

Joint Programme on Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training, **South Africa**



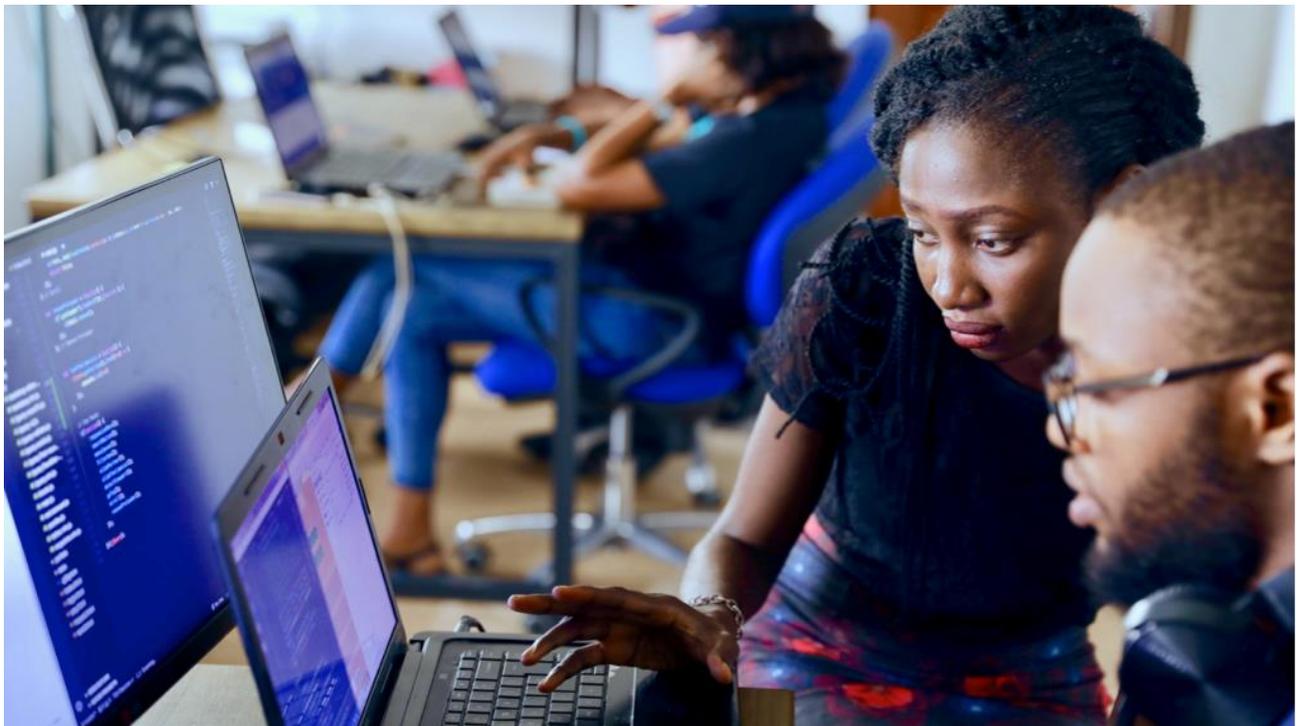
SKILLS CHALLENGE INNOVATION CALL

BOOSTING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY THROUGH DIGITAL SKILLS

Participants Guidelines

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1. Context

The world is currently in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). This latest era has brought with it an increasing use of digital technology including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR) and the Internet of Things (IoT). It is estimated that 230 million digital jobs will be created in Africa by 2030 which will result in a need of 650 million more training opportunities.¹

The 4IR is already underway in South Africa, and estimations expect it to amount to a value of R1.4 trillion by 2026.² South Africa has the potential to generate 4.5 million new cross-sectional jobs, because of productivity improvement, strategic policy implementation, and the evolution of technology, however, it is also faced with projections of the displacement of 3.3 million existing jobs, by 2030.³ The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has required people to change the way they work and consume. This has affected already existing trends of digitalisation, accelerated digital transformation faster expected and placed skills at the centre of the digital economy.

Currently, the demand for digital skills outweighs the supply, as many South African businesses lack the skills needed to operate and compete in the digital economy.⁴ Digital skills will be required in all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, infrastructure, manufacturing, and financial services. There is a high level of awareness for the importance of digital skills to secure employment, but also a need for young people to learn how to use digital platforms. The digital economy also opens opportunities for digital entrepreneurship, which contributes to continued economic growth: digital businesses do not only offer new products and services, they also leverage new technology and business models, which in turn open up new markets.

However, skills development ecosystems and labour intermediation services are not fully prepared for the digital era. The skills gap has been noticeably growing as there are less youth with digital skills entering the workforce and the demand from employers has been increasing. Young people need cutting-edge learning services and opportunities to realize decent work, while training institutions, particularly technical and vocational education and training (TVET), seem to have limited resources and innovation capacity to keep the pace of digital transformation. The challenge is amplified by the fact that access to educational resources might be limited along racial, economic, gender, disability and geographic lines. The number of youths who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) currently sits at over 12,6 million (out of 30,8 million youth). The potential of skills development interventions to help socially and economically empower young people, particularly those who are NEET, is clear.

The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have joined forces in South Africa to enhance digital skills for youth and contribute to the creation of decent work in the digital economy, through the implementation of South Africa's National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2021–2025). This forms part of the **Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth** initiative that strives to help young South Africans to access the digital economy. The partners recognize the key role of public, private and civil society organizations in fostering an innovative and inclusive approach to skills systems that can bring about progress towards making decent work for all a reality.

¹ https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/ed6362b3-aa34-42ac-ae9f-c739904951b1/Digital+Skills_Final_WEB_5-7-19.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

² <https://www.getsmarter.com/blog/career-advice/the-4th-industrial-revolution-will-south-africa-be-ready-for-the-jobs-of-the-future/>

³ Nomfanelo Magwentshu, Agesan Rajagopaul, Michael Chui, and Alok Singh, *The Future of Work in South Africa* (McKinsey and Company 2019).

⁴ Harambee Youth Employment Acceleration, 2020, "Mapping of Digital and ICT Roles and Demand in South Africa".

The **Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth** is working with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in #eSkills4Girls which aims to tackle the existing gender digital divide by increasing women's and girls' access to and participation in the digital world. While the 4IR is changing our world and the ways we live, work and learn, the risk of vulnerable groups being excluded from the benefits of the 4IR and the digital transformation is rising. Digital skills divide across lines of gender are deep, wide and growing and women are not benefitting equally from the potentials of the digital transformation. To counteract on these developments, the #eSkills4Girls initiative was launched by the G20 member states at the summit in Hamburg in 2017. The #eSkills4Girls initiative forms part of the Digital Skills for Jobs and Income programme, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ.

This call therefore invites targeted institutions to propose innovative ideas, solutions and practices to contribute to youth employment in South Africa through digital skills development.

2. What is the topic of the call?

Aligned with the South Africa's National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2021–2025), the 2063 Africa Union Agenda, The Africa We Want, and the ILO's Abidjan Declaration, Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the future of work in Africa, this innovation challenge is a joint multi-partner effort to **boost youth employability through digital skills**, by investing in human capital and by strengthening TVET systems.

The Skills Challenge Innovation Call's objectives are to:

- Address immediate and emerging digital skills needs in the labour market.
- Enhance the skills development supply through the development and scalability of quality learning programmes.
- Respond to the needs of youth NEET and facilitate their access to learning and decent employment opportunities.
- Support the matching and linking of young people, in particular young women and girls, to training and job opportunities.

Goal: To identify training providers that can deliver innovative solutions for skills development in the digital economy. These solutions, which should result in specific training offers, should address the needs of youth, and in particular youth NEET, by providing them with pre-entry level digital skills that will increase their access to employment or further skills development opportunities.

Some of the concrete ways in which digital skills training can improve young people's employability can include both the **design and piloting of new learning programmes**, and/or the **scaling up of existing successful learning initiatives**, such as (but not limited to):

- Training young people, trained through train-the-trainer programmes, to deliver digital literacy programmes.
- Digital skills development programmes focused on future learning and employment opportunities.
- Skilling young women and girls with digital skills to enter the digital economy for decent jobs including work readiness skills and professional mentorship.
- Creating opportunities for public and community-based facilities to be able to deliver skills development programmes.

- Offering NEET digital and future skills learning opportunities in “opportunity zones” created in the private sector and in government, that can present opportunities for digital and future skills relevant both to employment and to entrepreneurship. The best workplaces for the establishment of opportunity zones are those workplaces that are undergoing digital transitions.

3. What are we looking for?

Through this Skills Challenge Innovation Call, we are looking for entities or legally recognized non-profit organizations with innovative ideas and solutions that can contribute to create more employable youth, specifically out of youth who are NEET, in South Africa through **digital skills learning**.

The **solutions** we are looking for must include (target scope):

- **Design, propose, and/or improve a curriculum.** This can include:
 - New learning programmes design and piloting
 - Scaling up of existing learning programmes
- **Training of trainers (ToT)** to deliver the curriculum: setting up a new ToT mechanism, improving capacity of trainers and instructors, including from TVET as well as from other public, private and community-based training providers.
- **Training delivery and rollout to young people**, that reflects innovative thinking and strategy that seeks to overcome the digital divide in its community and in society on a higher level. This would also be coupled with consideration of appealing to a marginalised group and maintaining continuous engagement.

The way each solution is designed and delivered can be flexible. Examples of innovative ideas may include (but not limited to):

- Creating a new digital skill training programme or improving an existing one, which integrates work readiness and/or mentorship elements and it is accessible to youth NEET.
- Proposing a targeted skills development intervention that addresses the digital divide and increases women’s and girls’ access to and participation in the digital economy.
- Improving the capacity of trainers and training providers to deliver digital skills learning solutions and to apply innovative approaches.
- Improving the promotion and accessibility of skills training programmes for youth NEET and putting in place inclusive strategies to decrease the chances of dropouts.
- Supporting skills trainers and training providers to become agents of change that prevent and combat unemployment within their communities.
- Setting up mechanisms for the formal skills recognition of vulnerable youth, including NEET, who have acquired skills and competencies to provide them with recognized qualifications on the labour market.
- Integrating new ways of skills development and delivery for young people at risk (such as disadvantaged youth, youth forced to leave school, young graduates, unemployed youth).
- Creating sustainability through the way the proposed programme will be conducted, e.g., framed under a District Development Model (DDM), and utilising/recruiting youth in targeted communities.

This Skills Challenge Innovation Call aims to support the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

opportunities for all, as well as SDG 8, which seeks to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. In particular, the call aims to accelerate progress towards achieving Target 8.6 of the SDGs which aims to reduce substantially the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

4. Who can apply?

Applicants can be one of the following:

- Any entity or legally recognized non-profit organization with contractual and registered capacity that has been in existence for at least three calendar years prior to the call deadline and that is registered in South Africa.
- By entity or non-profit organization, we mean government agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, cooperatives, education and training institutions (including schools, public and private training providers, and universities), NGOs and civil society organizations and other research and educational institutions.

The DCDT, ILO, ITU, UNDP and GIZ reserve the right to carry out reasonable due diligence, including contacting references provided and other third parties to confirm the eligibility of participants and may refuse to award the grant to a participant if there is suspicion of any irregularity, fraudulent activities, etc.

We accept all types of innovations, i.e., innovative approaches, projects, tools, technologies and partnerships that offer solutions that contribute to the reduction of youth who are NEET through skills development, entrepreneurship promotion and lifelong learning.

We accept ideas and solutions at any stage of development. They can be early-stage innovations or at a more advanced stage. They can be ideas to improve, expand and/or promote a solution that is already being implemented.

5. What will the winner receive?

Under the overall coordination of the ILO Country Office in Pretoria, the partner agencies will support the winners of the challenge to design and prototype or scale-up an innovative digital skill training solution, either as a stand-alone intervention or to be integrated into an existing training programme.

The Skills Challenge Innovation foresees three prizes:

1st Prize: USD 40,000 #eSkills4girls (women's and girls' access to and participation in the digital economy)

2nd Prize: USD 25,000 #digitalSkills4youth (prototyping a new digital skills programme for youth NEET)

3rd Prize: USD 20,000 #digitalskills4youth (scaling up a tested digital skills programme for youth NEET)

The three winners will sign an Implementation Agreement with the ILO to implement their proposed solution and to receive a series of services, including:

Financial Support

The winning entries will receive **funds to the equivalent USD amount established by the prize category** (paid in local currency and into a bank account in the name of the entrant/entity) to prototype or scale-up their idea.

The funds will be paid in one to three instalments which will be detailed in the Implementation Agreement, after due diligence and confirmed eligibility and feasibility of the proposed idea.

The ILO, as grant manager, reserves the right to adjust, suspend, terminate or withhold any disbursement of funds at its sole discretion. The ILO and partners agencies also reserve the right to limit the number of prizes to the number of eligible proposals, based on the winning criteria defined in these guidelines.

Participation in a six-month skills innovation lab

The winners will receive technical assistance from the partner agencies to transform their idea into a prototype ready to be piloted or to expand an existing ready-to-scale initiative. The support will be channelled through a **six-month skills innovation lab** which provides access to face-to-face and virtual mentoring, training and capacity building, exposure and networking opportunities.

The six-month skills innovation lab will involve two main stages:

1. Prototyping / Programme expansion

The prototyping or programme development will take place over three months and include dedicated innovation bootcamps, tailored to the type of solution proposed. Throughout the process, winning participants will communicate, debrief and share documents and feedback through a virtual lab, in close contact with a team of experts that will offer advice to co-design, prototype or scale-up their programme.

The objectives of the first phase are to:

- **Refine the solution:** With support from experts, the winners will develop and refine their idea and solution.
- **Create a prototype / Design a scaling-up approach:** The winners will receive technical support and facilities to develop a prototype or test version of their solution or to conceptualise a scaling up approach of an already existing solution.
- **Develop an action plan:** At the end of the process, the winners will develop an action plan and/or business plan for the actual implementation of their innovation.

2. Piloting

Once the prototype/scaling-up plan is developed, the winners will pilot their solution. The Innovation Steering Committee will oversee progress and impact in consultation with the project partners. It is envisaged that each pilot will be completed within a maximum of 6 months, however the full rollout should continue beyond the duration of this innovation challenge.

The process and methodologies to be used in the Skills Challenge Innovation Call will be adapted to the stage of development of the winning solution.

Following the development of the training curriculum and training material, the partners will continue offering technical advisory services to encourage the implementation and rollout of training initiatives.

Access to a wide network of expert in the area of skills development

The winning initiatives will be invited to join the [ILO Global Skills Innovation Network](#) as well as other relevant networks managed by partner organizations, in South African and beyond. Through networking, members will have the opportunity to exchange with other innovators and to share their solutions with other partners.

Throughout a step-by-step process, the winning institutions will:

- Be connected to the National Pathway Management Network and SAYouth.mobi under the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative to identify collaboration opportunities with other digital skills and youth employment initiatives in South Africa.
- Join a community of practice of partners of the larger regional [ILO/ITU/AU Joint Programme on Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for Youth in Africa's Digital Economy](#) to share information and best practices on youth employment and skills development in the digital economy.
- Participate in interactive workshops facilitated by technical specialists on skills development in the digital economy from partner organisations and other stakeholders that are part of the [ILO's Skills Innovation Facility](#).

6. What does the winner have to do?

To receive the funding, the winning applicant(s) must sign an Implementation Agreement with the ILO, which includes clauses on intellectual property rights, financial reporting requirements, and criteria for disbursement of funds, dispute resolution and details of the implementation of the proposed solution. Grant recipients are, of course, expected to comply with the terms and conditions stipulated in the agreement.

The Implementation Agreement it will be tailored to this specific competition and shared with the winning institutions before confirming their enrolment in the six-month innovation lab.

As a precondition, before being allowed to sign an Implementation Agreement with the ILO, the winners must produce a detailed work plan and budget that will form the basis of the main goals to be achieved. The funds are disbursed through instalments and the final payment is subject to the satisfactory completion of the agreed work plan.

7. What are the eligibility criteria?

In addition to the above, the proposal must meet the following criteria:

- The proposed solution responds to a clear need as described in these guidelines.
- The proposed solution has innovation as a key driver and social inclusion as underlying principle.
- The proposed solution receives at least three endorsements (including referrals) by national or international stakeholders that have a recognised profile in the specific work area.

- The proposed solution is submitted by an entity or legally recognized non-profit organisation in South Africa (as detailed in section 4 of these guidelines) and its delivery will take place in South Africa.
- Applicants submitting the proposed solution are available to join the skills innovation lab as of October 2022 and for a period of six months.

8. What are the key dates?

To submit a proposal:

1. Review the eligibility criteria and conditions for participation in the call, as well as the Implementation Agreement [Terms and Conditions](#)
2. Read the [List of application questions](#)
3. Submit your proposal via [Application Form](#) by **12 September 2022 (midnight Pretoria time)**.

Applications must be submitted in English. Applicants will receive an email confirmation that their application has been received once the call has been closed. No fee is required to participate in the Call for Proposals. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

The dates and deadlines for the call are:

12 September 2022: Deadline for the submission of proposals

20 September 2022: Announcement of the winner(s)

3 October 2022: Start of implementation agreements with winner(s) and technical support programme

31 March 2023: End of the technical support programme

January - June 2023: Rollout of digital training programmes led by winning institutions

If you have any questions regarding the Skills Challenge Innovation call and its application process, please contact Ms Moipone Kgatle (National Project Coordinator) at skills-pretoria@ilo.org

9. What are the assessment criteria?

All proposals will be assessed by an independent panel, composed of specialists in the areas of skills, enterprise development and employability, gender equality and fundamental principles and rights at work, digital innovation experts, CEOs and other key national and international stakeholders.

All proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. **Value for DCDT, ILO, ITU, UNDP and GIZ priorities in skills development**
 - It contributes to or generates new social and economic outcomes for direct beneficiaries and targeted communities in general.

- It contributes to the achievement of the SDGs, national strategies and priorities.
 - It contributes to increase access to digital skills training and employment opportunities.
- 2. Fit with the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth mission and experience**
- The solution demonstrates how it will leverage the partners' network and expertise on digital skills development issues.
 - It engages or includes national stakeholders and partners in new and different ways.
 - It enriches the availability and accessibility of digital skills development services in South Africa.
- 3. Aligned with the National Digital Skills Strategy**
- It increases digital skills capacity among youth NEET to enter and participate in the digital economy.
 - It ensures continued skills capacity building through training of the trainers programmes.
 - It seeks sustainability of businesses and entrepreneurial initiatives, with a view of unlocking job opportunities for the youth.
- 4. Innovation**
- The proposal focuses on issues of an urgent nature or that have not been explored before.
 - It is substantially different and creative (i.e., through new approaches, tools, or methodologies) and/or adds value to existing solutions.
 - It is innovative in the way it reaches out to either new contents and/or new audiences, especially those that are generally most excluded.
- 5. Potential for impact**
- The idea or solution is suited to the priorities and needs of the identified beneficiaries.
 - It is appealing to potential partners and has the potential to build synergy with other initiatives in the country or in the Africa region.
 - It has the potential to produce positive and sustainable change at the individual, institutional and community level.
 - High potential of inclusion of vulnerable groups such as girls and young women, persons with disabilities, rural youth.
- 6. Sustainability and scalability**
- There is a strong likelihood for the benefits of the solution to continue beyond partners' support.
 - It has potential for scalability to other territories and/or countries.
 - It can generate and provide valuable lessons for the sector.

10. How will solutions be promoted?

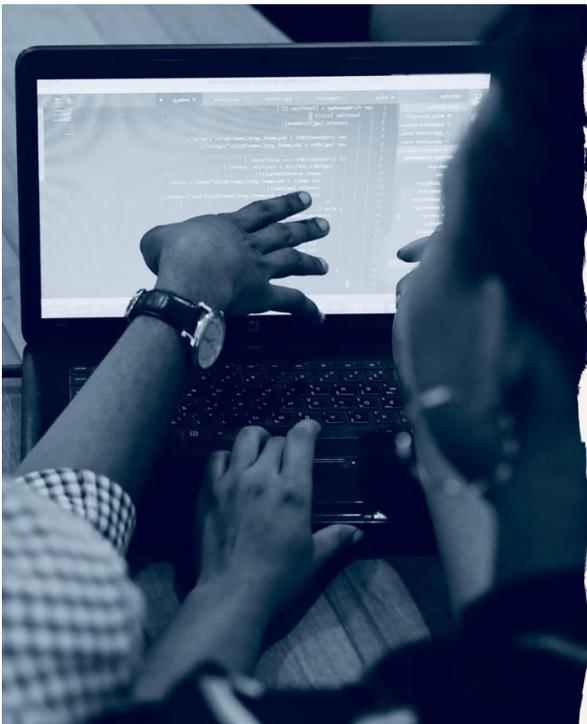
One of the central purposes of the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth is to document and disseminate the lessons learned from the process of developing and implementing the solution. The winner(s) is expected to participate in the analysis and documentation process to capture the lessons learned during the innovation work. This process includes financial reporting and regular project updates, and the possibility for DCDT, ILO, ITU, UNDP and GIZ staff and consultants to collect data, information, stories and testimonies, and to conduct field studies.

The winner(s) is also expected to be an active member of the [ILO Global Skills Innovators Network](#) and to share their experiences with other innovators as well as those interested in learning about skills development and innovation. The winner(s) will also be contributing to the national **Pathway Management Network (PMN)** that sees stakeholders in digital skills for youth working together to contribute to the **Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI)**.

The winning service providers should acknowledge that the activity is carried out with the support of the **DCDT, ILO, ITU and UNDP Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth** and the **GIZ #eSkills4Girls initiative** in all articles produced and published (e.g. reports, brochures, press releases, videos, software, conferences, seminars, blogs, social media, etc.), using the logo of the Innovation Challenge Facility and mentioning the following:

"This... is produced/realized with the support of the DCDT, ILO, ITU, UNDP Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth initiative in South Africa in partnership with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)."

The applicant may not use in any case, unless previously agreed in writing, the logo of the partner agencies, nor that of any other partner organization of the Skills Challenge Innovation Facility, unless previously authorized.



**SUBMIT YOUR IDEA
BY 12 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**THROUGH ONLINE
APPLICATION FORM**



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skills-pretoria@ilo.org