

Mid Term Review of Aus4Skills: Evaluation Report

Final Report

December 2018

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| AAS | Australia Awards Scholarships |
| AASC | Australia Awards Short Course |
| ABI | Australia’s Broader Interests (Aus4Skills Component 5) |
| ACIAR | Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research |
| ADIS | Alumni Development Impact Survey |
| AIP | Aid Investment Plan (also refers to support under Aus4Skills Component 4) |
| APEC | Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation |
| AWIL | Advancing women in leadership (Aus4Skills Component 3) |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) |
| DOLISA | Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs |
| DVET | Directorate of Vocational and Educational Training |
| GEDSI | Gender equality, disability and social inclusion |
| GeLead | Center for Gender Studies and Women’s Leadership (Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics) |
| HRD | Human Resource Development |
| ILO | Informal Learning Opportunity |
| LIRC | Logistics Industry Reference Council |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MARD | Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development |
| MOET | Ministry of Education and Training (Vietnam) |
| MOLISA | Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| Post | Australian Embassy in Vietnam (Hanoi) |
| QUNIS | Quality of Universities in the northern mountainous region (Aus4Skills Component 2) |
| TVET | Technical and vocational education and training |
| VCCI | Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry |
| VCMi | Vietnam College of Machinery and Irrigation |
| VET | Vocational education and training (Aus4Skills Component 1) |
| VNU-SL | Vietnam National University, School of Law |
| WIL-J | Women in Leadership Journey |

Executive Summary

Aus4Skills is a \$38 million human resource development (HRD) program delivered over a five-year period, 2016-2020. Its end-of-program outcomes are:

- (i) *Male and female alumni use new skills and knowledge to make positive contributions to targeted priority areas;*
- (ii) *Stronger workplace enabling environments for skills utilisation in selected priority areas; and*
- (iii) *Australia and Vietnam have stronger, sustainable links in targeted sectors/agencies.*

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations are expected to be fully integrated into all Aus4Skills activities and products.

In addition to Australia Awards Scholarships and alumni activities, a design for non-scholarship HRD activities¹ to support skills development in Vietnam was approved in February 2017. Approximately \$25 million of the overall Aus4Skills budget is to be delivered under the following five HRD components:

- (i) *Promoting industry linkages with vocational education and training;*
- (ii) *Improving the quality of universities in the northern mountainous region;*
- (iii) *Advancing women in leadership;*
- (iv) *Supporting Australia's Aid Investment Plan; and*
- (v) *Supporting Australia's broader interests.*

Aus4Skills is at its implementation mid-point. Delivery of the long-standing Australia Awards program in Vietnam began at program commencement in 2016. Implementation of the non-scholarship HRD activities commenced in late 2017 and early 2018, following the finalisation of the design and preparatory work for the agreed activities in early 2017. Aus4Skills will be escalating its activities in the coming 12-18 months in order to deliver against the end-of-program outcomes.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned this Aus4Skills mid-term review (the review) to identify what is working well in the Aus4Skills program, what should continue or be replicated and what should be improved. The scope of primary data collection under the review was on the non-scholarship HRD activities delivered under Aus4Skills. Australia Awards Scholarships were not a focus of the review.

Overall conclusions

Aus4Skills is a valuable part of Australia's engagement with Vietnam, mostly notably because of its collaborative approach in supporting stakeholders' aspirations to change the way in which they work within their own organisation or engage with their external partners to develop their human resources; feedback from stakeholders confirmed this is a point of differentiation between Aus4Skills and programs of other donors.

Despite some frustrations around inefficient practices experienced among the stakeholders interviewed, the feedback to the review team was overwhelmingly positive about the productive,

¹ "Non-scholarship HRD activities" refer collectively to all the activities and inputs which are neither long-term scholarships nor alumni activities that are individually focussed to directly improve the ability of alumni to access, or maximise benefits from, long term Australia Awards.

respectful and solution-oriented working relationships Aus4Skills staff have nurtured with DFAT and implementing partners.

There is demonstrable willingness, motivation and commitment to change among Aus4Skills' implementing partners. This may, in some part, stem from the fact many partners were on a pathway of change already and trying to keep up with fast-paced change (for example, in the logistics industry).

Aus4Skills is working in a dynamic environment, and the review team found evidence of the program being able to adapt to the contextual environment in Vietnam as well as the changing emphasis of Australia's development assistance in Vietnam. This adaptability however needs to be managed within clearer, higher-level decision-making by DFAT around strategic directions for the remainder of the program.

Components 1, 2 and 3 are on track to deliver the end-of-program outcomes, with good momentum and strong relationships established. There has been good monitoring of issues and lessons by Aus4Skills (as documented in the Annual Report), and evidence of an adaptive management style as confirmed by stakeholders to the review team.

Component 5 has proven to be an effective mechanism for delivering against emerging priorities as identified by DFAT, for example, supporting human rights law postgraduate training and managing abattoirs, training and exchange of skills.

Component 4 has been the least utilised component of Aus4Skills. While most non-HRD Post staff reflected to the review team that the mechanism was, in theory, an appropriate one, it was not immediately clear the other Aus4Vietnam programs would have high demands for HRD support from Aus4Skills.

In a relatively short timeframe (less than twelve months), Aus4Skills has worked with government institutions and private sector organisations to demonstrate a strong, likely sustainable and potentially transferrable model of industry-led skills development in an industry key to Vietnam's economic growth. This is an important achievement early in the program and, with careful support in the coming 12-18 months, has the potential to be a long-lasting contribution to the Australia-Vietnam economic partnership.

Findings

- › While the design provides little detail on the desired **policy objectives and/or influence** Aus4Skills is expected to contribute to, the review team heard several examples from stakeholders about areas of potential policy influence. These areas of policy influence are not necessarily under the remit of Aus4Skills to pursue. However, the examples provided in this report are a starting point for discussion within Post to agree on the desired policy objectives and/or influence going forward. Aus4Skills is generating significant learning that is of value to policy dialogue, though much of this is not documented, or conveyed to DFAT, in a way that easily assists policy dialogue.
- › In general, there is a **good mix of individual and organisational support** in all components. Inter-organisational support is found in each component, but evidence of progress at individual levels is strongest across all components. Organisational change, linked to Aus4Skills support, is prevalent in Components 1, 2 and 3.
- › Supporting new **linkages between Government (training institutions) and the private sector** in Vietnam is a deliberate approach in Components 1 and 2 and an emerging strength of Aus4Skills. There is evidence involvement of the private sector is contributing to organisational changes observed at vocational colleges and enhanced institutional linkages among actors in the sector. Representatives from Government institutions and the private sector independently spoke to the review team in detail about the level and nature of collaboration that is different to that

experienced in the past. For example, engagement of the private sector across the curriculum development cycle provides a useful exemplar for how to ensure tertiary institutions (VET and Universities) are meeting demands of employers and increasing the relevance and quality of the skills base of their students.

- › There is emerging evidence that the ‘journey’ approach to supporting women’s leadership is producing results. There is potential for additional leadership journeys (for men and women) to be included in Aus4Skills. The review team heard of early discussions within the Post of interest in Australia supporting existing leadership schemes in Vietnam. The **Aus4Skills toolbox approach has the flexibility to support different approaches to leadership development**, either as a standalone journey (such as the WIL-J) or providing an ILO as an ‘add-on’ to an existing leadership scheme.
- › **Component 4 is the least utilised component of Aus4Skills.** While most non-HRD Post staff reflected to the review team that the mechanism was, in theory, an appropriate one, it was not immediately clear whether it would be greatly needed by programs in the near future. Where AASC had been provided under AIP, the practical, targeted nature of the training appears to have benefitted participants, and the relevant Aus4Vietnam programs.
- › For the most part coherence of Aus4Skills has been maintained through implementing the components as described in the design document, and agreements with DFAT on emerging priorities (for example, supporting human rights law postgraduate training and managing abattoirs, training and exchange of skills). There is a need for strengthened coherence between Aus4Skills and the other Aus4Vietnam programs, and other Australian government agencies. This coherence agenda needs to be driven at the highest levels in the Post.
- › It is timely for strategic and programmatic decisions to be made, in the immediate future, on how to best utilise the projected expenditure for the remainder of the program in a way that maximises the successes derived from Components 1, 2 and 3 to date, and addresses emerging HRD priorities of interest to Australia in Vietnam.
- › The feedback to the review team was overwhelmingly positive about the **productive, respectful and solution-oriented working relationships** Aus4Skills staff have nurtured with DFAT and implementing partners. This bodes well for addressing the efficiency issues noted by the review.
- › The review notes the following issues that require attention in order to **increase efficient and effective implementation** of Aus4Skills:
 - ›› The governance mechanism (Program Coordinating Committee) not fully meeting either Australia or Vietnam’s interests and expectations of a consultative, direction-setting forum.
 - ›› The planning and reporting cycles are not currently structured to follow the same financial year cycle.
 - ›› The limitations of one-year planning cycles on stakeholders’ ability to undertake longer-term planning.
 - ›› If not managed well, the increase in activity spending expected in 2019 and 2020 has the potential to fragment the program’s coherence and lead to ineffective spending.
- › The **component structure of Aus4Skills provides appropriate scope to move with shifts in Australia’s aid policy and/or Aus4Vietnam program directions.** The modalities in the Aus4Skills HRD ‘toolbox’ can be utilised to deliver HRD support across differing priorities. The end-of-program outcomes however are closely aligned to HRD outcomes and could be expanded to capture a broader range of Aus4Skills results. For example, private sector engagement and development, and contribution to policy dialogue. DFAT is responsible for direction setting and decision-making regarding alignment of Aus4Skills with Australia’s aid policy and program directions in Vietnam. Any major shifts in direction or activity focus need to be communicated to

Aus4Skills, and implementing partners, as soon as possible to minimise any disruption to stakeholder relationships and activity implementation.

- › The review team heard examples of **positive change resulting from gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming activities** and activities targeted at advancing women in leadership.
- › The contributions of the non-scholarship HRD activities to **disability-inclusive development are less evident**.

Recommendations

Strategic

- 1 DFAT, in collaboration with relevant Australian Government agencies, identify the policy objectives and influence priorities to which Aus4Skills will be expected to contribute in the coming 18 months.
- 2 DFAT and Aus4Skills agree on the role Aus4Skills will play in contributing to specific DFAT policy objectives and influence priorities. Aus4Skills to provide evidence and analysis, and to keep DFAT informed of possible entry points for policy dialogue arising from Aus4Skills activities.
- 3 DFAT to further discuss its emerging ideas on leadership development activities with relevant partners in Vietnam and Aus4Skills, with a view to designing a stream of leadership support activities in addition to the WIL-J.
- 4 DFAT and MOET restructure the functions and membership of the PCC and alter the timing of PCC meetings to better serve Australia and Vietnam's needs for a consultative forum that provides clear direction setting for Aus4Skills.
- 5 DFAT to confirm any additional strategic priorities for Aus4Skills as soon as possible and use the planning process for the 2019/2020 financial year to detail activities and budgets in line with this.

Operational

- 6 Aus4Skills continue to implement Components 1, 2 and 3 as per the design to expand and consolidate the individual and organisation achievements to date. Aus4Skills continue to work with implementing partners to enhance inter-organisational learning (for example, to support standardisation of curriculum development and quality assurance systems).
- 7 DFAT and Aus4Skills retain Component 4 and limit the focus to activities to AASC and ILOs that enhance individual skills capacity at the individual level across more than one Aus4Vietnam program. Sector specific and/or organisational HRD support should be addressed through each of the other Aus4Vietnam programs.
- 8 DFAT's HRD team agree a 'ways-of-working' framework with relevant DFAT Post staff that identifies the processes for consultation and decision-making during the planning process. This could include consideration of annual plan decision-making at the deputy Head of Mission or Head of Mission level.
- 9 DFAT's HRD team and relevant Aus4Skills staff document respective responsibilities across key tasks to ensure efficient use of resources in both teams.

Planning and reporting

- 10 Aus4Skills update the indicative activities and budget for 2018/2019 financial year for DFAT consideration/approval. This should include a discussion between DFAT and Coffey regarding the contractual value for personnel costs for the remainder of the program.

- 11 The planning process for the 2019-2020 financial year consider the period July 2019 – December 2020 (i.e. the final 18-month period of the program) to ensure coherence in the final stage of the Aus4Skills program.
- 12 DFAT and Aus4Skills undertake a planning process in early 2019 which:
 - a. Is conducted in accordance with the 'ways of working' framework mentioned in the recommendations under 'effectiveness'.
 - b. Covers the period July 2019 – December 2020.
 - c. Identifies 'priority' activities and 'consolidation' activities for the remainder of program with minimal funds unallocated for emerging priorities.
- 13 The annual reporting cycle be changed from a calendar to financial year cycle to be in alignment with the planning cycle, with two reporting points (January, July) and revised report content.
- 14 DFAT to keep the Aus4Skills team informed of global Australia Awards changes and work with them to ensure appropriate alignment and clarification of roles, responsibilities and activities for effective implementation.
- 15 The 2020 Intake be maintained at similar levels to the 2018 and 2019 intakes, i.e. at least 40 and no more than 50 awards offered.
- 16 Following the review of the Australia Awards Global Strategy, DFAT Canberra and Post make decisions on indicative allocations for the Australia Awards 2021 – 2025 Intakes.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 17 Aus4Skills adjust its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to reflect agreed policy objectives and influence priorities and Aus4Skills' expected contribution. This should include the approach Aus4Skills will take to regularly documenting opportunities for policy dialogue.
- 18 Aus4Skills extend measurement of the enabling environment for skills utilisation to include monitoring under Components 1, 2 and 3.
- 19 Aus4Skills to update M&E framework to include outcome statements on private sector engagement and development, and contribution to policy dialogue.
- 20 Include gendered and disability outcomes in the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

- 21 Continue to consider the gender balance of participants in short courses – for some courses (such as the 'promoting gender outcomes' short courses) it may be appropriate to focus on increasing men's participation.
- 22 Aim to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the non-scholarship HRD activities. An appropriate starting point would be consulting with disabled people's organisations who already have some links to Aus4Skills to determine how to best achieve this.
- 23 Consider formalising the disability and social inclusion targets, and report progress towards them.

1 Introduction

Chapter 1 (Introduction) of this report provides background information on Aus4Skills and the context in which it operates. Chapter 2 (Methodology) details the purpose and key evaluation questions which guided the Aus4Skills mid-term review (the review). Chapter 3 (Findings) examines each key evaluation question in turn providing an assessment, findings and proposing recommendations. It also identifies areas for future improvement. Chapter 4 (Conclusions) contains concluding remarks. Chapter 5 (Recommendations) provides further detail on the recommendations presented in Chapter 3 in order to support their uptake.

1.1 Aus4Skills

Australia's Aid Investment Plan (AIP) in Vietnam 2015-16 to 2019-2020 is organised around three objectives:

- (i) Enabling and engaging the private sector for development*
- (ii) Assisting the development and employment of a highly skilled workforce*
- (iii) Promoting women's economic empowerment, including ethnic minorities*

Aus4Skills is currently the main vehicle to realise the Australian Government's commitment to, and support for, improving the quality of Vietnam's human resources, as per the AIP (objective ii) and the Australia-Vietnam Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategy 2014-2020.

Aus4Skills is a \$38 million program delivered over a five-year period, 2016-2020. Its end-of-program outcomes are:

- (i) Male and female alumni use new skills and knowledge to make positive contributions to targeted priority areas;*
- (ii) Stronger workplace enabling environments for skills utilisation in selected priority areas; and*
- (iii) Australia and Vietnam have stronger, sustainable links in targeted sectors/agencies.*

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) considerations are expected to be fully integrated into all Aus4Skills activities and products.

Aus4Skills delivers Australia Awards Scholarships² on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It also supports the implementation of the Australia Global Alumni Strategy in Vietnam, engaging alumni and delivering activities that directly contribute to both Aus4Skills and Global Alumni outcomes.

In addition to Australia Awards Scholarships and alumni activities, a design for non-scholarship HRD activities³ to support skills development in Vietnam was approved in February 2017. Approximately \$25 million of the overall Aus4Skills program is to be delivered under the following five HRD components:

- (i) Promoting industry linkages with vocational education and training (VET);*

² Australia Awards are highly valued international Scholarships and Fellowships that offer the next generation of global leaders an opportunity to undertake study, research and professional development in Australia.

³ "Non-scholarship HRD activities" refer collectively to all the activities and inputs which are neither long-term scholarships nor alumni activities that are individually focussed to directly improve the ability of alumni to access, or maximise benefits from, long term Australia Awards.

- (ii) *Improving the quality of universities in the northern mountainous region (QUNIS);*
- (iii) *Advancing women in leadership (AWIL);*
- (iv) *Supporting Australia's Aid Investment Plan (AIP); and*
- (v) *Supporting Australia's broader interests (ABI).*

The first two components follow a programmatic approach: Component 1 addresses systemic and policy issues in Vietnam's VET sector; and Component 2 builds organisational capacity in selected universities. Component 3 is delivered through a partnership with a high profile political training institution, the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, complemented by women in leadership (WIL) support activities that cut across all Aus4Skills components.

Components 4 and 5 respond to strategic and emerging needs of Australia's other aid investments in Vietnam and Whole-of-Government partners, to complement and leverage their investments, policy priorities and advocacy efforts.

A Box 1 Aus4Skills HRD toolbox

The toolbox consists of three categories of tools or modalities that can be deployed, depending on need and the targeted group, to meet program outcomes:

- 1 Formal Australia Awards: Australia Awards Scholarships, Australia Awards Short Courses and Australia Awards Fellowships⁴
- 2 Australia Awards Complementary Assistance
- 3 Informal Learning Opportunities.

The two most widely used tools to implement the five HRD components are Australia Awards Short Courses (AASCs) and Informal Learning Opportunities (ILOs). An essential element in the Aus4Skills approach to the AASCs is that the content is tailored in ways that allow the participants to apply their learning to their context in Vietnam, most commonly in the form of an Application Project.

ILOs are a highly flexible means of providing a wider range of HRD-related assistance to an organisation. They do not need to meet the definitions or standards set by formal Australia Awards and may include such modalities as short courses (non-AASC) in any form, seminars, workshops, conferences, study tours, technical assistance in any relevant field, mentoring and coaching exercises.

Aus4Skills is at its implementation mid-point. Delivery of the Australia Awards program in Vietnam started at program commencement in 2016, while the implementation of the non-scholarship activities fully commenced in early 2018, following the finalisation of the design (July 2017) and preparatory work for the agreed activities. Aus4Skills will be escalating its activities in the coming 12-18 months in order to deliver against the end-of-program outcomes.

The Managing Contractor for Aus4Skills, Coffey International Ltd (a Tetra Tech company), manages sub-contracts and grants with other service providers and implementing partners during program implementation.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Vietnam's Human Resource Development Context

Extensive information about the HRD challenges faced by Vietnam, at the time Aus4Skills was designed, is contained in Vietnam's Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011-2020, the Australia – Vietnam Human Resource Development Strategy 2014-2020 and the Australia – Vietnam Human

⁴ Fellowships are currently on hold, pending the outcome of a global review.

Resource Development Partnership Design 2016 -2020. The review team heard from stakeholders that many of these challenges still exist, including:

- › The higher education sector, including technical and vocational education, is characterised by a growing unmet demand, and there is a disconnect between the demands of the labour market and the quality of delivered courses.
- › Access to higher education, and particularly to the higher quality institutions, is inequitable, particularly for people with disability and those based in rural areas.
- › There remains a shortage of workers in Vietnam with the right skills to meet industry needs.⁵

Promoting human resources and skills development (particularly skills for modern industry and innovation), is one of three breakthrough areas highlighted in Vietnam’s Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011-2020. Aus4Skills positions Australia and Vietnam as partners in achieving the shared goal that “Vietnam can access and use high level professional and technical knowledge skills and competencies to contribute to the country’s sustainable economic and social development, and enduring links with Australia.”⁶

Vietnam is also working closely with other donors and multilateral agencies to progress its HRD goals, some of whom are making significant contributions to technical and vocational education and training (TVET)⁷ and support for University autonomy⁸. At the same time, other donors⁹ who have been supporting Vietnam’s HRD objectives are decreasing their support as Vietnam progresses to Middle Income Country¹⁰ status.

The review team also heard from Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) that two of its scholarship programs, Project 911 and Project 599¹¹, are being suspended (while awaiting confirmation of replacement scholarship programs).

1.2.2 Australian Government Policy Context

At the time the Aus4Skills non-scholarship HRD components were designed Australia’s development policy drivers included:

- › Australia’s overarching development policy:
 - » Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability
 - » Making Performance Count: enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of Australian aid.
- › Australia’s global aid policies:

⁵ Australia – Vietnam Human Resource Development Partnership Design. pp. 2-3.

⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

⁷ For example, Germany is supporting institutional and legal TVET reform processes, improving the quality and demand-orientation of training offers and the development of Centres of Excellence. Details available at <https://www.tvet-vietnam.org/en/topic/39.tvet-in-vietnam.html>

⁸ For example, in 2017 the World Bank approved a concessional loan for the ‘Support for Autonomous Higher Education Project for Vietnam’ to improve research, teaching, and institutional capacity at three selected autonomous universities and strengthen the national higher education management system. Sourced from <http://projects.worldbank.org/P156849?lang=en>

⁹ For example, Belgium’s aid program will cease all bilateral assistance in June 2019.

¹⁰ Middle Income Countries are defined as having a per capita gross national income of US\$1,026 to \$12,475. Vietnam became a lower Middle-Income Country in 2011. Its per capita gross national income has risen from US\$1,260 in 2011 to US\$2,170 in 2017. Sourced from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=VN&year_high_desc=false

¹¹ Project 911 supports lecturers from Universities and (non-vocational) Colleges to undertake doctoral studies overseas. Project 599 supports University lecturers and students, and state agency officers to undertake Bachelor and Master level studies overseas. Sourced from <https://vied.vn/en/about-vied/vietnamese-government-s-scholarship-schemes.html>

- » Strategy for Australia's aid investments in private sector development
- » Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program
- » Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy
- › Australia Awards global and country strategies:
 - » Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016 - 2020
 - » Australian Alumni in Vietnam Strategy. 2016 – 2021
 - » Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- › Australia's specific aid objectives in Vietnam contained within:
 - » Australia's Aid Investment Plan in Vietnam 2015-16 to 2019-20
 - » Australia-Vietnam Gender Equality Strategy for 2016-2020.

Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper (2017), and the Joint Statement on the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between Australia and Viet Nam (2018) are two recent additions to the policy and strategic context in which Aus4Skills operates. The Strategic Partnership emphasises Australia's development cooperation with Vietnam within an economic partnership¹². DFAT staff at Post¹³ noted Australia's aid investments in Vietnam are not judged solely on the achievement of development outcomes, they must also demonstrate a contribution to Australia's policy interests in Vietnam.

There are also other Australian Government policy instruments and/or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) arrangements that have a bearing on the work undertaken by Aus4Skills. For example, the Department of Education and Training's National Strategy for International Education 2025 (and related MoUs), ACIAR's Strategy for Agricultural Research Collaboration in Vietnam, and the Australia in Vietnam Agriculture Strategy. Aus4Skills does not directly contribute to the implementation of these policies¹⁴, nevertheless it is important for Aus4Skills to be aware of these broader relationships between Australia and Vietnam.

The abovementioned policies and strategies make for a complex policy operating environment that has the potential to 'pull' Aus4Skills in different directions. It could be viewed as a strength of the Aus4Skills design, and the implementation team, that the program thus far has been flexible enough to respond to differing policy drivers. However, there is a large onus on DFAT staff at Post to navigate the complexities of this policy environment and provide clear, unequivocal direction to Aus4Skills.

¹² Paragraph 14 of Joint Statement on the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between Australia and Viet Nam.

¹³ Post refers to the Australian Embassy in Vietnam (Hanoi).

¹⁴ As a program funded by Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA), Aus4Skills falls under the policy parameters of Australia's Aid Program, as directed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and as set out in DFAT documents.

2 Methodology

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the review is to identify what is working well in the Aus4Skills program, what activities or innovations should continue or be replicated, what should be improved, and what should or could cease. A formative evaluation approach was used, with the emphasis on generating useful insights for improving implementation for the remainder of the program. As the non-scholarship HRD components of Aus4Skills have fully commenced implementation in the past twelve months, the review is not expected to generate definitive evidence of outcomes achieved.

The scope of primary data collection under the review was on the non-scholarship HRD activities delivered under Aus4Skills. Australia Awards Scholarships were not a primary focus of the review.

2.1.1 Audience

The review has a broad intended audience, ranging from senior decision makers within the foreign affairs and aid programs, to implementers of Aus4Skills activities. The review will be used by DFAT to inform decision-making about the suitability of the end-of-program outcomes and the balance of components to improve the relevance and sustainability of Aus4Skills.

2.2 Evaluation questions

The terms of reference for the review include evaluation questions under five areas: effectiveness; efficiency; relevance; gender equality, disability and social inclusion; and, the future. Discussions with Post clarified the primary information needs from the review were understanding whether Aus4Skills has the appropriate scale¹⁵ and scope¹⁶ of activities to achieve the end-of-program outcomes, as well as, meet Australia's policy and influence objectives. As such, the evaluation team prioritised data collection and analysis against the effectiveness evaluation questions.

2.2.1 Effectiveness

- › Is Aus4Skills on the right track to bring about the *desired policy impacts and/or influence* outlined in the Program Design?
 - » Do we have the right mix between individual support, organisational support, policy dialogue and influence building?
 - » Do we have the right balance between achieving program strategic coherence versus addressing emerging priorities?

2.2.2 Efficiency

- › Is the Facility appropriately resourced and structured to deliver the design's outputs and outcomes?

¹⁵ Scale refers to the size of the activities.

¹⁶ Scope refers to the breadth, depth and reach of the activities.

2.2.3 Relevance

- › How well is the program aligned with Australia’s overarching aid policy and specific program directions in Vietnam?
 - » How well has the Australia Awards component aligned to the Australia Awards Global Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework?

2.2.4 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)

- › Assess the extent to which Aus4Skills is meeting its twin-track GEDSI Strategic Objectives (both mainstreamed and targeted activities)?

2.2.5 The future

- › How can sustainability and relevance be maintained in the remainder of the current program, in light of the new Australia-Vietnam Strategic Partnership?
- › How can any identified efficiencies or adjustments be implemented without negatively affecting the program’s ability to achieve the design’s outcomes?
- › Should any adjustments be made to improve the effectiveness or influence of the GEDSI work?

2.3 Approach

The evaluation methodology used was a mixed methods one. The review team supplemented qualitative data collected during consultations, with quantitative data from existing sources.

A collaborative approach to analysis and recommendation forming was part of the evaluation process. The evaluation team led the data collection and initial analysis stages to determine emerging findings, and then test out recommendations with both DFAT and the Managing Contractor at the aide memoire discussion to add a level of contestability to the proposed changes going forward.

Appendix B sets out the evaluation questions, the approach to collecting and analysing information and sources of information. It also details the methodology used for data collection, data analysis and formation of conclusions and recommendations. The list of stakeholders consulted is at Appendix C.

2.4 Limitations

As the lead evaluator does not speak Vietnamese, interpretation services were required for some interviews. While the interpreters generally did an outstanding job, there were some instances where the level of nuance and detail put forward by an interviewee was not fully conveyed in interpretation. To compensate for this all interviews conducted in Vietnamese were transcribed (in English) by Phạm Thị Thùy Chi, while all interviews conducted in English were transcribed by Stacey Tennant. The review team is confident this approach resulted in appropriately detailed transcribed interview notes for the data analysis phase.

3 Findings

3.1 Effectiveness

3.1.1 Is Aus4Skills on the right track to bring about the desired policy impacts and/or influence outlined in the design?

The end-of-program outcomes included in the Aus4Skills design relate to the attainment and utilisation of skills, and linkages between individuals and organisations in Vietnam and Australia.

The design of the non-scholarship HRD components states that the activities developed by Aus4Skills will support high-level policy dialogues conducted by the Governments of Australia and Vietnam. Particular mention is made of Component 1 (VET) supporting policy dialogue on the importance of vocational skills and governing frameworks for efficient and effective skills development¹⁷. However, the design does not go into detail on the desired policy impacts and/or influence that will be derived through Aus4Skills implementation. Nor is there any information in the design related to the *role* of Aus4Skills in supporting policy dialogue between Australia and Vietnam. This is not unexpected, as it can be difficult to know in advance what opportunities for policy dialogue may arise when beginning implementation of a new program with new partners.

Approximately twelve months of implementation has brought with it experiences and knowledge about potential policy influence which are directly related to activities undertaken by Aus4Skills. Some of the examples identified by Vietnamese stakeholders during the review include:

- › Supporting the relevant Vietnamese government departments (Directorate of Vocational Education and Training (DVET), the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) and the Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA)) with their development of the policy and legal framework/s (and supporting regulations) for the Logistics Industry Reference Council (LIRC), and the policy considerations regarding industry-led models for other sectors (for example, tourism);
- › Advising/assisting the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) to develop the necessary documents (including Decree and Circular) related to new regulations on University Autonomy in an amendment (expected in November 2018) to the current higher education legislation;
- › Increasing the potential of gender considerations influencing policy-making by extending the new gender equality curriculum delivered by Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics to the provincial political schools;
- › Supporting the network of women leaders established in universities in the northern mountainous region to become a nation-wide network;
- › Engaging with the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development (MARD) to develop regulations on standards for processing and trading imported beef;
- › Advocating for the inclusion of Human Rights curriculum throughout the education system (as per Vietnam Government's directive).

¹⁷ Design of non-scholarship Human Resource Development Components, p. 14

It is important to note the following when considering what kind of policy objectives and/or influence Aus4Skills should be expected to contribute to, and what the role of Aus4Skills could be in relation to policy impact and/or influence:

- › The clearer DFAT is on its policy objectives the easier it will be for Aus4Skills to position itself to deliver against DFAT’s expectations. Examples of policy impact include: framing debates and getting issues on to the political agenda; encouraging discursive commitments from the Vietnamese government and other policy actors; securing procedural change at domestic or international level; affecting policy content; and, influencing behaviour change in keyactors.¹⁸
- › The review team heard from Australian government stakeholders about the various aid and trade policy drivers affecting Aus4Skills. Where there may be tensions between these policies (for example, the extent to which Australia’s overseas development assistance can be used to promote Australia’s commercial interests) DFAT has a role in managing dialogue within the Post to reach agreement on the appropriate policy drivers.
- › In some/many instances, it may not be appropriate for Aus4Skills to take the lead in a policy dialogue or be directly involved in policy engagement. Of the three general types of policy influencing activity (Table 1) Aus4Skills’ contribution appears to be more directly aligned to ‘evidence and advice’. It could also potentially assist with public campaigns and advocacy through the alumni network and implementing partners. Lobbying and negotiation is not within Aus4Skills’ mandate, however, Aus4Skills would need to be kept informed of any lobbying and negotiating in order to ensure consistency of messaging with key partners.
- › Policy change is highly complex and proceeds in anything but a ‘linear’ or ‘rational’ fashion, with policy processes shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors. This makes it almost impossible to predict with confidence the likely consequences of a set of activities on policy, and extremely difficult to pin down the full effect of actions even after the event. Monitoring of policy influence requires a purposeful approach from those doing the influencing – this is unlikely to be Aus4Skills.

Table 1 Typology of policy influencing activities

| Type of influencing | Through what channels? | By what means? |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Evidence and advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › National and international policy discourses/debates › Formal and informal meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Research and analysis, ‘good practice’ › Evidence-based argument › Providing advisory support › Developing and piloting new policy approaches |
| Public campaigns and advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Public and political debates in developing countries › Public meetings, speeches, presentations › Television, newspapers, radio and other media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Public communications and campaigns › ‘Public education’ › Messaging › Advocacy |
| Lobbying and negotiation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Formal meetings › Semi-formal and informal channels › Membership and participation in boards and committees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Face-to-face meetings and discussions › Relationships and trust › Direct incentives and diplomacy |

Findings

- › While the design provides little detail on the policy objectives and/or influence Aus4Skills is expected to contribute to, the review team heard several examples from stakeholders about areas of potential policy influence.

¹⁸ Adapted from Overseas Development Institute, 2011. Background Note: A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence. Sourced from <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6453.pdf>.

- › These areas of policy influence are not necessarily under the remit of Aus4Skills to pursue. However, the examples above do provide a starting point for discussion within Post to agree on the desired policy objectives and/or influence going forward.
- › Aus4Skills is generating significant learning that is of value to policy dialogue, though much of this is not documented, or conveyed to DFAT, in a way that easily assists policy dialogue.

Recommendations

DFAT, in collaboration with relevant Australian Government agencies, identify policy objectives and influence priorities to which Aus4Skills will be expected to contribute in the coming 18 months.

DFAT and Aus4Skills agree on the role Aus4Skills will play in contributing to specific DFAT policy objectives and influence priorities. Aus4Skills to provide evidence and analysis, and to keep DFAT informed of possible entry points for policy dialogue arising from Aus4Skills activities.

Aus4Skills adjust its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to reflect agreed policy objectives and influence priorities and Aus4Skills' expected contribution. This should include the approach Aus4Skills will take to regularly documenting opportunities for policy dialogue.

3.1.2 Does the program have the right mix between individual support, organisational support, policy dialogue and influence building?

The five components of the non-scholarship HRD design differ in their approach to individual support, organisational support, policy dialogue and influence building. All components share an emphasis on building individual support, whereas Components 1 and 2 appear to have the most consistent approaches to organisational support. It is worth noting that Components 4 and 5 are demand driven from the Post, and it is not expected that organisational support, policy dialogue and influence building necessarily be included in activities under these components. Appendix D provides detailed findings on individual support, organisational support, policy dialogue and influence building for each of the Components. Below are some highlights.

Component 1: Promoting industry linkages with vocational education and training (VET)

This component has a balanced mix of support at the individual level (capacity building for trainers/lecturers, leaders of vocational training colleges, representatives of the private sector organisations and peak bodies, and state management agencies) and support to create organisational level changes (tailoring the logistics training curriculum, mobilising private sector participation in the stages of the vocational training process). The formation and operation of the LIRC is an example of where the program is making a significant contribution to inter-organisational cooperation between the Government and private sector in Vietnam.

Component 2: Improving quality of Universities in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam

At the individual level, faculty and university leaders participate in Australia Awards Short Courses (AASC) and Informal Learning Opportunities (ILOs) that aim at enhancing areas of organisational competence. Support at the organisational level under Component 2 has been implemented systematically, with support for the development of the 5-year Strategic Plans, university restructuring, reviewing job descriptions, enhancing the quality assurance systems and renewing many of the current curricula across the three target Universities¹⁹. Linkages between Universities were developed as a result of the alumni engagement rather than through support at the inter-organisational level under this component. Support for policy dialogue with MOET in the formulation of specific policies and regulations on university autonomy in documents guiding the implementation of the Higher Education Law may be a priority in the remainder of the program.

¹⁹ Thai Nguyen University, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Tay Bac University.

Component 3: Advancing women in leadership (WIL)

In this component, a combination of individual and organisational support, is found in activities related to the Center for Gender Studies and Women's Leadership (GeLead) at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics. With regards to the WIL journeys (WIL-J), the support is provided mainly to individuals²⁰, who, the review team heard are very active in the implementation of their action plans at their organisational level. Organisational and inter-organisational changes have been well-evident after WIL-J 1, with expectations of similar levels of change following WIL-J 2. Examples include the establishment of the Network of Women's Leadership in the northern Universities.

Box 2 Steps in the Women in Leadership Journey (WIL-J)

The WIL-J supports gender equitable leadership by bolstering women's opportunities, confidence and the support of their peers to be influential in their organisations and fields. Women are supported through a five-step 'journey' over the course of ten months:

1. Weekend retreat
2. One-week training in Vietnam
3. Elective activities in Vietnam
4. Six-week training in Australia
5. Core activities in Vietnam

Sustaining and replicating results through implementation of action plans, networking, mentor support and workplace support.

Areas of possible policy influence suggested by partners include the introduction of the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics Gender Equality curriculum to training programs at provincial political schools targeting the local public leaders, and the extension of the WIL network established across the northern universities by extended nationwide (currently an initiative of Thai Nguyen University).

Component 4: Aid Investment Plan

This component delivers HRD assistance to other Aus4Vietnam programs, which to date has been primarily at the level skills building for individuals, or cohorts of individuals from the same organisation. The emphasis on organisational change and policy influence is expected to come from the relevant Aus4Vietnam program rather than Aus4Skills.

Component 5: Australia's Broader Interest

Under this component, activities are designed to support Australia's broader interests in Vietnam (as specified by DFAT). The balance in the mix between individual and organisational support varies depending on the individual activities. Aus4Skills is currently implementing two activities under this component: (i) Human Rights Law postgraduate training at the Vietnam National University Law School (VNU-LS); and (ii) managing abattoirs, training and exchange of skills. With regards to Human Rights education activities with the VNU-LS, the support at the faculty level seems more dominant than individual capacity support. Policy dialogue between Australia and Vietnam on human rights is well-established at a political level²¹ and does not require Aus4Skills involvement (though the review team notes the participation of VNU-LS at the 15th Annual Australia-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue in 2018.²² With abattoir-related activities, support at the individual and organisational level is evident.

²⁰ The WIL Journey 1 pilot had 19 female participants (including 5 ethnic women), and WIL Journey 2 has 20 female participants (5 ethnic women and two women with disability).

²¹ The Annual Human Rights Dialogue between Australia and Vietnam is a high-level forum that has had 15 rounds of consultation.

²² Sourced from <https://dfat.gov.au/news/media/Pages/australian-statement-on-the-15th-annual-australia-vietnam-human-rights-dialogue.aspx>

Aus4Skills does not have a policy dialogue and influence building role with regards to Australia's cattle export to Vietnam. This is undertaken by Meat and Livestock Australia.

Program Outcome 2 (PO2) for Aus4Skills is *stronger workplace enabling environments for skills utilisation in selected priority areas*. The review team heard that upon direction from DFAT the measurement of PO2 to date has been focused on identifying changes in policy, practice and/or performance standards²³ in two or three specific work units of the three tertiary institutions under Component 2. Aus4Skills is expecting to review progress against these measures in mid-2019. The review team notes there are nascent changes in workplace enabling skills utilisation of staff who have participated in AASC and ILOs under Components 1 and 3. Some of these changes in the workplace environments can be linked to actions taken by the AASC and ILO participants themselves. As such, the review team feels there is a need to extend the measurement of PO2 beyond the targeted approach noted above.

Findings

- › In general, there is a good mix of individual and organisational support in all components. Inter-organisational support is found in each component, but evidence of progress at individual levels is strongest across all components. Organisational change, linked to Aus4Skills support, is prevalent in Components 1, 2 and 3.
- › As mentioned previously in this report opportunities for policy dialogue and policy influences are presenting themselves through the work undertaken by Aus4Skills. However, more needs to be done to capitalise on these opportunities.
- › Supporting new linkages between Government (training institutions) and the private sector in Vietnam is a deliberate approach in Components 1 and 2 and an emerging strength of Aus4Skills. There is evidence that involvement of the private sector is contributing to organisational changes observed at vocational colleges and enhanced institutional linkages among actors in the sector. Representatives from Government institutions and the private sector independently spoke to the review team in detail about the level and nature of collaboration that is different to that experienced in the past. For example, engagement of the private sector across the curriculum development cycle provides a useful exemplar for how to ensure tertiary institutions (VET and Universities) are meeting demands of employers and increasing the relevance and quality of the skills base of their students (see Appendix D for details).
- › There is emerging evidence that the 'journey' approach to supporting women's leadership is producing results. There is potential for additional leadership journeys (for men and women) to be included in Aus4Skills. The review team heard of early discussions within Post of interest in supporting existing leadership schemes in Vietnam. The Aus4Skills toolbox approach has the flexibility to support different approaches to leadership development, either as a standalone journey (such as the WIL-J) or providing an ILO as an 'add-on' to an existing leadership scheme.
- › Component 4 (AIP) is the least utilised component of Aus4Skills. While most non-HRD Post staff reflected to the review team that the mechanism was, in theory, an appropriate one, it was not immediately clear whether it would be greatly needed by programs in the near future. Where AASC had been provided under AIP, the practical, targeted nature of the training appears to have benefitted participants, and the relevant Aus4Vietnam programs.

Recommendations

Aus4Skills continue to implement Components 1, 2 and 3 as per the design to expand and consolidate the individual and organisation achievements to date. Aus4Skills continue to work with

²³ Definitions used are: policy = a documented course or principle of action adopted by an organisation; practice = an expected procedure or way of doing something adopted by an organisation; performance standard = a statement of the behaviours or results expected for performance to be considered satisfactory adopted by an organisation.

implementing partners to enhance inter-organisational learning (for example, to support standardisation of curriculum development and quality assurance systems).

Aus4Skills extend measurement of the enabling environment for skills utilisation to include monitoring under Components 1, 2 and 3.

DFAT and Aus4Skills retain Component 4 and limit the focus to activities to AASC and ILOs that enhance individual skills capacity at the individual level across more than one Aus4Vietnam program. Sector specific and/or organisational HRD support should be addressed through each of the other Aus4Vietnam programs.

DFAT to further discuss its emerging ideas on leadership development activities with relevant partners in Vietnam and Aus4Skills, with a view to designing a stream of leadership support activities in addition to the WIL-J.

3.1.3 Is there the right balance between achieving program strategic coherence versus addressing emerging priorities?

The successes of the program to date in Components 1, 2 and 3 (noted above) have occurred in a context where Aus4Skills has (subject to DFAT approval) implemented activities mostly as articulated in the design for non-scholarship HRD activities. This has enabled Aus4Skills to maintain program coherence in these early stages of implementation. At the same time, the review team heard from non-DFAT Post staff of the value of Aus4Skills in addressing emerging priorities. Notwithstanding some frustrations noted over timeframes to implement activities, there is a strong sense from stakeholders interviewed that Aus4Skills has adeptly balanced, and delivered on, expectations of delivering its program outcomes and responding to emerging priorities.

The review team notes some risks that could affect this balance being maintained for the remainder of the program:

- › The review team heard from DFAT staff at Post of the effect of limited engagement in annual planning processes and lack of consultation within Post on DFAT staff's awareness of the strategic 'fit' of the Aus4Skills program within the Aus4Vietnam portfolio.
- › With a number of the other Aus4Vietnam programs recently commencing implementation, it was also noted by DFAT staff at Post that opportunities for engagement to date had been limited. Current practice is for DFAT's human resource development team to coordinate discussions and decision-making among all stakeholders at Post on an 'as-needs' basis.
- › Expenditure on non-scholarship HRD activities is expected to significantly increase in the final eighteen months of program delivery (see Efficiency section below for further details). Decision-making around this expenditure will need to be structured and consultative so Aus4Skills can deliver the necessary support, in collaboration with implementing partners, to achieve the program outcomes. At the same time, as the program gets closer to its end date the level of flexibility for delivering against emerging priorities will need to decrease.

It is an opportune time to recalibrate the planning and decision-making mechanisms within the Post to ensure Aus4Skills retains its program coherence, at the same time as addressing the priorities that have emerged in the changing context since the non-scholarship HRD components were designed in 2016. This will require decisions being made at a higher level than has been the practice to date.

Findings

- › For the most part coherence of Aus4Skills has been maintained through implementing the components as described in the design document, and agreements with DFAT on emerging priorities (for example, supporting human rights law postgraduate training and managing abattoirs, training and exchange of skills).
- › There is a need for strengthened coherence between Aus4Skills and the other Aus4Vietnam programs, and other Australian government agencies. This coherence agenda needs to be driven at the highest levels in the Post.

- › It is timely for strategic and programmatic decisions to be made, in the immediate future, on how to best utilise the projected expenditure for the remainder of the program in a way that maximises the successes derived from Components 1, 2 and 3 to date, and addresses emerging HRD priorities of interest to Australia in Vietnam.

Recommendations

DFAT's HRD team agree a 'ways-of-working' framework with relevant stakeholders at Post that identifies the processes for consultation and decision-making during the planning process. This could include consideration of annual plan decision-making at the deputy Head of Mission or Head of Mission level.

The planning process for the 2019-2020 financial year consider the period July 2019 – December 2020 (i.e. the final 18-month period of the program) to ensure coherence in the final stage of the Aus4Skills program.

3.2 Efficiency

3.2.1 Is the Facility appropriately resourced and structured to deliver the design's outputs and outcomes?

The momentum of activity delivery is expected to increase significantly from now through to the end of the program (December 2020), with an **increase in activity costs** from approximately AUD 6 million in 2018/2019 financial year to approximately AUD 14 million in the final 18 months of program implementation (see Appendix E for budget overview).

Experience to date with new activity streams in Aus4Skills shows that considerable time is required to develop relationships with relevant partners, agree the parameters for an activity and commence implementation (in most cases this takes 6-12 months)²⁴. It would therefore be prudent to plan early to allow sufficient time for the full activity cycle to be completed (set up and agree the necessary contract/management/partnership arrangements, implement the activity and monitor the results of the activity). Adding new activities with a substantively different focus in 2020 risks undermining the ability of Aus4Skills to deliver sustainable results.

Early planning around the remaining activities of the program will also allow for DFAT and Aus4Skills to convey messages to implementing partners about the expected levels of support, which will assist these partners with their own priority setting, planning and resource allocation.

The 2018 – 2019 annual work plan was approved to December 2018 pending the results of this review. Given the lead times required to implement activities (and challenges in delivering activities between December – February²⁵) it is recommended DFAT proceed with its approval process for the January – June 2019 period at the same time as considering the recommendations of this review.

Aus4Skills' **human resources** are structured around the components it implements, with some functions such as communications, procurement, financial management and monitoring and evaluation working across all components. The review team notes the following have occurred to ensure an appropriate structure and skill set across Aus4Skills human resources:

- › In accordance with the design for the non-scholarship HRD components Aus4Skills undertook a staff restructure in 2017 to align resources with the new HRD focus on developing and implementing Australia Awards Short Courses and ILOs.

²⁴ This estimated timeframe is based on Aus4Skills reporting and stakeholder experiences conveyed to the review team.

²⁵ The holiday shutdown periods of mid-December to mid-January (Australia) and mid-January to mid-February (Vietnam) present significant challenges to procurement and contracting. Aus4Skills Annual Report 2017, pp. 33.

- › In early 2018 an implementation review of the Australian Alumni in Vietnam Strategy 2016-2021 was conducted. One of the review's recommendations was to for Aus4Skills to restructure its Alumni Engagement team to focus collective effort on implementing the Australian Alumni in Vietnam Strategy and a more efficient structure to manage alumni engagement resources. This restructure was undertaken in mid-2018²⁶. In addition to restructuring the Alumni Engagement Team, Aus4Skills also engaged a short-term alumni advisor.

The review team notes that Aus4Skills has one staff member dedicated to **communications**. Given the extensive communications activities across all components consideration should be given to ensuring there is sufficient communications support across all components of Aus4Skills.²⁷ Aus4Skills has been collaborating with media outlets in Vietnam to develop television and print content (at no cost to the program). This approach appears to be a successful one, with the review team sighting examples of published/televises (unpaid) content. The review team also heard of AASC alumni developing communications content (often with assistance from their workplace). This may provide an opportunity for Aus4Skills and DFAT to leverage dissemination of communications material regarding Australia's support to HRD in Vietnam.

Staffing resources of DFAT's HRD team at Post, in particular the lack of a substantive incumbent in the First Secretary role throughout 2018, has had a direct impact on program oversight and implementation. In addition, the review team heard examples of some inefficient work practices across the DFAT HRD team and the Aus4Skills team, for example double-handling of inputs into DFAT's investment quality reporting. These inefficient work practices could be redressed through a joint exercise of mapping roles and responsibilities across tasks at key points in planning and implementation.

The review team notes that the periods covered by the **annual report and the annual plan are not aligned**, with the former reporting on a calendar year basis and the latter planning on a financial year basis. To date, reporting on the non-scholarship HRD components, has focused on activity output indicators (largely quantitative indicators related to participation rates). As implementation progresses, the annual report will need to be more heavily weighted to demonstrating progress towards the agreed outcomes²⁸. In addition, reporting will need to provide evidence of success (or failure) from Aus4Skills' 'demonstration' approach to HRD, and possible entry points for policy influence (as noted in Section 3.1.1).

The review team heard examples of issues with some **planning, management and governance structures** that need to be addressed in order to more efficiently and effectively deliver the program. Notably, the governance mechanism (Program Coordinating Committee) does not appear to fully meet either Australia or Vietnam's interests and expectations of a consultative, direction-setting forum. In addition, stakeholders noted the limitations of a one-year planning cycle on their ability to undertake longer-term planning. The review team also heard from stakeholders that procurement procedures were at times lengthier and more prescriptive than they would have anticipated was necessary.

Findings

- › The feedback to the review team was overwhelmingly positive about the productive, respectful and solution-oriented working relationships Aus4Skills staff have nurtured with DFAT and implementing partners. This bodes well for addressing the efficiency issues noted by the review.

²⁶ The restructure merged the existing personnel resources of the Aus4Skills Alumni Engagement team, with the Global alumni personnel resources.

²⁷ Australia Awards Scholarships and alumni engagement demand a high level of communications support, often with fixed deadlines. It is not uncommon for other communication priorities to be put on hold while key Australia Awards communications priorities are met. The review team notes a number of activities in the 2017-2018 plan could not be undertaken or were delayed (according to Aus4Skills this was due to lack of communication staffing resources). Aus4Skills Annual Report 2017, p. 37.

²⁸ DFAT M&E Standard 3.4.

- › The review notes the following issues that require attention in order to increase effective implementation of Aus4Skills:
 - » The governance mechanism (Program Coordinating Committee) not fully meeting either Australia or Vietnam's interests and expectations of a consultative, direction-setting forum.
 - » The planning and reporting cycles are not currently structured to follow the same financial year cycle.
 - » The limitations of one-year planning cycles on stakeholders' ability to undertake longer-term planning.
 - » If not managed well, the increase in activity spending expected in 2019 and 2020 has the potential to fragment the program's coherence and lead to ineffective spending.
- › To mitigate these risks, planning for the 2019-2020 financial year should be extended to include indicative activities and budget through to the end of the program.

Recommendations

Aus4Skills update the indicative activities and budget for 2018/2019 financial year for DFAT consideration/approval. This should include a discussion between DFAT and Coffey regarding the contractual value for personnel costs for the remainder of the program.

DFAT and Aus4Skills undertake a planning process in early 2019 which:

- a. Is conducted in accordance with the 'ways of working' framework mentioned in the recommendations under 'effectiveness'.
- b. Covers the period July 2019 – December 2020.
- c. Identifies 'priority' activities and 'consolidation' activities for the remainder of program with minimal funds unallocated for emerging priorities.

DFAT's HRD team and relevant Aus4Skills staff document respective responsibilities across key tasks to ensure efficient use of resources in both teams.

DFAT and MOET restructure the functions and membership of the PCC and alter the timing of PCC meetings to better serve Australia and Vietnam's needs for a consultative forum that provides clear direction setting for Aus4Skills.

The annual reporting cycle be changed from a calendar to financial year cycle to be in alignment with the planning cycle, with two reporting points (January, July) and revised report content.

3.3 Relevance

3.3.1 How well is the program aligned with Australia's overarching aid policy and specific program directions in Vietnam?

As noted in Section 1.2.2 there are many policy and strategic influences on Australia's aid investments in Vietnam. Aus4Skills non-scholarship HRD components were designed in direct alignment with Australia's overarching aid policy (as set out in Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability), Australia's Aid Investment Plan in Vietnam and the Australia-Vietnam Gender Equality Strategy.

The following changes in context since the Aus4Skills program conception in 2015 were conveyed to the review team:

- › The relationship between Australia and Vietnam is now characterised by the Strategic Partnership. As such, the aid program needs to situate itself to deliver against this Strategic Partnership and Australia's aid investments in Vietnam are not judged solely on the achievement of development outcomes, they must also demonstrate a convergence with Australia's policy objectives in Vietnam.

- › The pace of change (particularly in the industries and sectors supported by Aus4Skills) in Vietnam is very fast.
- › As Vietnam increases its status as a Middle-Income Country, it is possible the aid program will reduce, but is likely to be expected to deliver the same value against Australia’s national interest.
- › As other Aus4Vietnam programs have commenced implementation, the understanding of where Aus4Skills ‘fits’ in delivering against AIP and where respective programs are expected to deliver against DFAT’s policy influence objectives is evolving. This increases the need for strong Aus4Vietnam collaboration and information sharing across the Post.

These contextual changes affect Australia’s aid program directions in Vietnam. On a practical level, Aus4Skills (when asked to do so) has been able to respond to emerging priorities related to Australia’s development assistance in Vietnam. It is incumbent upon DFAT to ensure that decision-making around future directions of Aus4Skills fits within the agreed parameters for Official Development Assistance while meeting Australia’s economic partnership objectives in Vietnam.

Findings

- › The component structure of Aus4Skills provides appropriate scope to move with shifts in Australia’s aid policy and/or Aus4Vietnam program directions. The modalities in the Aus4Skills HRD ‘toolbox’ can be utilised to deliver HRD support across differing priorities. The end-of-program outcomes however are closely aligned to HRD outcomes and could be expanded to capture a broader range of Aus4Skills results. For example, private sector engagement and development, and contribution to policy dialogue.
- › DFAT is responsible for direction setting and decision-making regarding alignment of Aus4Skills with Australia’s aid policy and program directions in Vietnam. Any major shifts in direction or activity focus need to be communicated to Aus4Skills, and implementing partners, as soon as possible to minimise any disruption to stakeholder relationships and activity implementation.

Recommendations

Aus4Skills to update its M&E framework to include outcome statements on private sector engagement and development, and contribution to policy dialogue.

3.3.2 How well has the Australia Awards component aligned to the Australia Awards Global Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework?

Although the scope of the review did not include the Australia Awards component of Aus4Skills, an analysis of key documents revealed the following with regards to the alignment of the Australia Awards component to the Australia Awards Global Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation framework:

- › Employees of Vietnamese private and state companies became eligible to apply for scholarships for the first time. In addition, employees from International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) became eligible again after several years of being ineligible. These changes bring the Australia Awards component in line with eligibility expectations under the Australia Awards Global Strategy.
- › Data collection methods (including ADIS) used by Aus4Skills would allow for reporting against outcomes, however the ADIS report does not present the data analysis against the global M&E framework outcomes. Nor does the Australia Awards Annual Report statistics directly report against the global M&E framework outcomes.

The review team notes that the Australia Awards Global Strategy will be subject to review in the near future. It is suggested that following this review, Aus4Skills and DFAT’s HRD team at Post do an internal review of the Australia Awards component to check its alignment with any new strategic direction (including any new global M&E Framework).

The review team also notes that in 2018 the Scholarships and Alumni Branch in Canberra developed a M&E Framework for global alumni engagement. As soon as practical, DFAT should make this M&E Framework available to the Aus4Skills team and agree expectations about data contributions from Aus4Skills in order for Post to report against the global M&E Framework indicators.

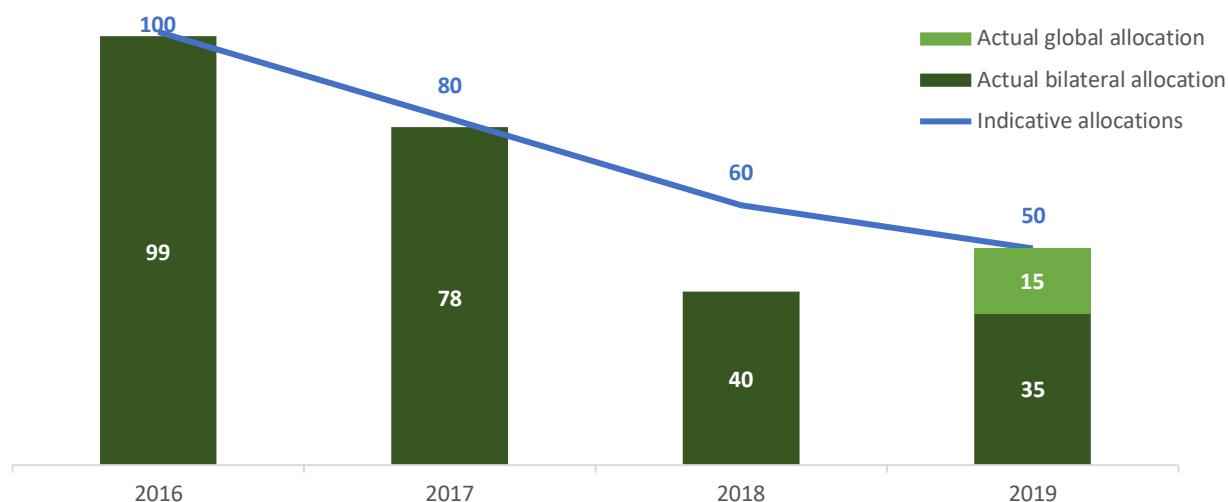
In the meantime, small changes to the reporting structure could be made to more explicitly report Australia Awards data collected by Aus4Skills against the outcomes in the global M&E framework.

The review team was asked also to provide some **reflections on annual allocations for Australia Awards Scholarships**. The review team notes there are several factors affecting DFAT’s internal decision-making around the allocation of long-term scholarships, including the mix of bilaterally and globally funded scholarships, availability of bilateral funds, global Awards policy settings, the ‘value’ of alumni in assisting Australia’s advance its national interests in Vietnam, and the broader context of Vietnam Government and other donor support for supporting international education. Detailed exploration of these factors was not included in the review’s focus. However, the review team did give some limited consideration to Australia Awards Scholarship allocations, primarily through discussion with DFAT staff in Canberra and Post. It is noteworthy that despite the interviews with Vietnamese stakeholders not including specific questions regarding Australia Awards Scholarships, many offered positive reflections on the scholarships.

The Vietnam-Australia Partnership Human Resource Development design notes “from 2016 to 2020, the number of long-term scholarships offered annually is likely to decline from up to 100 initially to 50 or less over the five-year period”. At the same time, a greater focus on AASC was planned (and now coming to fruition under the non-scholarship HRD components). The review team notes the immediacy of many of the examples of changed knowledge and workplace practices offered by the AASC alumni interviewed. This is a positive feature of AASC that cannot be easily replicated by long-term scholarships. In addition, AASC alumni appear to be active and engaged (at least with each other and the AASC service providers).

The contractual arrangements (Statement of Requirements) between DFAT and Coffey included an indicative annual allocation for Australia Awards Scholarships to be funded from bilateral program funds. The actual number of Australia Awards Scholarships funded by the bilateral program has dropped slightly more than those decreasing indicative allocations.

Figure 1 Australia Awards Scholarships, 2016 – 2019 Intakes



Sources: Actual allocations: OASIS data provided by Global Scholarships and Alumni Branch
 Indicative allocations: Aus4Skills Statement of Requirements, Clause 5.1

The review team notes the Australia Awards Global Strategy encourages a mix of modalities (and not one at the expense of another), and that a review of the strategy is in the pipeline. Any decision on

future intakes needs to be taken from a strategic, long-term perspective. This is not likely to be fully clear until after the review of the Australia Awards Global Strategy, and discussions between the relevant DFAT staff at Post and in Canberra. The review therefore recommends that the 2020 Intake be maintained at similar levels to the 2018 and 2019 intakes, i.e. at least 40 and no more than 50²⁹. This will allow DFAT to provide consistency in its messaging to Vietnam about the importance placed by both countries on Vietnam's access to long-term scholarships, while awaiting longer-term, strategic decision-making.

Recommendations

DFAT to keep the Aus4Skills team informed of global Australia Awards changes and work with them to ensure appropriate alignment and clarification of roles, responsibilities and activities for effective implementation.

The 2020 Intake be maintained at similar levels to the 2018 and 2019 intakes, i.e. at least 40 and no more than 50 awards offered.

Following the review of the Australia Awards Global Strategy, DFAT Canberra and Post make decisions on indicative allocations for the Australia Awards 2021 – 2025 Intakes.

3.4 Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion

3.4.1 To what extent is Aus4Skills meeting its twin-track (mainstreamed and targeted approaches) GEDSI Strategic Objectives?

Aus4Skills twin-track approach to GEDSI includes:

- › **GEDSI specific activities, actions and efforts** to tackle persistent challenges and barriers that are holding women, people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged rural locations, including disadvantaged minority peoples, back from achieving their full potential, and
- › **Mainstreaming GEDSI activities, actions and efforts** across all of Aus4Skills work because equality in human resource development cannot be achieved with only standalone GEDSI specific activities³⁰.

Aus4Skills also has a strategic principle that GEDSI considerations are fully integrated into all its activities and products.

Australia has strong policy commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.^{31 32 33} It is also committed to disability-inclusive development.³⁴

The review team heard of the following progress against the GEDSI 'twin-track' approach:

- › Supporting women to advance their (and other women's) leadership aspirations through a structured program of support and professional development (as delivered through WIL-J). The review team notes the early successes of the structured, purposeful steps in WIL-J and the examples provided from participants in advancing their leadership aspirations and implementing

²⁹ Subject to availability of bilateral funds, this may require a bid for an allocation of globally funded AAS.

³⁰ Aus4Skills GEDSI Strategy and Plan, 2017-2018.

³¹ "Australia's foreign policy pursues the empowerment of women as a top priority" Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper p. 93.

³² Australia's Gender Equality Strategy for Vietnam commits the Australian Government in Vietnam to ensuring that all of its aid investments will effectively address gender issues in their implementation. The Strategy focuses on three key areas to progressively close the gender gap in Vietnam: enhancing women's voices in decision-making and leadership; promoting women's economic empowerment; ending violence against women and girls.

³³ Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the three pillars in the Aid Investment Plan with Vietnam.

³⁴ DFAT, 2015. Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program.

personal (and organisational) action plans. As mentioned in Section 3.1.1 (and further elaborated in Appendix D) the AWIL is also showing emerging policy influence value. To date, 19 women (including 5 from an ethnic minority group) participated in the pilot WIL-J 1. 20 women (including 5 from an ethnic minority group, and 2 with a disability).

- › Mainstreaming through:
 - » GEDSI considerations in contracts for all short courses delivered.
 - » Changes to the Advanced Diploma of Politics curriculum delivered by the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics to include gender in leadership and management.
 - » Delivery of ‘Promoting Gender Outcomes’ short course to public and private sector participants involved in implementing Aus4Reform and Aus4Transport.

Aus4Skills has a target of equal participation of women and men in its activities. Of the ten AASC held in 2018, two had equal participation of women and men (Figure 2). Seven AASC had (slightly) more men than women attending the course, and one AASC had significantly more women than men attending the course (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Participation of women and men in 2018 Australia Awards Short Courses

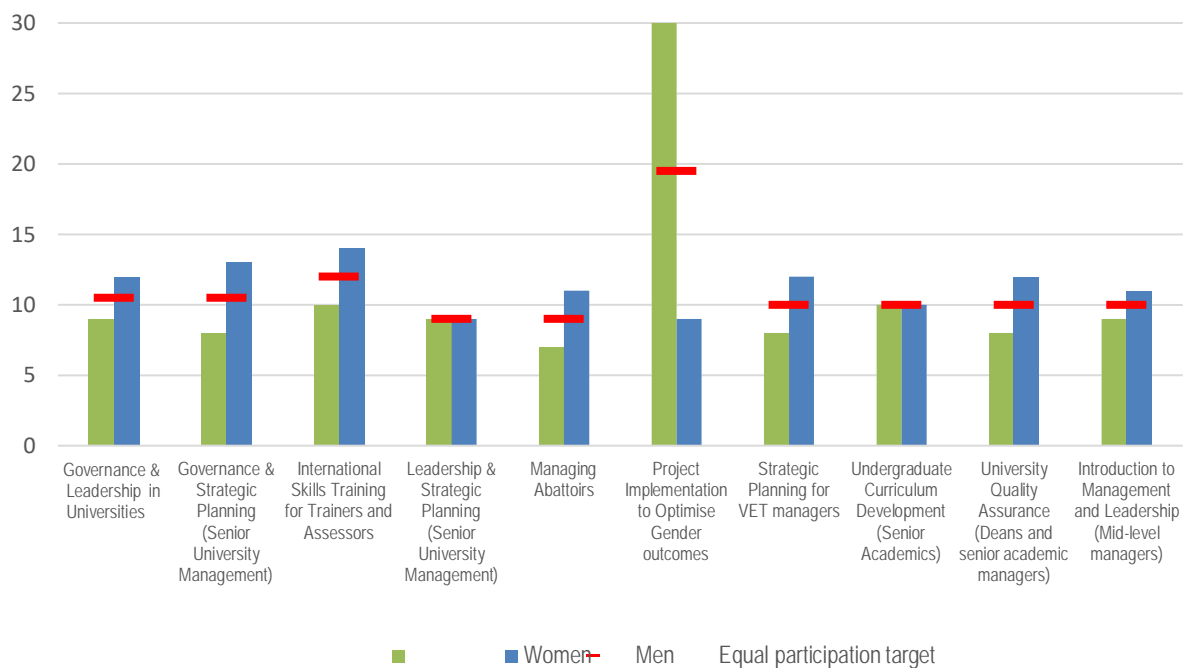
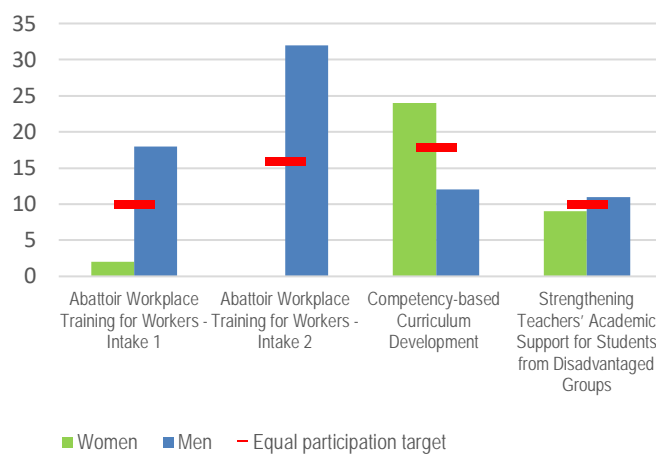


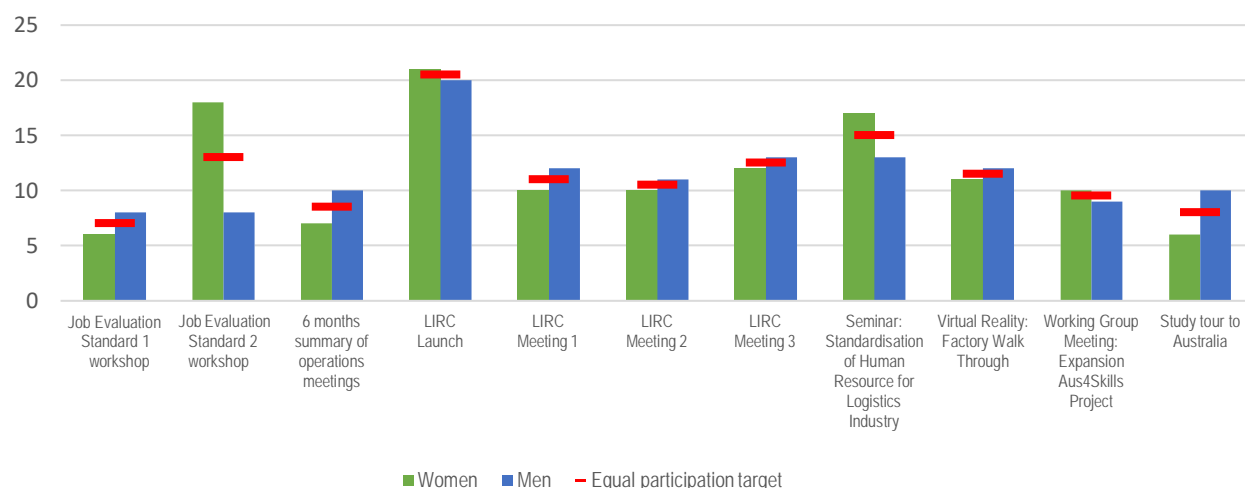
Figure 3 Participation of women and men in non-LIRC related ILOs

With the exception of the training related to abattoir workers, the spread of women and men across



the ILOs was relatively equal (Figures 3 and 4), with some meetings having more women, and some having more men in attendance. Of significance is the study tour to Australia, which is arguably a ‘higher value’ ILO than the LIRC meetings, in that it is a unique opportunity that cannot be accessed through other means. For the study tour, more men participated than women.

Figure 4 Participation of women and men in LIRC related ILOs



Inclusion of people with disabilities is considered a priority of Aus4Skills. However, to date participation of people with disabilities in the non-scholarship HRD components has been limited to two female participants in WIL-J 2 under Component 3. Linkages with disabled peoples' organisations are not evident.

Disability-inclusion is integrated as a topic in some AASCs and the review team heard examples of AASC participants applying disability-inclusive practices in their work following attendance at an AASC. Two examples are: after participating in the gender equality course, which included a module on disability inclusion, participants from the Aus4Transport program are working to increase accessibility to public transportation for people with disabilities; and lecturers at three universities in Component 2 have addressed issues for students with disabilities in their training.

Aus4Skills has informal sub-targets related to people with disability, ethnic minority people and peoples from disadvantage rural locations participating in its activities:

- › At least 10 per cent people from disadvantaged rural locations
- › At least 5 per cent ethnic minority peoples from disadvantaged rural locations
- › At least 5 per cent people with disability.

Gaps in data collection (particularly for the ILOs) means Aus4Skills is not able to fully report on the achievement of these targets. Using the AASC data alone, it is clear Aus4Skills is not meeting its own target for participation of people with disability. Component 2, by virtue of working in the northern mountainous region, enables Aus4Skills to deliver against its target on inclusion of ethnic minority peoples in short courses and ILOs under Component 2. The review team is of the opinion that formalising the targets will provide impetus for a change in data collection methods to fully understand participation of people with disability, ethnic minority peoples, and people from disadvantaged rural locations.³⁵ It will also provide a more substantive platform to fulfil Australia's policy commitment to disability-inclusive development.

Findings

- › The review team heard examples of positive change resulting from gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming activities and activities targeted at advancing women in leadership.
- › The contributions of the non-scholarship HRD activities to disability-inclusive development are less evident.

³⁵ It should be noted some ILOs are funding for events or groups (organised by entities other than Aus4Skills) rather than targeted at specific individuals. Collection of participant information for these events should not be expected to be collected with the same rigour as, for example, sending individuals on a study tour to Australia.

Recommendations

Continue to consider the gender balance of participants in short courses – for some courses it may be appropriate to focus on increasing men’s participation.

Aim to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the non-scholarship HRD activities. An appropriate starting point would be consulting with disabled people’s organisations who already have some links to Aus4Skills to determine how to best achieve this.

Include gendered and disability outcomes in the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Consider formalising the disability and social inclusion targets, and report progress towards them.

3.5 The Future

3.5.1 How can sustainability and relevance be maintained in the remainder of the current program, in light of the new Australia-Vietnam Strategic Partnership?

The review team notes that the Aus4Skills components are largely delivering against their intended outputs, and there is evidence of emerging success under all components. One option would be to expand upon the existing successes and consolidate changes made to date. However, the review team notes DFAT’s desire to see stronger alignment between all the Aus4Vietnam programs and the new Strategic Partnership between Australia and Vietnam. The review team believes the scope of the current design, and the allocation for activity costs, will allow for additional strategic priorities to be absorbed by Aus4Skills while sustaining existing activities at current levels of support.

Recommendation

DFAT to confirm any additional strategic priorities for Aus4Skills as soon as possible and use the planning process for the 2019/2020 financial year to detail activities and budgets in line with this.

3.5.2 How can any identified efficiencies or adjustments be implemented without negatively affecting the program’s ability to achieve the design’s outcomes?

In addition to the abovementioned recommendations, consideration could be given to increased coordination of viewpoints, facilitating decision-making and knowledge management between Aus4Skills and Post. In addition to the ‘ways of working’ document recommended above, consideration could be given to extending the Technical Working Groups of Aus4Skills and/or establishing an internal ‘consultative forum’ within the Embassy to undertake regular, structured discussions of a technical and/or policy nature among relevant Aus4Skills and DFAT Post staff.

3.5.3 Should any adjustments be made to improve the effectiveness or influence of the GEDSI work?

The review team notes the nascent success of the WIL-J in building the leadership confidence of women, providing opportunities for them to create change in their workplace and became part of strong and growing women’s networks. The review team heard of the importance of women’s networks in the lead up to the next election in Vietnam. Collaborating with Thai Nguyen University, Tay Bac University and GeLead to extend their women’s networks south of Hanoi may be one-way Australia could support women’s leadership aspirations at a national level in Vietnam. The extension of the gender equality curriculum delivered by Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics to the provincial political schools also holds potential for influencing mainstreaming of gender considerations in policy-making at a national level³⁶.

³⁶ An assessment of the implementation of the curriculum at the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics prior to any rollout to the provincial political schools would be advisable.

4 Conclusions

Aus4Skills is a valuable part of Australia's engagement with Vietnam, mostly notably because of its collaborative approach in supporting stakeholders' aspirations to change the way in which they work within their own organisation or engage with their external partners to develop their human resources; feedback from stakeholders confirmed this is a point of differentiation between Aus4Skills and programs of other donors.

Despite some frustrations around inefficient practices experienced among the stakeholders interviewed, the feedback to the review team was overwhelmingly positive about the productive, respectful and solution-oriented working relationships Aus4Skills staff have nurtured with DFAT and implementing partners.

There is demonstrable willingness, motivation and commitment to change among Aus4Skills' implementing partners. This may in some part stem from the fact many partners were on a pathway of change already and trying to keep up with fast-paced change (for example, in the logistics industry).

Aus4Skills is working in a dynamic environment, and the review team found evidence of the program being able to adapt to the contextual environment in Vietnam as well as the changing emphasis of Australia's development assistance in Vietnam. This adaptability however needs to be managed within clearer, higher-level decision-making by DFAT around strategic directions for the remainder of the program.

Components 1, 2 and 3 are on track to deliver the end-of-program outcomes, with good momentum and strong relationships established. There has been good monitoring of issues and lessons by Aus4Skills (as documented in the Annual Report), and evidence of an adaptive management style as confirmed by stakeholders to the review team.

Component 5 has proven to be an effective mechanism for delivering against emerging priorities as identified by DFAT, for example, supporting human rights law postgraduate training and managing abattoirs, training and exchange of skills.

Component 4 has been the least utilised component of Aus4Skills. While most non-HRD Post staff reflected to the review team that the mechanism was, in theory, an appropriate one, it was not immediately clear the other Aus4Vietnam programs would have high demands for HRD support from Aus4Skills.

In a relatively short timeframe (less than twelve months), Aus4Skills has worked with government institutions and private sector organisations to demonstrate a strong, likely sustainable and potentially transferrable model of industry-led skills development in an industry key to Vietnam's economic growth. This is an important achievement early in the program and, with careful support in the coming 12-18 months, has the potential to be a long-lasting contribution to the Australia-Vietnam economic partnership.

5 Recommendations

Strategic

- 1 DFAT, in collaboration with relevant Australian Government agencies, identify the policy objectives and influence priorities to which Aus4Skills will be expected to contribute in the coming 18 months.
 - › DFAT to consider assigning lead agency responsibilities for the policy dialogue and clarify coordination mechanisms.
- 2 DFAT and Aus4Skills agree on the *role* Aus4Skills will play in contributing to specific DFAT policy objectives and influence priorities. Aus4Skills to provide evidence and analysis, and to keep DFAT informed of possible entry points for policy dialogue arising from Aus4Skills activities.
 - › Aus4Skills and DFAT already maintain regular (weekly) contact and this can be used to inform DFAT of opportunities as they immediately present themselves.
- 3 DFAT to further discuss its emerging ideas on leadership development activities with relevant partners in Vietnam and Aus4Skills, with a view to designing a stream of leadership support activities in addition to the WIL-J.
- 4 DFAT and MOET restructure the functions and membership of the PCC and alter the timing of PCC meetings to better serve Australia and Vietnam's needs for a consultative forum that provides clear direction setting for Aus4Skills.
 - › Appendix F provides a suggested PCC terms of reference for DFAT and MOET consideration.
- 5 DFAT to confirm any additional strategic priorities for Aus4Skills as soon as possible and use the planning process for the 2019/2020 financial year to detail activities and budgets in line with this.

Operational

- 6 Aus4Skills continue to implement Components 1, 2 and 3 as per the design to expand and consolidate the individual and organisation achievements to date. Aus4Skills continue to work with implementing partners to enhance inter-organisational learning (for example, to support standardisation of curriculum development and quality assurance systems).
- 7 DFAT and Aus4Skills retain Component 4 and limit the focus to activities to AASC and ILOs that enhance individual skills capacity at the individual level across more than one Aus4Vietnam program. Sector specific and/or organisational HRD support should be addressed through each of the other Aus4Vietnam programs.
- 8 DFAT's HRD team agree a 'ways-of-working' framework with relevant DFAT Post staff that identifies the processes for consultation and decision-making during the planning process. This could include consideration of annual plan decision-making at the deputy Head of Mission or Head of Mission level.
- 9 DFAT's HRD team and relevant Aus4Skills staff document respective responsibilities across key tasks to ensure efficient use of resources in both teams.

Planning and reporting

- 10 Aus4Skills update the indicative activities and budget for 2018/2019 financial year for DFAT consideration/approval. This should include a discussion between DFAT and Coffey regarding the contractual value for personnel costs for the remainder of the program.
- 11 The planning process for the 2019-2020 financial year consider the period July 2019 – December 2020 (i.e. the final 18-month period of the program) to ensure coherence in the final stage of the Aus4Skills program.
- 12 DFAT and Aus4Skills undertake a planning process in early 2019 which:
 - a. Is conducted in accordance with the 'ways of working' framework mentioned in the recommendations under 'effectiveness'.
 - b. Covers the period July 2019 – December 2020.
 - c. Identifies 'priority' activities and 'consolidation' activities for the remainder of program with minimal funds unallocated for emerging priorities.
- 13 The annual reporting cycle be changed from a calendar to financial year cycle to be in alignment with the planning cycle, with two reporting points (January, July) and revised report content.
 - > See Appendix G for further details.
- 14 DFAT to keep the Aus4Skills team informed of global Australia Awards changes and work with them to ensure appropriate alignment and clarification of roles, responsibilities and activities for effective implementation.
- 15 The 2020 Intake be maintained at similar levels to the 2018 and 2019 intakes, i.e. at least 40 and no more than 50 awards offered.
- 16 Following the review of the Australia Awards Global Strategy, DFAT Canberra and Post make decisions on indicative allocations for the Australia Awards 2021 – 2025 Intakes.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 17 Aus4Skills adjust its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to reflect agreed policy objectives and influence priorities and Aus4Skills' expected contribution. This should include the approach Aus4Skills will take to regularly documenting opportunities for policy dialogue.
- 18 Aus4Skills extend measurement of the enabling environment for skills utilisation to include monitoring under Components 1, 2 and 3.
 - > Aus4Skills to assess if the current definitions of policy, practice and performance standards are applicable for extension across Components 1 and 3.
- 19 Aus4Skills to update M&E framework to include outcome statements on private sector engagement and development, and contribution to policy dialogue.
- 20 Include gendered and disability outcomes in the monitoring and evaluation framework.
 - > In line with its GEDSI strategy, Aus4Skills consider strengthening the monitoring and reporting of GEDSI activities to demonstrate measurable contributions to program outcomes, giving specific consideration to:

- » reporting on whether women, people with disability and people from disadvantaged rural locations, including disadvantaged ethnic minority peoples are benefitting equally from Aus4Skills activities, products and outcomes.
- » demonstrating the contributions made by Advancing Women in Leadership investments and other Aus4Skills activities and products to the promotion of gender equitable leadership models and enhanced leadership pathways and enabling workplace environments for women, including women with disability, women from disadvantaged rural locations and disadvantaged ethnic minority women.

Below are suggestions for areas of outcome statements to provide more specificity to the outcomes and assist with a discussion between DFAT and Aus4Skills. The review team recommends DFAT and Aus4Skills discuss and agree on additional outcome statements to be included in the program logic by early 2019. Following the inclusion of additional outcome statements, Aus4Skills will need to update the M&E framework to ensure an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators for the outcomes.

Themes/areas for outcome statements

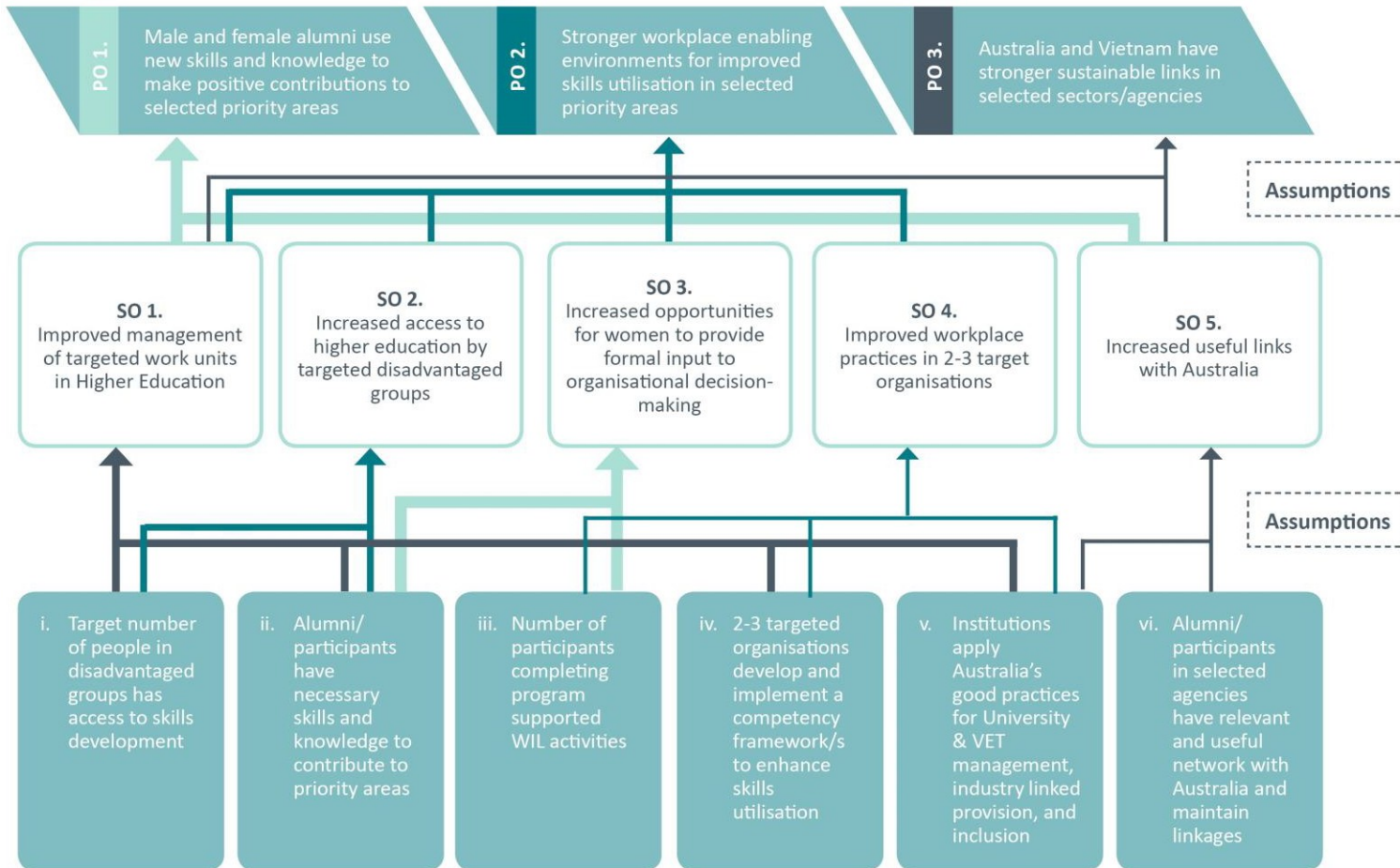
- › Increased collaboration and networking amongst participating individuals and organisations
- › Improved curriculum development and assessment practices in participating organisations
- › Aus4Skills contributes evidence and analysis to inform DFAT's policy influence activities
- › Linkages between public and private sectors leading to increased skill sets in selected industry/ies.
- › Engaging with the private sector to ensure training meets industry's needs, developing human resources and leadership in target organisations, supporting improvements to targeted areas of Vietnam's higher education systems and institutions and the continuation of individual scholarships for study in Australia
- › Women in leadership and management roles
- › Women influence decision-making in the family, the community, workplaces and businesses
- › Increase participation of people with disability, disabled persons organisations and organisations involved in disability inclusive development in Aus4Skills; and development of specific skill sets (for example, leadership, advocacy).

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

- 21 Continue to consider the gender balance of participants in short courses – for some courses (such as the 'promoting gender outcomes' short courses) it may be appropriate to focus on increasing men's participation.
- 22 Aim to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the non-scholarship HRD activities. An appropriate starting point would be consulting with disabled people's organisations who already have some links to Aus4Skills to determine how to best achieve this.
- 23 Consider formalising the disability and social inclusion targets, and report progress towards them.

Appendix A: Program logic

Figure 5 Aus4Skills Non-Scholarship Design Logic - Outcomes Pathway



Appendix B: Methodology

The review will use a formative evaluation approach. As the non-scholarship components of Aus4Skills progressively commenced implementation from mid-2017, the review is not expected to generate definitive evidence of outcomes achieved.

The evaluation methodology is a mixed methods one. The evaluation team will undertake analysis of (primary) qualitative data collected during consultations, and (secondary) quantitative data from existing sources (for example, Australia Awards tracer studies, Aus4Skills case studies, Aus4Skills AAS Alumni Development Impact Survey, and evaluation of the contribution of scholarships to women's leadership³⁷).

Findings will directly influence decision-making on program components for the remainder of the program, and as such, a collaborative approach to analysis and recommendation forming is a key part of the evaluation process. The evaluation team will lead the data collection and initial analysis stages to determine emerging findings, and then test out recommendations with both DFAT and the Managing Contractor to add a level of contestability to the proposed changes going forward. It is anticipated the findings from the review will provide an evidence base for future Aus4Skills program monitoring.

Table 1 sets out the main evaluation questions, the approach to collecting and analysing information and the sources of information.

³⁷ DFAT. (2015). *Building Women's Leadership: the Contribution of Australia Awards Scholarships*. Office of Development Effectiveness, Commonwealth of Australia.

Table 2 Evaluation approach

| Evaluation question | Approach | Data sources / Sampling Strategy | Data collection | Analysis |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Effectiveness: Is Aus4Skills on the right track to bring about the desired policy impacts and/or influence outlined in the Program Design?</p> <p>- Do we have the right mix between individual support, organisational support, policy dialogue and influence building?</p> <p>- Do we have the right balance between achieving program strategic coherence versus addressing emerging priorities?</p> | <p>Examination of progress against the outcomes and assumptions (including GEDSI) through document review and stakeholder interviews.</p> <p>Assessment of how DFAT and the Managing Contractor ensure alignment of activities to expected outcomes/DFAT objectives (including GEDSI).</p> | <p>DFAT policy and strategy documents; Aus4Skills planning, monitoring and reporting documents.</p> <hr/> <p>DFAT; Aus4Skills staff Individuals/organisations directly involved in implementing or benefiting from non-scholarship activities in the past 12-18 months.</p> <hr/> <p>Alumni tracer and case studies.</p> | <p>Document review.</p> <hr/> <p>Face-to-face/telephone semi-structured interviews. Roundtable discussions.</p> <hr/> <p>Qualitative data sourced from case studies of alumni</p> <hr/> <p>Quantitative data sourced from surveys of alumni.</p> | <p>Content analysis against the program logic and evaluation questions.</p> <hr/> <p>Content analysis against the program logic and evaluation questions.</p> <hr/> <p>Descriptive analysis</p> <hr/> <p>Statistical analysis to be determined based on availability and reliability of data sourced.</p> |
| <p>Efficiency: Is the Facility appropriately resourced and structured to deliver the design's outputs and outcomes?</p> | <p>Assess the current program management arrangements, with a focus on how the governance, planning and resourcing mechanisms affect decision-making and implementation</p> | <p>DFAT policy and strategy documents; Aus4Skills planning, monitoring and reporting documents, and, where relevant, financial reporting and procurement procedures.</p> <hr/> <p>DFAT; Aus4Skills staff Individuals/organisations directly involved in implementing or benefiting from non-scholarship activities in the past 12-18 months.</p> | <p>Document review.</p> <hr/> <p>Face-to-face/telephone semi-structured interviews. Roundtable discussions.</p> <hr/> <p>Qualitative data sourced from case studies of alumni</p> | <p>Content analysis against evaluation questions.</p> <hr/> <p>Content analysis against evaluation questions.</p> <hr/> <p>Descriptive analysis</p> |
| <p>Relevance: How well is the program aligned with Australia's overarching aid policy and</p> | <p>Assess the strengths (and gaps)</p> | <p>DFAT policy and strategy documents; Aus4Skills planning, monitoring and reporting documents.</p> | <p>Document review.</p> | <p>Content analysis against evaluation questions.</p> |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>specific program directions in Vietnam³⁸?</p> <p>How well has the Australia Awards component aligned to the Australia Awards Global Strategy and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework?</p> | | <p>DFAT; Aus4Skills staff Individuals/organisations directly involved in implementing or benefiting from non-scholarship activities in the past 12-18 months. Alumni tracer and case studies.</p> | <p>Face-to-face/telephone semi-structured interviews. Roundtable discussions. Qualitative data sourced from case studies of AAS alumni</p> | <p>Content analysis against evaluation questions. Descriptive analysis</p> |
| <p>GEDSI: Assess the extent to which Aus4Skills is meeting its twin-track GEDSI Strategic Objectives (both mainstreamed and targeted activities)?</p> | <p>Assessing the steps taken by the program to reduce barriers to inclusion, and whether they have been successful. Integrate consideration of GEDSI into data collection and analysis for effectiveness key evaluation question.</p> | <p>As per 'effectiveness' evaluation questions above.</p> | <p>As per 'effectiveness' evaluation questions above.</p> | <p>Content and descriptive analyses to draw out GEDSI findings and recommendations. Statistical analysis to take into account gender, disability, location and ethnicity (depending on availability and reliability of data sourced).</p> |
| <p>The Future: How can we maintain sustainability and relevance in the remainder of the current program, in light of the White Paper and the new Australia-Vietnam Strategic Partnership? How can any identified efficiencies or adjustments be implemented without negatively affecting the program's ability to achieve the design's outcomes? Should any adjustments be made to improve the effectiveness or influence of the GEDSI work?</p> | <p>review findings to be shared with DFAT and the Managing Contractor and collaborative agreement reached on recommendations for the future.</p> | <p>All data sources</p> | <p>Document review. Face-to-face/telephone semi-structured interviews. Roundtable discussions. Emerging review findings.</p> | <p>Content, descriptive and statistical data analyses related to all evaluation questions</p> |

³⁸ As articulated in the White Paper (2017), and Australia-Vietnam Strategic Partnership signed in March 2018

Data collection and analysis

Data collection

There are three key sources of data for this evaluation: documents, stakeholders and internal monitoring by Aus4Skills.

The scope of primary data collection under the review is on the 'non-scholarship' HRD activities delivered under Aus4Skills. There is substantial information (in the form of tracer studies and past evaluations) available on the contributions of long-term scholarships delivered under Australia Awards in Vietnam, and globally. This review does not seek to duplicate DFAT's global Australia Awards efforts to trace alumni experiences both while studying in Australia³⁹ and following their return to Vietnam⁴⁰. Nor will the review duplicate the Australia Awards alumni case study approach being adopted by Aus4Skills.

The review team collected, analysed, triangulated and reviewed qualitative data through interviews and discussion groups related to the experiences of key stakeholders involved with Aus4Skills (see Appendix C, Consultation List). The emphasis for the consultations was on gathering information on the views of those stakeholders directly involved in implementing or benefiting from non-scholarship activities (including short courses and informal learning opportunities) delivered under Aus4Skills in the past 12-18 months.

Data was collected from stakeholders through semi-structured interviews. Interview guides steered the semi-structured interviews, which were conversational in nature. The guides acted as prompts to ensure major topics were explored and were adjusted throughout the process to pick up new trails of data and test them in subsequent interviews.

The review team took extensive notes of all interviews which were then coded against the evaluation questions, emerging themes and other insights.

Data analysis

Analysis of the data occurred on an ongoing basis during the data collection phase. The review team recorded and tracked analytical insights during the data collection phase and set aside time each day to briefly discuss the major observations, impressions and emergent sense-making of the data. Evidence was triangulated to ensure rigour - emerging themes from interviews were tested in subsequent interviews.

NVivo (a qualitative research software) was used to code responses from interviews against the key evaluation questions. This helped manage large quantities of interview data and simplify the process for identifying emerging themes and gaps and drawing out findings and recommendations. The review team presented an aide memoire to DFAT staff at Hanoi post, DFAT Canberra and Aus4Skills senior staff on 24 September 2018. The emerging findings and proposed recommendations were discussed at the presentation.

³⁹ On-award surveys are conducted twice a year for Australia Awards scholars at tertiary institutions in Australia.

⁴⁰ DFAT's Global Tracer Facility is the primary mechanism for undertaking tracer and case studies of Australia Awards alumni.

The review team then gathered further necessary data (including data on AASC and ILO) to address gaps identified in the preliminary analysis and undertook final analysis of the data against: (i) the key evaluation questions; and, (ii) emerging themes.

Use of findings

The review team undertook the following actions to increase the likelihood of the review findings and recommendations being used:

- › Clarified key evaluation questions and priorities with DFAT.
- › Identified specific information needs of stakeholders.
- › Regularly checked-in with DFAT's HRD team at Hanoi Post.
- › Informal meetings with Aus4Skills senior staff during consultations in Vietnam.
- › Documented and discussed summary of findings following consultations in Vietnam.
- › Executive summary of evaluation report includes all key findings and recommendations for ease of reference for wide DFAT audience.
- › A concise, clearly written evaluation report (with executive summary) that enables all interested parties to quickly and easily access information of their interest.

Appendix C: Stakeholder consultations

The following stakeholders were consulted during the review.

Table 3 List of stakeholders consulted

| Name | Position | Organisation |
|---|---|--------------|
| DFAT Canberra | | |
| Joanne Frederiksen | Director, Vietnam and Cambodia Section | |
| Sarah Hollis-Bennetts | Assistant Director, Vietnam and Cambodia Section | |
| Rachel Ingwersen | Assistant Director, Gender Equality Branch, Multilateral Policy Division | |
| Kate Watson | Director, Strategy and Governance Section, Scholarships and Alumni Branch | |
| Kayte Davidson | Assistant Director, Strategy and Governance Section, Scholarships and Alumni Branch | |
| Australian Government representatives in Vietnam | | |
| H.E. Craig Chittick | Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam | DFAT |
| Rebecca Bryant | Deputy Head of Mission | DFAT |
| Stacey Nation | Counsellor, Political and Strategic Communication Section | DFAT |
| Ruth O'Hagan | First Secretary, Human Resource Development, Political and Strategic Communication Section | DFAT |
| Kellie Raab | First Secretary, Economics and Development Cooperation | DFAT |
| Justin Baguley | Counsellor, Economics and Development Cooperation | DFAT |
| Ton Nu Hue Chi | Senior Program Manager, Human Resource Development, Political and Strategic Communication Section | DFAT |
| Nguyen Hang | Senior Program Manager, Human Resource Development, Political and Strategic Communication Section | DFAT |
| Dinh Thi Viet Anh | Communication Officer | DFAT |
| Mia Urbano | Social Development Specialist | DFAT |
| Anna Coleman | Second Secretary | DFAT |
| Nguyen Quang Anh | Senior Trade and Development Manager, Economics and Development Cooperation | DFAT |
| Doan Thu Nga | Senior Safeguards Manager | DFAT |
| Nguyen Hoai Nam | Senior Program Manager | DFAT |
| Nguyen Lan Phuong | Senior Program Manager | DFAT |
| Than Thi Thien Huong | Gender Specialist | DFAT |
| Nguyen Tu Uyen | Senior Program Manager | DFAT |
| Nguyen Thi Thanh An | Country Manager | ACIAR |
| Amy Guihot | Agriculture Counsellor | DAWR |
| Joanna Wood | Education and Science Counsellor | DET |
| Tran Le Ha | Deputy Director, International Education | DET |
| Managing contractor staff | | |
| Michael Sadlon | Program Director | |
| Dam Thi Phuong Thảo | Deputy Program Director | |
| Andrea Wilson | Contracts and Services Director | |

| Name | Position | Organisation |
|---|--|--|
| Dang Tuyet Anh | QUNIS Manager | |
| Nguyen Quang Vu | HRD Officer (QUNIS) | |
| Vu Thi Binh Minh | HRD Manager (VET & AIP) | |
| Pham Dieu Linh | HRD Officer (VET & AIP) | |
| Nguyen Thi Van Anh | Communication Manager | |
| Nguyen Thi Kim Hoa | M&E Manager | |
| Graham Alliband | Senior Program Development Adviser | |
| Anne Herbert (Skype) | HRD Adviser | |
| Colin Reynolds (Skype) | M&E Adviser | |
| Cara Ellickson (Skype) | GEDSI Adviser | |
| Vietnam Government representatives | | |
| Pham Duc Thang | Vice Head, Dept. of Formal Training | DVET |
| Hoang Thai Son | Specialist, Dept. of Formal Training | DVET |
| Nguyen Van Lam | Vice Director | Ho Chi Minh City DOLISA |
| Dr Pham Quang Hung | Director General, Vietnam International Education Cooperation Department | MOET |
| Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha | International Cooperation Directorate | MOET |
| Tran Anh Tuan | Director, Higher Education Department | MOET |
| Cao Thanh Mai | Higher Education Department | MOET |
| Implementing Partners | | |
| La Khanh Tung | Lecturer | VNU, School of Law |
| Luong Thu Hien | Director | GELEAD, HCM Academy |
| Donor | | |
| Nguyen Than Tu | Program Officer, Program Reform the TVET in Vietnam | GIZ |
| Krista Verstraelen | Resident Representative | Enabel Vietnam |
| Ms Tran Thi Thanh Huong | Coordinator, Facility to Capacity Building project | Enabel Vietnam |
| Private Sector / Industry Groups | | |
| Nguyen Thanh Khue | Chairman | Viet Uc Agriculture Livestock Company Ltd. |
| Tran Thanh Hoa | Manager – Warehouse Department | DRAGON Logistics Co., Ltd. |
| Ho Thi Thu Hoa | Director | Vietnam Logistics Research and Development Institute |
| Alex Tran | Chairman | Vietnam Logistics and Aviation School |
| Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy | Head of VLA Office | Vietnam Logistics Business Association |
| Nguyen Thi Mai | HR Director | Veterinary Drugs Marphavet |
| Michael Patching | Livestock Services Manager | Meat & Livestock Australia |
| Bui Thi Ninh | Head of Bureau of Employers' Activities | VCCI, Ho Chi Minh Branch |
| Tran Thi Lan Anh | Director of Bureau of Employers Activities | VCCI |
| Alumni | | |
| Nguyen Van Chuong | Rector | Dong Nai VCMI |
| Tran Van Thang | Vice Rector | Dong Nai VCMI |
| Pham Van Hoai | Vice Rector | VCMI (Dong Nai) |
| Nguyen Van Minh | Lecturer | Dong Nai VCMI |
| Dinh Thi Nguyet | Lecturer | Dong Nai VCMI |
| Le Thi Dao | Dean of Economics Department | VCMI (Dong Nai) |

| Name | Position | Organisation |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Bui Ngoc Chau | Vice Dean of International Cooperation Department | VCMI (Dong Nai) |
| Phan Trong Tan | Head of Technical Department | Sai Gon New port |
| Vo Phuc Long | Vice Head of Technical Department | Sai Gon New port |
| Tran Thanh Hoa | Head of Warehousing department | Dragon Logistics Co. Ltd |
| Duong Quoc Viet | Dean of Business Administration Dept. | Thu Duc Technical College |
| Cao Thi Quynh Giao | General Director | Vietnam Shipping Gazette |
| Lam Van Quan | Rector | HCM City College of Economics |
| Pham Thai Binh | Lecturer | HCM City College of Economics |
| Do Vu Ba | Lecturer | HCM City College of Economics |
| Phan Nguyen Mai Trang | Lecturer | HCM City College of Economics |
| Nguyen Thi Truc Phuong | Lecturer | HCM City College of Economics |
| Do Thi Ngoc Thinh | Lecturer | HCM City College of Economics |
| Bui Ngan Gian | Marketing Director | Vietnam Shipping Gazette |
| Nguyen Hong Hai | CEO | LITACO Express |
| Nguyen Thai Dang Khoa | Lecturer | Thu Duc Technical College |
| Phan Minh Thuy | Legal Department | VCCI-Hanoi |
| Le Thanh Ha | Legal Department | VCCI-Hanoi |
| Nguyen Quoc The | Vietnam National Union of Communication and Transport workers | Ministry of Transport |
| Dang Van Minh | Vice President | Thai Nguyen University |
| Pham Van Hung | Rector Board | Thai Nguyen University |
| Do Anh Tai | Rector Board, Vice Rector | Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration |
| Tran Van Dien | Rector | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen The Hung | Vice Rector | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Ngoc Nong | Vice Rector | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Huu Tho | Head, Dept. of Scientific Research and International Cooperation | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Le Van Tho | Vice Head, Dept. of Training | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Thuy Ha | Vice Head, Office of Academic Affairs | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Van Duy | Head, Faculty of Biotechnology and Food Technology | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Thi Dung | Dean, Faculty of Basic Science | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Chi Hieu | Department of Administrative Affairs | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Pham Thanh Hieu | Lecturer, Faculty of Basic Science | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Doan Duc Lan | Vice Rector | Tay Bac University |
| Pham Minh Thong | Head, Department of Quality Assurance and Educational Testing | Tay Bac University |

| Name | Position | Organisation |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Nguyen Thi Lan Anh | Dean, Faculty of Economics | Tay Bac University |
| Vu Quang Giang | Dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry | Tay Bac University |
| Nguyen Ba Diep | Vice Dean, Faculty of Physical Education | Tay Bac University |
| Bui Thi Nguyet Quynh | Lecturer, Faculty of History - Geography | Tay Bac University |
| Nguyen Duy Hieu | Lecturer, Faculty of Math - Physics - IT | Tay Bac University |
| Bui Thi Hoa Man | Lecturer, Faculty of History - Geography | Tay Bac University |
| WIL Journey | | |
| Bui Thi Huong Giang | Vice Head, Dept. of International Cooperation | Thai Nguyen University |
| Le Thi Ngan | Head of Division, Dept. of Law and Society Management | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Nguyen Thi Hong Minh | Vice Head, Research Management and International Cooperation Dept. | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Phan Thi Thu Hang | Head, Training Centre for Social Need | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Lanh Thi Ngoc | Vice Dean, Faculty of Basic Science | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Vu Thi Thanh Thuy | Dean, Faculty of Natural Resource Management | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Deo Thi Thuy | Student Union | Tay Bac University |
| Vu Thi Quyen (email) | Department of Business, Customer Service Manager | Standard Photos |
| Luu Thi Anh Loan (email) | Vice Director | Centre of Disability Research and Capacity Development |
| Students | | |
| Trang A Do (H'Mong) | Student, Faculty of Natural Resource Management | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Hoang Thi Van Anh (San Diu) | Student, Faculty of Natural Resource Management | Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry |

Appendix D: Individual and organisational change across Aus4Skills components

Component 1: Promoting industry linkages with Vocational Education and Training

This component has a mix of support at the individual level (capacity building for trainers/lecturers, leaders of vocational training colleges, representatives of the private sector and state management agencies) and support to create organisational level changes (tailoring the logistics training curriculum, mobilising private sector participation in the stages of the vocational training process).

Faculty members of vocational colleges participated in AASCs on Competency-Based Curriculum Development, and International Skills Training for Trainers and Assessors. They noted the introduction of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) professional standards in the Competency-based Curriculum Development training has significantly strengthened their capacity to develop fit-for-purpose curriculum. All lecturers from the Vietnam College of Machinery and Irrigation, Thu Duc College and the Ho Chi Minh College of Economics who attended the consultation meetings with the review team confirmed they have mastered the competency-based curriculum development methods and find the methods pedagogically appropriate. After the training, they immediately applied the steps of curriculum development including a logistics enterprises survey to determine their human resource needs and skills requirements in logistics sector. Based on that survey the training programs were developed and further commented by the business community.

The leaders of the colleges were involved in training courses on VET managers and VET Study Tour. Leaders noted they were able to immediately initiate changes at their colleges, in particular the decision to invest in simulation workshops, renewal of the logistical training program, and promotion of the long-term cooperation with logistics companies (such as exchange of lecturers, training programs development and internships activities) with the purpose to provide high quality labour to the VET market.

At the same time, private sector representatives are invited to participate in these training activities to best collaborate with vocational colleges. The involvement of the private sector not only contributes to organisational changes observed at vocational colleges but also enhances the institutional linkages among actors in the sector.

The formation and operation of the Logistics Industry Reference Council is an example of where the program is making a significant contribution to inter-organisational cooperation between Vietnam Government and private sector. In addition to the tourism industry, the logistics industry is the second to pilot this model as a leveraging factor for standardisation of professional practices.

Component 2: Improving quality of Universities in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam (QUNIS)

At the individual level, faculty and university leaders participate in AASCs and ILOs that aim at enhancing many areas of organisational competence, including University Governance/Leadership and Strategic Planning, University Quality Assurance, Undergraduate Curriculum Development and Renewal, Strengthening teachers academic support for students of disadvantages groups. All participants interviewed noted changes in their attitude and improved competence in various areas as a result of the AASCs and ILOs. Most importantly, faculty members are well versed in the application of the competence-based curriculum development approach. Thai Nguyen Agriculture and Forestry University has completed the renewal of 23 frame training programs, and Tay Bac University completed 20 programs. Teams of lectures from all faculties participating in the AASCs are now in the process of developing detailed curricula for each subject. The faculties are proactive in cooperating with businesses in many forms. For example, the Faculty of Economics, Tay Bac University has sent their students in their second-year to professional practice session (internship) to enterprises. Before only students in their final year can have internship intakes. Or bee farmers have been mobilised to receive the students of the Department of Agriculture, Tay Bac University, for professional practice. A large veterinary drug manufacturer has increased cooperation with the Faculty of Agronomy of Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry to develop the training program and commit to receiving students after graduation.

Support at the organisational level under Component 2 has been implemented systematically, with support for the development of the 5-year Strategic Plans, university restructuring, reviewing job descriptions, the quality assurance systems and renewing (most of the) current curricula of the three target Universities. Contextually, the review team heard universities are struggling to find a way to become self-reliant and meet the high demand for the improvement of the quality of professional – oriented higher education. Stakeholders noted enrolment has been declining in recent years due to the quality of education not meeting the demands of the labour market. Hence the universities highly valued their participation in the Aus4Skills program. The combination of AASC courses and specialists' post-training technical support is well received by the Universities. The three target Universities are in the process of initiating major organisation changes, namely: (i) Completion of the University Strategy to 2030; (ii) Enhancement of the operation of the University Council; (iii) University Restructure Project; (iv) Development of the Position Description; (v) Completion of curriculum development and (vi) Application of the advanced training/education methods.

The review team heard of linkages between universities being developed as a result of the alumni engagement (rather than through support at the inter-organisational level under this component). Support for policy dialogue with the MOET in the formulation of specific policies and regulations on university autonomy in documents guiding the implementation of the Higher Education Law may be a priority in the next period.

Component 3: Advancing women in leadership (WIL)

In this component a combination of personal and organisational support is found in activities related to GeLead. GeLead is currently conducting a study of Women's Political Leadership in collaboration with Australian professors, and the results of the study may suggest policy recommendations based on the assessment of the current status of women's empowerment in politics in Vietnam. GeLead, with the support of Aus4Skills, has completed the development of the program on Women in Leadership, which will be included in the official training programs at the Ho Chi Minh Political

Academy. This is expected to bring about changes in the perceptions of local and central leadership on women's leadership and to generate long-term policy implications.

With regards to the WIL journeys, the support is provided mainly to individuals, who, the review team heard are very active in the implementation of their action plans at their organisational level. Organisational and inter-organisational changes have been well-evident after WIL 1 and WIL 2. Female faculty members from three universities have been implementing their action plan developed in the WIL journey at faculty and university level. The Gender-based Violence Campaign in Tay Bac University has initiated by a WIL participant and the review team heard of the impact on the perceptions of students and lecturers. The young female leader of Youth Union, Tay Bac University, has been invited to share her experience to implement this Campaign at high schools and universities. Female clubs and networks were established at Thai Nguyen University and Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry with the participation of male members and top leaders of Universities. This network was initiated by the WIL participants. It is expected that the Northwest University will join this network.

Areas of policy influence suggested by participating partners includes introduction of the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics Gender Equality Curriculum to training programs at provincial political schools targeting the local public leaders, and the extension of the WIL network established across the northern universities by extended nationwide (currently an initiative of Thai Nguyen University).

Component 4: Aid Investment Plan

This component delivers human resource development assistant to other Aus4Vietnam programs, which to date has been primarily at the level of individual (or cohort) skills building. The review team heard of the significant changes in mindsets from a handful of participants in the gender outcomes AASC. Importantly, several examples of organisational change were offered to the review team, though the AASC was only recently completed, and so more time is needed to see these nascent ideas/changes come to fruition. The emphasis on organisational change and policy influence is expected to come from the relevant Aus4Vietnam program rather than Aus4Skills.

Component 5: Australia's Broader Interest

Under this component, activities are designed upon request by DFAT, and the balance in the mix between individual and organisational support is not always ensured. With abattoir-related activities, support at the individual and organisational level is evident. The review team heard many examples of changes instigated by individual abattoir workers, but perhaps more importantly, changed practices within the abattoirs themselves. With regards to Human Rights education activities with the Vietnam National University Law School, the support at the faculty level seems more dominant than individual capacity support.

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Appendix E: Draft Program Coordinating Committee Terms of Reference

The following is intended as a guide for DFAT consideration, and discussion with relevant stakeholders, in order to finalise the terms of reference for the Aus4Skills Program Coordinating Committee.

Role of the Aus4Skills Program Coordinating Committee

The Program Coordinating Committee (PCC) is established to provide joint, high-level oversight of the Aus4Skills program by senior DFAT (GOA) and GOV officials.

Options for PCC role/s:

- › Be responsible for strategic planning and review of the Activity, including the allocation of scholarship awards by level, sector focus and between the two categories of awards
- › Discuss Aus4Skills performance and effectiveness,
- › Consider emerging issues and implementation risks,
- › Adjust strategic and operational priorities.
- › Review program implementation and decide on the annual workplans.
- › Ensure Aus4Skills meets the needs of Vietnam counterparts.

Responsibilities of the PCC Chair

The PCC is co-Chaired by DFAT [*Counsellor, Deputy Head of Mission, or Head of Mission*] and MOET.

The responsibilities of the PCC Co-Chairs are as follows [*specific which co-Chair if applicable*]:

- › Set the agenda for each meeting.
- › Ensure that agenda and supporting materials are delivered to members in advance of meetings.
- › Make the purpose of each meeting clear to members and explains the agenda at the beginning of each meeting.
- › Clarify and summarise what is happening throughout each meeting.
- › Keep the meeting moving by putting time limits on each agenda items and keeping all meetings to [x] hours or less.
- › Lead the updates from the Australian and Vietnam Governments
- › Encourage broad participation from members in discussion by calling on different people.
- › End each meeting with a summary of decisions.
- › [*Follow up with consistently absent members to determine if they wish to discontinue membership*].
- › [*Find replacements for members who discontinue participation.*]

Responsibilities of PCC Members

Individual Program Coordinating Committee members have the following responsibilities:

- › Understand the desired outcomes of Aus4Skills.
- › Understand and represent the interests of their organisation/ stakeholder group.
- › Take a genuine interest in Aus4Skill’s outcomes and overall success.
- › Act on opportunities to communicate positively about Aus4Skills.
- › Check that Aus4Skills is making sensible financial decisions – especially in procurement and in responding to issues, risks and proposed changes.
- › Check that Aus4Skills is aligned with the organisational strategy as well as policies and directions across Australian and Vietnamese governments.
- › Actively participate in meetings through attendance, discussion, and review of minutes, papers and other Program Coordinating Committee documents.
- › Support open discussion and debate, and encourage fellow Program Coordinating Committee members to voice their insights.

As a non-member of the PCC, the Aus4Skills Managing Contractor will:

- › provide reports to the PCC on the progress of the program.
- › act as a secretariat for the meetings [*insert details of this role, for example, minute taking*]
- › [*note any logistical arrangements the Aus4Skills team would be responsible for*]

Membership

Members are selected based on their specialist knowledge, ability to represent the interests of stakeholders, and ability to help resolves issues the project may face.

Partnerships will also be established with selected target institutions in key sector sub programs (to be identified). GOA or GOV may agree to invite these partners as observers or ad hoc members of the PCC, to provide additional perspectives and opportunity for building relationships.

MOET PCC membership comprises of representatives from the International Cooperation Department, Higher Education Department and Department of Higher Education (two from each unit – one is at decision making level (Director) and one is working level official).

Center for Gender Studies and Women’s Leadership (Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics)

[*Members can also be listed in a table*]

| Name | Title | Organisation |
|----------------|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Example</i> | | |
| Stacey Nation | Counsellor, Political | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |

Members of the Program Coordinating Committee <can / cannot> send proxies to meetings. Proxies <are / are not> entitled to participate in discussion and <are / are not> allowed a role in decision-making.

Program Coordinating Committee members will inform the Co-Chairs as soon as possible if they intend to send a proxy to a meeting and no less than two business days before the scheduled meeting.

Decision-making

[This section describes the process the Program Coordinating Committee will use to make decisions. The section can be prescriptive or general.]

Some prescriptive decision-making options include:

- › *Unanimity: everyone agrees to a given course of action.*
- › *Majority: a course of action requires support from more than 50% members who attend the meeting if there is quorum.*
- › *2/3 Majority: a course of action requires support from 2/3 of the members who attend the meeting if there is quorum.*
- › *Consensus: a majority approve a given course of action, but that the minority agrees to go along with the course of action, potentially with some modifications.*

A general decision-making option might be worded as follows:

At the PCC meetings members are invited to discuss and agree upon strategic and operational priorities for Aus4Skills, including scholarship allocations, short-term training and other non-scholarship HRD activities.

If there is disagreement in the PCC on the scholarship allocations, activities and/or annual work plan, DFAT, in consultation with MOET, will make the final decision.

Frequency of Meetings

The PCC will meet every six months to review program implementation and to decide on the annual workplans. The PCC will be able to meet, or communicate via email, on an ad hoc basis should any urgent matters arise out of the regular meeting schedule.

Annually, the PCC will be a forum for discussion of activity performance and effectiveness, consideration of emerging issues and implementation risks, and for adjustment of strategic and operational priorities. Sector priorities and the proportion of awards targeted to strategic partner organisations should be reviewed annually by the PCC; as well as new HRD activities and/or new partnerships and sub program activities.

PCC meetings will be timed to ensure that decisions made about the strategic and operational priorities for the coming year, are reflected in the subsequent scholarships promotion and selection processes *[this should be a PCC meeting in the second half of the year, and the agenda should reflect that agreement is sought on sector priorities and proportion of awards targeted to strategic partner organisations. A PCC meeting in the first half of the year should be the annual review and work plan approval for the non-scholarship HRD activities.]*

The PCC will be able to meet on an ad hoc basis should any urgent matters arise out of the regular meeting schedule.

Agenda, Minutes, and Decision Papers

PCC papers will be sent to members three to five business days in advance of a Program Coordinating Committee meeting. The PCC papers will include the following:

- > Agenda for upcoming meeting.
- > Minutes of previous meeting.
- > A progress report for Aus4Skills.
- > Decision papers.
- > Any other documents/information to be considered at the meeting.

Aus4Skills will provide the PCC with reports on the implementation of the program. The reports should be concise and include: a general review of the previous six months; progress against targets; key issues and constraints; acquittal of program expenditure and requests for alterations to the planned activity schedule.

In addition, a more comprehensive Annual Report should be prepared each year and should include an annual review against the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, a workplan (to be agreed by the PCC) of the next year's activities and a reconciliation of the yearly expenditure.

Appendix F: Suggested reporting cycle and content

| Report Title | Period Covered | Due Date | Content |
|---------------|----------------|--|--|
| Update Report | July-Dec | End of January each year | Summary report – not subject to M&E standards for Investment Progress Reports. Reports against AQC criteria; notes opportunities for policy dialogue/influence; includes any requests for changes to workplan/budget. |
| Annual Report | July -June | End of July each year (draft version potentially provided earlier to the PCC depending on agreed dates of meeting/s) | Meets M&E standards for Investment Progress Reports. Report against the entirety of the program logic (outputs, short-term outcomes and end-of-program outcomes) |

Glossary

Glossary

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Alumni | Used to include male and female graduates, in both singular and plural form. |
| Aus4Skills | The Vietnam-Australia Human Resource Development Partnership program (Feb 2016 – Dec 2020). |
| Formative evaluation | Formative evaluations serve the purpose of improving/shaping a specific program or policy. They usually do not attempt to generalise findings beyond the setting in which the evaluation takes place. Formative evaluations often rely heavily on qualitative methods. ⁴¹ |
| Non-scholarship activities | Non-scholarship activities refer collectively to the activities and inputs which are not long-term scholarships nor alumni activities that are individually focussed to directly improve the ability of alumni to access, or maximise benefits from, long term Australia Awards. Under Aus4Skills <i>non-scholarship</i> inputs are primarily driven by organisational needs and Australian interests in priority sectors in Vietnam. |
| Human Resource Development | <p>The enhancement of knowledge, skills and competencies of citizens, and of capacities for applying them effectively towards the advancement of the nation's development goals:</p> <p><i>'Knowledge'</i> identifies what a person needs to know to perform the work in an informed and effective manner;</p> <p><i>'Skills'</i> describes the application of the knowledge to situations where understanding is converted into a workplace outcome; and</p> <p><i>'Competencies'</i> are the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. ⁴²</p> |
| Higher education | Higher education refers to both university and post-secondary vocational education. |
| Training | Training include university courses, formal training and competency-based training. In practice, training did not include on-the-job training or distance education. |

⁴¹ Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, 3rd ed. Sage.

⁴² DFAT (2014). *Australia-Vietnam Human Resources Development Strategy*

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- › GeLead, 2018. Progress Report.
- › Monash University, 2018. Completion Report - Support for the master's degree in human rights law at Vietnam National University School of Law.
- › USQ Australia, 2018. Completion Report – Governance, Leadership and Strategic Planning Short Course.
- › La Trobe University, 2018. Strengthening Teachers' Academic Support for Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds.
- › Griffith University, 2018. Industry-led Vocational Education and Training in Logistics. Completion Report.
- › Queensland University of Technology, 2018. Completion Report: Strengthening Vocational Education in Logistics Industry in Vietnam. Course 1: International Skills Training for Trainers and Assessors. Course 2: Strategic Planning of Vocational Training Managers.
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