

## PROPOSAL

### Extension phase: Vietnam Blended Learning Program 2011 - 2015

#### 1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALS

The Vietnam Development Information Center (VDIC) is a partnership initiative of multilateral and bilateral development agencies, managed by the World Bank Vietnam. The VDIC was launched in January 2001 to promote the use of and access to knowledge in order to improve the effectiveness of development programs in Vietnam. The VDIC is financed by contribution from Government of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Japan, United Nations Development Programs and the World Bank.

Well-established within the Global Development Learning Network and with strong partnerships with local, regional and international organizations that have a commitment to and capacity for distance learning and access to information, the VDIC is as an important vehicle to support the development and training agenda of Vietnam. The VDIC offers a unique one-stop-shop platform for knowledge and information exchange covering a wide ranges of products from quality blended learning programs, structured course, inter-regional dialogues that enable distance learning customers, senior decision makers, academic researchers and development community to access to cutting edge knowledge and public information through high level interaction with global sources of expertise

To this end, the VDIC has been managing an Australian trust fund of AU\$674,000 to support some of its keys operational functions in Vietnam. Under the title Vietnam Virtual Learning Program (VBLP), the grant has help the VDIC to encourage local institutions to apply ICTs in organizational capacity building, especially in the modernization of curricula and blended learning approaches. The application of ICT in education and training and capacity building has been accelerated through increased engagement with GDLN-type techniques, giving Vietnamese decision-makers greater access to global knowledge, and strengthening partnerships between Vietnam, Australia and the rest of the world.

With this AUSAID's financial support, from 2006 – 2010 four rounds of small grant, under the operation of this trust fund, have been given to nine local institutions beneficiaries (Annex 1: List of projects funded 2005 – 2010). Through the implementation of the small grant, Vietnamese learners has been connected to local and international experts and their professional network, establishing collaborative community of practice by using the GDLN outreach to exchange knowledge and information. It is evidently that the small-fund program has contributed to building up research and training capacity of local institutions staff (Annex 2: Summary of key impacts)

Recognizing the value of the program support, VBLP beneficiaries have shared information about the program to their partners, including Ministries' technical agencies, universities, non-governmental or-

ganizations, research institute, enterprises and self-help groups. There has been increasing number of organizations submitting expression of interest following the call for proposal of the VBLP every new round. Many of the organizations, which either directly or indirectly benefited from the Grant have requested VDIC to continue to support them on the design and delivery of future blended learning programs that they have identified through their engagement with the original VBLP.

The realization of a second phase therefore is necessary to allow the VDIC to build on the momentum of these past activities and to *continue the small-grant funds* in order to respond to these requests from local partners in developing and delivering more training programs, *while also further developing educational resources and enhancing networking with leading educational institutions* thus reaching a much wider audience and to meet objective of increasing organizational capacity via ICTs application. These elements are regarded by all VBLP beneficiaries and new candidates as the most urgent.

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND KEY ACTIVITIES

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Over four years of this second phase, we continue to implement activities which aim to achieve the following objectives:

- To build capacity within Vietnamese institutions, targeting training agencies/divisions, through providing small grants funding to introduce and integrate blended learning methods and innovative technologies in training provision.
- To provide local institution with access to world class expertise in order to foster knowledge sharing across countries, establishing community of network and create a database of available contents resources.

**Objective 1: To build capacity within Vietnamese institutions, targeting training agencies/divisions, through providing small grants funding to introduce and integrate blended learning methods and innovative technologies in training provision.**

*Provision of small-grant funding scheme annually:* Following the same implementation as phase 1, competitive small grants will be awarded to Vietnam organizations' capacity building projects/plan focusing on human resources development's activities using blended learning methodologies with ICT as one of the essential tools. Given the small scope of funding, it is expected that the grant will only finance a slice of the master plan for the organization. Key selection criteria will be (i) effective and creative use of blended learning methodology; and (ii) potential to expand and sustain the achieved outcomes in their organizations

Each grantee will receive a funding amount from AU\$20,000 to 25,000 with approximately four institutions being award annually. Implementation period can be between to 8-10 months. The funding will be announced publicly following the approach of "call for proposal" so that any interested organizations from any sector could apply. An evaluation panel consisting of different specialists will be established to review submitted proposals and recommend the final grantees. Key steps will be:

- Call for Expression of Interest - EOI (idea expression)
- Shortlisted EOIs will be asked to submit full proposal
- Proposal writing training will be provided to shortlisted EOI
- Review and select grantees by evaluation panels.
- Grant award and implementation
- Regular monitoring and technical support will be provided by the VDIC's team.

**Objective 2: To provide local institution with access to world class expertise in order to foster knowledge sharing across countries, establishing community of network and create a database of available contents resources.**

There will be two activities under this Objective.

**2.1. Provision of a number of training programs in partnership with Vietnamese partners** such as Institute of Financial Training (Ministry of Finance), Vietnam Chamber of Commerce, Hanoi Medical School. These programs and partners have been carefully selected based on our positive experiences in partnering to deliver various training activities during the past four years, assessment of local training need, institutions' strong wills to learn and improve their performance; and sufficient capacity to carry out a comprehensive training/learning projects.

These training programs are proposed to be between 12 and 24 months. These programs aimed to deliver training on competency – based topics and skills. Training courses will be designed with individual modules/packages allowing participants to choose to attend the whole course or only those that a responding to their work-related skills. It is expected that these partners will need adequate timing to implement these program to better measuring changes by the participants as impact from the learnt knowledge and skill; therefore, be able to provide in-depth and qualitative data for a comprehensive evaluation. Four preliminary proposed training programs includes those in the areas of Healthcare Workforce, Microfinance, Small and Medium Enterprises and Institutional Finance Management Training. More information is provided in Annex 4.

**2.2. Provision of soft skills courses in developing and managing training plans/programs.** Proposed training courses including Design Learning Events, Develop Learning Plan and Strategy, Manage a Capacity Building project, Monitor and Evaluate Learning Impacts. The training will firstly be provided for the Grantees from the VBLP Grants (Objective 1) and then extend to either training divisions or human development departments institutions with potential powerful roles in coordinate training activities and delivering large scale in-service trainings. Training can be either through the “train the trainer” approach or directly delivery to those responsible individuals at the participated institutions.

This activity aims at updating Vietnamese institutions with professional knowledge and skills to strategically develop and professionally deliver training programs in the most efficient manner. Participating institutions will be trained both through attending formal lectures, exercising the learnt skills in actual working environment and also via ongoing coaching from VDIC and GDLN experts.

This comprehensive process is expected to help changing the conventional mindset largely rooted within many of Vietnam organizations (e.g. defining learning simply as attending learning events, overestimate formal learning or learning without practical application) to that of an active, demand driven and effective learning approaches.

### 3. PROGRAM EXECUTION, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

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**Execution:** The VDIC will execute, monitor and evaluate the program throughout the process to ensure standardized and transparent financial and management procedures. VDIC will oversee the VBLP's overall operation, conduct Grant selection on a competitive and quality basis, select independent consultants to conduct need assessment, advise applicants on program design, ensure compatibility with VBLP approaches, and support administrative and technical costs of delivering programs in Vietnam over 4 years with the management focusing on the early part/stages of the program.

**Reporting:** The VBLP VDIC management team will prepare round-based progress reports that will gauge the progress of activities and temporarily achieved outcomes vs VBLP Plan. Reports and updates would be communicated to the AusAID Counselor (Development Cooperation), who at any time may request a performance review.

**Monitoring and Process Evaluation:** The VBLP VDIC management team will provide periodic supervision and monitoring to each institution to ensure activities and financial expenses are in good track following the committed performance and impact indicators.

### 4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

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This extended phase would bring out tangible changes in performance of at least 50 training institutions in Vietnam and their service end-users during the four year program and connect Vietnamese institutions with leading experts and their education resources sustainably. With A\$900,000, this is an evidence of a cost effective training approach.

- 1) **About 20-30 local organizations will be granted** to implement their capacity improvement ideas through the use of innovative learning technologies over the period of four years. At a broader context, the human resource for Vietnam would be gradually improved and professionally performed. Project management capacity of those organizations will be improved. It is estimated that at least **1,000 staff and their counterparts would be directly benefit** (50 staff/institution x 20 institutions).
- 2) **A collection of international standard curriculums** will be available for educational purposes at VDIC. These resources will be used to develop blended learning courses that will be valuable for training institutions and organizations in capacity building.
- 3) **About 5 training courses will be conducted to institutions' core trainer team and training managers.** The topics include Strengthening Skills to Develop Staff Development Plans and Strategy; Manage a Capacity Building project; and Monitor and Evaluate Learning Events.
- 4) **Networks of expertise are created** to connect Vietnamese institutions to international communities of practice, virtual and physical networks via VDIC's initiatives and promotion.

- 5) **At least 50 Vietnamese institutions have their behavior changed** in training strategy development, training event planning and implementation. **90% of them have revised training strategy and planning annually.**

## 5. FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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This program work plan is feasible for the following reasons

- VDIC has 4 years of experiences in execution of small-grant funding scheme. Four rounds of VBLP have been implemented and the VDIC did get lessons learnt (Annex 3: Lessons learnt from previous phases) to make the implementation of this proposal more cost-effective.
- VDIC has good infrastructure to support the ICTs education approaches.
- This proposal responds to the urgent needs of local institutions in Vietnam, thus it would gain great supports in implementation.
- WB and particularly the Global Development Learning Network have good connection with national and international experts which helps to shorten the preparation period and foster the implementation process.

This program promises a high sustainability as:

- VDIC library is a popular resource for people working in development fields in Vietnam to come and make reference. The material purchased and developed will enrich the individual learners and allow organizations and institutions nation-wide access to and benefit from the curriculums and blended learning training courses. As a result the utilization rate of the procured curriculums will be high and sustained over years.
- The VBLP will only provide small grants for projects which are a part of a comprehensive master plan training program of Vietnamese institution. Grants outcomes will contribute to the overall achievement of the organization. This would require the endorsement of the institution leadership with clear plan of capacity building and budget allocation.
- The trained staff and improvement in organization capacity will stay with the organization once they institutionalize the processes and create an on-going learning environment within the organization. It is believe that the capacity of local institutions in Vietnam will be upgraded tangibly.

## 6. BUDGET

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We seek support AU\$900,000 over four years, from 2011 to 2015. The budget breakdown as below:

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	TOTAL
1. Small grant funding	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000
2.1 Trainings with strategic partners	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	200,000
2.2. Soft skills trainings	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	120,000
3. VDIC Monitoring & Evaluation	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>225,000</b>	<b>225,000</b>	<b>225,000</b>	<b>225,000</b>	<b>900,000</b>