Africa Innovation Policy Manifesto

V1.2

Co-created and Adopted at the African Innovation Hub Convention
May 6-7, 2018
Kigali, Rwanda

The Innovation for Policy Alliance
I4policy.org/Manifesto

We are social innovators, entrepreneurs, innovation spaces and startups across Africa that have come together to articulate and share our views and recommendations for policies that we believe will accelerate digital transformation and contribute to more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development of our economies and societies.

The actors who have undersigned this document are ready and willing to strategically engage with policymakers to further this agenda.

Education and R&D

Recognizing that education is the most critical factor to accelerating innovation, digital and socio-economic transformation, we recommend government's urgently adopt a three-pronged approach to stimulating R&D and innovation education across the continent: investing in R&D, amplifying indigenous R&D and co-creating education systems and curriculum redesign together with a broad coalition of partners, such as labs and civic spaces, emphasizing e-learning tools and do-it-yourself, hands-on learning, rewarding experimentation, failure and critical thinking, and teaching digital and financial literacy and software skills.

These can and must be achieved through a number of approaches: 1) apportioning a percentage of national fiscal budgets to various Research and Development and Innovation education, such as our national commitments to invest 1% of GDP in R&D; 2) establishing partnerships between government labs, universities and regulatory bodies; 3) supporting Intellectual Property Rights acquisition; 4) Supporting multidisciplinary research; 5) incentivizing the private sector to develop digital infrastructure, such as internet, hardware and digital facilities for social development; 6) activating a national and pan-African sharing platform to develop national strategies, advise and inform governments; 7) encouraging diversity and inclusion in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education, particularly supporting marginalized groups such as women and people living with disabilities; 8) establishing feasible innovation channels for the market contexts; 9)

developing strategic partnerships with different ecosystem players to co-create curriculum; 10) continuing to emphasize Arts, Culture and Humanities, which remain just as important to empowering citizens to drive the continent's digital transformation, as the current emphasis on STEAM.

Public Multidisciplinary Spaces

We recommend that governments invest in public spaces, and remove restrictions for diverse citizens to gather and discuss socially and commercially relevant issues and co-design solutions.

When governments invest in civic spaces, it is critical that they do not crowd out other stakeholders by imposing outcome-based metrics which prevent or hinder the emergence of new ideas and relationships from being formed. As much as possible, Governments can partner with credible and trusted, local, grassroots and community-based groups and organizations, such as hubs and labs to foster bottom-up innovation, mutual learning, exchange and serendipity. These partners should be involved in the design or redesign (in the case of existing spaces) from conceptualization. Through this approach, both partners will recognize the value that they each bring and there will be transparency on the win-win value created.

To strengthen our economies, we must also strengthen our public spaces for the sharing of ideas, for creative expression, cultural exchange and serendipity. Civic spaces – ranging from libraries and parks to museums, performing art venues and business incubators – are the catalysts in which the creative and social economy is born and fostered. Socially relevant innovations need time and space and the convergence of diverse ideas, opinions, perspectives, experiences, and skills to emerge. Once this process has run its course, clear outcomes including roles and responsibilities from all stakeholders will be done by mutual agreement. One of the benefits is that it not only indirectly adds to various levels of the economy but directly allows parties to create their own economic ecosystem. Ultimately, this is in line with the SDG goals 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and goal 17 partnership to achieve the goal.

Digital Infrastructure

There are numerous areas where digital infrastructure can be integrated to achieve the economies of scale needed to reduce the cost of internet access and to increase the amount of African-hosted content to reduce the dependency on international fibre connections and their associated costs. In particular, governments must encourage shared ownership of fibre infrastructure, nationally and regionally.

Additionally, we implore governments to provide tax waivers for the importation and indigenous production of ICT equipment & hardware to ease access for entrepreneurs. Also, government must provide tax waivers for digital infrastructure investments to reduce the retail costs paid by consumers. In exchange, government regulatory agencies will ensure independent oversight of internet service providers to enhance transparency of their fees-for-access model and to combat monopolistic practices that result in excessive charges in many markets.

The innovation community encourages public, private, multilateral and civil society actors to provide funds for hubs to acquire ICT equipment, to support community innovation hubs as safe spaces for women & youth to access the internet. Moreover, we encourage the creation of open data portals and internet subsidies for community innovation hubs, innovation centres, and educational institutions.

We implore governments to adopt the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms, to truly unlock the potential of the internet for transformational change and social mobility. In addition, we encourage governments to go a step further and create stakeholder forums to facilitate dialogue with citizens before passing laws that might inhibit freedom of expression or privacy.

We applaud the leadership of the Smart Africa Secretariat for making bold progress in pan-African integration, notably through the elimination of roaming charges across Smart Africa member nations.

Business Registration

In order to unlock the potential of citizens to provide new business solutions and services, it is imperative that barriers to register and close businesses are reduced. Business registration must be available online and the costs – financial and transactional – must be reduced to expand access and availability. On the other hand we recommend unifying the registration process, for all statutory obligations.

New business owners must also be provided a comprehensive list of their regulatory compliance obligations, as well as legal support during the registration process. In addition, closing businesses and declaring bankruptcy must be eased and decriminalized in order to provide entrepreneurs with an opportunity to try again. These processes must also involve feedback from citizens to ensure that services are improved, inclusive and responsive.

#i4Policy

Finance for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Governments and public policy have an important role to play in addressing the financial challenges impeding innovation, and must work to reduce uncertainty and risks associated with financing innovators.

We recommend a three-pronged approach, targeting each key stakeholder:

Entrepreneurs:
Recognizing that capacity building is essential to business development and fundraising, we recommend support for organizations and institutions that provide financial training and mentoring to entrepreneurs, such as community innovation hubs. It is important that entrepreneurs have clear and precise information to access grants, venture capital, private equity funds, loans and government innovation and SME funds. Furthermore, we encourage tracking and reporting of innovation and entrepreneurship fundraising to encourage sharing of success stories and best practice.

Supporters (NGOs, corporates, multilaterals, financial institutions and angel investors):
We encourage corporates to invest in early-stage enterprise acceleration through open innovation. We recommend lower interest rates for entrepreneurs. We recommend incentives, training and additional support for angel investors to unlock funding for seed stage and pre-seed stage startups in product development phase. Moreover, we encourage funders to broaden M&E metrics to assess and prioritise impact. We recommend that funders are encouraged to create shorter and simpler exit strategies, as compared to the existing ones.

Governments:
Governments must establish incentives for angel investors, private equity, venture capital, corporates and traditional financial institutions to expand working capital and investment capital for startups. Moreover, governments should establish funding mechanisms for the community innovation hubs. We strongly encourage governments to establish innovation-for-procurement mechanisms, and to otherwise ease access for entrepreneurs and innovation hubs to public tenders.

Overall, we believe it is the responsibility of governments to provide a sustainable and friendly environment for investments.

Local and Pan-African Markets

We recommend improvements in public procurement procedures and the easing of pan-African trade. Government budgets can be used to stimulate local businesses, research and development, and job creation. Moreover, improving market access for African businesses must be addressed in concert amongst African governments. The transaction costs of trade will reduce as the levels of trade increase, and vice versa.

Governments must also assess how to ease mobility of people, as well as goods and services. From prohibitive visa regimes to poor intra-continental infrastructure, Africa's people are unable to move freely within their own continent. This prevents the acquisition and exchange of perspectives, skills, networks and access to scale their enterprises and ideas. We strongly implore governments to ease mobility for Africans in Africa.

To achieve our joint goals of inclusive development and digital transformation, we believe innovation communities and governments must work in collaboration to 1) support local & African SMEs; 2) increase access to vital information, such as national and cross-border regulatory compliance; 3) establish clear and transparently-enforced investment laws; 4) ease mobility of people throughout the continent; 5) remove barriers for cross-border financial transactions; 6) ease restrictions on intra-African trade; 7) ensure inclusion & diversity throughout the process; and, 8) guarantee effective governance, consultation and enforcement of existing and new policies.

Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual Property Rights processes are costly and time consuming; registration of brands, industrial inventions and trademarks take up to a year or more for some countries, whilst government enforcement agencies are lax on counterfeiters and infringers of IP.

Acknowledging that IP rights are territorial, we recommend that the African Union adopt a joint IP policy. Intellectual Property regimes must simplify registration, in particular reducing the costs and bureaucracy, increasing transparency and providing greater accessibility for startups to register intellectual property ownership alongside their eased business registration. If African governments can adopt and enforce a unified IP regime, it will unlock innovation and expand investment in research and development. We implore countries to build open portals for IP, providing clear and transparent information on access and processes.

Taxation System

Recognizing that current tax regimes and administration are not conducive to innovation and business growth across the continent, we recommend a simplified digital tax registration and filing system under a government one-stop shop through e-filing and e-tax procedures.

It is important to levy taxes based on the stage of the business, ranging from ideation to growth stage. This will stimulate innovation, the emergence of new industries, and R&D to increase socio-economic development. Importantly, innovative companies should receive tax incentives, rebates, holidays and other forms of relief for investments, imports, hiring and capital gains tax.

We urge governments to implement proactive tax information campaigns to ensure adequate awareness and compliance amongst taxpayers. Moreover, penalties and fines should be designed to encourage and incentivize compliance, not to destroy business growth in the face of overwhelming compliance costs. This means that new enterprises and SME's should have lower penalties. Furthermore, governments should explore alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as amnesty from penalties, staggered payment options for defaulters and rapid access facilities for arbitration. This would improve sustainability of businesses, re-startup and persistent innovation.

We encourage governments to provide tax incentives for employing youth. Internship stipends must be tax exempt for university students, and companies can receive a payroll tax holidays for hiring first-time employees and other disadvantaged groups. Finally, we encourage African governments to treat all African startups as indigenous startups.

We innovation community leaders stand ready to work together with governments, regional bodies, civil society, our peers in the i4policy Alliance and other partners to implement these recommendations.

Signatories (as of May 9th, 6am)

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL HUB NETWORKS
Afrilabs (Anna Ekeledo)
Global Innovation Gathering (GIG; Vicy Wenzelmann)
Impact Hub Network (Emily Sheldon)
JokkoLabs (Karim Sy)
Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST; Atawodi-Edun Neku)
rLabs (René Parker)

Womanity (Asmaa Guedira)

NATIONAL HUB NETWORKS
Network of Incubators and Innovators in Nigeria (Bankole Olaruntoba)
Tech and Business Hubs Network (TBHN), Ghana (Jorge Appiah)

COMMUNITY INNOVATION HUBS
Benin:
Blolab (Médard C. AGBAYAZON)
Jokkolabs (Karim Sy)
Botswana:
WoTech Botswana (Tiamelo Cindy Melemo)
Burkina Faso:
AwZouLab – AfricaNumerik Community (Mamadou Wahabou Zoungo)
BeoogoLAB (Rouamba Mahamadi)
Jokkolabs (Karim Sy)
OuagaLab (Guiella wend n mi Gildas)
Burundi:
Impact Hub Bujumbura (Nadia Nintunze)
Cameroun:
ACTIVSPACES (Crescence Elodie Nguimbus Ninga)
Ecolia Labs (Yves Cedric NTSAMA)
Jokkolabs (Karim Sy)
Central African Republic:
Centrafrique Tech (Philippe Junior Sibiro)
Cote d'Ivoire:
Incub'Ivoire (Nafi Gueye)
Jokkolabs (Karim Sy)
Ovillage (Cyriac Gbogou)
Democratic Republic of Congo:
Centre d'Innovation de Lubumbashi (Berry Numbi)
Kivu Hub (Eliud Aganze)
Ethiopia:
IceAddis (Markos Lemma)
Gambia:
Jokkolabs (Jaraitu Jallow)
Startup Incubator Gambia (David Jeng)
Ghana:
Ashesi D:Lab (Gordon Adomdza)
Hopin Academy (MacCarthy M. Mac-gbathy)
Impact Hub Accra (Will Senyo)
ISpace Foundation (Ozichukwu Nma Favour)
Kumasi Hive (Jorge Appiah)
Kumasi Hub (Emmanuel Sodji)
The Hatchery (Richard Anim)
Workshed Africa (Andrew Bimpong)
Kenya:
@iBizAfrica (Bernard Chiira)
Afralti (William Baraza)
Eldo Hub (Chepkemoi Magdaline)
iHub (Sheila Birgen)

LakeHub (James Odede)
Lawyers Hub (Linda Bonyo)
Mashani Hub (Kakel Mbumb)
Metta Africa (Esther Mwikali Muia)
Nailab Ltd (Josephine Mwangi)
SwahiliBox Hub (Aly Uweso Abubakar Salim)
Libya:
TEC – Tatweer Entrepreneurship Campus (Amir Neihoum)
Tech Impact (Kusai Freita)
Madagascar:
100startups.co (Vola Elodie Rabenivo)
Malawi:
Blantyre Entrepreneurs Hub (Dineo Mkwezalamba)
Limbe Entrepreneurs Hub   (Dineo Mkwezalamba)
Zomba Entrepreneurs Hub (Dineo Mkwezalamba)
mHub (Vincent Kumwenda)
Mali:
Impact Hub Bamako (Issam Chleuh)
Jokkolabs (Karim Sy)
Mauritiania:
JCCM iLab (Mariem Wone)
Morocco:
Jokkolabs (Karim Sy)
Le Wagon (Hanae Bezad)
Mozambique:
Ideario Lab (Alfredo Cuanda)
Niger:
CIPMEN (Zakaria Elhadj Mamouda)
L'Oasis (Rabiatou HAROUNA MOUSSA)
Nigeria:
Civic Innovation Lab (Kenneth Okonkwo)
Clean Technology Hub (Ifeoma Malp)
CoLab Innovation Hub (Joy Ajuluchukwu)
Enspire (Bankole Olaruntoba)
Harixm Solutions Hub (Ismail Haruna)
Impact Hub Lagos (Solape Hammond)
Innovation Growth Hub (Daniel Chinagozi)
Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology – MEST (Neku Atawodi-Edun)
nHub (Theodore Longji)
Roothub Accelerator Systems Limited (Wejinya Gold)
Ventures Platform Hub (Michael John)
Wennovation Hub Initiative Ltd (Ahmed Umar)
Rwanda:
FabLab Rwanda (Alex Ntale)
Impact Hub Kigali (Jon Stever)
kLab Rwanda (Alex Ntale)
Senegal:
JokkoLabs (Karim Sy)
NASA Spaceapps Dakar – Kofi Sika LATZOO
Somalia:
iRise Hub (Awil Osman)

South Africa:
Impact Hub Johannesburg (Lana Lovasic)
rLabs Capetown (Rene Parker)
South Sudan:
Junub Open Spaces-JOS (Emmanuel Lobijo Josto)
Platform Africa (Jackson Jambu John Soro)
Sudan:
249 Startups (Mutaz M. Nour)
Impact hub Khartoum (Waleed Mohamed Saidahmed Babiker)
Tanzania:
Ennovate Hub (Francis Omorojie)
STICLab Tanzania Limited (Valerian Linus Sanga)
Tanzania Data Lab (Somoe Mkwachu)
Tchad:
Wenak Labs (Ali Hassane Abdisalam)
Tunisia:
Cogite Coworking Space (Walid Hached)
Uganda:
Hive CoLab (Lorna Twinomugisha)
MUBS Entrepreneurship Innovation and Incubation Centre (Sarah Kyejjusa)
Outbox (Richard Zulu)
Refugee Innovation Center (John Jal Dak)
TechBuzz Hub (Kenneth Twesigye)
The Innovation Village (Cynthia Olga Kiconco Muheki)
Zambia:
Bongo Hive (Lukonga Lindunda)
Zimbabwe:
B2C Coworking (Constantine Nyanzero)
Impact Hub Harare (Hope Antoinette Muchanyuka)

SUPPORTERS
1000 Group Limited – Dieudonne DUSABIMANA
3Ecologias (Ricardo Luiz Freire)
Ampion (Fabian-Carlos Guhl)
ArtsinUganda (Frank Morris Matovu)
Association pour le Promotion de la Science Ouverte en Haïti et en Afrique (Anselme Mahutin Houessigbede)
Axian Group (Carole Rakotondrainibe)
Bankable (Kelechi Anyanwu Reginald)
Burkina Faso Government (Venegda Bienvenue Kosbum)
Business Botswana Youth Sector (Sethebe Manake)
Chad Innovation Summit (Hamid Khayar Oumar Defallah)
Codetrain (Richard Brandt)
Community Innovation Initiative (Norbert Makano)
Dzuka Africa (Dineo Mkwezalamba)
Faith Works Rwanda (Pretty Magede)
Green and Smart Africa (Idrissa Diatta)
Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement (Helene Guehenneuc)
Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (Rasak Adekoya)
Kudra Social Innovation Lab, Turkey (Susan Long)
Mobile Web Ghana – (Florence Toffa)

Olaniwun Ajayi LP (Damilola Oyebayo)
Online Hub Education Services (Ishola Adebayor Monsur)
Root House (Kirenga Karengera)
Solidarity Network for Young Congolese Entrepreneurs (Kakel Mbumb)
Sustainable Development Solutions Network-Youth (Eric Nkinzingabo) – (Nigeria)
Sustainable Development Solutions Network-Youth (Eric Nkinzingabo) – (Rwanda)
University of Mines and Technology, Ghana (Simon Asare)
Vilsquare MakerHub (Obasegun Ayodele)
Viyola Foods (Olayinka Ayowole)
YouthHubAfrica (Medupin Olusegun)

AFFILIATES
African Innovation Foundation and Innovation Prize for Africa (Pauline Mujawamariya)
JamaaFunding (Alpha Nury)
Malaaka (Awa Sow ep. Ebion)