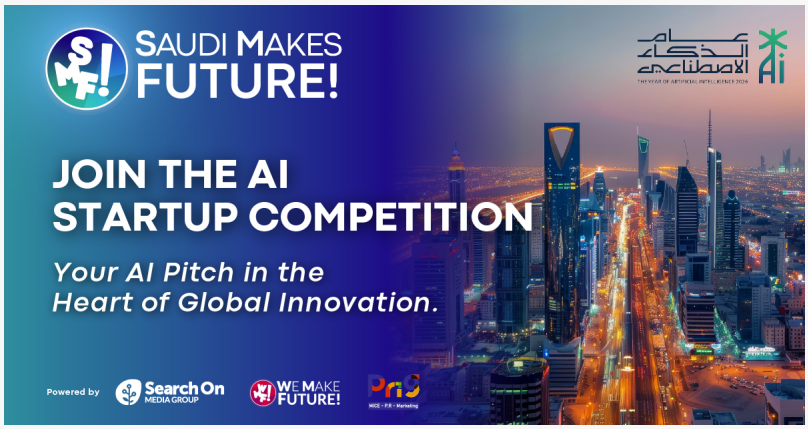
From We Make Future to Riyadh: the Global Startup Competition arrives in Saudi Arabia

Ahead of Saudi National Day, WMF's Saudi edition launches its global startup call for Riyadh, Dec. 14–16, offering visibility, business and investor access.



Join the Competition and enter the global network of WMF - We Make Future



WMF International Competition coming to Riyadh

BOLOGNA, RIYADH, ITALY, September 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Applications are now open for the international Startup Competition of Saudi Makes Future, the Saudi edition of WMF – We Make Future, organized by Search On Media Group in partnership with PNG Saudi, which will bring startups, companies, investors, institutions, and innovation leaders from around the world to Riyadh from December 14 to 16, 2026.

The launch comes on the eve of Saudi National Day on September 23, at a symbolic moment for the Kingdom and within the broader economic and technological transformation driven by Saudi Vision 2030, where innovation, entrepreneurship, and skills development are among the strategic pillars of the country's growth.

The Startup Competition will run through two application rounds, with the first round closing on October 15, 2026. The call is aimed at startups and innovative projects developing Artificial Intelligence-based technologies, products, and business models. Selected startups will gain access to Saudi Makes Future and the opportunities available throughout the event, while becoming part of the wider WMF global network. Their application may also open the door to future opportunities at WMF – We Make Future in Bologna, from June 10 to 12, 2027, as well as

across the WMF International Roadshow.



Onstage and offstage opportunities

Over the years, this network has expanded across Europe, North America, Asia, and the Middle East, connecting startups with investors, venture capital firms, corporations, open innovation arms, accelerators, incubators, and institutions. Its scale is also reflected in the figures represented by the financial and innovation players involved: $1.5 trillion in Portfolio Value, $304 billion in AUM, $72.8 billion in deal participation, and more than 17,000 funding rounds. Through Saudi Makes Future, this network now reaches Riyadh, creating a new point of connection between global innovation and one of the world's most rapidly transforming technology markets.

"Over the years, through WMF, we have worked to build an international innovation ecosystem capable of connecting startups, investors, companies, institutions, and universities, creating relationships and opportunities that continue to develop well beyond the days of the event," said Cosmano Lombardo, Founder and CEO of Search On Media Group and creator of WMF – We Make Future. "With Saudi Makes Future, we want to put this experience and network at the service of a bridge between the Saudi ecosystem and international innovation ecosystems. The Startup Competition is a concrete expression of this vision: on the one hand, creating new opportunities for Saudi startups to access capital, partners, and global markets; on the other, giving innovators from around the world direct access to companies, institutions, and key players in the Kingdom, as well as to the opportunities Saudi Arabia is creating across innovation and emerging technologies."

From the Call to Riyadh: Visibility, Business and Access to a Global Network

The Startup Competition goes beyond the selection process and the pitch itself. For participating startups, it provides access to international visibility, business matching, networking, and new opportunities for growth and international expansion. During Saudi Makes Future, selected startups will be able to present their solutions within an environment bringing together innovation and business players from more than 90 countries, meet industrial and financial stakeholders, and build relationships across the WMF international network.
The selection process will be structured around the 14 AI Sectors of Saudi Makes Future, developed from the strategic industries that have long shaped WMF and adapted to the major transformations being driven by Artificial Intelligence: from advanced technologies and robotics

to smart cities, from cybersecurity and healthcare to fintech, energy, agritech, education, digital government, the future of work, and open innovation. Together, these sectors provide a broad view of the AI innovation landscape that will be explored throughout Saudi Makes Future, bringing to Riyadh selected startups and solutions from around the world across multiple industries and offering an international perspective on the technologies set to transform the economy, industry, and society.

Connecting Saudi Arabia with Global Innovation

Taking place from December 14 to 16, 2026, at the Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Center, Saudi Makes Future is the Saudi edition of WMF – We Make Future, organized by Search On Media Group in partnership with PNG Saudi and bringing WMF's experience, network, and international model to the Kingdom. The event will bring together an international exhibition, content focused on the key sectors of AI, B2B meetings, networking, and business development opportunities, connecting the global innovation ecosystem with the technological and economic transformation underway in Saudi Arabia within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030.

"Saudi Arabia has a long-standing entrepreneurial tradition and a strong history of building international trade and business relationships. Today, that capability is rapidly evolving into new sectors, with growing attention to technology, Artificial Intelligence, and innovation," said Sheikh Nasser bin Saeed Al-Hajri, member of the Saudi International Council for Business and Investment and Chairman of the Board of Directors of PNG. "We are very pleased to be working with Search On to develop WMF in Saudi Arabia through Saudi Makes Future and to build an increasingly strong bridge between the Kingdom and international innovation ecosystems."

Dedicated Opportunities for Saudi Startups

Alongside the international call, Saudi Makes Future will offer dedicated opportunities for Saudi startups, designed to strengthen their visibility and business development while connecting them with the international network gathering in Riyadh. Startups from the Kingdom will be able to showcase their solutions, access B2B meetings, pitch their projects on the Startup Showcase Stage, and take part in dedicated networking opportunities with investors, companies, institutions, and leading players from the global innovation ecosystem. Through Saudi Makes Future, Saudi startups will also be able to strengthen their international visibility and connect with the wider WMF ecosystem, with opportunities extending from Riyadh to Bologna and across WMF's international network.

The Saudi Makes Future International Startup Competition will run through two application rounds, with the first round closing on October 15, 2026. Applications can be submitted through the dedicated page.

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.

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.
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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