



ASIE PACIFIQUE

CALL FOR PROJECTS - PACIFIC

NERE NAHAL¹ - 2nd EDITION

"Universities as vectors of innovation for climate stabilization and biodiversity protection"



Innovative project co-funded by the Pacific Fund



Call for projects open from 18th March until 10th May 2024

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. WHO ARE WE?

The Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), **created 60 years ago**, is today the **first university network in the world** with more than **1,000 members**: universities and research centers in nearly **120 countries**. **Unleashing the potential of the French-speaking scientific community** throughout the world, the AUF, an international non-profit organization, is also a label that carries a vision for a **better development of educational and university systems**: *"to think globally about the scientific Francophonie and to act regionally while respecting diversity"*.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Office of the AUF has had a permanent representation in the region since 1993. It coordinates a network of **85-member** higher education and research institutions in **13 countries**: Cambodia, China, the Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Mongolia, Thailand, Vanuatu, and Vietnam, as well as in New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

2. BACKGROUND: AUF, A UNITED FRENCH-SPEAKING UNIVERSITY NETWORK TO RESPOND TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES

A large-scale international survey undertaken by the AUF in 2020 enabled to understand the needs and priorities of more than 13,000 students in 90 countries, 2,000 personalities, university leaders and officials, members of civil society and the entrepreneurial ecosystem from 75 countries. It is based on this global consultation that the AUF has built its **2021-2025 strategy**, structured around 5 strategic areas and 5 societal challenges for the years to come.

The present call for projects is part of key area 5 **"Research and development"** and aims to act in favor of a **responsible and inclusive university**. Higher education is the cornerstone of a strong and sustainable educational ecosystem that develops the critical thinking and skills required by engaged citizens. One of AUF vocations is to **build bridges between French-speaking universities** around the world and to promote research in French on topics of common interest.

¹ « NERE NAHAL » could be translated as « *our direction, our way to the solution* », in the language of Vao on the island of Malekula, one of the 130 languages of Vanuatu

Among these unifying themes, **the social responsibility of universities and their contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** has emerged as a key issue for our member institutions. It is therefore natural that the AUF has taken up these issues, articulated in the Pacific around climate stabilization and biodiversity preservation, which are both **major issues for the region, but also priority topics for Pacific universities**.

3. THE CALL FOR PROJECTS « NERE NAHAL » – ELEMENTS OF SITUATION

In 2021, Tuvalu's Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered a **speech for COP 26, with his feet in the water**, where there was land just a few years before. These images went around the world and showed, once again, the urgency of a response from the international community and national authorities regarding resilience to climate change and the need to implement solutions to preserve biodiversity.

Indeed, *"half measures are no longer an option"*, insisted the **IPCC** (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), in a report published on 28th February 2022. The UN experts recalled that it is not too late to fight against climate change, but that each "additional delay" reduces the human chances of building a livable future.

The report stated that the current effects of global warming (+1.09°C in 2021) on populations and ecosystems are devastating:

- **Reduction in the availability of water and food resources** (in Africa, Asia and small islands in particular);
- **Impact on health in all regions of the world**, increased heat stress, degradation of air quality, etc.;
- **Decrease by half of the distribution areas of animal and plant species.**

These effects are presented as irremediable, even under the assumption of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5°C, as set by the 2015 Paris climate agreement (COP 21). In addition, the report pointed out that the consequences of warming already affect 3.3 to 3.6 billion people, who live in contexts that are "highly vulnerable" to climate change. In addition, about **1 billion people living in coastal areas could be threatened by rising sea levels by 2050**.

The place of higher education and research (HRE) in societies has become **increasingly important since 2015, with the advent of the 2030 Agenda**, which specifies that: *"Goal 13 aims to build the resilience and adaptive capacity of countries to climate-related hazards and disasters, with a focus on building the capacity of least developed countries and small island developing states"*.

In general, the SDGs clearly mention RSE as an essential and determining sector. This awareness has consecrated the place of the university as **an operator of societal change and as an incubator of innovative solutions** to address transnational concerns related to the SDGs and, more specifically, to environmental preservation.

In these conditions, the AUF, present in the Pacific region since 1993, wishes to act with its member universities as a **catalyst for concrete initiatives that have positive impacts** to contribute to limiting the effects of climate change and preserving biodiversity.

In this regard, the AUF launches a 2nd edition of NERE NAHAL, an open and multidisciplinary call for projects, inviting other universities of the small island countries of the Pacific to collaborate and establish synergies to promote sustainable solutions, to respond to these societal challenges in an effective and concrete way.

This new call for projects is a continuation of the previous one (Nere Nahal 1st edition), which enabled the financing of 7 projects carried out by universities and partners in the region.

Members of the **Pacific Island Universities Research Network (PIURN)** are encouraged to participate in this call for projects, in collaboration with at least one AUF member university, to receive funding.

This call for projects is a prefigurative one. It aims to:

- Determine the capacities of Pacific universities to become **vectors of change and adaptation** of communities to climate and environmental issues.
- Support institutions in the **development of innovative and virtuous solutions** that can be scaled up.

4. OBJECTIVES

- **General objective:** to encourage collaborations between Pacific universities around a common, federative and future-oriented theme.
- **Specific objective:** To initiate projects on these themes within universities, by encouraging partnerships and synergies between AUF member institutions and non-member higher education and research institutions.

These goals are:

- **To facilitate the networking** of higher education and research institutions (EESR) in the region;
- **To federate expertise** and contributing to the highlighting of knowledge around the protection of the common good;
- To contribute to the **implementation of joint experiments**, to stimulate collective intelligence and the exchange of know-how for the mutual reinforcement of partner universities;
- **To detect scientific innovations** and support them in their maturation phase;
- To propose a **financial instrument to support and improve** the quality of projects that are vectors of innovation for climate stabilization and biodiversity protection.

Thus, this call for projects promoted by the AUF is designed as a **seed fund and a gas pedal** aiming at identifying and boosting innovative initiatives and bearers of replicable future solutions. The proposed projects should have a leverage effect on the mobilization of external resources and/or include a reflection on the search for self-financing models, to be deployed more widely.

It is worth noting that the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) has published a quiz offering AUF-member higher education institutions in the Asia-Pacific region a roadmap to get familiar with University Social Responsibility (USR) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to adopt concrete and socially beneficial actions. Consulting this guide can be useful in preparing for this call.

5. BENEFICIARIES

- **Direct beneficiaries:** AUF member universities and universities associated with PIURN, in collaboration with an AUF member university;
- **Indirect beneficiaries:** Populations residing in the Pacific region, for whom these solutions will primarily benefit.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Projects deemed eligible must meet the following criteria:

- Be submitted by an **AUF member institution of higher education in the Pacific region that is up to date with its 2023 membership dues**;
- Be submitted by a **PIURN member** institution of higher education, in partnership with an AUF member university, up to date with its membership fees;
 - AUF member universities in the Pacific are:
 - University of New-Caledonia;
 - University of French Polynesia;
 - University of South Pacific;
 - National University of Vanuatu.
- The project coordinator must be a clearly identified associate lecturer, lecturer or university professor from one of these institutions;
- If the project coordinator is not from an AUF member university, he/she must be supported by and actively collaborate with a project coordinator from an AUF member university;
- The project must be supported by the **highest authority (HA)** of the member institution, in order to ensure that it is an institutional and not an individual project;
- The project should propose a 12-month action plan for Category A projects or a 24-month action plan for Category B projects; activities should start in **July 2024**.
- The support of the AUF should not exceed 70% of the global amount of the project, requested within the limit of (cf. point 7):
 - **Category A - INCUBATION:** EUR 10,000;
 - **Category B - DEVELOPMENT:** EUR 20,000.
- The project must be submitted by **10th May 2024**.
- Each institution may submit several projects (especially if they are in collaboration with other universities in the Pacific region);

In preparing their proposals, project leaders should pay particular attention to:

- The demonstration of links between the activities/results of the project and the adaptation to climate change;
- The co-construction of projects in a dynamic inter-university partnership in the region;
- The proposal of a budget calibrated according to the purpose of the call for projects and the chosen methodology;
- The implementation of nature-based solutions with measurable and multiple benefits for climate change adaptation, biodiversity preservation and the well-being of populations;
- The precise description of the expected results and deliverables;
- Project governance, including the active participation of national authorities, public institutions and local communities in the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of project results;
- Alignment of proposed projects with regional and national public policy frameworks;
- Partnerships with non-academic actors (incubators, public and private companies, business groups, civil society organizations, donors, research organizations, etc.);
- The proposal of projects that consider issues related to gender inequality among beneficiaries.

Note: Project holders who already benefit from funding under the NERE NAHAL 1 call, and whose project has not yet been fully completed (submission of deliverables and final technical and financial reports), will not be eligible for funding under the NERE NAHAL 2 call.

7. TYPES OF PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES AND ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

This call will provide financial support to two categories of projects:

- **Category A projects - INCUBATION:** the institution wishes to develop solutions with measurable and multiple benefits for climate change adaptation, biodiversity preservation and the well-being of populations;
- **Category B projects - DEVELOPMENT:** the institution already has solutions in this area and wishes to consolidate and develop these solutions in a sustainable, concrete, and effective manner.

Eligible expenses correspond to Annex A of this call for projects.

8. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE

Applications will be evaluated by the members of the Regional Commission of Economic and Scientific Experts (CREES), with possible recourse to its associate members or other competent partner experts.

The main criteria considered in the evaluation of the projects will be the following:

- **Relevance of the project:** adequacy between the objectives of the project and the objectives of this call for projects;
- **Coherence of the project:** adequacy between the objectives, the activities and the resources (human, material and financial) mobilized for the project;
- **Innovative character of the project:** novelties or added value that the project will bring compared to the existing one, justified in relation to the local/national/regional context of the project;
- **Impact of the project:** possibilities of dissemination and post-project sustainability in the short, medium and long term;
- **Feasibility of the project:** ability to achieve the objectives and expected results within the 12-month or 24-month timeframe and the realistic nature of the timeline presented;
- **Economic model of the project:** acuity of the budgetary proposal and lines of thought for the search for sustainable economic models allowing the project to be autonomous.

DRAP/AUF will give special consideration to projects that:

- Propose at least a part of the deliverable in French
- Mobilize Francophone expertise within the AUF network;
- Involve several partners, particularly those from civil society, NGOs and businesses;
- Are led by women.

9. CALENDAR

- Call publication: **18th March 2024**
- Kick-off webinar: **week of 18th March 2024**
- **Application deadline: 10th May 2024**
- Results publication: **3rd June 2024**
- Funding agreements signature: **June 2024**
- Effective start of the projects: **July 2024**
- Intermediate report submission:
 - category A projects: **31st January 2025**
 - category B projects: **29th August 2025**
- End of the projects (final report and deliverables submission):
 - category A projects: **29th August 2025**
 - category B projects: **28th August 2026**

10. APPLICATION AND CONTACTS

The original and the electronic version of the application must be sent to the AUF Asia-Pacific office of the applicant institution:

Pacific institutions	Bureau National AUF-Vanuatu Avenue Léopold Sédar Senghor, Port-Vila, Vanuatu Phone: +678 24 264 Contact: Mrs. Emmanuelle Boutier, Head of the Vanuatu AUF office Email: emmanuelle.boutier@auf.org
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