



The Asia Foundation

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia

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General Questions:

1. What is Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia program?

With support from, and in partnership with, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), The Asia Foundation is pleased to implement the *Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia* program. A three-year initiative, Ponlok Chomnes aims to strengthen the capacity of Cambodian knowledge sector institutions to undertake quality research that informs public policy analysis and dialogue in Cambodia. This will be achieved by strengthening organizational and technical capacity of research institutions, facilitating networking and collaboration between Cambodian research institutions within and outside Cambodia, and supporting an enabling environment for policy dialogue using data. The Asia Foundation will achieve this goal through mutually-reinforcing objectives and activities outlined below.

Objective 1: Increase understanding of Cambodia's knowledge sector

Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity and networking of established policy research institutes

Objective 3: Support research by emerging knowledge sector actors through an Innovation Fund

Objective 4: Promote thoughtful and inclusive policy dialogue and analysis

Ponlok Chomnes is not a sector specific program and focuses on supporting research institutions and organizations whose research could contribute to supporting policy dialogue and/or policy change in Cambodia. Additionally, Ponlok Chomnes is a learning program which emphasizes applying lessons learned to the implementation of the program.

2. There are two types of funding available through Ponlok Chomnes Program, can an organization apply for both?

An organization can apply for both kinds of funding if it meets the eligibility criteria required under each call for expressions of interest. However, once an organization is selected for one stream of funding, they will no longer be eligible for the other stream funding.

3. What is the Knowledge Sector?

The Knowledge Sector is the institutional landscape of government, private sector, and civil society organizations that provide research and analysis to support the development of public policy. The knowledge sector includes think tanks, universities, specialized agencies, private research consultants, and non-governmental organizations¹.

4. Who is the main sponsor of this program?

This program is fully funded by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The program is implemented by The Asia Foundation in Cambodia. The program will also benefit from advice from a Technical Advisory Council (TAC) whose membership comprises of:

¹[Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Pro-poor Policy: The Knowledge Sector Initiative, Design Document, 2012.](#)

- Representatives from the Royal Government of Cambodia;
- Representatives from civil society; and
- Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT);

The Council's primary responsibility will be to provide strategic advice and promote program visibility.

5. *Should an organization be a legal entity to join the selection process?*

Yes, your organization must be a legal entity in Cambodia with capacity to manage grants from donors. Organizations must be registered, or have initiated the registration process, with the appropriate Cambodian Government Ministry.

6. *Can a coalition or consortium of organizations apply for this grant?*

No, we are looking for applications from individual organizations. Once selected, we encourage our partners to collaborate with other organizations.

Core Funding Related Questions:

1. *What are the key characteristics of policy research institutes?*

A *policy research institute* should have the capacity to: (a) produce knowledge (research), (b) promote the use of evidence in policymaking process, (c) engage with government/policy makers or otherwise have the ability to influence government/policy makers during the policy making process, (d) work with civil society, (e) retain staff, (f) be committed to reform and change, (g) organize routine meetings/forums with stakeholders; and (h) cooperate with other research organizations.

From the international literature, we know there are several characteristics of successful policy research institutes, including:

- The institute's research demonstrates rigor, meets academic research standards, and uses quality datasets.
- The institute has in place systems to ensure its analysis is independent and non-biased.
- The institute has in place systems for peer review of research, by colleagues and external reviewers.
- The institute consults with policy makers and other stakeholders when setting its research agenda.
- The institute actively engages and shares information with government policy makers, partners and civil society about relevant development policy issues.
- The institute is actively involved in established research or policy networks to share knowledge and best practices.
- The institute has in place a strategic plan for organizational and program development.
- The institute has systems in place to build the capacity of its staff and provides a career path for its employees.

The selection committee will be looking for policy research institutions that are working toward having some of these characteristics and a strong commitment to growth, transformation and quality assurance.

2. How much funding will be available for Core partner organizations?

Prior to determining how much funding will be available for each organization, the following steps will be taken:

- an organizational assessment of selected organizations will be conducted, including an assessment of the technical capacity of research staff and a network mapping exercise;
- organizations will develop a capacity building plan – this plan will reflect an institutional change approach rather than a resource intensive, large training exercise;
- organizations will implement specific activities, with strong monitoring and evaluation against the planned results.

Partners will receive the majority of the grant during the first year, followed by additional funding in following years of the program should they meet the performance assessment.

As the funding provided is core funding; ultimately partners determine how funds are used. Funding may be used for research (including the cost to ensure the quality of research), organizational support (salary, operational cost, etc.), or institutional development (training, consultants, etc.).

Once selected, each core partner will receive a grant valued at between **USD80,000** to **USD100,000** for up to two years.

3. What is “core funding”?

An important part of the logic of core funding is that organizations, to become strong and independent, must have the resources to set their own agendas and live with the consequences of the decisions they make. An important feature of core funding is trust. In a basic term, “core funding” is a flexible funding mechanism to support a research organization to address their (core) problems that hinder them to fulfill their core mandate as policy research organization.

4. What is the commitment level expected from an organization who receives support from Ponlok Chomnes?

Eligible organizations must be willing and agree to work closely with The Asia Foundation to undergo consultations and meet regularly. The Foundation will conduct an interview at the start of our engagement using a participatory assessment tool. The participatory assessment enables organizations to reflect on and articulate their organizational mission, history, culture, and institutional performance and capacity. Through a facilitated process, organization’s will also be asked to reflect on aspects of their external operating environment which impact their organizational capacity to fulfill their respective missions.

Once approved to receive the grant, partners must be willing to identify areas of priorities that could support their organization’s ability to conduct high quality research once addressed.

5. How long can an organization be supported?

Core partners will be supported for up to two (02) years, with annual performance reviews.

6. What's the timeframe between the submission of EOI and Concept Note?

All organizations who submit an EOI will receive notification about whether they have or have not been shortlisted to the concept note phase within 15 days of the EOI due date. For shortlisted organizations, a concept note will need to be submitted approximately two weeks after shortlisted applicants are informed.

7. Should we already have had published research (in a peer-reviewed journal) to be eligible to apply?

Not necessarily. Nonetheless, the organization must be able to provide evidence of other types of publications that show rigor in research. For example, articles on websites, policy papers, and articles in newspapers.

8. What if our research report/analysis fails to influence policies?

The success/failure of policy advocacy based on your organization's research will not be a primary determinant of successful applicants for this program. However, we do expect that one of the core aims of your organisation is to influence public policy either at the national or subnational level.

9. Through this program, can selected organization use the funding to provide technical assistance for civil society or other civil society organizations?

The focus of this support is to develop the capacity of policy research institutes. The program is not designed for research organizations to provide technical assistance (such as training) to civil society or other CSOs. However, one expected outcome of this program is that research organizations will have the ability to establish and strengthen networks and cooperation with other research organisations, CSOs, constituents and other stakeholders who work on policy advocacy.

Emerging Research Fund Related Questions:

1. How much funding will be available for Emerging Research Partners?

Once selected, each Emerging Research Partner will receive a grant valued at between **USD12,000** and **USD15,000** for the proposed research.

2. How long can an organization be supported?

Emerging research partners will be supported for the one to two years depending on the research topic, research approach and program timeframe.

3. There are three rounds of Emerging Research Funding, can same organization apply for different rounds of funding?

Yes, the same organization can apply for different rounds of the Emerging Research Funding. In other words, the same organization can receive funding more than once. The program is expected

to have three rounds of a competitive application process and partners will be selected based on the quality of their proposed research/topic.

4. Can I submit my expression of Interest for emerging research funding in Khmer.

Yes, we will accept expressions of interest in Khmer or English.