

## Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) Guidelines 2024

The Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN), established in 2012, is a consortium of Australian and African universities working in equal partnership to build and sustain research and education collaboration, and leadership across areas of priority for Australia and Africa and to mobilise Australian and African expertise to address challenges faced by both continents.

### What is the AAUN Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF)?

The PRDF offers catalytic grants of an average of AUD 10,000 to foster partnership in the network, including new members, and support planning workshops and research collaborations, that address distinct mutual challenges. The PRDF provides one year of catalytic seed funding with the firm expectation that funded projects will be excellent, build specialist teams, achieve impact and be sustainable through the early identification of additional external funding.

PRDF awards are up to a maximum of AUD 10,000 per project, matched at up to AUD 10,000 total by partner teams. We expect to fund 8 projects in 2024. Two competitive projects can be led by ECRs who hold a PhD (up to five years since PhD award) and hold appointments in AAUN partner universities that extend beyond the timeframe of the project. These are **small, catalytic seed funds** and are likely limited to a workshop developing the research and allied program, formation of the team, development of preliminary data, and pursuit of significant external funding for next steps.

**NOTE:** There are 60 projects currently in progress or completed, from the seven earlier annual calls. Please note that it is **mandatory** to acknowledge AAUN appropriately in publications or conferences, for us to attract further funding and to present the strengths of the AAUN partnership to government, business, agencies, and universities. While our limited resources allow up to 8 awards this year, we will continue to seek funding for excellent proposals that we are unable to include in our awards.

**PRDF Status and Guidelines for 2024.** We are delighted to announce the call for proposals for PRDF 2024 with the guidelines below. The **closing date is Friday, 12 July at 18h00 Sydney time**. Awards will be announced at the AAUN AGM in Perth on 2 September 2024. This PRDF round is supported and reviewed equally by both AAUN Australia and AAUN Africa.

**Priority Research Themes 2024.** In the current round we encourage applications from natural and social scientists in the following priority thematic areas:

1. Environment, climate, and the energy transition
2. Equality, security, and social cohesion
3. Public health and human wellbeing
4. Sustainable food and water systems
5. Artificial intelligence and the digital revolution.

Each application should also briefly identify the relevance of the project to the following cross-cutting themes/frameworks:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- African Union Agenda 2063
- The role of higher education institutions and networks
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)
- Youth, including Early Career Researchers.

### Applications are invited from:

- (i) Existing AAUN research teams where the progress reports show major advance and limited additional funds would strengthen bids for funds to international agencies and governments. Only projects that have submitted reports are eligible to apply.
- (ii) New projects and teams, including those arising from the AAUN fora and research workshops during 2022-24.
- (iii) Collaborative teams involving other African networks such as the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) and RUFORUM are welcome.

### Am I eligible to apply?

The PRDF is open only to academic staff (faculty members) at AAUN member universities. Applications must first be approved for submission through an internal review at the principal investigator's university to ensure strategic alignment and support. Applications are submitted to AAUN through the AAUN Secretariat Australia (see information at the end of this document). On this round we will consider making up to 2 awards led by ECRs, as summarised above.

Proposals must engage at least four AAUN member universities (with involvement from at least two African AND two Australian member universities). The collaboration can also include non-AAUN universities and external partners but must be led by and have an active core of AAUN member universities. It is a priority for AAUN to engage newer members in the PRDF.

Applicants are encouraged to identify cash or in-kind support for the project from institutions involved, leveraging AAUN support where possible.

### What can PRDF funds be used for?

PRDF funds may cover the costs of exploratory research initiatives, targeted workshops, academic staff exchanges and the formation of collaborative networks, among other activities. Applications that incorporate a research mobility component for early career researchers and postgraduate students are encouraged. **Note:** As a small, innovation seed fund, the PRDF does not cover GST, university overheads (such as management, equipment depreciation, etc.), salaries or salary supplementation, scholarships, course fees and bench fees.

### What are the criteria for assessment?

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Impact** – the proposal is of high quality and addresses a distinct research problem for Australia and Africa. The proposal is likely to have significant impact in discovery, application, or policy.
- **Relevance to AAUN objectives** – the proposal aligns with AAUN strategic objectives and addresses a high priority area in the listed areas.
- **Sustainability** – the proposal is likely to build longer term international relationships based on genuine commitment by the research partners - and will provide a plan for attracting continuing external funding.
- **Teamwork** – the proposal involves a team of researchers across relevant disciplines and regions. Proposals that include early career researchers and PhD students are particularly encouraged and an outline of how this integration will be achieved should be provided.
- **Outcomes** – the proposal is likely to result in academic publications/dissemination, external funding, and/or policy options in the reasonable future.

### Applications will need to be accompanied by:

- Letters of support from AAUN partner universities confirming official institutional support and specifying any cash or in-kind contributions.
- Letters of support from external partners, also identifying cash and in-kind contributions.
- Proposal budget outlining key areas of expenditure (1 page maximum).

- CVs of principal investigators (1 page maximum each).

#### **How do I apply?**

Applications along with all accompanying documents should be submitted through the AAUN Secretariat Australia no later than **18h00 AEST on 12 July 2024**. Applications that are incomplete or received after the closing date will not be considered. Applications will be assessed and ranked by a selection committee from Australia and Africa.

**Award date: 2 September 2024, at the AAUN Australia Annual Forum and AGM**

#### **What are the financial and reporting obligations?**

Allocated funds will be deposited in local currency via bank transfer to the Principal Investigator's nominated university account. Awarded funding should be expended within 12 months. Any unspent funds at the conclusion of the 12-month award period will be returned to the AAUN.

Awardees will be required to submit an interim report to AAUN after 6 months and a 1-year report at the conclusion of the 12-month award period. A second report will be requested 3 years after the date of the award. This reporting is essential in assisting AAUN to track outcomes, demonstrate productivity and monitor return on investment. The AAUN will send a report template and a reminder by email at these intervals. Awardees who fail to submit satisfactory reports will be ineligible to apply for future AAUN funding.

#### **If successful, how does AAUN expect to be acknowledged?**

Any initiatives funded by the PRDF should adequately credit the AAUN, including the display of the AAUN logo. Any publications resulting from a PRDF-funded project should acknowledge AAUN as a supporter or participant. Principal Investigators are welcome and encouraged to participate in AAUN initiatives and events as they arise, including AAUN forums, workshops and AGM, the AAUN Annual Report etc.

**Contact information:** AAUN Australia Secretariat: A/Prof Grace Liu Flanagan via [aaun@unsw.edu.au](mailto:aaun@unsw.edu.au).

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