**StartUp Competition Guidelines**

**“The Problem Beneath all Other Problems” *~*** *Tristan Harris*

Technology’s promise to keep us connected has given rise to a host of unintended consequences that are catching up with us. The current COVID-19 pandemic is adding to the complexity of the problems with digital overload augmented by distance learning, social isolation and loneliness accentuated by social distancing, and the need for change coming in the forms of digital activism and using tech 4 good. Your mission is to choose one of these three categories to solve.

**Digital Overload and Digital Addiction:** Digital overload and digital addiction are an emerging global epidemic, which some link to the escalating mental health crisis among youth 10-24 including anxiety, depression, loneliness, distorted reality and social imbalance.

* **Fact**: Teenagers who spend 3 hours/day or more on devices are 35% more likely, and those who spend five hours or more are 71% more likely, to have a risk factor for suicide than those who spend less than one hour. [iGen, 2017]
* **Fact:** The percentage of non-fatal, self-harming incidents for girls 10-14 rose 189% between 2009-2015 , while college students in one study reported experiencing depression (40%), hopelessness (51%) and overwhelming anxiety (60%) in the last 12 months. [sited from 2020 note]
* **Fact:** Young people positively use technology for civic engagement, entertainment, self-expression, creativity, learning, and many other activities. Yet, unfettered access also presents challenges: 50% say they feel addicted to their phones and 68% believe social media negatively impacts their peers. [sited from 2020 note]

**Problem to Solve:** *Though there are many factors, correlative data between excessive use of digital devices and social media in multiple studies (NIH) signifies the call to address the abundance of 24/7 connectivity and need the tech-life balance. How would you address one of the most pressing human concerns of our times: youth mental health and digital overload/addiction?*

**Social Isolation and Loneliness:** In 2018Gen Z was acknowledged as the loneliest generation, and social isolation & loneliness became recognized as a public health issue. Loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, making it even more dangerous than obesity. [Cigna]

* **Fact**: A 5,000 person study found that higher social media use correlated with self reported declines in mental and physical health and life satisfaction and an increase in loneliness. [American Journal of Epidemiology, February 2017]
* **Fact**: Although social isolation is not necessarily synonymous with loneliness, early indications in the COVID-19 context indicate that more than one-third of adolescents report high levels of loneliness (4) and almost half of 18- to 24-year olds are lonely during lockdown. (4) which was an increase from 2018. (7)
* Fact: When social media is substituted for face to face interactions, the added non-verbal cues, sense of empathy and belonging can be lost. Similarly, the curated photos and idealized lives shown on social media create a negative comparison to one's present life and sense of self. (6)

**Problem to Solve:** *Gen Z is growing up with the exponential growth and use of social media, and the increase in loneliness and social isolation. There are unique pain points for Gen Z of living through the Pandemic, and the impact of social media and social distancing has increased social isolation and loneliness. How might we design or use technology to address social isolation and loneliness?*

**Digital Activism/Using Tech 4 Good:** Gen Z is known to be socially minded and committed to digital activism. From [global protests](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/technology/social-media-protests.html) against racial injustice to [the 2020 election](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/28/style/tiktok-teen-politics-gen-z.html), some Americans who use social media are taking to these platforms to mobilize others and show their support for causes or issues. Today’s youth are using communication tools in the digitized world to promote positive social change and the power of Tech 4 Good.

* **Fact**: The #MeToo hashtag has been used more than 19 million times on Twitter between 2017 and today. [Pew]
* **Fact**: Just over half of social media users ages 18 to 29 (54%) say they have used social media sites for information about rallies or protests happening in their area, and those who say these platforms are important for finding others with views about important topics has risen from 47% in 2018 to 59% today. [Pew]
* **Fact**: Black users stand out: 48% of Black social media users say they have posted a picture on social media to show their support for a cause in the past month, compared with 37% of Hispanic users and 33% of white users. [Pew]

**Problem to Solve:** While there are negative effects of living in the digital age and preponderance of social media, these tools can also be used for good. How can digital communication tools be used to mobilize and impact social change? How might you use technology to promote digital activism around a specific environmental, social or diversity issue?

**Your Mission**

**Help us change how technology is designed, regulated, and used. Propose a solution that could address one of the above three categories to create a healthier and more humane digital world, one that serves the interests of people, not profits.**

Given the scope (use, design, regulation) and complexity of the dilemma (mental health, distraction, impact of distance learning and social distancing, and the design of technology to be addictive) we encourage *any* type of creative initiatives including business model concepts, advocacy or communication campaigns, exhibits, high/low tech applications, products, and pretty much anything else in between. The sky’s the limit. Your future is your future.

Your idea should be **innovative** and **aligned** with LookUp’s vision: student-led movements and student-created models for digital use and design will help youth thrive in this digital world.

This is your call to lead a movement and chance to address one of the most pressing human concerns of our times - the impact of digital technology on youth’s mental health and success in life. Let’s see what you’ve got!

**Concept Note Requirements**

*Teams must complete and submit the following Concept Brief by November 15th. Pictures, videos, renderings, storyboards, and other design materials are strongly encouraged.*

**Your Solution**

1. Describe the specific problem you will address. Using data-driven information, please include detailed information explaining the causes of this problem and why it still exists. Feel free to include details about the stakeholder experience. (1,000 characters)
2. Describe the specific program, product(s), campaign or ideas you will implement to solve the problem. (1,000 characters)
3. How is your idea unique, innovative or an improvement upon existing efforts? Why will users want it or choose it over other alternatives? (1,000 characters)
4. Who is your target user or beneficiary? How will their lives be better off because of your idea? If appropriate, identify the targeted age band for your solution (e.g. Middle School, High School, College, Post College). (1000 characters)
5. Describe how you expect to executeyour proposal. Is this something that can be done on campus? Is this for a larger user group? Include an outline with timeline and key milestones. (1000 characters)
6. How will you track and assess the success of your project? (500 characters)
7. How much money do you anticipate you will need in two years and how will you use the grant funds? (500 characters)

**About the Applicant(s)**

1. Explain why you are so passionate about the problem and the population you described above. (1,000 characters)
2. What skills or experiences demonstrate that you and your team will be able to implement your solution and attract additional resources (money, people, etc.) to your project? (1,000 characters)
3. TEAMS: In order for us to better understand your team we are interested in learning about how you came together. How long have you known each other, and in what context? (500 characters)
4. TEAMS: Describe your individual roles on the project? (500 characters)

**Helpful Resources to Get You Started**

**Background:** [The Great Awakening](https://thriveglobal.com/stories/the-great-awakening/?utm_source=Newsletter_AH&utm_medium=Thrive) by Arianna Huffington.

**The Problem:** [The Social Dilemma Trailer](https://youtu.be/uaaC57tcci0) and [The Social Dilemma on Netflix](https://www.netflix.com/title/81254224)

**Videos**

* [Discover LookUp.live](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-jSknstjW4&t=21s)
* [Podcast with Joe Rogan & Jonathan Haidt: Social Media is Giving Kids Anxiety](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI6rX96oYnY) (20 min)
* [Smartphones are Making Us Stupid](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpoShCYSL_U) with Simon Sinek
* [The Panda Is Dancing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=tf9ZhU7zF8s&feature=emb_logo) with Max Stossel

**Articles**

* [Impact of Social Media on Mental Health Well Being](https://cognitiontoday.com/2019/08/effect-of-social-media-on-mental-health-well-being/)
* [Have Smartphones Ruined a Generation?](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/) Atlantic, 2017
* [Social Media, Social Life](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-2018). Common Sense Media, 2018.
* [Common Sense Media. (2016). Dealing with devices: The parent-teen dynamic.](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/technology-addiction-concern-controversy-and-finding-balance-infographic)

**Research**

* [Digital Overload and Addiction](https://www.itstimetologoff.com/digital-detox-facts/): Compilation of evidence based research divided by category from [Time to Log Off](https://www.itstimetologoff.com/)

**Digital Overload and Digital Addiction**

* [TWEENS, TEENS, TECH, AND MENTAL HEALTH: Coming of Age in an Increasingly Digital, Uncertain, and Unequal World.](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/tweens-teens-tech-and-mental-health-full-report-final-for-web1.pdf)
* [The coronavirus lockdown is forcing us to view ‘screen time’ differently](https://www.adnews.com.au/news/the-coronavirus-lockdown-is-forcing-us-to-view-screen-time-differently)
* [Smartphones are Making Us Stupid](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpoShCYSL_U) with Simon Sinek

**Social Isolation and Loneliness**

* [Smartphones are Making Us Stupid](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpoShCYSL_U) with Simon Sinek
* [Infographic on Social Isolation and Social Media](https://online.regiscollege.edu/blog/does-social-media-create-isolation/#:~:text=However%2C%20social%20media%20usage%20may,to%20feelings%20of%20social%20isolation) from Regis College
* [The Impact of Social Isolation and Loneliness on the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in the Context of COVID-19](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7267797/#bib73)
* [Cigna US Loneliness Survey](https://www.multivu.com/players/English/8294451-cigna-us-loneliness-survey/docs/IndexReport_1524069371598-173525450.pdf)

**Digital Activism/Tech 4 Good**

* [Genuine Social Media Activism: A Guide for Going Beyond the Hashtag](https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-activism/)
* [8 Massive Moments Hashtag Activism Really, Really Worked](https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/hashtag-activism-hashtag10-twitter-trends-dresslik/)
* [Activism on social media varies by race and ethnicity, age, political parties](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/13/activism-on-social-media-varies-by-race-and-ethnicity-age-political-party/)
* [Activism by *DoSomething.org*](https://www.dosomething.org/us/about/articles)
* Middaugh, Ellen. [“Social Media and Online Communities Expose Youth to Political Conversation, but Also to Incivility and Conflict.](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2016/08/26/social-media-and-online-communities-expose-youth-to-political-conversation-but-also-to-incivility-and-conflict/)” London School of Economics, Aug. 2016, [Blog](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2016/08/26/social-media-and%20online-communities-expose-%20youth-to-political-conversation-but-also-to-incivility-and-conflict/.)