The Build Challenge

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release · November 2026

Free national challenge asks Grade 10 to 12 learners to build a solution to a problem in their own community

Registration opens live on YouTube on 1 December at 7pm. Learners use an AI tool to build a working website, pitch it on video and compete for R100 000 in prizes.

Cape Town. Zaio Institute of Technology is inviting every Grade 10 to 12 learner in South Africa to find a real problem in their community and build a live website that helps solve it. The Build Challenge, brought to you by Zaio, is free to enter. Registration opens on 1 December 2026 at 7pm SAST, during a one-hour live stream on YouTube.

Learners enter on their own. Five themes help them find a problem worth solving: Youth & Education, Township Economy, Health & Wellbeing, Safety & Environment and Digital Access & Inclusion. A problem outside the themes is welcome too. The problems are ones they see every day, like free places to study after school that nobody can find online.

A guided prompt builder on the challenge platform asks each learner what the problem is, who it affects and what the website should do. Their answers become an instruction for an AI tool, which builds the site. Choosing the problem and explaining the fix stay with the learner. Each learner then records a pitch video of 60 to 120 seconds. No experience is needed, and a phone is enough.

The challenge carries R100 000 in prizes. First place wins R40 000, second place R25 000, and the People's Choice award, decided by a public vote, R10 000. The national winner's school receives a further R25 000.

More than 600 learners in all nine provinces have already signed up to hear when registration opens. Submissions close at midnight on 15 February 2027, public voting closes on 15 March, and the winners will be announced on 19 March 2027. Learners under 18 need a parent or guardian's consent to submit, and the public gallery shows first names only. The rules, the launch film and free classroom materials for teachers are at **thebuildchallenge.com**.

ENDS

ABOUT ZAIO

Zaio Institute of Technology is a QCTO-accredited tech education provider offering NQF Level 5 Occupational Certificates. Seven University of Cape Town students started it on campus. It has since taught more than 100 000 people and runs Innovation Hubs in Cape Town and Durban. zaio.io

Media contact: Akhil Boddu
Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Zaio Institute of Technology
+27 76 379 3540 · akhil@zaio.io, cc letsbuild@zaio.io

thebuildchallenge.com/media-kit
Logos, photos and the launch film

POWERED BY
ZAIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Zaio Institute of Technology · QCTO Accreditation No. 07-QCTO/SDP220925101328
Zaio Technology (Pty) Ltd, registration 2017/490284/07. Floor 2, Block B, 66 Albert Rd, Woodstock, Cape Town, 7915.

The Build Challenge

FACT SHEET

Correct as at 25 November 2026

The Build Challenge: the key facts

What it is

A free national competition. Each learner finds a real problem in their community, uses an AI tool to build a live website that helps solve it, and pitches it in a video of 60 to 120 seconds. No experience is needed, and a phone is enough.

Who can enter

Any learner in Grade 10, 11 or 12 at a South African school, public or private, and home-schooled learners. Individual entries only, one per learner.

How to enter

1. Register at thebuildchallenge.com from 1 December 2026 at 7pm.
2. Choose a real problem in the community, from one of the themes or outside them.
3. Answer the guided prompt builder's questions. The AI tool builds the website.
4. Record the pitch video and submit both by midnight on 15 February 2027.

Taking part

More than 600 learners in all nine provinces signed up for updates before registration opened: 683 by 25 November 2026.

Judging

Scored on the idea, the build and the pitch. The rubric does not penalise unpolished design or second-language English. People's Choice goes to the public vote.

Safeguarding

Learners under 18 need a parent or guardian's consent, given on WhatsApp, before they submit. The public gallery shows first names only and has no comments. A winner can decline media coverage and still receive the full prize.

Organiser

Zaio Institute of Technology, Woodstock, Cape Town. QCTO-accredited.

Naming

On first mention, "The Build Challenge, brought to you by Zaio". After that, "the Build Challenge". Write "Zaio", not "ZAIO".

PRIZES

1st place	R40 000
2nd place	R25 000
People's Choice, by public vote	R10 000
The national winner's school	R25 000

KEY DATES

Registration opens on a YouTube live stream	1 Dec 2026, 7pm
Submissions close at midnight	15 Feb 2027
Public voting closes	15 Mar 2027
Winners announced	19 Mar 2027

Media contact: Akhil Boddu

Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Zaio Institute of Technology

+27 76 379 3540 · akhil@zaio.io, cc letsbuild@zaio.io

thebuildchallenge.com/media-kit

Logos, photos and the launch film

POWERED BY

ZAIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Zaio Institute of Technology · QCTO Accreditation No. 07-QCTO/SDP220925101328

Zaio Technology (Pty) Ltd, registration 2017/490284/07. Floor 2, Block B, 66 Albert Rd, Woodstock, Cape Town, 7915.

The Build Challenge

SPOKESPERSON

Available for interviews

Akhil Boddu



Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Zaio Institute of Technology

Akhil Boddu is a co-founder of Zaio Institute of Technology and its Chief Executive Officer. Zaio was started on the University of Cape Town campus by seven students, Akhil among them, who saw the gap between what industry wanted and what a degree taught. Zaio has since taught more than 100 000 people and is accredited by the QCTO. Akhil holds a BSc in Computer Science and Information Systems from UCT, is an AWS Certified Developer, and still teaches on Zaio's Fullstack AI Engineering bootcamp.

ON AIR

Akhil Boddu, co-founder and CEO of Zaio, the Cape Town tech institute behind The Build Challenge for high school learners.

QUESTIONS AKHIL CAN TAKE

1. What is The Build Challenge, and who can enter?
2. Most Grade 10 to 12 learners have never built a website. How does a learner with no coding experience build one?
3. Many people worry that AI will take young people's jobs. Why build a competition around it?
4. What kinds of problems are you hoping learners will take on?
5. How is it judged, and how do you keep it fair for a learner at a rural school, or one pitching in a second language?
6. What happens on 1 December, and how can learners sign up?

Media contact: Akhil Boddu

Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Zaio Institute of Technology

+27 76 379 3540 · akhil@zaio.io, cc letsbuild@zaio.io

thebuildchallenge.com/media-kit

Logos, photos and the launch film

POWERED BY

ZAIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Zaio Institute of Technology · QCTO Accreditation No. 07-QCTO/SDP220925101328

Zaio Technology (Pty) Ltd, registration 2017/490284/07. Floor 2, Block B, 66 Albert Rd, Woodstock, Cape Town, 7915.