

News story: British Embassy Vientiane, Laos – Call for bids 2019/20

The British Embassy Vientiane is calling for project proposals supporting five main areas of focus.

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The British Embassy Programme Fund (BEPF) is issuing a call for bids for projects in line with the UK government's foreign policy objectives in Lao PDR during financial year 2019/20.

The BEPF project bids will be shortlisted and approved by the British Embassy Vientiane's Post Programme Board. To apply for funding, interested organisations must submit a project proposal and activity budget plan to the British Embassy. This will provide the basic information required to enable the Post Programme Board to make an assessment on whether or not the bidder will be invited to submit a full project proposal.

All projects submitted must directly support at least one of the following priority objectives for the British Embassy Programme Fund: 1. Promoting Education. Preference will be given to projects related to:

1. Promoting a safe and enabling environment for good governance, rule of law and human rights. Preference will be given to projects related to:
1. Promoting a safe and enabling environment for operating business in Lao PDR by raising awareness and enhancing capacity of both private and non – private sectors. Preference will be given to projects related to:

- Tourism and Hospitality

- Anti-money laundering

1. Environment and Conservation. Preference will be given to projects related to:

- Illegal Wildlife trade (IWT)

1. Promoting culture and sports, including the development of media, social media, film and other creative arts. Preference will be given to

projects related to:

The BEPF will fund projects from £5,000 upwards. It is strongly recommended that projects supporting these priority objectives must under £10,000.

All British Embassy Vientiane Programme Fund projects must clearly demonstrate how they will:

- support at least one of the above priorities
- deliver value for money (VfM)
- meet OECD criteria for Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding and
- demonstrate that they are able to complete 90% spend by December 7, 2019

The assessment criteria will be based on the following:

Managerial and Financial Aspects

- any organisation can apply for funding. We do not accept project bids submitted by individuals.
- please note that we cannot make pre-payments; the successful bidders should make the payment and then ask us to reimburse these expenses. The implementer must have an active bank account in the name of the organisation to which we can electronically transfer reimbursements.
- organisations must prove that they are able to manage the project sum in a satisfactory manner; the Embassy may request reports by auditors.

Exemptions We regret that we are unable to fund:

- academic courses
- charitable activities
- commercial activities
- infrastructure or construction projects, or
- humanitarian aid co-financing

Evaluation of project bids

- the aim of the project should be concise, feasible and sustainable
- the expected outcomes should be measurable and
- the target group should be clearly defined and involved in project implementation

Approval and reporting We will invite the implementer to submit a full Project Proposal and Activity Based Budget Plan and the full conditions of grants will be outlined once final decisions have been made by the Post Programme Board. The Embassy will require monthly financial reports/meetings and quarterly project progress reports from implementers. The first payment will be made upon the receipt of a monthly financial report. When the project has been completed the implementer shall prepare and send a final report to the Embassy within the period specified in the contract. Implementation time frame

Process: Please complete the following documents attached:

Successful applicants will implement their projects under the condition below:

- Duration of the Project: June 10, 2019 – February 15, 2020.
- All payment requests and reporting should be finalised by March 15, 2020, with 90% of funding spent by December 7, 2019.
- Budget must be 100% spent by February 15 2020.

Contact Completed concept notes should be sent by email to anongly.phimmasone@fco.gov.uk by 27 May 2019.

Press release: Parole Board Chief Executive's Blog – 7th edition – April 2019

In his latest blog, Martin Jones, CEO, writes about meeting other paroling

authorities in the US, publishing a new video for victims, plans for the new financial year, and guidance for members on consideration of allegations.

Press release: Parole Board Chief Executive's Blog – 7th edition – April 2019

International paroling authorities' conference

I was delighted to be invited to attend a conference of international parole authorities in Baltimore, USA. This was a fantastic opportunity to hear about how parole works in New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and different US states. While each jurisdiction is different, there is a great deal of commonality.

The [Association of Paroling Authorities International's](#) conference included sessions on how victims are treated, the increasing importance of using desistance theory when reviewing risk, and hearing from prisoners who have been through parole.

At the end of the conference I was surprised and honoured that the Parole Board had been awarded [the CARE award](#) for improving victim and public understanding of the parole process through providing decision summaries and producing better public information. I do think this is an area where our hard work has yielded some real improvements.

A victim's guide to parole

[A victim's guide to parole](#)

Linking nicely to our commitment to improve the information available for victims, the Board has published "A victim's guide to parole." This video is made for victims to help show what they can expect during the different stages of the parole journey. It was made in collaboration with the Victims' Commissioner (who also provides the voice-over) and professionals who support victims during the parole process.

Priorities for the new financial year

Looking ahead to the new financial year I wanted to highlight some priorities:

BAME representation

I am really hopeful that our most recent recruitment campaign will increase BAME representation in our membership. The early signs are positive. Our outreach work ensured that we received more than double the number of applications we were expecting. 27% of those applications were from a BAME background and it is looking like a high proportion will be invited to interview. Having a more diverse membership is important for confidence in the parole system and it is vital that we build on this promise in all future programmes.

10,000 oral hearings

The number of cases that need a parole hearing remains extremely high. I now anticipate that the Board will need to list around 10,000 oral hearings this financial year to keep up with demand. This is essential to ensure hearings are held in a timely fashion.

Decision making framework

To be more transparent about how the Board makes parole decisions, we will be publishing a decision making framework for members that will provide a clear, structured document to assist them when they are reviewing parole cases.

More cases completed

We will be rolling out a project to our membership in a determined effort to reduce unnecessary deferrals. In its pilot phase, 'Project Compass' showed a dramatic reduction in the number of deferrals that happen on the day of a hearing, from over 20% to around 6%.

Deferrals on the day of a hearing cause anxiety and frustration for prisoners and victims, and are also the most wasteful for the Board. I am happy to see the introduction of Project Compass and am confident this will have a positive effect on the 'on the day' deferral rate and deferrals in general.

I am also hopeful that more can be done within the system to drive up earlier case completion.

Performance

A new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been agreed and will be published in the Parole Board's Business Plan (2019/20). These KPIs will seek to ensure that the right outcomes are measured and incentivised.

Our indicators are focused on: timeliness of hearings and decisions, ensuring hearings go ahead and are effective, and continuing to improve confidence and transparency in the parole process.

Guidance for members on consideration of allegations

Earlier this month [we published guidance](#) for our members on the consideration of allegations made against a prisoner.

This guidance was a key part of [our strategic commitment](#) to equip our members with further guidance and support to fairly handle cases where there are allegations of offending that someone has not been convicted for. We worked with judges and lawyers to get the right balance so that we continue to have fair hearings, while acting on recommendations made for the Board to improve certain aspects of its work.

It is worth saying that we do listen and have consistently made improvements over the past year, including: the introduction of decision summaries, refresher training to all of our members and vastly improving the information available to victims.

That said, we are not sitting still. The work to deliver a more effective and transparent system continues.

For example, we are preparing to implement a reconsideration mechanism – where victims and prisoners will be able to make a request for parole decisions to be reviewed – [following recommendations made by the MoJ review](#)

[Press release: Brits urged to read travel advice ahead of Bank Holiday trips](#)

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office is updating its social media channels to remind people of the importance of reading travel advice before going abroad.