QDB
QATAR DEVELOPMENT BANK

مـؤتمــر رواد لريادة الأعمال
2024
Rowad Entrepreneurship Conference
DOHA-QATAR

القمة العربية للمشروعات الصغيرة والمتوسطة
ARAB SMEs SUMMIT
Navigating Digital Horizons آفاق العصر الرقمي

ازدهـار البلدان كرامة الإنسان
ESCWA

Workshop track on

Digital and emerging technologies – Day one

18 November 2024

1.00–4.00 p.m. | Zekreet Room

Introduction

Digital and emerging technologies are revolutionizing industries and reshaping societies across the Arab region, unlocking new possibilities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Innovations in artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, financial technology (fintech) and the Internet of Things (IoT) offer SMEs the opportunity to boost operational efficiency, access new markets and accelerate innovation. These advancements are pivotal not only for enhancing productivity and competitiveness but also for fostering economic diversification and resilience across the region.

Despite the dynamic growth of digital solutions, many SMEs in the Arab region face considerable barriers, ranging from limited access to funding and gaps in digital skills to complex regulatory landscapes. With targeted support, such as training, innovation hubs and funding initiatives, SMEs can successfully leverage these technologies to overcome challenges, scale operations and excel in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Governments and business support organizations in the region recognize this transformative potential and are prioritizing support for SMEs in their digital transformation journeys, aiming to position them as key players in the region's evolving digital economy.

Topics to be covered on day one

The workshop will provide a platform to explore and discuss the following topics:

- ### Session 1: Technological trends shaping the future of SMEs

  This session will explore major technological trends that are shaping the future of SMEs, including developments in AI, fintech, cloud computing, and data analytics. It will focus on identifying high-impact technological solutions, understanding their potential applications, and discussing how SMEs can integrate these tools to innovate, streamline operations and achieve greater competitiveness in the marketplace.

- ### Session 2: Leveraging AI and blockchain to enhance SME operations and development

  This session provides SMEs with insights on how AI and blockchain can elevate their operations, showcasing practical cases that boost efficiency, innovation and competitiveness. Speakers will discuss the role of blockchain in streamlining supply chains, ensuring transparency, and protecting intellectual property, as well as the potential of AI to transform product development, customer engagement and business models. Through networking and collaboration, SMEs, tech experts, and business support organizations will explore partnerships for growth. Participants are invited to brainstorm support initiatives that the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and other United Nations agencies can implement to help Arab SMEs leverage these technologies.

- ### Session 3: Building digital resilience – cybersecurity and data protection

  This session will guide SMEs on how to strengthen cybersecurity measures, protect sensitive data and ensure compliance with data privacy standards. Presenters will discuss practical strategies for safeguarding digital assets, investing in cybersecurity infrastructure, and cultivating a security-first mindset to build trust with clients and partners.

Agenda: Day one

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Technological trends shaping the future of SMEs

Presenters

Ibrahim Soltan, Data and AI Lead, Microsoft

Ayman Ghoneam, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), AGz DEV

Federico Bartalucci, Associate, World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)

Salman Surti, Programmes Lead, Qatar FinTech Hub

Moderator

Boumediene Ramdani, Associate Professor, Qatar University

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Leveraging AI and blockchain to enhance SME operations and development

Presenters

Oscar Barranco Liebana, Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Programme Director, Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council (QRDI)

Samer Al-Aswad, Co-Founder and CEO, Afkar Plus Accelerator

Mohammed Al Rashidi, Founder and Executive Chairman, One Global Holding

Sara Abdul Samad, Founder and CEO, Reinvent. Transform. Sustain. (RTS)

AlHasan AlSammarraie, Managing Partner, Applab Software Trading

Moderator

Adel Alghaberi, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCWA

3:00-4:00 p.m.

Building digital resilience – cybersecurity and data protection

Presenters

Kathryn Lundquist, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Research and Statistics Division, World Trade Organization (WTO)

Khaled Alnasser, Head of National Cybersecurity Policies, Standards and Guidelines, and Assistant Director of Information Security Department, National Cybersecurity Agency (NCSA)

Sarah Al-Mawlawi, Director of Corporate Information Security, Ooredoo Qatar

Hamad Hadeed, CEO, Cytomate Solutions and Services

Moderator

Sandra El Banna, Business Development Assistant Manager, MENA Executive Training