Authentic Task vs. Authentic Problem

When creating your Team-Based Challenge, it is important to ensure that challenges offer an Authentic Problem. What is an authentic problem? Authentic Problems encourage learners to explore different perspectives and processes and use critical thinking skills to develop creative solutions. The following statement accurately defines an authentic problem:

authentic problem / ə-'then-tik 'prabləm/ noun - problems that are characterized by their connection to genuine situations, contexts, or dilemmas that people encounter in everyday life or professional practice. These problems are often open-ended, complex, and may not have a single correct solution.

Career Pathway	Task	Task - Product	Learning (Content)
Finance and Business Authentic Task	Students will create a Business plan for their Coffee Shop in the library at school	Business Plan - created by teams of students	Students learn the components of a Business Plan
Career Pathway	Authentic Problem	Problem - Product(s) Determined by Students	Learning (Content and Skills)
Finance and Business Authentic Problem	A local business is applying for a government grant and needs support to document the business's goals, products/services, and financial planning. Develop a plan to address the business needs.	● Full-scale Business Plan on paper ● Presentation of the goals, services, products, and finances ● Promotional video containing an overview and future success plan of the business	Students meet with businesses to determine the best approach, using their critical thinking skills to address the needs of their clients and learn the components and skills needed to apply for a business grant.

Common Differences of Authentic Tasks and Authentic Problems

Components	Authentic Task	Authentic Problem
Question or Statement	Tasks tell the students what to do and how to do it. Authentic tasks are prescriptive and often include step-by-step instructions. Often tasks are list-driven.	Asks a question or provides a statement that allows for numerous potential answers. These are open-ended statements or questions.
Student voice and choice	Authentic Tasks are often more task-driven. Tasks often create a classroom exercise that limits student voice and choice because the students focus on completing the task.	Authentic Problems are problem-driven. Problem-driven questions provide a platform for students to determine how to manage and solve the process of solving problems, creating a learning environment of "unknowns" that need to be solved differently.
Critical Thinking	Tasks lead the students on what to do and/or how to do it. "Critical thinking" skills of students might be limited in the activity	Problems encourage critical thinking of students and require them to "ask more questions" on how to solve the issue
End Product	The end product is prescribed to students (often looks the same from each team) and focuses on delivering an end product	End products may look different from one team to the next because their processes might be vastly different.
Skills and Assessment	While tasks can include community partners, authentic tasks are more teacher-driven and seem to have assessments focused on content and the completion of the task.	A professional community member assists in the planning around a question or "Problem of Practice." The assessment provides a conversation on how to improve skills development through reflection and other types of assessment.
Motivations	Encourages compliance of students or creates an environment for students to "check boxes" (EG. "Complete this assignment")	Encourages students to be committed to their work ethic, make decisions to address the problem, and grow leadership skills. (Students tap into their self-motivation)

*Note: Some of the statements made above provide generalizations, and may not reveal that Authentic Tasks can be great way to approach certain types of assignments and activities. However, Team-Based Challenges with Authentic Problems "go deeper" into student skill development on collaboration, critical thinking, and other Essential Employability skills. While still content focused, problem-driven questions rely more heavily on the development of skills. This teaching and learning strategy builds students' self-efficacy, which research has shown, addresses classroom issues in student motivation, student participation, and student belief that they can perform difficult exercises (Dogan, 2015; Zimmerman et al, 1992; Schwarzer, 1992).