# AMPION Venture Bus Handbook

**This Handbook:**

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## ABOUT the AMPION Venture Bus:

## Introduction and Purpose

The AMPION Venture Bus is a 7 days venture building competition on a bus that brings together aspiring entrepreneurs on a road trip through Africa to conceive, build and launch the next leading African digital start-ups.

The Venture Bus serves several interrelated purposes. Most importantly it is

* A **platform that brings together founders** both from Africa and the rest of the world interested in exploring opportunities in the emerging African markets and ready to start a company focussed on these markets. In the bus, they connect and work together and thus founding teams are created
* An **intensive training programme** about venture creation through learning by doing. Entrepreneurship and venture creation is best learned by actively working on a concrete project example. The Venture Bus experience is an authentic real world opportunity to learn what is important to make a (social) business successful and to get your hands dirty while working on a real project.
* A **launching pad for promising business ideas**: During the seven days, the teams on the bus are guided through a tailored program, which supports the venture creation process. Task plans and scheduled milestones, combined with training sessions and mentoring on essential business areas (see program details below) keep the team on track, make sure that all areas of the business development process are being worked on and that the teams are supported in the process to gain a thorough understanding and build a solid foundation for the business. Furthermore, the program provides feedback possibilities both from the mentors, the other participants, the local community and the wider network to allow for a rapid learning curve and fast development. The learnings from the bus and the network built also facilitate the success of the start-up after the program has completed.

The Venture Bus serves more important goals, such as connecting the dots of the regional - and international – start-up ecosystem and facilitate international exchange, promoting entrepreneurship among young people as a promising career opportunity, encouraging the development of innovative ideas set to create solutions to local challenges and boost regional development, raising awareness internationally from investors, entrepreneurs, partners and the public about the immense opportunities and contributing to a positive coverage of Africa internationally which adequately portrays the immense opportunities that are ripe in Africa, just to name a few.

## WHO is on the bus: the AMPIONEERS

For each AMPION Venture Bus, 40 participants – the so-called AMPIONEERS – are select through open worldwide online application, which is promoted through AMPION’s network, its partners and the media.

Applicants give information about their professional background, entrepreneurial drive and experience as well as their future ambitions.

Applications are evaluated by AMPION and rated based on the selection criteria

From the applications a target 40 participants in total are chosen per bus to become the AMPIONEER batch.

The participants are chosen based on a consideration of the individual selection criteria detailed below as well as the criteria for the group composition.

**Individual Selection Criteria:**

The following selection criteria are used for the evaluation of the applications. Additionally, the c

* **Start-up experience**: Preference is given to applicants who have already gained experience either through an own start-up, working for one or through other involvements in the start-up scene.
* **Professional experience**: Significant work experience also outside the start-up field is considered a bonus. However, AMPION also seeks to provide chances for younger aspiring entrepreneurs and thus seeks a balance of more and less experienced AMPIONEERS.
* **Entrepreneurial Passion:** AMPION seeks to provide a launching pad for aspiring entrepreneurs ready to fulfil their dream and start a company. Therefore, preference is given to people who demonstrate a strong desire to found their own company in general and furthermore, to those who show a strong willingness to work on a project in the bus relevant to them and to execute also after the bus.
* In case of special topic for the bus: **Subject-matter expertise** in the chosen topics of the bus is highly valuable to ensure the availability of thorough understanding and insight knowledge and is thus given preference in the selection.

**Group Composition Criteria:**

To ensure an adequate availability & distribution of different skill sets required, foster collaboration and exchange among participants, facilitate international exchange and promote female entrepreneurs, the following quotas are guidelines for the group composition:

* **Geography**: 50% from the region, 50% internationals
* **Gender**: 50% women, 50% men (we know this is hard, but we aim for it)
* **Skills**: at least 25% programmers, at least 25% designers, 50% business experts. Also specialists in specific target industries are sought after, such as healthcare, fin-tech, agriculture specialists for relevant industry knowledge
* **Experience**: An adequate mix of more experienced and less experienced participants (not too big spread)

## WHAT is going on during the trip: The program

While the exact timing of the trip is subject to the route chosen, local considerations, and the partners and organisers, the following outline serves as an orientation of the program.

On the bus, AMPIONEERS will work on their ideas in teams of ideally 3-4 persons with a diverse background. Furthermore, we foster the exchange among participants and facilitate Peer-learning. We also provide mentoring on board: on board are experienced entrepreneurs from established startup hubs like Silicon Valley who transfer their knowledge to less experienced participants. Even after the trip, these professionals often continue to serve as mentors and business angels.

Additionally, we teach participants to pitch ideas, introduce them to supporting infrastructure (incubators, accelerators, universities, regulations), and promote entrepreneurship to local youth along the way.

The elements of each day are flexible and can be adjusted to driving plan and event schedules. **Keep in mind that this is a draft only.**

### Pre-Bus Phase

* Online community to get to know each other before, preliminary exchange of ideas and share useful materials
* Info package sent out to all participants

### Day 1: Kick-off

(Exact scheduling and details in Program ExcelSheet)

The kick-off workshop is a one-day workshop that is being held at a permanent location in the city where the Venture Bus Tour starts.

**DAY:**

* Arrival:
  + Welcome and Registration
* Introduction:
  + Presentation of AMPION, the Bus team, AMPION’s activities,
  + Presentation of local host & space
  + Overview of the AMPION Venture Bus: The purpose of the trip, the detailed plan for the week and milestones, stories & videos of last year
* Team Building
  + Multiple sessions/games directed at getting to know each other, personally, professionally, passions. Group activities and individual presentations
  + First presentation of ideas
* Thematic info sessions:
  + If applicable: Introduction of partners & the information about the core topics of the specific bus (Such as Healthcare Innovation, Open Governance etc.)
* Training
  + Business Model Canvas, Business Plan Elements
  + Lean Start-up
  + The perfect Pitch & Criteria for Evaluation (or: What do we expect on day 7)
* Inspiration
  + Speech of successful local entrepreneurs, potentially also of mentors
  + “Field Report” from AMPION Alumni –> about the trip and what they currently do

**EVENING**

* Fun & Team Building
  + Dinner/(Short) Night out/ Evening group activity

If fitted, the idea presentation can also be part of day one, and be repeated on day 2.

### Day 2: Team Formation and Idea Statement (on the Bus)

Driving starts. The whole program is executed in the bus, during breaks and in the hotel. Generally the second day is focussed on team building and group formation. Therefore, it is not ideal for an evening event at a local hub/co-working space but rather a private event at the hotel should be chosen. However, if the opportunity is good, a local event can also be organised.

**DAY**

* Idea presentation (bus)
  + Individual presentation of ideas or interests
* Training:
  + Design Thinking
* Facilitated team formation & Idea refinement: (bus & breaks)
  + Time for all participants to move around and talk to each other about skills and ideas
  + Breaks and facilitated team building sessions/games to ensure everybody talks to everybody
  + Idea refinement with facilitators: What is the problem you are solving? What is your solution? What is your vision?

**EVENING**

* If local event is planned:
  + Presentation of host venue & activities
  + Separate working sessions for AMPIONEERS and presentation for AMPION/ workshop for local entrepreneurs)
* First team pitching in the evening (partner location or (preferred): hotel)
  + Presentation of the teams and the ideas in front of the whole group

**Milestone:**

* All participants form part of a diverse (group composition criteria) team of 3-4 people
* All teams have a defined problem statement, a proposed preliminary solution and a vision

### Day 3: Understand your customer and your market

Driving continues. The whole program is executed in the bus, during breaks and in the hotel/local host location

**DAY**

* Training
  + Customer: Right Research, Interviewing & Observing, Empathy Map, Avatar
  + Market: Workshop on market & competitors research and analysis
* Group work on:
  + Understanding the problem
  + Get to know your customer
  + Get to know your market, learn about your competitors

**EVENING**

* Event:
  + Presentation/tour of host venue & activities
  + Pitches: Presentation of start-up idea, customer and market
  + If desired: Separate working sessions for AMPIONEERS and AMPION workshop for locals)

**Milestones:**

* Clear description of your customer and target group
* Clear description of the market size
* Overview of competitors

### Day 4: Ideation and Prototyping

**DAY**

* Training
  + Ideation & Prototyping
* Group work on:
  + Ideation, Prototyping
  + Hands on: Develop Wireframes, application plans

**EVENING**

* Event: as above
* Pitch: The start-up idea, customer and market & first suggestions for solution (visual and functional)

**Milestones:**

* Wire-frames for proposed solution

### Day 5: Business Model, Brand & Go To Market Strategy

- **DAY**

* Training:
  + The perfect Pitch
* Group work on:
  + Business Model Canvas
  + Brand creation
  + Defining Go to Market Strategy

**EVENING**

* Event: as above
* Pitch: The problem & solution, customer & market, visuals of prototype

**Milestones:**

* Wire-frames for proposed solution

### Day 6: The perfect Pitch

* Training
  + Story Telling
  + Perfect Pitch Training
* Group Work:
  + Create story and prepare ppt

**EVENING**

* Event: ideally none, if there is a good opportunity: as above
* Pitch: Pitch Training

### Day 7: The grand finale

Venue: Partner conference / host location

* Final Pitch polishing
* Grand Final Event:
  + Presentation of AMPION and host
  + Pitching
    - All teams pitch their venture in front of a jury and the audience
  + Selection:
    - Jury retreats and selects the winners
  + Award ceremony
    - Awards are handed in on stage to the winning teams
* Dinner & Party!

More detailed information can be found in the programme.

## Preparing an AMPION Venture Bus

1. **Applicants**

We are currently running applications on F6S. Everybody who comes from the region or has a specific interest in the region can apply worldwide. We select them on a rolling admission based on the criteria mentioned above.

**Once they are selected:**

Information to send to applicant:

* Terms and Conditions
* Tips & Tricks / Packing List
* Program overview
* Collection of Resources for preparation

Information / Documents needed from participants

* Signed Terms Sheet (Ideally already online)
* Copy of Passport, ideally with Visa
* Vaccination certificate if needed for border crossing (e.g. Yellow Fever Vaccination to enter Rwanda)
* T-shirt size (ideally with application)
* Medication requirements / Illnesses?
* If we pre-order food: dietary constraints?

**AMPIONEER Group Building**

4 weeks before:

create online community (Facebook) (Rolling basis)

* Encourage everybody to shortly present themselves
* Encourage first idea exchange
* Post interesting preparation material
* Use for reminders and ensuring that everybody got preparation kit

1. **The Bus Company and the Bus**

The following criteria are important regarding the Bus and Bus Company. For comparison, unless we already have a preferred partner or if a partner such as a travel agency or a sponsor is arranging the bus for us, please do some research in the region and ask for offers at 3-5 companies (in country of starting point, ending point or even within the region)

**The Bus:**

* Modern Bus (max 15 years) with comfortable seats
* Place for 50-60 people
* Light in the passenger cabin
* If possible: Tables in the cabin to work on!!!
* Socket outlet for common plugs, at best one per seat
* Microphone for announcements (if not available we need to bring a megaphone)
* Toilet on board? (has pros and cons, if yes only if cleanliness is secured; we don’t want to have a bus that smells)
* Check colour and painting: Ideally white/uni-coloured or simply branded bus for our own branding
* As far as possible verify that electric system will manage powering 20 laptops at a time

**The Company and Drivers**

* Respectable company
  + (business experience, references, friendly personnel, informative website)
* Route Permits
  + Make sure the company is allowed and willing to let the bus and the driver drive the whole routes (some have restrictions to drive to certain countries)
* Branding
  + Make sure we are allowed to brand the bus with self-adhering banners that cover both sides
  + Verify when and where we can brand the bus
* Drivers
  + If driving times of more than 8h are planned per day, make sure 2 drivers accompany the tour
  + Verify that the drivers have licences
  + Check what languages they speak
  + Talk to the company beforehand whether the drivers are getting allowances for food and sleeping arrangements during the trip, or how this aspect is being handled (We need to know their and our responsibilities for the days they are with us)
* Legislation & Safety
  + If possible verify that bus and company comply with national & regional safety ad road legislations
* Price & Payment:
  + When obtaining specific offers, clearly state that our trips are often no round trips but will end in a different city and country than where they started. Make sure the offer does not require us to bring the bus back.
  + Verify early on which payment methods and modalities the company will accept.
  + Ideally arrange no or low down-payment to secure booking and pay the rest on site
  + Prices will depend on the region and the package. For last year’s quotes ask Fabian Carlos Guhl or Marianne Kuhlmann

1. **The Bus Branding Company**

The AMPION Venture Buses are being branded with our AMPION logo and the logos of our supporters (See pictures).

* Get info about the Bus for the Agency
  + Verify with bus company that we are allowed to brand the bus
  + Obtain pictures of the bus and measurements to estimate the area to be branded. The number and importance of our supporters will determine the respective sizes of the logos.
* Obtaining offer:
  + Search for branding agencies at city of starting point of the Route that print on demand self-adhering stickers in the large format (Will depend on size of the bus)
* Prices and services
  + Obtain prices quotes (material production and sticking service) of several agencies to select the best offer
  + Check out offer of services such as branding at bus company’s location and verify the time they need to brand the bus

1. **The Hotels**

Unless we have a clear preferred location/recommendation, obtain quotes from several hotels in each city to compare and choose the best offer.

Reach out to local partners to ask them about suggestions.

* **Price**
  + Always try to negotiate a special AMPION price or at least a group price.
  + Price estimate per person an night: 15-25USD with breakfast
* **Quality**:
  + Assure quality by confirming ratings and references at Trip Advisor and similar pages and/or by asking locals.
* **Location**:
  + Save neighbourhood!
  + If possible close to the day’s event partner location
  + If possible close to some shops or bars
  + Is possible not too far away from our road
* **Sleeping Rooms**
  + 2 to max 4-bed rooms for participants and AMPION team with private bathrooms
  + Single rooms for mentors, investors, corporate partners, journalists
  + Further availability of single bed rooms on request
* **Facilities:** 
  + Common area/ group room to meet and work
  + In case we do not have a local event, be sure the hotel contains everything we need for an event (See below)
    - Separate rooms for internal pitching
* **WI-FI**
  + Make sure the hotels have WIFI and that the network is strong enough for 40 people to connect at the same time
  + Start-up Weekend Guide: Is there enough bandwidth? A good rule of thumb is to make sure there will be at least one router for every 25 people
  + (Wifi is super important for the work, especially if internet connection is a problem during the day in the bus. Also, we experienced several times last year that we crashed the WIFI because we were too many people)
* **Food:** 
  + Is breakfast included and acceptable?
  + If we have no dinner plans for the day: Do they serve good and affordable food?

1. **The local venues & events**

* **Hosts**
  + We seek to organise local events for both the participants and the general public at the cities we drive through (not all evenings though; please check Mastersheet)
  + The hosts should be locally well-connected and an attractive space to visit. We seek to partner with renowned local institutions in the cities to ensure maximum exposure and outreach.
* **The local event**
  + Many opportunities here:
  + Presentation of local host, facilities and programme
  + Local guest speakers (such as successful entrepreneurs)
  + Training sessions if of added value (see programme and local trainer availability)
  + Pitching of our teams in front of the local community to receive feedback
  + Co-working for our teams
  + Specific sessions for local entrepreneurs or the interested public while our AMPIONEERS work.
* **Contact**
  + Be sure to have the phone number of the person who runs the venue, just in case.
  + Be sure to have one contact person you can keep in touch with while approaching the venue
* **WI-FI** (esp. for venues other than tech hubs such as universities)
  + Be sure the venues have WIFI and that the network is strong enough for 40 people to connect at the same time
* **Food**:
  + Can we bring food and beverages? Can we arrange some refreshments with them?
  + Are they able to sponsor that or know potential local sponsors?
* **Rooms**
  + Is there a common area that will fit everyone for speakers, pitches and presentations?
  + If we are doing a public event for the local community: Is there enough space to allocate the estimated number of audience?
  + If we are doing one-on-one training / pitching sessions: Is there a separate room we can do this in?
* **Power** (esp. for venues other than tech hubs such as universities)
  + Are there enough power outlets? Will you need to bring in power strips/surge protectors?
* **Electronic equipment**
  + Does the venue have a projector and A/V System? If not, you will need to source one/bring one with you.
* **Tables & Chairs**
  + Make sure there are enough tables for everyone to work on – visualize the number of teams that will be working and how they will be distributed throughout the space.
* **Flipchart/Whiteboards and all that stuff**
  + Make sure there are white boards/flipcharts etc. This also can be a valuable tool to work with for the teams to visualise etc.

1. **Marketing Materials, Merchandise, AMPION Certificates and Branding**

During the event we will need the following articles, ideally ready at kick-off event

* AMPION banner with up to date supporter List
* Flyer and Sticker for the local events
* Ideally posters for the local events
* Participation Certificates (check no. of participants + a few extra)
  + Sample available from Tunisian Bus (please update)
* Certifications for winning teams places 1-3 (6 each)
  + Sample available from Tunisian Bus (please update)
* Certificates for local Partner (supporters): exact numbers depend on local partner organisation(s)
  + Sample available from Tunisian Bus (please update)
* Evaluation Sheets for Demo Day Jury
  + Sample available from Tunisian Bus (please update)
* Prices for winning team: Design/Find a Medal for the winning team, at least the first one
* AMPION T-shirts with logos
  + Design t-shirt with AMPION logo and up to date names of sponsors
  + Research prices, quality and timing for prints in Berlin (or in the kick-off country)
  + Quantity: All participants + AMPION team + mentors etc + spare T-shirts for local partners
  + Many L or XL since many Africans are tall

## RUNNING the AMPION Venture Bus

**Packing List Germany**

* First Aid Kit
* Megaphone (if the bus doesn’t have one)
* Beamer & Adapter
* Loudspeakers
* T-shirts
* Working materials for the bus

At the Event:

Day 1: Kick off and Welcome:

* The room
  + Large enough for all participants and team to sit, plus space to move for ice-breaking games
  + Equipment: Beamer + white wall/Leinwand
* Host
  + Presentation of Host

Setting up Registration:

* + At least 1, better 2 people responsible for registration
  + Box for Money
  + Receipt book (with carbon copy) or similar for written confirmation of payment
  + Online List of attendees to check them and note down their payment if needed
  + Tshirts. Stickers. Other Goodies?
  + Name Tags printed + blank reserve
  + Colour sticker so that attendees can label their name tag according to their field of expertise

Setting up Venue:

* At least 1 person to welcome and entertain arrivals
* Banner, Welcome Sign
* Flipchart or written overview of the day + short overview of whole week
* Music: Either separate music system or powerful loudspeakers
* Make sure there are enough chairs & mingling areas & areas for group activities
* Provide beverages
* Set up a running Twitter feed/slide show to entertain arrival?

Announcements:

* Rules of engagement
  + Don’t litter. Not the environment, not the bus. We have trash bags that we use. At each final stop for the day, please look around you and take the trash with you. If eating: careful
  + English is only language; in specific local circumstances French as well.
  + Look out for each other and help each other. Be respectful, many different cultures. Also to our hosts in the countries
  + Be on time! In the mornings, during the breaks, for the local events and also our own sessions in the hotels/meeting rooms. German Timing ;)
    - Who is not on time has to sing in front of the crowd

**In the Bus / On the Road:**

* Water & Food:
  + Purchase bottled water (at least 2l per person and day) every day for the next day / If there is space in the bus in the beginning for several days
  + Fruits or small sweets to pass around
* Working material
  + Colourful sticky notes
  + Lots of thin & thick pens + pens that write on the windows
  + Workshop Material
    - Print out business model canvas (A3 or similar size)
* Trash bags
* First Aid Kit
  + Diarrea, Headache, stomach ache, anti-vomit, band-aid
* If the bus has no microphone: megaphone
* Internet & electric Equipment
  + Multi-pole Sockets
  + SIM cards for the groups / alternative means for internet access
  + Powerbanks?

Day 3-5

Final Event

* Presents/Flowers for jury members and important local partners/sponsors