THE SKILLS CoLAB

The Skills CoLab is a new initiative premiering at WorldSkills Conference 2026, designed to foster international cooperation and knowledge sharing in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Under the title "Shaping a Skills-Driven Future", the Conference will take place from 23 to 25 September 2026 in Shanghai, China, alongside WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. The event will unite diverse voices in government, industry, and education to accelerate innovation, equity, and excellence in skills development worldwide, share best practices, and deliver skills solutions in a rapidly changing world.

Unlike traditional conference formats, the Skills CoLab creates an active networking environment, enabling participants to engage directly with project representatives through structured, pre-scheduled, one-on-one or small-group consultations. It is a marketplace-style networking format, designed to showcase cutting-edge projects and generate concrete outcomes, including new collaborations, knowledge exchange, and connections with potential partners to support project scaling and implementation.

WorldSkills International is looking for up to 30 innovative skills development projects that contribute to shaping a skills-driven future through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and scalable solutions. Selected participants will have the opportunity to present and discuss their projects with conference attendees and partners during the WorldSkills Conference 2026.

Skills CoLab features

- Selected project representatives will have the opportunity to showcase their initiatives through pre-scheduled 20 to 30-minute consultation meetings with Conference participants and other partners.
- Professional facilitation will ensure smooth operations, coordinated transitions, clear navigation, and maximum networking value.
- A complimentary Conference ticket will be provided for up to two project representatives (travel and accommodation, and any other associated costs are not included).
- Final project selection will be made by a jury representing WorldSkills Members, WorldSkills Global Partners, and members of the WorldSkills Conference Coalition.

Key dates

- February – April 2026: Application period
- 30 April 2026: Submission deadline
- 31 May 2026: Announcement of selected projects

Who can apply and selection criteria

The Skills CoLab welcomes submissions from a wide range of individuals and/or organizations engaged in **skills development innovation**, including:

- **WorldSkills Members:** Members showcasing flagship programmes or pilot initiatives.
- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET institutions):** Technical colleges, vocational schools, and training centres, implementing innovative approaches.
- **Industry and Global Partners:** Companies developing workforce development programs, apprenticeships, or industry–education partnerships.
- **Government agencies:** Ministries of education, labour, or economic development introducing skills policy or programme innovations.
- **Labour unions: Organizations advancing workforce skills through training partnerships, apprenticeship programs, or worker upskilling initiatives.**
- **International organizations:** UN agencies, development banks, and NGOs with skills development programmes.
- **EdTech companies:** Technology providers creating innovative learning platforms or assessment tools.
- **Research institutions:** Universities, TVET colleges, and think tanks, conducting applied research in skills development.
- **Skills Centres of Excellence:** Regional or sectoral training hubs, demonstrating best practices.
- **Industry associations:** Sector-specific organizations addressing skills gaps and workforce needs.
- **Social enterprises:** Organizations promoting inclusion, accessibility, or training for underserved populations.

Eligibility

To ensure the Skills CoLab showcases forward-thinking initiatives ready for international collaboration, all submitted projects must meet the following criteria:

1. **Project focus**
   Initiatives that are addressing key TVET and skills challenges, such as transforming the public perception of TVET; aligning TVET with industry; connecting TVET and other learning pathways; reforming TVET curriculum; transforming TVET resources; reimagining TVET assessment; reimagining skills credentialing; and improving equity and inclusion in TVET**.**

2. **Currency, relevance, and demonstrated impact**
   - Projects should be current and relevant, with clear evidence of positive impact, or strong potential for impact.
   - Projects at different stages of maturity are welcome, provided they show a compelling rationale, practical applicability, and alignment with the objectives of the WorldSkills Conference.

3. **Financial responsibility**
   - Selected project representatives must be able to fund their own travel and accommodation to Shanghai.
   - Applicants should confirm their organization’s ability to cover these expenses during the implementation process.

Selection criteria

The selection jury will evaluate all submissions based on three core criteria:

1. **Global adaptability & knowledge sharing (35%)**
   - Demonstrated potential for cross-border knowledge exchange or adaptation in different contexts.
   - Potential for replication or contextual adaptation across regions or systems.
   - Clear plans or strong potential for engaging international partners or audiences.
   - Evidence of existing, emerging, or planned collaborations with WorldSkills Member organizations.
   - Accessibility of project insights to the global skills development community.
2. **Innovation (35%)**
   - Novelty of approach, methodology, or implementation strategy.
   - Creative solutions to persistent or emerging skills development challenges.
   - Integration of new technologies, pedagogies, or partnership models.
   - Potential to transform current practices in skills training and assessment.
   - Evidence-informed design with clear indicators of effectiveness or impact.
3. **Skills-driven impact (30%)**
   - Direct relevance to skills development, TVET or workforce preparation.
   - Clear alignment with the WorldSkills mission and values.
   - Demonstrated or anticipated impact on learners, trainers, or skills systems.
   - Scalability and sustainability of the approach.
   - Contribution to addressing skills gaps, youth employment, or industry needs.

Projects will be scored against each criterion, and the selection committee will prioritize diversity across regions, thematic areas, and project types to ensure a balanced and representative approach within the Skills CoLab programme.

How to apply

All applications must be submitted through the designated application platform by **30 April 2026.** Only complete applications submitted by the deadline will be considered. Shortlisted projects may be contacted for additional information as part of the selection process.

For more information: www.worldskillsconference2026.com