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INTRODUCTION

Disruptive technologies pose opportunities and challenges for both traditional industries as well as governments in grappling with unexpected and unfamiliar regulatory issues.

In response, a new approach to policymaking has emerged—one that is based on dialogue and sandbox-type idea exchanges. The Startup Nations Policy Hack is designed to help both public and private sector leaders from entrepreneurial ecosystems around the world experiment and leverage this approach.

BACKGROUND

As the policy platform of the Global Entrepreneurship Network, Startup Nations focuses on giving its members opportunities for policy design, experimentation and knowledge exchanges that lead to policy implementation.

The 2017 Startup Nations Summit in Tallinn, Estonia, featured a next-generation policy hack concept developed in partnership with the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the European Commission, the Kauffman Foundation, Dell, and EIT Digital, that explores innovative ways to address some of today’s most pressing policy issues faced by both regulators and entrepreneurs.

The Startup Nations Policy Hack allows participants to tackle pressing regulatory policy challenges they are facing at home. After hacking a solution locally, they have the option to then hack it globally with experts and peers who have similar experience within similar economies elsewhere.

The policy hack concept is focused on real policy challenges, actual implementation and impact. Team leaders return to their national economies having tested and refined their ideas and solutions – better preparing them for local implementation. The competition component remains, however, and hack winners commit to reporting their implementation experiences within six months.

WHY A STARTUP NATIONS POLICY HACK?

For participants, the benefits of a Startup Nations Policy Hack are collaboration and validation. Participants – grouped into teams and supported by mentors – have an opportunity to receive feedback along the Startup Nations Policy Hack process from a variety of stakeholders, including assigned team members, mentors and policy hack judges.

For organizers, it is a way to bring together startup ecosystem representatives, including the ultimate beneficiaries – entrepreneurs – ‘to hack’ a specific policy solution in response to an identified challenge in the ecosystem.
INTRODUCTION

The Startup Nations Policy Hack allows entrepreneur-support organizations to create a forum for dialogue between startups, policymakers, investors and regulators.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

We will take you through all the steps to implement a Startup Nations Policy Hack as a well-designed, facilitated learning experience in your ecosystem. We look at how to prepare teams, select policy challenges, and promote the program in your ecosystem.

As you read through this playbook, keep the following key features in mind.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE POLICY HACK

Real policy hurdles:

• The Startup Nations Policy Hack is a tool for developing policies intended to solve specific new regulatory challenges that exist in entrepreneurship ecosystems.

• Unlike other policy hacks where challenges are chosen by a committee of organizers, the Startup Nations Policy Hack recruits team leaders who bring to the table both a specific challenge they are facing in their ecosystems, along with a preliminary or developed idea as to how to address it.

Participant preparation is key:

• Policy hacks traditionally present challenges to the teams only on the day of the event. The Startup Nations Policy Hack, however, requires that participants engage in portions of the hack before the event.

• In fact, participants must come with a minimum level of preparation in order to maximize the value of the hack and return home with a workable policy solution.

Multi-stakeholder involvement

• Teams should be challenged to refine and validate their policy solution via multi-stakeholder dialogue, meaning that each team should include a variety of perspectives on the policy hurdle they will address.

A journey rather than an event:

• The Startup Nations Policy Hack is not a typical hacking event limited to a few hours on-site. Participants in the Startup Nations Policy Hack will benefit from a process of peer testing ideas before taking the policy solutions back home to implement them.

Output-oriented:

• Participant selection should focus on applicants who are committed to implementing their solution after the hack. As such, team leaders should ideally be entrepreneurship policy advisors who are active in policy development in their governments.
INTRODUCTION

OPTIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Startup Nations is a specialized network for entrepreneurship policy advisors who are active in policy development in their countries. You may contact us for suggestions on which members can help mentor your Policy Hack teams.

You may also inquire into hiring staff support time from our global office for experienced project management and to coordinate the teams in the pre-hack phases.

Please note that we do not charge a fee to host local editions of the Startup Nations Policy Hack, but we do request that you brand it accordingly. This will allow us to promote your event among our network, as well as feature your finalists and participants on our global events and year-round policy dialogues.

Please contact cristina@genglobal.org for any of these inquiries.
“Startup entrepreneurs and ecosystem influencers got a taste of how policy development can be very similar to startup ideation hacks. Altogether, the policy hack was a success story for startups and policymakers.”

MIKK VAINIK
Co-creator of the first Startup Nations Policy Hack. Read more about his experience organizing it here.
SECTION I: STARTUP NATIONS POLICY HACK BASICS

ROLES

The Startup Nations Policy Hack involves:

- **Team leaders**: These are selected applicants who will benefit from the process of fine-tuning their specific policy idea. We recommend selecting up to 10 team leaders.

- **Expert team members**: Four (4) to five (5) team members will be recruited for each team, based on their experience in dealing with similar policy issues.

- **Mentors**: Startup Nations Policy Hack mentors have experience with policy design and implementation, and ideally with different formats of government-enterprise dialogue. They can also serve as judges for the event finals.

- **Facilitator(s) or Emcee**: They execute the run of show during the on-site hack, motivating participants. The facilitator(s) must clearly understand the rules and process that teams will follow.

- **Organizers**: The team responsible for project management, and who will facilitate the process before, during and after the event.

THE POLICY HACK JOURNEY

Participants in the Startup Nations Policy Hack will benefit from at least a two-month process. The journey for participants will include:

**Pre-hack (at least three (3) weeks)**: teams get ready to make the most of the hacking event.

- At least one preparatory group call for participants to be exposed to detailed knowledge about how the hack works.
- Access to an organizer-arranged phone discussion for each team leader to give team members details about their policy idea, the problem they wish to solve and the challenges they are facing. The Startup Nations Policy Hack organizers should facilitate this.
- During this period, teams should also be able to expect guidance from mentors, via email or during conference calls.
- Interaction with the [Startup Nations Atlas of Policies](#), for which the policy idea entry form was developed in collaboration with the World Bank to help policy actors think through various dimensions of entrepreneurship policymaking.

**Startup Nations Policy Hack event (approx. five (5) hours)**:

- Team members come together to brainstorm ways to refine the policy solution for at least one hour. They have the possibility of getting input from mentors.
- After refining the policy idea through collaboration and multi-stakeholder dialogue, each team pitches their policy solution to the audience and a panel of expert judges.
- Judges select the best three policy ideas and provide verbal feedback.
- Finalist teams have additional time to incorporate judges’ feedback, before pitching one last time.
- The winner is selected based on the criteria of most potential impact on rates of scale-ups, and most innovative policy solutions.
After the Startup Nations Policy Hack (at least one (1) month):

• After receiving help with testing and validation, it is time to implement the policy solution.
• Assistance with early implementation: those selected as the finalists will continue to receive assistance from organizers in communicating progress and connecting to mentors, for three (3) months following the hack, for the purposes of implementation feedback.
• Startup Nations Policy Hack team leaders can also continue communicating with team members willing to support the proof-of-concept and implementation.
• Those outside the top three (3) teams should still be encouraged to pursue the implementation of the policy solution, if the experience at the hack helped them overcome challenges in policy design.
• There will also be opportunities to share the implementation experience at future international GEN events.

TEAM LEADER SELECTION CRITERIA

Make sure you recruit the right team leaders who are passionate about solving the policy hurdle they propose to address. The Startup Nations Policy Hack is intended to help those who are ready to move from a relatively well-defined policy idea to an early implementation or tested policy stage.

Team leaders will receive visibility before, during and after the hack as the participants who are committed to solving a hurdle and transforming their Startup Nations Policy Hack experience into actual implementation. Please see a

sample announcement of team leaders, here.

Make sure you offer team leaders the necessary logistical support in coordinating with their assigned teams, so they can focus on policy substance.

The following are ideal candidates for team leaders of a Startup Nations Policy Hack:

• Public sector leaders focused on helping new and young businesses in their country who are looking to implement an innovative policy tool (such as a change in regulation or a specific program), but would like to put their policy idea to the test in front of peers and entrepreneurs prior to implementation.
• Government officials who want to unleash a wave of innovation in a specific industry or policy domain and who have some ideas about how to do it, but need to build momentum or wish to test the idea prior to implementation at home.
• Leaders of cities, regions or countries that are interested in creating a “regulatory sandbox” or some form of government-startup dialogue.

RECRUITING TEAM MEMBERS

Many in your network may not currently be in a position to move forward with a specific policy proposal, but perhaps they have recently implemented a policy change and as such can help those who are just undergoing change.

For other team members, the Startup Nations Policy Hack journey will offer exposure that they will need for upcoming policy changes.

In any case, organizers should expect active participation from team members.
SECTION I: STARTUP NATIONS
POLICY HACK BASICS

Their perspectives and experience should complement that of the team leader’s. Team members should include policy stakeholders from across the board, including entrepreneurs, investors and researchers in the ecosystem.

Every team should have the following seven members:

1. Team leader – the selected applicant who drives the discussion around his or her proposed policy solution.
2. Local government stakeholder – someone who could be crucial for implementing the policy.
3. Policy peer – an additional colleague of the team leader that will support him or her in the hack process.
4. Entrepreneur – someone who has activity in the field and at least some experience with the problem.
5. Investor – capital tends to be a key issue in every policy, an investor’s point of view can be helpful.
6. Civil sector representative – including an accelerator or any other NGO having experience with the local startup ecosystem who can help fine-tune the policy.
7. Note-taker – a detailed report of the discussions during the hack can help during the implementation phase.

See this sample announcement of team compositions.

SAMPLE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Please tell us how you would like to participate in the Policy Hack (team member, team leader, mentor).
- Please describe your role in entrepreneurship policymaking.
- Please tell us about the problem in your ecosystem which you are trying to solve.
- Please describe your proposed policy solution.
- What challenges are you facing in designing or implementing this solution?
- Which actors in the entrepreneurship ecosystem would ideally help you co-design a stronger solution?
“This was a great learning experience for everyone. And I think this should have a place in overall policy development. This can be a great tool for policymakers and startups and other stakeholders at every level of government to really be innovative in their policymaking.”

DANE STANGLER
Startup Nations Policy Hack mentor, November 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia
SECTION II: PLANNING A STARTUP NATIONS POLICY HACK

The following responsibilities and details are categorized into stages of the Startup Nations Policy Hack.

BEFORE THE EVENT

Designate a project manager. You need at least one person working full time (or two team members at half time) on participant management, communications, logistics, finance and partner management.

Select an audience. Decide whether the Startup Nations Policy Hack will be part of some bigger event or an independent event. This audience can also provide feedback and vote for their favorite policy solution.

Recruit strong team leaders. See Section I: The Startup Nations Policy Hack Basics.

Recruit mentors. They need to allocate some time to help and support the preparation of the hack teams. It is fair to ask them to devote one hour per week before the event, and after the event, one hour every two weeks for implementation mentorship.

Manage the teams. Keep the participants engaged. Organizers are responsible for facilitating the pre-hack discussions.

Build momentum. Schedule public announcements that keep the momentum going. Prepare and implement a communication plan to promote and support the policy hack, that includes web articles, newsletters, press release and social media activity.

AT THE EVENT

Offer a comfortable venue with technical support, so that participants can focus on the policy hacking. There should be enough working space for each team, as well as materials such as markers, notebooks and flip charts. Mentors should be able to walk around each team work table to provide guidance, as necessary. See sample venue, here.

Have an Emcee who understands the hack process, can explain it and facilitate the run of show. The agenda should include:

- Brief opening remarks by the organizers and/or sponsors.
- Facilitator or Emcee reminds everyone of the rules and structure for the day.
- Two (2) hours of hands-on team workshops with tools and resources, such as the Lean Policy Canvas.
- Pitching: presentations of five (5) minutes by each team, plus five (5) minutes of Q&A and feedback.
- A break for the judges to deliberate and choose the top teams.
- Final teams get one (1) hour for fine tuning their proposals and pitches
- Pitching before a broader audience for the top teams, with five (5) minutes presentation and three (3) minutes Q&A
- Voting mechanism for the audience
- Presenting the results and prizes.
- Closing remarks.

As an optional added value activity, you could build in networking sessions.
SECTION II: PLANNING A STARTUP NATIONS POLICY HACK

AFTER THE EVENT

Promote the policy outcomes following your communication plan developed during the organization of the policy hack.

Collect feedback from participants, mentors and co-organizers.

Support the implementation of the top policy hack solutions:

- Those selected as the three (3) finalists should continue to receive assistance from mentors and team members, for the purposes of implementation feedback.

- Reporting implementation results: Those who tested their policy idea at the policy hack should continue to work on monitoring it, report results and share their experience with peers via GEN platforms and future GEN events.

- Use written reports as web articles, blog posts and internal reports. Also, offer speaking opportunities upon availability.

For more information on the Startup Nations Policy Hack, please contact Cristina Fernandez at cristina@genglobal.org.

“One of the unexpected things that came out of this is the policy hack structure itself. I’m actually thinking of implementing that on the local level in Egypt in other local networks. It’s not just the result that came out, but even the process itself.”

RASHA TANTAWY
Startup Nations Policy Hack winner, November 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia
SECTION III: STARTUP NATIONS POLICY HACK OUTCOMES

FIRST GLOBAL EDITION


“The Startup Nations Policy Hack brought together representatives from startups and governments, each of whom wanted to work out a specific novel policy initiative for their country,” said Urve Palo, Minister for Entrepreneurship and Information Technology of Estonia. “By the end of the policy hack, all national representatives travelling home had a well-thought-out game plan about how to develop their ideas and begin implementing them.”

The winner, Rasha Tantawy, traveled to the Startup Nations Summit in Tallinn, Estonia, to meet a multi-sector, international team that would help her hack a solution to address barriers that provide challenges for agri-tech startups to scale.

Eight months after the hack, the policy went under implementation at the Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center in Egypt. Tantawy is working with her government and its counterpart in Greece, to establish the foundation for Twinning Open Farms.

SECOND GLOBAL EDITION

The second global edition of the policy hack took place during the Startup Nations Summit in Surabaya, Indonesia in November 2018.

The innovative solution winning the second global edition is the “gAsia Pass,” which is a new initiative by GEN Asia and other collaborators. The gAsia Pass offers a digital entrepreneur membership card which speeds up and facilitates access to government startup support services (such as a startup visa or tax benefit) and curated professional services.

LOCAL + REGIONAL EDITIONS

Inspired by the global policy hacks, local partners have organized several national editions of the Startup Nations Policy Hack around the world. These independently organized events bring together public sector leaders and experts responsible for strengthening their countries’ entrepreneurship ecosystems and roll up their sleeves and engage in hacking.

Georgia held its first Startup Nations Policy Hack in November 2018. Nikoloz Gogiashvili’s team’s proposal took first place, and focused on creating a specific accreditation system for startups and entrepreneurs, so that it can serve as a starting point for startup policy development in Georgia. This “Accreditation Center of Entrepreneurs” will maintain a constantly updated startup and entrepreneur database, identifying their capacity-level, level of activity and more. Based on this information, startups and entrepreneurs can receive specific advantages, such as tax reductions or training programs.

In Africa, a regional Startup Nations Policy Hack event worked to shed light on unseen SMEs. The hack took place in Johannesburg, South Africa in May 2018.

Team leader Jak Koseff, chief director at the Office of the Premier, Gauteng Province, South Africa, and his team members took first place at the competition for hacking a solution that addressed the 30 percent SMME procurement policy. The policy proposal was elevated and refined for the global policy hack in Surabaya, Indonesia. Koseff teamed with senior officials from across Africa under the title of “Digitizing Procurement of SMME inclusion.” The team focused on enabling the 60 to 80 percent of African SMMEs that are considered informal, to evolve into suppliers to both government and private sector value chains.