



UNIVERSITY of  
RWANDA



C4DLab

# THE AFRETEC MAKERTHON CALL FOR INDUSTRY CHALLENGES



Many companies across Africa face growing pressure to innovate rapidly, optimize operations, and improve customer experiences, all while adapting to evolving technologies and competitive landscapes. Yet, internal constraints such as limited time, capacity, or fresh perspectives often slow innovation. Without continuous input from diverse thinkers and agile experimentation, organizations risk falling behind. To help address this gap, the [AFRETEC NETWORK](#)—a network of African engineering and technology universities led by [Carnegie Mellon University Africa](#)—is integrating real-world industry challenges into the five-day Afretec Makerthon bootcamp, scheduled for October 5th – 10th at [C4DLab, University of Nairobi](#). This event bridges entrepreneurial creativity with industry needs, creating a platform where structured innovation meets practical problem-solving. During the Makerthon, teams of innovators will tackle challenges submitted by companies, applying human-centered design and rapid prototyping to generate actionable, early-stage solutions. Industry partners benefit not only from fresh perspectives but also from potential connections to emerging talent.

## Call for Challenges

As members of the Afretec Network and Co-lead organisers of the Makerthon, at the University of Rwanda, we hereby invite companies to submit real, current challenges particularly those that sit at the intersection of Operations, Customer engagement, Technology adoption, Product development in the following target sectors:

- Energy
- Health
- Agriculture and Food Security
- Smart Manufacturing
- Financial Inclusion

- Edtech
- Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation

Related and complementary challenges are also welcome. We encourage companies to submit two challenges, each matched with a dedicated team of 6–7 innovators.

## **How It Works**

1. Submit a Challenge – Share a current challenge your organization faces in areas such as operations, customer experience, technology adoption, or product development.
2. Orientation Session (Sept 10th–11th) – A dedicated member of your team provides a short briefing to your assigned team of innovators to give background and context.
3. Engagement Sessions (Sept 3rd–5th weeks) – Make time for three short sessions (one per week) where innovators engage with you (or your clients) to deepen understanding of the problem. Each approximately 30 - 45minutes.
4. Innovation in Action (Oct 5th–10th) – During the Makerthon, cross-functional teams will apply human-centered design, stakeholder research, and rapid prototyping to craft tailored, early-stage solutions.
5. Final Showcase (Oct 10th) – Join us in Nairobi or virtually (via Zoom) to hear solution pitches, provide feedback, and explore implementation. Teams can also present solutions directly at your company premises after the event.
6. Ongoing Engagement – Continue conversations with teams beyond the Makerthon to explore pilots, internships, or collaborative projects.

## **What's in It for You?**

- Early access to innovative solutions tailored to your organization's real needs.
- Position your company as a champion of local innovation.
- Contribute to a transformative learning experience for young entrepreneurs.

## **Additional Considerations**

We aim to create an open, collaborative environment between company teams and the innovators, and therefore do not require formal NDAs. To support this, companies are encouraged to submit general, non-sensitive challenges that do not involve confidential or proprietary information. If there are concerns around intellectual property (IP) or confidentiality, please flag them in your submission and we will explore appropriate accommodations.

## **Submission**

Submit your challenge via the application form here: <https://forms.gle/9D9vyAJq5UvP3gB19>

Deadline: August 31, 2025

For more information, please contact Dr. Jennifer Batamuliza,

University of Rwanda AFRETEC Project Deputy Lead & Career Path Lead

University of Rwanda

Head of Data Driven Incubation Hub and Professional Short courses, African Center of Excellence  
in Data Science, University of Rwanda

Tel: +250788312697 Email: j.batamuliza@ur.ac.rw

**Done at Kigali, 26/8/2025**

**Dr. Pierre Bakunzibake**

**Project Lead,**



**26.08.2025**

**University of Rwanda AFRETEC Project**