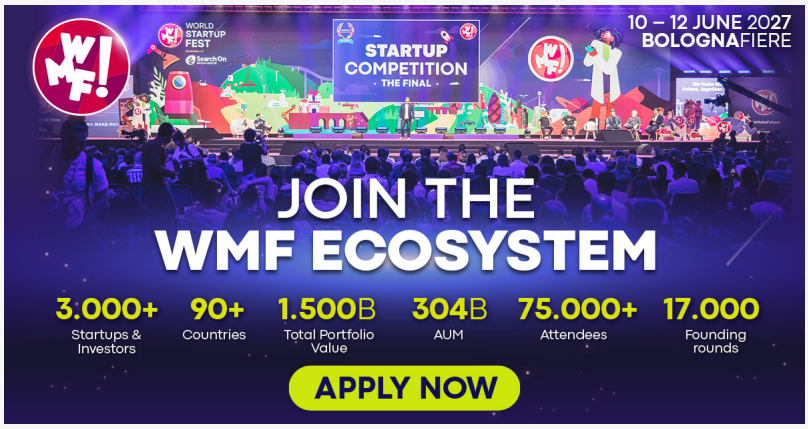
Startups, Capital, and Global Markets: WMF Opens 2027 Opportunities Across Its Global Innovation Network

From Silicon Valley to Riyadh, Milan and Bologna: WMF opens its 2027 startup Calls, connecting founders to global business, visibility and growth opportunities.



WMF Ecosystem Opportunities: visibility, growth, worldwide connections



Join the WMF Builders Community

BOLOGNA, ITALY, September 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Not just a competition, but a year-round pathway connecting startups and innovative SMEs with opportunities for business, investment, visibility, education, and access to new markets.

WMF – We Make Future has opened its 2027 Calls for the startup ecosystem, giving founders and innovative companies access to an international network of investors, corporations, accelerators, and innovation stakeholders able to support projects through different stages of growth. The entry point is the WMF Builders Community, a year-round community connecting startups, investors, companies, researchers, and innovators. The network covers the full growth cycle, from pre-seed to scale-up, bringing together organizations that collectively represent $1.5 trillion in Total Portfolio Value, $304 billion in Assets Under Management, $72.8 billion in deal participation, and more than 17,000 funding rounds. It is designed as an infrastructure for connecting capital, expertise, and entrepreneurial projects 365 days a year.

The ecosystem is structured around the 14 Future Challenges, linked to the strategic industries that form the foundation of WMF's discussions and opportunities: from AI and Digital Business

to FinTech & Digital Assets, from IndustryTech & Robotics to CleanTech & Energy, as well as Health & Life Sciences, Smart Cities & Mobility, and other industries undergoing technological transformation. Startups applying are asked to identify the Challenge their project is designed to address, making the Calls a tool for international scouting of high-potential solutions.

“For a startup, capital is essential, but it is no longer enough. Access to markets, industry relationships, expertise, and opportunities for international exchange are also needed to support growth through the different stages of a project,” said Cosmano Lombardo, Founder and CEO of Search On Media Group and creator of WMF. “With the Builders Community, we are developing a continuous infrastructure that brings these elements together and connects startups, investors, companies, research organizations, and territories. The Calls are the entry point into this journey. Our goal is to create the conditions for high-potential innovations to find the right partners, capital, and markets in which to grow and generate impact.”

Multiple Pathways, One Global Ecosystem

Within its broader system of startup Calls and opportunities, WMF is highlighting three pathways designed for projects with different objectives and stages of development.

The WMF International Startup Competition, now in its 15th edition, is the flagship program for companies looking to engage with global investors and industry players. The Call will select 140 startups, which will take part in the World Startup Fest, WMF’s international event dedicated to startups, SMEs, and investors, through pitching sessions, B2B meetings, and side events. During the first two days of WMF, six finalists will then be selected to compete on the WMF 2027 Mainstage before an international audience for the final prize pool. Participation also opens access to the global WMF platform and its international opportunities, connecting selected startups with the world throughout the year and across international events, including Saudi Makes Future in Riyadh.

AI For Future is dedicated to projects in which Artificial Intelligence is at the core of the solution. Selected companies will gain access to a pathway focused on international visibility and engagement, spanning AI For Future in San Francisco on November 5, 2026; Saudi Makes Future in Riyadh from December 14–16, 2026; AI Festival in Milan on February 11–12, 2027; and WMF in Bologna from June 10–12, 2027. Four international touchpoints designed to connect startups with investors, corporations, and stakeholders across some of the world’s key AI ecosystems.

The Global Impact Challenge, meanwhile, focuses on startups and innovative SMEs developing solutions that address the WMF Future Challenges and their related strategic industries, generating tangible impact across society, the environment, and emerging models of development. Selected companies gain access to visibility and opportunities to engage with investors, companies, and experts within the WMF network.

Capital, Deal Flow, and Amplification

The international network supporting WMF's startup initiatives is particularly active across Europe, North America, and Asia, connecting investors, corporations, accelerators, media organizations, and startup support organizations. The ecosystem is built around three complementary dimensions- capital, deal flow, and amplification - designed to connect high-potential projects with financial resources, markets, and opportunities for growth.

WMF 2026: Scale and Quality for an Increasingly Global Startup Ecosystem

The 2027 pathway builds on the results of the latest WMF edition. In 2026, the event brought together 3,000 startups, SMEs, and investors within an ecosystem involving organizations and participants from more than 90 countries.

A total of 140 startups were selected to participate in pitches, meetings with investors and corporations, and networking opportunities throughout the three-day event. The final of the International Startup Competition brought projects from seven countries to the Mainstage, covering fields ranging from space-based energy and AI to advanced manufacturing, finance, media, maritime autonomy, and social impact. The winners were TerraSpark, recipient of the Jury Award; MaestroHub, winner of the Audience Award; Brainfood Intelligent Media Cloud, recipient of the Global Impact Challenge Award; and WealthRyse, winner of the Saudi Makes Future Award, alongside Lishe360, which received a special mention.
These results reflect the scale the WMF startup ecosystem has reached and its ability to connect entrepreneurial innovation with capital and international markets.

WMF - We Make Future,is the largest International Trade Fair and Festival dedicated to Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Digital Innovation.
From June 10 to 12, 2027, WMF returns to BolognaFiere (Italy) as a certified international event fully focused on the future of innovation. A global hub for the AI and tech ecosystem, WMF brings together each year the most advanced developments in artificial intelligence, digital and social innovation, alongside leading international companies, startups, scaleups, investors, institutions, universities, and non-profit organizations. With over 75,000 attendees from 90 countries in 2026, more than 800 exhibitors, 1,000+ speakers and guests from around the world, 3,000+ organized B2B meetings, and 3,000 startups and investors involved, WMF represents a unique convergence point for innovation-driven business and policy dialogue.
Its partner network includes organizations managing a combined €1.5 trillion investment portfolio, €304+ billion in assets under management (AUM), $72.8+ billion in funded transactions, and over 17,000 investment rounds, positioning WMF as a global benchmark event for the innovation economy.

Saudi Makes Future – The Largest AI Exhibition in the Middle East
Saudi Makes Future is the Saudi edition of WMF – We Make Future, a certified international trade

fair and global platform for innovation, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies. Developed through the collaboration between Search On Media Group, WMF – We Make Future, and PNG Saudi, the event will take place December 14–16, 2026, in Riyadh at the Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Center. Building on WMF's vision, experience, and thematic architecture, Saudi Makes Future adapts the format to a strong AI-driven focus, structured across 14 strategic sectors exploring the impact of artificial intelligence on business, industry, society, and institutions. Aligned with Saudi Vision 2030, the event positions itself as an international platform for dialogue, cooperation, and development, designed for companies, startups, investors, and stakeholders seeking new opportunities for growth, training, and innovation in the Middle East and on a global scale.
Search On Media Group - Humans Leading Innovation Founded in 2004, Search On Media Group works to advance digital culture and innovation by managing professional communities, supporting knowledge-sharing initiatives, and delivering strategic and operational consulting through its Search On Consulting division, specializing in Digital Marketing and Digital Transformation for large organizations. From the expertise of Search On Media Group stem both the Event Agency Business Unit—responsible for organizing WMF and other proprietary and client events—and Hybrid.io, a flexible and customizable platform designed to manage online, hybrid, and on-site events.
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