Needs Assessment Report: Digital Innovation hubs under Digiken Programme

Prepared By

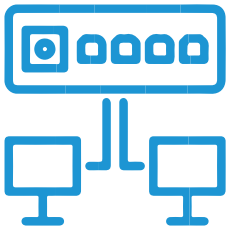
Green and Digital Innovation Hub

This report is published under the DigiKen – Digital Platforms Kenya programme supported by the Joint SDG Fund with contributions from the European Union and the Governments of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. In Kenya, DigiKen is led by UN Resident Coordinators Office and implemented by UNESCO (lead agency), UNCDF, UNEP and UN Women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This needs assessment was conducted to get insights on the operational status, challenges, and support needs of **15 Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)** under the DigiKen programme. The hubs are central to bridging the digital divide by providing community-based training, mentorship, and access to digital infrastructure for youth, women, Micro, Small, and Emerging Enterprises (MSMEs), persons with disabilities, and rural populations.



Key findings from this assessment are summarized below:

Governance and Engagement: The hubs have diverse governance structures, with team sizes ranging from **1 to 30 members.** While the majority **(10 hubs)** can be engaged directly, **5** require coordination through parent institutions or county-level authorities.

Target Groups and Outreach: All **15 hubs prioritize youth (ages 18–35), with 14 targeting women and girls, and 12 engaging rural communities.** Several hubs also serve persons with disabilities, MSMEs, and students, highlighting their capacity to reach multiple vulnerable and underserved groups. **9 hubs** reported training more than **400 participants** annually.

Mode of Delivery and Infrastructure: In-person sessions and community outreach remain the dominant delivery formats across the hubs. Besides, **7 hubs** have adopted online training, **5 offer** hybrid models, and a few utilize self-paced or mobile-based learning. The hubs cited barriers such as **limited learner devices (12 hubs)**, **poor internet connectivity (8 hubs)**, and **lack of software tools (10 hubs)**, which constrain their capacity to offer online and/or hybrid programmes. While a few hubs such as PC Kinyanjui, Lakehub, and Mandera are well-equipped with modern labs, reliable internet, and backup power, most operate with limited devices and basic infrastructure. Many lack sufficient computers, software licenses, and power backup systems.**Curriculum and Skills Areas:** The majority of hubs focus on digital skills such as basic Information Communication Technology(ICT) literacy, digital marketing, and web development. Advanced areas like Artificial Intelligence(AI), cybersecurity, and mobile app development are offered by only a few hubs. Only **2 hubs** have certified curricula, and **4 have no formal curriculum.**

Language and Inclusivity: All hubs deliver training in English, and most supplement with Swahili or local languages. Nonetheless, **13 hubs** indicated the need for further support in content localization to enhance comprehension.

Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) per Hub: Trainer capacity is uneven across hubs, with some like PC Kinyanjui and Kilifi Innovation Hub having **6** or more ToTs, while others such as Othaya National Government Constituency Development Fund Ajira Youth Empowerment Centre (NG-CDF AYEC) operate with only **1 trainer.**

Skills Identified by Hubs as Most Needed by Their Target Participants: Hubs emphasized high demand for both foundational digital skills (like digital literacy and data entry) and advanced areas (such as graphic design, web development, AI, and cybersecurity) to meet their respective target participants needs. Many hubs also stressed the need for entrepreneurship support, and integration of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), carbon credits, and Internet Protocal (IP) training into their curricula.

Mentorship & Incentives: 13 hubs provide mentorship or follow-up support, often informally or through alumni networks. Besides, only **7 hubs** offer learner incentives such as transport, airtime, or stipends.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): While **12 hubs** report tracking participant outcomes such as employment and skill acquisition, only a few, use structured, multi-metric M&E frameworks. Others rely on basic or informal tracking methods, and **3 hubs** lack any formal M&E system.

Based on the findings, this assessment recommends the DigiKen project to:

- Provide infrastructure support such as learner devices, internet, and solar backups to enable hybrid and online learning.
- Support language adaptation by translating training content into Swahili and local languages.
- Promote a demand-driven learning pathways rather than a one-size-fits-all curriculum structure.
- Strengthen alumni and mentorship structures to promote sustained impact post-training.
- Introduce learner incentive models (e.g., transport or data stipends) to boost participation and retention, especially in underserved areas.
- Deploy a standardized and certifiable curriculum to enhance quality of the training programs.
- Prioritize hubs with limited trainer capacity (1 or 2 ToTs) for immediate support to expand their training workforce.
- Establish a pool for non-monetary support such as software tools, and job linkages.
- Institutionalize M&E systems with templates and tools to track learning outcomes and employment linkages.

INTRODUCTION

Kenya's digital economy is expanding rapidly, driven by growing internet penetration, mobile usage, and supportive government policy frameworks. According to the International Trade Administration , Kenya's ICT sector contributes approximately **7%** to the country's Gross Domenstic Product (GDP) and is one of the most dynamic in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this growth, a significant digital divide still exists, particularly among youths, women, persons with disabilities, and rural communities.

7% of Kenya's GDP comes from ICT

Studies show that the digital gender gap is acute, with only **21.7%** of rural women using the internet compared to **32.2%** in urban areas . MSMEs and youth face major obstacles in accessing training, devices, and affordable connectivity, limiting their participation in the digital economy . Kenya's Artificial Intelligence Strategy **2025–2030,** which builds on foundational frameworks such as the 2019 Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain Taskforce Report and the Kenya National Digital Master Plan **(2022–2032)** , identifies the need to strengthen digital infrastructure, digital skills, and innovation ecosystems to harness the potential of emerging technologies.

Only **21.7%** of rural women use the internet vs **32.2%** in urban areas

To further unlock the potential of the digital economy, innovators require more than infrastructure and connectivity. They need targeted support systems to help scale their ideas into sustainable businesses. Scaling up demands access to entrepreneurial training in business management, financial literacy, legal knowledge, particularly around intellectual property protection, and strategic marketing . Innovators also need mentorship networks to guide them through market entry, investment readiness, and product development stages. Affordable access to co-working spaces with reliable internet and technical equipment is essential for enhancing collaboration and productivity.

To further unlock the potential of the digital economy, innovators require more than infrastructure and connectivity.

Furthermore, financial support mechanisms, such as seed funding, access to investor networks, and structured pathways to secure venture capital, are critical to enable startups to grow beyond the ideation phase. As emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, and Internet of Things (IoT) continue to reshape market opportunities, innovators must also be equipped with advanced technical skills and updated content to remain competitive. Strengthening innovation hubs as centers of entrepreneurial capacity building, technical upskilling, mentorship, and resource access will therefore be pivotal in creating a more inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable digital economy in Kenya.

In view of these structural inequalities in digital access and capacity, there is increasing recognition that national-level digital policies must be complemented by localized, demand-responsive mechanisms to ensure inclusive participation in the digital economy. Innovation hubs are offering a range of critical services to address these needs. They provide co-working spaces equipped with internet access, technical infrastructure for product development, and communal environments that enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing.

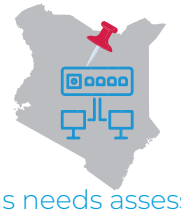
Many hubs also deliver entrepreneurship training programmes covering areas such as business modeling, market research, and financial planning . Legal advisory services, particularly focused on intellectual property rights, are increasingly available to help innovators protect and commercialize their ideas. Mentorship opportunities are organized through structured programmes connecting early-stage entrepreneurs with experienced advisors and industry experts. Additionally, hubs facilitate exposure to investment opportunities by hosting networking events, pitch competitions, and investor meetups. Some hubs further support technical skill advancement through coding bootcamps, mobile app development courses, and training on emerging technologies system.

Many hubs also deliver entrepreneurship training programmes covering areas such as business modeling, market research, and financial planning .

The DigiKen programme, was conceptualized as a catalytic initiative to strengthen Kenya's digital innovation ecosystem at the grassroots level. The programme identifies DIHs as key institutional actors with the potential to drive community-based digital transformation by serving as delivery points for digital skills training, inclusive entrepreneurship support, and access to digital infrastructure.

By anchoring interventions within locally embedded hubs, DigiKen aims to bridge the last-mile digital divide and reinforce national efforts to foster a more equitable, resilient, and future-ready digital society. By offering training, mentorship, digital tools, and safe learning spaces, the hubs will play a critical role in equipping the youth, women, persons with disabilities, MSMEs, and rural communities with the skills and networks needed to thrive in a digital economy. In doing so, DigiKen does not just aim to expand access, but to ensure that digital transformation in Kenya is inclusive, sustainable, and locally anchored.

This needs assessment was therefore conducted to better understand the operational capacities, challenges, and support requirements of the **15 DIHs.** The findings will inform the design and rollout of Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes, and other non-monetary support mechanisms under DigiKen, with the ultimate goal of scaling high-quality, community-centered certified digital skills training across Kenya.



This needs assessment was therefore conducted to better understand the operational capacities, challenges, and support requirements of the 15 DIHs.

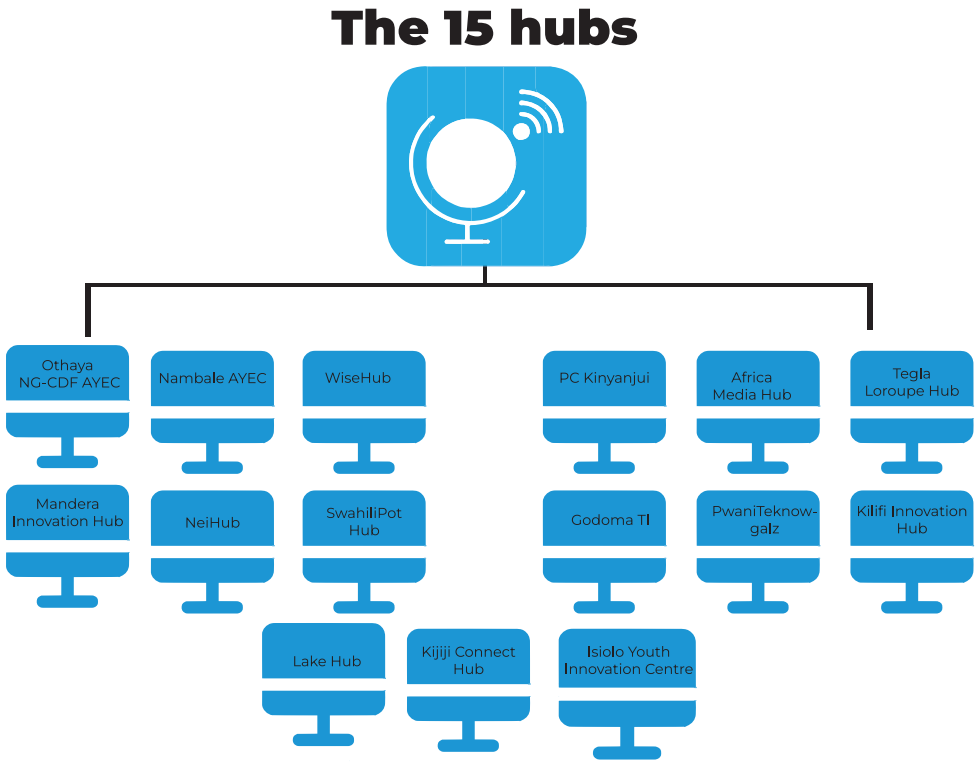
METHODOLOGY

The needs assessment was conducted using a mixed-methods approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the hubs' operational capacities, challenges, and strategic support requirements. The primary data collection involved administering a questionnaire between April 7 and April 16, 2025, targeting the **15 DIHs**. The questionnaire was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights across key thematic areas, including governance structures, engagement protocols, training delivery models, infrastructure and digital readiness, curriculum development and certification, inclusivity and language use, as well as non-monetary support needs.

The questionnaire was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights across key thematic areas, including governance structures, engagement protocols, training delivery models, infrastructure and digital readiness, curriculum development and certification, inclusivity and language use, as well as non-monetary support needs.

The **15 hubs** that participated in the initial assessment were:

Othaya NG-CDF AYEC, Nambale AYEC, WiseHub, PC Kinyanjui, Africa Media Hub, Tegla Loroupe Hub, Mandera Innovation Hub, NeiHub, SwahiliPot Hub, Godoma TI, PwaniTeknowgalz, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Lake Hub, Kijiji Connect Hub, and Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre.



Following the questionnaire phase, an additional round of virtual individual engagements was held on **April 24, 2025,** to deepen the insights collected. The objective of these follow-up discussions was to gain more detailed information on each hub's Trainer of Trainers (ToT) capacity and to better understand the critical skills gaps that are most in demand for their target participant groups. During the engagement, hubs that were available provided live input, while those unable to attend were given the flexibility to submit their feedback through a Microsoft Forms questionnaire. During the second round of interviews, **one hub** failed to submit a response.

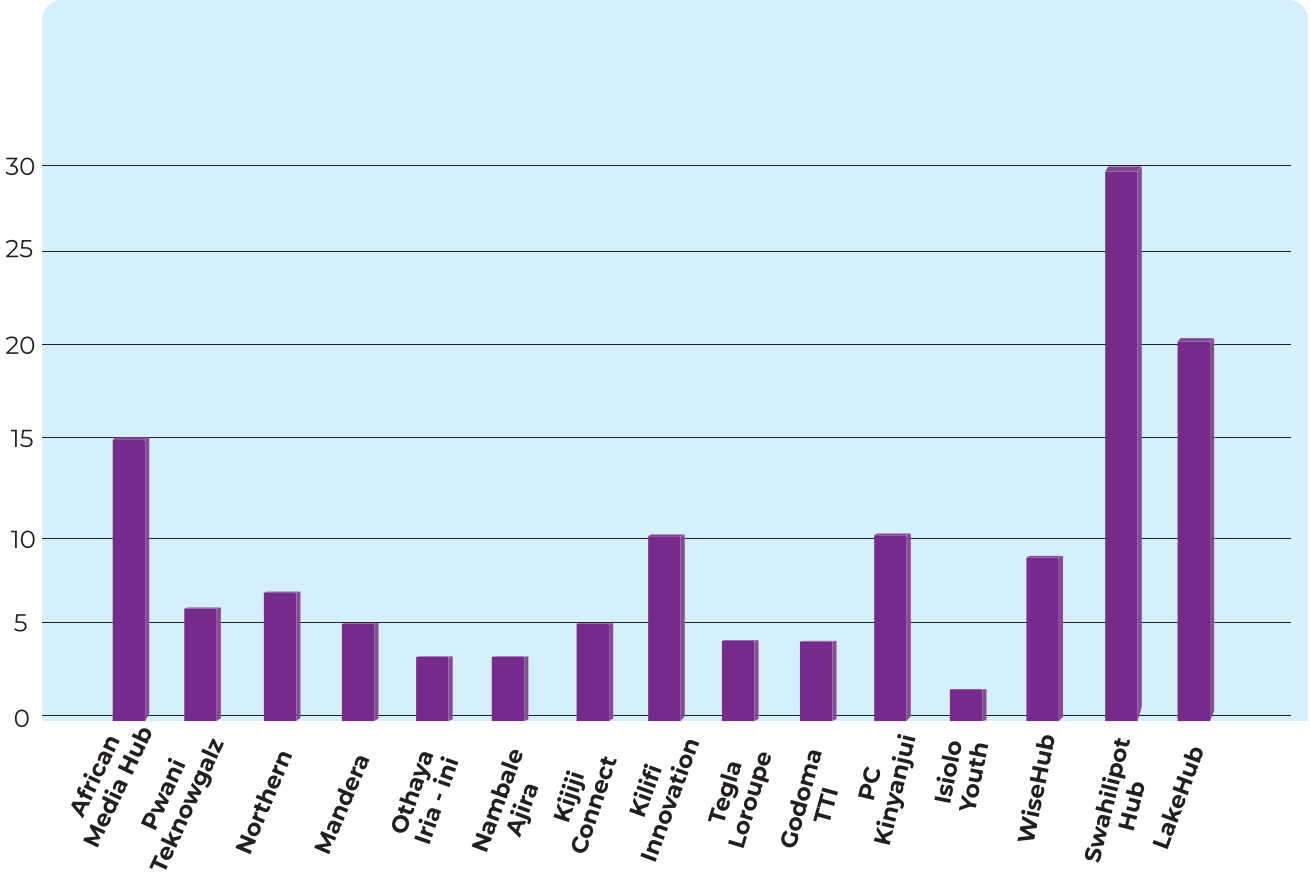
For data analysis, a thematic synthesis approach was employed. Responses from both the structured questionnaire and the follow-up engagements were reviewed, categorized, and synthesized to identify common patterns, unique challenges, and emerging opportunities across the hubs. The data was then triangulated across the **2 engagement phases** to validate findings and ensure robustness. This process led to the identification of key findings that have been elaborated in the following section.

KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Hub Governance and Engagement Protocols

Finding 1: The hubs demonstrate varied governance structures, with core team sizes ranging from 1 to 30 members. While 10 hubs can be engaged directly, 5 require coordination through county governments or parent institutions.

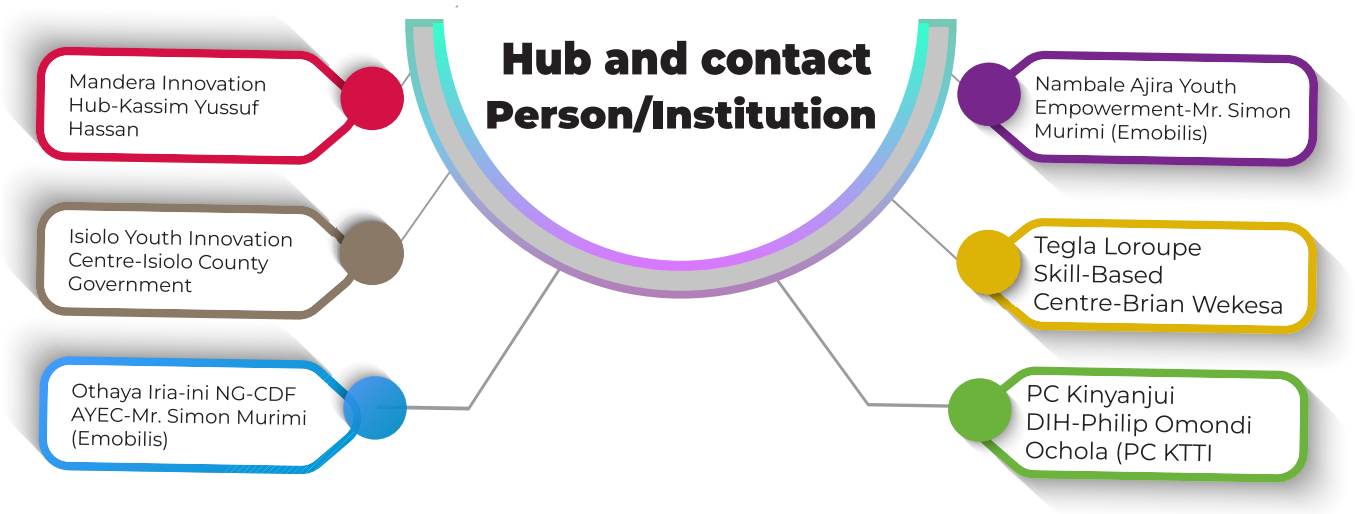
The **15 DigiKen** Innovation Hubs exhibit diverse organizational and engagement protocols depending on the context on which they were established. In terms of core staffing, Swahilipot Hub Foundation reported the largest team with **30 members**, followed by Lakehub with **20,** and Africa Media Hub with **15.** Medium-sized teams are found at Kilifi Innovation Hub and PC Kinyanjui Digital Innovation Hub, each with **10 members**, and WiseHub with **9.** Northern Innovation and Empowerment Hub (NieHub) operates with **7 team members**, while Pwani Teknowgalz and Mandera Innovation Hub have **6 and 5 members**, respectively. Kijiji Connect ICT Hub also reported a team of **5,** while both Tegla Loroupe Skill-Based Training Center and Godoma TTI Jitume Hub work with **4 team members** each. The smallest teams were reported by Nambale Ajira Youth Empowerment Centre and Othaya Iria-ini NG-CDF Ajira Youth Empowerment Center, each with **3 members,** and Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre, which currently has only **1 core team member.**



In terms of funding, only **3 hubs**; Africa Media Hub, Kijiji Connect ICT Hub, and Swahilipot Hub Foundation, confirmed receiving seed funding at the time of their establishment. The remaining **12 hubs** reported that they were established without any initial seed grants or financial support. This highlights a significant resource gap at the foundational stage, suggesting the need for increased support mechanisms for early-stage hubs, especially those operating in marginalized regions.

Engagement protocols vary across the hubs. A total of **10 hubs,** Africa Media Hub, Pwani Teknowgalz, NieHub, Kijiji Connect ICT Hub, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Godoma TTI Jitume Hub, WiseHub, Swahilipot Hub Foundation, Lakehub, and Northern Innovation and Empowerment Hub, indicated that they can be engaged directly without going through an intermediary.

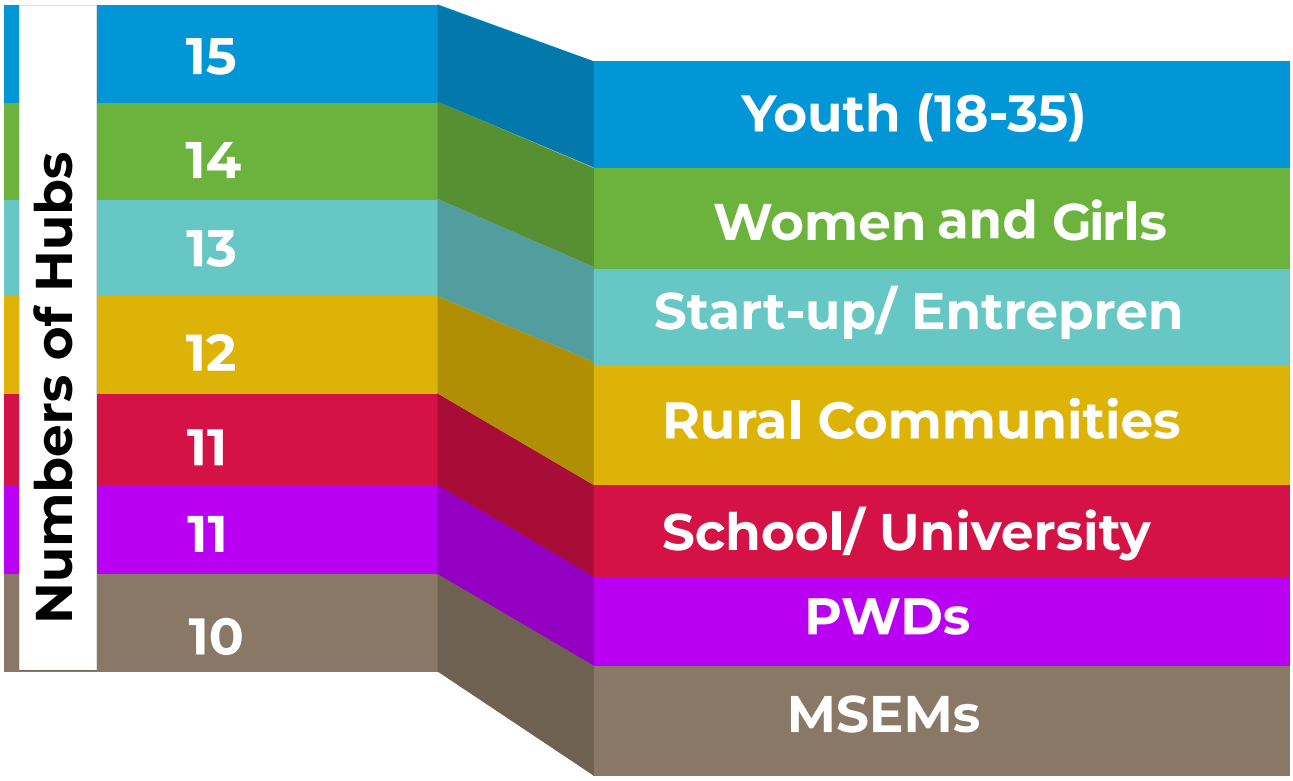
The remaining **6 hubs 5** require engagement through an intermediary, either a founding government department or a parent institution. Mandera Innovation Hub directs all engagements through the founding county government, with Kassim Yussuf Hassan as the designated contact person. Similarly, Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre is coordinated through the Isiolo County Government. **3 hubs**, Othaya Iria-ini NG-CDF, Ajira Youth Empowerment Center, Nambale Ajira Youth Empowerment Centre, and Tegla Loroupe Skill-Based Training Center, operate under a parent institution, specifically a Technical Vocational Education Training(TVET) or Non Governmental Organization (NGO) structure. For both Othaya and Nambale, engagement is coordinated through Mr. Simon Murimi from Emobilis. For Tegla Loroupe Skill-Based Training Center also gave a point of contact. Additionally, PC Kinyanjui Digital Innovation Hub requires that coordination should be done through the Manager and ODeL Coordinator at PC KTTI.

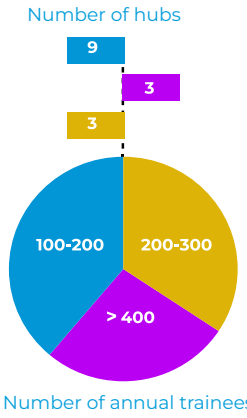


3.2 Target Beneficiaries and Community Reach

Finding 2: The hubs primarily target youth, women, rural communities, and underserved groups, with all 15 hubs serving youth and 14 targeting women and girls. Most hubs also report strong annual outreach, with 9 training over 400 people each year.

All the **15 hubs** identified youths **(18–35 years)** as their core beneficiary group which reaffirms the programme's focus on youth empowerment. Women and girls are also widely targeted, with **14 hubs** explicitly including them in their programmes. Rural communities are engaged by **12 hubs** which reflects the efforts to bridge digital gaps in marginalized areas. Support for startups and entrepreneurs is provided by **13 hubs.** MSMEs are served by **10 hubs**, often in conjunction with youth- and gender-focused programmes. Persons with disabilities are supported by **11 hubs** and this demonstrates a commendable commitment to inclusive access. School and university students are included in programmes by **11 hubs,** either through direct training or as part of early pipeline engagement. This focus on diverse beneficiaries reveals the hubs' capacity to address layered vulnerabilities across age, gender, geography, and ability.





The training capacity of the DigiKen Innovation Hubs demonstrates a significant reach across communities. **9 hubs** including Northern Innovation and Empowerment Hub (NieHub), Mandera Innovation Hub, Othaya Iria-ini NG-CDF Ajira Youth Empowerment Center, Nambale Ajira Youth Empowerment Centre, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Tegla Loroupe Skill-Based Training Center, PC Kinyanjui Digital Innovation Hub, ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre, and Swahilipot Hub Foundation, reported **training over 400 people annually.**

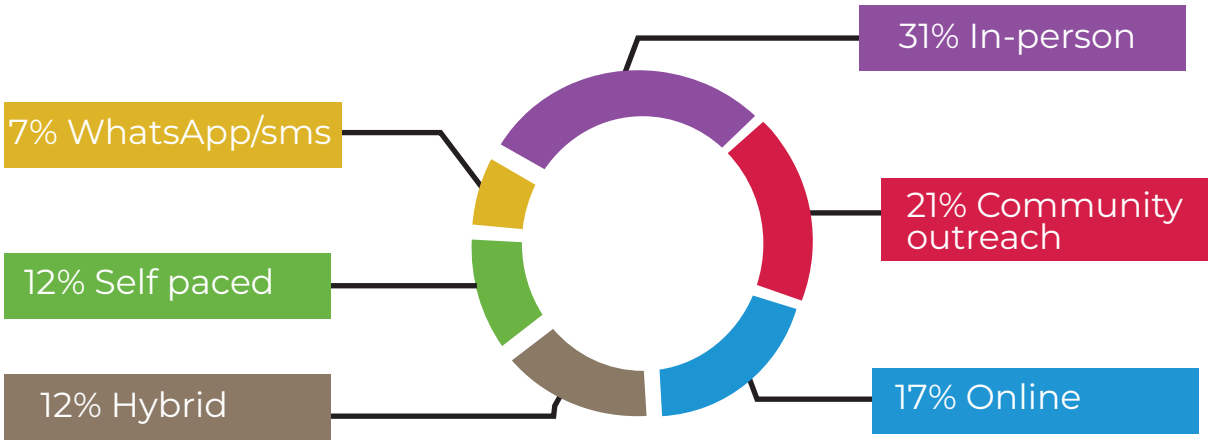
3 hubs, Africa Media Hub, Godoma TTI Jitume Hub, and WiseHub, train between **200 and 300 people per year,** while Pwani Teknowgalz, Kijiji Connect ICT Hub, and Lakehub each train between **100 and 200 people annually.** Thus, many hubs demonstrate a high-volume outreach that underscores their importance in advancing digital inclusion at the grassroots level.

3.3 Mode of Delivery

Finding 3: Most hubs deliver training through in-person and community outreach formats, while a smaller number use hybrid and digital methods. Among hubs offering hybrid or online training, the most commonly cited challenge was insufficient learner devices, followed by poor internet connectivity.

The hubs employ multiple delivery approaches to cater to different learner contexts, with in-person and outreach formats being the most widely used. **13 hubs** reported delivering training through in-person sessions. These include Swahilipot Hub Foundation, WiseHub, Godoma TTI, Kijiji Connect ICT Hub, Othaya Iria-ini, Nambale Ajira, Mandera Innovation Hub, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Tegla Loroupe, PC Kinyanjui, and ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre. **5 hubs**, namely Africa Media Hub, Pwani Teknowgalz, Northern Innovation and Empowerment Hub (NieHub), Nambale Ajira, and PC Kinyanjui, reported using a hybrid model.

Online delivery was reported by **7 hubs**, including Mandera, Kilifi, ISIOLO, PC Kinyanjui, Nambale, NieHub, and WiseHub. Self-paced digital learning that involves using pre-recorded content or e-learning platforms, was reported by **5 hubs,** Mandera, ISIOLO, PC Kinyanjui, WiseHub, and Nambale. Mobile-based learning, such as WhatsApp or SMS-driven instruction, was mentioned by **3 hubs**, Mandera Innovation Hub, ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre, and PC Kinyanjui. Finally, community outreach training was implemented by **9 hubs.** These include Mandera, Nambale, Kijiji Connect, Kilifi, Tegla Loroupe, ISIOLO, WiseHub, Swahilipot Hub, and PC Kinyanjui.



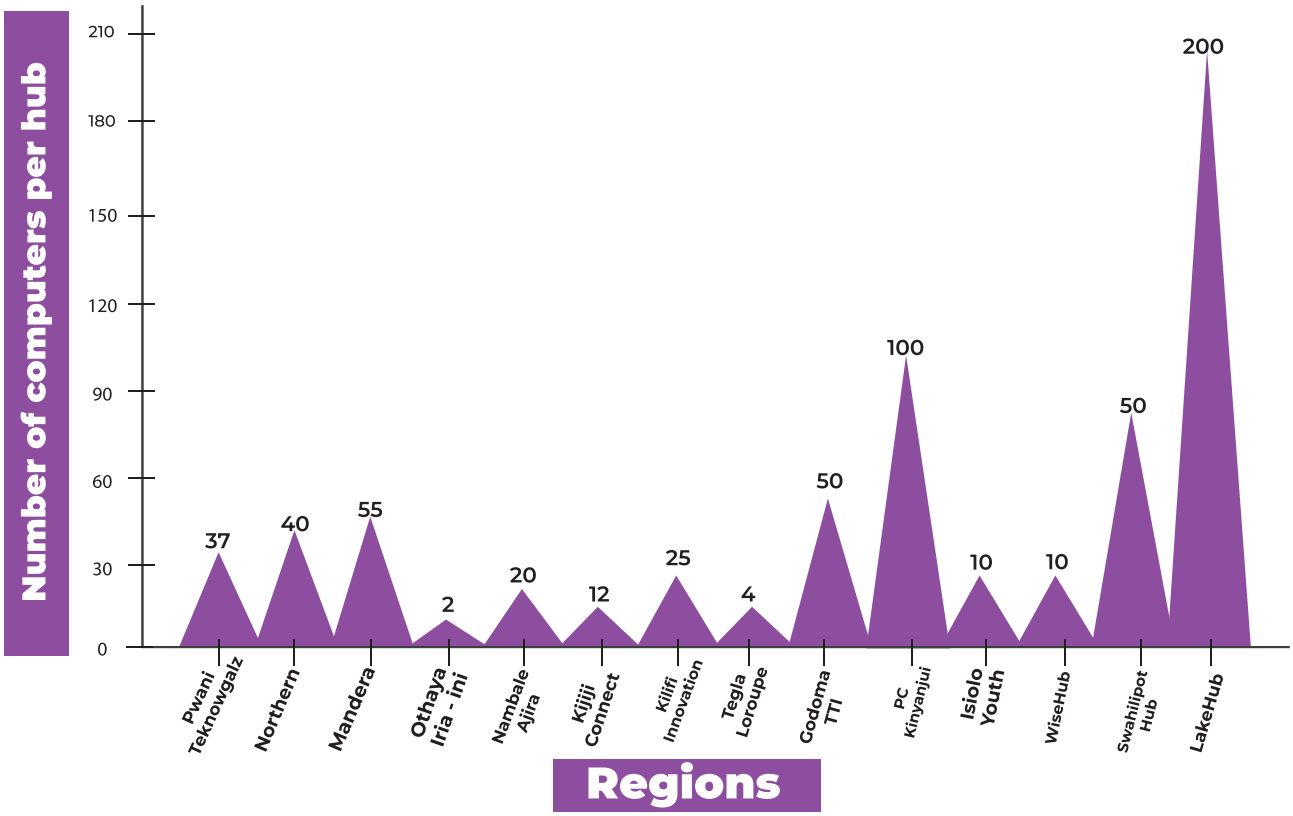
Hubs delivering online and hybrid training programmes reported various operational challenges that affect both reach and learner engagement. Poor internet connectivity was cited by **9 hubs,** including Pwani Teknowgalz, Mandera Innovation Hub, Othaya Iria-ini, Nambale Ajira, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Tegla Loroupe, ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre, WiseHub, and Swahilipot Hub Foundation. Insufficient learner devices, such as smartphones and laptops, were identified as a barrier by **11 hubs,** including NieHub, Mandera, Othaya, Nambale, Kijiji Connect, Tegla Loroupe, PC Kinyanjui, ISIOLO, WiseHub, and Swahilipot Hub. The cost of digital tools and platforms was also a concern for 10 hubs, which limits the scalability and quality of digital delivery. Additionally, **7 hubs,** including Africa Media Hub, Mandera, Othaya, Tegla Loroupe, Godoma TTI, PC Kinyanjui, and Swahilipot Hub, reported difficulty maintaining learner engagement during hybrid or online sessions.

3.4 Facilities & Infrastructure

Finding 4: While a few hubs are well-equipped, most face infrastructure challenges. Inadequate learner devices is the most common gap (reported by 12 hubs), followed by poor internet (8 hubs), lack of software tools (10 hubs), and power unreliability (5 hubs).

While some hubs are relatively well-equipped with modern training rooms, high-specification computers, and backup power systems, others operate with limited hardware and basic infrastructure.

Hubs such as PC Kinyanjui Digital Innovation Hub, Lakehub, and Mandera Innovation Hub are among the best-equipped, with **100, 200, and 55 computers** respectively, alongside reliable internet, training rooms, and backup power systems. These hubs are well-positioned to deliver hybrid or fully digital programmes. Mid-tier hubs such as Kilifi Innovation Hub, Godoma TTI, and Swahilipot Hub Foundation also demonstrate strong infrastructure, with **25–50 computers,** consistent internet access, and other essential equipment.



On the lower end, hubs like Othaya Iria-ini, Tegla Loroupe, and ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre have between **2** and **10** devices and lack internet or backup power, which may limit their digital training capacity. Africa Media Hub relies on a training room with internet but depends on learners to bring their own devices and this introduces a significant accessibility gap for this hub.

Building on the facility capacity insights, the analysis also investigated infrastructural gaps that are limiting the delivery of training programmes in the hubs. Inadequate access to learner devices was the most common challenge, reported by **12 hubs** such as Africa Media Hub, NieHub, Mandera, Othaya, Nambale, Kijiji Connect, Tegla Loroupe, Kilifi, PC Kinyanjui, ISIOLO, WiseHub, and Swahilipot Hub. This results in hubs struggling to ensure all trainees can participate meaningfully in practical sessions, particularly in coding, data analysis, and other hands-on modules.

The second most prevalent barrier is poor internet connectivity, noted by **8 hubs,** Pwani Teknowgalz, Othaya Iria-ini, Nambale Ajira, Kijiji Connect, Kilifi, Tegla Loroupe, Godoma TTI, and ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre. In addition, lack of access to essential software tools was reported by **10 hubs,** including Mandera, Othaya, Nambale, Kijiji Connect, Tegla Loroupe, Godoma TTI, PC Kinyanjui, ISIOLO, Swahilipot, and Lakehub. This deficit hinders effective training delivery in areas such as cybersecurity and mobile app development, which are domains that often require licensed tools. Power unreliability was also flagged by **5 hubs,** Mandera, Nambale, Kilifi, Godoma TTI, and WiseHub, as a recurrent limitation.

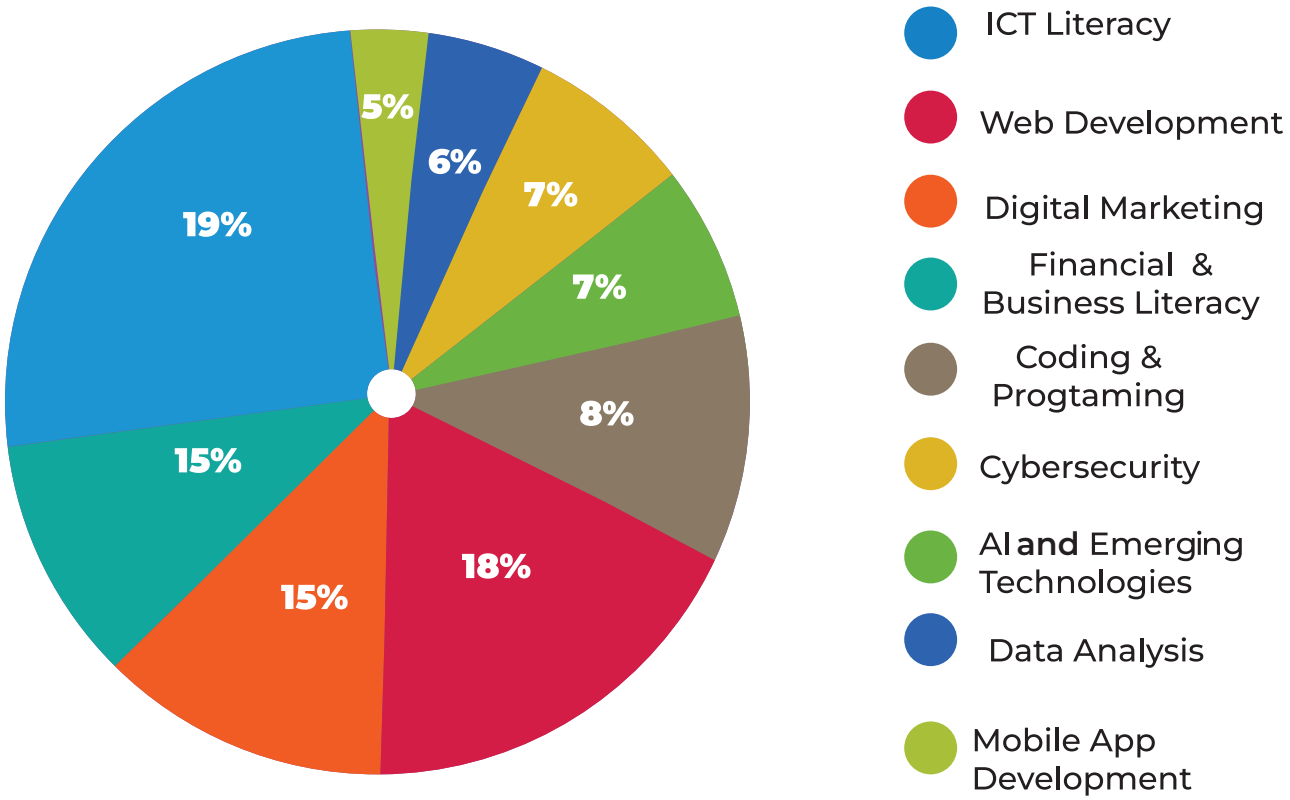
This deficit hinders effective training delivery in areas such as cybersecurity and mobile app development, which are domains that often require licensed tools.

3.5 Digital Skills Training Content and Curriculum

Finding 5: Most hubs focus on core digital skills, with fewer offering advanced areas like AI and coding. While 12 hubs have training curricula, only 2 are certified, and 4 have none which indicates a gap in curriculum standardization.

Most hubs have prioritized core digital skills such as ICT literacy, web development, and digital marketing, while a smaller number are integrating more advanced or niche areas such as AI, coding, and mobile app development. The most widely offered course is Basic ICT Literacy, provided by **13 hubs,** including Africa Media Hub, Mandera Innovation Hub, Kijiji Connect ICT Hub, Kilifi Innovation Hub, and Swahilipot Hub Foundation. Digital Marketing follows closely, offered by **10 hubs** which demonstrates the demand for skills in online promotion, e-commerce, and content creation. Financial and Business Literacy is taught by **10 hubs** as well, signaling the importance of equipping learners with practical business skills to support entrepreneurship and financial inclusion.

Web Development is included in the training programmes of **12 hubs** while Data Analysis is offered by **4 hubs,** namely Nambale Ajira, Swahilipot Hub, PC Kinyanjui, and WiseHub. Coding and Programming is covered by **5 hubs** (e.g., PC Kinyanjui, Lakehub, Swahilipot, Kijiji Connect), while AI and Emerging Technologies are integrated into training by **5 hubs,** including Pwani Teknowgalz, Kilifi, Isiolo, PC Kinyanjui, and Lakehub. This demonstrates early adoption of future-facing technologies in select the hubs. Cybersecurity is addressed by **5 hubs** and Mobile App Development, is offered by **3 hubs**.



Out of the **15 hubs, 12 hubs** indicated that they have a curriculum in place for their digital skills training programmes. These include Africa Media Hub, Pwani Teknowgalz, NieHub, Othaya Iria-ini, Nambale Ajira, Kijiji Connect, Kilifi Innovation Hub, PC Kinyanjui, WiseHub, Lakehub, and partially Swahilipot Hub Foundation, which noted having a digital literacy curriculum while relying on donor-provided content for other topics. Only **2 hubs,** Nambale Ajira and partially PC Kinyanjui, confirmed that their curricula are certified.

Most hubs reported using internal or customized content, with several explicitly noting that their curriculum is not yet certified. **4 hubs,** Mandera Innovation Hub, Tegla Loroupe, Godoma TTI and ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre, do not have a curriculum in place.

3.6 Language, Inclusivity and Content Localization

Finding 6: All hubs use English as the primary language of training, but many supplement it with Swahili or local languages. Despite this, 13 hubs still need support to better adapt content for learners facing language barriers.

All DigiKen Innovation Hubs deliver training in English, while **10 hubs** also use Swahili and **7 hubs** incorporate local languages to enhance accessibility. Despite these efforts, **7 hubs** reported that trainees face language-related challenges, particularly in rural and northern regions where English is not commonly spoken. To address this, **5 hubs** have taken steps to translate or simplify their training materials into local languages. However, **10 hubs** indicated a need for further support in localizing their content, highlighting the importance of language inclusivity in digital skills training.

All the **15 DigiKen Innovation Hubs** deliver training in English, making it the primary language across the hubs. Swahili is used by **10 hubs,** including Mandera Innovation Hub, Swahilipot Hub Foundation, and Kilifi Innovation Hub which helps bridge accessibility for learners more comfortable with the national language. Local languages are integrated by **7 hubs,** such as Tegla Loroupe, Nambale Ajira, Godoma TTI, Mandera, and WiseHub, to reach learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

15 DigiKen Innovation Hubs deliver training in English, making it the primary language across the hubs.

Despite this multilingual approach, **7 hubs** reported that their trainees experience challenges understanding training content due to language barriers. These include NieHub, Nambale Ajira, Kijiji Connect, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Tegla Loroupe, PC Kinyanjui, and Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre. For example, NieHub highlighted that it addresses these challenges by using simplified English, visual aids, peer support, and where possible, local language explanations.

Other hubs such as Kilifi and Kijiji Connect noted that some sessions require translation into Swahili or local languages to ensure learner comprehension. Out of the **15 DigiKen Innovation Hubs, 7 hubs** indicated that they have translated or localized parts of their training materials into Kiswahili or local languages. For instance, NieHub has translated content into Somali to reflect the linguistic needs of Northern Kenya, while others have adapted content to suit their regional context through simplification and real-time translation during sessions.

Despite these efforts, **13 hubs** expressed a need for additional support in adapting training content to different languages, including those that have already started localization efforts. Only Lakehub indicated that it does not require such support.

13 hubs expressed a need for additional support in adapting training content to different languages, including those that have already started localization efforts.

3.7 Post-Training Support & Learner Incentives

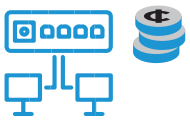
Finding 6: Most hubs (13 out of 15) offer post-training mentorship while only 7 hubs provide participant incentives.

A significant majority of the hubs have follow-up mentorship as a core component of their training. **13** out of the **15 hubs** confirmed that they provide some form of mentorship or structured post-training support. Pwani Teknowgalz, for instance, has implemented an impact model that includes, job readiness coaching, alumni networks, and even opportunities for graduates to return as facilitators or volunteers. Similarly, NieHub connects trainees to local professionals and provides extended access to co-working spaces, innovation labs, and ongoing peer support.

A significant majority of the hubs have follow-up mentorship as a core component of their training.

Other hubs, such as Africa Media Hub, Mandera Innovation Hub, Kijiji Connect ICT Hub, Kilifi Innovation Hub, Othaya Iria-ini, Tegla Loroupe, Godoma TTI, WiseHub, Swahilipot Hub, PC Kinyanjui, and Lakehub, all confirmed providing either regular or informal mentorship post-training. Godoma TTI reported offering mentorship "on a case-by-case basis," which suggests the absence of a mentorship strategy in this hub. ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre is the only hub that reported no mentorship or follow-up support for its trainees.

Regarding learner incentives, only **7 hubs** currently offer stipends or material support to their participants. These include Pwani Teknowgalz, NieHub, Mandera Innovation Hub, Kijiji Connect, Kilifi Innovation Hub, PC Kinyanjui, and Lakehub. The incentives provided typically cover transport, airtime, or minimal stipends to reduce barriers to participation, especially in underserved areas. The remaining hubs do not currently offer any financial or in-kind incentives.



7 hubs currently offer stipends or material support to their participants.

3.8 Impact and Outcomes Tracking

Finding 7: Most hubs track participant outcomes, but the depth varies. While hubs like NieHub and Pwani Teknowgalz use structured M&E systems, others like ISIOLO and Godoma TTI lack formal tracking mechanisms.

The hubs reported varying levels of sophistication in their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, with **12** out of the **15** confirming that they actively track participant outcomes such as employment, skill development, and engagement in digital platforms. NieHub indicated that it uses a blend of qualitative and quantitative metrics to track employment or self-employment outcomes, startup growth, skill certifications, and participant satisfaction.

12 out of the **15 hubs** track participant outcomes

Pwani Teknowgalz shared that it measures skill acquisition, income changes, and post-training job readiness, supported by structured alumni networks and continuous feedback loops. Similarly, PC Kinyanjui outlined a wide-ranging framework that includes metrics on knowledge gain, environmental impact, community engagement, and inclusion, particularly among women and girls.

Other hubs such as Kilifi Innovation Hub, Kijiji Connect, Lakehub, and Nambale Ajira also reported having monitoring processes. Kilifi Innovation Hub described using participant feedback, referral trends, and community engagement to assess the ripple effects of their programmes. Kijiji Connect tracks skill improvement, course completion, and participant satisfaction, while Lakehub focuses on skills gained, apps created, and livelihood outcomes. Nambale Ajira reported tracking access to digital work, income from freelance platforms, and participant feedback through surveys.

On the other hand, some hubs reported more basic or informal methods of tracking progress. For instance, WiseHub, Swahilipot Hub, and Africa Media Hub indicated that they track the number of participants trained and the proportion that completes the programme. WiseHub specifically mentioned monitoring jobs created and revenue generated, while Swahilipot tracks application, attendance, and completion numbers.

On the other hand, some hubs reported more basic or informal methods of tracking progress.

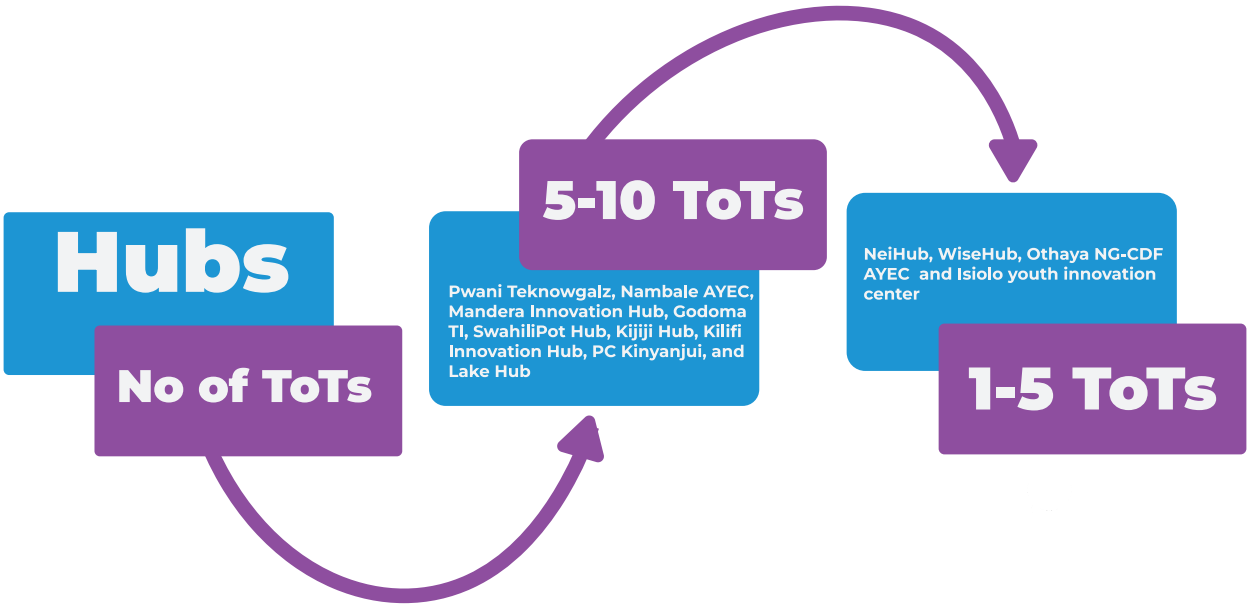
A few hubs noted significant gaps in their M&E practices. Tegla Loroupe, Godoma TTI, and ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre reported having limited or no systems in place. Tegla Loroupe and Godoma TTI rely on general feedback like participant attendance or callbacks, and ISIOLO explicitly stated that no tracking system currently exists.

A few hubs noted significant gaps in their M&E practices.

3.9 Number of Trainers of Trainers per Hub

Finding 8: Trainer capacity across the hubs is uneven, with some hubs having 5 or more ToTs while others operate with only 1 or 2 trainers. This highlights a need to prioritize ToT support for under-resourced hubs.

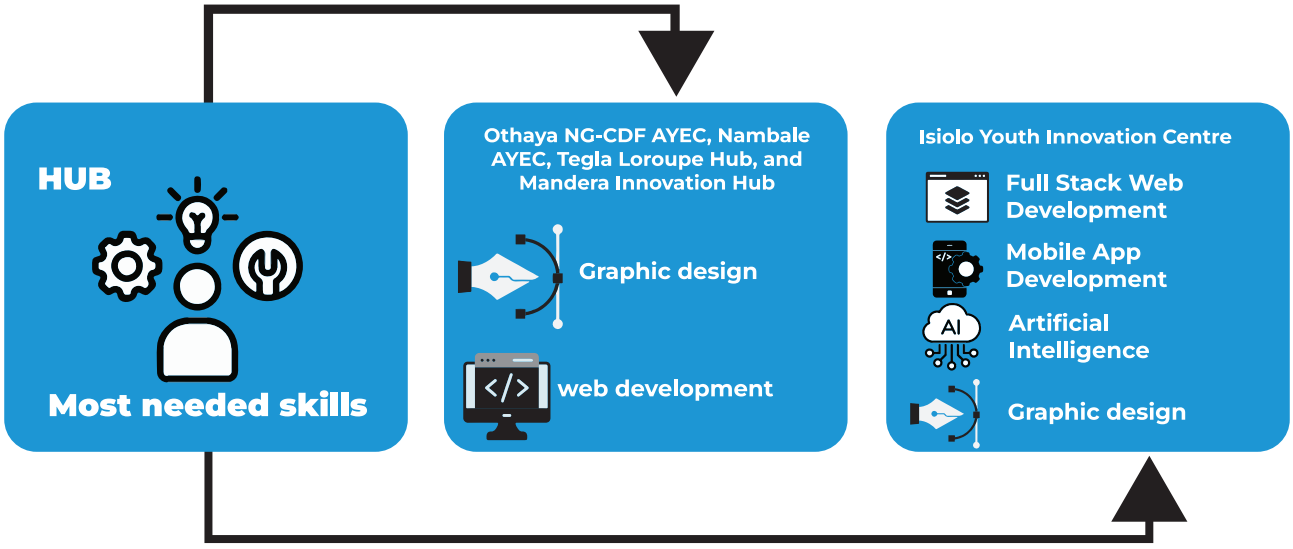
The hubs exhibit varying capacities in terms of the number of available ToTs and general trainers which reflects the different levels of readiness to deliver and scale digital skills programmes within their communities. Several hubs, including Nambale AYEC, Mandera Innovation Hub, Godoma TI, Kijiji Hub, and Lake Hub, each reported having **5 ToTs** supporting their activities. SwahiliPot Hub similarly has **5 ToTs** that are complemented by additional **10 trainers.**



Kilifi Innovation Hub reported the availability of **6** ToTs available while PC Kinyanjui has a total of **8 ToTs,** specialized in digital literacy and renewable energy fields. Pwani Teknowgalz reported to be having **10 ToTs** at their hub. On the other hand, NeiHub, WiseHub and Isiolo youth innovation center each reported having only **2 trainers** while Othaya NG-CDF AYEC operates with a single trainer. This indicates the need for urgent support in expanding the training workforce of these particular hubs. Africa Media Hub has a flexible approach by utilizing "Lecturer-Partners" rather than formal ToTs. The diversity in trainer availability across the hubs points to the need for a tiered approach to the allocation of additional ToTs to the hubs by prioritizing hubs with limited trainer capacity.

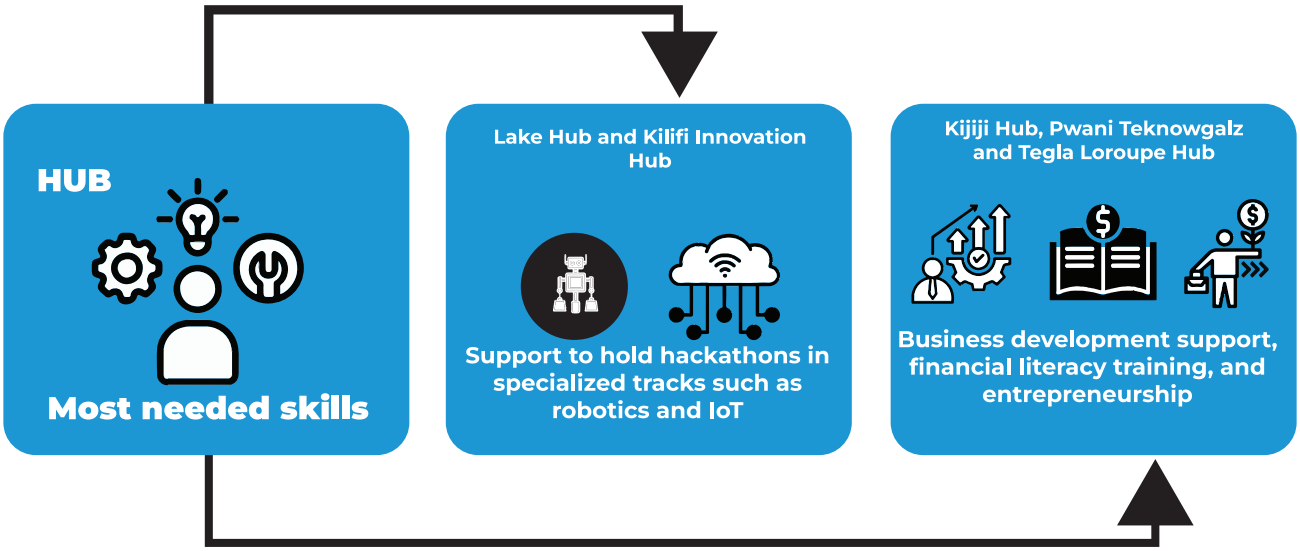
3.10 Skills Identified by Hubs as Most Needed by Their Target Participants

Finding 9: The hubs identified foundational skills like digital literacy, content writing, and data entry as critical, while also expressing strong demand for expanding into advanced areas such as graphic design, web development, AI, and cybersecurity. Many hubs also emphasized the need for updated technical content, entrepreneurship support, and deeper integration of ESG, carbon credits, and IP training to meet the evolving needs of their communities.

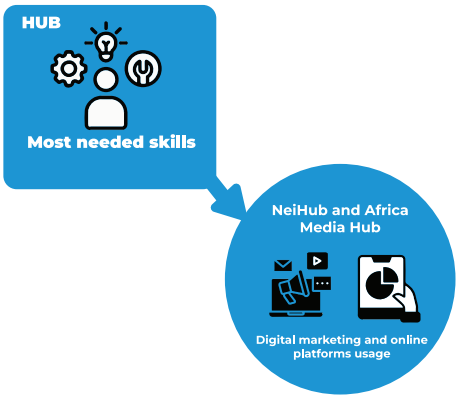


Across hubs, there was a strong consensus on the need to enhance both foundational digital skills and specialized technical expertise to better serve their diverse communities. Foundational skills such as basic digital literacy, computer packages, data entry, and content writing were particularly critical among hubs serving rural participants who emphasized continued demand for entry-level training. Graphic design and web development were repeatedly cited as immediate priority areas across various hubs such as Othaya NG-CDF AYEC, Nambale AYEC, Tegla Loroupe Hub, and Mandera Innovation Hub, where participants increasingly aspire to move beyond basic skills into more marketable digital services. The Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre identified Full Stack Web Development, Mobile App Development, Artificial Intelligence and Graphic Design as the skills that would significantly benefit their participants.

Meanwhile, some hubs such as Lake Hub, Kilifi Innovation Hub, and SwahiliPot Hub have already made strides by offering intermediate and advanced training in fields such as web development, AI, data science, cybersecurity, and blockchain technologies. However, these hubs also stressed challenges in accessing updated technical content, mentorship, and hardware which limits the full realization of these programmes. In hubs like Lake Hub and Kilifi Innovation Hub, interest in specialized tracks like robotics, IoT, and software engineering are growing, but practical exposure and structured hackathons to solidify learning are still lacking.



Beyond technical skills, hubs such as Kijiji Hub, Pwani Teknowgalz and Tegla Loroupe Hub strongly highlighted the need for business development support, financial literacy training, and entrepreneurship modules to help participants transition from digital skills acquisition into real economic opportunities. NeiHub and Africa Media Hub also underscored the importance of embedding digital marketing and online platform usage into the curriculum to help young entrepreneurs' visibility and market reach.



Furthermore, there was a recognition across hubs of the growing importance of cross-cutting topics like Enviromental , Social and Government (ESG) practices, carbon credits, and intellectual property rights. Most hubs reported only a basic understanding of these areas, although hubs like Africa Media Hub and Kilifi Innovation Hub demonstrated more advanced familiarity due to prior engagements with projects involving environmental sustainability and intellectual property protection.

3.11 Non-Monetary Support Needs

The hubs expressed a strong need for technical mentorship, training tools, and digital infrastructure to enhance their digital skills programmes. Commonly cited forms of support include access to high-specification devices, software licenses, and stable internet connectivity, especially through partnerships with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) or provision of routers and power backups. Several hubs, such as NieHub, Kilifi Innovation Hub, and PC Kinyanjui, highlighted the need for technical mentorship, curriculum development support, and certification pathways to strengthen their training content and delivery. Others, like Mandera and Nambale Ajira, emphasized infrastructural needs such as solarization, additional machines, and job linkage opportunities. Networking, skills exchange, and internship placements also emerged as important, with hubs like Kijiji Connect, Lakehub, and Swahilipot prioritizing job placement support, mentorship, and exposure to innovation networks.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

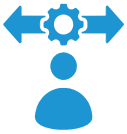
To ensure the successful delivery of the Digiken Project through these hubs, the following recommendations are proposed, drawn from the hubs' expressed needs and operational realities,

Prioritize Infrastructure Support for Hybrid and Online Delivery: Several hubs reported challenges related to poor internet connectivity, limited access to learner devices, and frequent power outages. To address these barriers, it is recommended that the programme provides hubs with essential infrastructure support, including laptops or tablets for learners, subsidized or high-speed internet solutions, and solar kits or power backup systems.

Deploy a Standardized Curriculum with Flexible Certification Support: Given that only **2 hubs** have certified curricula and **4** do not have any formal curriculum in place, there is a clear need to introduce a standardized training framework. In addition, support should be extended to help hubs pursue *-formal certification.

Support Local Language Adaptation and* Inclusive Training Delivery: With **13 hubs** indicating the need for support in content localization, and several reporting that learners struggle to understand training delivered in English, it is essential to make language inclusivity a core feature of programme delivery. The programme should provide hubs with resources to translate training materials into Kiswahili and other local languages.

Implement a Tiered ToT Strengthening Programme: Given the uneven distribution of trainer capacity across the hubs, there is need to implement a phased ToT strengthening strategy. Hubs with only **1 or 2 trainers** should be prioritized for immediate trainer expansion.



Introduce Flexible Skills Alignment: Enable hubs to select and sequence training modules based on their participants' needs to ensure a more responsive and impact-driven approach rather than enforcing a one-size-fits-all model.

Establish a Resource Pool for Non-Monetary Support: Many hubs expressed the need for non-monetary forms of support such as technical mentorship, access to software licenses, job placement linkages, and curriculum development assistance.

Strengthen Post-Training Mentorship and Alumni Networks: To enhance long-term impact, the programme should support the formalization of alumni engagement models, structured mentorship cycles, and job readiness coaching, particularly for hubs like Godoma TTI and ISIOLO Youth Innovation Centre, which currently lack consistent support mechanisms.

Institutionalize Monitoring and Evaluation Systems across Hubs: The programme should provide standardized M&E tools to help hubs track outcomes like employment, skills gained, and participant feedback consistently.

Introduce Incentive Models to Boost Participation: The programme should develop flexible incentive options such as transport stipends, airtime, or data bundles, to increase training access and retention.

Empower the 15 hubs to run investment readiness programmes that prepare startups for engagement with investors and to organize periodic pitch competitions and networking events that connect their innovators to potential financiers.

5. CONCLUSION

This needs assessment was undertaken to generate an understanding of the capacities, challenges, and support needs of **15 DIHs** under the DigiKen programme. Through the data collected, it is evident that DIHs play a pivotal role in advancing Kenya's digital inclusion goals, particularly by targeting underserved groups such as youth, women, persons with disabilities, and rural communities. However, their potential to deliver inclusive, community-anchored digital skills training is constrained by various systemic and infrastructural barriers.

15 DIHs across Kenya evaluated under DigiKen

On the beneficiary front, the hubs are actively reaching marginalized groups, with most training over **400 individuals** annually, exemplifying their strong community anchorage and outreach capability. In terms of delivery formats, most hubs rely on in-person training and community outreach while a smaller number have adopted hybrid and online models. The most common barriers identified for the online and hybrid model were limited learner devices, unreliable internet, lack of software tools, and intermittent power supply. Only a few hubs, such as PC Kinyanjui, Lakehub, and Mandera Innovation Hub, were found to be adequately equipped for fully digital delivery.

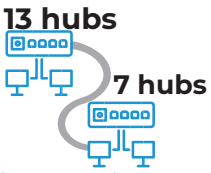
400+

High annual training reach, targeting youth, women & PWDs

The content offered by the hubs leans heavily on core digital skills, with few hubs offering advanced areas such as AI, mobile development, or cybersecurity. Although **12 hubs** reported having some form of a curriculum, only **2** are certified, and **4** have no curriculum at all, which signals a need for standardization and support toward certification. Language inclusivity is also another critical issue. **13 hubs** indicated a need for support in translating or adapting training content into Swahili or local languages.

Language barriers still hinder inclusion—13 hubs affected

On mentorship and incentives, **13 hubs** provide some form of follow-up mentorship to support learner progression, but only **7 offer incentives** such as transport or airtime. Furthermore, although most hubs track training outcomes, the depth and formality of their M&E systems vary widely. While hubs like NieHub and Pwani Teknowgalz employ structured, multi-metric systems, others such as ISIOLO and Godoma TTI lack any formal tracking mechanism.



13 hubs provide some form of follow-up mentorship 7 offer incentives

These insights informed a set of recommendations aimed at enabling the DigiKen programme to address structural and operational gaps. Key proposals include providing infrastructure support, deploying standardized and certifiable curricula, enabling local language adaptation, and setting up a resource pool for non-monetary support such as mentorship and tools. Additional recommendations include strengthening alumni networks, institutionalizing M&E systems, and introducing incentives to boost training retention and impact.

---

https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/kenya-digital-economy
https://www.kictanet.or.ke/celebrating-progress-amplifying-digital-access-for-women-and-girls-in-kenya/
https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/kenya-digital-economy
https://dig.watch/updates/kenya-launches-ai-and-blockchain-report
https://cms.icta.go.ke/sites/default/files/2022-04/Kenya%20Digital%20Masterplan%202022-2032%20Online%20Version.pdf
https://ideas.repec.org/p/sau/iznews/1707.html
https://ideas.repec.org/p/sau/iznews/1707.html

UN Women Kenya

UN Gigiri Complex, UN Avenue, Block M, Ground Floor
P.O. Box 30218 00100, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 7624331

https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/kenya
https://x.com/unwomenkenya