UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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ONLINE

18 AUG 2026 - 20 AUG 2026

Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development Academy

Change and transformationGovernance and Human Rights
Stakeholder engagement and partnerships
Sustainable development and the SDGs
Digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI)



LANGUAGE	DURATION	ENROLL BY	PRICE	LOCATION	TARGET
English	3 days	12 Aug 2026	1,000 USD	ONLINE	Everyone

CONTACT sustainable-development@unssc.org

The Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development (D4S) Academy 2026 is a global forum dedicated to exploring how digital transformation is being harnessed to accelerate progress towards sustainable development. It builds on UNSSC's pioneering work with UN Environment on the Digital4Sustainability Learning Path.

This year's Academy focuses on understanding AI's role in shaping sustainable development outcomes.

We are pleased to offer a limited number of **full scholarships for the D4S Academy 2026**. The criteria and the application process are described at the end of this page.

Introduction

In 2025, the Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development Academy introduced participants to the broader landscape of digital transformation and its implications for sustainable development. Building on this foundation, **the 2026 edition focuses on how AI is reshaping sustainable development—and what it takes to use it effectively in practice.**

The Academy is structured to move from understanding to application. It begins by situating AI within global transformations, then examines implications for sustainable development, and finally **focuses on governance, organizational uptake, and practical application.** The programme combines plenary discussions, working group exercises, and peer exchange, with a consistent focus on translating insight into execution.

Objectives

Upon successfully participating in the Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development Academy 2026, participants will be able to:

- Understand how AI is reshaping sustainable development and the organizations working to advance it.
- Identify where AI can create meaningful value by responding to sustainable development priorities and organizational needs.
- Analyze how application, governance and adoption interact to enable or constrain effective AI use.
- Apply practical approaches to strengthen the use of AI in their own work and organizations.

Course methodology

This Academy is designed using experiential online learning methodologies that combine panel discussions featuring high-level speakers with interactive opportunities for knowledge exchange, experience sharing, and hands-on practice sessions.

Most of the virtual Academy is synchronous with limited mandatory pre-readings. Participants will engage with a wide range of experts inputs during live webinars, reflect in small-groups during breakout activities, prepare for learner-led and peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges, and apply the knowledge and skills they have during co-creation activities.

This Academy places a premium on fun and relationship-building. During networking sessions, participants showcase their work, play games, and engage in other social activities.

Course contents

D4S Academy participants will explore key topics in-depth through plenary sessions, applied use cases, hands-on practice sessions, and side events on trending topics. Participants will have an opportunity to present their solution to a real-world sustainable development challenge by participating in a policy **hackathon**.

An agenda detailing the session themes is presented below.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY 2026

ONLINE | 18 - 20 AUG 2026

UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

AGENDA

DAY 1: UNDERSTANDING THE SHIFT

18TH AUGUST
Tuesday

Opening and Keynote

Silke Weinlich - Deputy Director, Learning and Knowledge Services, UNSSC

Doreen Bogdan-Martin - Secretary-General of the ITU

COFFEE BREAK

Plenary 1 : Where AI Matters for Sustainable Development

Shankar Maruwada - Co-Founder and CEO at EkStep Foundation

LUNCH

TREND TALKS

UNDP & UNICEF

Jayant Narayan - Leading Digital, AI & Innovation at UNDP

Miles Hastie - Digital Impact Manager at UNICEF

COFFEE BREAK

Plenary 2: AI for Sustainable Development: What is needed to unleash its potential

Bethany Edmunds - Associate Dean of Computer Programs at North Eastern University

Philipp Zimmer - Applied AI Scientist at The World Bank

Key Takeaways + Workshop Preparatory Session

- Recap
- Preparatory session for next day's working group

DAY 2: AI IN PRACTICE- FROM GOVERNANCE TO APPLICATION

19TH AUGUST
Wednesday

Plenary 3: AI in Practice: Applications that deliver

Marc le Page - Digital Technology Innovation specialist at ADB

Jason Slater - Chief of AI, Innovation and Digital Officer at UNIDO

COFFEE BREAK

Working Group Session: Systems Thinking

Beatriz Gonzalez Mendoza- Associate Learning Officer at UNSSC

LUNCH

TREND TALKS

ADB & UNIDO focus on applications

James Edward Ball - Digital Innovation Consultant at ADB

Jason Slater - Chief of AI, Innovation and Digital Officer at UNIDO

COFFEE BREAK

Plenary 4: AI in Practice: Governance for effective Use

David Jensen - Managing Director at Jensen Consulting

Francisco Gonzalez - Specialist Architect at Google

Key Takeaways + Hackathon Preparatory Session

- Recap
- Preparatory session for next day's working group

DAY 3: AI IN PRACTICE- ADOPTION INSIDE YOUR ORGANIZATION

20TH AUGUST
Thursday

Plenary 5 : Making AI Work: Culture, Capacity, & Adoption

Shivam Kishore - Prof. of Practice, University of Hawaii

COFFEE BREAK

Hackathon: Digital Culture in Practice

Lourdes Rodriguez - Senior Foresight Consultant

LUNCH

SHARE FAIRS

Showcasing participants initiatives

COFFEE BREAK

Team Presentations and Peer Exchange

Clare Stark - Head of Futures Literacy and Foresight UNESCO

Valentin Rudloff - Climate Technology Specialist at UN CTCN

Jivtesh Singh - AI Architect at Microsoft

Closing

- Final reflections, key takeaways, and next steps.
- Program Evaluation
- Virtual music concert for participants

Target audience

The cohort will comprise UN professionals; representatives from national and local government bodies; members of civil society, academia, and sustainability entrepreneurs from the private sector. More specifically, successful applicants to the Academy will be professionals with 10-15 years of experience working on digital transformation for sustainable development.

Participants will be selected based on their professional/academic profile and motivation statements. When signing up, make sure you dedicate enough time to fill in all the required information, especially at the question: "**Tell us a bit more about why you are applying for this course**".

The selection board will make sure geographic regions, gender, and sectors – including UN and non-UN - are well represented in the cohort.

IMPORTANT

- **Attendance requirements**: Participants **must commit to attending all three days** of the Academy. **Certificates** will be awarded to participants who meet the attendance rate criteria for the Academy.
- **Technical requirements:** Participants will need to access the academy through a desktop PC or laptop with an internet connection, as well as a functioning webcam, microphone, and speakers. Internet speed and volume should be sufficient for four to five hours of video-conferencing each day. Due to the interactive and co-creative format of the Academy, **it is not possible to participate using a smartphone**

Cost of participation

A number of scholarships covering 100% of the programme fee are available. See the **Scholarships section** below for details.

The course fee of USD 1000 for individual participants covers the following:

- **Three days of online training**, including a technical orientation session on how to navigate the virtual platform and use collaborative tools for the course.
- **Exclusive access to the UNSSC online social learning environment** with asynchronous learning activities, background materials, and the opportunity to connect with and learn from peers.
- **All course materials**, references, and contacts.

Participants are expected to cover all costs related to their participation in the Academy (computer, Internet access, any other IT equipment, etc.).

Scholarships

Scholarship applications closed on Monday, 27 July 2026.

The United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) is pleased to offer a number of scholarships for the D4S Academy 2026, covering 100% of the programme fees. The scholarships aim to broaden access to the programme for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Qualified candidates from all backgrounds and regions are strongly encouraged to apply.

The application process is highly competitive, and the selection committee will make decisions based on candidate profile, suitability to the programme, and geographic diversity, among other factors.

Application Steps:

- **Step 1:** Register for the D4S Academy by clicking on the "Add to Cart" button at the top of the page. Once your course registration is completed (pending approval), you will receive an automated confirmation email. Your scholarship application will not be taken into consideration if you have not registered on this page first.
- **Step 2:** After registering for the course, complete the Scholarship Application Form (CLOSED) using the same email address you used during registration.