

ALUMNI
INNOVATION
GRANTS



**APPLICATION AND
SELECTION GUIDELINES**

ALUMNI INNOVATION GRANTS APPLICATION AND SELECTION GUIDELINES

Laos Australia Institute

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1. Purpose and Objectives

Australia has supported human resource development in Laos since 2013 delivering scholarship, training, alumni engagement and organisational capacity-strengthening support.

The Australian Government, through Laos Australia Institute (LAI) has delivered Alumni Innovation Grant (AIG) since 2020. AIG is a small grants scheme accessible for any Australia Alumni in Laos to implement their proposed project ideas. Over 5 rounds, 25 projects have been implemented in total, supporting local communities and organisations to recover for COVID-19, respond to climate change, support disability inclusion and enhance the economic empowerment of local women.

LAI defines "Innovation" in the context of AIG as developing impactful, adaptable, and sustainable solutions through novel approaches. This includes local adaptation, cross-sector collaboration, and a focus on achieving lasting positive change for Lao communities. Applications for AIG 6 projects are required to demonstrate how they will mainstream principles of gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion. This ensures that projects are accessible and beneficial to all segments of the community.

In recognition of Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040, Australia and Laos diplomatic relationship for over 70 years as well as Australia commitment in human resource development in Laos, the AIG 6 will include projects that promotes bilateral cooperation as well as the rich cultural, social and economic relations of the two nations.

The proposed themes for AIG 6 to include:

Below is the broad description of themes aligned with bilateral cooperation of Australia and Laos. Applicants are encouraged to explore more specific project ideas in the areas of interest. LAI promotes different types of grants activities, including community development, research, and training/capacity building.

1) Climate, environment and green energy

Projects to foster new ideas, practices, and technologies that are being used to help different sectors adapt and become more resilient in the face of climate change impacts.

Projects that encompass sustainable practices in agriculture, livelihoods, small community-based initiatives in alternative energy sources, energy efficiency and storage.

2) People, education and human resources development

Projects that enhance adaptation, encourage entrepreneurial thinking, and foster innovation. Initiatives that focus on equipping the population with skills and knowledge to thrive in a changing world while promoting creativity innovative solutions that contribute to sustainable development and resilience in their communities and beyond.

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3) Economic, trade and investment

Projects that focus on contributing to transforming economic activities, improving trade efficiencies, or fostering investment opportunities.

4) Agriculture & Food resources

Projects that promote sustainable agricultural practices focus on soil health, water conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reducing the use of synthetic inputs like pesticides and fertilizers.

It could include projects that promote modern approaches to food security which include improving distribution systems, reducing food waste, enhancing crop yields sustainably, and ensuring equitable access to food.

5) Health security

Projects that integrate environmental consideration in healthcare services prioritising equitable access and inclusivity for marginalised communities and underserved areas.

Projects that leverage technology and innovative solutions to enhance healthcare delivery efficiency, while also engage local communities, healthcare providers, policy makers and stakeholders in collaborative planning and implementation, emphasising preventive care and healthy lifestyles.

6) Media, Art and culture diversity

Projects in the realm of Media, Art, and Cultural Diversity can span a wide range of activities aimed at promoting, preserving, and celebrating diverse cultural expressions and artistic endeavours of Australia and Laos.

7) Cyber security and Information Technology

Projects aimed at protecting digital assets, enhancing data security, and leveraging technology, with a focus on knowledge transfer, capacity building, and policy development.

Depending on the specific requirements of each project, AIG6 grantees may receive up to AUD 10,000, with implementation up to 6 months duration.

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

- to support Laos communities' current and diverse needs – particularly those of women, girls, persons living with disability, ethnically diverse, gender diverse and other marginalised groups in Laos.
- to promote Lao-Australian bilateral cooperation, including cultural, social and economic relations of the two nations

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- to provide a much-needed funds in a timely manner which support alumni to utilise their skills and knowledge
- 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 to share good practice and create opportunities for collaboration.

2. Eligibility

The AIG is open to all Laos Australia Alumni including Australia Awards Alumni, Australia Awards Short Course 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.

Alumni can apply as individuals or as part of a group of up to four alumni or non-alumni.

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

3. Conflict of interest declaration

Conflicts of interest are a clash that most often occurs between requirements and interests. A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests – family, friendships, financial, or social factors – could compromise his or her judgment, decisions, or actions during implementing the project.

Conflicts of interests must be declared and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. **Please note declaring a conflict of interest will not preclude you from receiving a grant.** Conflicts of interest can include:

- Alumni working directly for the Government of Lao PDR.
- 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

4. 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

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- Proposals where the main beneficiary of the funding is alumni

5. Grant amount

The AIG Round 6 will provide grants of up to AUD 10,000 for alumni to undertake their initiative.

6. Application Process

LAI advertises the AIG through the LAI website and Facebook page, the Australia in Laos, 360Alumni platform and Laos Australia Alumni Club (LAAC) Facebook pages, as well as via email and notification in online alumni groups to attract a range of applicants from across the alumni network.

All applications must be received by 17:00 p.m. on Sunday, 6 October 2024. 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, are not signed, allocate too much budget to benefit alumni, or do not adequately respond to the questions in the application form. Applications will also be ineligible if we are unable to determine the alumni status of the applicant.

Please complete your application via SmartyGrants (click: <https://laos.smartygrants.com.au/AIG6>). If your files are too large to attach in SmartyGrants, please save them to a file sharing service, such as Dropbox or Google Drive and copy paste a link to the files in the SmartyGrants instead. Kindly see the SmartyGrants User Manual here <https://laosaustraliainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/AIG6-SmartyGrants-User-Guide-for-applicants.pdf>

LAI regrets that it cannot accept applications sent via post, however applicants with disability or limited English language capacity are encouraged to inform LAI through this email address: alumni@laosaustraliainstitute.org should you require assistance to complete your application.

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. Translation supports are available for applicants from the equity group. Budgets should be submitted in **LAK** and **AUD**, except where they include expenses in other currencies. If using other currencies, this must be explicitly detailed in the budget form.

7. Selection Criteria

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

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1. The innovation promotes bilateral cooperation, including cultural, social and economic relations of the two nations.
2. The innovation explicitly responds to one of the key themes of climate, environment and green energy; people, education and human resources development; economic, trade and investment; agriculture & food resources; health security; media, art and culture diversity; cyber security and information technology.
3. The innovation is linked to the knowledge and skills gained through the applicant's study program in Australia or Laos and/or professional experience.
4. The innovation should have measurable outcomes. The application should specify how this impact will be measured and briefly describe the method that you will use to maintain the project after its completion.
5. 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.
6. 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 (<https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/value-for-money-principles/Pages/value-for-money-principles>)
7. The innovation directly supports and benefits either women, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ people, ethnic minorities or other marginalised groups.

8. Selection Process

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

Phase 1:

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 Engagement 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 four weeks from the closing date for applications.

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Stage 5

LAI publishes details of grants awarded on the LAI website and Facebook page after the grant agreements take effect).

Grant implementation should commence within 3 weeks of grant agreement signing. 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. Failure to start in this time could lead to cancellation of the grant agreement and the applicant will be required to return any payments made.

9. Grant Terms and Conditions

9.1 General terms and Conditions

Successful applicants are required to sign grant agreements with Laos Australia Institute and Tetra Tech 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 6 months of being awarded. Applicants should advise LAI in writing of any anticipated delay in implementing the activity. An extension may be requested due to unforeseen circumstances. Grantees should inform LAI as soon as possible shall any implementation issues arise in order for LAI to help mitigate the impact and achieve the grant's outcomes. Where funds have already been transferred to an individual or organisation for an innovation that does not go ahead within 2 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 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.

9.2 Payment of Grant Funds

All grants will be paid in LAK in tranches. LAI will pay **50 percent** of the grant value upon signing of the grant agreement, followed **40 percent** upon LAI receiving a satisfactory Grant progress reports and interim financial reports via email and as laid out in the Financial Guidelines document and **10 percent** within 14 days LAI receiving a satisfactory Activity Completion Report and Final Financial Report. The amount of the final tranche will be based on actual final costs submitted to LAI.

If submitted reports are not completed to LAI's satisfaction, a request for revision will be made and payment will not be made until a satisfactory report is approved.

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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.

9.3 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:

- LAI believes there has been unsatisfactory progress in carrying out the innovation or activity
- the grantee does not complete the funded activity
- 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 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 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
- 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
- the proportion of the innovation or activity that has already been successfully completed

9.4 Taxation

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

9.5 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.

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10. Grantee Support and knowledge Sharing

LAI will deliver a Grant Orientation (GO) for all grantees at the beginning of 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 a face-to-face event at the time the activity is planned.

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
- 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 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.

11. 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.

12. Reporting and Acquittal of Funds

Grantees must provide narrative and financial reports on their grant projects during and at the completion of their project. Reporting requirements are tied to tranche payments. See below for the narrative and financial reports required.

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Three tranche payments total	
First tranche payment	On execution of Grant agreement
Second tranche payment	On approval of Progress Report and Interim Financial Report mid-way through project implementation
Final tranche payment	On approval of Completion Report and Final Financial Report due 7 days after project completion

Progress Report and Interim Financial Report mid-way through project implementation can be via email to alumni engagement team of LAI.

Templates for Grant Completion Reports and Final 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 Final Financial Report. LAI requires copies of all invoices/receipts and other forms of documentation for expenditure items. Grantees who receive other funding from external parties that support the project 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.

Please note that failure to submit quality reporting documents by the date outlined in the Grant Agreement will result in termination of the Grant and you will be ineligible to receive any future funding or support from the Australian Government.

13. 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 guides Australia's aid program in supporting people with disabilities in developing countries.

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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.**

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, LGBTIQ+ alumni, alumni with a disability and alumni from remote regions or ethnic minorities to apply to the AIG for grant funding.

14. 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:

15. Publicity and Australian Identity

LAI encourages grantees to promote their projects in traditional or 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 will receive a communications induction before commencing the project. This induction will provide specific guidance on communications and marketing materials to be produced as part of the grant implementation.

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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

16. 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.

17. 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, TETRA TECH International Development, 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 (<https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/corporate/privacy/Pages/privacy>).

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18. 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).

19. 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.

20. Contact details

Alumni Engagement Team
Laos Australia Institute
Setthathirath Avenue
Xiengnheun Village
Chanthabouly District
(In front of Hor Prakeo)
Vientiane, Laos
Phone: +856 21 265721-2
Email: alumni@laosaustraliainstitute.org