



AFRIHACK 2026 GUIDE

Tips For Building A Winning Team

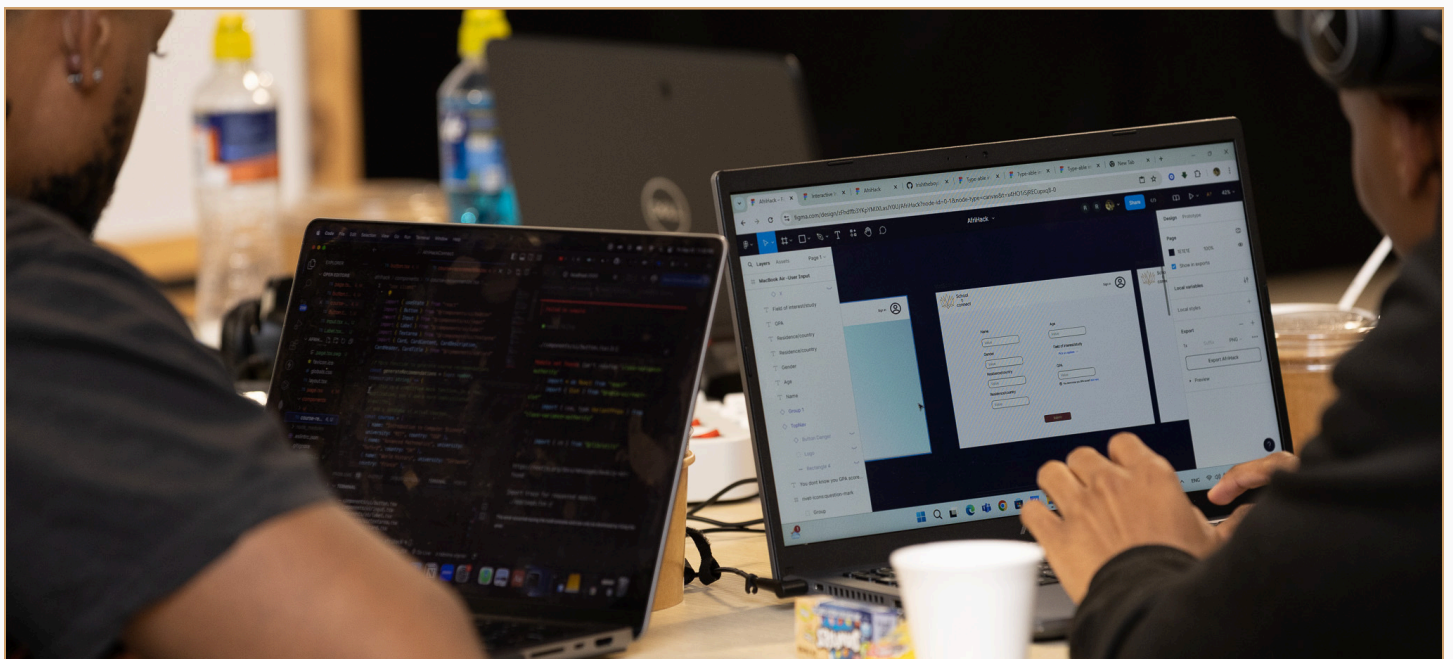
AFRIHACK 2026: PROSPECTIVE TEAM GUIDE

How to Prepare, Build Your Team, and Succeed at AfriHack

Welcome!

So you're thinking about entering AfriHack. That's a great decision. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know to build a strong application, form a winning team, and prepare for the 24-hour challenge.

Whether you're a first-year student or a seasoned coder, these tips will help you show up ready.



1. What is a Hackathon?

A hackathon is a time-bound event where teams collaborate to build a working prototype that solves a real-world problem. It's not about hacking into systems – it's about creative problem-solving under pressure.

Myth	Reality
"You need to be an expert coder"	Teams need a mix of skills: coding, design, business thinking, presentation
"You must build a finished product"	A functional prototype is the goal – not a polished app
"You code alone in a corner"	Hackathons are collaborative; mentors and teammates help
"Only computer science students can win"	Winning teams include designers, business students, and domain experts

2. How AfriHack Works

Application - Your team submits a brief proposal, team composition, and a GitHub portfolio link

Selection - Teams are chosen based on skill diversity, past projects, and motivation

Regionals - 24 hours of building, mentoring, and pitching at a venue in your province

Summit (if you win) - Top 2 teams from each region go to Cape Town for the national finals

The Core Challenge Question: "How can we leverage technology to build a more sustainable, connected, and prosperous future for South African communities?"

The challenge could be focused on any sector: education, healthcare, finance, agriculture, energy, mobility, or something else entirely. You won't know until the morning of!

3. Building the Best Team

Teams must have **exactly** 4 members. A winning team is not four coders – it's a mix of complementary skills.



The Ideal Team Composition

Role	Skills Needed	Who Could Fill This
The Builder	Strong coding skills, knows frameworks, can architect a solution	Computer Science, Software Engineering, IT student
The Designer	Can design interfaces, thinks about user experience, creates wireframes	Design, Multimedia, HCI student, or a coder with design sense
The Strategist	Understands business models, can articulate value proposition, thinks about impact	Business, Economics, or any student with entrepreneurial mindset
The Communicator	Confident speaker, can tell a story, manages presentation and Q&A	Any discipline – often the same as Strategist, but can be separate

Tips for Forming Your Team

Do	Don't
Recruit from different year levels	Four first-years with no senior guidance
Diversity is an advantage	All four from the same friend group with identical skills
Look outside your department	Ignore business and design skills
Test working together on a small project first	Form a team just because you're friends

4. Preparing Your Application

Your application is your first chance to impress. Here's what judges look for:

- GitHub Portfolio (Required). At least one team member must provide a link to a GitHub repository showcasing a previous project. This doesn't need to be perfect – but it must show that you can:
 - Write functional code
 - Document your work (a good README file)
 - Use version control (commits, branches)

If your team doesn't have a GitHub portfolio yet:

- Build a small project together before applying
- Contribute to an open-source project
- Document a class assignment properly

Team Proposal

You'll be asked to briefly describe:

- Your team's motivation for entering
- Any relevant experience (hackathons, projects, coursework)
- Why your team is well-suited for AfriHack
- Keep it concise, specific, and enthusiastic.



5. How to Prepare Before the Event

Practice a mini-hackathon: Set a 6-hour timer with your team and build something small. Learn how you work together under pressure.

Prepare a tech stack: Decide which frameworks, APIs, and tools you'll use. Have them installed and tested before the event.

Create reusable templates: Have a basic web or mobile app template ready. You can build on it during the hackathon.

Research past winners: Look at previous AfriHack projects (available on our website). What made them successful?

Discuss backup ideas: Your first idea might not work. Have 2-3 problem areas you're excited about.

Assign roles in advance: Who codes? Who designs? Who researches? Who presents? Know before you arrive.

6. What to Bring (and What Not to Bring)

Bring	Leave at Home
Laptop and charger	Extra monitors (space is limited)
Headphones	Alcohol or substances
Student ID	Outside food (we provide meals)
Government ID (for prize fulfillment)	Anything valuable you don't need
Comfortable clothes (blanket and pillow are optional)	Outside guests without permission



9. Tips from Past Winners

"Don't overcomplicate. We won with a simple solution that worked perfectly, while teams with bigger ideas struggled to get their demo running."

– 2025 Winner

"The overnight is hard. We took shifts – two people slept for 3 hours while two kept building. We were fresher in the morning."

– 2024 Winner

"Use the mentors. They gave us a crucial piece of advice on our business model that changed our whole pitch."

– 2025 Winner

"We practiced our pitch 12 times before Sunday. By the time we presented, we could do it in our sleep."

– 2025 Winner

10. Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to be an expert coder?

No. Teams need a mix of skills. If you're a designer or business student, you're valuable.

Can I apply as an individual?

No. You must apply as a team of exactly 4. Use the tips above to find teammates.

What if my team doesn't have a GitHub portfolio?

Build one. Even a small class project, properly documented, is enough.

Do we have to stay overnight?

You can leave, but you'll miss mentor sessions and collaboration. Most teams stay.

What if we don't finish?

Many teams don't finish everything. Judges care about a working demo of the core feature, not a fully polished product.

Is there a fee to participate?

No. AfriHack is free for selected teams. Travel and accommodation for the Summit are covered.

What do winners receive?

Top 2 teams per region: Cash prize, sponsor prizes, and all-expenses paid trip to the AfriHack Summit in Cape Town



11. Checklist Before You Apply

- |□| Form a team of exactly 4 members with complementary skills
 - |□| Assign roles (Builder, Designer, Strategist, Communicator)
 - |□| Ensure at least one team member has a GitHub portfolio ready
 - |□| Write your team proposal (motivation, experience, why you'll succeed)
 - |□| Complete the online application form
 - |□| Secure department endorsement
 - |□| Submit before the deadline
-

12. Ready to Apply?

Applications close May 31st. Visit our website to register:
empirasglobal.com/afrihack26

Connect With Us

- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, Youtube): **@empirasglobal**
- Download SABC+ and subscribe to the AfriHack channel
- Questions: **info@empirasglobal.com**

We can't wait to see what you build. Hackathons are a fantastic opportunity to learn, collaborate, and build something amazing. By following these tips and strategies, your team can increase its chances of success and have a memorable experience.

Good luck, and happy hacking!

