

ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Regional Partnerships Scheme

The ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program (AADCP) extends the long-running collaboration between Australia and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in previous phases of the ASEAN-Australia Economic Cooperation Program (AAECP).

Since 1974 AAECP has played a core role in ASEAN-Australian relations, evolving over time in response to economic changes in South East Asia, developments in technology and the growing maturity of the political relationship. Program content and management style have been guided by and helped to reinforce ASEAN's regional networking aims and participative committee structure. The third phase of AAECP, which comprised a Projects Stream and a Linkages Stream, concluded in 2001.

AADCP is a five year, \$45 million program with three components:

- Regional Economic Policy Support Facility;
- Program Stream (with projects promoting competitiveness and economic integration);
- Regional Partnerships Scheme.

Like the earlier Linkages Stream, the Regional Partnerships Scheme (RPS) provides funding for joint activities between ASEAN and Australian partners which address major regional development challenges. Proposals are subject to a joint ASEAN-Australian assessment process. Grants of between \$50,000-\$500,000 may be available for suitable activities of not more than two years' duration. There are no sectoral limitations on RPS other than relevance to major regional development priorities. Both public and private sector organisations are encouraged to participate.

Guidelines for Funding Proposals

RPS seeks to promote Australian engagement in the region and the strengthening of intra-regional cooperation in important development fields. Scheme objectives reflect Australia's national interest in assisting the neighbouring region to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. They take account of the substantial economic advancement of the older ASEAN member states, the recent expansion of ASEAN to include Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, and ASEAN's strategic commitment to initiatives which promote economic integration and regional prosperity as spelled out in the ASEAN Vision 2020 and the Hanoi Plan of Action.

RPS provides a funding mechanism for innovative partnership projects relating to the development priorities of the region as a whole. Proposals must be jointly submitted by

the Australian and ASEAN partners. It is expected that activities selected for support will:

- Help promote sustainable economic growth and contribute to reducing poverty;
- Strengthen regional cooperation in key development areas through knowledge exchange and building institutional capacity and linkages;
- Build on the benefits of previous ASEAN-Australia cooperation, including extending these benefits to the newer ASEAN members;
- Accord with ASEAN's regional development priorities which are outlined in the Hanoi Plan of Action and other key policy statements;
- Be truly regional in character, addressing issues of regional relevance and promoting cross-boundary solutions involving regional interaction;
- Demonstrate well-considered, cost-effective design, relating inputs to achievable outcomes in no more than a two year timeframe;
- Incorporate appropriate gender analysis and environmental management;
- Facilitate partnerships between ASEAN and Australian organisations with the skills and commitment to realise project outcomes and to fulfil RPS reporting and continuous review requirements.

Management of RPS

Management arrangements for RPS promote the cooperative principles of the ASEAN-Australian relationship. Proposals satisfying RPS criteria are referred for comment to the ASEAN committee system as well as Australian regional Posts. Funding decisions are taken by a Joint Selection and Review Panel (JSRP) with ASEAN and Australian membership.

The scheme's regional character is emphasised by the location of the Regional Partnership Scheme Coordination Unit (RPSCU) in the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. Staffed by ASEAN nationals, the RPSCU reports to the Australian Managing Contractor, ACIL Australia Pty Ltd, and also to senior officials of the ASEAN Secretariat.

Applications for RPS Support

Proposals for RPS funding are welcome throughout the year and will be considered in a timeframe allowing for screening and consultation before their submission to the JSRP which will meet every four months.

Assistance in preparing applications to comply with RPS guidelines and in identifying potential partner organisations may be obtained from the RPSCU.

Use of the AADCP Website

The RPS Australian Managing Contractor is responsible for development and maintenance of the overall AACP website www.aadcp.org

This website is the central source of information for the RPS and the other two components of the AADCP program. It will also provide an on-line mechanism for submitting applications for funding support. The site is designed to enable applicants to check RPS guidelines and the timing of selection rounds, review lessons learned from past activities, complete a project application and, through the site's restricted access facility, check the progress of their application.

The website details AADCP events taking place in the region and enables downloading of the four-monthly Newsletter which will highlight activities and developments throughout the AADCP program. It also provides stakeholders with summary information about the progress of RPS, enables access to an RPS project database and is a major vehicle for the continuous review and feedback process.