

Management Response Independent Mid-term Evaluation of the Australia Awards in Africa Investment

Summary of management response

Australia Awards in Africa (AAA) is a four year (2016-2020) investment of approximately \$100 million. Australia Awards in Africa's end of program outcomes are;

- 1) alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development
- 2) targeted countries in Africa view Australia as a valued partner, and
- 3) alumni have positive ongoing links with Australia.

An independent mid-term evaluation was undertaken in 2018 to determine if AAA is achieving its planned outcomes, to assess the performance of the managing contractor and to ensure alignment with the Foreign Policy White Paper and the Australia Awards Global Awards policy.

DFAT accepts the 12 recommendations of the independent mid-term evaluation of the Australia Awards in Africa program. The Director and the Program Manager Australia Awards in Africa, Middle East and Africa Partnerships Section (MAP), Africa Branch (AFB) will lead the implementation of the mid-term evaluation recommendations and associated consultations. Africa Posts, Scholarships and Alumni Branch and the current managing contractor, Palladium, will be consulted at each stage of implementation for the Evaluation recommendations including, drafting the Annual Plan, amending the Scope of Services for the two year contract extension (2020-2022) and in the design process for the next phase (2022-2026). Depending on the complexity of the issues the recommendations will be implemented over three phases as outlined below.

- **Phase 1 - 2019-2020:** A significant number of the recommendations can be implemented under the current Scope of Services with the managing contractor through the 2019-20 Annual Plan. The negotiations to extend the end date of the contract with Palladium, from 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2022, and any other changes to the Scope of Services necessary to implement recommendations can also be completed in this period, **subject to financial approval.**
- **Phase 2 - 2020-2022:** During the proposed two year contract extension period, **subject to financial approval,** an investment design and tender process for delivery of a new phase of Australia Awards in Africa will be implemented. The investment design process is an opportunity to address the more complex program and policy recommendations.
- **Phase 3 - 2022-2026:** A number of the more complex recommendations may be implemented as part of a new four year investment for Australia Awards in Africa that would be due to start on 1 April 2022, **subject to financial approval.**

Individual management response to the recommendations				
Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan	Timeframe
Recommendation 1 <i>DFAT to use the option in the Scope of Services Agreement with the Managing Contractor to extend the end date of the contract by two years, from 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2022.</i>	Agree	The Peer Review Meeting agreed that the evaluation report provided sufficient evidence that the program is on track to achieve its outcomes and the managing contractor Palladium is performing efficiently and effectively therefore justifying an extension of the contract end date to 31 March 2022, subject to financial approval.	The program manager, Australia Awards in Africa, MAP will negotiate amendments to the Scope of Services with Palladium including extending the end date to 31 March 2022. The contract extension underpins phase 2 of implementation.	Subject to financial approval, a revised Scope of Services will be agreed by 1 December 2019 to allow time for the contract amendments to be agreed and signed by 1 March 2020.
Recommendation 2 <i>Africa Branch lead a strategic discussion regarding the outcomes of the postdoctoral Fellowship Pilot at the September 2019 Program Management Group meeting to inform the design of the next phase of Australia Awards in Africa.</i>	Agree	Australia Awards in Africa launched a pilot for postdoctoral fellowships in partnership with the Australia Africa Universities Network (AAUN), in 2017, and will be completed by the end of 2019. The evaluation found that the pilot is delivering benefits for fellows and African Universities. It suggested consideration of postdoctoral fellowships as a component of the next design of Australia Awards in Africa.	AFB will work with the managing contractor to prepare a paper outlining the results and proposing future implementation options for discussion at the September 2019 Program Management Group meeting. Noting that it may not be possible to fund a Post doctorate Fellowship through Australia Awards Global Investment.	September 2019 Program Management Group to discuss the future of the postdoctoral fellowships. Subject to the advice of that meeting and financial approval a postdoctoral program will be considered as part of the investment design process for a new phase of the Australia Awards in Africa (2022 26).

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<i>Recommendation 3 Africa Branch to clarify the strategic and functional intent of private sector engagement and development to inform the design of the next phase of Australia Awards in Africa.</i>	Agree	The 2016-2020 Australia Awards in Africa design sets out expectations that there will be increased and new ways of working with the private sector. A number of activities have been tried without fully achieving intended outputs.	AFB will consider this recommendation and the issues raised as part of the investment design process for the next phase of the Australia Awards in Africa (2022-26), subject to a financial approval for a new phase.	Investment design process to start by June 2020. The Terms of Reference will address private sector engagement.
<i>Recommendation 4 Palladium and Posts use the annual work plan process to further strengthen alignment of alumni engagement activities delivered by Palladium with: (i) the Australia Awards in Africa Alumni Engagement Strategy; and, (ii) Posts economic and public diplomacy strategies.</i>	Agree	The managing contractor is assisting DFAT to meet its alumni engagement objectives. DFAT posts report tangible, consistent examples of the public diplomacy benefits for Australia from engaging with alumni, as well as sporadic economic diplomacy benefits.	AFB has consulted with Posts and Palladium at the Regional Planning Meeting in February 2019 and will document the revised approach in 2019-20 Annual Plan	By 1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months and the 2020-2022 extension (Phase 2). Progress will be reported in the managing contractor's six monthly progress reports.
<i>Recommendation 5 Africa Branch increase its coordination of information sharing between relevant sections in Canberra, Palladium and Posts to (i) ensure policy and operational decisions are communicated to all stakeholders; and (ii) create regular opportunities for shared learning.</i>	Agree	The evaluation found that improved internal DFAT coordination and information-sharing, as well as improved coordination and information-sharing between DFAT and Palladium would further enhance the effectiveness of Australia Awards in Africa.	AFB has consulted with Africa Posts and Palladium at the annual planning meetings in February 2019 to identify actions to improve communication of policy and operational issues to all stakeholders and provide opportunities for regular shared learning.	By 1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. There will be ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor at the biannual Program Management Group Meetings and between

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				AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting
Recommendation 6 <i>Africa Branch, Posts and Palladium management team to review the current documented roles and responsibilities, discuss any changed expectations and revise the document accordingly.</i>	Agree	The evaluation found differing experiences and expectations across Posts in relation to the division of tasks between DFAT Posts, the managing contractor and DFAT Canberra.	AFB will action in consultation with Africa Posts.	By 1 April 2019 a revised document outlining the roles and responsibilities of AFB, Africa Posts and the managing contractor will be finalised. To be reviewed at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.
Recommendation 7 <i>Africa Branch consider stakeholder suggestions for improvements as summarised in Appendix H and discuss with Palladium (see Attachment 1).</i>	Agree	The evaluation report Annex H documents 52 suggestions from stakeholder groups.	AFB will develop a response to the 52 suggestions in Annex H following advice from the managing contractor, Africa Posts and Scholarships and Alumni Branch. Subject to budget and policy guidelines these suggestions will be implemented over the next two years.	By 1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor through the biannual Program Management Group Meetings and between AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.
Recommendation 8 <i>DFAT and Palladium consider the suggested modifications to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) and progress reports included at</i>	Agree	The recommended changes to the MEF include; 1) Consistent disaggregation of data provided in the six monthly performance report MEF by sex, disability,	AFB will consult the managing contractor to assess how best to implement these changes to the Australia Awards in Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and	By 1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor

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Appendix I (see Attachment 2).		<p>organisation type, sector and country wherever possible.</p> <p>2) Data is reported in a consistent way to allow aggregation across years which is the primary purpose of a MEF.</p> <p>3) Six-monthly program performance report which includes the MEF tables provides data across years not just for the reporting period.</p> <p>4) Six-monthly report include an annex providing status update on implementation of lessons learned recommendations from previous reporting period.</p> <p>5) Noted corrections to six-monthly report data.</p> <p>6) Combine Outcome Report data from 2017 & 2018 to enhance statistical analysis of data.</p>	document in the 2019-20 Annual Plan.	through the biannual Program Management Group Meetings and between AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.
Recommendation 9 DFAT and Palladium agree on distribution plans for each of the key reporting and evaluation products (for example short course	Agree	The evaluation found there would be benefit in packaging information and distributing reports to ensure that the information needs/interests of stakeholders (such as, short course providers, alumni and	AFB will consult Palladium to assess how best to implement these changes and incorporate into the 2019-2020 annual plan.	1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor

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providers, alumni and coordinating authorities).		coordinating authorities) are being met. This would add to the accountability of Australia Awards in Africa.		through the six monthly Program Management Group Meetings and between AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.
Recommendation 10 DFAT and Palladium use the annual planning process to clarify: timing and content of specific communications products to be developed for each Post (in conjunction with the promotions plans); level of assistance required for each Post to maintain their alumni contact register; and, other issues as raised by Post with the Africa Branch.	Agree	The evaluation documented that different Posts require different levels of engagement with, and support from, Palladium on various aspects of the program. The largest variances across Post's expectations relate to communications and public diplomacy support required from Palladium, and the level of detail and notice required for activities scheduled in the annual work plan.	AFB will consult Posts and Palladium to develop an approach to implementing this recommendation and include in the 2019-2020 Annual Plan.	1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor through the biannual Program Management Group Meetings and between AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.

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Recommendation 11 Amend the Outcome 2 wording to read 'Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively' (see Attachment 3).	Agree	This Australia Awards Global outcome has clear alignment with Australia Awards in Africa delivery and the existing MEF therefore the outcome can be made with minimal disruption to the program.	AFB will consult Palladium to assess how best to implement this change.	By 1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor through the biannual Program Management Group Meetings and between AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.
Recommendation 12 <i>Palladium adjust how it reports on disability-inclusion to give a clearer indication of the participation of People with Disability (PWD) in Australia Awards in Africa.</i>	Agree	The evaluation noted that clarifying the data to ensure that the number of PWD receiving a scholarship are counted separately from those non-disabled scholars undertaking study in a related disability support field. At the same time the evaluation noted that targets for disability inclusion would not be effective given the significant barriers experienced by PWD which are outside the program's control.	AFB will work with Palladium to implement this recommendation in all future data collection and reporting commencing with the 2019-20 Annual Plan.	By 1 July 2019 agreed approach will be documented in the 2019-20 Annual Plan. Ongoing implementation over the next 12 months. Progress will be reviewed between AFB and the managing contractor through the biannual Program Management Group Meetings and between AFB and Africa Posts at the February 2020 Annual Planning Meeting.