



Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) Grants Round 2025

Call for Applications & Institutional Briefing Session

The Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN) is a group of leading universities in Australia and Africa, connecting academics and early-career researchers through institutional partnerships in order to address research and development challenges facing both continents.

The Network, formed in 2012, fosters growing relationships between Australia and Africa by building research and education links between the continents.

At a time when the environment is ideal for building successful partnership with African countries, the AAUN aims to further the Australian Government's commitment to 're-invigorating' its relationships in Africa. The AAUN is integral to enabling Australia and Africa to work together creatively, innovatively and in equal partnership.

Australian University Members (10)

Australian National University*
Charles Sturt University*
Curtin University (*Co-Chair*)
Edith Cowan University*
Murdoch University
University of Newcastle (*Deputy Co-Chair*)
University of New South Wales
University of Queensland
University of Western Australia
Western Sydney University

Note: Institutional contact persons are listed on the AAUN PRDF webpage

****Recently-joined members***

African University Members (14)

Bahir Dar University*
Makerere University (*Deputy Co-Chair*)
Nelson Mandela University
Tshwane University of Technology
Université Cheikh Anta Diop*
University of Botswana
University of Cape Town
University of Ghana
University of Mauritius
University of Mpumalanga* (*Co-Chair*)
University of Nairobi
University of Pretoria
University of Rwanda*
Walter Sisulu University*

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

The AAUN Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) offers small catalytic grants to foster institutional partnerships in the network and develop 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 outputs and impact, and be sustainable through the identification of additional external funding. [There are 68 PRDF projects currently in progress or completed from earlier rounds.](#)

PRDF awards are a maximum of AUD 10,000 per project in matching funding and must be matched in cash funding by partner teams.

For example, if a project partner team raises AUD 10,000 cash through combined internal funding, then the team can apply for the equivalent amount of AUD 10,000 via the PRDF; if successful, they would then have total project funding of AUD 20,000. If the project team instead raises only AUD 8,000 internally, then they can apply for the equivalent amount of AUD 8,000 in matching funding from the PRDF to have total project funding of AUD 16,000. If a project team raises more than AUD 10,000 in internal funding, they can only apply for a maximum of AUD 10,000 in matching PRDF funding.



Applications must include at least two African AND two Australian [AAUN member universities](#). The collaboration can also include non-AAUN universities and other 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.

PRDF Call and Guidelines for 2025. We are delighted to announce the call for proposals for PRDF 2025 according to these guidelines. The round opens for applications on 1 May 2025 and **closes on 15 June 2025 at 23h59 in the local time zone of the project lead institution**. Winners will be notified in August 2025, and Awards will be presented at the AAUN Forum in Perth on 1-2 September 2025.

This PRDF round is supported and reviewed equally by both AAUN Australia and AAUN Africa.

We expect to fund 8 projects in 2025: 4 led by African member universities and 4 led by Australian member universities.

Priority Research Themes 2025. We encourage applications from natural and social scientists in the following priority 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.

Am I eligible to apply?

PRDF applications should be led by academic staff (faculty members) at AAUN member universities.

At least two Awards per round shall be made to projects led by **Early Career Researchers** (ECRs, who hold a PhD and are up to five years since PhD award date) who hold appointments at AAUN member universities that extend at least through the project timeframe (to end of 2026).

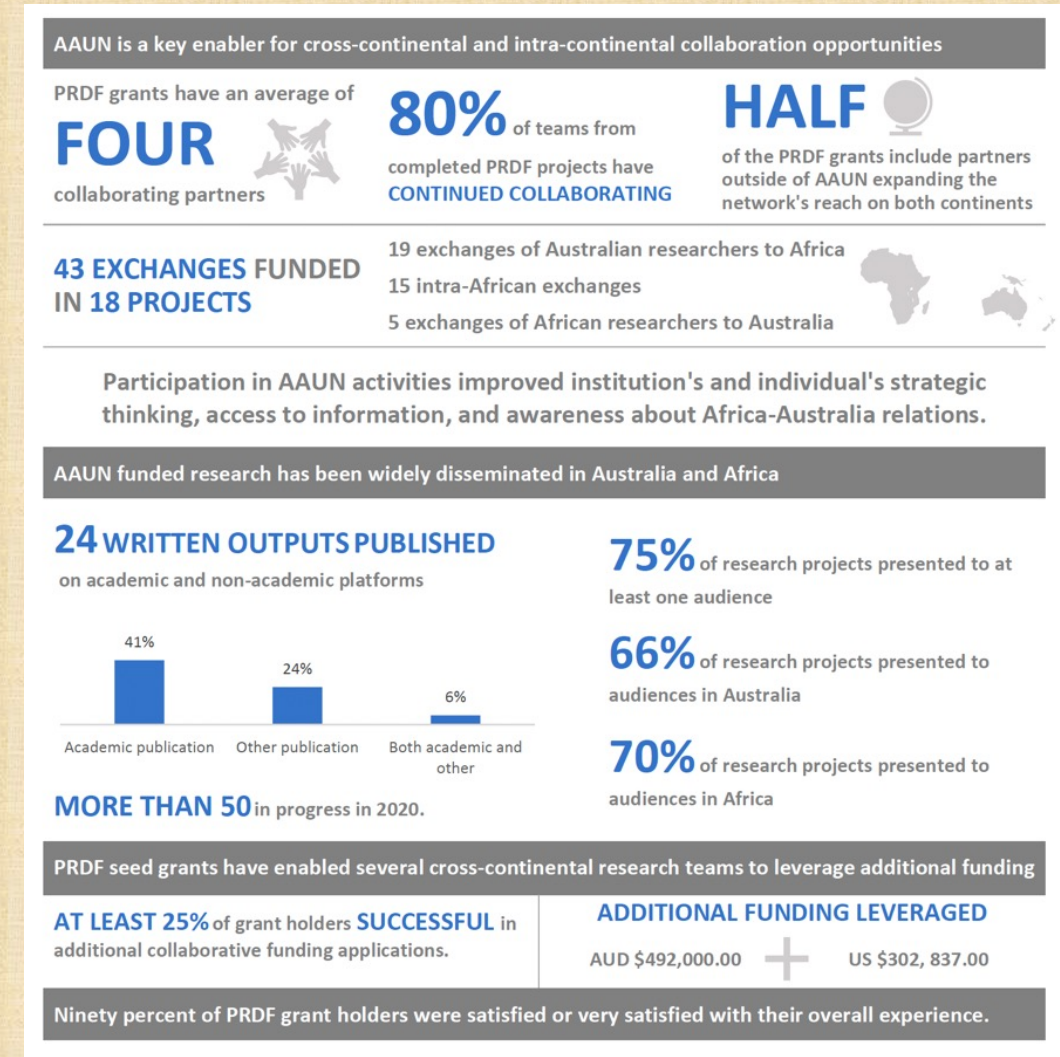
Applications are invited from:

- (i) Existing AAUN research teams where the progress reports show major advance and limited additional funds would strengthen bids for further external grant funding. Only projects that have submitted reports are eligible to apply again.
- (ii) New projects and teams, including those arising from recent AAUN fora and research workshops.
- (iii) Collaborative teams involving other related networks, such as the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), Association of African Universities (AAU), and IORA Indian Ocean University Network (UNIOR).

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 (using attached template).
- 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).

Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) Application Form 2025

Deadline 23h59 on 15 June 2025 in the local time zone of the project lead institution

APPLICATION NOTES

- This application form should be completed after reading the AAUN PRDF Guidelines 2025.
- Responses should be completed using lay terms. It is likely that one or more reviewers will not be a specialist in the field to which the program pertains.
- Enter responses by clicking on the marked fields. Some fields are restricted to pre-defined lengths. Fields will not allow for formatting of text (bold, italic etc). Should such formatting be required please cut and paste the information in.
- Do not attach additional pages, other than those specifically requested in the accompanying information checklist found at the bottom of this form.
- Application forms should be submitted along with any requisite attachments in a [single](#) pdf document.
- Return the completed application form to AAUN Secretariat Australia aaun@unsw.edu.au or AAUN Secretariat Africa sussy.munialo@up.ac.za

Proposal Title	Click here to enter text.	
Priority Theme Addressed	Click here to enter text.	
ECR-led Project (Y/N)	Click here to enter text.	
Principal Investigator at the lead institution	Title Choose an item.	
	First Name Click here to enter text.	
	Last Name Click here to enter text.	
	Department Click here to enter text.	
	University Click here to enter text.	
	Contact phone Click here to enter text.	
Contact email	Click here to enter text.	
Partner Institutions <i>Name of partner university and lead collaborator at that university.</i>	AAUN partners <i>(please provide details of the academics to be involved and their institutions)</i>	Click here to enter text.
	Non-AAUN universities	Click here to enter text.
	Other partners <i>Corporate, government, NGO partners etc.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Funding requested	Aus\$	
Total matched cash funding raised by AAUN and other partners	Aus\$	
Proposal Summary <i>Enter a summary for non-specialists (maximum 100 words).</i> <i>What do you want to do? Why do you want to do it? How will you do it? What is the expected outcome and impact?</i>		
Click here to enter text.		
Proposal Description		

In language intelligible to the non-specialist, describe what you intend to do. Is this a planning workshop, or a new research project? Are the outcomes a research team to develop a program, or a research team with a program? Explain what you expect to be the outcome of the work, and its scholarly or other impact. Explain how (and, if relevant, where) you and your collaborators will undertake the work. Where special skills or techniques are required at any point, make clear who will supply them (maximum 200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Relevance to AAUN Objectives
Explain briefly how the proposal aligns with or addresses one or more of the AAUN's objectives (maximum 200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Sustainability
How will the proposal build longer-term international relationships with genuine commitment from the research partners? Describe the plans to obtain funding to support the research collaboration in the longer term (max.200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Teamwork
Outline how the proposal team will be led and constituted, including the participation of any Early Career Researchers or PhD students (maximum 200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Anticipated outputs
List the key performance indicators (KPIs) of this project (eg: joint publications, joint external funding applications, postgraduate training, policy input, novel technologies etc) (maximum 200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Project Timeline
(maximum 100 words per quarter)

Preparation (Q4 2025)	Click here to enter text. <i>(Award presented 1-2 September 2025)</i>
Q1 2026	Click here to enter text. <i>(Projects to commence by 1 January 2026)</i>
Q2 2026	Click here to enter text. <i>(Interim report due 30 June 2026)</i>
Q3 2026	Click here to enter text.
Q4 2026	Click here to enter text. <i>(Completion report due 31 December 2026)</i>
Beyond award	Click here to enter text. <i>(Final report due 3 years post-award)</i>

Accompanying Information Checklist

Letters of support from AAUN partner universities	Click here to enter text.
Letters of support from external partners	Click here to enter text.
Proposal budget outlining key areas of expenditure	Click here to enter text.
CVs of principal investigators (1 page max. per investigator)	Click here to enter text.

How do I apply?

All applications must first be approved for submission through an internal review at the principal investigator's university to ensure local strategic alignment and support. A list of key institutional contacts is provided separately. Applicants are required to identify committed cash contributions as well as in-kind support for the project from institutions involved.

Applications along with all accompanying documents should be submitted through the AAUN Secretariat Australia (for applications led by Australian member universities) or AAUN Secretariat Africa (for applications led by African member universities) by **23h59 on 15 June 2025 in the local time zone of the project lead institution**. 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.

PRDF Timelines:

- 1 May 2025: Applications open
- 15 June 2025: Applications close
- August 2025: All applicants notified of outcomes
- 1-2 September 2025: Award presented at AAUN Australia Annual Forum and AGM in Perth
- 1 January 2026: Projects should commence by this date
- 30 June 2026: Interim report due
- 31 December 2026: Project completion and completion report due
- 3 years post-project: Final report due capturing all project outcomes and outputs.

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 completion report at the conclusion of the 12-month award period. A final 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?

Please note that it is **mandatory** to acknowledge AAUN appropriately in publications or conferences in order for us to attract further funding and to present the strengths of the AAUN partnership to government, business, agencies, and universities. 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 and workshops.

List of 8 winning projects in the PRDF 2024 Round

Inclusivity in Virtual Study Tours: Using technology to foster transformational learning

- **Principal Investigator(s):**
Dr Aneeshta Gunness , Curtin University
- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**
Prof Kirsten Holmes, Dr. Julie Napoli and Dr. Robyn Oushan, Curtin University;
Dr Shabanaz Baboo (Curtin Uni Mauritius);
Prof Dick Ng'ambi, University of Cape Town;
Assoc. Prof Goonesh Bahadur, University of Mauritius;
Dr Woudi von Solms, University of Mpumalanga;
Assoc. Prof Donella Caspersz, University of Western Australia

Building innovative capability and climate change resilience in higher education sectors in Australia and Africa

- **Principal Investigator(s):**
Dr Terri Trireksani (PI), Murdoch University
Co-PIs: Prof Antonia Girardi and Dr Augustine Donkor, Murdoch University
- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**
Dr Teddy Ossei Kwakye, University of Ghana;
A/Prof Viraiyan Teeroovengadum, University of Mauritius;
Prof Hadrian G. Djajadikerta, Curtin University;
Ms Pradnya Dewi, Murdoch University

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) perception and knowledge among adolescents across two continents: Africa and Australia

- **Principal Investigator(s):**
Dr Blessing Akombi-Inyang, University of New South Wales
- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**
Prof Alta Schutte, University of New South Wales;
Prof Ajediran Idowu Bello, Assistant Lecturer Dorothy Ekuu Adjabu, University of Ghana;
Cissie Namanda, Research Associate, Makerere University;
Dr Ludo Badlangana, Ms Matsapa Phegelo and Dr Keikantse Matlhagela, University of Botswana;
Dr Judith Byaruhanga, University of Newcastle;
Kingsley (Arua) Kalu, Western Sydney University;
Dr Barbara Nattabi, University of Western Australia

**Civil society participation in energy transition minerals governance:
Comparative case studies of lithium development in Africa and Australia**

- **Principal Investigator(s):**
Dr Joshua Matanzima, University of Queensland
- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**
A/Prof Kathryn Sturman, University of Queensland;
Dr Gaopalelwe Mathiba, University of Cape Town;
Prof Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Dr Peter Narh and Dr Clement Sefa-Nyarko,
University of Ghana;
A/Prof Nicholas Bainton, Australian National University

Gender Dynamics in Energy Transitions in African Countries and Australia

- **Principal Investigator(s):**

Prof Roula Inglesi-Lotz, University of Pretoria

- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**

Dr Jessika Bohlmann, A/Prof Heinrich Bohlmann, Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu, Anna Maria Oosthuizen and Dr Getrude Njokwe, University of Pretoria;

Prof Kanayo Ogujiuba and Prof Ferdinand Niyimbanira, University of Mpumalanga;

Prof Helen Cabalu, Dr Julian Inchauspe, Dr Hiroaki Suenaga and Dr Khuong Truong, Curtin University;

A/Prof Yixiao Zhou, Australian National University

Enhancing Well-Being in Rural Destinations through Sustainable Luxury Ecotourism Development: Delineating Structural, Product, Host Community and Tourist Factors

- **Principal Investigator(s):**

Dr Tinashe Ndoro, University of Pretoria

- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**

Dr Jorine Ndoro, University of Mpumalanga;

A/Prof Sean Lee, Curtin University;

Dr Michael Lwin, Western Sydney University

Enhancing the use of pigeonpea and other indigenous and underutilised crops in African food systems through technological and agronomic advancements

- **Principal Investigator(s):**

Dr Selorm Yaotse Dorvlo, University of Ghana

- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**

Dr Sussy Munialo, University of Pretoria;

Prof Wallace Cowling, Prof Kadambot Siddique and Winthrop Prof Michael Blakeney, University of Western Australia;

Dr Yash Chauhan, University of Queensland

Empowering Cattle Farmers: Harnessing Biogas for Sustainable Milk Preservation in Off-Grid Areas of Uganda

- **Principal Investigator(s):**
Dr Denis Nsubuga, Makerere University
- **Collaborating AAUN partner universities:**
Prof Michael Wandayi Okoth, University of Nairobi;
Laureate Professor Ravi Naidu, University of Newcastle;
Prof Damien Batstone, University of Queensland



aaun@unsw.edu.au



<http://aaun.edu.au/>



<https://au.linkedin.com/company/australia-africa-universities-network>

Contact information:

AAUN Australia Secretariat: A/Prof Grace Liu Flanagan via aaun@unsw.edu.au.

AAUN Africa Secretariat: Dr Sussy Munialo via sussy.munialo@up.ac.za

For more information and to see previous winners, go the PRDF webpage: <https://aaun.edu.au/research-development/>



Q&A