# Executive Summary

The Great Canadian Appathon (GCA) is a 48-hour national hackathon open to Canadian college and university students from coast-to-coast. Aspiring game developers and designers race against the clock to design the next hit mobile game.

Hackworks partners with university/colleges across Canada to set up HUBs on their campuses. Students sign up their teams to compete from these HUBs or virtual HUBs hosted on

the GCA website. The theme is announced minutes before the GCA begins and then 48-hours of hardcore coding!

# Event Goals

The GCA was created in 2011 as a way of engaging with and giving back to the student game developer community.

**Goals:**

* Give aspiring game developers the skills and experience required to design and develop a mobile game.
* Provide students with an opportunity to gain valuable insights into the video game development industry.
* Connect students with to professionals working in the video game industry

“We expect nothing less than the students to emerge from GCA3 with learning more about commercial software development than any other experience in their student careers,” - *Bill Marshall, Founder of the Toronto International Film Festival, and a member of the GCA3 judging panel*

# Event Challenges

* Recruiting participants for the GCA hackathon event
* Managing multiple HUB locations across canada
* Ensuring high quality submissions
* Providing a positive participant experience

# How we overcame these challenges

## Recruiting Participants

**Computer Science and Digital Design Programs**

We focused on recruiting from schools with computer science programs, video game development programs and digital design programs. These schools had the highest amount of students interested in competing in a game development hackathon.

**On Campus Influencers**

**Professors**

To facilitate on campus recruiting we reached out to Professors in the areas of computer science, digital design and video game development. These Professors spread the word to their students and student associations about the GCA and encouraged them to participate.

**Student Champions**

We recruited ‘Student Champions’ to help drive recruitment on campus. Student Champions put up posters around campus, spread the word about the hackathon to other students and shared the event on their social media platforms.

**Promotion Package**

We sent promotional packages to our school champions that included digital and physical marketing material that they used around campus to promote the GCA and recruit students.

## Multiple Locations Across Canada

**On-Campus Champions**

We empowered our on-campus student and teacher champions to help organize and manage the individual GCA HUBs.

**Briefing Docs**

Detailed briefing docs were provided for our school champions with all the info they needed to successfully manage a GCA HUB. It included instructions on how to organize and run a HUB, the rules and regulations, judging criteria, FAQs and promotional material.

**Online Submissions**

Multiple locations was made possible by having a online submission tool for students to submit their hackathon projects from anywhere in Canada.

## Quality Control

**Mentors**

Students had direct access to video game developers working in the industry to answer their questions and help them out.

**Pre-Hack Briefing**

Leading up to the event we prepared the participants by sharing hackathon tips for success, an overview of the judging criteria and what key things make a great mobile game.

**Resource and Tools Section**

We provided valuable game development resources and tools on the GCA website to help teams create a working playable mobile game.

**24 hour hotline**

We made a 24 hotline available over the weekend for participants to call if they needed help.

## Experience

**Provide a safe, fun environment**

Ensure that the HUBs are safe, friendly environments for students with access to clean amenities and keep the students engaged throughout the weekend.

**Community Engagement**

We built a community around the hackathon and made sure the students felt in touch with the other teams and the GCA staff throughout the weekend.

**Swag**

We sent awesome GCA and sponsor swag to the participants so that the GCA and sponsors brand would continue to be promoted past the completion of the hackathon

**Learning Experience**

The GCA provides an excellent real-life learning experience as to what it is like to work at a game studio and to collaborate with other developers on a game project.

”The teamwork experience these bright and talented young minds will gain will certainly

be invaluable to them in the future.” — *Nelly Khouzam, Chair of the Department of*

*Computer Science at Bishop’s University*

“You can take courses and develop your programming knowledge, but in a competition you have to think on your feet and troubleshoot quickly — those are very valuable skills.”

— Chính Hoàng, professor of Physics and

Computer Science at Laurier University

# Results

The GCA has taken place in all Canadian provinces with over 40 participating Canadian Universities and Colleges. A total of 1720 students have created 235 mobile games to date. GCA has had a combined media reach of 7,699,371 and has been covered by Electronic Playground, CBC news, The Globe and Mail, CTV, National Post and the Financial Post. The GCA has helped students found their own game studios and pursue their passion in game development as a career.

* 4 iterations of the GCA since its inception in 2011
* over 1720 Students in total
* 40+ Canadian Colleges and Universities have participated to date
* Over 235 Games Developed
* X Studios founded
* X prizes awarded

# Key Takeaways

* Find Influencers to help you reach your target participants
* Build a community around your event and engage with it
* Focus on providing an amazing participant experience
* Give participants the resources and tools they need to make the app you want them to