APEC HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP (HRDWG)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For the term of 2026–2029

Article I: Governance and Reporting Structure

The APEC Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) is a sub-forum of the APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE). It follows the *Revised Guidelines for Lead Shepherd/Chair and Deputy Lead Shepherd/Chair of APEC Working Groups and SOM Task Forces* (2012 AMM 11).

The HRDWG reports to the SCE through the Lead Shepherd (see Article III), who submits annual reports and work plans to the SCE and responds promptly to additional reporting requests from the SCE Chair or Senior Officials.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) are hereby established and unanimously endorsed by HRDWG members on 6 November 2025.

Article II: Mission

Established in 1990, the HRDWG aims to share knowledge and experience, promote dialogue and cooperation, and develop regional policies to strengthen human resources development in support of sustainable economic growth across all member economies.

Article III: Membership, Structure, and Leadership

The HRDWG comprises all 21 APEC member economies, represented by government officials. It operates through three subgroups, called Networks:

- Capacity Building Network (CBN)
- Education Network (EDNET)
- Labor and Social Protection Network (LSPN)

Networks can invite other stakeholders including from governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to support their work (see Article IX).

ToRs for all three Networks are to be provided as annexes. All APEC member economies shall submit updated HRDWG focal point information at the start of each calendar year. The APEC Secretariat shall maintain an official contact list available to all economies and the HRDWG

leadership team through the APEC Collaboration System. This updated list shall be used as the primary reference for meeting invitations, project consultations, and intersessional communications.

HRDWG Leadership

The HRDWG is chaired by a Lead Shepherd and supported by one or two Co-Chairs.

- The Lead Shepherd is nominated by a member economy and approved by consensus.
- A standard term is two years, renewable once if all member economies support for the extension. Term limits may be modified with consensus.
- The Lead Shepherd is responsible for managing all aspects of the HRDWG, supported by a Program Director and a Program Executive from the APEC Secretariat.
- The Lead Shepherd serves as the spokesperson of the HRDWG.

Key responsibilities include:

- Setting themes for annual work plans and activities, in consultation with Co-Chairs
- Developing and submitting annual work plans and reports to the SCE
- Chairing plenary and other related meetings
- Convening the Lead Shepherd Advisory Committee (LSAC), which includes Co-Chairs, Network Coordinators and Co-Chairs, the immediate past Lead Shepherd, and other stakeholders as invited
- Overseeing the performance and direction of HRDWG meetings and events
- Representing HRDWG at other APEC forums and ministerial meetings.

Nomination criteria for Lead Shepherd include:

- Endorsement from the nominating economy's relevant ministries
- Availability of resources and a qualified support team
- Expertise in human resources development policies in the Asia-Pacific
- Support for APEC’s mission and principles
- Knowledge of APEC policy documents and ability to implement their goals and directives into HRDWG policy and activities
- Preferable with two years of executive experience in relevant multilateral or international settings.

The HRDWG Co-Chair(s):

- Support the Lead Shepherd and lead coordination within the host economy
- Chair meetings in the Lead Shepherd's absence
- Are nominated by the host economy and serve a one-year term.

If the Lead Shepherd cannot complete their term, Co-Chair(s) will serve in their place until the end of their own term.

Network Leadership

Each Network is led by a Network Coordinator and supported by a Network Co-Chair.

- Coordinators are nominated by economies and approved by consensus
- They serve up to two two-year terms, modifiable by consensus.

Key responsibilities of Network Coordinators:

- Coordinate activities across participating economies
- Ensure broad participation to meet quorum
- Provide technical guidance on project development
- Prepare and chair meetings
- Keep the Lead Shepherd informed and submit reports
- Represent and speak for their Network.

Nomination criteria for Coordinators:

- Endorsement from the nominating economy's relevant ministries
- Sufficient resources and support team
- Expertise relevant to human resources development and their Network's focus areas
- Support for APEC's mission and values
- Knowledge of APEC policy documents and ability to implement their goals and directives into Network policy and activities
- Preferable with two years of executive experience in relevant domestic or international settings.

Network Co-Chairs:

- Support Coordinators and coordinate work within the host economy
- Chair meetings in the absence of Coordinators
- Are nominated by the host economy and serve a one-year term.

If Coordinators cannot complete their term, Co-Chairs will assume the role until the end of their term.

The Lead Shepherd and Network Coordinators are selected biennially. Each Network will develop its own ToR, subject to HRDWG unanimous approval and in accordance with SCE requirements.

Article IV: Priorities

HRDWG sets its priorities based on APEC principles and guidance from Leaders, Ministers, Senior Officials, and relevant ministerial meetings.

Key guiding documents include:

- APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040
- Aotearoa Plan of Action
- Joint Statements of the 7th Human Resources Development and 7th Education Ministerial Meetings (2025)
- Other APEC guiding documents approved during its mandate
- Other outcome documents generated from the Human Resources Development and Education Ministerial Meetings within the term of this ToR.

The work of the HRDWG will continue to be guided by the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE) and its Economic and Technical Cooperation (ECOTECH) Medium-Term Priorities, in advancing HRDWG activities and projects through its three networks.

Article V: Meeting Arrangements

HRDWG will convene at least one in-person plenary meeting annually in the host economy, with additional meetings held virtually or in hybrid format as needed.

Each Network will meet at least once annually in conjunction with the HRDWG plenary and may organize additional technical sessions throughout the year.

The host economy ministries may convene ministerial meetings in cooperation with the HRDWG leadership team. These ministerial meetings are known as:

- APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meetings (HRDMM)
- APEC Education Ministerial Meetings (AEMMs)

Article VI: Projects

HRDWG encourages member economies to propose and implement APEC-funded or self-funded projects.

- Project overseers should consult Network Coordinators, the Lead Shepherd, and APEC Project Management Unit.
- All projects must align with priorities in Article IV or as determined by HRDWG
- Projects must be endorsed unanimously by HRDWG members.

Additional guidelines:

- Special initiatives may be undertaken when directed by APEC Leaders or Senior Officials
- A project concept note, co-sponsored by at least four economies, must be submitted in the prescribed format
- Co-sponsoring economies must demonstrate meaningful engagement in proposal development and implementation
- All APEC Secretariat project management requirements must be followed, including entry into APEC Project Administration Systems, Project Database, and APEC Information Management Portal
- All projects shall develop clear linkage to HRDWG objectives and plans for cross-economy learning and reporting.

Article VII: Friends of the Lead Shepherd / Chair

The Lead Shepherd may establish a Friends of the Lead Shepherd (FoLS) or Friends of the Chair (FotC) on important subjects, such as disability, subject to SCE Chair approval, when work cannot be undertaken within existing structures.

Each FoLS or FotC must have a ToR and work plan and is automatically dissolved at the end of the SCE Chair's term unless renewed by the next SCE Chair. Annual reports must be submitted to the Lead Shepherd and Secretariat.

Article VIII: APEC Specialized Centers

When beneficial to member economies, APEC Specialized Centers (ASCs) may be created with approval from the Lead Shepherd, member economies, and the SCE Chair.

- ASCs are self-funded
- A concept paper, work plan, and ToR (with a maximum 4-year duration) must be submitted
- ASCs may be extended once for up to four more years
- ASCs must submit annual reports, maintain updated English-language websites, and comply with all APEC branding, sponsorship, and cooperation rules.

Article IX: Engagement with Other Stakeholders

HRDWG actively engages with APEC and non-APEC stakeholders including governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, multilateral, regional and international organizations, academia and research institutions focused on education, vocational training, employment, social protection and economic development, and social partners. Participation in plenary meetings shall be agreed unanimously by member economies and by invitation while aligning with APEC guidelines.

Article X: Forum Review

SCE will review HRDWG's performance based on its objectives and outputs, consistent with the *Recommendations of the Review of Fora Implementation (2007/SOM3/SCE/016)*. The ToR may be revised upon consensus and approved by Senior Officials.

Article XI: Quorum

A quorum for HRDWG and Network meetings requires participation from at least 14 economies. Decisions may only be made when quorum is met. Decisions must be communicated to the full membership. Failure to meet quorum for two consecutive plenaries will be referred to Senior Officials for a determination on continuity.

Article XII: Sunset Clause

The term of the HRDWG and its Networks runs from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2029. Prior to expiration, the SCE will review this ToR and recommend whether the group should continue. Continuation requires explicit renewal by Senior Officials.

ANNEX I

APEC HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP
CAPACITY BUILDING NETWORK

TERMS OF REFERENCE
For the term of 2026-2029

Article I: Mission and Priorities

The Capacity Building Network (CBN) focuses on skills development, human resources management, and vocational training. It seeks cross-cutting collaboration among APEC economies to facilitate 21st century talent, enhance employability and promote high quality and full employment, ensuring member economies' effective responses to the current and evolving developments on the skills and training needs of the labor market.

The CBN priorities are guided by and aligned with the principles outlined in the guiding documents of the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG), such as the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and other key documents.

The CBN shall also promote economic growth by strengthening linkages between policy development, industry engagement, and workforce adaptability to future-of-work challenges.

CBN recognizes the complementary missions and priorities shared with the Education Network (EDNET), particularly in Vocational and Technical Education, and may engage in cross-cutting project work and policy exchange on education systems with respect to skills development and secondary-tertiary vocational education pathways.

Article II: Governance, Membership and Leadership

The CBN operates under the direction and technical guidance of the HRDWG and reports to the HRDWG Lead Shepherd.

Membership and Quorum

Members of the CBN comprise all 21 APEC member economies, represented by government officials appointed by member economies.

A quorum for CBN meetings requires participation from at least 14 economies. Decisions shall be made by consensus and can only be made when quorum is met, in line with APEC's non-binding, voluntary, and cooperative principles.

Member economies may invite relevant stakeholders to CBN meetings and project activities upon unanimous agreement of all member economies.

CBN Leadership

The CBN is led by a Network Coordinator and supported by one Co-Chair from the host economy.

- The CBN Coordinator is nominated by member economies and approved by consensus, serving up to two consecutive two-year terms. The term limit can be modified by consensus among member economies.
- Each economy is invited to nominate one candidate as a Coordinator.
- The CBN Co-Chair is nominated by the host economy of the year, serving a one-year term. The Co-Chair shall assist the CBN coordinator in managing and coordinating the programs and activities of the CBN
- When the Coordinator resigns or is otherwise unable to complete their term, the Co-Chair will assume the role until the end of the Coordinator's term.

Key Responsibilities of CBN Coordinator

- Coordinates activities pertaining to policy and programmatic development and cooperation across participating economies
- Provides technical guidance on project development
- Represents and speaks on behalf of the CBN
- Prepares and chairs the annual CBN meeting in collaboration with the Co-Chair
- Ensures broad participation of members to meet quorum
- Engages other APEC and non-APEC stakeholders in CBN meetings and activities
- Reports to the Lead Shepherd and submits reports as requested
- Promotes best practices sharing and cross-fora collaboration within APEC, as well as with relevant international or regional organizations.
- Monitors the progress of the CBN Action Plan and evaluates progress against strategic outcomes.
- Supports the development and endorsement of concept notes, project proposals, and project completion reports aligned with CBN priorities.
- Facilitates regular consultations with stakeholders to promote wide participation and ensure responsiveness to labor market priorities.
- Submits an annual progress report, including lessons learned and recommendations, to the APEC HRDWG.

Nomination Criteria for the CBN Coordinator

- Official endorsement from relevant ministries of the APEC member economy
- Demonstrated expertise relevant to CBN's mission and focus areas
- Proven leadership and executive experience in domestic or international labor and

employment policies
- Strong commitment to APEC's goals, mission, and values
- Strong facilitation skills especially in multilateral settings
- Access to institutional support and resources from their home economy to effectively fulfill coordination responsibilities.

Member economies are encouraged to consider measures to ensure wide and full participation by all members when nominating candidates.

Article III: Meeting Arrangements

The CBN should convene at least one annual meeting in the host economy in conjunction with the HRDWG Plenary Meeting. Additional technical meetings may be organized virtually or in-person as needed throughout the year.

Meetings may include thematic sessions, roundtables, or workshops designed to facilitate focused dialogue on emerging priorities on skills development and capacity building. Meeting agendas shall be developed by the Coordinator in consultation with the Co-chair and member economies and in coordination with the HRDWG Secretariat to ensure alignment with broader HRDWG goals.

Under the leadership of the HRDWG Lead Shepherd, the CBN contributes to the APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting when convened by the host economy.

The CBN shall also conduct a mid-term and end-term review of its Action Plan, reporting progress, challenges, good practices and lessons learned and recommendations to the HRDWG Plenary to ensure effective monitoring and alignment with APEC's broader strategic outcomes.

ANNEX II

APEC HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP
EDUCATION NETWORK (EDNET)

TERMS OF REFERENCE
For the term of 2026-2029

Article I: Mission and Priorities

The Education Network (EDNET) focuses on fostering strong and vibrant learning systems and promoting quality education across APEC member economies. Through promoting cross-border education cooperation, EDNET aims to strengthen quality education to enable people of all ages to meet the challenges of rapid change in today's world through enhancing competencies, accelerating innovation and increasing employability.

EDNET priorities align with the principles outlined in the guiding documents of HRDWG.

EDNET recognizes the complementary missions and priorities shared with the Capacity Building Network (CBN), particularly in Vocational and Technical Education, and may engage in cross-cutting project work and policy exchange on education systems with respect to skills development and secondary-tertiary vocational education pathways.

Article II: Governance, Membership and Leadership

EDNET operates under the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) and reports to the HRDWG Lead Shepherd.

Membership and Quorum

Members of EDNET comprise all 21 APEC member economies, represented by representatives appointed by the member economies. A quorum for EDNET meetings requires participation from at least 14 economies. Decisions can only be made when quorum is met.

EDNET Leadership

EDNET is led by one Network Coordinator and supported by one Co-Chair from the host economy.

- EDNET Coordinator is nominated by economies and approved by consensus, serving up to two two-year terms.
- EDNET Co-Chair is nominated by the host economy of the year, serving a one-year term.

Key responsibilities of EDNET Coordinator

- Coordinate activities pertaining to education development and cooperation across participating economies

- Provide technical guidance on project development
- Represents and speaks on behalf of EDNET
- Prepare and chair the annual EDNET meeting in collaboration with the Co-Chair
- Ensure broad participation of members to meet quorum
- Engage other APEC and non-APEC stakeholders in EDNET meetings
- Monitors the progress of the Action Plan of the APEC Education Strategy 2016-2030, and regularly reviews the plan in consultation with member economies
- Report to the Lead Shepherd and submit reports as requested.

Nomination Criteria for EDNET Coordinator

- Endorsement from relevant ministries of the APEC member economies
- Demonstrated expertise relevant to EDNET's mission and focus areas
- Sufficient executive experience in relevant domestic or international settings
- Commitment to APEC's mission and values.

Article III: Meeting Arrangements

EDNET will organize at least one annual meeting in the host economy in conjunction with the HRDWG Plenary Meeting. Technical meetings may be held virtually or in-person as needed throughout the year.

Under the leadership of the HRDWG Lead Shepherd, the EDNET contributes to the APEC Education Ministerial Meeting when convened by the host economy.

ANNEX III

APEC HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP
LABOR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION NETWORK

TERMS OF REFERENCE
For the term of 2026-2029

Article I: Mission and Priorities

The Labor and Social Protection Network (LSPN) aims to foster strong, flexible and adaptive labor markets and strengthen labor and social protection. It seeks to accomplish these goals through evidence-based interventions, collaboration, and technical cooperation among member economies, contributing to modernized and sustainable human resources development across the Asia-Pacific region.

LSPN's priorities are guided by and aligned with the principles outlined in the guiding documents of the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG), such as the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and other key documents.

Article II: Governance, Membership and Leadership

The LSPN operates under the direction and technical guidance of the HRDWG and reports to the HRDWG Lead Shepherd.

Membership and Quorum

Members of the LSPN comprise all 21 APEC member economies, represented by government officials appointed by member economies.

A quorum for LSPN meetings requires participation from at least 14 economies. Decisions shall be made by consensus and can only be made when quorum is met, in line with APEC's non-binding, voluntary, and cooperative principles.

Relevant stakeholders may be invited to LSPN meetings and project activities upon unanimous agreement of all member economies.

LSPN Leadership

The LSPN is led by a Network Coordinator and supported by one Co-Chair from the host economy.

- The LSPN Coordinator is nominated by member economies and approved by consensus, serving up to two consecutive two-year terms. The term limit can be modified by consensus among member economies.

- Each economy is invited to nominate one candidate as a Coordinator.
- The LSPN Co-Chair is nominated by the host economy of the year, serving a one-year term.
- When the Coordinator resigns or is otherwise unable to complete their term, the Co-Chair will assume the role until the end of the Coordinator's term.

Key responsibilities of LSPN Coordinator

- Coordinates activities pertaining to policy and programmatic development and cooperation across participating economies.
- Provides technical guidance on project development.
- Represents and speaks on behalf of the LSPN.
- Prepares and chairs the annual LSPN meeting in collaboration with the Co-Chair.
- Ensures broad participation of members to meet quorum.
- Engages other APEC and non-APEC stakeholders in LSPN meetings and activities.
- Reports to the Lead Shepherd and submits reports as requested.
- Promotes best practices sharing and cross-fora collaboration within APEC, as well as with relevant international or regional organizations.
- Monitors the progress of the LSPN Action Plan and evaluates progress against strategic outcomes.
- Supports the development and endorsement of concept notes, project proposals, and project completion reports aligned with LSPN priorities.

Nomination Criteria for the LSPN Coordinator

- Endorsement from relevant ministries of the nominating economy.
- Demonstrated expertise relevant to LSPN's mission and focus areas.
- Sufficient executive experience in domestic or international labor and employment policies.
- Strong commitment to APEC's goals, mission, and values.
- Access to support and resources from their home economy to effectively fulfill coordination responsibilities.

Article III: Meeting Arrangements

The LSPN should convene at least one annual meeting in the host economy in conjunction with the HRDWG Plenary Meeting. Additional technical meetings may be organized virtually or in-person as needed throughout the year.

Meetings may include thematic sessions, roundtables, or workshops designed to facilitate focused dialogue on emerging priorities on labor and social protection. Meeting agendas shall be developed by the Coordinator in consultation with the Co-chair and member economies and in coordination with the HRDWG Secretariat to ensure alignment with broader HRDWG goals.

Under the leadership of the HRDWG Lead Shepherd, the LSPN contributes to the APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting when convened by the host economy.