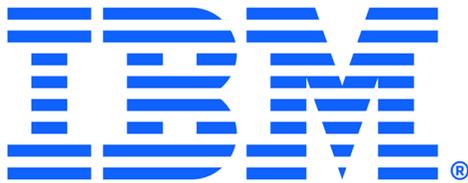## IBM and Web Summit to Launch Sports Tech Startup Challenge to Fuel Next Wave of Innovation in Sports

• **The IBM & Web Summit Sports Tech Startup Challenge will seek to find game-changing solutions that could be leveraged throughout IBM's technology portfolio and world-class global sports and entertainment partnership team.**

• **Regional startup competitions planned for Qatar, Vancouver, and Rio, leading to the global finale at Web Summit Lisbon 2026.**

• **IBM to become the Official AI Partner across all Web Summit 2026 conferences in Qatar, Vancouver, Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon.**

Lisbon, Portugal – November 10, 2025 -- IBM (NYSE: IBM) and Web Summit today unveiled a new global sports-tech competition proposal. The **Sports Tech Startup Challenge** will spotlight startups using AI to revolutionize sports — from athlete performance and stadium operations to fan engagement — with regional events planned for Qatar, Vancouver, and Rio, culminating with global winners being selected during Web Summit Lisbon 2026. Participation will be subject to local laws and official rules to be published before each regional competition.

As one of the world's fastest-growing industries, sports entities of all shapes and sizes are racing to better integrate AI, turning to enterprise-grade solutions to boost performance, unlock new revenue, and deliver smarter fan experiences. For more than three decades, IBM has been a trustworthy tech partner to iconic sports organizations including the Masters, Wimbledon, the US Open, Scuderia Ferrari HP, UFC and ESPN Fantasy Football. With the **Sports Tech Startup Challenge**, IBM will bring this unrivaled expertise to the sports tech startup community for the first time, accelerating innovation at the intersection of AI and sports.

"IBM has spent decades partnering with global sports icons, integrating our technology to redefine how the game is played, watched, and experienced," said **Emily Fontaine, Global Head of Venture Capital at IBM.** "With the IBM & Web Summit Sports Tech Startup Challenge, we'll fuse that legacy with the ingenuity of some of world's best startups, to spark the next era of sports innovation — and write a new playbook for AI-driven growth across the industry."

The IBM & Web Summit **Sports Tech Startup Challenge** is expected to unfold over a 12-month cycle, including mini-regional competitions where startups will pitch enterprise-grade AI solutions for the sports and entertainment industry. Pitches will be judged by a slate of industry leaders, including IBM leaders, sports and tech executives, and world class athletes. Regional winners will be showcased live on stage at Lisbon Web Summit 2026 and conclude with the winner selection. Winners may be eligible for the following from IBM: a paid proof of concept valued at up to $100,000 in collaboration with IBM Sports and Entertainment Partnership Team, mentorship from IBM's world-class experts in tech, innovation, and business development and evaluation for venture funding.

"As one of our long-standing partners, we're delighted to enter this new phase with IBM," said **Kevin McDonald, Chief Commercial Officer, Web Summit.** "We have helped showcase startups over the years which have went on to become some of the world's biggest companies, such as Revolut, Stripe and Whoop. This partnership highlights the rapid growth of AI in sports tech, fusing the biggest growth sector in tech with the sports that captivate billions worldwide. We look forward to discovering the next big success story together with IBM over the coming 12 months."

How to Apply

Startups interested in participating in the IBM & Web Summit Sports Tech Startup Challenge will be able to obtain additional information through the dedicated Web Summit Startups portal. Details, including eligibility, deadlines, and selection criteria will be announced on the portal closer to each regional pitch event.

Applicants may begin the process by going to the IBM & Web Summit **Sports Tech Startup Challenge** portal: https://websummit.com/ibm-ai-startup-challenge/

IBM as Web Summit's Official 2026 AI Partner

IBM is the Official AI Partner across all Web Summit 2026 conferences in Qatar, Vancouver, Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon and will host a series of on floor activations and curated content programs focused on AI and quantum for businesses.

About IBM

IBM is a leading provider of global hybrid cloud and AI, and consulting expertise. We help clients in more than 175 countries capitalize on insights from their data, streamline business processes, reduce costs and gain the competitive edge in their industries. Thousands of governments and corporate entities in critical infrastructure areas such as financial services, telecommunications and healthcare rely on IBM's hybrid cloud platform and Red Hat OpenShift to affect their digital transformations quickly, efficiently and securely. IBM's breakthrough innovations in AI, quantum computing, industry-specific cloud solutions and consulting deliver open and flexible options to our clients. All of this is backed by IBM's long-standing commitment to trust, transparency, responsibility, inclusivity and service. Visit www.ibm.com for more information.

About Web Summit

Web Summit is a global technology events company that brings together founders, entrepreneurs, business leaders, and investors to connect and exchange ideas about the technologies and trends shaping the world. Since 2009, Web Summit's portfolio - including Web Summit in Lisbon, Web Summit Rio in South America, Web Summit Vancouver in North America, and Web Summit Qatar in the Middle East, and RISE in Asia - has attracted nearly one million participants. Its newest event, Web Summit Vancouver, launched in May 2025. To learn more, visit websummit.com and follow Web Summit on LinkedIn.

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