

Microsoft grants Afrika Tikkun over R2.5m as part of Global Skills Initiative

Microsoft South Africa has provided Afrika Tikkun with a \$150,000 (over R2.5m) grant as part of its Global Skills Initiative. With the goal of passing on critical digital skills to 25 million people worldwide by the end of the year, the initiative has reached 10 million engaged learners in 231 countries so far - more than 83,000 in South Africa.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

The initiative aims to bring new digital skills to underserved populations and reskill workers impacted by Covid-19 and the economic crisis it precipitated. Unemployment is a widespread challenge in South Africa, hitting 30.1% in the first quarter of 2020 and steadily rising because of the impact of the pandemic. The latest statistics show that the economy shed a further 2.2 million jobs in the second quarter, with the expanded unemployment rate rising to 42%.

Youth hardest hit

“Hardest hit has been young people, particularly in poorer and more remote areas,” says Onyinye Nwaneri, CEO at Afrika Tikkun Services.

Afrika Tikkun helps young people from underserved South African communities through its holistic cradle-to-career model which includes skills development and work readiness programmes – while also helping meet nutrition, health and social needs.

The grant will enable Afrika Tikkun to focus on:

- Recruiting jobseekers to be reskilled and positioned to access opportunities in the job economy.
- Assessing recruited jobseekers, identifying and implementing the most appropriate learning pathways to follow based on their existing skillset and the most in-demand skills and jobs in South Africa identified through data and analytics.
- Providing free access to curated learning pathways for in-demand roles within the economy across LinkedIn Learning, GitHub and Microsoft Learn.
- Supporting and incentivising as many job seekers as possible to achieve certifications by completing various exams offered on the digital platforms.
- Sourcing work experience and job placement opportunities and providing employability tools and connections to jobs offered, including connections to work-based learning, coaching and mentoring.
- Providing post-placement support through the organisation's alumni network between September 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Afrika Tikkun aims to recruit 50,000 jobseekers into the Global Skills Initiative programme; assess 14,500 to determine the best learning pathway for them and support and incentivise them to access and complete at least one learning pathway while enabling the remaining jobseekers to benefit from selecting and following their learning pathways on their own; enrol 1,000 for formal certification and help 500 get formally certified; assist 500 land a job, work experience or economic opportunity and help 50 become entrepreneurs.

“Partnering to bring together resources that reimagine how people learn and apply new skills to prepare for the workplace of the future, as well as create opportunities to equip unemployed South Africans with much-needed digital skills is a priority for Microsoft,” says Siya Madyibi, legal and corporate affairs director at Microsoft South Africa.

Microsoft is also partnering with corporate companies and customers who have committed to make training labs with connectivity available to jobseekers, co-fund some Microsoft certifications and market the programme on their social media channels to raise awareness.

Collective effort

“Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is too significant of a challenge for any one organisation to tackle in isolation. It requires a collective effort from civil society, corporates and government, and this integrated Global Skills Initiative provides the scope and leverage to make a difference,” says Marc Lubner, group CEO.

“Afrika Tikkun is already committed to integrating such stakeholders to optimise outcomes impacting youth employment.”

Unemployed individuals interested in accessing critical digital skills can register for the programme on Afrika Tikkun's website or learn more on the Microsoft microsite. Microsoft is offering its certification exams at a significantly discounted fee until the end of the year, and participants have until 31 March 2021 to complete the exam. All of the resources for the Global Skills Initiative are also available at www.aka.ms/jobseeker.