

DFAT Management Response  
Australia Awards Cambodia End of Program Evaluation

No.	Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Time Frame
1.	<p>Embed locally led development principles more systematically.</p> <p>Ensure structured Cambodian stakeholder input across the award cycle, particularly in identifying critical knowledge and skill gaps and informing the targeting approach. Strengthen partnerships with priority organisations that align with Australia’s strategic objectives in Cambodia. The rationale for encouraging employer engagement during the award period is to improve relevance and utilisation of skills upon return, addressing a current gap where reintegration planning is often deferred until completion. This includes formalising partnership agreements (e.g. MoUs) with ministries, universities, civil society organisations, and Organisations of Persons with Disability (OPDs).</p>	Partially Agree	<p>Australia Awards in Cambodia systematically embeds locally led development by requiring applicants to design Reintegration Plans that map directly to Cambodia's strategic development. Candidates must demonstrate how their Australian post-graduate education will address specific, domestic policy or industry gaps. Returning scholars are supported through active Alumni Networks and Community Leadership Awards, creating an ongoing, locally-sustained framework for mentorship, institutional collaboration and grassroots development.</p>	<p>In addition to the current Annual Strategic Review Meeting with the Council for Development of Cambodia, DFAT and AAC will also consult with Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, and other government committees and bodies relevant to skills development. Once priority skill gaps are identified (including those linked to economic and broader development objectives), AAC will align promotions and targeting and will also factor these into interview and selection processes, to ensure that AAC continues to meet critical skills and capabilities gaps in</p>	Annually

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				Cambodia. This will be balanced with maintaining an open and inclusive approach, as per program design, recognising the value to Australia and Cambodia of supporting a diverse range of disciplines and candidates.	
2.	Consolidate sectoral and thematic focus to maximise critical mass and system influence. More focused thematic areas could strengthen system-level impact; however, any targeting must be designed carefully to avoid excluding Equity Pathway Plan (EPP) candidates or narrowing pathways for non-traditional applicants. Periodic reviews and an “open field” component can help manage these trade-offs.	Partially Agree	<p>There is no clustering of scholarships and narrowing sectors would introduce new risks such as shrinking the applicant pool, missed emerging development needs and reduce long terms socio economic impact. Limiting areas of study risks alienating specific ministries making it hard to build cross government support.</p> <p>Creating a critical mass of Australia Awards alumni in a specific Cambodian sector is challenging. Despite the openness of the program to different organisations, some have benefited more than others for example Ministry of Economy and Finance, National Bank of Cambodia and international NGOs.</p>	<p>AAC will continue to ensure that priority sectors are aligned with the DPP.</p> <p>AAC may consider future case studies that will examine how key Ministries have used Australia Awards Scholarships (AAS) strategically to progress their human resource development plans to build critical mass.</p>	Annually

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			<p>AAC Priority sectors for Australia Awards in Cambodia are closely aligned with Australia’s Development Partnership Plan (DPP) 2025–2029. The DPP focuses on institution building, inclusive public services, and economic resilience.</p> <p>Short courses and other professional development opportunities are demand driven and are based on DPP priorities and alumni areas of interests.</p>		
3.	<p>Introduce fit-for-purpose and cost-effective modalities to expand access and relevance.</p> <p>To reach more diverse professional cohorts and support inclusive participation, the next phase should adopt a suite of cost-effective, context-appropriate modalities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ in-country or partially in-country scholarships for people with disabilities and Indigenous Cambodians, in partnership with accessible universities;</li> <li>○ targeted short courses for mid-career professionals and provincial staff unable to undertake long-term study;</li> <li>○ extended English language pathways, including pre-IELTS preparation,</li> </ul>	Partially Agree	<p>Fully implementing this recommendation would expose the AAC to risks of diluting the prestigiousness of full scholarships. Flexible modalities also increase the administrative burden.</p> <p>DFAT also values the benefits of having awardees exposed to the in Australia experience, as AAS is more than just classroom study.</p> <p>AAC will continue targeted short courses and professional development opportunities for</p>	<p>DFAT and AAC will review the Equity Pathways Plan (EPP) and Alumni Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>Under the EPP streams, AAC currently offers English language pathways including pre-IELTS preparation, conditional offer arrangements and inclusive accommodation testing.</p>	31 October 2026

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	<p>conditional offer arrangements, and inclusive testing accommodations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o micro-credentials and online learning packages in priority thematic areas.</li> </ul> <p>Modalities successfully used in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste (summarised in Annex A) provide adaptable models for Cambodia.</p>		<p>scholars, alumni and EPP participants.</p>		
4.	<p>Strengthen the alumni ecosystem and position alumni as long-term partners in development and diplomacy.</p> <p>The next phase should adopt a more deliberate and structured strategy for alumni engagement, including older cohorts, AAF/ACIAR alumni and self-funded graduates.</p>	Partially Agree	<p>AAC will continue to provide reintegration support.</p> <p>AAC will continue to provide Alumni Research Grants (ARG) to support targeted projects that align directly with both Australia's and Cambodia's development priorities.</p> <p>DFAT is currently developing a Guidance Note for Southeast Asian posts on alumni strategy development. This new guidance will be considered in the new phase.</p>	<p>DFAT, AAC and the Australian Alumni Association of Cambodia will hold a workshop to discuss the refresh of the Alumni Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>As part of reintegration planning, AAC will re-introduce 'Development Impact Plans'.</p> <p>AAC has developed an Alumni Database to support easier tracking of career milestones of alumni.</p>	31 October 2026.
5.	Explore co-funding and cost-sharing with the Royal Government of Cambodia.	Disagree	Co-funding and cost-sharing scholarships with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) can accelerate human capital	N/A	N/A

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	<p>In line with the Invested: Australia’s Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040, initiate dialogue with the RGC to establish co-investment and cost-sharing arrangements. Co-funding can demonstrate mutual commitment and create pathways for eventual financial sustainability, while cost-sharing arrangements can broaden institutional engagement without compromising merit or equity. Models such as Indonesia’s LPDP–Australia Awards collaborations offer useful precedents.</p>		<p>development but carry administrative and financial risks.</p> <p>This recommendation will be revisited when the settings are more suited to this approach.</p>		