

## Management Response to the Independent Review of Aus4Innovation program

The Review outlines six major recommendations that have been agreed upon DFAT and CSIRO. Below is the detail of the management response:

	Recommendation	By When	Management Response
1	<p><b>Ensure a rigorous, purposeful design for Phase 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The design should endeavour to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Articulate a clear strategic vision</li> <li>○ Meet DFAT design requirements, including the participatory process to develop clear objectives for Phase 2, consensus on End of Program Outcomes (EoPOs) and clear linkages between components</li> <li>○ Provide a better-informed stakeholder analysis to determine who to work with</li> <li>○ Build on a better understanding of context and enhanced/closer cooperation with Vietnamese partners to further strengthen joint steer of the program and ownership</li> <li>○ Incorporate a better understanding of Australia’s priorities, and identify possible linkages with other Australian investments to enhance synergy, thereby strengthening Australia’s influence in Vietnam</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Conclusion of Phase 1 in March 2023.	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT has worked closely with CSIRO to ensure these recommendations are reflected during Phase 2 design process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The design creates a clear vision for Phase 2, with a concept note being shared among stakeholders to obtain their input during the design consultations.</li> <li>• The design team conducted workshops and discussions with a wide array of Vietnamese stakeholders.</li> <li>• DFAT ensured Phase 2 reflects the priorities of the Australia-Vietnam partnership, particularly with a narrower focus on food and agriculture so support can be more targeted. Phase 2 commits A4I to engaging closely with other Australian investments in Vietnam, including ACIAR.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>A4I could be more proactive and systematic in supporting Australia’s public diplomacy role in Vietnam</b>, through a deliberate, structured process.</p> <p>The process would be informed by annual bilateral consultations to determine innovation priorities that A4I can support, not only to Vietnam’s priorities but also aligned with Australia’s comparative advantage and priorities (as identified in AVEEES, the <i>Vietnam-Australia Joint Statement on Commitment to Practical Climate Action</i>, the <i>Partnerships for Recovery Strategy</i> and so on), to ensure that A4I is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promoting Australian science and innovation credentials,</li> <li>○ Connecting Australia’s unique innovation capability to the rapidly growing Vietnamese markets,</li> <li>○ Fostering better links with other CSIRO innovation programs/initiatives (e.g. SME Connect team), and</li> </ul>	Start of Phase 2 in April 2023	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT will ensure Australia’s public diplomacy is incorporated proactively and systematically during the remaining time of Phase 1 and the implementation of Phase 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2022, CSIRO strengthened its public diplomacy opportunities, including discussion through its Steering Committee mechanism, various high-level engagements with the new Australian Ambassador and counterparts, and additional staff recruited by CSIRO for Aus4Innovation in 2022 working on communications.</li> <li>• The informal Innovation Group for development partners in Vietnam has been re-invigorated with Aus4Innovation hosting the October 2022 meeting. A4I has also had one-on-one meetings with other like-minded donors such as USAID and FCDO.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cultivating links with other like-minded donors/programs e.g. through the Informal Innovation Donor Group, and with The FCDO funded Newton Program in Vietnam</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In October and November 2022, CSIRO experts travelled to Vietnam to foster links, plan and deliver elements of Aus4Innovation. The A4I Project Director also travelled to Australia to share lessons with CSIRO. It is expected such exchanges will continue throughout Phase 2.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Gender and social inclusion strategy for A4I needs to be developed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A strategy will ensure that A4I has a ‘whole-of-program’ approach to mainstreaming gender and social inclusion across the program in order to ensure that its approach is deliberate, coordinated, and consistent across its activities. Key features of the strategy would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clarity on equality objectives A4I can feasibly achieve over a four year period</li> <li>○ The type of support structure the program will put in place to support gender and social inclusion efforts</li> <li>○ A description of the approach the program will take to mainstream gender and social inclusion across the different components of A4I</li> <li>○ Steps to be taken to strengthen the commitment of stakeholders within the program to A4I’s gender and social inclusion objectives</li> <li>○ A description of how gender and social inclusion will be monitored, and how lessons will be shared to help steer A4I to meet its gender and social inclusion objectives</li> <li>○ A costed budget allocated to enhance gender and social inclusion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	As soon as possible	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT will ensure that gender and social inclusion outcomes are intentionally targeted during Phase 2 including opportunities to support implementation of the forthcoming Vietnam Equality Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CSIRO has developed a Socially Inclusive Innovation Strategy for the Science Commercialization Partnership.</li> <li>● CSIRO has development GESI guidelines to embed inclusion outcomes in the design of Phase 2.</li> <li>● CSIRO contracted a gender expert to provide technical assistance for grant projects.</li> <li>● GEDSI experts were consulted as part of the Phase 2 design.</li> <li>● Support will be provided by DFAT to assist CSIRO deliver on its GEDSI plans and strengthen impact. This includes DFAT organised Disability and Inclusion Clinic in late November 2022 and ongoing DFAT facilitated access to gender specialists and Disabled People’s Organisations for advice to A4I.</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Expand management structure in Hanoi</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is essential that the program retains a strong complement in Vietnam to ensure continuity and connection, to enhance the visibility of the program and to make it easy for key stakeholders to access the program on a day-to-day basis. An expanded structure could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Director – who focuses on strategy and influence</li> <li>○ Program Manager – who focuses on operational excellence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Start of next phase	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>DFAT supports the expansion of A4I management structure for the effective delivery of the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initial changes in the program personnel structure have been initiated including the recruitment of a short-term Administrative Assistant, a Project Officer and a Deputy Program Director.</li> <li>● Moving into Phase 2, A4I personnel structure will be adjusted to ensure all aspects of strategy, operation, and</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Component/thematic leaders – strategic thinkers for each theme/component with innovation management experience and subject matter expertise.</li> <li>○ GESI/MEL coordinator – responsible for overseeing both the implementation of the GESI strategy and MEL (especially to ensure a systematic approach to program learning)</li> </ul>		<p>coordination are more efficiently allocated across personnel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A MEL contractor is currently working with the program and may continue to be engaged in Phase 2. DFAT has also engaged a Support Unit to work on MEL across the bilateral development program, including A4I. This work will complement CSIRO’s efforts and provide independent assessments. A CSIRO engaged GEDSI consultant is supporting the program and will have a greater scope moving into Phase 2.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Ensure A4I communication activities, products and materials systematically promote the objectives of A4I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is important that communication activities, products and materials are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Generating interest and awareness of A4I,</li> <li>○ Attracting participation in/engagement with A4I</li> <li>○ Raising the profile of the distinctive and unique features of CSIRO,</li> <li>○ Providing specific updates on the progress the program is making towards its efforts to enhance gender and social inclusion, and</li> <li>○ Telling the story of A4I so that its successes (such as its impact on the Vietnamese innovation system, partnerships created between Australia and Vietnam, and so on) are accessible to a wider audience (not only in Vietnam but also in Australia).</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Communication activities, products, and materials should be developed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support A4I in its efforts to promote marketing discoveries and learning, and packaging innovative solutions as commercial opportunities, and</li> <li>○ Enable A4I to provide in-depth briefings to key stakeholders so that they will continue to advocate for greater support of the program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Start of next phase	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>During the transition towards Phase 2, the following actions have been planned or taken to enhance communication efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An in-house communication specialist from CSIRO has been engaged to enhance the quality of communications products.</li> <li>● A communication plan has been developed specifically for the transition period, with a strong focus on promoting the MOST – Australian Embassy partnership. Communication activities i.e., showcases, TV shows, media (both social and mainstream) coverage are increasing with additional A4I staff.</li> <li>● CSIRO will integrate A4I’s communication products with the Embassy’s communication plan, particularly with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bilateral diplomatic relationship between Vietnam and Australia.</li> <li>● See item 2 above for related information.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>A4I needs to pay greater attention to the MEL process and the learning function it plays within program implementation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Key steps include:</li> </ul>	Start of Phase 2	Agreed.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Appropriate M&amp;E system needs to be developed, with improved software, as early as possible to collect information and measure successes</li> <li>○ Revitalise the program logic to ensure its better at tracking the performance of A4I</li> <li>○ Identify a mix of metrics that will ensure uncover new information and provide a nuanced picture of what is changing in the operating context, to allow adaptation in real-time.</li> <li>○ Maximise learning, so that the system is not only focussed on tracking progress, by taking a portfolio approach (emphasis on multi-methods/MEL embedded within activities as part of implementation plan).</li> </ul>		<p>DFAT will work closely with A4I management team to ensure M&amp;E for A4I program will be strengthened. So far, some actions have been taken to address this recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A plan to upgrade the M&amp;E system for Phase 2 has been set up to enhance the system’s effectiveness/ efficiency in data collection and analysis. The new focus will be, for example, integrating MEL in activities, as well as tracking the performance of the program through the lens of synergies across projects.</li> <li>• The program logic framework was revised by introducing intermediate outcomes to better reflect the performance of the program.</li> <li>• A Support Unit established by DFAT will work with A4I’s MEL specialist to align expectations and procedures for more effective MEL processes.</li> </ul>