

APPLICATION AND SELECTION GUIDELINES

1. Purpose and Objectives

Promoting and supporting health, economic security and social stability are the key objectives of the Australian Government's commitment to Lao PDR in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic as detailed in the recently released [Laos COVID-19 Development Response Plan](#).

Round 2 of the Alumni Innovation Grants (AIG2) aims to support the Australian Government in these key objectives whilst building on the success of the first round piloted in May/June 2020.

Alumni networks, such as the Laos Australia Alumni Network, are well placed to help the Government of Lao PDR in its efforts to deal with the multiple ramifications of Covid-19. Unlike most other networks, the Alumni network covers expertise across multiple, if not all, sectors that will have important roles to play in supporting Lao PDR through this time. This includes epidemiology and other health systems professionals; economic, planning, finance and business experts; entrepreneurs and change makers; social welfare, community development and non-profit workers; and many other fields related to one of the three key areas of focus for the AIG2. LAI's network also reach government, academia, business, and civil society across all provinces in Laos.

Alumni working directly on Covid-19 related issues are over-stretched and human resourcing needs are multiple. Many of LAI's Alumni will be in a position where they have the skills, expertise and time that could provide much needed support to Government of Lao PDR efforts.

The AIG2 is the mechanism to provide Alumni with funds of up to AUD10,000 to enable implementation of innovative activities which respond directly to Covid-19.

The objectives of the Alumni Innovation Grant (AIG) are:

- to provide a much-needed funds in a timely manner which support alumni to utilise their skills and knowledge in response to the current Covid-19 crisis;
- to support initiatives that benefit communities that may be negatively impacted by Covid-19;
- to develop, maintain and strengthen professional linkages and partnerships between alumni and the Australian government, and Australian businesses, organisations and educational institutions;
- to connect alumni to each other across disciplines and professions, organisations and institutions, and geographic areas in order to share good practice and create opportunities for collaboration; and
- to develop a network of alumni who view Australia's capabilities and credentials in a positive light.

2. Eligibility

The AIG is open to all Laos Australia Alumni, Laos Australia National Alumni and Disability Inclusive Development Alumni as well as private fee-paying alumni who have graduated from a recognised

Australian tertiary institution. Applicants may be required to provide a copy of their testamur, statement of graduation or other documentary evidence to prove their eligibility.

Alumni can apply as individuals or as part of a group.

We encourage all alumni to apply, and we strongly encourage alumni with disability, alumni from remote regions, women alumni and any other alumni from marginalised groups to apply.

Conflicts of interests must be declared and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Conflicts of interest can include:

- Alumni working directly for the GoL;
- Alumni working for the Australian Government – either within the Australian Embassy or on an Australian Government funded program;
- Any other situation that may be deemed a conflict of interest.

3. Ineligible activities

The following types of proposals will not be eligible for funding:

- Fees (i.e. tuition, enrollment, attendance) for formal studies, trainings or short courses in Laos, Australia or any other country.
- Proposals which are entirely or primarily for the purchase of equipment or construction.
- Proposals which, in effect, subsidises the commercial activities of an enterprise, for which the enterprise would normally be expected to invest its own funds.

4. Grant amounts

The AIG will provide grants of up to AUD 10,000 for alumni to undertake their initiative.

5. Application Process

LAI advertised the AIG through the LAI website and the Australia in Laos and Laos Australia Alumni Club (LAAC) Facebook pages, as well as via email in order to attract a range of applicants from across the alumni network.

All applications must be received by 11:59pm on January 6 2021. LAI regrets that late applications cannot be accepted.

Applicants may submit more than one application, but LAI will only provide funding for one grant per applicant. If an applicant submits two different applications, that is one as an individual and one as a member of a group application, then LAI will consider both applications on a case-by-case basis.

Applications may be deemed ineligible if they are incomplete, do not include the requested documentation, or do not address the selection criteria.

Applications for innovation grants should be made by emailing completed documents to alumni@laosaustraliainstitute.org. LAI regrets that it cannot accept applications sent via post, however applicants with disability are encouraged to inform LAI through the above email address should you require assistance to complete your application.

Information requested on the AIG application form includes:

- the name of the project;
- a brief description of the innovation (including a list of its main activities and dates and how it responds to the Covid-19 crisis);
- the proposed objectives and anticipated outcomes of the project;
- the beneficiaries of the project;
- how the innovation addresses the selection criteria;
- how the outcomes of the innovation will be assessed (including any performance targets);
- the potential risks to the innovation and how these will be managed;
- how the innovation will be publicised and promoted, and,
- the proposed budget and schedule of activities

Where an innovation involves a partnership with an organisation, business or other institution, applications must include a letter of support.

Applications must be submitted in English. Budgets should be submitted in AUD or LAK, except where they include expenses in other currencies. If using other currencies, this must be explicitly detailed in the budget form.

6. Selection Criteria

Selection of AIG are competitive and merit-based. Applications are assessed against the following criteria:

1. The innovation explicitly responds to one of the three key themes of the Laos [COVID-19 Development Response Plan](#) – i.e. Health Security, Economic Recovery or Stability;
2. The innovation is linked to the knowledge and skills gained through the applicant’s study program in Australia or Laos and/or professional experience; and
3. The innovation will have measurable outcomes. The application should specify how this impact will be measured.
4. The innovation has a clear and realistic strategy for achieving its objectives within the stated timeframe, including enough budget and an appropriate assessment of risk.
5. The innovation represents value for money. Value for money is defined as economy (spending less), efficiency (spending well), effectiveness (spending wisely), and equity (spending fairly). Further guidance on the DFAT’s policy on value for money can be found on the [Department’s website](#).
6. The innovation directly supports and benefits either women, people with disability, the LGBTI community, ethnic minorities or other marginalised groups.

Applications partnering with Laos or Australian organisations, and applications submitted by groups of alumni will be looked upon favourably.

7. Selection Process

The selection process for AIG consists of the following phases and stages:

Phase I:

Stage 1

LAI screens all applications received before the deadline to ensure that applications are complete and all requisite supporting documentation has been provided. Only complete applications are deemed eligible for funding.

Stage 2

The AIG Selection Committee assesses all eligible applications. The Committee is comprised of LAI's AIG Management Team and an independent reviewer. The Committee scores eligible applications against the selection criteria. LAI conducts due diligence on recommended applications.

Stage 3

LAI forwards applications recommended for funding to the Australian Embassy (Alumni and Australia Awards Unit) for final selection and approval.

Phase 2:

Stage 4

LAI advises applicants of the outcome of their application in writing (by email). Applicants will be advised two weeks from the closing date for applications.

Stage 5

LAI publishes details of grants awarded on the LAI website (no later than 5 working days after the grant agreements take effect).

Grant implementation should commence within 3 weeks of grant agreement signed. In case of a delay in implementation, the grantee should notify LAI of the reasons and propose a new start date not exceeding 6 weeks from grant approval date and new implementation timelines.

8. Grant Terms and Conditions

8.1 General terms and Conditions

Successful applicants are required to sign grant agreements with LAI on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia represented by DFAT. The full terms and conditions of the grant will be set out in the grant agreement. Grant funds cannot be paid until LAI receives a signed grant agreement.

Grants must be utilised within 3 months of being awarded. Applicants should advise LAI in writing of any anticipated delay in implementing the activity. Where funds have already been transferred to an individual or organisation for an innovation that does not go ahead within 3 months, the recipient will have to return those funds.

Grantees are responsible for all administrative arrangements associated with their project. All administrative costs associated with the innovation or activity should be detailed in the budget submitted with the grant proposal.

Grant funds may only be used only for carrying out the activities for which the grant has been awarded. Any changes to the nature of an innovation or activity must have prior approval from LAI.

Grant activities may not be carried out by any other person or organisation other than the grant recipient without prior approval from LAI.

8.2 Payment of Grant Funds

All grants will be paid in LAK in tranches. LAI will pay 30 percent of the grant value upon signing of the grant agreement, followed 50 percent upon LAI receiving a satisfactory Grant progress report, including milestone-based finance report and 20 percent within 14 days LAI receiving a satisfactory Activity Completion Report and Financial Report. The amount of the final tranche will be based on actual final costs submitted to LAI.

Milestone payments for these tranches will be outlined in the grant agreement.

Once a grant application has been approved no further funds will be made available for that project.

8.3 Termination or withdrawal of funding

LAI reserves the right to withhold or withdraw funding, terminate an innovation or activity, or require grantees to return all or part of the grant funds if:

- the grantee fails to comply with the grant agreement or the AIG Guidelines;
- the grantee fails to comply with lawful and reasonable instructions given by LAI;
- LAI believes there has been unsatisfactory progress in carrying out the innovation or activity;
- LAI believes the grantee has not carried out the innovation or activity with reasonable care, thoroughness, and competence and to a standard that would be expected for the grantee's level of experience in their practice, profession or line of work;
- the grantee does not complete the funded activity;
- the grantee provides false or misleading information to LAI;
- the grantee acts illegally or negligently at any time during the funding period, and LAI believes this action significantly affects the innovation or activity, or is likely to harm the reputation of LAI or the Government of Australia; or,
- LAI suspects that fraud has been committed. Where fraud is determined to have taken place, LAI may pursue criminal charges in accordance with the DFAT's requirements and local laws.

LAI will determine the amount of funds to be returned, considering:

- whether there were any circumstances outside of the grantee's control;
- whether the issue can be satisfactorily addressed within a reasonable time frame; and,
- the proportion of the innovation or activity that has already been successfully completed.

8.4 Taxation

Grantees are responsible for making their own arrangements regarding any taxation liabilities that may arise from the award of funding.

8.5 Insurance

Grantees are required to obtain any insurance that is necessary or prudent for undertaking their project. This includes any necessary insurance for equipment. LAI does not accept any liability for any medical, hospital or evacuation costs incurred by participants in projects funded by LAI.

Grantees must provide LAI with evidence of their insurance policy promptly on request, as required by the grant agreement. Grantees undertaking travel must confirm that they have read the current Australian Government travel advice for that country prior to travel.

9. Grantee Support and knowledge Sharing

LAI will deliver a Grant Orientation (GO) for all grantees at the beginning the funding period. The GO event is an opportunity for grantees to share information on their projects and develop networks with other alumni. It allows the Australian Embassy to engage with alumni. This will be an online event.

During the orientation, LAI provides grantees with information relevant to the management of their grants, including requirements for:

- Performance monitoring and evaluation;
- Publicity and branding;
- Reporting and acquittal of funds;
- Risk management and fraud;
- Child protection; and,
- Gender and social inclusion.

LAI staff will continue to provide advice on these matters to grantees throughout the funding period.

At the end of the funding period, if permissible, LAI will hold a closing event for selected grantees to showcase their projects and reconnect with other alumni and the Australian Embassy. The LAI communications team may also contact grantees to create media content to promote grantees work.

10. Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

LAI provides support to grantees to monitor, evaluate and report on the outcomes of their projects. Grantees are required to report against several indicators depending on the type of innovation as well as to provide more qualitative analysis of innovation achievements and impact. In addition, LAI carries out compliance monitoring of grant agreements throughout the funding period to minimise fiduciary risk. LAI may contact grant recipients at any time to seek information on the progress of projects and activities.

11. Reporting and Acquittal of Funds

Grantees must provide narrative and financial reports on their grant projects at the completion of their project. See below for the narrative and financial reports required.

Grant Progress Report	Interim Financial Report	Mid-way through implementation
Grant Completion report	Financial Report	Within 14 days of innovation completion

Guidelines for preparing Grant Progress Reports and Grant Completion Reports, as well as Interim Financial Reports and Financial Reports will be provided to successful applicants.

Grantees must acquit the funds they have received from LAI in a timely manner. Grant funds must be fully acquitted within 14 days of the completion of the innovation through the submission of a Grant Completion Report and Financial Report. LAI requires original invoices/receipts and other forms of documentation for all approved expenditure items. Grantees who receive matching funds under the AIG are required to acquit third party contributions in their Financial Reports. Grantees must return any unspent funds to LAI.

Grantees are required to retain copies of original receipts and records relating to the grant for a period of at least seven years as per LAI's policy and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Grantee must make copies of original receipts and records available upon request from LAI.

12. Gender equality and social inclusion

The Australian Government is committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. DFAT's Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy (February 2016) establishes three priorities to guide Australia's work on gender equality:

- enhancing women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peacebuilding,
- promoting women's economic empowerment, and
- ending violence against women and girls.

Disability-inclusive development is also a priority for Australia's international engagement. DFAT's Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program (May 2015) guides Australia's aid program in supporting people with disabilities in developing countries.

Consideration of GEDSI issues will vary depending on the type of activity proposed, however all grants **must demonstrate** consideration of how the grant will contribute to empowering women and girls, promoting gender equality, disability, and social inclusion.

Ensures that barriers to women's, people with disabilities and rural disadvantaged peoples' participation are identified and addressed.

All activities will apply principles of do no harm, ensuring that they do not exacerbate existing gender inequalities for people with disabilities.

LAI encourages female alumni and alumni with a disability to apply to the AIG for grant funding. LAI welcomes innovation proposals from alumni which promote gender equality and women's empowerment and inclusion and improved quality of life for people with a disability.

13. Risk Management and Fraud

Grantees are required to regularly review and manage the risks identified in their proposals throughout the grant period. LAI requires grantees to report key risks and risk response in a timely manner. This includes risks to the achievement of the program's objectives, fiduciary risks, and risks to the reputation of LAI or the Australian Government.

DFAT's approach to identifying and assessing risk in aid investments follows the principles of the International Risk Management Standard (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018). Further information on risk management in the aid program is available on the DFAT website.

LAI has zero tolerance towards fraud and is committed to minimising the incidence of fraud through the development, implementation and regular review of fraud prevention, detection and response strategies. LAI expects all grantees to comply with DFAT's Fraud Policy Statement and Fraud Control and Anti-Corruption Plan. The Fraud Policy Statement defines fraud as 'dishonestly obtaining a benefit, or causing a loss, by deception or other means'. This definition extends beyond the legal definition of fraud to include benefits obtained that can be both tangible and intangible. It thus encompasses activities or behaviours broader than the misuse or misappropriation of monies or assets and includes.

14. Publicity and Australian Identity

LAI encourages grantees to promote their projects in traditional, online media and through their own networks. Australian Government funding should be appropriately acknowledged in publications, reports, at training courses and workshops, and in presentations at conferences by using the disclaimer provided below (in both English and Lao Language).

Disclaimer: This report/research/publication is supported by the Australian Government. The opinions expressed in this report/research/ publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government.

Grantees should contact LAI for appropriate specific guidance prior to publications or public presentations.

The grantee will be solely responsible for any discrepancy that is reflected in the publications and/or reports of their grant. The results of the grants may not necessarily be the view endorsed by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) or LAI.

LAI would appreciate hard or soft copies of any media coverage or publications resulting from grant activities.

All grantees are required to provide five good quality high-resolution digital photographs, together with a brief description of the innovation for use on the Global Alumni, LAI, Australian Embassy and/or DFAT websites or social media platforms.

When promoting innovations through social media channels, grantees should use the following hashtags and handles:

#BuildingLaosFutureTogether

@AustraliaAwards

#BuildingLaoLeaders

@AusGlobalAlumni

15. Intellectual Property

Grantees retain the right to any intellectual property produced using grant funds or as a result of grant projects. Intellectual property means any trademarks, copyright, designs, rights in computer software, databases and lists, rights in any inventions, technology, experimental methods and results, processes, systems, concepts, protocols, techniques and know-how of any nature, patents, plant variety rights, and all other intellectual property, as that term is generally understood, whether registered or unregistered.

16. Privacy and Freedom of Information

Information provided by applicants is used to process and assess the application. This information is stored in LAI's systems. It is available to employees of LAI, Coffey International Development Pty Ltd, and the Governments of Australia and Lao PDR on a need-to-know basis. The information provided by the applicant may be made public through national and local media or via the Global Alumni, LAI, Australian Embassy or DFAT websites and/or social media platforms.

LAI and DFAT may also publish this information, excluding personal information, in Annual Reports. In other circumstances, LAI only uses and/or discloses personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988. Applicants should also note the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 apply to documents in LAI and DFAT's possession.

Further information is available in [DFAT's privacy policy](#).

17. Child Protection

DFAT's Child Protection Policy (2017) aims to create and maintain protective environments for children and to protect them from exploitation and abuse of all kinds in the delivery of Australia's overseas aid program. All individual grantees must sign DFAT's Child Protection Code of Conduct (see Attachment 2 of the Child Protection Policy) and obtain a police check if in contact with children. Organisations seeking a grant must provide evidence that the organisation has a child protection code of conduct that is compliant with DFAT's Child Protection Policy (see Attachment 1 of the Child Protection Policy).

18. Complaints and Appeal

Feedback, inquiries and complaints in relation to the processing and selection of applications should be made in writing and sent to alumni@laosaustraliainstitute.org. Appeals against decisions on the selection of grantees will not be considered.

19. Contact details

Alumni Engagement Team

Laos Australia Institute

Setthathirath Avenue

Xiengneun Village

Chanthabouly District

(In front of Hor Prakeo)

Vientiane, Laos

Phone: +856 21 265721-2

Email: alumni@laosaustraliainstitute.org