

# Closing the Skills Gap Business Commitment Framework

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## Background

It is now well-recognized that the disconnect between education systems and labour markets, coupled with technological disruptions, is creating instability and insecurity to the livelihoods of many. Governments are under increasing pressure to find solutions, including by involving the private sector in change efforts, although few are able to act rapidly and few work in close collaboration with private sector actors to reform education systems. Businesses are initiating their own rapid skilling, upskilling and reskilling<sup>1</sup> of their workforces, or more broadly in their communities, although few are able to affect systemic change alone.

## Objective

The Closing the Skills Gap Project serves as a platform to focus fragmented actions within one overarching mission to gather business commitments that address future-oriented skills development, while at the same time supporting constructive public-private dialogue on urgent and fundamental reform of education systems and labour policies to prepare workforces for the future of jobs.

The project leverages existing business communities and partnerships established through the World Economic Forum's New Vision for Arab Employment, the Africa Skills Initiative, and the Europe Skills Initiative.

The project aims to gather commitments from these leading businesses resulting in skilling, upskilling and reskilling for 1 million people by January 2018, to be announced publicly at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting 2018, followed by a target of 5 million by January 2020. In addition to the direct impact of the business commitments, the project will indirectly assist millions by incentivizing and inspiring thought leadership, best/practice sharing and policy change.

## Call For Action

The System Partners for Education, Gender and Work are leading the way in building a skilling consortium. Additionally, all members of the World Economic Forum with operations in Africa, Europe, and MENA, inclusive of the Regional Business Council members in the respective regions, are invited to make a pledge towards these efforts in the form of specific quantifiable commitments, which will be aggregated by the World Economic Forum as well as segmented by region, industry and skill type. These business commitments will help build a body of knowledge that will be complemented through new insights and research continually developed by the World Economic Forum.

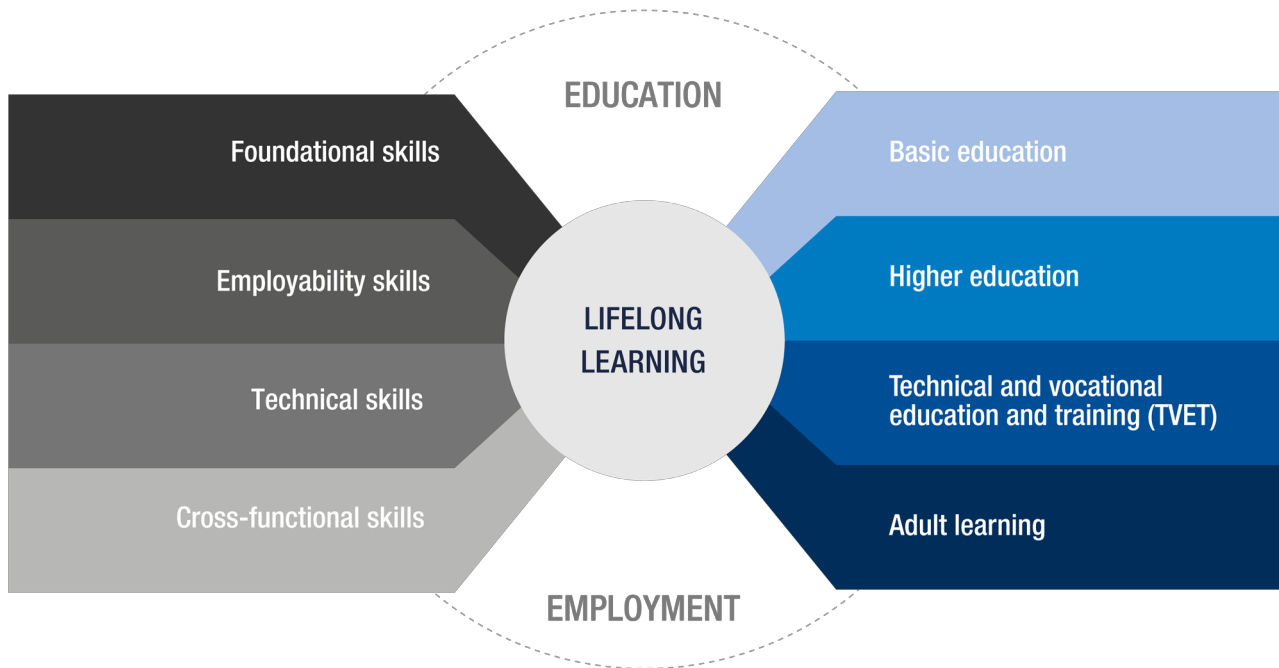
<sup>1</sup> See definition of terms in Annex A of this document

Businesses are invited to design new initiatives or align existing business-led education and training initiatives that address *at least one* of the following target areas:

- Basic education
- Technical vocational education and training (TVET)
- Higher education
- Adult learning

The four target areas follow a lifecycle approach to transforming education and training ecosystems and prepare businesses to successfully navigate and manage the new world of work. At its core, the lifecycle approach supports and promotes the concept of “lifelong learning”, which can be understood as all learning activities undertaken throughout life for the development of competencies and qualifications.<sup>2</sup>

Target areas and skill categories of the Closing the Skills Gap Project



<sup>2</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), [Glossary of Key Terms on Learning and Training for Work](#) (2006)

Below are a range of illustrative activities and project examples that businesses can commit to within each target area of the Closing the Skills Gap Project.

Target area	Illustrative Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Basic education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Partner with educational institutions to improve foundational skills of current students in basic literacy, numeracy, digital fluency, financial literacy and/or social-emotional skills</li> </ul> <p><i>Example programme:</i></p> <p><b>The LEGO Foundation’s Connecting Play and Education</b></p> <p>The LEGO Foundation aims to establish play-based learning as a critical component of the educational system, enabling teachers and schools to prioritize quality learning through play and to build the capacity to influence traditional forms of education. The programme focuses primarily on making play an integral part of development and learning for children in the 5-12 age group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Technical vocational education and training (TVET)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organize work-based learning for current TVET students (work exposure activities, internships, apprenticeships)</li> <li>– Partner with local educational institutions to ensure that curricula development is informed by market-demand skills</li> <li>– Design and deliver interventions that strengthen technical skills, including STEM and digital skills, as well as employability skills (e.g. complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><i>Example programme:</i></p> <p><b>Junior Achievement Job Shadow Programme</b></p> <p>The JA Job Shadow is a visit to a professional work environment where students can shadow a mentor and learn the skills needed to land and keep their dream jobs. The goals of the programme are: Career research and preparation; Job-hunting tools; Professionalism and ethics in the workplace; Professional action plans.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organize work-based learning for current college or university students (work exposure activities, internships, apprenticeships)</li> <li>– Partner with local educational institutions to ensure that curricula development is informed by market-demand skills</li> <li>– Design and deliver interventions that strengthen technical skills, including STEM and digital skills, as well as employability skills (e.g. complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><i>Example programme:</i></p> <p><b>JPMorgan Chase’s New Skills for Youth</b></p> <p>JPMorgan Chase’s New Skills for Youth programme focuses on the development and implementation of career-focused education programs that increase the number of students who earn meaningful postsecondary credentials that are tied to high-wage, high-demand jobs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Adult learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support continuous on-the-job learning and specific reskilling and upskilling through individual, specific and agile training modules in partnership with educational institutions and training providers</li> </ul> <p><i>Example programme:</i></p> <p><b>HP Learning Initiative for Entrepreneurs (HP LIFE)</b></p> <p>HP LIFE e-Learning is a free, online training programme that enables students, teachers and entrepreneurs to gain the business and IT skills that help create jobs and stimulate economic growth. The programme is accessed directly by independent learners and is also used by educators, trainers and mentors to enrich the curriculum. Twenty-five courses are available in seven languages, including English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, covering the key business areas of finance, marketing, operations, communication and some special topics such as social entrepreneurship, energy efficiency, effective leadership and strategic planning.</p>

For contextual information on how businesses can align their commitments to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, please see the document: [Realizing Human Potential in the Fourth Industrial Revolution](#).

## Guidelines

Pledging businesses will define targets and a specific set of metrics to be monitored and reported as part of the Closing the Skills Gap Initiative. Activities included in the business commitment should be guided by the following criteria:

- Commitments can target basic-, secondary-, and post-secondary education students, including TVET and higher education students (college and university), current employees at all levels of skills and tenure, or redundant employees to support them in their transition to other roles
- Commitments should aim for gender parity (50% men, 50% women) in the people affected by the proposed programmes
- Commitments can consist of a new initiative or the alignment of an existing initiative with at least one of the four target areas
- Commitments should achieve a balance in contributing to the public good, e.g. create added value for society and the economy at large by deploying skills that can be applied by beneficiaries beyond the company
- Commitments should align with the organization's core business strategy and comparative advantage, e.g. build on sector-specific expertise
- Commitments should build future-ready skills, particularly digital and technical skills, that help beneficiaries adapt to the changing work landscape. Future-readiness should be defined by each company for the initial set of commitments, depending on the needs in a particular sector or geography, with the Forum providing segmentation, integration and emerging knowledge in this area as the body of commitments grows
- Internal training activities (e.g. HR training, onboarding of new employees) will not be considered towards the business' pledge.

## Commitments Submission

Commitments should be submitted at this link:  
[wef.ch/CSGpledge](http://wef.ch/CSGpledge)

## Impact Platform

By making a business commitment, each pledging organization agrees to monitor and report back to the World Economic Forum on the progress of its business action. Key indicators to be monitored include achievement of people reached against target, development of future-ready skills, and conversion of skills to jobs. Monitoring of pledges is critical to track progress towards the desired results identified in this business commitment framework. Results from the monitoring process will provide a common benchmark against which pledging organizations can jointly monitor and verify impact. To facilitate this, a Closing the Skills Gap platform will be developed and disseminated by the World Economic Forum, including skills gaps data, standard pledge formats, a commitment-monitoring tool and impact heat map, designed for agility and scale as the pledges scale across multiple companies, countries and geographies.

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## Annex: Definition of Terms

### Skilling

The acquisition of practical competencies, know-how and attitudes necessary to perform a trade or occupation in the labour market

Source: [EU Commission, 2012 Europe](#)

### Reskilling

Training workers to acquire new skills that give access either to a new occupation or to new professional activities

Source: [CEDEFOP 2008, Europe](#)

### Upskilling

Short-term, targeted training typically provided following initial education or training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired during previous training

Source: [CEDEFOP 2008, Europe](#)

