Workshop Packet: Choosing the Right Learning Structures for Your L&D Program

A Practical Planning Packet for Learning & Development Leaders

L & D Leader Name: _____

Organization: _____

Program Name: _____

Program Date Range: _____

Workshop Objective

Use this packet to identify the goals of your learning program, determine the right mix of learning structures, balance collaboration with individual ownership, design scalable learning experiences, and align learning dynamics to business outcomes.

Part 1 — Define Your Program

What type of program are you designing?

☐ Internship Program

☐ Leadership Development

☐ Technical Academy

☐ Sales Enablement

☐ New Hire Onboarding

☐ AI Upskilling

☐ Manager Training

☐ Other: _____

What is/are the primary business goal(s)?

☐ Skill development
☐ Knowledge sharing
☐ Innovation
☐ Culture building
☐ Collaboration
☐ Retention
☐ Faster onboarding
☐ AI adoption
☐ Leadership readiness
☐ Other: _____

What skills or capabilities should participants develop?

Technical Skills:

_____

_____

Human Skills:

_____

_____

Business Skills:

_____

_____

AI / Technology Skills:

_____

_____

Power/Soft Skills:

_____

_____

Other Skills:

_____

_____

Part 2 — Program Learning Priorities (circle one for each line)

Learning Priority	Low	Medium	High
Collaboration	1 2	3	4 5
Hands-on practice	1 2	3	4 5
Peer feedback	1 2	3	4 5
Innovation	1 2	3	4 5
Reflection	1 2	3	4 5
Real-world application	1 2	3	4 5
Psychological safety	1 2	3	4 5
Accountability	1 2	3	4 5
Team problem solving	1 2	3	4 5
Individual ownership	1 2	3	4 5

Part 3 — Learning Structure Selection Guide

If You Want Participants To…	Recommended Structure
Build community and shared identity	Cohorts
Deliver real business outcomes	Teams
Collaborate in focused small groups	Pods
Practice skills in real time	Pairs
Receive structured peer feedback	Triads
Solve difficult problems collectively	Mobs

Part 4 — Learning Structure Reflection Activities

Cohorts

Best Used For:

☐ Community building

☐ Program culture

☐ Shared learning journeys

☐ Cross-functional networking

Reflection Questions:

_____

_____

Possible Activities:

_____

_____

Teams

Best Used For:

☐ Real-world projects

☐ Agile collaboration

☐ Shared accountability

☐ Delivery-focused learning

Reflection Questions:

_____

_____

Possible Activities:

_____

_____

Pods

Best Used For:

☐ Focused collaboration

☐ Peer support

☐ Safe discussions

☐ Specialized workstreams

Reflection Questions:

_____

_____

Possible Activities:

_____

_____

Pairs

Best Used For:

☐ Skill practice

☐ Rapid feedback

☐ Coaching

☐ Knowledge transfer

Reflection Questions:

_____

_____

Possible Activities:

_____

_____

Triads

Best Used For:

☐ Reflection

☐ Communication practice

☐ Structured feedback

☐ Peer coaching

Reflection Questions:

_____

_____

Possible Activities:

_____

_____

Mobs

Best Used For:

☐ Innovation

☐ Complex problem solving

☐ Shared visibility

☐ Group learning

Reflection Questions:

_____

_____

Possible Activities:

_____

_____

Part 5 — Individual Ownership Planning

How will participants own their learning journey?

☐ Personal learning goals
☐ Learning journals
☐ Reflection exercises
☐ Role rotation
☐ Peer teaching
☐ Presentations/demos
☐ Mentorship
☐ Self-assessments
☐ Skill progression tracking
☐ AI usage reflection

What expectations will learners own individually?

_____

_____

_____

Part 6 — Facilitator Style Planning

What type of learning environment do you want to create?

☐ Interactive
☐ Collaborative
☐ Reflective
☐ Experimental
☐ Peer-driven
☐ Coaching-oriented
☐ Discussion-based
☐ Hands-on
☐ Innovative
☐ AI-enabled

How will facilitators encourage participation?

☐ Group problem solving
☐ Peer teaching
☐ Open discussion
☐ Real-world scenarios
☐ Reflection exercises
☐ Pair activities
☐ Team collaboration
☐ Role rotation
☐ Live demonstrations
☐ Interactive workshops

What behaviors should facilitators model?

☐ Curiosity
☐ Active listening
☐ Coaching
☐ Psychological safety
☐ Adaptability
☐ Collaboration
☐ Continuous learning
☐ Experimentation
☐ Constructive feedback

Part 7 — Program Design Worksheet

Program Element	Selected Structure	Why This Structure Fits	Facilitator Role
Kickoff			
Weekly Collaboration			
Skill Practice			
Peer Feedback			
Problem Solving			
Reflection			
Final Showcase			

This is where you move from **theory into actual program architecture**. The goal is to help L&D leaders intentionally map the items below, to the right learning structures.

- learning goals
- collaboration dynamics
- facilitation methods
- accountability
- and learner experience

1. Program Element – Embedding Habits and Nudges
This identifies the major component of the learning experience and embeds habit-forming practices.

Examples

- Kickoff
- **Team Agreements (living documents)**
- **Daily Huddles** or Daily Scrums
- Weekly labs
- **Driver/Navigator**
- **Shared Understanding**
- **Pairing Pyramid**
- Coaching sessions
- **Skill practice**
- **Teach Backs**
- **Capstone project**
- **Peer review**
- Innovation sprint
- Demo or Showcase day
- **Retrospectives** or Reflection checkpoints

2. Learning Objective

What should learners gain from this part of the experience?

Examples

- Build psychological safety
- Practice AI-assisted coding
- Improve communication
- Apply agile methods
- Strengthen peer feedback skills
- Develop problem-solving capability

Why Add This?

It forces intentionality: “Why are we using this structure?”

instead of: “Because it sounds collaborative.”

3. Selected Learning Structure

Which structure best supports the objective?

Options

- Cohort
- Team
- Pod
- Pair
- Triad
- Mob

Why Add This?

It helps participants connect:

desired learning dynamics to group structure design.

4. Why This Structure Fits

L & D Leaders explain the rationale.

Example

“We chose triads because we want structured feedback and balanced participation during presentation practice.”

Why Add This?

This strengthens instructional design thinking.

5. Learner Experience

Describe what participants will actually do.

Examples

- Pair program using GitHub Copilot
- Rotate architecture review roles
- Participate in live debugging mobs
- Conduct peer feedback sessions
- Present sprint demos

Why Add This?

It shifts thinking from:

abstract design
to
observable learner behaviors.

6. Individual Ownership Mechanism

This is one of the most important additions.

Ask:

How will learners personally own their growth?

Examples

- Personal learning goals
- Reflection journals
- Role rotation
- Feature ownership
- Peer teaching
- Demo accountability
- Skills tracking

Why Add This?

Many collaborative programs accidentally create:

- passive learners
- hidden contributors
- unequal participation

This section prevents that.

7. Facilitator Role

What does the Facilitator/Instructor/Presenter/Coach do?

Examples

- Coach discussions
- Observe participation
- Provide feedback
- Remove blockers
- Moderate retrospectives
- Guide AI ethics conversations
- Create a safe space to fail
- Celebrate learning from failure
- Build resourceful learners
- Encourage critical thinking and exploration

Why Add This?

L&D leaders often under-design facilitator behaviors.

8. AI Integration Strategy

Especially important for modern L&D programs.

Examples

- AI-assisted brainstorming
- Copilot pair programming
- Prompt engineering practice
- AI critique sessions
- AI reflection exercises

Why Add This?

It helps organizations intentionally integrate AI instead of randomly introducing tools.

9. Success Metrics

How will you know this worked?

Examples

- Participation rates
- Quality of peer feedback
- Project completion
- Learner confidence
- Demonstrated skills
- Presentation quality
- AI adoption behaviors
- Technical Metrics from a pipeline or other tool stack

Why Add This?

This connects learning design to measurable outcomes.

10. Risks or Watchouts

This is a very mature L&D design practice.

Examples

- Dominant personalities
- Passive learners
- AI over-reliance
- Unequal contribution
- Lack of psychological safety
- Collaboration fatigue

Common Facilitation Pitfalls

Traditional Sage on the Stage Pitfall	Guide on the Side Alternative
Talking too much	Increase learner interaction
Solving every problem	Let learners struggle productively
Calling on the same participants	Structure inclusive participation
Overloading slides/content	Create activities and discussions
Measuring attendance only	Measure contribution and engagement
Treating silence as failure	Allow reflection and processing time

Why Add This?

It encourages proactive facilitation planning.

Example A:

Program Element	Learning Objective	Structure	Learner Experience	Individual Ownership	AI Integration	Success Metric
Midpoint Architecture Review	Improve systems thinking and collaboration	Mob	Entire team reviews architecture together	Each learner presents one technical insight	AI-generated architecture comparisons	Better design decision quality

Example B:

Program Element	Learning Objective	Structure	Learner Experience	Individual Ownership	AI Integration	Success Metric
Weekly Coding Labs	Practice full-stack engineering skills	Pairs	Pair program using GitHub Copilot	Each learner owns one improvement goal per week	Copilot prompt refinement	Increased code quality and confidence

Reflection Prompts

Where are learners collaborating, and where are they individually accountable?

How are Facilitators ensuring self-discovery and ownership in the learning journey?

If the facilitator disappeared for 15 minutes, would meaningful learning still continue?

That question immediately reveals whether:

the experience is facilitator-dependent* or *learner driven.

Recommended Session Design Ratio

Activity Type	Suggested Percentage
Lecture/Input	20–30%
Discussion	20%
Hands-on Practice	30–40%
Reflection/Feedback	10–20%

How This Connects to Learning Structures

Structure	Guide on the Side Facilitation Style
Cohorts	Build community and shared reflection
Teams	Coach collaboration and accountability
Pods	Encourage peer problem-solving
Pairs	Support hands-on experimentation
Triads	Facilitate constructive feedback
Mobs	Guide collective intelligence

Why This Matters Especially Now (AI Era)

In an AI-enabled world:

- **information is abundant**
- **answers are accessible instantly**

The value of facilitators is no longer:

delivering information

The value is:

- ***curating experiences***
- ***guiding critical thinking***
- ***enabling collaboration***
- ***fostering reflection***
- ***helping learners apply knowledge***
- ***building human-centered learning cultures***

Part 8 — Facilitator Mindset & Learning Experience Philosophy

Facilitator Philosophy

Traditional Facilitation

“Sage on the Stage”

The facilitator:

- delivers information
- dominates airtime
- lectures extensively
- controls learning
- positions themselves as the primary expert

Participants:

- passively consume information
- wait for answers
- rely on the instructor
- engage minimally

Risks

- low energy
- low retention
- passive participation
- limited ownership
- weak collaboration
- dependency on the instructor

Modern Facilitation

“Guide on the Side”

The facilitator:

- creates the learning environment
- encourages discovery
- coaches rather than lectures
- asks powerful questions
- supports collaboration
- enables peer learning
- empowers learners to solve problems together

Participants:

- actively contribute
- collaborate naturally
- reflect
- experiment
- teach one another
- own their learning journey
- feel safe to fail and learn

Key Principle

The facilitator is not the center of the learning experience.
The learners are.

What a Guide on the Side Facilitator Does

Instead of…	They…
Giving all the answers	Ask learners to explore solutions
Lecturing continuously	Facilitate discussions and activities
Controlling every interaction	Create space for peer learning
Solving problems immediately	Coach learners through problem solving
Being the only expert	Encourage shared expertise
Measuring participation by attendance	Measure engagement and contribution
Prioritizing content delivery	Prioritize learner experience

Guide on the Side Principles

A modern facilitator:

- Designs experiences, not lectures
- Encourages curiosity over perfection
- Creates psychological safety
- Facilitates peer learning
- Balances structure with autonomy
- Coaches instead of controls
- Uses questions to deepen thinking
- Makes learning active and collaborative
- Treats learners as contributors, not consumers
- Helps learners own their growth journey

Facilitator Reflection Exercise

Rate Yourself (1–5 with 1 = low and 5 = high)

Facilitation Behavior	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I ask more questions than I answer	○	○	○	○	○
Participants actively collaborate during sessions	○	○	○	○	○
Learners teach one another	○	○	○	○	○
Activities outweigh lecture time	○	○	○	○	○
Participants solve problems together	○	○	○	○	○
Learners reflect on their growth	○	○	○	○	○
I create space for experimentation	○	○	○	○	○
Learning feels energetic and interactive	○	○	○	○	○
I tell stories and time gets away from me	○	○	○	○	○
I ask for others explain to explain a question asked to me	○	○	○	○	○
I set expectations for collaboration and interaction and provide guardrails for the learning	○	○	○	○	○

Part 9 — Action Planning

Top 3 Learning Structures I Will Use

1. _____

Why:

_____

2. _____

Why:

_____

3. _____

Why:

_____

Final Reflection

What is one thing you want participants to feel in your program?

_____

_____

What is one thing you want participants to be able to do by the end?

_____

_____

How will you balance team success, individual growth, accountability, and psychological safety?

_____

_____

Closing Thought

Collaborative learning creates momentum. Individual ownership creates transformation. Remember, Learning is a Team Sport!