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EAES26

3RD EAST AFRICAN EMPLOYABILITY SUMMIT
& UONGOZI CAREER AWARDS



CONCEPT NOTE



Manga House,
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www.employabilitysummit.org

CONCEPT NOTE



"Skills without Borders"

Accelerating Integration through Skills and Labour Mobility in East Africa



OBJECTIVE

Deepening collaboration and harnessing inter-sectoral efforts in education, labour migration, trade & investment and policy to foster skills mobility and catalyze youth employment.



TRACK

Common Demographics, Common Education, Common Skills, Common Market and Common Agenda in Facilitating Integration.



DATE

14th – 15th October 2026



VENUE

Kenyatta International Conference Center,
Nairobi County - KENYA



+5K

PARTICIPANTS



+28
(EAC)

COUNTRIES



100+

EXHIBITORS



100+

SPEAKERS



20+

SESSIONS



100+

AWARDS



Contents

Our Mission.....	3
Objectives of EAES26.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Context.....	6
The Inaugural Summit EAES23 & Follow-Up EAES24	7
The Focus of EAES26	8
Key Achievements — EAES23	8
Key Achievements — EAES24	9
Target Audience.....	10
Outcome	10
Proposed Summit Format.....	11
Resourcing the Summit.....	11
Conclusion.....	12



Our Mission

The overarching mission of the East African Employability Summit 2026 (EAES26) is to consolidate the gains and track the impact of the outcomes of the inaugural and second summits while advancing innovative, inclusive, and sustainable approaches to youth employability across East Africa. Building on previous achievements, the third edition will focus on strengthening regional collaboration and harnessing inter-sectoral partnerships in education and training, Competency-Based Education (CBE), labour migration, trade and investment, entrepreneurship, and policy reforms to address barriers to skills mobility and employment.

Recognizing the rapidly evolving world of work, EAES26 seeks to champion Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) as a transformative approach to developing graduates and young professionals who possess the practical competencies, technical expertise, digital capabilities, entrepreneurial mindset, and transferable skills required by today's labour market. The Summit will provide a regional platform for governments, academia, TVET institutions, industry, development partners, employers, and youth to strengthen collaboration in aligning education and training systems with labour market demands and emerging economic opportunities.



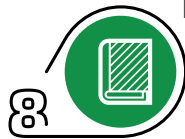
Dr. Alfred Mutua, EGH, Cabinet Secretary for Labour and Social Protection, launches key youth employability interventions at EAES 2024, joined by Dr. Meshesha Shewarega, Coordinator, AU Volunteerism Platform, and Mr. Shadrack Mwadime, Principal Secretary, State Department of Labour and Skills Development



Hon. Ababu Namwamba, EGH, then Cabinet Secretary for Youth Affairs, Sports and the Arts, delivers a keynote address at the inaugural East African Employability Summit, held at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi.

Objectives of EAES26

Specifically, the EAES26 seeks to achieve the following:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Assess the contributions of various sectors in facilitating skills | 1  | 5  | Evaluate the progress of implementing the Common Higher Education Area in enhancing student and professional transitioning within the East African Community (EAC). |
| Promote skills-based learning and training to equip individuals with future-ready competencies. | 2  | 6  | Strengthen the role of Offices of Career Services in assisting students in gaining clarity in their career paths and anchoring transitioning to job market. |
| Re-evaluate the Academia-Public-Private Partnership to leverage entrepreneurship and creativity in the development of on-campus Innovation Hubs. | 3  | 7  | Emphasize the importance of embracing digital transformation in training today's and future youth in the EAC. |
| Identify, recognize, and amplify the efforts of individuals and institutions that are promoting career and skills development in East Africa. | 4  | 8  | Promote Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) by advancing education and training systems that equip learners with industry-relevant competencies, practical skills, digital capabilities, entrepreneurial mindsets, and lifelong learning attributes required for the future of work. |

Introduction

Investing in employability and entrepreneurial skills for the present and future job market remains a key priority in the region. Admittedly, the African Agenda 2063 emphasizes the need to skill the youth to facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA and accelerate the uptake of the continental development roadmap. As education systems increasingly adopt Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) to equip learners with practical, industry-relevant competencies, there is a growing opportunity to strengthen workforce readiness and improve graduate employability. For full integration at both regional and continental levels, the need for an agile, competent, and mobile youth population cannot be overlooked.

Conversely, efforts to educate, train, skill, and equip Africa's youth are faced with challenges, including widening inequality, poverty, limited access to quality education, conflict, and forced displacement. This is further compounded by the realities of the continent's youthful population, with a median age of 19.1 years, against restricted resources allocated to Ministries of Education and Youth in the region. These challenges underscore the importance of strengthening Competency-Based Education, industry partnerships, and skills development systems to ensure that graduates possess the knowledge, practical competencies, and adaptability required to thrive in a rapidly evolving labour market.



Context

The East African Community (EAC) is arguably the youngest region on the continent. Presently, the EAC has a median age of under 18 years, with Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Burundi, and South Sudan recording median ages of between 15 and 16 years — approximately three years younger than the continental average. This youthful population is under increasing pressure to acquire the competencies, skills, and knowledge required to secure meaningful employment in a rapidly changing labour market and escape the devastating effects of poverty. As countries continue to implement Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) reforms, there is growing recognition that education systems must produce graduates equipped with practical, industry-relevant competencies that respond to evolving workforce needs.

Although countries have increased investment in education as a proportion of GDP, challenges including inequality, limited access to quality education, conflict, war, and insecurity continue to disrupt learning, training, and skills development across the region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and parts of Kenya and Uganda. Millions of young people have become refugees or internally displaced persons over the last decade, significantly limiting their access to education and employment opportunities. At the same time, many employers continue to report a mismatch between graduates' competencies and labour market requirements, underscoring the need for stronger education-industry collaboration, competency-based learning, and more responsive skills development systems.



The Inaugural Summit EAES23 & the Successful Follow-Up EAES24

In 2023, the Corporate Career Academy (CCA), with the support of stakeholders, convened the inaugural East African Employability Summit (EAES23) in Nairobi. Hosted by the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, the Summit brought together delegates, speakers, higher learning institutions and TVETs, development partners, government representatives, employers, and other stakeholders from across the region to advance dialogue on youth employability, skills development, and workforce transformation.

2,000+	100+	50+	32
DELEGATES	SPEAKERS	INSTITUTIONS & TVETS	COUNTRIES

The Summit responded to the 2014 report by the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), which established that one out of every two graduates in the region lacked key employability competencies, including technical proficiency, communication, self-confidence, and other workplace skills. Uganda and Tanzania recorded the highest levels of skills gaps at 63% and 61% respectively, while Burundi (55%), Rwanda (52%), and Kenya (51%) also reported significant employability deficits. These findings reinforced the urgent need to strengthen education systems, promote Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET), and improve alignment between learning outcomes and labour market demands.

Building on these achievements, EAES24 was co-convened by the Corporate Career Academy and the East African Business Council (EABC). The Summit was further informed by the World Bank Enterprise Survey (2015), which corroborated the IUCEA findings by indicating that more than 25 per cent of formal firms in Sub-Saharan Africa identified inadequate workforce skills as a major constraint to recruitment. EAES24 therefore strengthened collaboration among governments, academia, industry, and development partners to advance practical solutions for improving employability and workforce competitiveness.

EAES24 further expanded its strategic partnerships by bringing on board the African Union Commission, which officially launched the One Million Next Level (1MNL) Initiative in Kenya, making the country the third to achieve this milestone. The initiative aims to create opportunities for 300 million young Africans in Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Engagement, and Health and

Wellbeing. Through collaboration with the Government of Kenya, the East African Community via the EAC Youth Ambassadors Platform, the private sector, and civil society, EAES24 established a strong regional platform for advancing youth employability. Entrenching skills for employment, strengthening Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET), and fostering regional collaboration emerged as central priorities for preparing young people for the future of work.

The Focus of EAES26

Riding on the groundbreaking success and outcomes of the first and second East African Employability Summits (EAES23 and EAES24), EAES26 seeks to consolidate the gains made, track the impact of previous commitments, and build on the strong foundation established over the past two editions. The Summit will provide a progressive regional platform that brings together governments, academia, TVET institutions, employers, development partners, industry leaders, and youth to strengthen collaboration on employability, skills development, and workforce transformation. Particular emphasis will be placed on advancing Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET), strengthening education-industry linkages, promoting digital transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in learning, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, and facilitating regional skills mobility to prepare young people for the future of work.



Some of the key achievements and milestones realized through EAES23 and EAES24 include:



Launch of the East African Employability Policy Brief, shared with stakeholders across the public, private, development, and education sectors.



Sponsorship of 500 students by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Kenya, to participate in the Africa Youth Connekt Summit

Recognition of over 200 outstanding individuals and institutions advancing employability and career development across East Africa.



Partnership with LinkedIn, enabling more than 1,080 delegates to access digital career profiling and online job search resources.

More than 200 job shadowing opportunities provided to students through Diamond Trust Bank.



Training and certification of 250 Directors and Coordinators of Career Services as Career Analysts and Coaches, while strengthening the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in career guidance through NextGen.

Launch of the Emerge Global Student Leadership Mentorship Programme and the Offices of Career Services Strengthening Programme, with over 780 student leaders trained.



Dissemination of the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) Skills Needs Survey Report (2023) to inform policy dialogue and workforce development initiatives.

EAES2024

THE EAST AFRICAN EMPLOYABILITY SUMMIT AND UONGOZI CAREER AWARDS

1

Strategic partnership between the Corporate Career Academy (CCA) and the East African Business Council (EABC), positioning the private sector as a co-convenor of the Summit.

2

Launch of Wadata, powered by Tectona Group.

3

Strengthened collaboration with the Government of Kenya, particularly the Ministries responsible for Labour and Education.

4

Support from the African Union Commission's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, reinforcing employability as a continental

5

Participation of the International Labour Organization (ILO), highlighting the global importance of addressing youth unemployment.

6

National launch and dissemination of the African Union One Million Next Level (IMNL) Initiative in Kenya.

7

Unveiling of the Kenya Skills Hub.

8

Launch of the CCA Career Assessment Programme and the Offices of Career Services Capacity Building Initiative.

9

Launch of the National Policy on Linking Industry to Education, Training and Research.

10

Launch of the National Guidelines for Career Guidance in Kenya.

10

Launch of the National Career Guidance Training Manual.

11

Launch of Certified Career counsellor Program and indicates 545 Educators have already been certified

These achievements provide a strong foundation for EAES26 to deepen regional collaboration, promote Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET), strengthen workforce readiness, and accelerate practical solutions that enhance youth employability, skills mobility, and sustainable economic development across East Africa.

Target Audience

The summit is designed for a diverse audience involved in the higher education sector, TVETs, post-training and skills development partners, the out-of-school youth ecosystem, governments, non-government organizations, the private sector, and development partners facilitating access to innovative learning, skills transfer, labour migration, and opportunity creators, as well as the end users, including recruiters, employers, and industry leaders.

Outcome



Summit summary and report with key recommendations on accelerating efforts to close the employability skills gap and catalyzing Labour Migration and catalyzing Labour Migration.

On the third edition, EAES26, we desire to realize the following results



Africa Year of Education 2024 report mainstreamed.



Proposed Summit Format

With feedback since 2022, CCA has adopted a systematic approach to building consensus and delivering a student and youth-focused event with stakeholders as key drivers. Pre-summit activities, including stakeholder breakfasts and round tables, press releases, and media briefs, set the tone for the main event. At the summit, we adopt an agile delivery model infusing high-level panel discussions, main plenum discussions, sub-sector breakaway sessions, student demo days, pitching, and exhibitions.

At the climax of the summit, we host the gala event featuring Uongozi Career Awards recognizing pacesetters.

Resourcing the Summit

CCA and EABC leverage relationships with partners and stakeholders like government ministries, departments and agencies, business member organizations, the private sector and development partners we established since the awards in 2022 and EAES23. These engagements shall continue until the requisite budget and support are realized to host this impact regional gathering. CCA plans to complement these efforts by holding donor round table meetings with foundations, philanthropy, grant-making institutions, and education funders to strengthen participation and involvement in the best way feasible to realize independent goals by institutions. Sponsorship packages will be provided for partners, exhibitors, and all stakeholders. Importantly, we are engaging to find an anchor partner with whom we can confidently roll out EAES26 and beyond.



Conclusion

CCA and the East African Business Council (EABC) are encouraged by the achievements of EAES23 and EAES24 and the growing momentum towards EAES26, whose increasing regional significance has informed the reconvening of the Summit in Nairobi, with the long-term vision of hosting it across all East African Community (EAC) Partner States. The lessons and partnerships established through the previous two summits have strengthened CCA's and stakeholders' capacity to convene impactful, stakeholder-led platforms that drive collaboration and innovation.

With the support of governments, academia, industry, development partners, and the private sector, CCA, EABC, and their collaborators are committed to delivering a solution-driven EAES26 that advances youth employability, Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET), skills mobility, entrepreneurship, and workforce readiness. The Summit will catalyse regional cooperation by promoting stronger linkages between education and industry, fostering mutual recognition of skills and competencies, and leveraging the common market to accelerate sustainable economic growth, labour mobility, and regional integration across East Africa.

Skills without Borders — Together, Accelerating East Africa's Integration

Past Summits Impact Partners





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