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DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRANTS

CALL FOR INNOVATION CONCEPTS AND GUIDELINES FY 2026/2027

Link for submission opens: 15th June 2026

Go to page 16 for important timelines/dates

Read the guidelines before applying.

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Definition of Terms

Administrator: a full time staff who takes financial responsibility for the project, if the lead innovator is a student.

Applied research: work geared towards acquiring new knowledge that is directly aimed at achieving practical and applicable objectives.

Innovation: An innovation is a new or significantly improved product, process, or service that creates value. It involves the practical implementation of new ideas, which can be either completely new or an improvement on something that already exists.

Principal Innovator: the lead innovator who has full responsibility and authority for a project's intellectual and logistical direction, management, and financial oversight.

Concept: is a high profile guide for the proposed innovation idea, problem and solution, method and proposed impact.

Innovation Collaborator: an individual or organization that works on a project, pooling expertise and resources to achieve common goals. This may be from the private sector, civil society or government.

Multidisciplinary approach: A collaborative approach that involves scholars or experts from different academic disciplines working together on a common innovation project, pooling their unique knowledge and tools to find comprehensive solutions. This can be inter or intra-faculty or academia and industry.

Community in the context of research and innovation: A group of people sharing a common geographic location, social identity, or set of interests who are collectively affected by or stand to benefit from the outcomes of a project. For example, **local communities, vulnerable populations, youth groups, farmers, entrepreneurs, or other stakeholders** whose livelihoods, well-being, or environment stand to improve as a result of the project's outcomes.

Minimum/Market Viable Product: A market viable product—more commonly called a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is a version of a new product launched with just enough features to satisfy early customers and gather validated feedback for future development. It solves a real problem for the user immediately. It uses the fewest features possible to minimize development costs. It allows you to gather real user data and feedback.

1.0 Introduction

Kabale University is a beneficiary of Uganda Government funding for research and innovation. Since the 2021/2022 financial year, the University Council has allocated between 500 million and one billion shillings annually for this purpose. These funds are managed by the Directorate of Research and Grants and allocated through an open competitive process to Kabale University Staff and students for annual projects. Funds are disbursed to grant recipients in three or more instalments from the Bursar's office, based on contracts agreed between the innovators and the University Secretary.

In the last years, these grants have been allocated on an unrestricted basis, with decisions depending on the quality of proposals, the eligibility of the applicants and feasibility.

In the period 2023/2024, questions started arising on the impact of the research funded by the University. In response, several measures were instituted to ensure that allocated grants are impactful and innovative. These measures include:

- a) A decision was made to focus funding and management efforts in the 2024/2025 financial year on completing already issued projects. At the beginning of this period, 33 projects from previous years were still pending.
- b) A decision was taken to allocate 30% of the 2025/2026 research and innovation budget to support innovations.
- c) To develop a second Kabale University Research and Innovations agenda in the financial year 2024/2025, which will provide direction on the areas where Kabale University intends to have an impact.
- d) Furthermore, 30% of the budget available for research and innovations has been earmarked for Innovations.

1.1 Objectives

With these guidelines, Kabale University aims to ensure that all future projects funded under the Kabale University Fund for Innovation and Research (KAB-FIR):

- a) Lead to impactful research and innovations that address significant societal problems
- b) Support students and early-career staff in conducting research and developing innovations that enhance their academic and professional growth

To achieve this, the following measures are in place.

2.0 Grant principles

- i. **A commitment to results and impact:** This grant is committed to results and impact. The expectation is that innovators will address the most pressing development issues. Innovation teams should demonstrate attainment of tangible and useful deliverables within 1 year of implementation, including projects that require multi-year funding. Market viable products and or services are expected. Grants must have a multiplier effect through job creation and improved efficiency.
- ii. **Equity and inclusion:** Measures will be taken to ensure that all Faculties will benefit from the fund. The DRG will also ensure that women co-innovators and junior faculty are well represented in the grant portfolio. However, equity will not mean equal allocation, because 1) KAB-RIF aims to fund the best and most impactful innovation proposals and competition is at the centre of its approach, and 2) the nature, capacity, and cost of innovation initiatives differ markedly across disciplines.
- iii. **Multi-disciplinarity:** The development challenges we are seeking to solve require more than the effort of one sector. It is therefore important that innovators demonstrate a multi-disciplinary approach reflected through the problems selected, the technical proposals, and their team composition.
- iv. **Accountability and utilization of funds:** To protect the University's and the researchers' reputation and ensure continuity of this funding, accountability for the RIF will be of utmost importance. All funds disbursed should be accounted for in a timely way and to acceptable standards (both financial and implementation-wise). The DRG will therefore regularly track all awardee performance. Innovators with substantial accountability arrears and those who do not utilize allocated funds will be temporarily stopped from accessing these funds in the future.
- v. **Utility of innovation structures:** The Kabale University Business Incubation and Innovation Centre (KABBIC) was launched on 13th November 2025 by KAB, Ministry of Education and Sports, UNDP Country Representative and the Uganda Development Bank representatives. KABBIC is a multidisciplinary innovation hub established to foster entrepreneurship, innovation and business development in the Kigezi region and beyond. KABBIC embodies Kabale University's vision of transforming education into a practical engine for innovation, enterprise development, and community advancement. Through strategic partnerships, the center will bridge the gap between academia and industry, empowering farmers, startups, and students to drive sustainable regional development. Projects demonstrating utility of this facility will have added advantage.

3.0 Innovation Projects

3.1 What is innovation

An innovation is a new or significantly improved product, process, or service that creates value. It involves the practical implementation of new ideas, which can be either completely new or an improvement on something that already exists.

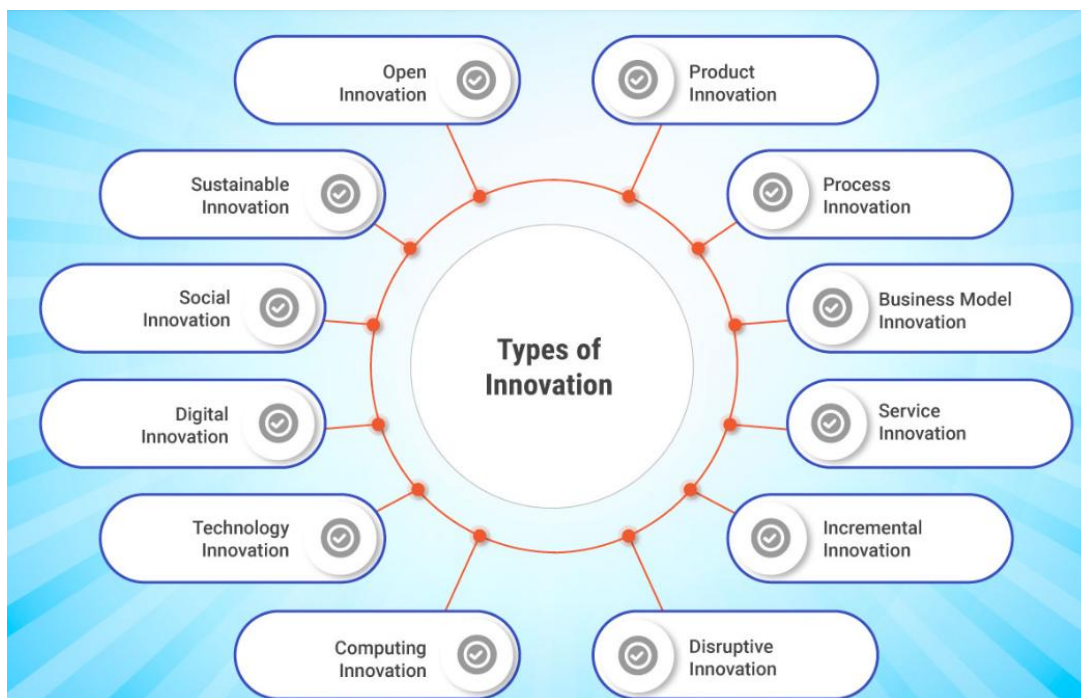
In simple terms, innovation is using new or novel ideas and approaches to solve existing problems. Innovation also means being creative

Innovation projects typically start with a creative idea and go through different stages such as development, validation, and implementation to transform the concept into a tangible and impactful outcome.

3.2 Types of Innovation

Innovation is not limited to technological advancements. There are multiple types of innovation (See figure 1).

Figure 1: Types of innovation



- **Product Innovation:** Focuses on creating new products or improving existing ones
- **Process Innovation:** Simplifies internal processes, technologies, and systems to boost productivity and cut expenses. It is the foundation for both competitive agility and operational excellence.
- **Business Model Innovation:** Reimagines how value is created and captured.
- **Service Innovation:** Enhances customer experiences by offering new service delivery methods, personalization options, and digital convenience.

- **Incremental Innovation:** Involves continuous improvements to existing products, services, or processes.
- **Disruptive Innovation:** Introduces breakthrough ideas that reshape industries.
- **Open Innovation:** Invites collaboration with external partners, customers, and institutions to co-create solutions.
- **Sustainable Innovation:** Designs eco-friendly products, services, and models that reduce environmental impact.
- **Social Innovation:** Addresses social or environmental issues with creative solutions that improve lives, promote inclusivity, and contribute to global well-being.
- **Digital Innovation:** Leverages technologies such as AI, IoT, and blockchain to enhance operations, deliver smarter products, and accelerate digital transformation.
- **Technology Innovation:** Drives advancements in areas like biotechnology, renewable energy, and materials science—enabling new capabilities and solving global challenges.
- **Computing Innovation:** Leads progress in information technology, from advanced algorithms to cloud infrastructure, powering automation, data security, and digital ecosystems.

3.3 Areas of focus

We are seeking innovations that;

1. Promote a Multidisciplinary Approach
2. Teams should integrate students and staff from diverse disciplines (e.g., business, ICT, health sciences, engineering, agriculture). Such multidisciplinary collaboration enhances problem-solving, commercialization readiness, and innovation depth.
3. Practicability and Hands-On Development. Innovations should move beyond theory and demonstrate practical application through
 - a. Prototypes development
 - b. Pilot projects
 - c. Having minimum viable products (MVPs) or services.
 - d. Provide hands-on exposure, practical labs, and field-testing opportunities.
 - e. Jobs created or impacted on.

3.4 Expected deliverables.

Innovations must move beyond academic or theory to deliver on any one or a combination of the following;

- a. Registered Intellectual Property (varies depending on the innovation or stage of innovation)

- b. Business model
- c. Process (new or modified)
- d. Tangible products
- e. Services
- f. Economic impact that emphasises; potential for job creation and or new opportunities.

4.0 Emphasize Job Creation, Scalability, and Economic Impact

Reference is made to the types of innovations identified in section 3.2; innovations should add value to socio-economic transformation. Innovations must therefore demonstrate the value proposition to society in one or a combination of the following aspects.

- a. Clearly demonstrate potential for job creation
- b. Clearly explain new opportunities or approaches.
- c. Show scalability beyond pilot communities.
- d. Explain how they contribute to local, regional, or national economic growth.
- e. Quantify potential economic impact where possible.

This ensures innovations align with broader development goals and attract investor interest.

5.0 Budgets

Projects for innovation grants will vary depending on the stage of development and the needs. Projects in their initial stages may need **under UGX 10 million**.

Budgets applied for funding shall cover a period of one year. Multi-year projects should outline the full project trajectory and total budget but may only request funding for one year at a time. Subsequent funding will be conditioned to fresh funding application following timely completion of the funded phase of the innovation.

Allowable budget expenses are research ethical clearance (if there is evidence of research component), equipment and supplies, registration of intellectual property, business registration, per diem, safari day allowance, printing final reports, editing, photocopying and stationery, exhibitions and communication.

Innovators can budget for salaries for critical project staff that are not paid by KAB or the Government of Uganda e.g., Project Coordinators, Administrative Assistants, Research Officers etc. Regular Personnel costs excluding Innovation research assistants should not exceed 33% of the budget. Projects that exceed this threshold will be disqualified. Because of the observation that projects without administrative support tend to be the ones most affected by implementation and accountability delays, projects are strongly advised to include Coordination or Administrative support in their teams. Field Innovation or research assistants (or Data collectors) costs are considered project activity costs. Note that all salaries and all repetitive allowances will be subject to mandatory statutory deductions at source, to pay the relevant taxes.

Publications contribution shall be a maximum equivalent of USD 100.

Unallowable budget expenses are payment of consultation fees for project teams, salary of team members, travel for conferences.

6.0 Target for Innovation Grants

Innovation projects must be administered by a confirmed Kabale University staff member. The PI can be a student or a Kabale University staff member. In the case where the student is a PI, the staff member will be the mentor and will be financially liable for administering the grant. The following conditions will apply:

1. Concepts can be submitted by teams of students and staff of Kabale University, or in collaboration with people from other public or private sector institutions.
2. Project teams that include staff of other institutions must demonstrate that the external stakeholders or private sector players bring in necessary expertise that is not available among Kabale University staff or help to leverage additional funding.
3. A staff member or student can lead only one innovation project and can participate in a maximum of two projects concurrently.

7.0 Eligibility Criteria for Innovation Grants

To be eligible for funding, projects must comply with the following criteria

7.1 Significance and originality

Projects need to show how they will contribute tangibly to addressing significant societal problems. Each project must clearly articulate the problem that it intends to address, the methods that will be used, and the envisaged outputs and outcomes. Projects must demonstrate how they will apply the current state of knowledge to generate a solution (or solutions) that consider the complex nature of significant societal problems and tackle the specific problem from multiple disciplines.

7.2 Potential impact

The project must articulate its envisaged impact in terms of:

- a) **Problem-solving impact:** i.e. how does the solution proposed improve on existing ways of addressing the problem? What are the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed solutions on society?
Innovators will be expected to describe clearly the outputs anticipated to arise from their projects. Outputs are the immediate tangible results of the project activities. Beyond outputs, applicants will describe the anticipated outcomes and impacts of the solution they propose. The target populations (primary and secondary) to be involved in and impacted by the research should be clearly described as well as the anticipated reach of the outcomes and impacts stated. Since this funding is specific to the current financial year, projects must demonstrate clearly the deliverables they expect within

one year, matching the level of investment made and attainable in the 1-year timeframe.

Often, science requires more than one year of implementation to effectively answer the required study questions and as such, some projects are designated as 'multi-year'. However, since the available funding has been committed for one Financial Year, all proposed projects including multi-year projects must articulate clearly the deliverables expected to be attained within one (1) year.

- b) **Integrate Strong Business Foundations:** Innovators should integrate business aspects based on the Business Model Canvas into their innovations and clearly articulate how their solution generates income and sustains operations. Innovations should clearly demonstrate;
- i. A clear value proposition that gives the uniqueness of your product or service. What value are you bringing to the customer. This can be unique characteristics of your business that might be related to e.g. price, speed or qualitative such as design, client/customer experience).
 - ii. A defined customer segments. What groups of people or companies is your innovation (product or service) is targeting? How will you interact with your various customer segments.
 - iii. Clearly defined channels to raise awareness of your proposed product/service.
 - iv. Revenue streams and pricing strategy. Articulate the sources from which you will generate revenue/money.
 - v. Define the key activities that you will focus on to fulfil the value proposition, reaching customer segments, maintaining customer relationships and generating revenue.
 - vi. Cost structure and sustainability plan. Outline all costs involved in running your service/generating your product.
 - vii. Key partners: these are external companies or suppliers/practitioners that will help you carry out your key activities.
- c) **Capacity development impact:** (at individual, department or faculty level).
i.e. how will the innovation improve on skills, competences, and qualifications? Or any other impact at department or faculty level.
Innovators should articulate how they expect their project to build capacity for stakeholders and their own department. Examples could include mentorship of youth/students, equipment, and training of investigators, research fellows or research assistants. Co-designing of the innovation or participation in implementation etc. Projects are strongly encouraged to include provisions for students to attachments so that students can benefit. Projects should indeed involve teams of students from different academic disciplines working together.
- d) **Communication impact:** i.e. how will the project and its outcomes be used to promote Kabale University?

- e) **Sustainability impact:** i.e. how will the project outcomes be sustained? Are there prospects for attracting complementary or follow-on external funding? Does the project yield new partnerships?

KAB-RIF aims at supporting the government and its partners to improve service delivery and to accelerate development. Innovators should show a clear plan for disseminating their findings to audiences critical for policy and program change so as to achieve impact at scale. Innovation-based projects should articulate a scaling strategy, including linkage to scaling partners within the industry (for commercially viable enterprises), or within the relevant public sectors (for innovations targeted to the public) or within relevant implementing agencies (for social enterprises). Innovations targeting commercial interest should demonstrate the anticipated commercial potential, anticipated demand, anticipated patents/copyrights/industrial design claims/trademarks if applicable and the path to commercialization. Innovations targeting social impact (social innovations) should elucidate the path to wide-scale community uptake. Teams that already have the necessary connections to sector ministries, implementing partner agencies (e.g., NGOs), or industry partners should articulate these connections.

Innovation initiatives that are expected to run longer than 3 years, the team should articulate the sustainability of their projects beyond the KAB-RIF funding. Sustainability will also mean the availability of co-funding or solicitation of continued funding from other grant applications beyond RIF. However, for projects that have already received or anticipate funding from elsewhere, researchers should show how the KAB-RIF funding fits into the broader funding structure. In general, researchers should show that they will not become dependent on KAB-RIF funding.

8.0 Benefits for students

Students participating in innovation projects benefit in several ways, including:

- a) **Sponsorship:** Students receive financial and logistical support for innovative activities.
- b) **Promoting innovation and creativity:** Students have the opportunity to move their ideas into real-life projects.
- c) **Entrepreneurship and commercialization:** Students have the opportunity to scale up their projects. Create start-ups as employment for themselves and fellow youth. Have registered companies.
- d) **Timely Completion of Studies:** Students benefit from structured supervision, mentorship, and access to project resources, which support timely completion of their studies and graduation.
- e) **Skills Development:** Students get hands-on experience and enhance competencies in effective communications, team work, innovations and making a business case for your innovations. All applicants shall be subjected to a bootcamp leading to the final pitch and projects for granting.

- f) **Multidisciplinary team collaborations:** Engagement in multi-disciplinary teams exposes students to interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches, broadening their understanding of complex development issues. Giving real world experiences.
- g) **Networking and Mentorship:** Students interact with academic staff, external collaborators, and community or industry partners, expanding their professional networks and benefiting from mentorship opportunities.
- h) **Gain transferable skills:** By participating in practical and impactful innovation activities, students gain transferable skills and experience that enhance their competitiveness in the labour market.
- i) **Contribution to Community Development:** Students become active contributors to solving real societal challenges.

9.0 Concept note framework

SUMMARY OF YOUR PROJECT IDEA (In not more than 300 words, describe your idea):

PROBLEM: What societal problems/needs are you addressing? (In not more than 200 words, what gap/challenge/problem/need are you trying to address? Credible evidence of the problem)

SOLUTION: What solution will address the mentioned problem/need. Does your solution contribute to the NDP IV in sectors critical to the economy? (In not more than 300 words, describe your solution to the stated problem/need)

STRATEGY FOR RESULTS: What strategy do you intend to use to achieve the intended result? (In no more than 600 words, describe the methods/steps you will take to execute the project)

NOVELTY: How innovative is the proposed solution? Can it be realistically developed and deployed? (not exceeding 300 words)

CAPACITY BUILDING: What skills and competencies shall be built as a result of implementing this project? Skill level (Individual, Departmental, Faculty level, Community, Local government/regional, National level) capacity building may include mentorship of junior researchers, equipment, and training of investigators, students, research fellows, or research assistants, co-design of the research methodology, or participation in field implementation, data management, or analysis. (Not exceeding 500 words)

SUSTAINABILITY: How will your project be sustained after the grant period? Will your dissemination include audiences (public sector, industry, social enterprises) critical for policy and program change to achieve impact at scale? Will you include or work with (In not more than 600 words, describe how your project will be sustainable. Is it commercially viable? Is the execution realistic?)

RISKS AND THEIR MITIGATION ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: What are the potential risks in this project and how shall they be mitigated? What steps shall you take to ensure that human participants are protected? what is your stakeholder engagement plan? (not exceeding 500 words)

CONTRIBUTION TO UGANDA'S ECONOMY (In not more than 250 words, clearly explain the relevance of your project to the SDGs, and potential impact. Respond to specific sections of the National Development Plans (NDP IV), Sector plans, and regional visions such as the East African Community Vision 2050 and the Sustainable Development Goals. What tangible, measurable results from your project?

10.0 Evaluation criteria

Projects will be evaluated along the following parameters

Each sub-area will be scored on a scale of 1-5 whereby 1-Very weak, 2=Weak, 3=Adequate, 4= Strong 5=Excellent

	Area of assessment	Maximum score
A	Problem statement	20
	Clarity and precision of the problem	
	Use of data/evidence to validate the problem/need	
	Clarity of the target clients/customers/beneficiaries	
B	Innovation/novelty	25
	Level of originality	
	Development stage (concept, prototype, pilot etc)	
	Technical feasibility & implementation plan	
C	Potential impact (social, economic, environment etc)	20
	Economic impact- job creation, cost reduction etc	
	Environment sustainability	
	Measurable impact indicators	
D	Scalability and market viable product/service	20
	Market size and demand validation	
	Scalability potential	
	Clear roadmap to market viable product/service	
	Start-up strategy or go-to-market strategy	
E	Funding needs and expected outcomes	15
	Clarity of funding request	
	Realistic budget breakdown	
	Defined milestones & expected outcomes	
F	Total score	100

11.0 Concept note budget framework

Primary activities should be listed with a clear description of what it entails. Primary activities should have a logical sequence based on the outlined method/activities in the concept. Submit as an MS Excel file. Add rows as appropriate.

SN	Primary activity	Budget estimate	Description
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
	Total		

12.0 Pre-submission process

1. Submit expression of interest
2. Mandatory attendance of the information session
3. Pitching to the Faculty Research and Grants Committee (FRGC)
4. Submit the concept online

13. Post-submission process

1. Concepts received by DRG are evaluated for compliance to the set criteria or eligibility check.
2. Attend the independent pitching.
3. The Research and Grants Advisory Board (RGAB) makes a grant decision or not.
4. Applicants shall receive notification of Grant Award/Regret
5. Awardees prepare Letter of Acceptance of the Award or Decline of the Award signed by all core team members.
6. Mandatory attendance of Innovation Booster Camp (Boot camp).
7. Sign a research agreement with KAB. All team members are party to the agreement.
8. Onboarding of Awardees (Finance, procurement and grant management process)
9. Implementation (requisition and action)

14. IMPORTANT DATES FOR INNOVATION PROJECTS APPLICATION FY 2026/2027

DUE DATES	ACTION
1st June 2026	Issue the call
15 th June 2026	The application portal opens to receive Expression of Interest
23 rd June 2026	Deadline for receiving Expression of interest to https://kab.ac.ug
3rd July 2026	Information session on submitting proposals for all who express interest
18th August 2026	Pitching of concepts to Faculty Research and Grants Committees is concluded
15 th September 2026	Concepts with budgets submitted online
18th September 2026	Pitching event to an independent panel of assessors
24th September 2026	Research and Grants Advisory Board Meeting
29th September 2026	Notification of Grant Award Outcomes
8th October 2026	Letters of acceptance received from PIs
12-16th October 2026	Bootcamp
23rd October 2026	Business Canvas with budgets submitted to DRG
30th October 2026	Innovation Award Agreement
15th November	Implementation starts

NB: Faculty Research and Grants Coordinators organize the faculty specific pitching schedules. All these should be concluded by the 18th of August 2026 to allow interested applicants to review their concepts before submitting online. Evidence of Faculty Minute should be uploaded as an appendix.