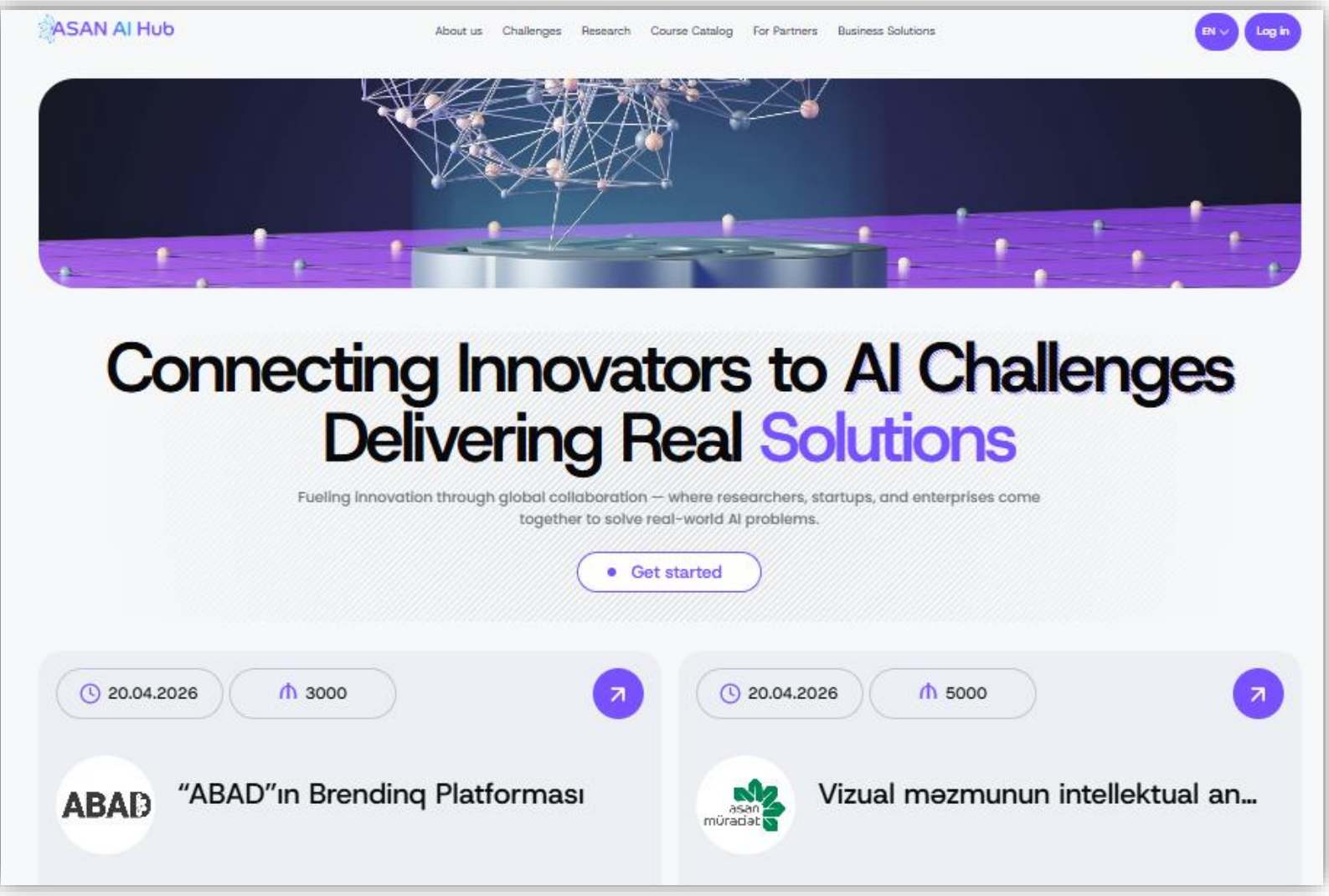
ASAN AI Hub

Concept Note 2025



ASAN AI Hub

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ASAN AI Hub

Background

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming economies and societies worldwide, creating both opportunities and uncertainties for governments, businesses, and citizens. Yet many institutions continue to face pressing challenges in applying AI, often lacking the expertise, resources, or platforms needed to translate potential into solutions.

In Azerbaijan, important steps have already been taken to lay the foundations of an AI-driven economy. Most notably, the government has adopted the Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2025–2028), which prioritizes human capital development, research capacity, and institutional readiness for AI adoption. These measures signal a strong national commitment to ensuring competitiveness in an innovation-driven global economy.

At the same time, several challenges remain:

- **Limited AI integration in services and governance** – Institutions lack structured frameworks to identify and scale impactful AI use cases.
- **Fragmented innovation ecosystem** – No unified platform exists to connect real-world challenges with solution providers from academia, startups, and industry.
- **Weak research and talent pipeline** – Students and researchers have few opportunities to participate in applied AI research or innovation.
- **Low AI literacy and workforce readiness** – Structured training in AI for public servants, professionals, and young people is still insufficient.

The ASAN AI Hub, established under the Innovations Center of the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations, addresses these gaps. It transforms societal and governance challenges into AI-driven opportunities, while at the same time **strengthening research capacity, fostering open innovation and giving access to global platforms with world-class training.**

ASAN AI Hub

VISION AND MISSION

Vision:

To be a global hub for open innovation where government, industry, academia, and startups co-create scalable solutions, accelerate digital transformation, and build the capabilities and talent needed for sustainable, inclusive growth.

Mission:

To build a vibrant AI ecosystem that connects government, academia, business, and startups—advancing AI adoption in public services, fostering applied research and open innovation, and strengthening human capital for a sustainable digital future.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the ASAN AI Hub is to foster a globally connected innovative ecosystem where challenges can be shared, solutions sought, and AI-driven ideas developed. The Hub aims to bring together public entities, startups, businesses, academia and research initiatives to create, adopt, and integrate AI technologies into real-world operations, promoting sustainable digital transformation and innovation beyond Azerbaijan.

Specific objectives are to:

1. **Engage institutions in open innovation**
   - Facilitate a challenge-based platform where public and private organizations can post real-world problems and access AI-driven solutions.
2. **Mobilize tech providers and startups**
   - Connect startups, technology firms, and private sector organizations with posted challenges to co-create, provide, and integrate AI solutions into governance and business services.
3. **Cultivate research talent and applied knowledge**
   - Engage students, graduate researchers, and academic institutions in applied AI projects and research programs that generate rigorous analyses, inform policy, and reduce uncertainty.
4. **Build AI literacy and skills for officials and citizens**
   - Deliver training programs for public servants, civil servants, and citizens to enhance human capital, AI literacy, and co-creation of AI-driven services.
5. **Strengthen global collaboration**
   - Collaborate with international universities, research institutions, and organizations to develop training materials, implement exchange programs, conduct joint research, and facilitate knowledge transfer.
6. **Accelerate scalable AI solutions and digital transformation**
   - Establish a global marketplace of validated AI-driven business solutions and tech providers to enable rapid adoption, scaling, and integration into operations.

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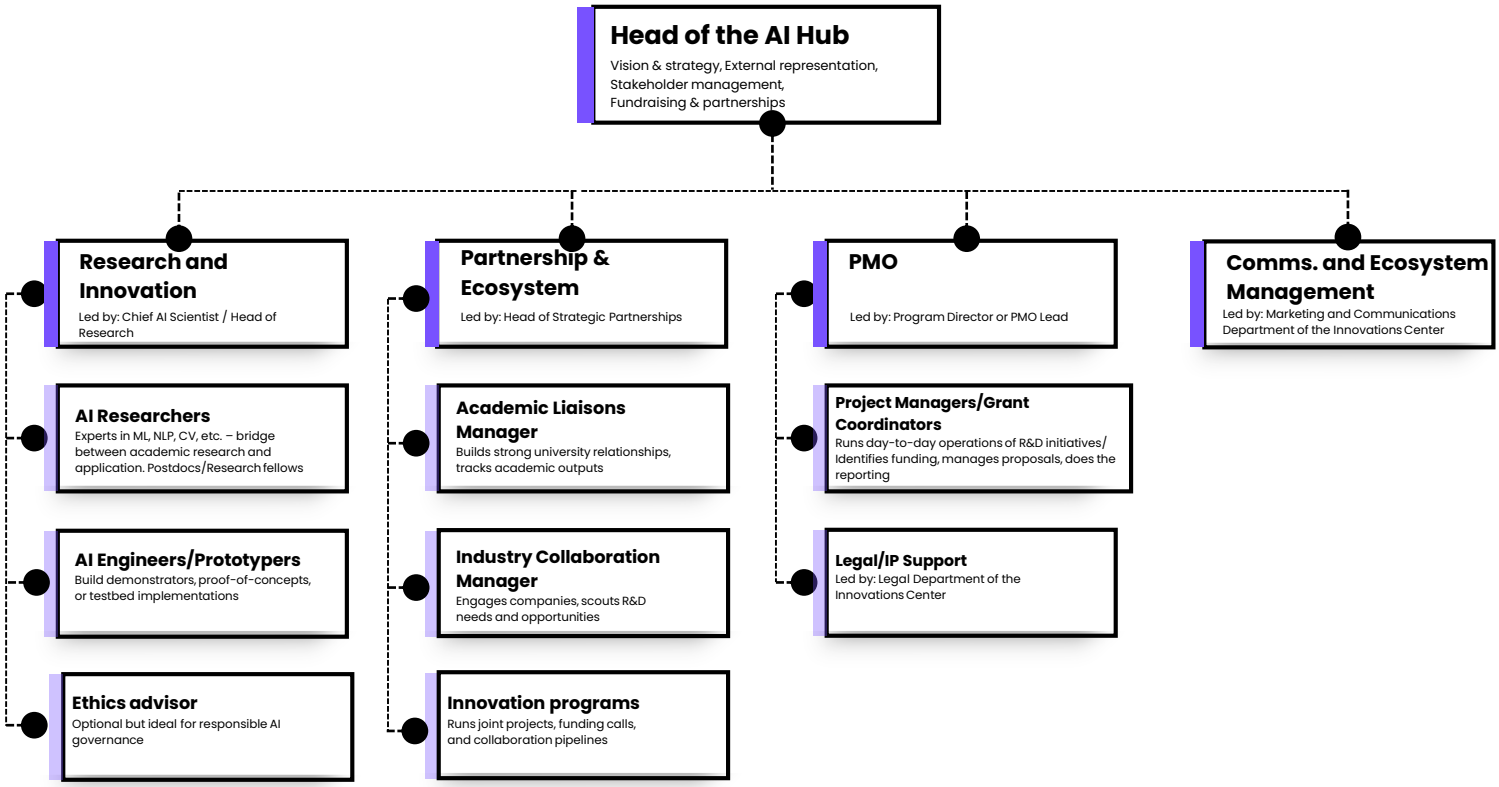
Team Structure



Expert Board

Our leading experts will facilitate access to networks, contribute to the design of training programs, participate in webinars, deliver keynote speeches, and evaluate challenges.



Denis Newman-Griffis

Theme Lead in AI for Health in the Center of Machine Intelligence University of Sheffield



Katherine Miller Weber

Director for Partnerships Apolitical Co.



Khaladdin Rzayev

Co-Director of Edinburgh Center of Financial Innovations University of Edinburgh

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CORE PILLARS OF THE HUB

To achieve its objectives, the Hub operates through **five interconnected pillars** that collectively advance open innovation, applied research, and capacity building in AI:

1. **AI Challenge Platform –** Matchmaking public and private sector needs with AI-powered solutions from startups, researchers, and technology providers through challenge-based innovation.
2. **Research and Talent Hub –** Advancing applied AI research, supporting graduate and collaborative projects, and promoting international knowledge exchange.
3. **AI Literacy and Capacity Building –** Delivering structured training, AI ethics education, and workforce readiness programs to strengthen human and institutional capabilities.
4. **Business Solutions Hub –** Curating a showcase of ready-to-deploy AI tools and enterprise solutions, accelerating technology adoption across industries.
5. **Global Expert Network –** Engaging international specialists to mentor teams, evaluate challenges, and guide education and research initiatives.

TARGET GROUP



Public and Private Institutions



Technology Providers and Startups



Students and Researchers



Officials, Citizens and Civil Servants



Global Partners

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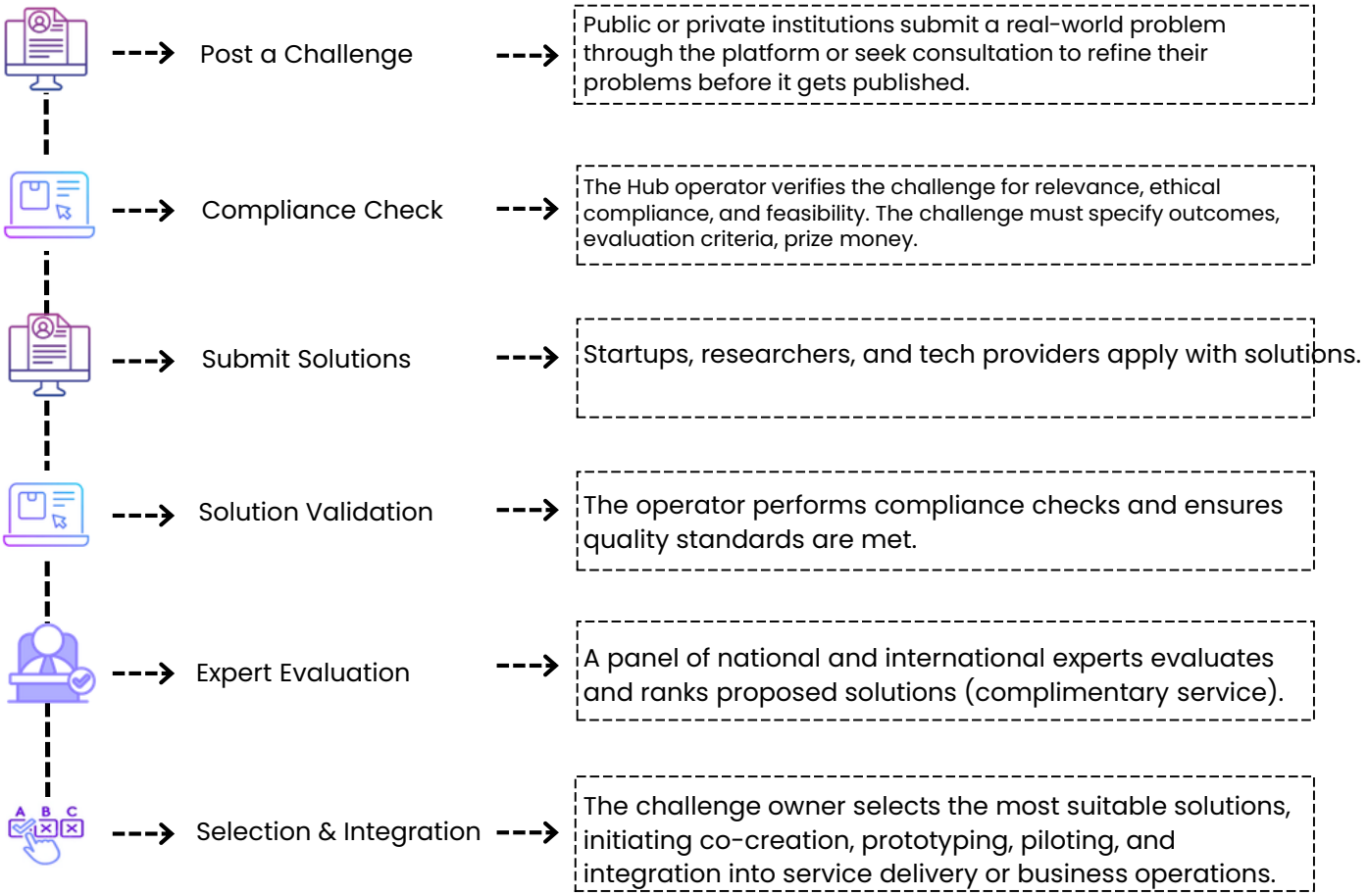
AI Challange Platform

The AI Challenge Platform serves as the cornerstone of the ASAN AI Hub, enabling open innovation by connecting real-world governance and business challenges with digital solutions. The process is designed to be transparent, inclusive, and results-oriented, ensuring that challenges from public and private sector stakeholders are efficiently matched with validated solutions from startups, researchers, and technology providers.

Challenge Progression

The following process supports the entire innovation journey from problem identification to solution development.



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Partnerships

Collaborating with partner organizations enables us to expand our capacity, diversify our expertise, and maximize the reach and impact of our work in Azerbaijan and beyond.

We have established, or are currently implementing, impactful collaborations with:

- **Apolitical Co:** Currently finalizing an MoU to deliver artificial intelligence training for Azerbaijani public servants through its Government AI Campus.
- **MIT Computer Science & Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL):** Partnering with CSAIL's startup network to showcase and connect their innovations through the AI Hub's online marketplace.
- **Bilişim Vadisi, Eduvence:** Users of the ASAN AI Hub will have access to Eduvence's extensive library of translated courses (including leading AI programs in Turkish). The Hub will also publish and distribute its own original content via the platform.
- **Asian Development Bank (ADB):** A proposal on AI education and capacity building for inclusive innovation (2026–2027) has been submitted and is under discussion with the ADB team.
- **The Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence at Boğaziçi University:** Engaged in defining the scope of an MoU to enable joint research projects and co-authored publications.
- **Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford:** Reviewing a draft MoU to define the scope of collaboration on internship, AI and cybersecurity training programs.
- **Tsingua University:** Engaged in discussions to involve their professors in the Hub's expert pool.
- **Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA):** In discussions to feature Azerbaijan and the ASAN AI Hub in the AI Playbook for Small States 2025.
- **Dubai Future Foundation:** As part of the FEEL: A Disruptive Futures Program, two senior officials of our team participated in a one-week executive program. This collaboration is expected to expand further.
- **Bayraktar Technologies Azerbaijan:** MoU signed to implement joint research, exchange, and training programs with local specialists.
- **Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences:** Agreed to co-host joint events and support research in the social sciences.
- **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population:** Established collaboration to post challenges identified by the ministry and its subordinate entities in the platform.
- **Local Universities:** Agreed to involve Master's and PhD students from seven universities in the "Research Scholar" program.

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Funding Sources and Revenue Streams

The ASAN AI Hub combines strategic funding with planned revenue mechanisms to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Funding Sources

The Hub is actively pursuing support from international institutions to fund research grants, training initiatives, and exchange programs. Meanwhile, operational costs, including staff salaries, are currently covered by the Innovations Center of the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Revenue Streams

In its first year, the Hub will provide consulting services for challengers free of charge to build engagement and demonstrate value. Starting in 2027, a **consulting fee will be introduced**. Additionally, for each successful solution approved by a challenger, **the Hub will retain 10% of the associated prize fund,** creating a performance-based revenue model that aligns the Hub's incentives with successful outcomes.



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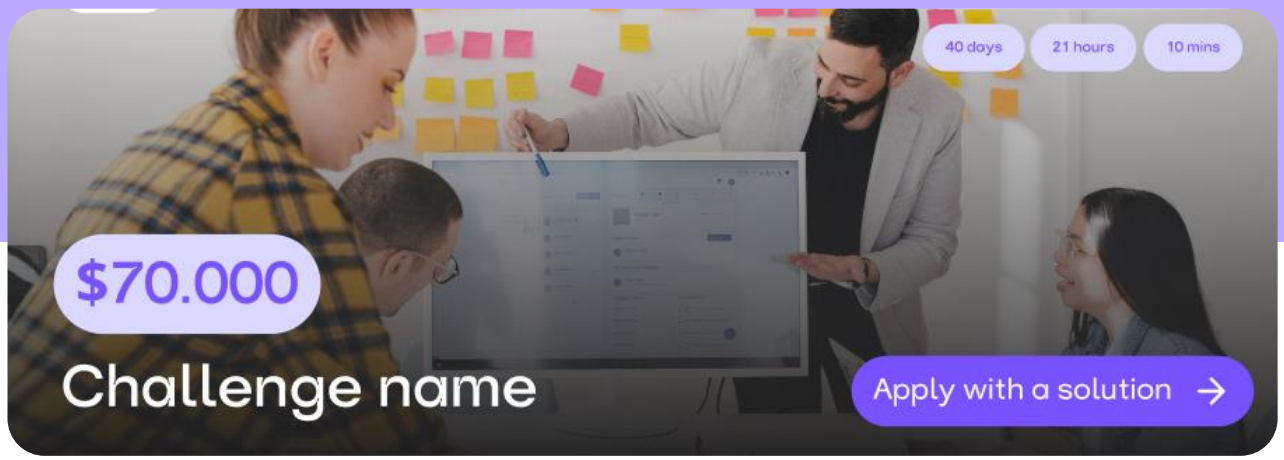
Expected Results and Impact by 2028



AI Challenges & Collaborative Solutions

Enabling 30+ real-world AI challenges to be solved through open, cross-sector collaboration.

Ecosystem for AI-Driven Innovation

Connecting 200+ solution providers co-creating AI-driven innovations for public good and industry impact.

Applied AI Research & Talent Development

40+ graduate students and researchers advancing applied AI research and innovation.

Global Learning & AI Literacy

20+ global partners deliver specialized AI and digital-skills training through the platform.