

Connecting...

# **Academia, Industry, And Government**

for Sustainable Innovation

**MARCH 2026**

**Edition**

 **Insights**



Welcome to the

# March Edition

of the Triple Helix Nigeria (THN)

# Newsletter.



Dear Readers,

This edition brings together two powerful conversations that reflect a shared global imperative: repositioning research as a driver of innovation, policy, and economic transformation.

We are privileged to feature insights from Prof. Magdalena Frąc of the Institute of Agrophysics Polish Academy of Sciences, whose experience with Horizon Europe offers a practical roadmap for researchers seeking to compete in highly competitive international funding ecosystems. Her emphasis on strategic alignment, interdisciplinary collaboration, and impact-driven proposals is both timely and instructive.

Complementing this is our engaging discussion with Prof. Dickson Andala, Executive Director of the National Research Fund Kenya. His perspective highlights Africa's evolving research landscape - one that is increasingly focused on local funding resilience, translational research, and the integration of the quadruple helix model to drive economic growth and societal impact.

Together, these interviews underscore a central message: the future of research lies in its ability to connect across disciplines, sectors, and borders and to translate knowledge into real-world solutions.

At THN, we remain committed to advancing this vision by fostering meaningful collaborations between academia, industry, government, and society, and by creating platforms where ideas evolve into impact.

We invite you to engage deeply with these insights and reflect on how your work can contribute to building a more connected, innovative, and resilient research ecosystem.

Happy Reading,  
**PROF. EUCHARIA OLUCHI NWAICHÌ**  
Editor, *Triple Helix Nigeria Insights*

Dear Innovators, Partners, and Stakeholders,

As we continue to strengthen the innovation ecosystem in Nigeria and across Africa, this edition of the Triple Helix Nigeria Newsletter comes at a critical moment.

The conversations with Prof. Magdalena Frąc and Prof. Dickson Andala reinforce an important truth: research must move beyond knowledge generation to become a catalyst for transformation.

Across the continent, we are witnessing a shift from fragmented efforts to more intentional, structured collaboration. The insights shared in this edition highlight the importance of:

- Building globally competitive research systems
- Strengthening university–industry–government linkages
- Embedding innovation and commercialisation pathways
- Aligning research with policy priorities and societal needs

At Triple Helix Nigeria, we believe that Africa's future will be shaped by how effectively we connect ideas to implementation. Platforms like ours are designed to catalyse this process bringing together stakeholders, fostering partnerships, and enabling research to translate into startups, policies, and scalable solutions.

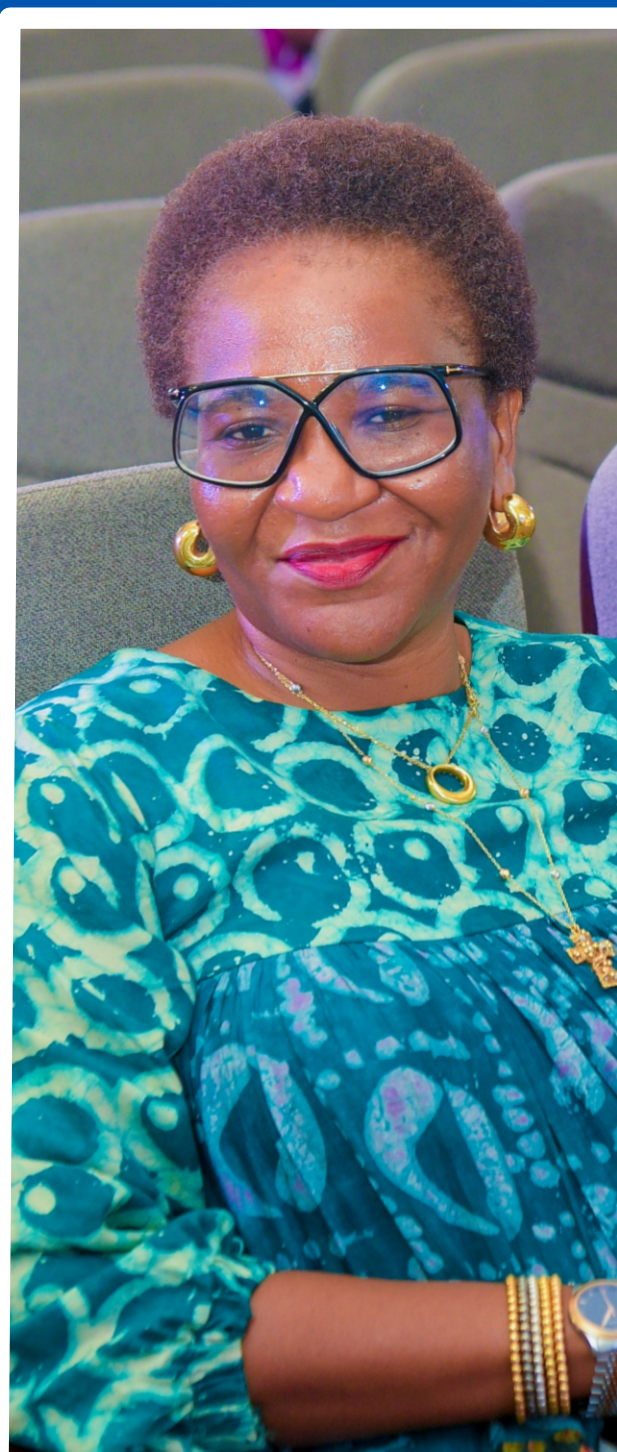
The opportunity before us is clear: to move from potential to performance, from collaboration to co-creation, and from research outputs to measurable impact.

I encourage all stakeholders – researchers, industry leaders, policymakers, and development partners – to take inspiration from these conversations and actively contribute to building a vibrant, innovation-driven ecosystem.

Let us shape a future where Africa not only participates in global knowledge production but leads in delivering solutions that matter.

**With partnership and purpose,**  
**Tassalla Tersugh**  
*President, Triple Helix Nigeria*

## Message from the **President**



# FEATURES IN THIS EDITION

## March 2025



### **Advancing Global Research Through EU Grants & Strategic Collaboration**

A THN Newsletter Interview with Prof. Magdalena Frąc  
Insights into winning competitive international grants, building strong research consortia, and positioning research for global impact through programmes such as Horizon Europe.



### **Driving Research and Innovation for Economic Transformation in Africa**

A THN Newsletter Interview with Prof. Dickson Andala  
Exploring how the National Research Fund Kenya is advancing translational research, strengthening the quadruple helix model, and building a resilient, locally driven research funding ecosystem.



### **Upcoming Triple Helix Nigeria Programmes and Events**

A preview of upcoming THN engagements, including the SciBiz Annual Conference and targeted capacity-building initiatives designed to deepen collaboration across academia, industry, and government, while accelerating innovation and commercialisation



### **Funding Opportunities for Researchers and Innovators**

A curated selection of current grants, fellowships, and calls for proposals to support cutting-edge research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and policy-relevant scholarship within Nigeria and across the global research ecosystem.



### **Looking Ahead: Strengthening Nigeria's Triple Helix Ecosystem**

Reflections and forward-looking insights on building resilient innovation systems, fostering partnerships, and positioning Nigeria for inclusive, knowledge-driven development in the year ahead.

A



## ADVANCING GLOBAL RESEARCH THROUGH EU GRANTS & STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

A Conversation with Prof. dr hab. Magdalena Frąc, czł. koresp. PAN  
Institute of Agrophysics Polish Academy of Sciences, Lublin, Poland

### Spotlight

Prof. Magdalena Frąc is a globally recognised expert in environmental microbiology and soil mycology, currently Head of the Department of Soil and Plant Systems and Supervisor of the Laboratory of Molecular and Environmental Microbiology at the Institute of Agrophysics Polish Academy of Sciences.

With over 15 years of research experience, she leads cutting-edge work on soil microbial diversity, plant–soil microbiome interactions, and sustainable agroecological solutions, including biofertilisers and bioproducts. She has coordinated major national and international projects (~€10 million), published over 130 peer-reviewed articles (h-index: 32), and supervised multiple PhD scholars. Her work sits at the intersection of science, sustainability, and innovation, making her a leading voice in global research collaboration.

## Introduction

In this March edition, Triple Helix Nigeria brings you an engaging conversation with Prof. Magdalena Frąc, a seasoned contributor to EU-funded research programmes, including Horizon Europe.

We explore what it takes to win competitive international grants, build high-impact research consortia, and translate ideas into solutions that matter. This interview is a masterclass for researchers aiming to compete globally and deliver real-world impact.

1

### What sparked your journey into EU-funded research programmes such as Horizon Europe?

My journey was driven by a desire to engage in research that transcends national boundaries and addresses complex societal challenges through collaboration. EU programmes like Horizon Europe are particularly attractive because they integrate scientific excellence, innovation, and real-world impact.

Although I have not yet coordinated a Horizon project, I have contributed as a work package and task leader, experiences that have significantly strengthened both my expertise and the capacity of my research group.

2

### What makes EU grants different from other international funding opportunities?

EU grants go beyond funding research – they connect science with policy relevance, innovation, and measurable societal impact.

#### They emphasise:

- High-quality, well-structured consortia
- Interdisciplinary approaches
- Strong stakeholder engagement
- Long-term value creation

This integrated approach clearly distinguishes them from many national funding schemes.

**3**

### What are the top three factors that determine a winning proposal?

From my experience, success depends on three key elements:

- a** Strong alignment with the call and expected outcomes.
- b** A well-balanced consortium with complementary expertise.
- c** A clear and convincing impact pathway

Without these, even excellent ideas struggle to succeed.

**4**

### How do you move from a research idea to a fundable concept?

The starting point is always the funding call, not just the research idea.

#### You need to:

- Align your idea with the defined problem
- Clearly articulate the solution
- Build the right partnerships
- Translate everything into structured objectives, work packages, and deliverables

This process transforms ideas into competitive proposals.

**5**

### How important is international collaboration in securing grants?

It is absolutely essential. EU programmes are built on the principle that the best solutions emerge from diverse expertise across countries and disciplines.

Strong collaboration enhances credibility, expands capacity, and ensures global relevance.

**6**

### What is your strategy for building strong research consortia?

I focus on three pillars: competence, complementarity, and commitment.

#### In addition:

- Include relevant stakeholders early
- Select reliable partners who can deliver
- Ensure alignment around a shared vision

A strong consortium is not just a group - it is a cohesive, goal-driven team.

**7**

### What common mistakes cause proposals to fail?

Common pitfalls include:

- Weak alignment with the call.
- Poorly defined objectives and impact.
- Choosing partners based on convenience.
- Treating proposal writing as routine administration.

Winning proposals require precision, strategy, and intentional design.

**8**

### How do you ensure proposals demonstrate real-world impact?

Impact must be built into the proposal from the beginning.

#### This involves:

- Identifying clear beneficiaries
- Understanding adoption barriers
- Defining implementation pathways
- Linking outcomes to policy, industry, and society

Impact is not an afterthought - it is the core of the proposal.

9

## What leadership skills are essential for managing large EU projects?

Successful leadership requires:

- Strategic thinking
- Strong communication
- Effective coordination
- Decision-making under pressure

A project leader must align diverse partners and maintain focus on both excellence and delivery.

10

## How do you manage complexity across multiple countries and partners?

Through structure and transparency:

- Clear governance frameworks
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Realistic timelines
- Regular communication and reporting

These systems ensure alignment despite complexity.

11

## What should Nigerian universities do differently to compete globally?

They should invest more in:

- Research support systems
- International partnerships
- Grant development capacity

Focusing on global challenges such as climate, agriculture, and health significantly enhance competitiveness.

12

## How can early-career researchers position themselves for EU grants?

They should:

- Build interdisciplinary expertise
- Engage in international collaborations
- Align research with global priorities
- Focus on impact-driven work

These steps are critical for success in competitive funding environments.

13

## What future trends will shape global research funding?

Common pitfalls include:

- Mission-oriented and interdisciplinary research
- Digital and green transitions
- Open science and societal impact
- Stronger global partnerships

These will define the future of research funding worldwide.

14

## Final advice to researchers?

Identify a niche that addresses global challenges and combine:

- A strong idea
- The right funding opportunity
- The right partners
- A clear pathway to impact

This combination is essential for success.



This conversation underscores a powerful message: global research success is intentional. It requires alignment, collaboration, and a relentless focus on impact.

As platforms like Triple Helix Nigeria continue to bridge ecosystems, the opportunity for researchers especially across Africa to engage, compete, and lead globally has never been greater.



## DRIVING RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

A Conversation with Prof. Dickson Andala,  
Executive Director, National Research Fund Kenya

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### Spotlight

Prof. Dickson Andala is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Research Fund Kenya (NRF), where he leads the mobilisation, allocation, and strategic management of financial resources to strengthen Kenya's national innovation system for sustainable development.

An accomplished scholar and research leader, Prof. Andala is an Associate Professor of Materials Chemistry at Multimedia University of Kenya, holding a PhD in Materials Chemistry. His career reflects a strong intersection of scientific excellence, regulatory leadership, and policy influence.

He has previously served as Director at the Kenya Nuclear Regulatory Authority (KNRA), contributing to national and regional frameworks on nuclear safety and regulation. His leadership extends across continental scientific bodies, including the African Materials Research Society (AMRS) and the Africa Crystallographic Association (AfCA), where he has played key roles in advancing materials science and research collaboration in Africa.

At the institutional level, he has served as Chairman of the Department of Chemistry at Multimedia University of Kenya, demonstrating a sustained commitment to academic leadership and capacity building.

Prof. Andala is actively engaged in several professional and scientific networks, including the Kenya National Academy of Sciences (KNAS), Materials Research Society of Kenya (MRSK), and the Kenya Chemical Society (KCS). He is also affiliated with the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) and associated with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

In addition, he serves as a Lead Expert for national regulatory and safety frameworks, including environmental management and occupational safety, with expertise spanning CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) systems.

Through his leadership at NRF, Prof. Andala continues to champion research-driven development, innovation ecosystems, and policy-relevant science, positioning Kenya as a key player in Africa's knowledge economy.

1

**What is your current strategic vision for the National Research Fund Kenya, and how is it evolving to meet emerging national and global research priorities?**

it evolving to meet emerging national and global research priorities?

The National Research Fund Kenya (NRF) is mandated to mobilise both financial and non-financial resources to strengthen Kenya's research ecosystem. We work closely with institutions such as the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), which sets national priorities, and the Kenya National Innovation Agency, which focuses on translating research into commercially viable outputs.

In light of evolving global dynamics, particularly declining external funding, we are shifting toward locally driven and sustainable funding mechanisms. This includes stronger engagement with the private sector and philanthropic organisations. Our vision is to build a resilient, self-sustaining research ecosystem that is both nationally relevant and globally competitive.

2

**How is NRF positioning research and innovation as a driver of economic transformation in Kenya?**

NRF is advancing a quadruple helix model, integrating academia, industry, government, and the community to ensure that research delivers tangible societal benefits.

We align our investments with Kenya's priority sectors, including health, agriculture, digital transformation, and transport. Agriculture remains central to the economy, while health research is critical for addressing disease burdens. By focusing on these areas, research becomes a practical driver of economic growth, job creation, and improved livelihoods.



3

**What criteria guide NRF's funding decisions, particularly in balancing fundamental research with applied and commercially viable innovation?**

While we recognise the importance of fundamental research for knowledge generation, our current emphasis is increasingly on translational and applied research.

Our funding decisions prioritise projects that demonstrate clear pathways to market-ready products, policy impact, or scalable innovations. This shift reflects the urgent need to link research more directly to economic outcomes and employment generation, ensuring that investments yield measurable national benefits.

4

**How is NRF strengthening collaboration between academia, industry, and government to accelerate research commercialisation?**

Collaboration is central to our strategy. NRF actively supports projects with strong commercial potential and engages the private sector to identify areas where research outputs can be applied for economic value.

We are also promoting the entrepreneurial university model, encouraging institutions to integrate innovation and enterprise into their core functions. This helps ensure that research outputs move more efficiently from the laboratory to the marketplace.

5

**Can you share a compelling example where NRF-funded research has translated into tangible industry uptake or policy impact?**

A notable example is research on natural beauty products derived from camel milk, which has attracted international investor interest. This demonstrates how locally rooted research can generate global commercial opportunities.

Beyond this, there are several impactful projects (available on our website) across agriculture, health, and digital sectors that highlight NRF's role in bridging the gap between research and real-world application.

6

### What initiatives are in place to support early-career researchers and build a sustainable pipeline of scientific talent?

NRF places strong emphasis on capacity building and talent development. Our initiatives include:

- Postgraduate funding at Master's and PhD levels.
- Expansion into postdoctoral support.
- Integration of postgraduate students into funded research projects.
- Monitoring career progression through structured evaluations

We also organise dedicated platforms and conferences to enable knowledge exchange, collaboration, and professional networking, ensuring a continuous pipeline of skilled researchers.



7

### What opportunities do you see for deeper collaboration between Kenya and Nigeria, particularly within platforms like Triple Helix Nigeria?

There is significant potential for collaboration between Kenya and Nigeria, especially through platforms like Triple Helix Nigeria.

One opportunity is the establishment of a Triple Helix Network in Kenya, drawing on Nigeria's experience. Additionally, Pan-African academic and innovation networks provide a strong foundation for cross-border collaboration, enabling knowledge exchange and joint research initiatives that can strengthen Africa's innovation ecosystem.

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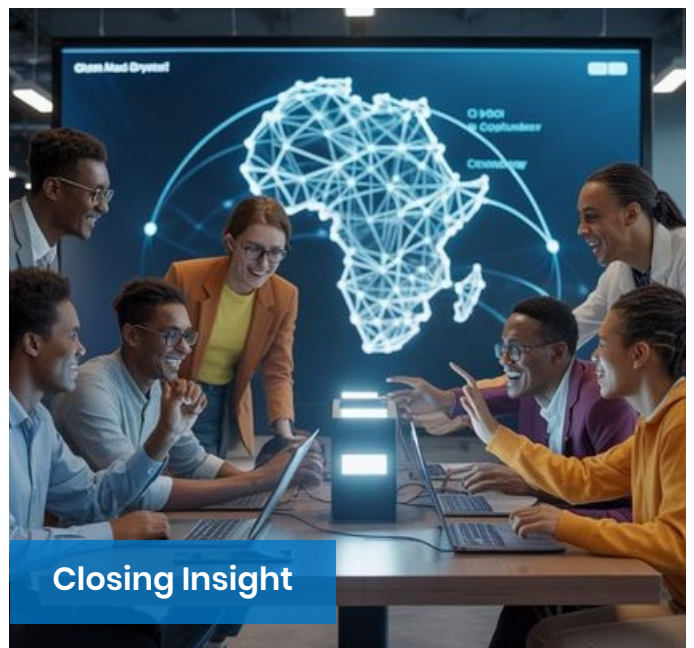
### What are the most pressing challenges facing research funding institutions in Africa today, and how is NRF addressing them?

The most pressing challenge is insufficient and inconsistent funding, which has led to heavy reliance on external sources across many African countries.

#### NRF is addressing this by:

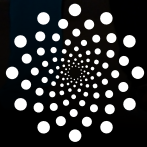
- Strengthening engagement with the private sector.
- Encouraging philanthropic investment in research.
- Advocating for increased government funding and policy support

Africa has a strong base of capable researchers, but unlocking this potential requires sustained investment, strategic partnerships, and supportive policy frameworks.



#### Closing Insight

This conversation highlights a critical imperative: research must be positioned at the centre of Africa's development agenda. Strengthening the quadruple helix – linking academia, industry, government, and society – will be key to driving innovation, economic transformation, and sustainable growth across the continent.



## Triple Helix Nigeria SciBiz Conference 2026: Call for Participation



Preparations are in full swing for the Triple Helix Nigeria SciBiz Conference 2026, scheduled to take place from 14 to 16 October 2026 in Abuja, Nigeria [www.triplehelixnigeriaconference.org](http://www.triplehelixnigeriaconference.org). This landmark event will convene stakeholders from academia, industry, and government to explore strategies for fostering collaboration and driving sustainable innovation in Nigeria.

Themed "Strengthening Innovation Infrastructure for Research Commercialisation and Economic Competitiveness", the conference will feature engaging keynote speech, plenary sessions, panel discussions, strategy session, high-level roundtables, exhibition, and interactive workshops, among others.

### Tracks

- Smart policies and frameworks for effective academia- industry technology transfer & IP Commercialisation
- Digital Infrastructure for Innovation: AI, Cybersecurity & Data Governance
- Financing Innovation & Venture-Building Models
- Human Capital for Innovation: Skills, Talent Mobility & Research Workforce Development
- Innovation Infrastructure & Clusters: Science Parks, Incubators & Tech Hubs

Get ready for the Triple Helix Nigeria SciBiz Conference 2026. Where Science meets Business and Research meets Real-World Impact. Date: Wednesday 14th – Friday 16th October, 2026 Venue: PTDF Main Auditorium, Abuja FCT, Nigeria

The conference will provide valuable networking opportunities, knowledge-sharing sessions, and insights into funding opportunities for researchers and startups. Register at [www.triplehelixnigeriaconference.com](http://www.triplehelixnigeriaconference.com). Stay tuned for details on speaker announcements, and partnership opportunities.

Be part of this exciting journey to shape the future of research commercialization and innovation in Nigeria!

# Funding Opportunities for Researchers and Startups

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- Call for Centres of Vocational Excellence Erasmus+ opened December 4 2025. Closing 3 September 2026. [www.horizoneuropeproject.ng](http://www.horizoneuropeproject.ng)
- 7th Summer School on Theory, Mechanisms and Hierarchical Modelling of Climate Dynamics - Estimating Ocean Transports: Single Sections, Box Models and Reanalysis Products I (smr 4224). 29 Jun 2026 - 10 Jul 2026. The application deadline is 15 May 2026. [https://portal.ictp.it/applicant/loggedin/profile/open\\_applications](https://portal.ictp.it/applicant/loggedin/profile/open_applications)
- The Wellcome Trust is inviting applications to establish infrastructure hubs that will power evidence synthesis, strengthening global capacity for inclusive, high-quality decision-making. The application deadline is 7 May 2026. <https://wellcome.org/research-funding/schemes/establishing-infrastructure-hubs-power-evidence-synthesis>
- Apply for the Africa Research Excellence Fund's (AREF's) Research Development Fellowship, supporting early-career African researchers with placements and skills to drive impactful health research. The application deadline is 8 May 2026. <https://programmes.aref-africa.org.uk/login.aspx>

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## Upcoming Events and Webinars

Mark your calendars for our upcoming knowledge-sharing sessions:

### **Triple Helix Innovation Summit 2026 - Postponed to 2027**

The United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), in partnership with the Triple Helix Association, wishes to inform scholars, practitioners, and policymakers that the Triple Helix Innovation Summit 2026, originally scheduled to take place in the United Arab Emirates from April 14-16, 2026, and previously announced in the January edition of the THN Newsletter, has been postponed to 2027.

This decision follows the emergence of an unfortunate and highly volatile geopolitical situation, which has created significant uncertainties and constraints beyond the control of the organisers. In light of these developments, postponement is necessary to ensure the safety, inclusivity, and successful participation of all stakeholders.

A new date and further details for the Summit will be communicated in due course.



# Advancing Vision 10:10:10:10:

## THN Hosts Second Quarterly Webinar on Entrepreneurial Universities

**TRIPLE HELIX NIGERIA**  
ACADEMY · INDUSTRY · GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

### ENTREPRENEURIAL UNIVERSITIES AND VISION 10 10 10 10

Reforming Governance, Incentives and Innovation Policy



**Tassalla Tersugh**  
President  
Triple Helix Nigeria  
**HOST**



**Onome Jonathan-Olarotimi**  
Tech Business Growth Manager  
CypherCrescent Limited  
**Moderator**

**Thursday**  
April 30th, 2026

**5PM – 6:30PM (WAT)**

**LIVE ON ZOOM**

**REGISTRATION LINK:**  
<https://triplehelixnigeria.org/events>

**PANELISTS**



**Dr. Oladunni Owo**  
CEO  
Blackgold Energy Authorities Ltd



**Prof. Dr.-Ing Ayodele Ajayi**  
Professor of Agricultural and Business-related Engineering  
Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA)



**Dr. Esther Imuafiyin Mmeko**  
Director  
Skills Development and Entrepreneurship  
National Innovation Commission



**KodeHauz**  
Managing Director  
KodeHauz (Startup Mentor)

**SUPPORTED BY:**

Triple Helix Nigeria (THN) is pleased to announce its Second Quarterly Webinar for 2026, continuing its commitment to driving innovation and institutional transformation in line with its strategic Vision 10:10:10:10.

The webinar will explore how universities can evolve into entrepreneurial hubs, strengthening governance structures, aligning incentives, and advancing innovation policies that support research commercialisation and national development.

As part of THN's ongoing efforts to bridge academia, industry, and government, the session will provide a platform for thought leadership, policy dialogue, and practical insights into building resilient and innovation-driven knowledge institutions.

Participants across academia, industry, government, and the broader innovation ecosystem are encouraged to attend and engage in this important conversation.



**TRIPLE HELIX NIGERIA**  
• ACADEMIA • INDUSTRY • GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

## CALL FOR SUBMISSION



Do you have a story, insight, or innovation case study to share? Submit contributions aligned with the Triple Helix model to help shape our collective future.

***Stay Connected, Stay Innovative!***

**#TripleHelixNigeria #Innovation #UniversityIndustryGovernment  
#ResearchCommercialization #SciBiz2026**

Stay updated via our website and social media channels:

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