



Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) Grants Round 2026

Call for Applications & Institutional Briefing Webinar

The **Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN)** is a group of 29 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, established in 2012, fosters growing relationships between Australia and Africa by building research and education partnerships between the continents. The AAUN is integral to enabling Australia and Africa to work together creatively, innovatively and in equal partnership.



Australian University Members (11)

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

Annual Membership Fee

Australia:	AUD \$10,000
Africa (excl. South Africa):	AUD \$4,000
South Africa:	AUD \$5,000

African University Members (18)

Amoud University (*new)
Bahir Dar University
Makerere University (*Deputy Co-Chair*)
Mekelle University (*new)
Namibia University of Science and Technology (*new)
Nelson Mandela University
Tshwane University of Technology
Université Chiekh Anta Diop (*new)
University of Botswana
University of Cape Town
University of Ghana
University of Gondar (*new)
University of Mauritius
University of Mpumalanga (*Co-Chair*)
University of Nairobi
University of Pretoria
University of Rwanda
Walter Sisulu University (*new)



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 over 75 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 2026. We are delighted to announce the call for proposals for PRDF 2026 according to these guidelines. The round opens for applications on 1 May 2026 and **closes on 30 June 2026 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 2026.

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

We expect to fund 8 projects in 2026: 4 led by African member universities and 4 led by Australian member universities.



Priority Research Themes 2026. 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 2027).

Applications are invited from:

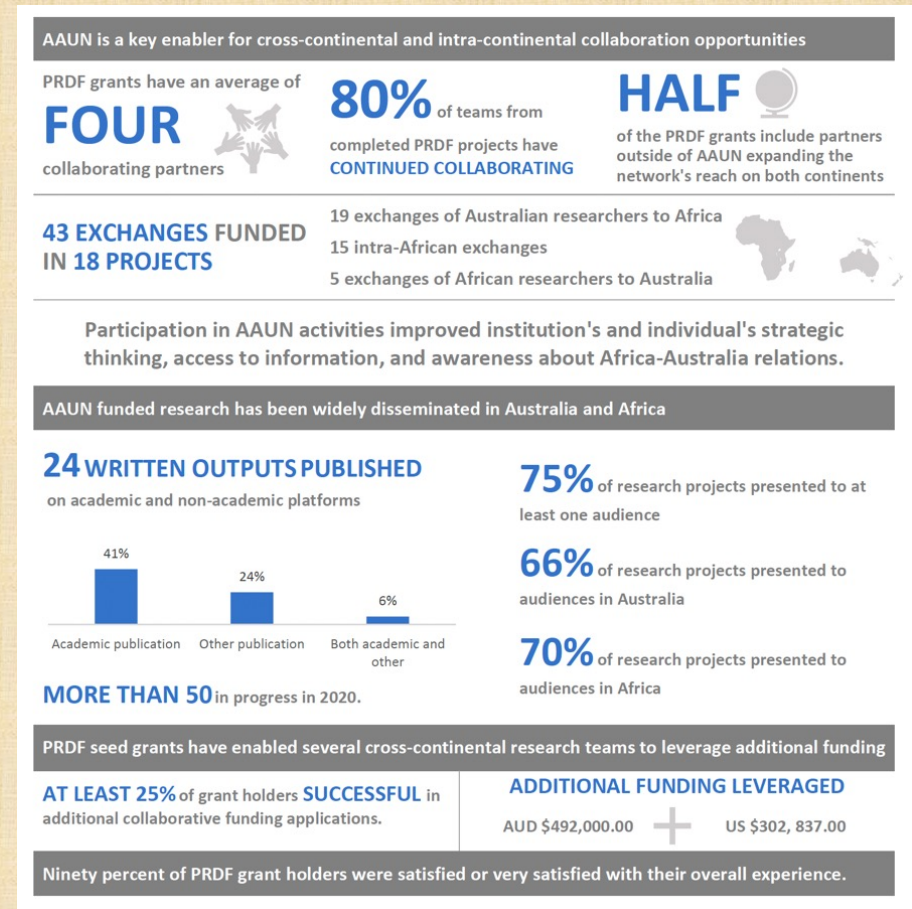
- (i) New projects and teams, including those arising from recent AAUN fora and research workshops.
- (ii) Existing AAUN research teams, where the progress reports show major advance and limited additional funds would strengthen bids for further external grant funding. Only projects that have submitted reports are eligible to apply again.
- (iii) Collaborative teams led by AAUN members and 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.



Data from AAUN Research Assessment 2021

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 outcomes in the medium term.

Applications will need to be accompanied by:

- Letters of support from AAUN partner universities confirming official institutional support and specifying any cash and/or in-kind contributions (using attached template).
- Letters of support from external partners, also identifying cash and/or in-kind contributions.
- Proposal budget outlining key areas of expenditure (1 page max.).
- CVs of principal investigators (1 page max. each).

AAUN AUSTRALIA AFRICA UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

Partnership & Research Development Fund (PRDF) Application Form 2026

Deadline 23H59 on 30 June 2026 in the local time zone of the project lead institution

APPLICATION NOTES

- This application form should be completed after reading the separate AAUN PRDF Guidelines 2026.
- 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 aus-secretariat@aaun-network (for Australian-led applications) or AAUN Secretariat Africa africa-secretariat@aaun-network (for African-led applications)

Proposal Title	Click here to enter text.	
Priority Theme Addressed	Click here to enter text.	
Tickled 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, community partners etc.</i>	Click here to enter text.
Funding requested	Aus\$	
Total matched CASH funding raised by AAUN members 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.		

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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 (max. 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 (max. 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 (max. 200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Anticipated outputs
List the key performance indicators (KPIs) of this project (eg. joint publications, max. 200 words).

Click here to enter text.

Project Timeline
(max. 100 words per quarter)

Preparation (Q4 2026)	Click here to enter text. <i>(Award presented 1-2 September 2026)</i>
Q1 2027	Click here to enter text. <i>(Projects to commence by 1 January 2027)</i>
Q2 2027	Click here to enter text. <i>(Interim report due 30 June 2027)</i>
Q3 2027	Click here to enter text.
Q4 2027	Click here to enter text. <i>(Completion report due 31 December 2027)</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 (max. 1 page)	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 30 June 2026 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 2026: Applications open
- 30 June 2026: Applications close
- July 2026: Applications assessed
- August 2026: All applicants notified of outcomes
- 1-2 September 2026: Awards presented at AAUN Forum in Perth
- September-December 2026: Preliminary organisation of funded projects
- 1 January 2027: Projects commence
- 30 June 2027: Interim report due
- 31 December 2027: Projects finish 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.

2025 AAUN PRDF Grant Winners



1. Dr Nehemiah Latolla, Nelson Mandela University (*ECR)

“Indigenous Knowledge and Green Innovation: Co-Creating Sustainable Cancer and Environmental Health Solutions from African Medicinal Plants”

Partners: University of Ghana, Curtin University, University of New South Wales

2. Dr Sashah Mutasa, Edith Cowan University (*ECR)

“Laying the Foundations for Digital Mental Health: A Comparative Study of Emerging Models in Africa and Established Telehealth Systems in Australia”

Partners: Curtin University, Makerere University, University of Ghana, Walter Sisulu University

3. Dr Theogene Dusingizimana, University of Rwanda

“Exploring Food Waste in School Meal Programs in Rwanda: A Pathway to Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems”

Partners: University of Ghana, Curtin University, University of New South Wales

4. A/Prof. Manickam Minakshi, Murdoch University

“Bridging Continents through Clean Energy: Australia-Africa Research on Electrochemical Materials”

Partners: Edith Cowan University, University of New South Wales, University of Pretoria, University of Nairobi

5. Dr Naadhira Seedat, University of Pretoria (*ECR)

“Predictive modelling of hydrochar from food waste for the adsorption of H₂S from biogas”

Partners: Makerere University, University of Botswana, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University

6. A/Prof. Elizabeth Thomas, Curtin University

“Building a collaborative team to improve chronic disease outcomes”

Partners: University of Western Australia, University of Mauritius, University of Pretoria, University of Gondar, Victoria Hospital Mauritius, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Malawi, Harry Perkins Institute

7. Dr Deirdre Rule, University of Cape Town (*ECR)

“AI Governance in Africa and Australia: Opportunities, security, and ethical considerations”


Partners: University of Pretoria, University of Mauritius, University of Western Australia, University of New South Wales


8. Dr Gloria Odo, Murdoch University (*ECR)


“Empowering youth in rural regions through developing an educational sustainable energy”

Partners: Makerere University, Curtin University, University of Rwanda



 aus-secretariat@aaun.network (Australia) and africa-secretariat@aaun.network (Africa)

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

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

Contact information and submission points:

AAUN Australia Secretary: Ruvi Goredema via aus-secretariat@aaun.network

AAUN Africa Secretary: Dr Sussy Munialo via africa-secretariat@aaun.network

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