INTER-UNIVERSITY COUNCIL FOR EAST AFRICA

Competitive Call for Strengthening University–Industry Collaboration

Call Reference Number: IUCEA/CALL/UIC/2025/01

Total Available Funding: USD 50,000

Maximum Grant per Proposal: USD 10,000

Deadline for Submission: 26 January 2026

Duration of Implementation: 12 months

1.0 Background

Globally, higher education institutions (HEIs) are recognised as the engine of knowledge creation, innovation, and skills development. The central role of HEIs is emphasised in the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 as the contributor of essentials for building the Africa "we want". The East African Community (EAC) Vision 2050, in alignment with the continental Agenda prioritizes the development of a knowledge-based economy driven by industrialization, innovation, and research-led solutions to socio-economic challenges.

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), as the EAC institution responsible for coordinating higher education and research has taken a leading role in operationalizing these goals. Among the IUCEA's Strategic priorities are to strengthen academia–industry linkages and foster regional research excellence. IUCEA has been implementing initiatives to promote collaboration between universities and the private sector, including the biennial regional Academia-Public-Private Partnership Forum (APPPF). To complement the ongoing initiatives, IUCEA has also been developing, sharing and advocating for supportive and guiding frameworks such as the Research Excellence Framework for Higher Education in East Africa (2024), which provides a structured mechanism for supporting, assessing, and rewarding high-impact research across universities, with emphasis on collaborations and multi-stakeholder engagement.

This Call, while grounded on the global, continental and regional development agenda is designed to catalyse university-industry collaboration in order to drive innovation, support industrial development, respond to market needs, and ultimately contribute to the transformation of the East African region. The Call is therefore a supportive initiative envisioned to be a scale-up mechanism for linking university with industry in a purposeful and policy-aligned manner.

2.0 Rationale

The gap between knowledge generation in universities and practical application in the private sector remains significant across the region despite of various strategic and policy commitments. Most of research outputs and innovations developed from academic institution settings struggle to reach the market or to be impactful to the society due to weak institutional linkages, the absence of structured technology transfer mechanisms, and limited funding for collaborative initiatives.

This call is structured to respond to the need for systematic, well-resourced collaboration frameworks that bring universities and industry partners together to co-create, test, and commercialize innovations. Implementation of this Call will therefore focus on initiatives that strengthens university-industry collaborations, including collaborative capacity building initiatives, linkage of students and researchers to the industry, and collaboration in product development and

improvement. The implemented initiatives will be a multiplier to move policies into action, and prototypes into transformative scalable products and services.

The commitment to strengthening University–Industry Collaboration is aligned to the recommendations to IUCEA from stakeholders' engagements in different Academia-Public-Private Partnership Forum and further seeks to contribute to translation of policy calls on academia-industry partnerships into actions. It is envisaged that with such actions, the EAC region will in the long-term celebrate the gains and impact of strengthened systems for University–Industry collaboration, enhanced knowledge transfer, joint intellectual property development, and improved research and innovation ecosystems.

3.0 Objectives of the Call

The main objectives of this Call are to:

i. Support in building and strengthening systems for University–Industry collaboration.
ii. Build capacity and enhance sustainable linkages between academia and industry.
iii. Improve knowledge and technology transfer, joint product development and commercialisation of research output.

4.0 Priority Thematic Areas

Proposals must align with one or more of the following priority sectors:

i. Agri-tech and food systems
ii. AI and digital technologies
iii. Renewable energy and green technologies
iv. Health and pharmaceutical technologies
v. Blue economy management

5.0 Initiatives to be Covered

The call will focus on supporting initiatives with activities that will contribute to building and strengthening systems for university-industry collaboration, enhancing linkages and capacity building of students and researchers, and improving knowledge and technology transfer, joint product development and commercialization of research output.

The activities will include:

i. Development of institutional policy or framework for university-industry engagement, technology transfer, or research commercialisation (e.g. stakeholder consultation or focus group discussions with industry representatives and government agencies to identify gaps and

expectations, and to gather feedback on the draft policy or framework; awareness and sensitization sessions across departments and faculties, among others).

ii. Collaborative university-industry capacity building initiatives (e.g. Joint seminars or programs by practitioners on specific issues for strengthening teaching, research and innovation; career development and mentorship forums/sessions by industry practitioners; establishment of industrial advisory committee for specific programs; and curriculum review meetings with industrial advisory committee, among others).

iii. Linkage of students and researchers to the industry (e.g. coordinated industry learning visits that will provide hands on training and industry experiences; collaboration forums or expos with industry partners).

iv. Joint product development and/or improvement in the priority sectors outlined in Section 4.0 of this call (e.g. Jointly developing prototypes; co-designing solutions with industry experts; setting up shared innovation spaces for testing and development, etc).

6.0 Eligibility Criteria

i **Lead Applicant** must be an academic staff or a researcher affiliated to a recognised/accredited public or private degree-awarding institution, which is a member of IUCEA, herein referred to as the **academic institution**.

ii **Industry partner** should be a legally incorporated company, registered small and medium enterprise (SME), or registered startup within the East Africa region, and operating in any of the priority sectors specified in Section 4.0 of this call.

iii Both parties (academic institution and industry partner) **must demonstrate** collaboration commitment (e.g., Evidence of MoU that highlights specific area of collaborations in regard to the project, letters of support, resource sharing, co-funding in-kind or in cash, etc).

iv **Evidence of academic institutional leadership support**: The proposal must be submitted with a support letter signed by the head of academic institution.

7.0 Funding Details

i. The Grant **will cover** initiatives with activities that will contribute to building systems for university-industry collaboration, enhancing linkages and building capacity of students and researchers, and improving knowledge and technology transfer, joint product development and commercialization of research output, as highlighted in Section 5.0 of this Call.

ii. The Grant **will not cover** for costs related to thesis and paper publications and travel participation costs to scientific conferences/workshops nationally, regionally or internationally.

iii. The Grant will be disbursed to successful applicants through their institutional bank account.

8.0 Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Criteria	**Weight**
Relevance to a priority sector and potential impact to the sector.	10 %
Applicability and demonstrated potential for: • Building and strengthening systems for university-industry collaboration. • Enhancing linkages and capacity building of students and researchers. • Improving knowledge and technology transfer, joint product development, and commercialization of research output.	30 %
Demonstrated impact on staff and students' capacity development and skills transfer. (e.g. Expected number of students/researchers to be trained or linked with industry, industry experts to be engaged, products to be development/improved.)	30 %
Demonstrated strength and sustainability measures for the university-industry collaboration initiative beyond project implementation.	15 %
Budget clarity and value for money	10%
Inclusivity considerations (Demonstrated measures to ensure inclusivity in terms of gender, age and persons with disabilities during the implementation of the proposed initiatives/activities)	5%

9.0 Submission Guidelines

i All proposals must be submitted electronically.

ii The required documents include:

a) Completed Online Application Form on this link: **APPLICATION FORM: PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION IN EAST AFRICA**

b) Key documents to be submitted in PDF format via email to **research@iucea.org.**

b.1. Detailed Proposal *(Comprising of Background and Rationale; Objectives; Activities and Methodology; Expected Outputs,*

Outcomes and Impact; sustainability Measures; Inclusivity Measure).

b.2. Detailed Budget Breakdown in USD *(Providing different columns that outlines the Budget item; Description of the item; Amount requested in the proposal; and Cost-sharing, co-funding or In-kind Contribution to the project. Whereby the cost-sharing, co-funding, or In-kind Contribution is well explained in the footnote of the table).*

b.3. Letter of Support from the academic institution (signed by the Head of Institution).

b.4. CVs of Lead Applicant and Key Team Members.

b.5. A copy of signed MoU or commitment document supporting the partnership/ collaboration with the industry (Jointly signed between the institution and the industry partner).

b.6. A copy of evidence of incorporation or registration of the industry partner.

10.0 Timeline

Activity	**Date**
i Call Launch	05 October 2025
ii Webinar for Information Sharing	20 November 2025
iii Deadline for Submissions	26 January 2026
iv Notification of Successful Applicants	27 February 2026
v Award	16 March 2026

NB: Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

11.0 Reporting

Upon disbursement of funds, successful applicants will be required to submit feedback and reports as follows:

i. Successful applicants should send a letter of acknowledgment of receipt of funds in institutional account, endorsed by the head of the institution, **not later than six (6) weeks upon funds disbursement**.

ii. Successful applicants should submit the **first progress report at the end of six (6) months upon funds disbursement.**

iii. Successful applicants should submit the **final report at the end of twelve months upon funds disbursement.**

iv. The progress and final reports should **highlight the key achievements, while clearly outlining the key performance indicators (KPIs)**.

v. The KPIs are dependent on proposed activities in a specific proposal. Hence, the possible list of KPIs include but not limited to:

   a. Number of students/researchers (disaggregated by gender) placed in industry attachments.
   b. Number of joint university–industry events.
   c. Number of joint capacity-building sessions/workshops conducted.
   d. Number of industry practitioners engaged in teaching or research activities.
   e. Number of participants trained (disaggregated by gender).
   f. Number of stakeholder consultations held.
   g. Number of institutional frameworks/policies developed or updated.
   h. Number of training modules or curricula updated with industry input.
   i. Number of joint R&D projects initiated.
   j. Number of prototypes, products, or services co-developed.
   k. Number of innovation spaces or labs established.
   l. Amount of funding or resources mobilized beyond grant.
   m. Number of innovations adopted by industry or commercialized.
   n. Amount/value of co-investment from industry partners.

12.0 Contact Information

For inquiries or clarification, please contact:

Research and Innovation Team

Email: research@iucea.org