



21st RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Theme: Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent

Pre-conference events: November 24th – 30th 2025,

Main conference events: December 1st – 5th 2025

Venue: Gaborone International Conference Centre (GICC)

Call for Expression of Interest to hold Side Event Meetings

1. Introduction

The development opportunity. 2025 signifies a pivotal moment in the evolution and advancement of African Agriculture, as it is the year the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Kampala Declaration, to cover the period (2026-2035) was launched. The Kampala Declaration focuses on building resilient agri-food systems, and is the Africa Union's strategy for agriculture growth and development. It is aligned to Agenda2063, the continents' development strategy, whose Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2024 – 2033 (STYIP), focuses on accelerating Africa's economic growth and development. These apex development blue-prints all emphasize the need for Africa's higher education sector, in particular its universities, and relatedly, the agriculture and allied sectors to proactively design, accelerate and deliver at scale the required human capital, as well as knowledge products and services for development.

To transform higher education institutions in agriculture and natural resources for inclusive and sustainable development, RUFORUM facilitates networking, human capital development, continental mobilisation, and advocacy. RUFORUM achieves this vision by strengthening capacities of African universities to respond to development demands of the continent. RUFORUM's training programmes include both undergraduate and postgraduate education in agriculture and related disciplines, whilst research for development investments include basic, strategic and translational programmes. Institutional strengthening and policy actions target higher education institution sector as well as national to regional public agencies. The RUFORUM network implements these actions by co-creating and implementing them with partners. Annually, the RUFORUM Network and its partners meet to review and draw lessons from past actions through an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The 2025, AGM is its 21st meeting, to be held in Gaborone, Botswana, hosted by the Government of Botswana and Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN). This AGM offers Botswana, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the rest of Africa, and partners an opportunity to discuss current development opportunities and challenges, and to co-create roadmaps for delivering solutions. The strategic engagement of member universities across the continent; the African Union Commission; SADC and its agencies; United Nations agencies,



Development partners; as well as academic and science networks from the global south and north, show the significance of the AGM.

2. The themes of the 21st Annual General Meeting

The main theme of the 21st Annual General Meeting, is ***Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent.***

Sub theme 1: Strategic partnerships for growth: Building bridges for the future

Meetings under this sub-theme will explore and leverage collaborations to enhance university capacity for maximizing their contributions to Africa's and global development agendas. The convenings will include multilateral and bilateral south-south meetings-(Africa-China, Africa-New Zealand, and within Africa- inter-regional and regional meetings and Africa - South America); and North-South collaborations such as-Africa-EU, and Africa-North America. Discussants will analyse how collaborations could be developed and or optimized to: (a) strengthen university mission and development delivery, (b) mobilize and or rationalize resources, (c) promote knowledge transfer and, (c) address shared contemporary challenges.

Sub theme 2: Science for development: Generating contemporary and relevant solutions at scale

Meetings under this sub-theme will explore opportunities for strengthening science and innovation capacities of African Universities. Three key sub activities will be held: (i) Building university-led strategic partnerships for research, training and development; (ii) A science conference; (iii) Translating science into development i.e., market transitions for science solutions by enhancing business and jobs creation, entrepreneurship, start-up business incubation, and communicating science for development impact among others. Digital advances for market transitioning and value chain support; hackathons and investor pitch sessions will also be held for upcoming young people. Case studies of successful science-driven businesses that bridge the gap between research institutions and agricultural communities will be shared. The detailed topics for the scientific sessions are outlined in the [call for abstracts](#).

Sub-theme 3: Capacity sharing to train the next generation

This conference sub-theme will explore how cooperative capacity development approaches might transcend continental disparities in expertise, facilities, and innovation. Emerging platforms and models, such as digital networks and open science platforms for improving access to learning and research infrastructure, joint research and academic mobility programmes that harmonise competencies and foster cross-border learning, and regional centres of excellence and thematic consortia that consolidate talent and infrastructure will be examined for scaling and resourcing.

Subtheme 4: RUFORUM AGM

The AGM is the supreme decision-making organ of RUFORUM bringing together member universities, policy makers and partners. The purpose of the AGM is to prioritize, seek guidance, share lessons and experiences on building Africa's human capital, science, technology and innovation, as well as relevant policy information to underpin the continents development. The AGM serves as a springboard for leveraging resources and fostering strategic partnerships between and among universities in and outside the Network to support university mission delivery. During the AGM, key meetings such as the Vice Chancellors, Principals and Deans, bilateral and multilateral, and RUFORUM governance meetings are held. Financial accountability to the membership and partnerships is done.



3. Key events of the 21st Annual General Meeting

The AGM will involve different convenings such as: Pre-AGM events that will include training sessions in: Botswana higher education day, student technology hackathons, advanced data management and analytics, among others; Conference activities include strategic partnership events, high level policy events, RUFORUM Governance meetings, scientific conference (oral and poster presentations), and exhibitions. Additionally, field visits will be held. Recognition of outstanding achievers including young scientists, model farmers and young agripreneurs will be made.

4. Expected participants

The AGM event brings together academia and science leaders, policy makers (including ministers and technical experts), higher education leaders in Africa, development partners, private sector leaders, researchers, innovators, students, and farmer organizations, among others from Africa, the global south and global north. Approximately 600 participants are expected to attend the AGM.

5. Call for Expression of Interest to hold Pre-Conference or Side Meetings

RUFORUM invites interested institutions/organisations and individuals to hold pre-conference or side events¹ aligned to the overall conference theme and directly contributing to the achievement of the conference objectives. The pre-conference or side events should be contributing new knowledge or equipping Africans with new skills to address the challenges and seize opportunities in one or more sub-themes scientific sessions to contribute to Africa's development. Each event should therefore showcase or equip African agriculture and research ecosystem actors with novel knowledge and skills to innovate for Africa's development.

6. How to express interest to hold a Pre-conference and/or Side Event

Interested organisations/institutions/individuals should provide 1–3-page Concept Note of the proposed event. The Concept Note should include the following sections.

- a) Title of the event.
- b) Brief background including rationale and objectives.
- c) Event delivery approach and draft programme.
- d) Expected outcomes specifying new knowledge or competency that will be delivered to enable a specified actor in the higher agriculture and research ecosystem to address challenges and seize opportunities in one or more sub-themes scientific sessions to contribute to Africa's development.
- e) Target group of the pre-conference or side event.
- f) Number of participants.
- g) Sitting arrangements. See examples [here](#)
- h) Equipment required to hold the event (projectors, video conferencing equipment, Public Address System, Video coverage etc. required to hold a quality events)
- i) Branding and publicity materials to be brought and those required (flyers, pull-up stands, tear drops, LED Screens, Videos etc.)
- j) Dissemination plan including live media coverage platforms social media, live streaming on e.g., Facebook; twitter and YouTube if applicable, and
- k) Number and category of participants who will be funded by the side event organisers (excluding the organisers). The Program Committee requires that for an event to be accepted, **the organisers should cover the travel, registration, and accommodation costs**

¹ A side event is a meeting, training, dialogue, or any other event that is not part of the RUFORUM Governance and mainstream scientific Conference by either members or non-members of the RUFORUM Network.



of at least five (5) participants preferably Principals and Deans from outside Botswana to the meeting excluding the event organisers.

7. Side event dates and duration

The preconference events will take place between 24th – 30th November 2025. Events taking place in this period can run for a period of one to five days between 8:30am and 4:30pm CAT.

During the conference, side events may be organised on a day that will be specified in the programme. The day allocated for side events will be shared with organisations which will have expressed interest to host side events. Events taking place during this day must take place for only one day between 8:30am and 4:30pm CAT.

8. Reporting for Side Events

To ensure coherence in reporting of the overall conference, all side event's organisers will prepare a summary report of their events as a contribution to the broader conference report, a day after holding the session. A report of a maximum three (3) pages should specify the following.

- a) Objectives of the Side Event.
- b) The sub-theme that the Side Event is contributing to.
- c) The success stories/best practices shared/new skills or competency delivered.
- d) Challenges and opportunities identified.
- e) Practical recommendations, and,
- f) Action plan to implement the recommendations specifying the role of different stakeholders.

9. Side events funding arrangements

The side event conveners/ organisers will pay for all costs related to the holding of the side event. The cost of holding side events include:

- a) Venue hire, which varies with the number of participants.
- b) Registration fees for the expected number of participants in the side event, and
- c) Video conferencing facilities (for blended events).

Please submit the concept note by email to Emmanuel Okalany at e.okalany@ruforum.org with a copy to stshwenyane@buan.ac.bw; s.dagnoko@ruforum.org; agm@ruforum.org; and by **31st October 2025**. All submissions will be responded to by the side event coordinator, specifying the availability of space and conditions for holding the events.