechallenge.org
 - Partner4Work: www.partner4work.org/catalyzepittsburgh
- Application is Submitted via Submittable



Questions? Need additional help?

- Catalyze Pittsburgh Challenge Questions?
 - CatalyzePittsburgh@partner4work.org
- Submittable questions or technical support needed?
 - [Submittable Help - For Submitters | Submittable](https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter) :
<https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter>



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