



Digital Nigeria empowers workers to thrive in a rising digital economy

The free online program trains Nigerians in digital literacy, technical skills, soft skills, and entrepreneurship. Learners using Digital Nigeria, which was developed by a partnership between the Nigerian government, Microsoft, and African Development Bank, have already completed more than 134,000 courses.

The challenge

Nigeria is a formidable force in Africa: It has the largest economy on the continent. Yet a third of Nigerians work less than 20 hours a week or not at all, according to the most recent data, making it the country with the second-highest unemployment rate in the world. Young people are the most likely to go without work. More than half of Nigerians ages 15-24 are unemployed, and the average age in Nigeria is just 18.

The digital sector in Nigeria has enormous potential for creating jobs, which led to the country's adoption of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy. Progress is more urgent than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the demand for workers with ICT skills, and the economy is poised to add 3 million jobs in this sector alone by 2027, according to research by the online job platform Jobberman.

In spite of high unemployment, companies in Nigeria struggle to find qualified candidates for positions that require technology knowledge and capabilities. The biggest skills gaps include computer programming, data analytics, data science, and cloud infrastructure.

At a more fundamental level, too few Nigerians have proficiency in digital literacy and computers, according to a report by Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (MCDE).

In response, the federal government of Nigeria, African Development Bank, Wootlab, and Microsoft are working together to advance an inclusive economic recovery by providing skills and resources aligned to local labor markets. They launched the e-learning platform Digital Nigeria to train people across the country in skills critical to the growing digital economy.

"People are the most important part of any economy, including Nigeria's," says Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy. "Investing in skills for Nigerians will enable us to better contribute to a \$11.5 trillion global digital economy. Individuals, communities, and the country as a whole will benefit."

Projections estimate that the digital sector could add **\$88 billion** to Nigeria's economy by 2027.



The solution

In 2020, the federal government launched the Digital Nigeria program. The free e-learning program, built on Microsoft Community Training platform, offers dozens of self-paced trainings on digital literacy, technology skills, soft skills, and entrepreneurship. The program is designed so that learners could begin at the most basic training and eventually advance to topics such as networking, security, and software development.

Digital Nigeria is accessible by computer and as a mobile app. Microsoft Community Training works even in low-bandwidth areas and learners can work offline, which is vital in a country where only one-third of the population uses the internet. Microsoft Community Training is an Azure-powered digital learning platform is protected by world-class security and privacy safeguards so learners can feel confident about joining.

Digital Nigeria's features were designed to empower learners in these ways.

Connect with national policy.

Digital Nigeria aligns with more far-reaching policies, leading to support for the program through the federal government. The program ladders up to the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy, which aims to transform the country into a leading digital economy that benefits all Nigerians.

Include fundamentals and advanced topics.

Microsoft worked with the Nigerian government to understand the types of skills that were most needed among people who are under- or unemployed. Content begins at "ground zero" to demystify basic digital literacy and computer skills, providing an entry point for users of any education and background. MCDE also requested advanced content such as artificial intelligence and complementary topics such as personal finances, which the partnership will build out over time.

So far, more than **250,000** people have registered with Digital Nigeria.

Enable users to direct their learning.

Digital Nigeria's trainings are all self-paced for now. The flexibility enables learners juggling other responsibilities to work through courses when they're able—and extra-motivated learners to zip through content unimpeded. This approach has been successful: Users completed more than 10,000 courses in the program's first 48 hours alone.

Cover entrepreneurship and soft skills.

Nigeria's federal government sees entrepreneurship as a promising option for livelihoods and job creation. Digital Nigeria offers courses on how to start, manage, and grow your own business so more people can contribute.



Digital Nigeria] will support the development of a large pool of digitally literate and digitally skilled citizens.

-Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami,
Nigeria's Minister of Communication and Digital Economy.



Promising practices for deeper impact

Digital Nigeria aligns with Microsoft's commitment to upskill 5 million African youth and African Development Bank's strategic agenda to create 25 million jobs in agriculture and ICT by 2025. So far, more than 257,000 learners from across the country have registered to gain skills that can lead to jobs in the digital economy and entrepreneurship. Those involved in the project point to several factors that contribute to its success so far.

Leverage existing relationships.

African Development Bank had already worked with Microsoft and Nigeria's federal government, so representatives brought all three organizations together. The partnership that led to Digital Nigeria formed more quickly because of the trust and cooperation brought about by existing relationships.

Drive enthusiasm through the media.

Representatives from the federal government, African Development Bank, and Microsoft held a press event to launch Digital Nigeria in 2020. The coverage encouraged a flood of users. In the program's first 48 hours, more than 25,000 learners signed up and registered in 42,000 courses. Digital Nigeria also generates demand through ads, live workshops, and influencer campaigns.

Motivate learners with certificates.

Learners earn certificates when they complete courses, which encourages users to finish trainings. Some learners demonstrate their skills by adding certificates, which display the logos of Microsoft, MCDE, and African Development Bank, to their resumes. Some users even post theirs on social media, which encourages their social group to sign up, too. One registrant wrote in a caption, "Enjoying this learning experience... new challenge, learning spree, on a journey to upgrade!"

Localize to expand access.

Digital Nigeria is now offered in Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba in addition to English. "Localizing content ensures more people have the opportunity to jump on the platform and start their own learning journey," says Oluwamuyemi Orimolade, Microsoft Philanthropies Lead in Nigeria.

Accelerating impact

We at Microsoft have a responsibility to ensure the technology we create benefits everyone on the planet, as well as the planet itself. We are proud to scale social impact by partnering with governmental agencies, private companies, and nonprofits to build organizations' capacity, jointly deliver programs and services, and drive systems-level change. Together, we are focused on

- Supporting inclusive economic opportunity
- Protecting fundamental rights
- Working toward a sustainable future for all

Microsoft is working with non-profits to ensure every person has the skills, knowledge, and opportunity they need to succeed in the digital economy.

Learn more aka.ms/skills-employability

