

Situation 2026 FAQs.

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What is Situation 2026?

Situation 2026 is the Development Intelligence Lab's flagship annual event in Canberra – where development's boldest ideas meet the people who can act on them.

The event is run by the Lab in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Canberra Innovation Network, and with support from DT Global.

Where and when is Situation 2026 happening?

Canberra, 15 September 2026. [Sign up to our mailing list](#) for updates in the lead up to the event.

What is this year's challenge?

This year's challenge is: **what Indo-Pacific development challenge could AI solve by 2031?**

Why this challenge?

Global aid could shrink by up to 40% over the next five years, [according to some estimates](#). Now more than ever, the development solutions that generate real momentum need to be affordable, locally owned, and built to last.

AI changes what's possible here, and we want to surface the best solutions – from ambitious bets on policies that could reshape how development works at scale, to practical tools and process changes that a government ministry or community organisation could pick up and use tomorrow.

What happens at Situation 2026?

There'll be a **showcase** of high quality, adoptable AI solutions to experience and explore. Solutions that are either already being implemented in an international development context or that could be adapted to address challenges that Pacific and Southeast Asian countries are facing.

Shortlisted contributors will take the stage to present their ideas in **five-minute pitches**, with these pitches being judged by an expert panel.

Following the event, a **closed-door strategic dialogue** will be convened with senior Australian Government officials, co-chaired by the Lab's CEO and DFAT's Deputy Secretary of the Development, Multilateral and Europe group.

Who is Situation 2026 for?

Anyone with an interest in our challenge: what Indo-Pacific development challenge could AI solve by 2031?

That includes government officials, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, development organisation leaders, researchers, technologists, development practitioners, students, and people who don't fit neatly into any of those categories.

How can I get involved?

There are five ways to be part of Situation 2026:

Stream	Description
Contribute an idea	<p>If you have an original concept that addresses the challenge, and you'd like the opportunity to develop your idea and present it front of a room full of decision-makers, this is for you.</p> <p>Ideas can be at any stage and can include but are not limited to policy ideas, technological solutions or adaptations and transformative process improvements. Shortlisted contributors will be invited to present on stage at Situation 2026.</p> <p>Apply through our expression of interest form.</p>
Showcase an existing solution	<p>If you have a tool, product, or approach that's ready to be seen by the people who could adopt or scale it, apply for a showcase spot. This could be something you're already implementing in an international development context or could be adapted to a Pacific or Southeast Asian context to address a development issue. Think health, education, governance, employment, private sector development and beyond.</p> <p>There will be opportunities to present on stage too.</p> <p>Apply through our expression of interest form.</p>
Attend the event	<p>If you're an individual, development organisation or policymaker looking for ideas and tools you can put to work, buy a ticket to attend Situation 2026.</p>
Mentor an idea	<p>If you have AI expertise, policy expertise or are an international development expert and you would like to mentor someone to help them shape and improve their idea, get in touch.</p>
Sponsor the event	<p>If you work for an organisation that would like to help make this event happen. Email us at hello@devintelligencelab.com and we'll send you the event Prospectus.</p>

Not sure where you fit? There's an option for that too – just [register](#) and we'll help you find your place.

Can I apply for more than one stream?

Yes. Go for it!

Do I need to have a finished idea or product to contribute?

No. We're looking for contributors across the spectrum – from a hunch you haven't been able to shake, to a tool that's already deployed and ready to scale. Where you are in the process doesn't disqualify you. If you're unsure where you fit, fill out the [expression of interest form](#) and we'll help figure it out.

I already have a finished product or service that's commercially operating. Is this still relevant to me?

If your product can address an Indo-Pacific development challenge and AI is central to how it works, we'd love to hear about it. Fill in the [expression of interest form](#) and tell us about what you've built. We'll be in touch about whether a showcase spot or another way of contributing is the right fit.

What does 'AI-related' mean?

We're using a broad definition. Your idea might use AI as a core tool: an AI-powered diagnostic, a machine learning model for early warning, a large language model for local language access. But it might also be a policy response to AI's effects on development, a governance framework for responsible AI adoption, or a process change that helps development organisations work alongside AI tools more effectively. If AI is central to the problem or the solution you're addressing, we want to hear from you.

What does the 'Indo-Pacific' mean?

We're primarily interested in challenges facing Pacific Island and Southeast Asian countries – these are the regions where Australian development engagement is most active. That said, we won't disqualify a strong idea that draws on experience from South Asia, East Asia, or the broader Indo-Pacific. If your idea is grounded in the region and speaks to real development challenges, it's worth submitting.

What do I get if I'm shortlisted?

Shortlisted contributors get expert mentorship and pitch development support from the Canberra Innovation Network ahead of the event (all available online).

At Situation 2026 itself, you'll present your idea or showcase your work to a room of policymakers, development practitioners, philanthropists, and investors – people who are there specifically to find ideas they can back or adopt. There will also be two awards presented on the day.

Contributors with the strongest ideas are in contention for a place in the closed-door strategic dialogue with senior Australian Government officials after the event.

Do I need to be based in Australia?

No. The challenge is open globally to anyone over 18 years old, as an individual, team or organisation. We're particularly interested in ideas that are locally owned and grounded in the Indo-Pacific context, wherever you're based. At this point attendance is self-funded but we are working to secure sponsorship support for participants travelling from the region – we'll share more on this as it becomes available.

Will I need to travel to Canberra? Is there financial support available?

Shortlisted contributors are expected to attend Situation 2026 in Canberra in September. We are working to secure sponsorship support for participants travelling from the Indo-Pacific region and will share more on this as it becomes available. We are not currently able to offer support for domestic travel.

Do I apply as an individual or an organisation?

Either. Individuals, teams and organisations are all welcome to apply.

What do I actually have to submit?

Just a short [expression of interest form](#) – a few questions about you and your idea or contribution. It takes about five minutes. We'll follow up with next steps from there.

What happens after I submit?

You'll receive an acknowledgement within a few days. We review on a rolling basis and will be in touch about next steps – this might be a short clarifying question, an invitation to one of our two information webinars, or an invitation to develop your idea further with coaching support.

How much do tickets cost?

Tickets to Situation 2026 will be priced at \$99 for general admission and \$79 for students or for-purpose organisations. You can buy your ticket [here](#). If the ticket price is a barrier to your attendance, please get in touch at hello@devintelligencelab.com – we don't want cost to be the reason you're not in the room.

Is there a fee to showcase at Situation 2026?

There is a participation fee for showcasers: \$300 AUD for commercial organisations, \$200 AUD for for-purpose organisations including NGOs, multilaterals, and research institutions. This covers your table, power, and inclusion in event materials. Fee waivers are available on request – if cost is a barrier, get in touch at hello@devintelligencelab.com

Can I sponsor Situation 2026?

Yes! We are actively seeking sponsors for Situation 2026. Sponsorship will primarily support participation at the event from innovators and policy makers across the region. Get in touch at hello@devintelligencelab.com to discuss options.

What is the strategic dialogue and who gets to participate?

Following Situation 2026, the Lab will convene a closed-door policy dialogue with senior Australian Government officials. It will be co-chaired by the Lab's CEO and DFAT's Deputy Secretary of the Development, Multilateral and Europe Group.

The dialogue is not a commercial event – it is a focused policy conversation centred on the question: what should Australia do to address AI disruption in development?

A small cohort of contributors will be selected to participate, based on the quality and relevance of their ideas. Selection is made jointly by the judging panel, the Lab, and DFAT. Adopters and other attendees may also be invited depending on the focus of the dialogue. If you're shortlisted for Situation 2026, you're in contention.

When is the deadline to get involved?

Thursday, 30 July 2026 – we recommend applying early as we review applications on a rolling basis.

Still have a question not answered here?

Get in touch at hello@devintelligencelab.com and we'll be happy to answer it.

Development Intelligence Lab.

About the Lab

The Lab is a think tank working on development cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. We're convinced that great development cooperation comes from unusual collaborations, inspired leadership, good natured debate, and cracking analysis.

Join us for the latest debates on [The Intel](#), where every fortnight we ask three experts one question that's top of mind for the development and foreign policy community. Stay up to date with rich insights on Australian development cooperation in the region through [Our Analysis](#). And keep an eye out for our [Situation Room](#), an off-the-record dialogue to test ideas, deepen understanding, and shape Australian policy and practice.

Further Information

Please reach out at hello@devintelligencelab.com

Find us

Website	devintelligencelab.com
Email	hello@devintelligencelab.com
LinkedIn	/development-intelligence-lab
X (Twitter)	@devintellab
Bluesky	@devintellab.bsky.social

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