

# SIFA

Skills Initiative  
for Africa

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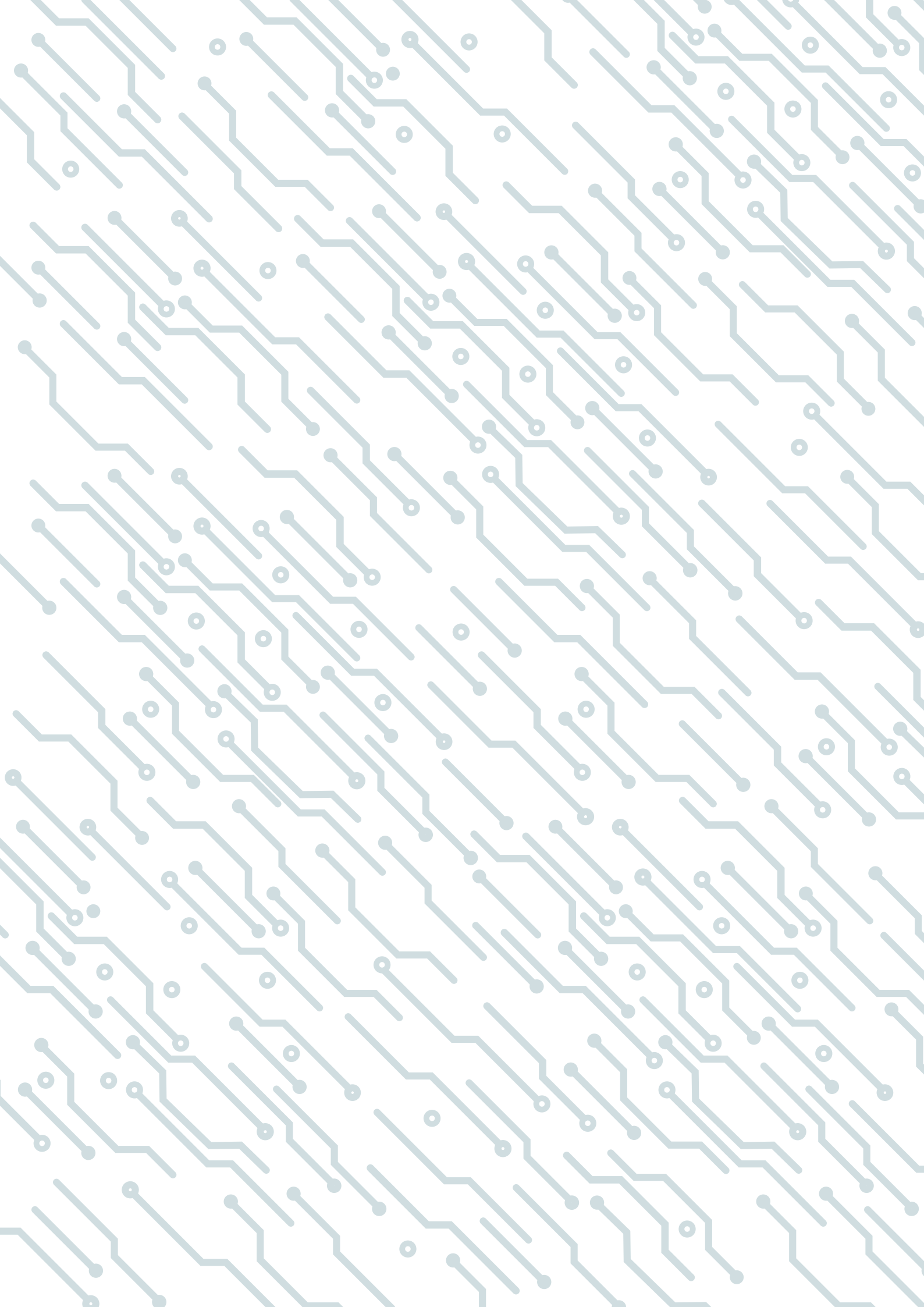
## TAKING YOUR JOB FAIR VIRTUAL

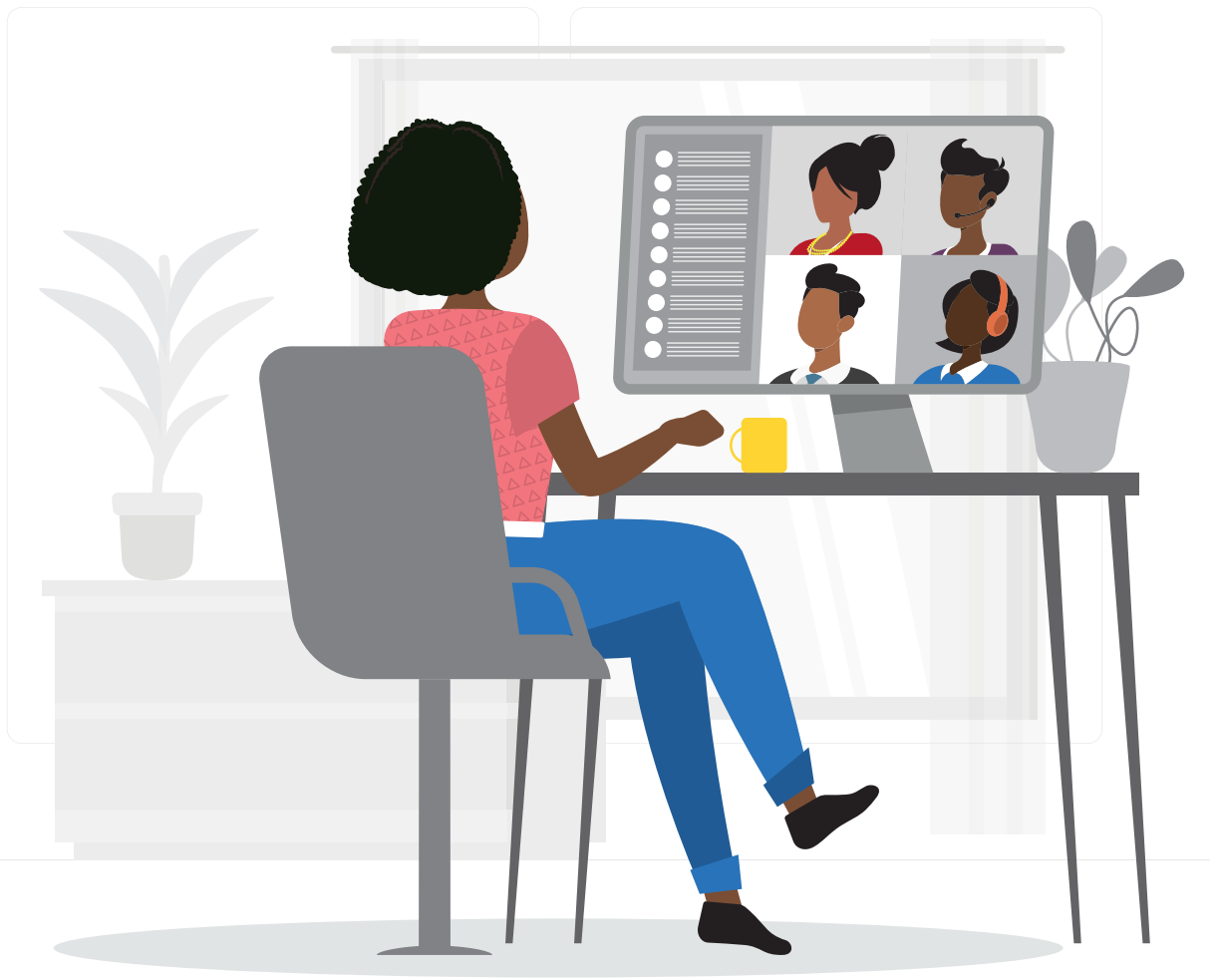
A HANDBOOK FOR ORGANISING, HOSTING & EVALUATING  
SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL JOB FAIRS



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**SECTION 1:**  
About Job Fairs

# Introduction

## THE TRADITIONAL JOB FAIR: AN OVERVIEW

A TVET Job Fair is an event where demand meets supply; information on labour market opportunities and information about the available workforce is exchanged. Also commonly referred to as a Career Day, Job Expo, Career Fair or Career Expo, Job Fairs are usually a single-day event held once to several times a year and typically take place at TVET premises. Employers showcase their companies through exhibition booths and

have recruitment personnel on hand to talk to potential job candidates. Job seekers and TVET students looking for Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) attend Job Fairs to make a good impression on potential employers and co-workers by interacting face-to-face, submitting and filling out Curriculum Vitae (CVs) and Portfolios, and asking questions to get a sense of what positions are available and how to apply for them.

## WHAT IS A VIRTUAL JOB FAIR?



Virtual Job Fairs have the same goals as on-site events - to provide job seekers, students, training providers and employers opportunities to interact.

Paving the way for improved hiring outcomes while simplifying Job Fair setup, execution, and even post-event analysis, online Job Fairs are a game-changer that deliver multiple wins at a fraction of the cost of a physical event. Taking your Job Fair online allows you to run your Job Fair with the help of virtual tools. The benefits of a Virtual Job Fair are many.

They include the ability to create branded welcome areas, video greetings, exhibit halls with booths, and breakaway rooms where job seekers can chat with recruiters to learn more about an organisation in real-time.

Virtual Job Fairs are a dynamic solution to help you overcome some of the limitations of traditional physical Job Fairs. A major advantage is eliminating the need for travel. Attendees save on expensive travel costs and gain back travel time, avoiding having to reschedule prior commitments or lose out on valuable networking opportunities due to geographical distances. Job Fair hosts save on venue costs, and by creating branded digital break-away rooms can extend the participant reach.

Webinars have been used for training purposes across sectors for a long time, and most people are familiar with what they can offer. The question is, how does a webinar become a virtual event?

A webinar is a virtual event in its own right but is normally limited to a presentation-style digital conference. With the development of technology, virtual events now have a lot more scope than a traditional webinar. Here are some of the main differences between the two:

# WEBINAR VS VIRTUAL EVENT

## PURPOSE



### WEBINAR

A webinar is a collaborative and interactive way to connect with your attendees in an intimate setting that emphasises learning.

### VIRTUAL EVENT

A virtual event is a digital replication of a physical event.

## COMPONENTS



### WEBINAR

Webinar platforms offer many visual elements, including live streams of the presenter talking, slide sharing, whiteboards, surveys, and live chat. The presentation is usually followed by a Q&A session where the audience can ask questions.

### VIRTUAL EVENT

In addition to hosting webinar-type sessions, the virtual event covers multiple elements such as networking rooms, virtual booths and information desks. It can include anything from tutorials and networking to product launches and conferences. Every event will have its own identity. It's important to identify which components will give you the maximum engagement in relation to the goals of your Virtual Job Fair.

## PROCEDURE



### WEBINAR

The normal procedure is for a host or facilitator to be joined by one or more presenters to discuss a topic for a set amount of time.

### VIRTUAL EVENT

A fully encompassing virtual event goes beyond providing just one component. It may include a number of facilitators or moderators for different types of sessions.

## DURATION

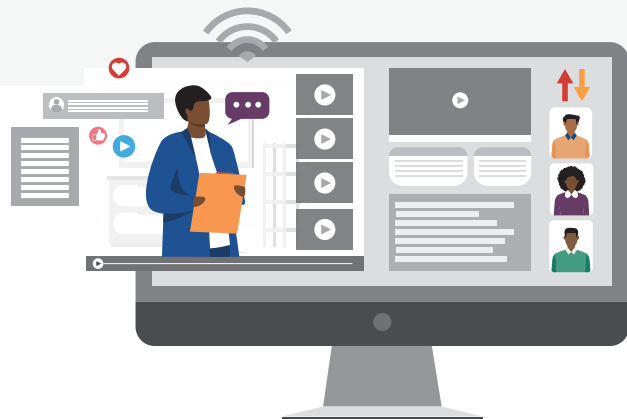


### WEBINAR

The average time is between one to two hours.

### VIRTUAL EVENT

It offers multiple components and sessions over a much longer time frame, just like an in-person event.



# Why you should be hosting a Virtual Job Fair

## Improved recruitment efficiency:

Virtual Job Fairs can be enhanced with digital applicant tracking tools and easier CV searches. This is a move away from traditional slow and cumbersome practices for shortlisting candidates.



**Higher attendance:** Regardless of their location across Africa, the removal of travel and time constraints when compared to physical events encourages higher participation and catches the eye of attendees.



## Building candidate pipelines:

Gaining access to talent with diverse backgrounds and skill sets, employers benefit from improved candidate pipelines to aid collaborative and swift recruitment, which in turn benefits providers and their students.



## Easy information exchange:

Eliminating the need for printed marketing materials and expensive corporate giveaways, the functionalities of virtual platforms make it easy to share company videos, photo galleries, FAQs, brochures, and more to paint an attractive picture reflecting company culture at the Virtual Job Fair.



**Exciting visitor experience:** Virtual platforms can host webinars, pre-recorded or live, discuss popular industry topics, or invite guest speakers to initiate interesting Q&As.



**Secure live chat:** Virtual Job Fairs provide break-away rooms with chat features, enabling job seekers to quickly reach out to company representatives and get answers in real-time. Meanwhile, recruiters can also make use of this technology for quick interviewing to screen candidates on the spot.



**Hassle-free setup:** A Virtual Job Fair is a great time-saver. The online event can be set up in a matter of weeks, unlike the time needed to put together a physical job fair with high risks and unnecessary costs. This helps you accelerate hiring processes and lessens the time frames for providing opportunities for job seekers.



**Pre-event marketing:** The Virtual Job Fair allows the organiser to streamline pre-event marketing, focusing more on digital techniques: email marketing, social media campaigns, and landing pages for easy candidate registration.



**Easier measurement of results:** Acquiring real-time data to identify preferred employers, job types, unique and recurring visitors, webinar views, and more provides measurable insights to help drive consistent improvement in event quality. This data also feeds into the overall monitoring and evaluation of Job Fairs as a skills development tool.





# Going virtual in Africa: challenges & mitigations



## Internet Access

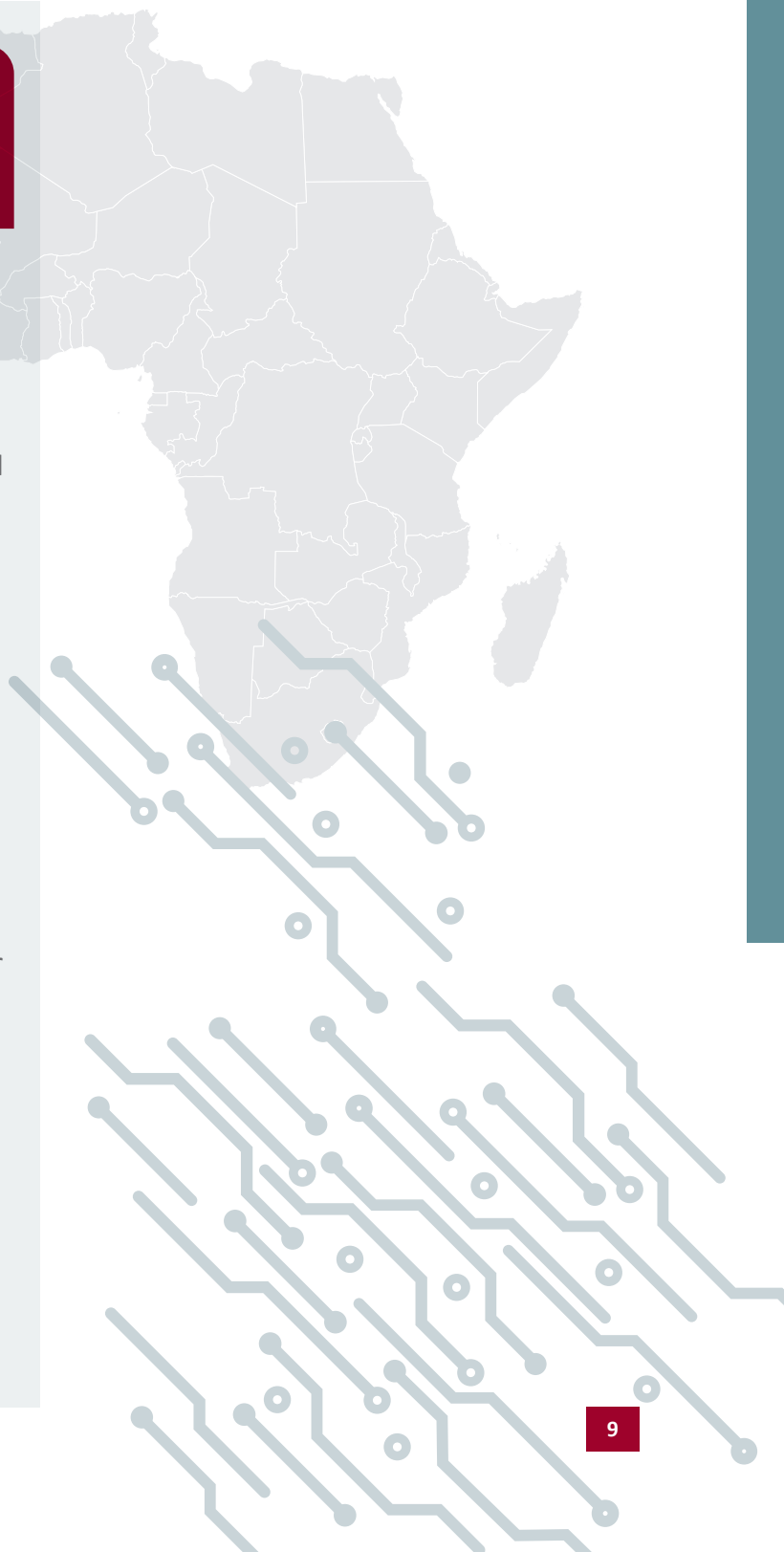
Less than 39% of Africans have internet access due to a combination of supply and demand-side constraints. A larger share of the population lives in rural areas that are expensive to connect

using current cable or satellite technologies. As a result, fewer jobs can be done from home, while the scope for using virtual education during the period of lockdown becomes minimal.



### HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO MITIGATE THIS CHALLENGE:

- It is crucial to have a backup source of internet in case of a breakdown in connectivity as this is a frequent problem. Consider paying for internet bundles from more than one service provider. As a bonus, having IT personnel on standby who can handle technical challenges as they arise is very helpful.
- You need to anticipate connectivity setbacks by holding practice sessions to test both connectivity and platform (navigation with speakers, presenters etc.).
- Assigning multiple hosts may save an event. If the main host drops out, the others can save time on technical issues and embarrassment.
- Organisers may arrange for jobseekers or participants to join the Virtual Job Fair from a single common location with a strong and reliable internet connection, such as a community centre or a room in the TVET College. This is called a “Hub Model.”
- You should also ask participants to plan to have an alternative backup source of internet connection and fully charged devices in the event of power and/or internet connection loss.





## Low attendance despite high registration

You may advertise your Virtual Job Fair widely and receive high registrations, but only about half of those who register will actually log in or connect. Even fewer stay connected to the end. There are many virtual events vying for the same audience.



### BELOW ARE TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN ENSURE HIGH ATTENDANCE AND RETAIN LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT:

- ▶ Sponsor facilitators and attendees with at least an internet bundle and, if possible, other equipment, as this has been shown to boost participation.
- ▶ Follow up on participants by calls or texts (through mobile numbers provided optionally during registration) a day or two before the Job Fair; calls and mobile text messages are more accessible to most people than emails, plus they do not require an internet connection.
- ▶ Register a larger number of attendees than the limit (25% more) to ensure a full house of participants.
- ▶ Send out clearly written and step-by-step guidelines on event logistics and platform navigation at least twice before the Job Fair to facilitate the smooth running of the event, and keep people online until the end.



## Difficulty obtaining feedback

It can be difficult to obtain feedback from participants, making it hard to gauge the Job Fair's effectiveness and learn from mistakes. It is advisable to embed the evaluation process in the Job Fair programme.



## The cost associated with hosting virtual events

In addition to internet connectivity, subscriptions to different meeting platforms and buying proper gear such as headsets and microphones can be costly. Most physical Job Fairs were already established and justified cost-wise, but the abrupt change to going virtual can be difficult to finance with a lack of sponsorship.



## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Actively seeking sponsorship from organisations outside your region that support digital platforms in employment and economic development could help sustain the event.
- Another option is to collaborate and merge efforts with other TVET Colleges to lower costs and increase efficiency.
- Self-funding of your Virtual Job Fair may also be done, particularly for shorter and/or small ones.



## Limited knowledge

Participants are often unfamiliar with online platforms and can get confused about how to use functions such as cameras, microphones, chat rooms, breakout rooms, screen sharing and hand raising. This can be a problem as it interrupts the flow of the event and the participants' experience. Most African countries are still not big on virtual

participation and have had to learn and adapt quickly. Virtual Job Fairs can become chaotic with background noises interrupting what is happening. Organisers have to constantly be on the alert to mute and even remove people from events. This contributes to overall ineffectiveness and loss of precious time during the events.



## HERE ARE SOME TIPS WHICH MIGHT HELP

- We recommend that participants are asked to familiarise themselves with platforms used to host events beforehand and, if possible, to ask for assistance from organisers. Organisers should also take a few minutes at the beginning of the Job Fair to introduce participants to the platform and its functions.
- It is also important for organisers to choose hosting platforms that are most suited to particular contexts, considering ease of use, popularity, data consumption, and available features. For example, it is easier to get more participants by hosting an event on Zoom because many people have access and are already familiar with it. Also, Zoom has a "raise hand" option that is not available on many other platforms that may reduce interruptions during events.

**We hope these tips can help you gain insights on how to organise effective Virtual Job Fairs in challenging contexts, such as those found in Africa.**

## FROM PLANNING TO FOLLOW-UP, HERE ARE THE BEST PRACTICES AND NINE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS TO HOSTING A VIRTUAL JOB FAIR:

- 1 Choose a Virtual Job Fair platform
- 2 Develop your Virtual Job Fair budget
- 3 Strategize and plan effectively
- 4 Customise your virtual booths
- 5 Form partnerships and share expectations
- 6 Staff your Virtual Job Fair
- 7 Develop and implement a marketing plan
- 8 Launch your Virtual Job Fair
- 9 Follow up with attendees





**SECTION 2:**  
Steps to taking your  
Job Fair virtual

# 1 Choose a Virtual Job Fair Platform

Have a look at several video conferencing platforms and applications, comparing their pricing and feature profiles. Basic features of video conferencing platforms include chat rooms, live streams, the ability to share presentations and videos, and breakaway rooms.

Choose the most suitable platform in relation to your target audience and the key features you need for your Virtual Job Fair to be successful. These include customer support, customisation options, interactive tools, security, and analytics.

## PLATFORMS

The most popular platforms being used in Africa are Zoom and MS Teams, but you can also explore Google Meets (<https://apps.google.com/intl/en/meet/>) and Skype for Business (<https://bit.ly/3tq32zh>). Both Zoom and Microsoft Teams enable online meetings, chats, calls, screen sharing, and file sharing. Below is an overview of the main features of Zoom and Ms Teams.



**Zoom:** Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service you can use to virtually host your Job Fair either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats.

Here are Zoom's core features:

- 🖱️ **One-on-one meetings:** Host unlimited one-on-one meetings.
- 🖱️ **Group video conferences:** Host up to 500 participants (if you purchase the "large meeting" add-on).
- 🖱️ **Scope:** Zoom allows one-to-one chat sessions to grow into group calls, training sessions and webinars for internal and external audiences, and global video meetings with up to 1,000 participants and as many as 49 on-screen videos.
- 🖱️ **Screen sharing:** Meet one-on-one or with large groups and share your screen with them so they can see what you see.
- 🖱️ **Recording:** You can record your meetings or events for playback and later views and sharing.
- 🖱️ **Costs:** Zoom offers four pricing tiers: Zoom Free, Zoom Pro, Zoom Business and Zoom Enterprise. The different tiers offer different functionalities regarding the number of meetings, the number of participants, length of meetings, recording capabilities. The free tier allows unlimited one-on-one meetings but limits group sessions to 40 minutes and 100 participants. Paid plans start at \$15 per month per host. To find out which tier could work best for your Job Fair, visit <https://zoom.us/>

For a full tutorial on how to optimise Zoom for your Virtual Job Fair, visit the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2SxmE4C-KAQuHaEfHVymgQ>

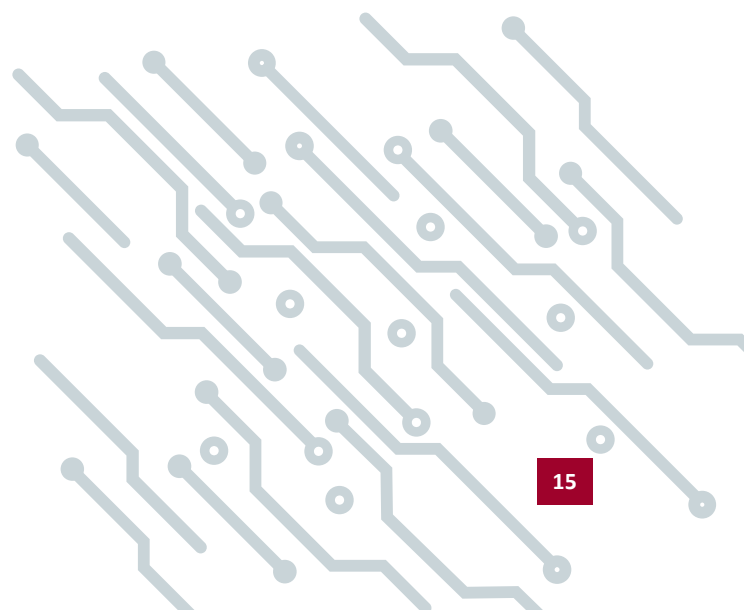


**Microsoft Teams:** Microsoft (MS) Teams is a chat-based collaboration platform complete with document sharing, online meetings, and many more extremely useful job-fairs features.

Here are Microsoft Teams core features:

- 🖱️ **Teams and channels:** Teams are made up of channels, which are conversation boards between teammates.
- 🖱️ **Conversations within channels and teams:** All team members can view and add to different conversations in the General channel and can use an @ function to invite other members to different conversations. The Chat function can be used between teams, groups, and individuals.
- 🖱️ **Document storage in SharePoint:** All files shared across all conversations will automatically save to this folder. Permissions and security options can also be customised for sensitive information.
- 🖱️ **Online meetings:** This feature also includes:
  - A scheduling aid and a note-taking app
  - Screen sharing so that everyone can see the same content
  - In meeting chat messaging and file uploading
  - Together Mode allowing everyone to sit in a shared background, making it feel like you are in the same room with everyone else
- Raise Your Hand to allow participants to make their voices heard without disrupting the session
- White Board for collaborating by using a free form digital canvas
- Breakout Rooms to divide into smaller groups to discuss, network and connect
- Custom Backgrounds for creating your perfect virtual setting by uploading branded digital backdrops
- Audio conferencing so that anyone can join an online meeting via phone
- 🖱️ **Costs:** Microsoft Teams offers four pricing tiers: MS Teams Free, MS Business Basic, MS Business Standard and MS Office 365. The different tiers offer different functionalities regarding the number of meetings, the number of participants, length of meetings, recording capabilities. To find out which tier could work best for your Job Fair, visit <https://www.microsoft.com/>.

For a full tutorial on how to optimise MS Teams for your Virtual Job Fair, visit the following link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/officevideos>



## 2

## *Develop your Virtual Job Fair budget*

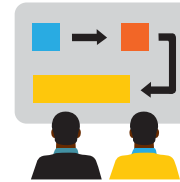
You're already cutting costs with a Virtual Job Fair as opposed to a traditional one, and using free software can help you save even more. Factors like the number of attendees and the communication platform or software features you require will help determine your budget. The cost of a Virtual Job Fair depends on several variables, such as:

- ✦ Platform of choice
- ✦ Studio for live streaming
- ✦ Microphones, lighting, camera(s) and other audiovisual (AV) equipment
- ✦ Live and on-demand transcription and closed captioning assistance
- ✦ Internet service providers
- ✦ Other technical requirements, e.g. routers, modems, and cabling
- ✦ Cost of technical support staff
- ✦ Branding
- ✦ Promotions and marketing
- ✦ Duration of your event
- ✦ The features required
- ✦ Scope of the event (i.e. local, provincial, national, regional or continental)

Budgeting gives you a basic framework to start with, though not all expenses can be forecasted. It is a good idea to have a reserve and pad your budget for unexpected expenses. A Virtual Job Fair event does away with a large number of expenses associated with an in-person event. These include costs related to venue rental, hospitality, equipment rental, staffing etc. The budget for a Virtual Job Fair may be estimated considering the cost areas enumerated earlier. Make sure you record each expense in detail and remember that the total cost will vary depending on the length of the Job Fair, the number of users, the features and customisations in use, and the breadth and depth of the marketing and promotion effort. A well-planned budget will pave the way for a successful Virtual Job Fair.



### 3 Strategize and plan effectively



**Virtual Job Fairs don't happen overnight. What is your strategy? What type of Job Fair are you organising?**

Thorough planning must take place before the actual event. Make a list of everything you'll require, from the staff you'll need to hire to resources and additional software you'll have to buy. Develop a detailed plan and timeline for how and when each task should be completed.

Some aspects to consider in line with your strategy include:

- ✦ The number of attendees you expect
- ✦ The staff you need for specific roles
- ✦ Your budget, as outlined in Step 2
- ✦ Your invitation list, and any potential partners you have identified
- ✦ The resources you'll create for the event



Developing an effective strategy to guide your planning that covers the basics and sets goals for your event is crucial. Make sure you keep these important points in mind:

- ✦ **Dates:** Find the best date(s) possible to host your Virtual Job Fair with a great turnout, allowing your team at least 3-4 months to plan.
- ✦ **Programme:** Develop your Virtual Event Programme, allocating time slots, speakers, panel discussions, and breakaway rooms.
- ✦ **Content:** Plan and schedule time for content creation (video, images, text) for the event.
- ✦ **Scope:** Decide on the ideal number of participants.
- ✦ **Goals:** Set goals for expected attendance to attract companies and sponsors.

## 4 Customise your virtual booths

Depending on the platform you choose, you may customise and create dedicated rooms for an information desk or webinars, tutorials, etc. Whatever component you choose to use your breakout rooms for, it is important to consider the following:

- If you are a TVET College hosting a number of employers, design your virtual booths for exhibitors
- If you are a company using the Job Fair for recruitment, design the required breakaway rooms
- Stock these with useful information for exhibitors or candidates
- Staff your booths and breakaway rooms for all of the days that the event is live
- Standardise Messaging



## 5 Form partnerships and share expectations



Reach out to partners to participate in the event. Set clear expectations.

As the Job Fair gets closer, take time to reach out to event partners, sponsors and/or speakers to consult them on the expectations and requirements for the event. Make sure you're all on the same page before the fair begins.

You may need to jump on a quick call to do a Virtual Job Fair platform run-through so that they know how to use all the features. And it is also important to develop briefing guidelines for speakers (and for exhibitors if you are a TVET College hosting the fair) to refer to when preparing for the event, in the context of the programme and themes provided.

## 6 Staff your Virtual Job Fair



Once your partners and contributors have confirmed their participation in the event, you'll have an idea of the staff you'll need to hire or the volunteers you need to recruit.

You may want to hire content creators, people who can manually sift through CVs, chat-room moderators, and more.

- Make sure you have enough knowledgeable staff on hand to send attendees (employers, students and job seekers) in the right direction and help them navigate through the event.
- More than anything, you want your Job Fair attendees to be able to find knowledgeable staff members who can help answer their questions at all times during the fair hours.

## 7

## Develop and implement a marketing plan

Decide how you will market your Job Fair, identifying which channels you will use, the type of content and materials you will need, and how users can sign up for the event. Depending on your Virtual Job Fair size, you may want to hire someone to take care of the marketing requirements.

LinkedIn, Job boards, and all forms of social media are great channels for marketing your Virtual Job Fair. You can also use email, direct mail, advertising, public relations, and other channels such as partner companies. **Integrated marketing campaigns** work best for Job Fair promotion. The more diverse the selection of marketing vehicles used, the better the chances of reaching more potential attendees.



### Set up communication channels with attendees

Once your job seekers and students have registered, you need to set up a regular email drip, social media, and other communications schedule to keep attendees informed, with a final reminder going out the day before.

The reminders should include information about useful materials such as:

- 🔗 The event programme
- 🔗 Recorded webcasts
- 🔗 Industry keynotes workshops
- 🔗 The ability for attendees to ask questions and have them answered promptly



## 8

## Launch your Virtual Job Fair



### Now that you've done so much hard work, you can officially launch your Job Fair!

Once attendees have registered for your Virtual Job Fair, you'll be able to send out reminders, preparation tips, the overall programme, workshop information, guest speaker details, and more. Connect with attendees via social media and make an effort to find out what else they'd want to see at the Job Fair.

If the suggestions are feasible, add them to the breakout rooms or relay them to the relevant recruiters and employers to tailor their programmes to the audience.

### Encourage job seekers to upload their CVs before the event.

- If job seekers and students upload their CVs well before the Virtual Job Fair, it will give prospective employers a chance to gather information on potential hires before meeting them. This may help improve engagement and participation.
- Reviewing CVs before the event might help to determine if, for example, a CV writing workshop should be included in the programme.

## 9

## Follow up with attendees

**Congratulations! You have researched, planned, designed, and executed your first Virtual Job Fair and even analysed the metrics.**

- Don't forget to follow up with candidates that shared information at the fair. Keep track of this information so that these leads can be nurtured.
- Use any contact information received to reach out to the potential candidates that haven't applied yet or may have more questions. You can even track candidates who moved to the next step in the hiring process to track the event's overall success.
- While face-to-face meetings are still important, now they can often be pushed back further in the hiring process when interest levels on both sides are high.

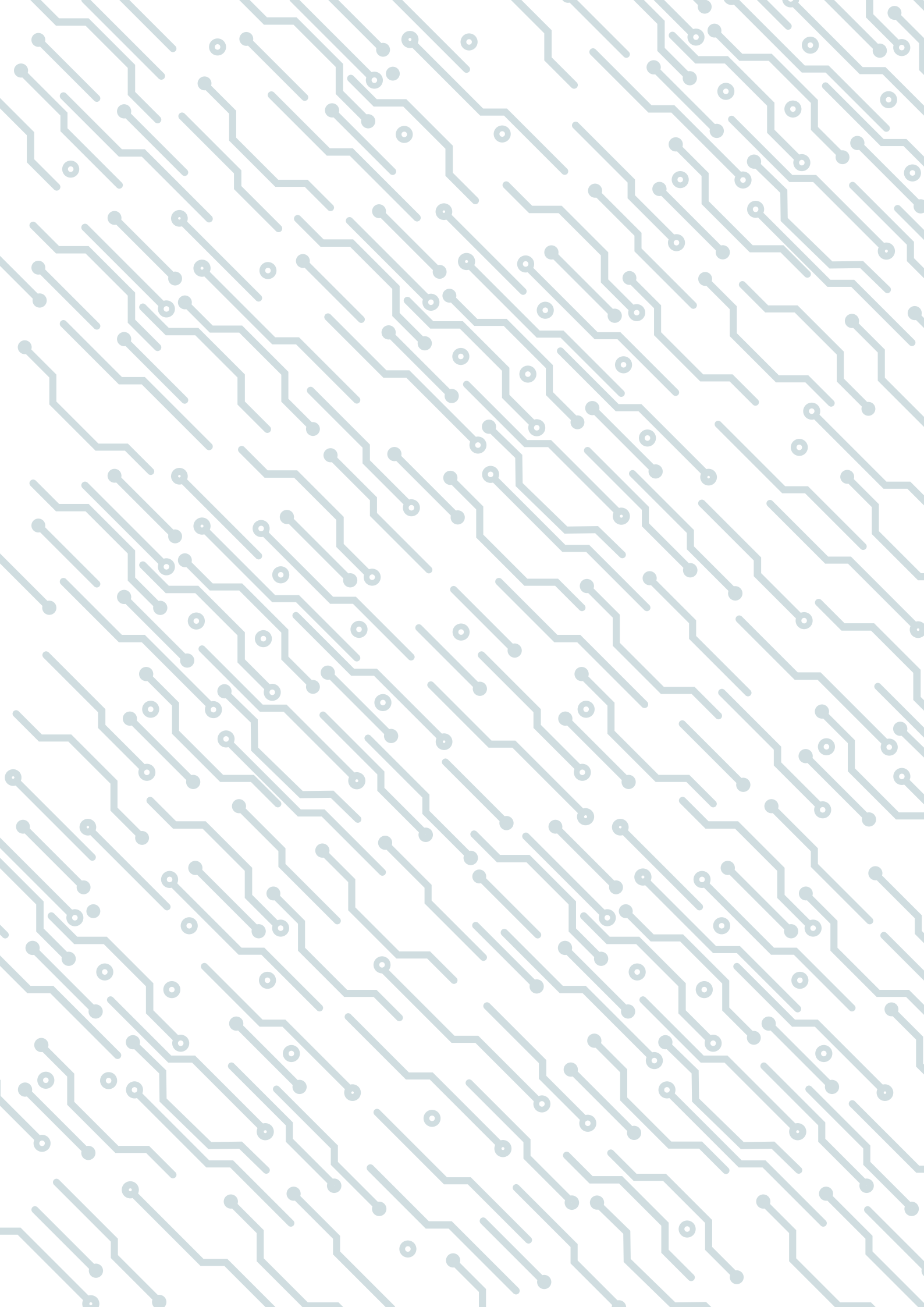


Whether you are a TVET College or a company hosting a Job Fair, the fair is an opportunity to establish relationships that can lead to useful partnerships between business and training providers.

For TVET Colleges and other skills training providers, partnerships and collaborations can strengthen the quality of your institutional offerings. Good relationships with local business and industry in your area can also service the WBLE needs of your students so that they can complete their qualifications, and make it easier for you to advise potential graduates on job opportunities. If you are a company or business, you can benefit by making your skills shortages

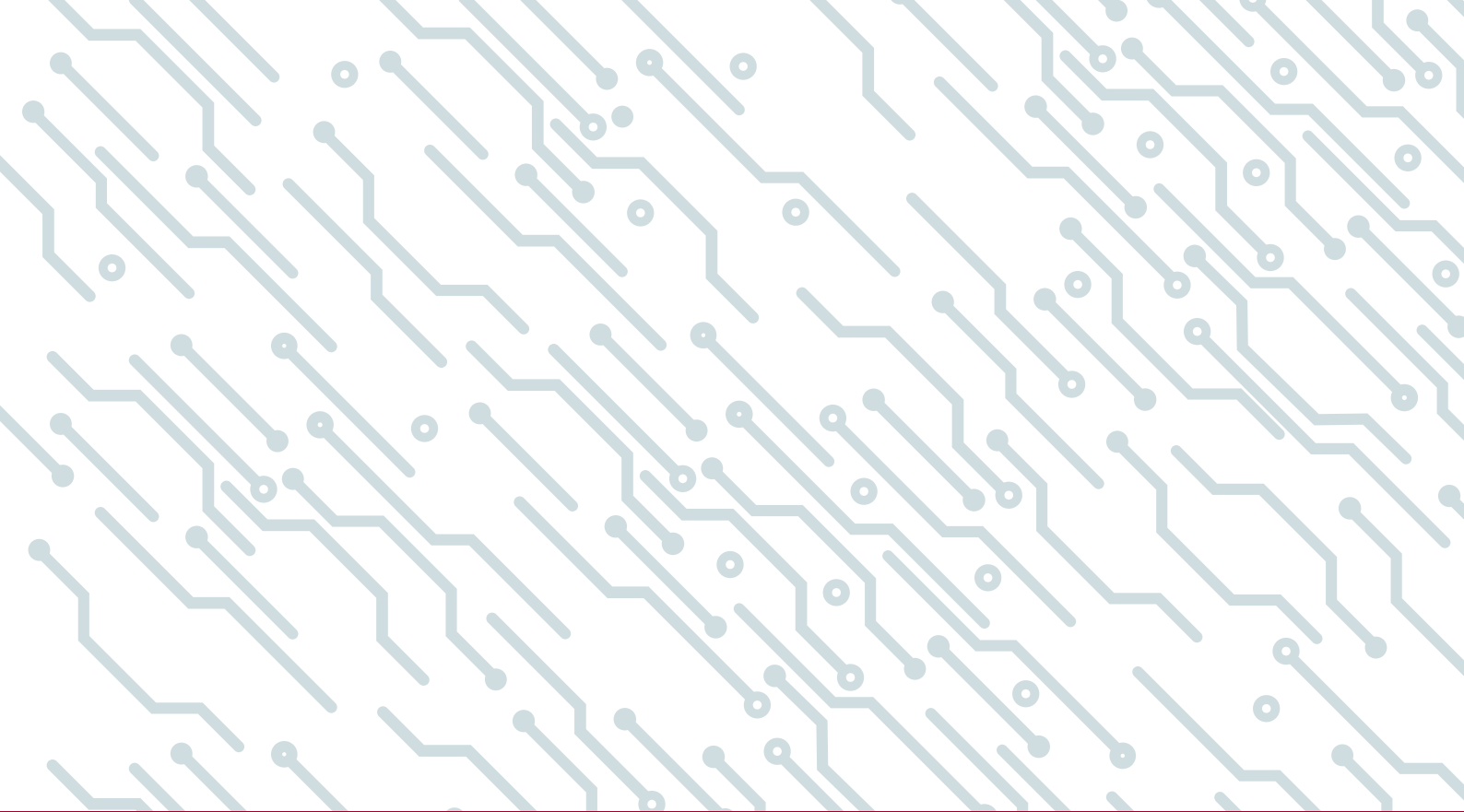
and skills needs clear to training providers, and work in partnership to address these.

In short, both the private sector and training providers can use the Job Fair as a foundation to firm up collaborations on areas such as WBLE, internships, apprenticeships, curriculum development, industry placements for trainers, mentorship programmes, and for data collection on the skills pipeline.









The two related guides **The Ultimate Guide to Job Fairs: A Handbook for TVET Managers in Africa** and **The Ultimate Guide to Job Fairs: A Handbook for HR Managers in Africa** give you more information on partnerships in the context of Job Fairs.



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