Student Data Competition 2017

Submission Guidelines

Summary
The Global Accelerator Learning Initiative invites undergraduate and graduate students to answer a key question for the field of entrepreneurship by analyzing a unique, global dataset on acceleration and early stage entrepreneurs. The competition is open to individual and team submissions from universities around the world. Compete for both fame and fortune: the winning team will have their submission published on www.galidata.org and will be awarded a prize of $2,000. Up to two runner-up submissions may be awarded $500 each.

Background: The Global Accelerator Learning Initiative

Small and growing businesses in emerging markets have the potential to drive economic growth, promote sustainability, and support equity around the world. They create jobs in underserved communities and provide access to critical goods and services. But these businesses often face barriers to achieving that potential. In particular, they often find it difficult to access finance: they are too large for microfinance institutions but not established enough to qualify for a traditional bank loan. Private equity and venture capital is relatively scarce in emerging markets, especially smaller deals that back early stage startups.

In recognition of this challenge, a new wave of entrepreneur-support organizations has emerged in the past decade to help these small businesses grow. Accelerators are one distinct type of these organizations. These are time-bound programs that work with cohorts or "classes" of promising ventures to provide mentorship and training, with a special emphasis on connecting them with the investment required to scale quickly. These programs "accelerate" early stage businesses towards success or failure, speeding up the process to match startup companies with investors and markets.

This type of program first emerged in the United States with Y Combinator and Techstars. However, since 2011 hundreds of accelerators have launched around the world in places like Nairobi, Mexico City, and Mumbai. Investors, development agencies, and governments have been investing millions of dollars into these programs, motivated by their potential to drive growth, spur innovation, and increase employment opportunities in emerging markets.

Despite this interest, rigorous research on the effectiveness of acceleration methods has not kept pace. We currently know little about their effectiveness or how differences across programs and models influence entrepreneur performance.

To address this gap, Social Enterprise @ Goizueta at Emory University (SE@G) and the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) launched the Global Accelerator Learning Initiative (GALI) in collaboration with a consortium of public and private funders. GALI builds on the work of the Entrepreneurship Database Program at Emory, which has been working with accelerator programs around the world to collect and analyze data describing the many entrepreneurs that they attract and support.

The Entrepreneurship Database Program works with dozens of accelerators to collect standardized data during the application process. From this effort, the Entrepreneurship Database Program has grown to include information on thousands of early stage enterprises that have applied to dozens of accelerator programs. This data has the potential to provide enormous insight into the ventures that are seeking acceleration around the world.

Research Question

We invite students to help GALI investigate an important question about early stage entrepreneurs using data from the Entrepreneurship Database Program:

In our dataset of applicants to accelerator programs, what types of ventures (and entrepreneurs) are more or less likely to have received investment? Do different types of early stage ventures attract investment from different sources?

Research from practitioners supporting small and growing businesses has shown that there is a gap in financing at the early stages, particularly in emerging markets and for social enterprises. Accelerators may help bridge this gap. For example, recent research from GALI demonstrated that the impact of acceleration on raising equity was similar in emerging markets to that in developed markets. The question of who is receiving investment, and what kind of ventures attract different types of capital from different sources is an important one that has not been fully investigated.

The Entrepreneurship Database Program 2016 data file includes anonymized information from over 8,500 early stage ventures that applied to one of nearly 100 accelerator programs between 2013 and 2016. Variables include basic information about each venture's business model and operations, performance to date, and future goals as well as information on members of the founding team. Keep in mind that the data that you will analyze contain information about entrepreneurs and ventures at the time they apply to accelerator programs. Please refer the "data dictionary" tab in the data file for a complete description of all the variables in the 2016 data file.

We invite submissions that address the question posed above by creatively analyzing this dataset. To access the data, complete this data access form, and indicate that you plan to participate in the 2017 GALI Student Competition. Note that the question is broad by design, because we submissions to hone in on the most promising insights from the data. So, be sure to apply your own creative approach to providing a powerful data-driven answer, and telling a story through data.

To see how this data has been used to address other questions, take a look at the Publications page on the GALI website.

Timeline & Submission Guidelines

- September 18th: Student Competition Launches
- December 1st: Submissions Due
- January 12th: Winners Announced

Each student team must use the submission template to be eligible for consideration. Submissions should be sent via email to Abby Davidson at abigayle.davidson@aspeninst.org and must be received by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on December 1st. The overall competition winner will be announced on January 12th, and in early 2018 the winning submission will be published on www.galidata.org. The winning

submission will be awarded $2,000, and two additional teams may be awarded honorable mention prizes of $500 each.

Eligibility

- The competition is open to students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs anywhere in the world.
- Individual and team submissions will be considered. Teams should be made up of no more than five people.
- Each team should nominate a team leader who will submit the paper and serve as the main point of contact for questions about the project. However, team members will recognized alphabetically on the published submission. The monetary prize for the winning team will be divided evenly among team members.
- There is no limit on the number of entries from one program or school.
- A faculty member may serve as advisor to student teams, with the understanding that the primary work is done by the students. Advisors should not be involved in setting the direction of the analysis or in the analysis itself. It is not necessary for a team to have an advisor to be eligible.

Judging Criteria

The GALI team will evaluate submissions on the following criteria:

- Creativity of the chosen analytical approach;
- Quality of the data analysis;
- Clarity and coherence of the insights; and
- Quality of the writing and presentation of the data and insights.