# Recommendations and Management Response arising from the Australia Awards and Alumni Engagement Program-Philippines Final Program Evaluation

DFAT welcomes the recommendations proposed by the independent evaluation team. Since AAAEP-P is in its final stage of implementation, DFAT notes that most of the recommendations can feasibly be taken forward in the successor program, particularly those that are GEDSI-related.

Detailed responses are set out below.

| **Recommendation** | **Response** | **Actions** | **Responsibility** |
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| **Recommendation 1**: Flag emerging priority activities early to minimise adverse impacts on the work plan and consider additional resourcing if necessary. (Operational) | Agree | DFAT endeavours to inform Tetra Tech about possible activities addressing emerging priority sectors as early as possible and in advance of its annual planning process. It notes, however, that requests for support by the Philippine Government cannot always be anticipated. | DFAT |
| **Recommendation 2**: Regularly convene key governance meetings, both operational and strategic, to maximise engagement and build strong constituencies. (Operational) | Agree | The Program Board and Program Coordinating Committee were convened in FY 2025.  Tetra Tech will continue coordinating schedules with members. | DFAT  Tetra Tech |
| **Recommendation 3**: Recruit a senior advisor to the Embassy in the future program to:   * + analyse how a future program’s processes can be applied to different contexts (sectors and stakeholders), such as fellowships, study visits, targeted sectoral scholarships (e.g., PhDs in forensics or soil science), and Transnational Education (TNE) initiatives linked to Austrade’s efforts, and   + proactively link REAPs to policy dialogue. This could be achieved by working with GPH agencies to closely link scholarships (and hence REAPs) to specific reform efforts beyond Human Resource Development (HRD). This would heighten Embassy engagement and visibility on GPH reform issues. (Strategic) | Partially agree/ Noted | DFAT recognises the need to align the successor program’s processes and activities to different sectors and stakeholders as guided by the Philippines-Australia Development Partnership Plan and for REAPs to be proactively linked to policy dialogue.  However, this may not necessarily require a senior advisor embedded in the Embassy. How this could potentially be operationalised will be considered in the design and implementation of the successor program. | DFAT |
| **Recommendation 4**: For the program’s increased responsiveness to emerging priorities, develop a second, parallel workstream alongside the core AA workstream, with tailored objectives, selection criteria, and appropriate resourcing, to engage and offer scholarships to targeted stakeholders in specific sectors for strategic purposes while leveraging the quality of AAAEP–P brand and operational platform. It is important that this second workstream is specifically and appropriately resourced to emphasise its strategic contribution to both governments’ priorities. This ‘twin-track’ approach would allow the flexibility for responsiveness to changing priorities and emerging leaders (and key stakeholders) while maintaining the core AAAEP–P program’s integrity and reputation. (Strategic) | Noted | This cannot be implemented within the current Program, which is in its final stage of implementation.  However, this will be considered once the successor program is established and begin to develop workplan and operational strategies. | DFAT  Successor program managing contractor |
| **Recommendation 5**: Enhance alumni engagement by establishing targeted groups (e.g. defence alumni, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) alumni) linked to the Embassy’s development and public diplomacy objectives/sectors, ensuring alumni and their organisations see value in participation. This approach would need to be informed by political economy analysis and would need to be appropriately resourced. Inclusion in a future program of financial and human resources to support Embassy-wide alumni would add to the strategic coherence (e.g., support for managing defence alumni, including establishing an accessible database of alumni). (Strategic) | Agree | Outreach has begun with Defence at Post regarding information sharing on alumni engagement strategy.  Tetra Tech has also been tasked to begin grouping alumni according to sectors and for introductory calls to be organised with relevant DFAT officers and teams.  This recommendation will be taken up in the successor program. | DFAT  Tetra Tech  DFAT |
| **Recommendation 6**: Strengthen program implementation to align with Australian values and policies (e.g., GEDSI) by ensuring meaningful engagement with scholars from vulnerable or marginalised groups. (Operational) | Agree | The updated GEDSI Strategy was submitted to DFAT in March 2025. Among its improvements is the development of an intersectionality reporting tool, which will help AAAEP-P better understand the lived experiences of people with multiple marginalised identities. This tool will also inform the design and implementation of future activities, including for the successor program. | DFAT |
| **Recommendation 7**: Allocate specific GEDSI resourcing in the future program to complement mainstreaming with targeted activities, leveraging the alumni talent pool and supporting the Philippine Government’s understanding and application of GEDSI principles. (Operational) | Agree | This will be undertaken in the successor program, noting the requirement that all official development assistance investments valued at $3 million and above to include a gender equality objective. | DFAT |

## GEDSI-related recommendations:

| **Recommendation** | **Response** | **Actions** | **Responsibility** |
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| **Recommendation 8**: Have allocation/slots per region, and more equitable distribution (rural vs urban focus, Metro Manila vs non-Metro Manila placements). | Noted | DFAT notes that certain geographic regions within the Philippines are underrepresented in terms of scholars/alumni. A targeting mechanism will be considered in the planning and implementation of the successor program. | DFAT, successor program managing contractor |
| **Recommendation 9**: Deepen the discussion on GEDSI as a conceptual framework and as a practice and clarify how it aligns or differs from intersectionality. | Noted | DFAT notes the evaluation’s assessment regarding AAAEP-P’s strength in supporting women empowerment and disability inclusion, and in supporting the capacity-building of scholars from Indigenous communities.  As the successor program is designed and implemented, other facets of social inclusion (e.g., sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, LGBTQIA+, etc) will be considered for program interventions. | DFAT, successor program managing contractor |
| **Recommendation 10**:  As one of the lead development partners of the Philippines, Australia can further strategise how GEDSI can advance in the form of policy, budget, and practice in its key government partners. This will also influence the meaningful execution of GEDSI which can facilitate sustainability over time. | Noted | See response to Recommendation 3.  DFAT recognises the need for REAPs to be proactively linked to policy dialogue.  This recommendation will be reiterated as the successor program is designed and implemented. | DFAT, successor program managing contractor |
| **Recommendation 11**: AAAEP-P should also consider hiring a person with disability as a member of the team, to identify the meaningful points of participation by persons with disabilities as a standard operation procedure. | Noted | Tetra Tech is an equal opportunities employer and encourages applications from suitably qualified and eligible candidates regardless of, among others, disability.  The same will be expected for the managing contractor of the successor program. | Tetra Tech    Successor program managing contractor |