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**2021-2022 AUSTRALIAN ALUMNI COVID-19 RESPONSE GRANTS SCHEME**

**PART A: Overview**

**1. Background**

In light of the current global pandemic, the Australia Awards and Alumni Engagement Program (AAAEP-P) provides funding through the Australian Alumni Covid-19 Response Grants Scheme to help respond to the emerging challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis.

These open competitive grants will allow alumni to collaborate with peers or other individuals and organisations to undertake research and development projects that build resilience and recovery efforts in communities impacted by the pandemic. Projects should focus on the core areas of health security, stability and economic recovery in their response initiatives. A multi-sectoral approach which considers social and economic needs, with a strong emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable sectors of society, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, children, displaced populations, the elderly, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable groups is highly encouraged.

AAAEP-P is an initiative of the Australian Government to support the Philippines in its development goals and create positive relationships that advance mutual interests. The program offers a mix of long-term scholarships, short courses, and other forms of training for current and emerging leaders and influencers. It supports ongoing alumni engagement through the Australian Global Alumni network.

The Australian Government launched the Australian Global Alumni network (<https://globalalumni.gov.au>) as a virtual global network for all alumni to stay connected, build and mobilise professional networks and celebrate successes. Australia's Global Alumni Network is an active network of influential alumni leaders with strong links to Australia. Alumni are a valuable resource who can contribute to the Philippines' development needs and promote Australia's position as a world-class training and education services provider.

The AAAEP-P provides this opportunity for alumni to use their Australian education to contribute to the Philippines' national development. The 2021-2022 Australian Alumni Covid-19 Response Grants Scheme is a platform for alumni to create meaningful change in their organisations and communities.

**2. Objectives**

The 2021-2022 Australian Alumni Covid-19 Response Grants Scheme aims to assist alumni to:

- undertake research that uses their knowledge and skills gained from their Australian education or training. It gives alumni a platform to conduct research initiatives that would better understand COVID-19 and respond to current challenges brought about by the pandemic. Cross-disciplinary research proposals are highly encouraged.



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- Lead projects that contribute to building resilience and recovery efforts in communities impacted by Covid-19. It gives alumni a platform to leverage their competencies gained from their Australian education or training in implementing the projects.

Specifically, it aims to:

- provide alumni with opportunities to enhance and use their knowledge and skills
- develop, maintain and strengthen professional linkages and partnerships between alumni and the Australian Government, Australian businesses, public and private organisations and educational institutions
- connect alumni across disciplines and professions, organisations and institutions, and geographic areas to share good practice and create opportunities for collaboration
- showcase Australia's excellence as a global provider of high-quality education and research
- support COVID-19 response initiatives that promote gender equality, women's empowerment and social inclusion
- support COVID-19 activities that protect the most vulnerable sectors of society, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, children, displaced populations, the elderly, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups

## **PART B: General Guidelines**

### **3. Key dates**

<b>Application stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Call for proposals	Monday, 27 September 2021
Deadline for applications	Friday, 12 November 2021
Panel Screening / Deliberation	November 2021
Notification of results	January 2022
Commencement of Activity	February 2022 to January 2023

### **4. Focus Areas for 2021-2022**

The Australian Alumni Covid-19 Response Development Grants Scheme will award the grant to successful proposals that are aligned to the [Philippines COVID-19 Development Response Plan](#), with particular focus on:

- i. Strengthening **HEALTH SECURITY**;
- ii. Maintaining **STABILITY**; and
- iii. Promoting **ECONOMIC RECOVERY**.

The Australian Government has a strong commitment to supporting initiatives that protect the most vulnerable sectors of society. These are women and girls, persons with disabilities, children,



displaced populations, the elderly, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups and strongly encourages applications from alumni supporting these sectors.

## **5. Eligible Proponents**

The Alumni COVID-19 Grant Scheme is open to all Filipino nationals who have graduated from a recognised Australian tertiary education, including those that self-funded their study in Australia. It is also available to alumni who have graduated from short-term study or fellowship programs from recognised Australian institutions and alumni of AAAEP-P programs, including short courses, non-formal learning opportunities and in-country scholarship program (ICSP). Alumni can apply as an individual, group or on behalf of an alumni association.

Applications must be submitted by an alumnus (individual), group of alumni or organisation headed by an alumnus as the Team Leader and demonstrate the ability to conduct quality research, implement development projects and manage grant funds according to AAAEP-P's policies.

Alumni and their partner individuals and organisations must demonstrate that they are ethically sound and, where necessary, seek prior approval of appropriate review/technical board.

## **6. Funding and duration**

The 2021-2022 Australian Alumni Covid-19 Response Grants Scheme will provide financial support up to PHP 500,000. Project costs and proposed sources of funding must be included in the proposal. It will not, however, provide funds for (i) the conduct of masters or doctoral projects, (ii) payments to non-Philippine nationals for services rendered; (iii) purchase of furniture, fixtures, equipment or machinery; and (iv) salaries and/or compensation of alumni proponent (individual, team leader and alumni members). The grant will depend on the scope of study and the research approach or the extent of proposed projects to be implemented. The grant may be used as a counterpart to other grants provided by local or foreign organisations. AGS funds will be fully acquitted. The grantee is expected to maintain a sound administrative and financial system capable of providing evidence of the delivery of activities, services and goods purchased.

The maximum duration for implementing a grant is 12 months or until 31 December 2022. Implementation should commence within 1 month of funding approval and signing of the Grant Agreement. In case of a delay in execution, the grantee should notify the AAAEP-P in writing proposing new implementation timelines. Proposals that exceed the funding limit and duration may be considered subject to merit and assessment.

## **7. Appraisal and Approval Procedures**

All proposals should be submitted online at [www.australiaawardsphilippines.org/alumni/ags](http://www.australiaawardsphilippines.org/alumni/ags) using the prescribed templates on or before 12 November 2021. All applications will be acknowledged upon receipt. Selected proposals will be advised not later than 15 December 2021. Proposals will be assessed as they come in, and if selected, the proponent may begin project implementation immediately.

Proposals will be assessed and approved on a competitive basis by the Grants Screening Committee composed of representatives from the: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and external members from either the private or development sector.



Successful applicants will sign a Grant Agreement with AAAEP-P. Work must commence in the first three (3) months of signing. A delay of more than three (3) months without approval will cancel the grant. Funds will have to be returned to AAAEP-P within 30 days. Extensions of time will only be given in unforeseen circumstances beyond the grantee's control.

## **8. Exclusions**

Activities and expenses ineligible for funding include:

- Academic or short-course training to be taken by the alumnus/alumna.
- Australia Awards Re-Entry Action Plans.
- Travel to other countries by the alumnus/alumna
- Salaries and compensation of alumni proponent (individual, team leader and alumni members)

## **9. Terms and Conditions**

The schedules of fund releases are as follows:

- 50% on commencement, upon approval and acceptance of the project.
- 40% upon the submission of the mid-term project review, satisfactory project evaluation based on project visit and approved final implementation and cost plan (for major projects or events).
- 10% upon submission of final acquittal and approved terminal report.

Generally, these schedules should apply. However, proposals can present a different schedule when critical to the nature of the project or research they intend to implement. The final tranche will entail closer monitoring from the AAAEP-P and strict reporting from the proponents/implementers to ensure the full completion of the project.

The bank details as the repository of project funds are required for individual or group applications. For registered groups or organisations, the bank account must be under the organisation's name. For unregistered groups, the bank account must be under the group leader's name. It is the responsibility of the proponent to keep the account active within the duration of the project. Group members will be asked to sign an acknowledgment of financial arrangements during contract signing and submission of the final report.

## **10. Monitoring and Reporting**

The following activity and financial reports are required for all successful grant applications:

1. Progress Report (1-2 pages) – due quarterly throughout the project duration. There will be instances where AAAEP-P will require proponents to submit a progress report before the due date. The report should include updates on key activities, events and progress towards completion, risks (where relevant), budget and expenditure, any qualitative and quantitative data, social media and other relevant information.
2. Project Terminal Report (up to 10 pages) – due one month from completion of the project. This should include a full recap of key activities and outcomes, events and indicators of completion, any ongoing work, risks, a full breakdown of budget and



expenditure, qualitative and quantitative data and reports, social media and other relevant information.

It is the responsibility of the alumni or group leader to provide timely updates and feedback to AAAEP-P regarding the implementation of the project. Through the group leader, the implementing team is required to submit the following:

1. Information on major changes to the scope and details of the proposed activity or project, or significant changes to the allocation of fund items within the project, will be reported throughout the project's duration as they arise.
2. Written update following the second tranche.
3. Final report, including detailed acquittal and financial reporting on project expenses and disbursements. This should be submitted within one month after completion of the project or activity.
4. All social media promotions such as blogs, tweets, Facebook and Instagram videos and photos of milestone activities shall be posted on the AAAEP-P microsite provided for the grants scheme recipients. Photos and videos are encouraged, along with the written reports.

#### **11. Other Provisions (include these provisions in the research)**

##### **Fraud Control**

Fraud is described as “dishonestly obtaining a benefit by deception or other means”. The grants scheme strictly adheres to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade’s Fraud Control Policy and the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines with a “zero-tolerance” to any form of fraudulent activity. This means that the grant scheme will not condone any form of fraudulent behaviour in its operations such as payment of bribes, facilitation payments or “hidden” commissions for any reason.

##### **Child Protection**

Organisations or institutions whose applications propose working directly with children must have a clearly articulated and functional child protection policy in place. This policy shall be provided to AAAEP-P upon request. The child protection policy shall include procedures for protecting children in the proposed activity, amongst other things, from any potential sexual, mental and physical abuse by staff members or other adults involved in the activity.

##### **Terrorism Financing Risks**

All organisations or institutions must make reasonable efforts to identify and understand the level of terrorism-financing risk that a proposed activity may be exposed to across its entire life cycle. Where a specific risk is identified, necessary actions must be taken to manage and reduce this risk. Grants will not be provided where there is a non-mitigated risk of financing terrorism.

##### **Record Keeping**

The proponent shall ensure that records including all official forms and templates, minutes of evaluation proceedings and related meetings, reports (progress, mid-term, terminal, and acquittal) are properly maintained and kept. This allows easy, and ready access to records should an audit arise.

##### **Additional References:**



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- The Philippines COVID-19 Development Response Plan  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/covid-response-plan-philippines.pdf>
- DTI Sampung Utos



## **Annex 1. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES ON AGS PROJECTS**

### **ANNEX 1A. Development Projects**

#### **Eligible Activities**

The scheme will support short-term projects that meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Highlight and promote the proponents' Australian education or training
- Build and strengthen people-to-people links of the alumni with Australian institutions or individuals and organisation/community beneficiaries; sign-off from institutional or community partners is required prior to confirmation of the grant.
- Share the proponents' training, knowledge and skills with local communities or organisations
- Have joint public and private sector development activities and advocacies
- Projects should be innovative and sustainable.
- Respond to immediate or long-term resilience and recovery efforts that will provide substantial benefits and significantly impact the organisation and/or community.
- Conform to current restrictions on COVID-19 and consider innovative and/or technology-related means of implementation.
- Promote gender equality, women's empowerment and social inclusion and protect the most vulnerable sectors of society, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, children, displaced populations, the elderly, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups
- Proponent must be a Philippine resident and project must be implemented in the Philippines from the time of application until project completion

Projects should focus on any of the three core action areas: health security, stability and economic recovery such as:

#### **Health Security (contributes to SDGs 1, 3, 5)**

- Improvement of Health Systems,
- Emergency assistance
- Minimum initial service package for sexual and reproductive health in emergencies which includes gender-based violence protections)
- Assistance to women and girls' survivors of violence (e.g. access to safe spaces)

#### **Stability (contributes to SDGs 1, 2, 4, 16)**

- Social Protection
- Making BARMM planning and service delivery systems more inclusive, conflict-sensitive, and COVID-safe (e.g. education; WASH; roads; GBV counselling and referral; conflict monitoring);
- Community-level conflict resolution mechanisms
- Projects and actions that apply learning gained in Australia-supported short courses/scholarships relating to COVID-19 response and recovery
- Enabling leaders to identify and act on reform opportunities for COVID-19 response and recovery (e.g. transport systems for enhanced worker mobility), food security and food systems' resilience to impacts of COVID-19 and other shocks;

#### **Economic Recovery (contributes to SDGs 5, 8, 10, 11, 13)**



- Supporting local government units to strengthen their preparedness for and resilience to economic shocks
- Financial and/or business development services women's small and micro-enterprises
- Supporting the development of creative, smart, innovation oriented MSMEs through digital transformation, shared service facilities and innovative start-ups

### Examples of COVID-19 Response Initiatives

<b>Response area</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Health preparedness, response and systems strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provision of PPE through social enterprise development</li><li>• Health service delivery</li><li>• Public health messaging/ awareness-raising on health, sanitation and hygiene</li><li>• Support for contact tracing efforts and other health response efforts</li></ul>
Managing economic impacts and supporting economic recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support to sectors of the economy (e.g. tourism) affected by COVID-19</li><li>• Immediate livelihoods support for sectors that have been negatively affected by COVID-19 (e.g. labour-intensive infrastructure)</li><li>• Private sector development programs through corporate social responsibility (CSR) channels</li><li>• Agricultural/food security programs</li><li>• Support for small and medium- sized enterprises</li><li>• Public financial management programs designed to improve the quality of public spending, but which is now supporting the government to streamline procurement for COVID-19 related activities</li></ul>
Supporting stability and/or security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governance programs addressing/ mitigating impacts of COVID-19</li><li>• Law and justice programs addressing/ mitigating impacts of COVID-19</li><li>• Conflict analysis/ conflict prevention activities addressing/ mitigating impacts of COVID-19</li><li>• Peacebuilding/ social cohesion programs</li><li>• Ensuring continued water and electricity supply for rural areas and vulnerable communities</li></ul>



Targeted support for vulnerable populations, e.g. women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programs to address increases in gender-based violence associated with COVID-19</li><li>• Programs targeted at minimising COVID-19's impact on persons with disabilities or the elderly</li><li>• Humanitarian programs responding to impacts of COVID-19, targeting displaced communities</li></ul>
Assistance on other policy and sector responses to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical assistance to the government on how schools' systems can adapt to the COVID-19 context</li><li>• Support to government on how to adapt transport sector plans in light of COVID-19</li><li>• Support to adapt resource management plans to a COVID-19 context</li></ul>

### **Assessment Criteria**

The assessment of each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to the objectives of the grant scheme
  - Responsive to building resilience and recovery efforts arising from COVID-19 pandemic
  - Highlight and promote Australian education in the Philippines
  - Build and strengthen people-to-people links of the alumni with Australian institutions or individuals and organisation/community beneficiaries
  - Share their Australian training, knowledge and skills with local communities or organisations
  - Create opportunities for joint public and private sector development activities and advocacies
  - Promote gender equality and social inclusion
  - Be sustainable and have a social media component
- Soundness of project plan and methodology
  - The project plan is well developed and integrated to address the objectives and activities of the grant scheme
  - The methodology is highly likely to lead to concrete and meaningful results.
  - The project plan includes measures to ensure accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of women and children, the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable sectors of the community
- Sustainability & replicability
  - The project shows potential for sustainability.
  - It can be localised and adapted by other proponents under varying circumstances and settings.



## **ANNEX 1B. Research Projects**

### **Eligible proponents**

- The research grant scheme is open to all Filipino nationals who have graduated from a recognised Australian tertiary education, including those that self-funded their study in Australia. It is also available to alumni who have graduated from short-term study or fellowship programs from recognised Australian institutions and alumni of PAHRDF/PAHRODF and AAAEP-P programs, including short courses, non-formal learning opportunities and in-country scholarship program (ICSP).
- Applications must be submitted by an alumnus (individual), group of alumni or a research organisation headed by an alumnus as the Team Leader. Applications are open to individuals and organisations who can work collaboratively with alumni (*Alumni should either be a team Leader or at least hold a key position in the team*) and demonstrate the ability to conduct quality research and manage grant funds according to AAAEP-P's policies.
- If the alumni are based in another country, he/she should co-lead with Philippine-based alumni. The research should be done in the Philippines.
- The alumni must secure a written agreement or commitment from partner or host organization/s in relation to the proposed research project. This agreement must be submitted as part of the application.
- For a proposed research project requiring ethics consideration, approval must be secured from the appropriate review committee or technical board before submission of proposal.

### **Assessment of application**

- a. Process
  - i. Only applications received on or before the application deadline will be assessed for consideration under the grant scheme.
  - ii. AAAEP-P will shortlist the proposals based on the criteria identified below (see Table 1).
  - iii. AAAEP-P will submit the proposed list of qualified applications to the Research Selection Committee (RSC) within two (2) weeks after shortlisting.
  - iv. Proposals will be assessed by the Research Selection Committee (RSC), consisting of representatives from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and external members with appropriate expertise and experience in research and the topic of the study. A DFAT representative shall chair the RSC.
  - v. The RSC will select the final list of AGS awardees.
  - vi. Applicants will be notified of the selection outcome in writing.
  - vii. The assessment process will ensure clear and transparent mechanisms, and any potential conflict of interest will be identified and addressed early on.
- b. Instructions to applicants
  - i. The application is a one-step process. Applicants may not make any changes in their submissions but may withdraw their proposal at any time through a formal letter stating such intent.
  - ii. Applicants must submit a research proposal through the Australia Awards website application portal. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages (excluding relevant documents submitted as attachments), and should follow these guidelines:



- a) The proposals must describe original research that covers the themes identified earlier.
  - b) Research proposals must be clear and succinct. Technical jargon and acronyms should be avoided.
  - c) The research proposal must clearly define the following: purpose and relevance of the research project, problem statement, related studies, respondents, research design (detailing methods for sampling, data gathering and analysis), budget and communication and engagement strategy.
- iii. Applications must contain all required information. All information must be current at the time the application is submitted. They must also be accurate and complete or, the application will not be considered for funding.
  - iv. All information provided by the applicants will be treated as confidential.

**Pre-screening criteria**

Individual and/or Team*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The individual must have a relevant Master’s degree or PhD in the specific field of study of the proposed research;</li> <li>• The individual can be supported by research associates/assistants. Fees/salaries for work/tasks carried out by these associates / assistants should be within the acceptable industry compensation and supported by clear terms of engagement.</li> </ul>
Research Team*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team leader has a relevant Master’s degree or PhD in the specific field of study of the proposed research</li> <li>• A majority of the team members must have qualifications and extensive experiences in the specific field of study</li> <li>• The track record of all team members supports the proposed research objectives and design</li> <li>• The capacity to undertake and manage the proposed research is shown; and</li> <li>• Evidence of strong people-to-people links with Australia and in-country collaboration with partner institutions and/or private sector organisations.</li> </ul>

**Assessment criteria**

Criteria	Assessment notes
Rationale / significance and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research will help respond to critical issues and problems related to COVID-19 and aligned with the priority theme covered by the grant.</li> <li>• Anticipated outcomes will contribute to the limited information, literature and knowledge about this new disease. They will advance understanding on relevant themes/areas for national and local development and benefit the international community.</li> <li>• The research is novel and innovative.</li> <li>• New methods or technologies will be developed.</li> </ul>
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research project is aligned to priority themes and is helping respond to issues and problems brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a demonstrated demand and/or a need for research on this topic within the public and private sector.</li> <li>• Research outputs can contribute to the policy discourse on public health and governance or identify important and strategic issues in the priority themes that require attention and focus, especially by decision-makers in the public and private sectors and the community.</li> </ul>
Research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conceptual framework, problem statement and research design (sampling, data gathering and analytical methods) are well developed, integrated and appropriate to the aims of the research.</li> <li>• The research approach is justified, and the methodology is highly likely to result in meaningful findings. The research design will yield reliable and valid data and information that can be utilised effectively.</li> <li>• The design combines robust qualitative and/or quantitative methods with innovative thinking.</li> <li>• Useful outputs will be produced that will keep all key stakeholders informed of the progress of – and, where applicable, engagement with – the research during the life of the project.</li> <li>• A logical and feasible work plan is presented to implement the research project.</li> <li>• The research design includes measures to ensure responsiveness to the needs of women and children, the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable sectors of the community</li> </ul>
Communication and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The communication and engagement strategy is innovative, plausible and achievable.</li> <li>• The strategy targets specific audiences and outlines methods for engaging each audience from the outset of the research project.</li> <li>• Appropriate communication activities are included in the budget.</li> <li>• Demonstrates strong people-to-people links with Australia and in-country collaboration with partner institutions and/or private sector organisations</li> </ul>
Budget and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed budget is appropriate and offers value for money.</li> <li>• The administering organisation’s contribution or counterpart is presented and provides good value to the project.</li> <li>• If the project is in partnership with other organisations, it should demonstrate the grant’s contribution (i.e. resources and outputs) to achieving results.</li> </ul>

**Submitting research proposals**

All applications must be submitted online at the Australia Awards Philippines website [www.australiaawardsphilippines.org/alumni/ags](http://www.australiaawardsphilippines.org/alumni/ags) Applicants must consider the possibility that technical issues may delay the transmission of their application and should submit earlier than the prescribed deadline. AAAEP-P will not consider any submissions received after the specified deadline regardless of the reason.

**Application components**

Research proposals must contain the following information at the minimum:

- a. Abstract



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- b. Title of the Research Paper
- c. Research Questions
- d. Rationale / Significance and Innovation
- e. Relevance of Study
- f. Research Design and Method
- g. Outputs and Deliverables of the Research Project with clear indicators of success
- h. Risk Assessment and Management Plan
- i. Communication and Engagement Strategy
- j. Workplan and Budget (describe funds sources and uses if research is co-financed)
- k. Curriculum Vitae of Individual (if Individual) or profile of Organisation and Respective Team Members (if research organisation). This includes the performance of key personnel with regards to the quality of research products and publication record
- l. Results of Review of Ethics Committee (if appropriate).

### **Expectations from awardees**

Aside from submitting the final research paper, the awardees are also expected to:

- m. Present their work in a research colloquium or Knowledge Sharing Series event/s to be organised by AAAEP-P, and
- n. Submit selected outputs (i.e. two-pager infographics/results brief, research abstract/journal, policy briefs, conference paper or video recording of presentation and other specific research outputs), to AAAEP-P for uploading in the Program's Knowledge Management webpage