



# The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

## Innovating Partnerships: Applying frameworks and models in the real world

### Concept Note

#### Background

Michigan State University, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), and the Resilient Africa Network (RAN) headquartered at Makerere University are all actively striving to understand how to build stronger partnerships that lead to innovative community-oriented solutions to challenges. At Michigan State University, the Alliance for African Partnership, the Global Center for Food Systems Innovation (CGFSI), and the Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) program have begun to develop models and identify best practices for partnerships which support innovative research, education, and outreach. LUANAR is innovating new ways to connect with communities and carry out problem-solving research while providing students with hands-on learning experiences. Each of these institutions has had to navigate complex landscapes in different ways to advance the aims of developing and promoting innovative ‘ecosystems’. However, while frameworks and models are a necessary step for building and supporting innovative partnerships, they must reflect real world challenges. Models are relatively easy, implementing successful partnerships can be hard. This event will draw on real world experiences of attendees to challenge concepts on how partnerships form, thrive and collapse in the real world. Representatives from MSU and LUANAR will be on hand to share partnership frameworks developed by the two organizing institutions. How to build partnerships that are a) equitable, b) innovative, and c) problem-solving will be the focus for the discussion.

#### Purpose of the Side Event

The purpose of the side event is to challenge existing partnership frameworks by learning from participants how partnerships have formed, thrived and collapsed. We hope to identify new ways that institutions can work together to address the emerging challenges of the new Millennium. The focus of the workshop will be on partnerships—understanding and

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deconstructing the models and frameworks that currently exist, identifying the crucial elements of partnership, learning from on-the-ground partnership experiences, and innovating new ways to expand the range of effective and equitable partnerships to promote problem-oriented research, teaching, outreach, and mutual capacity building.

**Objectives of the side Event**

A) to understand existing models and frameworks of partnership—overlapping themes, innovative approaches, and current gaps, B) to identify challenges and lessons from attendees’ past experiences with building innovative, problem-solving partnerships and C) to challenge partnership models to reflect real world complexities.

**Approach and Methodology**

The session will begin with introductions and short presentations by representatives of the organizing institutions. It will then utilize a human-centered design approach to deconstruct the models presented, elicit attendees’ input on their current and past experiences with partnership challenges and success, and then reconstruct models that reflect these real-world experiences.

**Venue and Participants**

The organizers expect up to 30 attendees at the side event in addition the organizers

Venue:

Date & Time:

**Side Event Organizers and Contact**

**Michigan State University-Alliance for African Partnership; Global Center for Food Systems Innovation, and Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development.**

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