

Call for Proposals

Research Grants in Computer Science and Information Systems

FY 2026/2027

Overview of KENET's Research Grants Program

One of KENET's mandates is to catalyze collaboration in research and education among its member universities and research institutions. KENET promotes collaboration through facilitation of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in priority academic areas, discovery of active researchers/faculty, provision of research and education grants to researchers and member institutions, as well as travel grants for faculty and/or graduate students in SIG areas.

As of April 2026, KENET was supporting three Special Interest Group areas, namely, Computer Science and Information Systems, Computational Modelling and Materials Science and Engineering. The target group for this Call for Proposals is early career PhD faculty and/or researchers in the SIG in Computer Science and Information Systems (CSIS) academic area. However, it is possible for the Principal Investigator in the call to collaborate with faculty or researchers in other academic domains.

This call for proposals seeks to support early-career researchers in advancing emerging areas of Artificial Intelligence through work that combines technical depth with demonstrable, real-world implementation. The grant is designed to catalyze the development of innovative ideas into functional pilots or prototypes that can be tested, refined, and shared as practical reference models. The call, therefore, aims to strengthen institutional capacity in priority AI domains while generating insights, tools, and systems that can be adopted, adapted, and built upon by students, researchers, and other institutions.

This call has two areas of focus as follows:

1. Agentic AI Systems for real-world impact
2. Artificial Intelligence of Things (AIoT) for decision support

Grants: Structure, Technical Brief and Schedule

Grants Structure

1. Each theme will be awarded two (2) grants in the 2026/2027 round of funding.
2. Each grant will be for a maximum of KES 2 Million.
3. The grant period is 12 months.

Areas of Focus: Technical Brief

1. Agentic AI Systems for Real-World Impact

Recent advances in generative AI are accelerating the emergence of agentic AI systems – autonomous, goal-directed systems capable of planning, reasoning, and acting through interaction with tools, data sources, and other agents. Unlike conventional generative AI applications that primarily generate outputs in response to prompts, agentic systems are able to execute multi-step tasks, coordinate workflows, and function in dynamic operational environments. As this field continues to evolve, there is a growing need for research that strengthens technical understanding while also demonstrating how such systems can be designed, tested, and deployed for meaningful use in real-world settings. Research in this area has strong potential to shape the next generation of AI systems and to support impactful applications in domains such as education, public services, and institutional decision-making.

For this area of focus, we are seeking proposals that advance knowledge in Agentic AI research areas such as planning, multi-agent coordination, tool use, memory, monitoring, and human oversight, while culminating in a demonstrable pilot or prototype that translates the research into a practicable application. The intention is to support work that not only contributes to emerging scholarship, but also generates tangible reference models from which students, researchers, and other institutions can learn.

2. Artificial Intelligence of Things (AIoT) for Decision-support

The convergence of the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence, commonly referred to as AIoT, is opening possibilities for real-time monitoring, analysis, and decision-making in physical environments. Through the integration of sensing, connectivity, analytics, and intelligent response, AIoT has relevance across a wide range of domains, including agriculture, environmental management, logistics, infrastructure, and health. Low-power wide-area technologies such as LoRaWAN are particularly promising for this purpose, given their ability to support long-range communication, low energy consumption, and cost-effective deployment across distributed settings.

With this call, we are inviting proposals that move beyond conceptual design to the development and validation of end-to-end AIoT systems that are operational and support decision-making in a well-specified domain and use case. Further, we require that proposals leverage KENET’S LoRaWAN for the sensor network. In addition, projects under this theme are required to include the generation of well-curated raw datasets as a beneficial secondary output of system deployment, thereby contributing valuable open data resources for machine learning training, student projects, and future research.

Research Computing and Research Data Storage @ KENET

KENET provides a select set of research computing services to grantees, including access to computing facilities at partner institutions, such as the CHPC in South Africa, as well as 24-hour local cloud services that may be used as a platform to power computing needs of the research problem.

KENET’s expanded [GPU cluster](#) will also be available for use by grantees. Additionally, grantees will have FREE research data storage during the project.

Schedule

Applicants in these areas are encouraged to view the KENET grant as a catalyst for pursuing additional funding opportunities from other organizations, at the national and international levels, providing much larger funding.

Table 1: CSIS grants call timeline.

Activity	Dates
Call for Proposals open for submissions	May 11 – July 10, 2026 (2 months)
Review and evaluation of received proposals	July 11 – July 31, 2026
Presentations of shortlisted applicants	August 1 – August 14, 2026
Finalists announced and grants awarded	August 18, 2026
Grantees on-boarding	September 7 – September 11, 2026
Implementation period	September 2026 – June 2027
Evaluation, monitoring, reporting and close-out	E & M – quarterly per group

Eligibility, Terms and Conditions

Eligibility

This call is open to Computer Science and Information Systems (CSIS) faculty (who are full-time) at any of the KENET member institutions. The lead applicant must be a PhD holder, attained within the last 5 years, and must demonstrate active research interest. Those recently awarded grants from CSIS are not eligible to apply. Candidates who have received their PhD from Kenyan institutions may have an added advantage.

Team Composition

One of the main objectives of this grant is to develop expertise and build capacity in the areas of focus, and to grow a community of practitioners. To this end, it is important for faculty to work closely with students with a view to furthering their knowledge and capacities in the various technologies and issues of interest, in the areas of focus. Incorporating students as team members as well as designing student-level projects from the research activities to be undertaken is encouraged. The lead researcher(s) must be a PhD holder meeting the eligibility criteria above. The lead researcher is strongly encouraged to incorporate other researchers into their team, especially dedicated research staff or full-time MSc/PhD students. If other members are incorporated into the team, then the roles and extent of involvement of these team members must be clearly spelt out. A Letter of Commitment from each Team Member with support from respective Heads of Department or Deans must be included as part of the team's submission documents. Teams with multidisciplinary backgrounds are encouraged. The lead researcher will serve as the team leader and the primary point of contact on all matters related to implementation of the grant.

Collaboration and Partnerships

To enhance research uptake and utilization, it is important for researchers to identify and seek out collaborations and partnerships with strategic persons and institutions. This not only opens up pathways for moving research from the lab to the society, but also enhances visibility of researchers and their institutions, attracting even more funding and opportunities to further their research agenda. Given the identified areas of focus, it will be imperative for teams to identify strategic partnerships and collaborations with a view to modeling and planning for prototyping, testing and scaling at later stages in the research cycle.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property derived from the funded R&D activities will be appropriated and protected based on the lead researcher's institution's IP policy and procedures.

Post-Award Requirements

The successful grantees will be expected to:

1. Provide quarterly progress reports to the CSIS Research Associate at KENET.
2. Participate and present project work at selected meet-ups organized by KENET.
3. Grow a community of researchers in the area, by reaching out to other local researchers working in the area and other related multidisciplinary domains.
4. Actively seek post grant funding to further their research work by writing (joint) funding proposals.
5. Prepare a final project report at the end of the grant period and submit it to KENET. Prepare an abridged version of the project report for profiling on KENET's and institutional websites.
6. Publish paper(s) on their work in reputable journals.

Proposal Submission

Concept Note Format

1. The concept note should not exceed 6 pages (12pt, single spacing, excluding appendices).
2. The concept note should be submitted in PDF format.
3. The research area should be clearly indicated in the title page.
4. No personal identification (names) or institutional affiliation should be included in the concept note.

Concept Note Structure

The concept note should have the following structure:

1. Title
2. Problem definition and justification
3. Proposed solution and justification
4. Methodology
5. Resources (human, hardware, software, etc.)
6. Work plan (not exceeding 12 months in duration)
7. Detailed Budget (not exceeding KES 2 Million)
8. Appendices

Supporting Documents

The following documents should be included as part of the concept note submission:

1. Team profile document, indicating the names, institutional affiliation and brief biographies of the lead researcher(s). Details of other team members and any collaborating institutions should also be included in the team profile.
2. CVs of the lead researcher(s), clearly profiling research activities undertaken to date as well as relevant publications.
3. Letters of Commitment from team members and any collaborating institutions.

Concept Note Submission

Concept notes with all supporting documentation should be sent via email to csisgrants@kenet.or.ke by **10th July 2026, 5.00PM EAT**.

Enquiries and Applicant Support

All enquiries and requests for further information related to this call should be addressed to grantsadmin@kenet.or.ke.

Proposal Evaluation

1. KENET will constitute a review panel of leading CSIS experts. Members of the review panel will sign Non-Disclosure Agreements as well as statements acknowledging that they will make no claim to the intellectual property developed by the grantees.
2. The reviewers will review all received applications as per the evaluation criteria provided in Table 2 below and select the top three (3) proposals for each area of focus.
3. The top three (3) finalists in each area will be invited for a final face-to-face presentation. During the oral presentations, the applicants will respond to and clarify any questions from the panel that will have arisen out of their written submissions. They will also be required to respond to any ad-hoc questions arising from the oral presentation.
4. After the oral presentations, the reviewers will make their final decisions on which two (2) proposals will receive the grant, per area of focus. Four (4) teams will be selected.
5. Selected grantees will be notified formally and profiled on KENET’s website.

Evaluation criteria:

Table 2: CSIS grants evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Aspects	Weighted Score
Relevance and justification of proposed research topic	Is the proposed topic and preferred solution aligned with Kenya’s Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, Vision 2030 or SDGs? Is it an important problem to solve in a developing world context? Is there sufficient research uptake and utilization potential for the proposed research outputs?	15%
Technical approach and methodology	Is the research concept innovative and effective compared to existing alternatives? Does the proposed approach have a potential experimental component partner to test the computational findings proposed? Is there a potential HPC development component? Is the proposed work doable given the time and budgetary constraints of the grant, considering the team’s composition?	35%
Budget justification	Are the items to be procured related to the project objectives and activities? Can these items be obtained with the project timelines?	10%
Viability assessment and scaling potential	Is scale built into the solution? Can it be replicated in similar contexts? Is there scope for furthering the research idea/prototype? Is there scope for future external research funding to scale-up the research?	10%
Human capacity	Does the team have the required expertise, experience and necessary contacts to deliver? Do they have a local footprint?	10%
Student engagement	Are there concrete roles and responsibilities for student team members? Are there clearly defined student-level project ideas?	10%
Inter-university/industry involvement	Have critical partnerships in the main domain of application been identified? Is there a likelihood for collaboration during and after the grant period? Does lack of partnerships severely impede the research work during the grant period?	5%
Potential for publication in refereed journals and/or conferences	Are the results likely to be published in international peer reviewed journals/conferences that are indexed in the Elsevier Scopus database?	5%